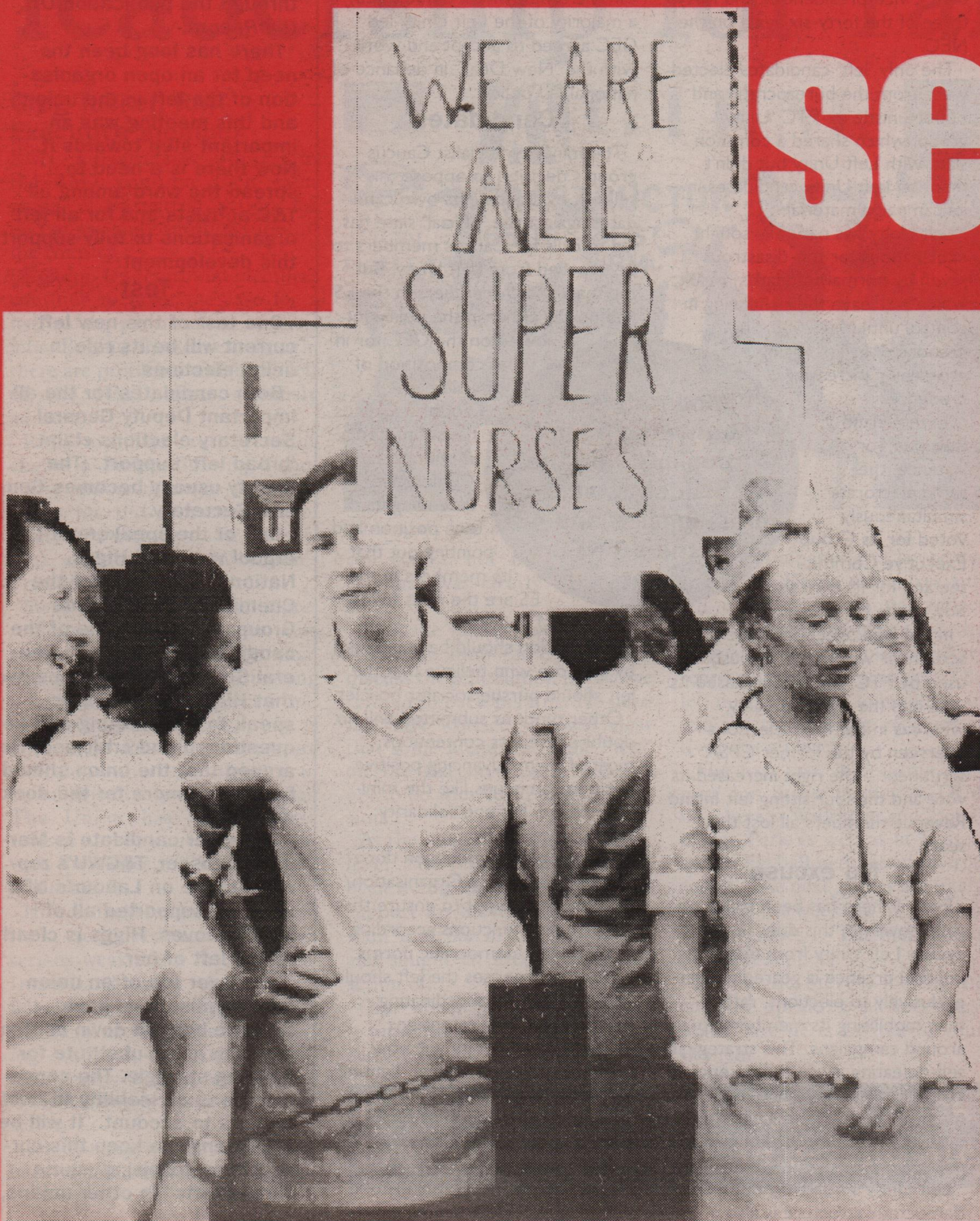


Socialist OUTLOOK

A monthly marxist review * New series No. 19 * October 1998 *

Pay squeeze threat to public services



MINISTERS are set on a collision course with public sector workers as they attempt to hold down public spending and force low-paid staff to carry the can.

All the hollow boasts of multi-billion pound hand-outs to the NHS and education in Gordon Brown's July spending review are now being revealed as nothing more than hot air. When it comes to the vital question of raising pay levels sufficiently to recruit and retain the front-line staff vital for quality services, ministers offer nothing more than the Tories.

But without urgent action to draw young people into teaching, nursing and other health professions, Tony Blair's pledges to cut class sizes, improve education and reduce hospital waiting lists will be no more than a sick joke.

Despite dwindling numbers applying for teacher training courses, teaching unions are being told that the only increase they can expect is a miserable deal based on "performance related pay", which will leave most teachers struggling to keep pace with inflation (see page 2).

The shortage of nurses is if anything more serious, with thousands of unfilled training places, and thousands more vacant posts in hospitals throughout the country. A recent snap-shot survey by the *Evening Standard* showed that London's hospitals alone are under-staffed by almost 5,000 nurses, with Trusts admitting that over 300 beds were closed for lack of staff.

This is almost certainly an under-estimate: there are similar desperate shortages of other NHS professionals, with salaries starting at a pitiful £12,500 after three years training – less than a shelf-stacker in Tesco!

The growing anger in the NHS was shown by the recent lunch-time protest at Kingston hospital, where over 100 nurses came out to show their anger at staff shortages.

Union leaders may not want to challenge the government, but a fight has to be waged to prevent low pay and rock-bottom morale driving away the staff we need for health and education.

Teachers reject Blunkett's Performance Related Pay

Keith Sinclair, delegate, Hull NUT (personal capacity)

DELEGATES at a special one day National Union of Teachers (NUT) conference have firmly rejected performance related pay. The conference had been called by the leadership of the NUT in order to gain support for changes to the long standing pay policy of Britain's largest teaching union.

The debate at the conference was heated and occasionally shambolic. The President of the union closed the conference before any final decision was taken on an action strategy that could have produced pay increases for teachers.

The leadership were defeated on all the key votes.

The left won the idea of a flat rate plus cost of living claim as opposed to 10 per cent for all which would have given bigger increases to the highest paid teachers. Conference also rejected explicitly any direct or indirect link between appraisal and teach-

ers' pay.

The key debate was over the issue of 'recognised competencies'. The leadership wanted members to accept that teachers would only get annual pay increases if they were deemed to have passed annual 'competencies'. New Labour proposes to make annual guaranteed pay rises for teachers a thing of the past.

NUT General Secretary Doug McAvoy believes that New Labour wishes to introduce performance related pay and therefore thinks the union should agree to a softer version to thwart the government.

But any system of conditional pay rises is unfair. For example, teachers at an inner-city school have to cope with social problems that leafy suburban schools rarely come across.

Who is more competent? The teacher with the best exam results? With the best record of student attendance?

No system can cope with the massive disparities between schools and the circumstances of

an individual school at any particular time.

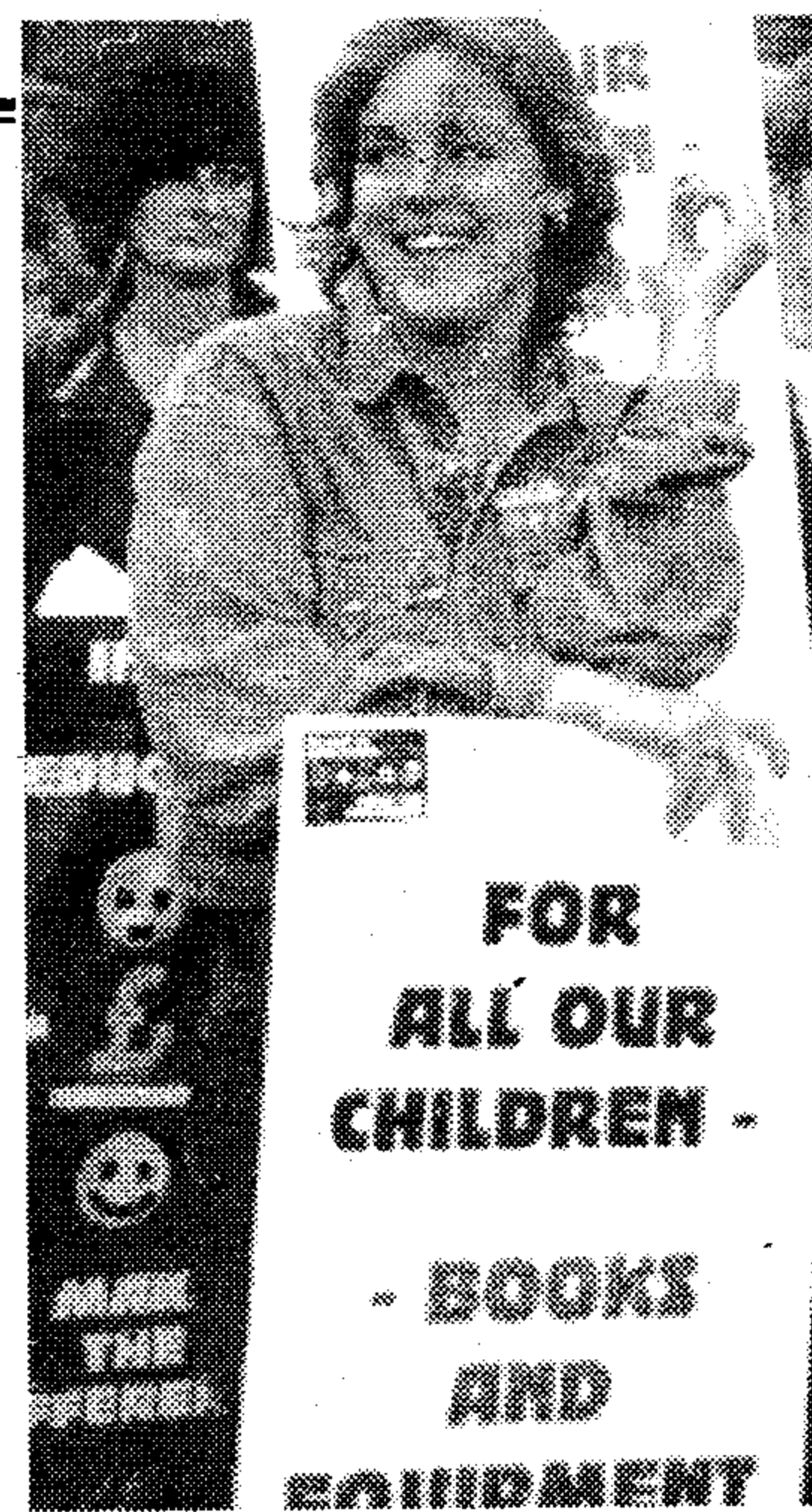
The government is committed to maintaining Tory spending levels but wants to give the impression of providing more for services such as education and health. To give all teachers a decent rise would increase education spending significantly.

Given their unwillingness to spend more, the Government is forced to rely on gimmicks such as Advanced Skills Teachers who will be paid up to £40,000 a year.

Their pay levels will attract the headlines but big rises for a handful will only store up resentment amongst the mass of teachers.

Attempts to link pay rises to performance are an attempt to line teachers up behind the Government's attack on allegedly weak and incompetent teachers.

What happens next remains to be seen. No formal decisions were made at the conference as it was closed down before the key final votes were taken. Activists need to continue to take up the arguments around performance



Give teachers the tools - and the pay!

related pay and rises related to 'professional competencies'.

As important however will be the fight to make teachers realise that this government will not hand teachers a decent pay rise without a fight.

Blair has made it clear that he wants to take on the teaching unions. The NUT leadership wants to come to an accommodation with the government.

A fight to raise the confidence of teachers to ensure we meet Blair head on is also a fight for a new fighting leadership in the NUT.

New left lifts off in TGWU

By a TGWU member
LIVERPOOL Dockers called a meeting on September 19 to set up a new left in the Transport and General Workers Union. The need for this had been made particularly clear by the lack of support from the union's leadership during their long and courageous struggle.

The official 'broad left' had split over opposing the role of the leadership. In some areas there are now two separate 'broad lefts'. In most of the country meetings are secret, invite-only, and highly bureaucratic.

More than fifty T&GWU activists answered the call. Jimmy Nolan opened the meeting and set the general context. The meeting was clear that there is a necessity to go to a system where officials are elected.

The final resolution agreed to hold 6-monthly meetings, and to campaign against the anti-union laws and for the implementation of TGWU policy on issues such as the minimum wage. An open steering committee was set up, and there will be a voice through the publication *Off the Record*.

There has long been the need for an open organisation of the left in the union and this meeting was an important step towards it. Now there is a need to spread the word among all T&G activists and for all left organisations to fully support this development.

Test

One test of this new left current will be its role in union elections.

Both candidates for the all important Deputy General Secretary elections claim 'broad left' support. (The deputy usually becomes General Secretary.)

One of the speakers at Liverpool was Fred Higgs, National Secretary for the Chemical Workers Trade Group. He is also one of the candidates for Deputy General Secretary. It was positive that Higgs was willing to speak to the meeting and be questioned and criticised. He argued that the union should have done more for the dockers.

The other candidate is Margaret Prosser, T&GWU's representative on Labour's NEC who has supported all of Blair's moves. Higgs is clearly to the left of her.

However too often union left organisations have become bogged down in electoralism as a substitute for building struggle. The consequence is an inability to hold leaders to account. It will be a challenge to keep this current from following some "broad lefts" in other unions, down that road.

Which way forward for Civil Service Left?

Darren Williams (South-East Wales Area convenor, PCS Left Unity - personal capacity)

On October 24 Left Unity in the new civil service union, PCS, will hold its first conference since the union's creation after the merger of CPSA and PTC.

The merger, and the unification of four of the five socialist factions in Left Unity, should, in principle, put militants in a stronger position than ever.

In practice, however, the civil service left faces perhaps its greatest ever crisis.

Eighteen years of Tory rule saw a Government offensive which cut tens of thousands of jobs, introduced privatisation, New Management Techniques, and forced

down pay. The response of the unions, under generally right-wing leaderships, was completely inadequate. National industrial action was renounced in favour of lobbying and hanging on for a Labour government.

Apathy

Members' responded not by a turn to the organised left (which often proved little better than the right during its own spells of power), but increasing apathy. The National Moderate Group leadership of CPSA ignored conference decisions and concentrated power at the top. This culminated in the stitch-up of the new PCS constitution, to preclude rank-and-file influence.

July's elections (now only biennial) to the new PCS National

Executive Committee (NEC) amounted to a complete walkover by the right-wing - albeit on a pathetically low turn-out.

The 'Moderate' and 'Membership First' groupings won the presidency, vice-presidencies and forty-three of the forty-six seats on the NEC.

The only 'left' candidates elected were from the bureaucratic and opportunistic ex-PTC 'Unity' group, which shared a common slate with Left Unity but didn't mention Left Unity candidates in its campaign material.

Left Unity has naturally sought explanations for this disastrous (even by normal standards) result, which will leave the right-wing in control until May 2000. Suggestions of ballot-rigging are gaining increasing credence.

In the Inland Revenue, for instance, the same electorate simultaneously voted for its Group Executive Committee and for its own section of the NEC.

In the GEC elections, where the scrutineer was that previously used by PTC, the left increased its vote and the right did badly, whereas in the NEC elections - overseen by the former CPSA scrutineer - the right increased its vote and the four sitting left Inland Revenue members all lost their seats.

No excuse

Even if there has been ballot-rigging, however, this does not excuse Left Unity from blame. Its political practice is geared almost exclusively to elections, rather than mobilising its membership around campaigns. This strategy is self-defeating, since the absence of consistent leadership by the left means that members have little motivation to support left candidates.

Left Unity's relatively open and democratic structure is also in danger of being undermined by as

decisions are often made behind the scenes by the dominant forces - the Socialist Party and the ex-Stalinist/left-Labourite 'BL84'. This tendency is greater within departmental Groups.

In the Employment Service (ES), a majority of the Left Unity-led GEC agreed to accept and work with the 'New Deal', in defiance of national LU policy.

Candidates

The minority Socialist Caucus group's decision to oppose this sell-out by standing its own candidates against the 'official' slate has led to calls for Caucus members to be expelled from Left Unity. But the mass of LU members in the ES had no say either in the policy followed on the GEC, or in the composition of the slate.

The 'Moderate' and 'Membership First' groupings won the presidency, vice-presidencies and 43 of the 46 NEC seats

Socialist Caucus has submitted a motion to LU Conference defending its own position and pointing out that its members in the ES are the ones following LU policy.

This motion should be supported by all those who believe that the left should pursue socialist policies.

Other motions submitted will no doubt prove less contentious, most of them advancing positive positions on issues like the minimum wage, PFI and solidarity work.

There is also a discussion document on Left Unity Organisation, - a welcome attempt to ensure that the grouping functions according to consistent democratic norms.

Another proposes the left should take the lead in co-ordinating departmental pay campaigns.

Whether Left Unity will now begin to provide effective, fighting leadership for PCS activists, however, will be decided not on 24 October, but at the PCS national conference in November, and in its subsequent work 'on the ground' in civil service departments.

Get your copy!

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.

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

Tory conference flop

IT WAS widely recognised as a disaster. William Haig's desperate attempt to rally his demoralised, disorientated and ageing Party was always going to be hard going: but in the event the main message that was banged home was that the Tories are unelectable in the foreseeable future.

Haig's decision to confront the political divide over Europe, and the single currency issue, proved to be the biggest watershed, and could yet lead to a split in the Party, with the formation of a break-away pro-Euro Conservative party, more akin to Helmut Kohl's recently ousted Christian Democrats.

The predictable victory in the pre-conference ballot on the single currency issue will raise as many problems for Haig as it solved. Where now are the many major companies and banks which support EMU to place their political allegiance - and donations?

Recent opinion polls have shown that while there is still a popular majority opposed to EMU, support for it is strongest amongst the most wealthy social strata - those earning over £50,000 a year. Historically these have been seen as natural Conservative voters, though Tony Blair's shameless courtship of them with tax concessions has no doubt won over a few.

EDITORIAL

Since Haig is now cemented into diehard opposition to the Euro, and clearly a prisoner of his party's xenophobic hard-right, it makes it increasingly unlikely that he can lure this influential layer back into the fold.

The hard-line anti-EMU policy did not even have its expected effect in winning Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* and *Times* back for the Tories, with the *Sun*'s cruel "dead parrot" front page now firmly etched on the minds of many of its working class readers.

But part of the explanation for this is the extent to which the Tories really are struggling as a party. The defeat of the Major government and the new life as the main opposition has brutally underlined the mediocre abilities and lack of charisma of former ministers and big hitters.

Any conference which looks to a blustering display by Ann Widdecombe as one of its high points, and which winds up starting at the bizarre spectacle of past prime ministers Heath and Thatcher ignoring each other on technicolour sofas is desper-

ately short of excitement, personalities and prospects.

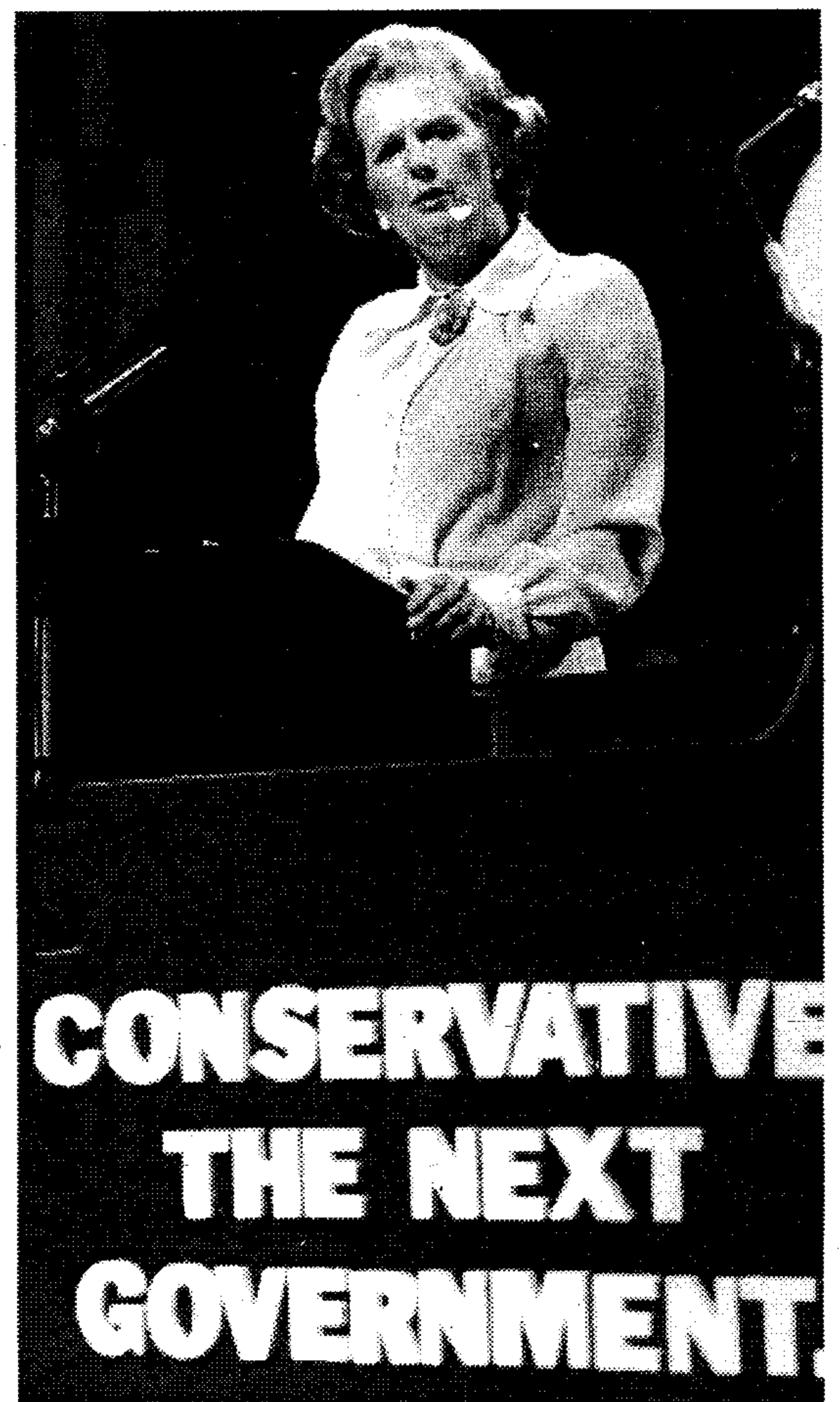
With Michael Heseltine repeatedly stressing that a mass vote of Tory members for Haig's policy in the ballot was insignificant because it is a party of "a few hundred thousand mainly elderly people", the conference merely underlined how right he was.

Of course the Tories will eventually win back some seats in by-elections and in local government: the Blair government is even now driving protest voters their way.

But with New Labour having stolen almost all of the pro-market ideology and zeal which animated Thatcher, Haig's unknown, uninspiring bunch of has-beens and deadbeats don't even have any clear policies to inspire their target audience - except opposition to EMU.

It's too easy for the workers' movement simply to brush off the Tory conference as an irrelevant side-show. But the Tory line of Europe is likely to push even more big business sponsors towards New Labour, where they already have far more influence than the unions which built the Labour Party.

The lack of any credible electoral opposi-



How different for Tories from the heady days of 1978

tion will also intensify the arrogance and dictatorial line of the Millbank mafia. Haig's conference was a disaster all round!

Campaign for a fighting leadership for rail workers

Greg Tucker, RMT Executive member

RAIL infrastructure workers in the RMT continue their campaign of industrial action for decent pay and conditions around the country.

London Underground members continue to press the case for a halt to the privatisation of their jobs. Behind the scenes, though, there are problems which the left of the RMT must seriously address.

RMT members must seize the chance to build a fighting, democratic union through the campaign for the reinstatement of victimised members and the current elections for the union's President.

Steve Hedley, key local representative at Euston depot, was sacked and now faces criminal charges for supposedly attacking a scab van on a strike day and threatening a supervisor. It is quite clear that the charges are ridiculous - his only offence is to be an effective picket organiser. The Union has quite rightly refused to continue negotiations with his bosses, GTRM, until he is reinstated.

However, events following Hedley's victimisation have shown serious weaknesses in the union. Immediately after the sacking, fellow workers at Euston took unofficial action. Instead of offering support, the general secretary, Jimmy Knapp, wrote to all GTRM members repudiating the action.

The Euston workers have now been balloted and are taking offi-



Holding the line: infrastructure strikers in Sattley

cial action, but Knapp's initial response was clearly unacceptable.

To make matters worse Knapp refused to allow the Executive to discuss the repudiation in case we refused to back his line. He need not have worried - it was clear that some members of the "left" on the Executive were relieved not to be allowed to make a decision.

At the same time, the company-level lay representatives have been doing their best to drop all support for Steve. Many did not want a strike in the first place, and sought an excuse to call all action off.

One effect of privatisation was to move the centre of negotiations away from the Executive to this

layer of company-level lay representatives. Union structures and union do not reflect these changes, meaning that the rank and file is unable to call its representatives to account. The left must start now to organise to win control of union representatives - at all levels.

The first task is building support for Steve Hedley. GTRM members at Willesden and Stonebridge Park as well as at Euston are being balloted for industrial action. The next strikes are likely to be on the weekend of October 31-November 1. The picket lines need our support.

Meanwhile, Steve is touring the country speaking at meetings. Make sure he is invited to your Branch.

The national leadership must offer backing - by attempting to draw out the political lessons involved, linking the campaign for Steve's reinstatement with the campaign for the repeal of the anti-trade union laws and exposing the real weakness of Labour's "Fairness at Work" proposals.

Instead, although the union has been helping Steve financially since his dismissal, the Executive refused to fund his travel to win support for the strikes.

With the election of RMT President under way, some members of the Executive have decided that it is in their interests to moderate their actions in order not to damage their electability.

They have also dodged confrontation with Knapp on internal issues, particularly on financial questions, and gone along with his views on political matters. Decisions were fudged before Labour Party conference so as not to embarrass him too much in front of the Labour leadership.

The left needs to campaign in the President's election for the one candidate, Mick Atherton, prepared to stand up to Knapp and to put forward a program to organise the members in defence of the union. Mick Atherton, currently on the Executive representing the Midlands, was the force behind the infrastructure dispute.

His platform is one of building a

fighting democratic union - to mobilise the membership to campaign for re-nationalisation of the railways and stop Tube privatisation, halt bus deregulation and defend our shipping members from union-busters, the likes of P&O.

In particular, he has argued for the need to sort out union finances and rebuild union organisation to secure the union's survival. This will involve organising to confront Knapp, who has been prepared to allow a continual slow decline in the union's fortunes rather than upset his base in the bureaucracy.

Mick's campaign is complicated by the fact that, despite the fact that he is open about his SLP membership, it is other SLP members on the Executive who have been behind the backsliding, and who have decided to support another candidate.

While their action has found little support among other left activists in the Union, it is important that the SLP gets its act together, especially as soon after the President's election is over, the positions of Assistant General Secretary and General Secretary will be coming up for election.

How the left responds will determine the future of the union, even its survival, for years to come.

For further information on Steve Hedley's and Mick Atherton's campaigns or to arrange for either of them to come to address a local meeting contact me at RMT Head Office on 0171 387 4771.

RMT activists must support Mick Atherton for President - Organise to defend Steve Hedley

Labour Conference: victory or farce?



There was no chance to debate the jobs massacre even as steel workers lobbied the conference

Neil Murray
Labour Party conference was a strange affair, with the 'Partnership in Power' changes having left the structures very barren.

Few decisions were taken on key policy areas. Most policy resolutions are forwarded to the National Policy Forum (NPF) which produces lengthy reports differing little from government policy.

The four slots for 'contemporary' resolutions at this conference were filled with relatively uncontroversial issues through the manoeuvres of Blair's friends in the trade union hierarchy.

This meant other resolutions such as on the loss of manufacturing jobs, the new 'anti-terrorist' law, the Asylum White Paper and the U.S. bombing of Sudan and Afghanistan were not discussed.

Controversy was stifled by a combination of these restrictions on policy debate and the unwillingness of most trade union leaders to use the remaining opportunities for

policy-making to criticise the government. Little disagreement with the government was expressed, let alone voted for.

Only two resolutions contentious with the leadership made it on to the agenda. The RMT resolution calling for renationalisation of the railways and opposition to the privatisation of London Underground

was overwhelmingly defeated in favour of a bland TGWU resolution in support of government policy.

The composite on electoral reform would have committed the Party to defend First Past the Post for Westminster elections, essentially arguing that we should oppose any change which might lessen the chances of Labour winning elections. It looked like it might embarrass the leadership until the AEEU leadership agreed to remit at the end of the debate.

Against this, the election of four 'dissidents' to the NEC on the left/centre left Grassroots Alliance slate was an incredible achievement.

The Alliance won 4 of the 6 places elected by CLP members. Dennis Skinner came within 20 votes of winning one of the places elected by MPs and MEPs(!). The Alliance also won all the places it stood for on the Conference Arrangements Committee, and now has 30-40 supporters on the National Policy Forum.

However while the election results may make the Left feel stronger, conference clearly showed that the leadership call all the shots. The danger is that the Left will lose sight of this in election euphoria.

It has won 4 seats on an NEC of 32

Conference clearly showed that the leadership call all the shots

which is no longer responsible for policy, only organisation. The new NEC members have committed themselves to fighting for democracy on the NEC and to regular report backs to those who elected them. NPF members will fight for the right to take minority reports to conference so there can be real debates and votes.

They should be supported in this, but it falls far short of what is needed.

If the Left is to achieve these democratic victories, let alone change or defeat the government's right wing policies in practice, it needs to make itself an effective force in the Party. It needs to be part of campaigns and struggles which reach beyond the Party membership.

This requires a major debate involving the widest layers of the left in the party. Even to maintain this year's election result will be hard - the Blairites will learn from

this year and organise far earlier and more effectively. The best way would be for all the organisations supporting the Grassroots Alliance to jointly call a conference for supporters.

Such a concept of organising democratically is a long way from what has happened so far. The candidates and platform of the Grassroots Alliance were dictated by the desire of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) to keep out the 'ultra left' and keep Labour Reform on board at all costs.

In fact, the candidates were elected despite being denounced as trotskysts or dupes of trotskysts.

Labour Reform showed itself to have very little on the ground to win nominations. Many on the left were wary of voting for their candidate, Andy Howell, because of his record of voting for cuts on Birmingham Council.

Other Labour Reform supporters have been equally prominent in pushing through cuts. Howell got half the votes of the left candidates.

Despite these problems, *Socialist Outlook* supported the whole slate on the basis of the need for a disciplined campaign.

There is nothing wrong with an election platform primarily around defence of party democracy. But for this to continue to be relevant to wider layers of Party members, let alone workers outside, it also has to make key policy issues central.

As Liz Davies says, the Grassroots Alliance is the start of something big and exciting.

It could develop into an effective force.

The danger is that this opportunity will be squandered.

"What we were saying struck a chord" - Liz Davies

The Grassroots Alliance of Left and Centre-Left candidates won four out of the six places on Labour's National Executive Committee elected by the membership in a One Member One Vote ballot. Mark Seddon, editor of *Tribune*, received 56% of the votes cast and Liz Davies, from Labour Left Briefing, 46%.

Pete Firmin interviewed Liz Davies for *Socialist Outlook* at Labour Party conference.

SO: Congratulations on your election to the NEC. Can you tell us about the election campaign?

LD: Thanks, it went very well. We were initially worried about getting nominations, given the bizarre rule requiring 3 nominations from different regions. In fact we got far more, we got one-third of all nominations.

What we were saying struck a chord. We spoke at a lot of meetings and a head of steam built up. Activists everywhere did a lot of phoning, leafleting etc. This was entirely voluntary, unlike Members First. We were outspent 50-1!

The Guardian put Members First's spending at £100,000, but even they said this was probably an underestimate. None of the candidates escaped personal abuse and smears from senior labour movement figures and a Party General Secretary who was supposed to be neutral. Party members saw through this and voted for the policies on

which we stood.

At times in the last few months the smears have been very disheartening and made it hard to carry on. Party members rallied round with each attack, with letters to the Guardian and Independent and personal support from comrades all over the Party. The Grassroots Alliance stuck together and the candidates stuck together in unity and solidarity. The Grassroots Alliance is the start of something big and exciting.

SO: What was the platform you stood on?

LD: We stood on clear principles - the redistribution of wealth and power from the rich to the poor, the need to defend and enhance the welfare state and progressive taxation.

We stood for democracy, diversity and the right of Labour Party members to dissent. We stood for defending public services, valuing public sector workers properly, opposing the privatisation of the public sector and Private Finance Initiative deals. Those principles command the support of many Labour Party members. The leadership never expected this when they changed the rules to prevent MPs standing.

SO: What happens now?

LD: Many supporters want to broaden and deepen the Alliance. We need to bring in the concerns of the grass roots members of the Labour Party.

I would like to see us developing policies around common values such as pensions, lower interest rates and prioritising low unemployment over low inflation. We need to develop policies for the centre and left around civil rights and citizenship for the 21st century. Within the Labour Party members must have the right to free and fair

selection of candidates for public office - for the European parliament, the Scottish parliament, the Welsh Assembly, local government and Westminster. The key issue on the NEC will be the right of London Labour Party members to select their candidate for mayor of London.

We will argue for a code of conduct for internal Party elections - a level playing field with spending restrictions and the neutrality of Party officers.

We hope to be issuing these commitments as pledges or promises to those who voted for the Grassroots Alliance. We also promised as part of the campaign to issue regular reports of the NEC in the left press and constituency bulletins. We will speak at local meetings and take the views of grass roots Party members back to the NEC.

SO: They will attempt to marginalise the 4 of you on the NEC. What can you do about this?

LD: We are prepared to work constructively and creatively with every member of the NEC.

No doubt we will be marginalised, as happened to Ken Livingstone and the others. But we will be opening up the NEC - arguing for recorded votes so people know how trade union and CLP representatives vote. We will keep Party members informed and able to make up their own minds on whether we are being marginalised.



SO: You will be fairly weak on the NEC, how do you see the way around this?

LD: We will be 4 members out of 32. We would have been 5 if the MPs had voted for Dennis Skinner, an excellent NEC member since 1978.

We are a small minority. But many of our economic arguments are shared by the trade unions represented on the NEC and passed by the TUC 2 weeks ago. We will see what happens when we put them forward.

SO: This has been the first conference under the new Partnership in Power rules, what do you make of it?

LD: It has been a strange conference, I have not seen as much of it as I would have liked because of all the media attention. Ken Livingstone says it is the same as always without the votes, but I disagree.

It is my third time as a delegate since 1989. In 1989, CLP delegates grumbled about being taken for granted, but this is much worse. There is no ability to amend National Policy Forum reports and no minority reports. I will argue on the NEC for the ability of conference to take such reports. Conference has been predominantly Cabinet speeches. Many delegates' speeches have been written by Millbank in advance.

There are no votes. Having said that, there are some signs that conference still has some of its old spark. Derek Hodgson of the CWU was given a standing ovation when he attacked the privatisation of the Post Office. CLP delegates feel strongly against proposals for an approved list of candidates for Westminster.

I would like to thank your readers who are Labour Party members for the hard work that they and thousands of others put into the campaign for the election. Now we need your support to make sure that the NEC members and the Party members they represent are heard.

Local campaign to fight council house privatisation gathers pace

Glenn Voris (North West TUC Executive, in a personal capacity)

Socialist Outlook supporters initiated a local fightback against St. Helens Council plans to privatise 800 council houses in July. The campaign has rattled the council, who are now worried that they may lose the vote to transfer the estate to a Housing Association.

The transfer of housing stock involves giving away over 800 houses for free to Maritime Housing Association.

To promote privatisation the government has given the council a £5.5m grant as a sweetener which would then be given to the Housing Association if tenants vote 'yes' to the transfer.

The government has allocated £1.2m of this to be used by the council and Maritime to print leaflets to sell their line to the tenants. This also covers employing 'advisors' to harass tenants by constantly knocking at their doors. With this high level propaganda machine the privatisers thought the vote would be cut and dried.

The 'vote No' campaign quickly

gained the support of the local Direct Works Joint Stewards Committee as their jobs were directly threatened. The Council plans to privatise a further 2,000 homes next year. Since July the campaign has produced 6 leaflets explaining why tenants should 'vote No', combined with public meetings, mobile loudhailers and local media coverage.

Our first protest was linked to the People's March 98 marching through the estate, cheered by 80 tenants outside Maritime's Show House. This display of support by tenants showed that the 'vote No' campaign was gaining ground.

A further protest on October 5 saw 40 tenants burning glossy pro-privatisation leaflets in a brazier outside the Show House. This was to coincide with the tenants receiving their ballot papers to vote on the transfer. A hardcore of 25 tenants from the estate now attend weekly 'vote No' meetings.

If the campaign is successful it will only be the tenth victory out of 62 national transfer votes. The result of the ballot will be announced at the beginning of November.

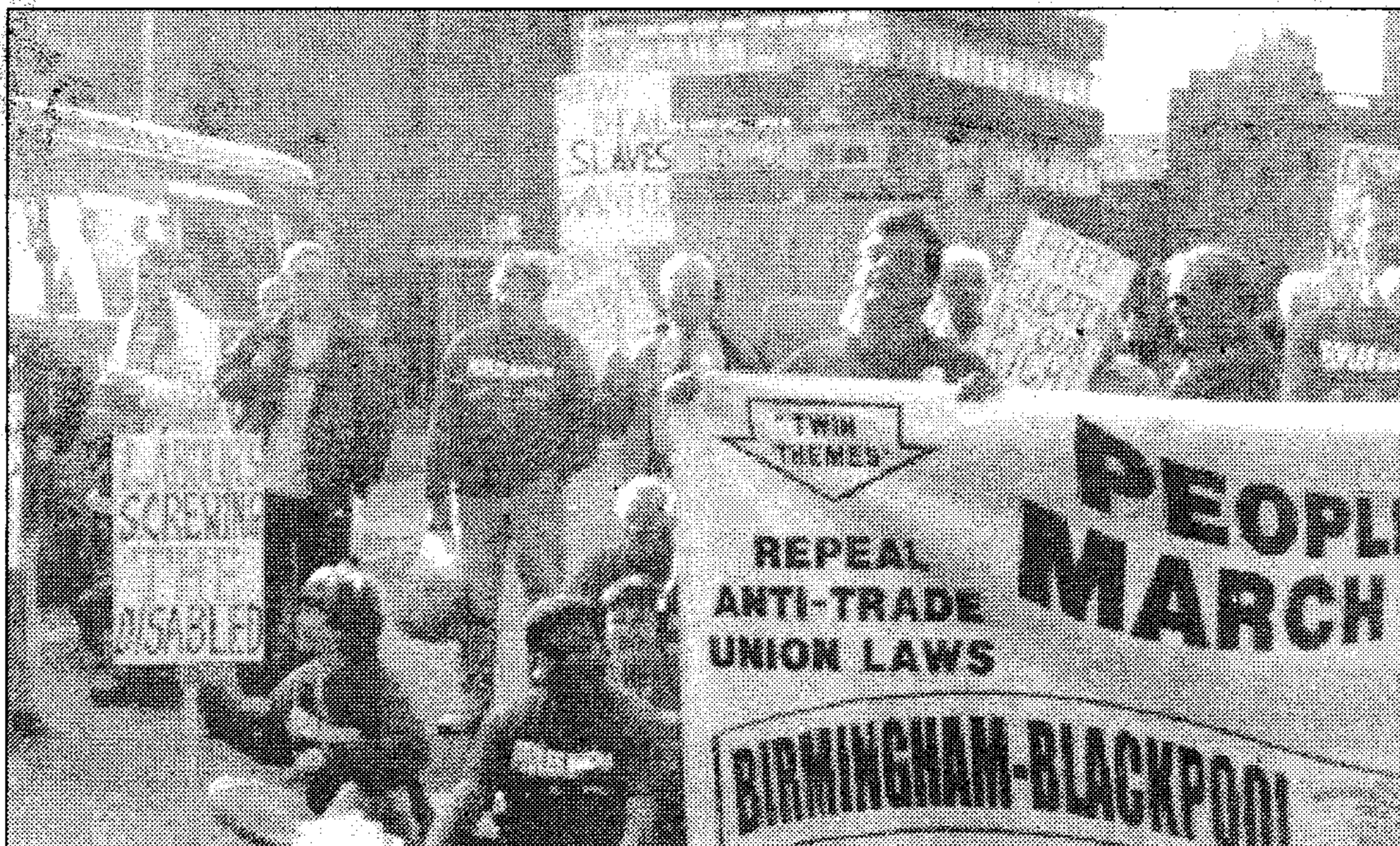
St. Helens council's attack is part of a national plan by New Labour

to eradicate public housing. Councils including Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and many others are attempting to offload their entire housing stock.

There are three main reasons for this.

Councils were starved of cash to upgrade council houses under the Tories leading to massive disrepair. The Tories would not allow Local Authorities to reinvest money raised through the right to buy. Around £8 billion has been raised, but Labour has only released £3.5 billion, well short of what is required.

Labour has continued with Tory spending plans, linked to Blair's wish to meet the criteria for the Single Currency. This requires slashing public sector borrowing - including money for upgrading council houses.



The People's March to the Labour Party Conference linked up with tenants as it passed through St Helens. Successful meetings were also held in other towns and cities along the route.

Blair wants to privatise council houses so that borrowing can be drastically cut. Public housing must be off-loaded to the private sector. Housing Associations are seen as a soft option, as the government argues they are part of the public sector.

To fight off the whole scale privatisation of social housing a national campaign must be waged uniting tenants and council

workers. An important step has been taken as a motion from Merseyside TGWU has called for the setting up of a regional committee to fight privatisation of council houses. This call is likely to get the backing of the North West Regional TUC.

A success in St Helen's will hopefully be a first step in building a national campaign against this attack on public housing.

Pimlico school: PFI = Profits for Investors

A. Teacher

WESTMINSTER Council used to be the flagship for Tory Policies. It still is.

The Conservatives may no longer be in government, but their policies live on, implemented enthusiastically by Labour. Pimlico School is to be the flagship PFI project, pushed through against the opposition of parents, teachers and local residents, by Chair of Governors, Jack Straw.

The Private Finance Initiative is presented as a partnership between the public and private sectors to encourage badly needed investment run down by years of Tory cuts. It is no such thing. PFI is a step on the road to privatisation of education. As a down payment, Straw proposes to give away 23 per cent of the prime SW1 site to property developers to build luxury housing.

The council is allowing its own planning regulations on density to be broken and there is no provision for any social housing. Perish the thought that the developer's profits or the tone of the area should be affected by allowing any working class people to live there at lower than market prices.

The building work will take about five years. You might think, if you were a parent, that having your children taught on a building site for that length of time could affect their education. But no, the disruption we are assured will be almost nil! The Governors and

staff will have no control over the new building and it is open to the developer to use it for any other purpose out of school time.

True to its free-market principles the council and the government went through a long tendering process and eventually narrowed the bidders down to 2, one of which it selected in July as the preferred bidder.

Again, following market principles it emerged that both final bidders were part owned by the same property developer! They "shared nothing but a bank account" a representative of one of the companies told a member of school staff.

Even more bizarrely it now emerges that the developer rejected in the final stage had a proposal to decant the school to another site while building work went on, but this was turned down by the council in breach of its own specifications for making a bid.

This simply confirms what most staff and parents had already suspected, that this was a rigged auction, driven not by the relative costs to the public, but as path-breaker for other PFI projects in education.

Because the state can borrow more cheaply, the cost of providing a new school in this way could be higher than one built by the public sector. This fact is disguised

in Pimlico by giving the developer public assets worth between £17 and £25 million.

The cost to the public over the long term could be much greater, with the council and the DFE committed to make annual payments to the developer for providing a school for a period of 35 years. Because of the likely profits from the luxury housing, the developer could default on the contract to provide a school (and consequently not receive any money from the council) and still not be at a financial loss.

Teachers and parents who are well aware of the problems of the existing building, partly the result of lack of maintenance and upgrading from a council with almost the lowest council tax in England & Wales, have constantly asked for refurbishment - with lower cost, less disruption and without giving 23% of the site away, but it is clear that the council's (and the government's) only option is demolition and rebuilding using PFI.

Both have passed motions of no confidence in the Governors who voted by a narrow majority for PFI. One of the latter, a parent governor, has now resigned and an election is taking place for the vacant place. Given that both candidates are opposed to PFI it is possible that the Governors' decision could be reversed.

Either way the campaign to save Pimlico School, which involves parents, staff and local residents will continue.

The Governors and staff will have no control over the new building

Hillingdon: 3 years on the picket line

A SMALL but important demonstration of about 200 people assembled at Hillingdon hospital on Saturday October 3 to mark the third anniversary of the Hillingdon hospital workers' strike.

Led by a full contingent of the women on strike, the demonstration marched to a rally at Uxbridge town hall with a range of speakers including a delegation of Tameside care workers

The achievements of the strikers are truly remarkable. Not only have they stuck unflinchingly to the struggle and become an inspiration to other groups of workers resisting the attacks of the employers, but they have reversed, at conference

a previous decision of UNISON to deprive them of membership of the union. This decision, however, has still not been carried out, and they are not yet reinstated.

At the same time they made a major breakthrough at their Industrial Tribunal hearing when their previous employer Pall Mall (which no longer operates on the Hillingdon site) admitted unfair dismissal.

The women were sacked for refusing to sign a Pall Mall contract that drastically reduced their wages and condi-

tions

The Tribunal concluded in July, and undertook to produce its report within four weeks. Nearly four months have now gone by, but the result is still not published.

The strikers meanwhile show absolutely no lack of resolve. They want full reinstatement, and refuse to settle for anything less.

The strike is an important focus of resistance and deserves the full support of the trade union movement.

The lack of support from the official movement was a major lost opportunity, since the strike could have been made a rallying point against privatisation and PFI.



TUC 98: Bastards, bureaucrats and bunkum

'GREEDY Bastards', declared John Edmonds, of overpaid (sic) company directors, opening this year's TUC.

'Just the sort of people we can do business with,' he might have added, as the General Council continues to push its theme of partnership between bosses and workers.

This theme was taken to its logical conclusion later in the week by Peter Mandelson, addressing the TUC for the first time, twenty years after he had left employment at the TUC (pushed out because he wasn't up to the job!).

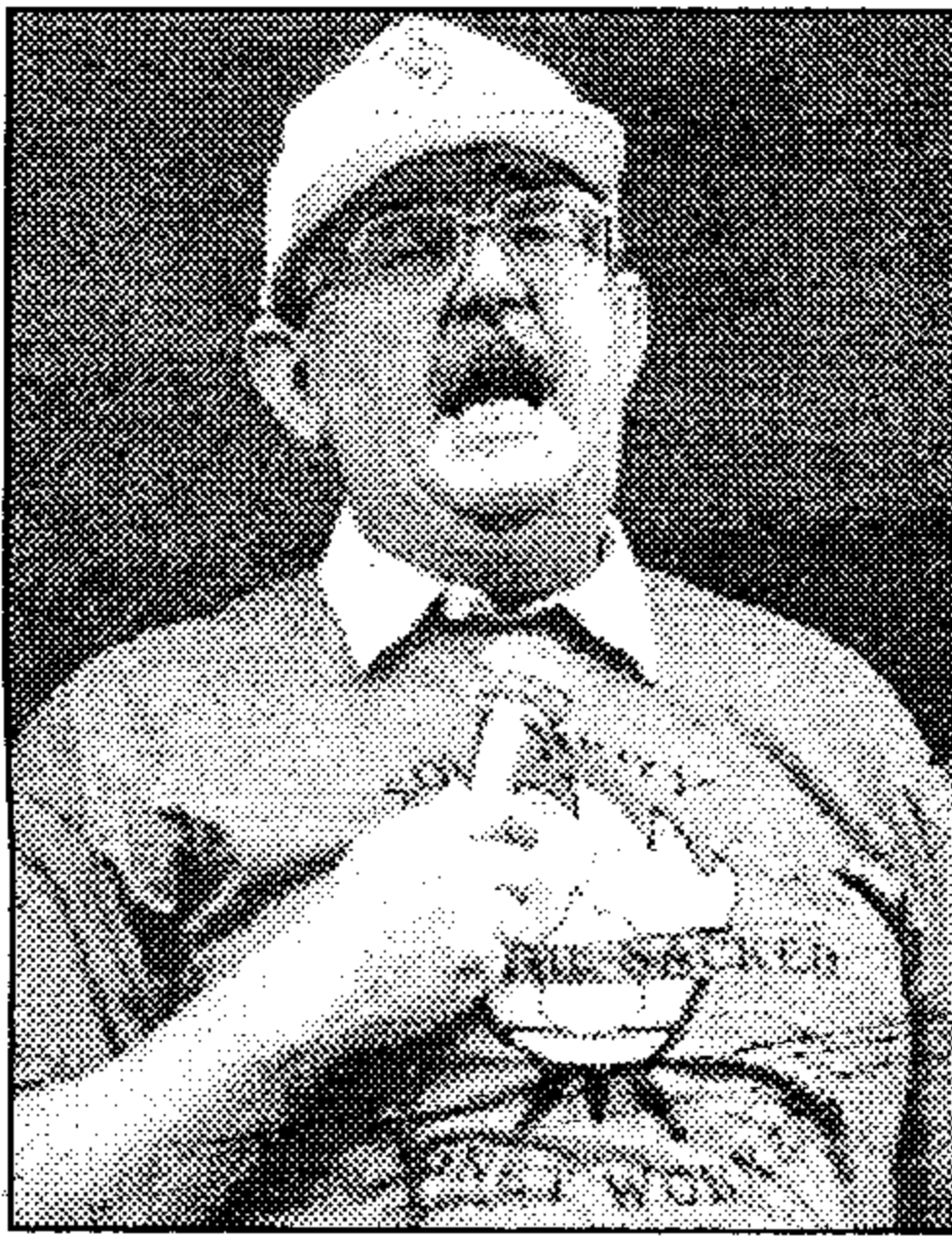
"No union benefits by harming the companies its members works for. In the private sector that means actively working for and welcoming profits," he said. "It means sharing in the company's success but also showing moderation in wage demands and

flexibility in pay levels in times of economic difficulty."

Striking Tameside care workers lobbying the Congress could give some lessons in where that policy gets you. Having taken pay freezes and cuts in the past they were then rewarded with a kick in the teeth.

Their situation summed up the two key debates of the week - on the minimum wage and on 'Fairness at Work'.

Labour ministers came to Blackpool to expound on what a good job they were doing. The government's policies were welcomed by the TUC



Mr Greedy? No it's Edmonds!

leadership. But, despite all the guff, they will go only a small way to meet the needs of poorly paid and badly treated workers.

Congress delegates were clearly fed up with the way that their own union members were being treated. Union delegations were prepared to vote for

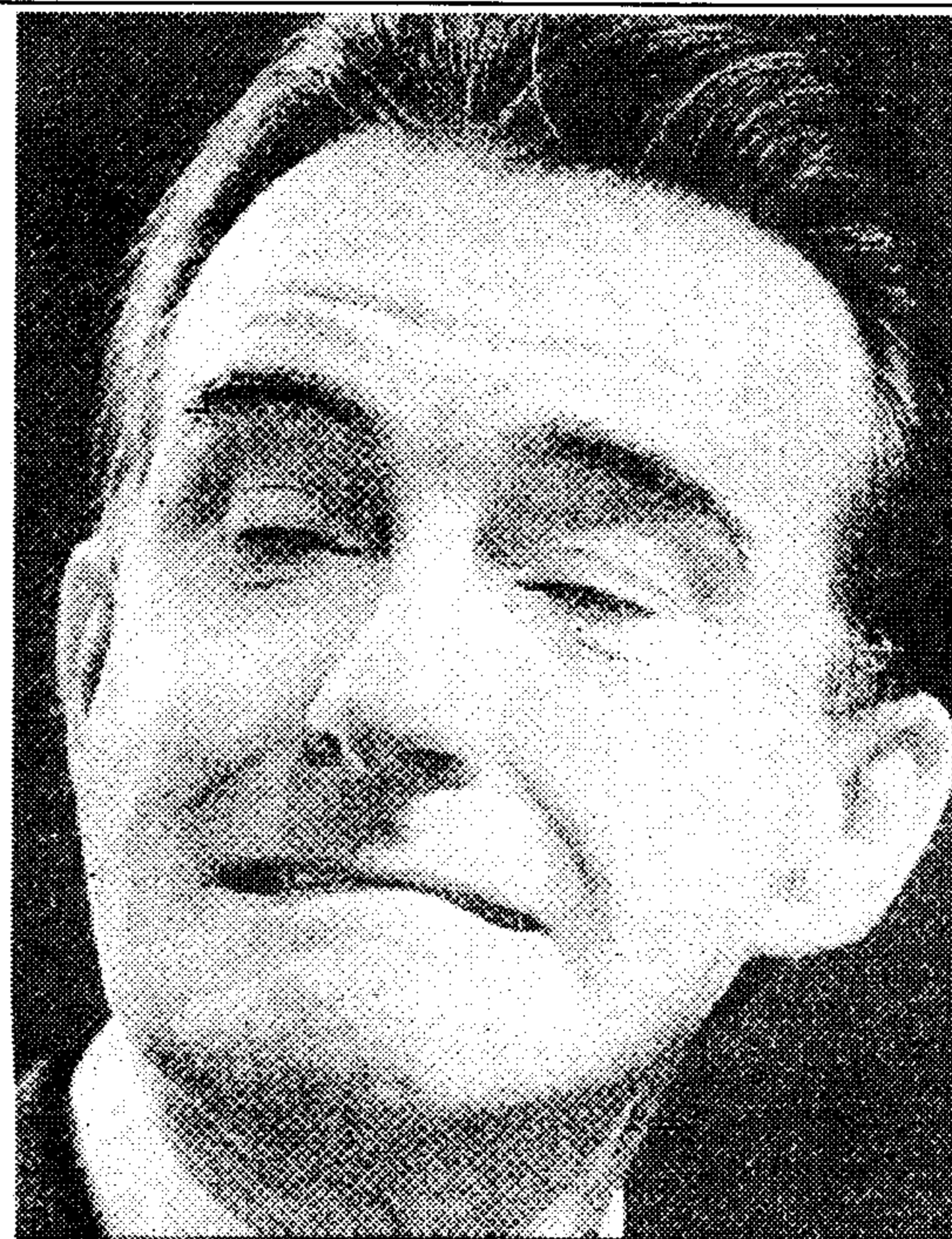
critical resolutions in their own field, reflecting the pressure from their membership.

Teachers attacked the privatisation of education through Education Action Zones, communications workers demanded that the Post Office remain in public hands, hospital workers demanded

an end to public sector pay freezes. And - in a card vote supported by the GMB and UNISON - the Congress voted to campaign for the ending of the Private Finance Initiative.

But generalising that feeling, recognising that overall government policy was at fault, was a step too far. You will have to wait a long time for the TUC General Council to lead a fight back. Only through independent trade union action will anything change.

Congress overwhelmingly rejected a call for the repeal of all the anti-trade union laws, and the General Council continues to appease the government just in case Man-



Had something that disagreed with him? Mandelson

delson withdraws even the crumbs of comfort in the existing 'Fairness at Work' proposals.

Therefore it is all the more important that the United Campaign for the Repeal of the Anti Union Laws is built and its plans for to make next May Day 'Workers' Rights Day' with a big demonstration in London supported across the labour movement.

The way forward for Socialist Alliances

Campaigns, not Constitutions!

John Nicholson (Convenor Greater Manchester Socialist Alliance, Joint Convenor of Network of Socialist Alliances in England)

THE RECENT meeting of the "Network of Socialist Alliances in England" (working title) spent much time and energy debating a future structure. This was in an attempt to unite more formally a wide range of local Socialist Alliances, individual supporters, related groups and activists, including environmental, direct action, peace campaigns, trade unionists and industrial struggles.

The gathering was wary of imposing a constitution from on-high without consultation - and then declaring that all members have already agreed it and that all future members must sign up to it explicitly before joining.

On the other hand, most people felt that something clearer and more structured may be needed, now that more groups and individuals are showing an interest in working together.

This is not least because the liberal "work with anyone" approach forces us to allow the inclusion of those who don't actually want to work with anyone else! Inevitably the process meant taking one step forward and half a step back but we're still here and there's a clear commitment to move forward.

But we can't minimise the problems involved. Communists genuinely want a mass working class party with a central committee. Some want it based on the "UK State", and do not recognise parallel developments in Scotland or Wales (never mind the situation in the 6 Counties in the North of Ireland).



Less empty debate, more action on real issues is the way to build the left

Socialists working with campaigners from different backgrounds think that a looser federal structure, based on networking and mutual respect, is a more likely and more desirable future. Language varies from the Leninist and its historical truth to the broader demand for dropping words like "socialist" and "green" altogether, focusing instead on "social justice and ecological sustainability".

This question of orientation is the major fault-line running through the debates. And it's political, not organisational (even if it is true that one form of structure would favour some groups more than the other). So it has to be tackled politically.

Subordinate to it are questions of affiliation. Should any structure be individual only, should it guarantee places for every affiliated group, or for every local alliance? Who defines what constitutes a "group" or an "alliance"? Should it just be simpler in any case?

And there's the question of approach. Is it acceptable to be able to join something simply for the purpose of exposing it as not

the something that you want?

If you want a "Central Committee" about which you can complain for its failure to "lead", why not join an organisation which gives you this, rather than seeking to promote discord amongst comrades who clearly don't want to be in that sort of organisation ever again?

We have all been at meetings which progress very well while we're considering practical action to carry out supporting industrial struggles, fighting against racist deportations, campaigning for civil liberties. They then fall

apart at the end when people start haggling about who to elect to whatever "committee" is being set up.

Somehow we have to combine a willingness to engage in (not just tolerate) political debate, with a real commitment to a process, of enabling participation and encouraging new people to get involved. Disagreement about policy can be expressed, at the same time as ensuring that rules of comradely behaviour, between people, are paramount.

Allowing someone to speak, on the grounds of inclusiveness, cannot mean allowing every member

of one tendency to take cynical advantage of this and bore everyone else to death. This simply excludes everyone else.

The real danger is that the left gets sucked into discussing its constitution endlessly and stops itself from campaigning in the here and now. If the (underemployed) Secret Services of this country were trying to keep the left from any (overdue) successes, they could not find a better way of going about it!

Instead, we must be taking up the campaigns with the disadvantaged, dispossessed and disenfranchised who have suffered for over 20 years from attacks on living standards, cuts in jobs, pay, services, and persecution because of gender, race, sexuality, disability.

We must be supporting the Tameside Care Workers (sacked for striking over pay cuts) and building a massive campaign for a maximum wage and a minimum income.

We must be publicly opposing the increased powers to unaccountable immigration officials and the vicious and unnecessary anti-terrorism laws which give the word of senior policemen the force of law.

We must support the anti-nuclear missile campaigners and oppose Clinton for dropping bombs on the developing world. This means clearly challenging Blair, who is Clinton's leading fan, by putting forward an alternative to the unregulated global free-market economy, which is failing all the peoples of the east as well as dividing the rich further from the poor in the west.

That is why Socialist Alliances, such as those in Greater Manchester, Coventry and Warwickshire, Walsall, and Kent, have taken the lead in uniting, co-ordinating, or

just plain informing people around particular issues. When Clinton threatened to bomb Iraq earlier this year, it was Socialist Alliances which ensured the development of joint Coalitions against War in the Gulf, between organisations ranging from the SWP to CND, with the theme of No War. Stop Sanctions, and Troops Out of the Gulf.

When Roisin McAliskey was persecuted by Jack Straw's Home Office, it was Greater Manchester Socialist Alliance which organised support for the local pickets of the German Embassy.

When the Tameside Care Workers took strike action, their union secretary came under fire for daring to defend them, not least because he had just won the election to Branch Secretary openly standing as a socialist and as a supporter (and Chair) of the local Socialist Alliance itself. And we led the support work, of disrupting scab agencies recruiting to take the care workers' jobs (two agencies backed down as a result).

Making a difference

This pattern of activity is echoed in Alliances and similar groups everywhere. Socialist Alliances can make a difference, and are already doing so.

But the secret (not very secret) of the left's inability to unite in this country is its willingness to go into terminal fragmentation and internal division just at the point where unity on practical action could take place.

Socialist Alliances haven't necessarily got the answer to overcoming this - yet; but we are still here and we are moving forward. We urge everyone who wants to see Blair's Bubble Burst to start to work with us - to begin to overcome both the ruling exploiters and the possible damage of splitters in our own ranks.

We must campaign with the disadvantaged, dispossessed and disenfranchised

Cashing in on another injustice

Terry Conway reviews *A Chronology of Injustice - The case for Winston Silcott's conviction to be overturned (Legal Action for Women, £6).*

INSTITUTIONAL racism has been hotly debated in the wake of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry.

That this was an opportune moment to gain more publicity for another fight for justice was highlighted by the success of Legal Action for Women in getting Winston Silcott's comments on institutional racism prominently printed in *The Observer*.

Winston Silcott became infamous when he was arrested in 1985 after the Broadwater Farm rebellion and charged with two other men with the murder of PC Blake-lock. Six years later Silcott and his co-defendants were cleared after evidence proved that his statement had been tampered with.

But Silcott remained in prison having also been convicted of another murder after Anthony Smith died in 1984.

This book is the story of how the two cases interwove, how Silcott became the subject of not one but two miscarriages of justice.

He was demonised by the press during the coverage of the Blake-lock case in a way that denied him any possibility of fair trial. Silcott was the target of this vitriol in a way the other defendants were not because it was easier to pin on him all the negative stereotypes of black men in this racist society.

It is to the credit of Legal Action for Women and International Black Wages for House Work (who are also associated with the book) that they have worked round this case when many others have forgotten it.

The strength of the book lies in the clear explanation of the complex chronology and in some of the testimonies it brings forward.

We have contributions from Winston himself:

"Innocence is determined by decisions which depend on the look of the accused, skin colour, their sex and background. The present criminal justice system can only be described as a major tool that offers to cut corners to gain guilty verdicts instead of finding out or searching for the truth."

Winston's mother Mary also writes powerfully: "From the age of 14 the police started on Winston, just for riding a bike without lights - from that day on they never stopped. They told me that if a pin dropped anywhere in Tottenham they would come for Winston. It wasn't only Winston that was locked away, it was the whole family..."

In addition there is damning evidence of police racism in the statements that officers made in and around both trials. We also learn the tragic story of how Silcott was let down by a lawyer he trusted because he too was black.

Sadly however the book is marred in other ways. There is a sectarian account of the campaign in support of Silcott which wrongly implies that the forces involved in the book are the only people who have lent any support.

The book's structure is somewhat disjointed. It jumps between pieces which focus on the case itself and others that are used to put forward the general politics of Wages for Housework.

This is problematic not only because I profoundly disagree with the basic tenets of these, but because they are rather gratuitously introduced into Silcott's story.

In the end the whole thing seems less substantial than is merited either by the price or, more seriously, by the campaign that needs to be waged to win justice for Winston Silcott.



Despite angry protests, no police officer will even be disciplined over the unlawful killing of Ibrahim Sey

Ibrahima Sey: The killer cops walk free

Simon Deville

THE SAME day that Metropolitan Police Chief Sir Paul Condon was telling the Lawrence inquiry that the institutional racism does not exist in the Police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) decided not to press charges against any of the officers responsible for Ibrahim Sey's killing.

In March 1996 Ibrahim Sey, a Gambian asylum seeker, was arrested by police at his home in Forest Gate, East London.

He was taken to Ilford Police

station where he was sprayed with CS gas whilst lying face down on the floor, with his hands cuffed behind his back. Within minutes he was dead. The jury at the inquest ruled last year that he had been unlawfully killed at the hands of the police.

The CPS decided that there was insufficient evidence as to the cause of death, particularly whether or not "excited delirium" on its own could cause death.

Excited delirium is a condition that many black people who die in police custody apparently suffer from. It is

claimed that people go into a mad frenzy and take on super-human strength, leaving the police no option but to use excessive force to defend themselves.

Effectively what has happened in the Ibrahim Sey case is that the courts have ruled that Ibrahim was killed illegally by the police.

To deal with this the police have spent thousands of pounds of tax payers money flying in "experts" from around the world to argue that Ibrahim wasn't really killed but died of natural causes.

Since the inquest ruled out the police version of events, the CPS have dropped all charges on the grounds that the "expert" testimony paid for by the police conflicts with the ruling of the inquest.

How many other jobs can there be when you can illegally kill someone, get your boss to pay for experts to say that you didn't, get the state to say that it can't really do anything because the events are too confusing, and not even face a disciplinary?

How more institutional can racism get?

Lawrence Inquiry: Why Condon must go

Mark Jasen

THE STEPHEN Lawrence campaign is currently travelling across the country hearing conflicting evidence from the police and from anti-racist organisations about police responses to racism.

Every minor step forward for the Campaign stands as testament to the courage and determination of Doreen and Neville Lawrence. The very fact that the inquiry is taking place is a result of years of long and hard campaigning.

The inquiry has focused attention on other examples of racism both from the police and society as a whole

When the family of Ricky Reel told police their son had gone missing after being chased by two white men, the police ignored them until his body was found in the Thames. Even then they insisted that he had fallen in by accident.

When Michael Menson died after being set on fire, the police refused to acknowledge that there was any crime involved.

The inquiry has drawn atten-

tion to these and other horrific examples of racist violence, police racism, indifference and incompetence - in themselves only the tip of the iceberg.

Throughout the inquiry the campaign has conducted itself brilliantly. The sheer weight of evidence has forced the Inquiry Chair Sir William MacPherson, not known for his anti-racist credentials, to criticise Police and the Home Office denials of racism.

The Campaign has done far more than put forward correct legal arguments inside the inquiry. Its real importance is that it has projected the inquiry as part of a wider campaign to challenge racism and to change public consciousness. Its success has been shown in the results of opinion polls that have shown that the majority of Londoners now have less faith in the police as a direct result of the inquiry.

The Lawrence campaign have demonstrated that the "few bad apples" theory of police racism is wildly off the mark. The Scarman enquiry into police racism in the

1980's took the view that police racism amounted to the prejudices of one or two junior officers whilst exonerating the police as a whole.

It will be far more difficult for the Lawrence inquiry to take such a position in face of anger the inquiry has created.

Paul Condon has apologised to the role of the police in the inquiry, has accepted that racism, both conscious and sub-conscious, exists throughout the police force, and even admits that such practices are widespread. But what Condon refuses to accept is that there is institutional racism. To do so, according to *The Guardian* "would have condemned him as a

traitor in the eyes of the ...metropolitan police".

This is not an argument about semantics, but is the very reason that Condon should go.

For any member of an institution that is racist through and through to challenge that racism, they must, by definition, betray that institution. That is something Condon has made clear he is not prepared to do.

Condon has been forced to admit that there are more than a few bad apples, but his view differs from Scarman's only in the numbers involved.

Getting rid of the Chief of the Metropolitan Police will not rid the police of racism, but it would be an acknowledgement that institutional racism exists.

As the Stephen Lawrence Campaign has shown, real change will only come through mass campaigning, through limiting the powers of the police, through making the police accountable to a body independent of themselves, and through the self organisation of black communities and working class people to defeat racism



The world economy in crisis

Could 'it' happen again?

NEWSPAPERS and political pundits have begun to talk about the worst economic situation since the 1930s. Politicians like Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, who only a year ago praised globalisation and claimed that international economic developments were outside the control of national governments, now argue for worldwide financial reform. How serious are the problems facing international capitalism? Could the crisis of the 1930s happen again? ANDY KILMISTER reports.



Korean bank workers caught in the chaos

The current crisis is actually made up of a number of different developments, each of which affects the others. Three are particularly important. First, and probably most serious, is the continuing slump in Japan.

This is significant because of the size of the Japanese economy and because of its international links. Japan is a key trading partner with China and South East Asia and the leading investor in the region. Any recovery there depends to a large extent on an upturn in the Japanese economy. Japan is also important because of its trade with the US. As the yen has fallen and Japanese demand has decreased the Japanese trade surplus has grown dramatically. So has the US trade deficit.

In this way the problems of Japan threaten continued US growth. Not only this, but international investors and policy makers increasingly fear that the unstable Japanese banking system and financial infrastructure may collapse altogether, triggering a catastrophic recession and threatening existing and new Japanese investment abroad.

The second problem lies in the major capitalist economies of the US and Europe. US growth has already lasted longer than most expected.

The likelihood is that the American economy will 'overheat' and that inflation will rise. If the US Federal Reserve acts to slow down inflationary pressures then the economy will slow down and could enter a slump.

This dilemma has provoked a continuing argument among American policy makers. On the one hand some argue that deregulation and technological change have changed the structure of the economy so that the old pattern of booms and slumps no longer holds.

They claim that increased international competition has fundamentally lowered inflationary pressures, so that interest rates can be cut and growth maintained indefinitely. On the other hand though, other observers point out that that high US investment in recent years has not yet delivered major productivity improvements and that personal and corporate debt in the US are at record levels.

In addition the US stock market has long been recognised to be highly overvalued. Set against this, the decision by the Federal Reserve to cut rates is a gamble which risks helping to build up an increasingly shaky financial structure which will eventually collapse.

The near collapse of the ludicrously named 'hedge' fund Long Term Capital Management a fortnight ago underlines this point.

What the US would like to see is interest

rate cuts and growing demand from Western Europe. But this is not happening because of the project of the single currency. European governments will not reflate their economies for fear of making the Euro appear weak.

The third issue is the continuing wave of currency speculation which is sweeping the globe. This ultimately rests on the lack of productive investment opportunities in the industrialised economies.

It is important to understand just how this can feed into the developing global crisis. In theory a currency collapse is redistributive. If one country's currency falls then the speculative funds buy another. So currency speculation does not on its own cause a problem for global capitalism, only for individual countries or regions within it.

However, in practice things are not so simple. Currency crises can cause deeper problems in a number of ways. Firstly, this happens through their effect on debt repayments. If a country's debt is measured in, say, dollars, then as its currency plummets in value the debts become impossible to repay. This is what happened to South Korea last year and to Russia this year.

This then threatens to bankrupt the banks and other institutions who lent the money, and transmits the crisis across international borders.

Secondly, the fall in currency values cuts incomes dramatically.

If workers resist this, or if companies try to recoup profits by raising prices then hyperinflation can set in and threaten political stability.

Thirdly, the sheer instability of the global financial markets disrupts trade and investment.

Fourthly, if currency values fall then foreign investors, both in financial assets and in productive activity, can lose substantial amounts of money. If this then affects their lending elsewhere or causes them to go bankrupt then again the crisis is transmitted internationally.

Each of these problems individually would be unlikely to cause the panic of the last few weeks. It is the combination of the three which raises the possibility of a major crisis. How likely is such a crisis to occur?

In the short run the two key countries which global investors are nervously watching are Brazil and China.

Brazil is important both in itself and because of its influence in Latin America, a region which takes about 20 percent of US exports (as compared to Russia's 2 percent). The Brazilian government budget deficit, widely believed by institutions like

the IMF to be a key predictor of currency crises, is at a level of 7 percent of GDP (over twice that prescribed by the Maastricht convergence criteria) and foreign exchange reserves are dropping fast.

A collapse of the Brazilian currency would have very serious implications. It would be likely to lead to a general currency crisis in South America, a region which is key to the global strategies of many US corporations.

This would then probably cause a major decline in the US stock market, which might easily swing the US into recession. A US recession would remove any possibility of recovery for Japan and the rest of Asia.

Small wonder then that the US is currently organising a \$30 billion rescue package for Brazil.

China is by far the largest recipient of foreign investment outside the industrialised economies. The growth rate is slowing rapidly there, and exports are facing massively increased competition from the rest of South East Asia following their devaluations.

In certain Chinese regions, notably Hong Kong, the situation is even more serious. In Hong Kong unemployment is rising fast and the stock market has only been saved from collapse by huge government purchases of shares. The Chinese banking system is exceptionally fragile with high levels of bad debt.

A Chinese devaluation would probably trigger off a further round of currency speculation in Asia and would write billions off the value of investments in the region. But continued stagnation threatens a wave of bankruptcies and a stock market crash which could be equally destabilising.

In the medium term each of the three main areas of the industrialised world faces major challenges. The issues in Japan have been widely discussed, as have those around EMU in Europe.

But the US faces equally searching questions. US companies, households and stock market investors have been involved in a huge gamble over the last period, building up high levels of debt on the expectation of continued IT fuelled growth. If it does not pay off then a US financial crisis could be central to global economic disorder.

The proposals being put forward by Blair and Brown to reform the system are exceptionally reactionary

There are two dangers facing socialists as we try to analyse the current international turbulence. One is to minimise the difficulties facing capitalism on the grounds that, with the exception of Japan, the major industrialised countries continue to grow.

Not only does this ignore the hundreds of millions already facing destitution as a result of the crisis, for example in Indonesia, it also overestimates the stability of growth in Europe and the US. However, it is also important not to view the current situation as inevitably leading to a crisis like that of the 1930s or the 1970s. Much of the current turmoil is rooted in the financial sector. Financial crises under capitalism have important effects, but only threaten the system as a whole if they are linked to struggles over real production.

That may well happen in the present crisis but it is by no means inevitable. One advantage for the capitalists is that so far the crisis has been centred on a region of the world - East and South East Asia - where until recently working class organisation, with the exception of South Korea, has been weak.

It has also happened at a time when the

working class has internationally been pushed onto the defensive. However, this can change very quickly. The intensity of the debates among imperialist leaders shows the seriousness with which they view the situation.

The problems of the last two years have caused significant divisions within the institutions which try to manage global capitalism. The IMF has tried to use the crisis to reassert the role of US style free market capitalism and to break up the networks of influence which characterised Asian economies, notably in South Korea.

Some people like World Bank Chief Economist Joe Stiglitz increasingly favour some kind of capital controls, or a tax on international financial transactions. They look to Chile, where capital controls appear to have insulated the economy to some extent from speculative crises since 1983, as a possible model.

At an extreme in these debates the Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed has rejected the IMF strategy of global financial integration and imposed sweeping controls on currency movements. This has fed into and helped to intensify the political crisis in Malaysia based on disagreements between Mahathir and his former deputy Anwar Ibrahim, an advocate of free trade and greater integration.

The Malaysian government has long argued for tighter regional co-operation and less reliance on relations with the US.

Socialists cannot take sides in these arguments. The Keynesian strategy of government intervention in the international financial markets will not avoid the underlying problems which currency and stock market movements reflect.

Like Keynesianism on a national level it will simply postpone the development of such problems into fully fledged crises.

Neither is economic nationalism a solution in a world dominated by multinational corporations and international finance. But we should recognise the role currently being played by the British government in these debates.

The proposals being put forward by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown for reform of the international financial system are exceptionally reactionary.

Essentially they are calling for a 'new' IMF which would deal with financial issues rather than trade issues.

Such a body would replicate the policies of the old IMF but with potentially even more power. The same kind of 'structural adjustment' programmes which we have seen used against countries with trade deficits or debt problems, reducing public expenditure and wages and increasing privatisation, would now be used against countries in danger of currency slides.

Which countries faced this danger would be dictated by the international financial markets. The 'agreements' which have been imposed on Russia, Indonesia and South Korea (and the one which is in preparation for Brazil) would be replicated on a global scale.

Socialists must expose and criticise the agenda being put forward by Brown and Blair. But this cannot be done by relying on alternative approaches for tinkering with the international financial system.

A real alternative must begin with the resistance of those affected by the current crisis in Asia, Russia and beyond. This resistance is still in its early stages and by no means certain to succeed. But solidarity with it is crucial in determining the outcome of the current crisis and whether it challenges or reinforces the rule of capital over the global economy.

Germany (hardly) turns to left End of old king Kohl

Pete Firmin

ON SUNDAY September 27 the German electorate replaced its Christian Democrat-led government by a Social Democrat-led one, ending Helmut Kohl's 16-year reign as Chancellor.

The post-war German electoral system has rarely resulted in one party government, and before the election there was speculation as to who the SPD, if it emerged as the largest party, would approach to form a coalition government.

Possibilities ranged from the ex-communist PDS through the liberal FDP (almost permanently in government) to a repeat of the 'grand coalition' of a CDU/SPD government of the 1960s. But right up till the last minute it was uncertain that Kohl would lose his majority.

In the event, the SPD did better than predicted, and the PDS improved its position, but the SPD leader Gerhard Schröder opted for a Red-Green coalition. Germany's Green Party, one of the largest and longest existing in Europe, was already part of several state governments together

with the SPD.

The SPD fought the election on the issues of unemployment and Kohl being 'yesterday's man'. Although Kohl achieved the popular re-unification of Germany, 10 years on this is not seen as such a great success. Unemployment stands at 4 million, and is particularly high in the East, where much industry has disappeared.

The SPD's policy for tackling unemployment, however, consists mainly of attempting to reduce the 'non-wage' costs of German industry.

While cutting income tax will be a part of this, it also signals a further assault on the 'social wage' (sick benefit, unemployment benefit etc) which have been under attack for several years.

The Greens would like to cut labour costs through environmental taxation but are unlikely to get anywhere on this, especially given the importance of the motor industry in Germany.

On most issues the SPD made it known in advance of the election

there would be little change.

The SPD is as keen on a federal Europe and the single currency as the CDU was, and is as willing to support NATO intervention in Kosovo. The only issue on which a clear indication of a change of policy has been made is on Germany's outrageously racist nationality law, which prevents children born in Germany of immigrant families from obtaining German citizenship.

Schröder has attempted to model himself on Blair, and his policies are similar. The SPD membership elected him candidate over the more left wing Oscar Lafontaine on the basis that opinion polls gave him a better chance of defeating Kohl.

The Greens, who long ago ditched their 'fundamentalist' approach in order to share power, are happy to be part of such a government.

The only issue which they have made much noise about is the quick phasing out of nuclear power stations, over 5-12 years. Kohl was unequivocally for the use of nuclear energy, but this has



Like most social democrats Schröder can also imitate a rabbit in the headlights

become increasingly unpopular with the population and mass protests have disrupted the transportation of nuclear waste for years.

The SPD is supposedly committed to the phasing out of nuclear power (possibly over 30 years!), While some Green leaders see this as a crucial issue, others have been playing it down.

Despite the growth of the fascist right in Germany in recent years, particularly in the East, they won no representation in parliament, not even coming close to the 5 per cent of votes needed.

On the contrary, the PDS, supported by much of the far left

including Fourth International supporters in Germany, improved its position considerably, winning 4 direct mandates (against the expected 2 or 3) and 5.1 per cent of the vote.

While its main support remains in the old East Germany, it also did well in the West.

The German election result means there are now social democratic governments in most European Union countries.

Yet they will still protest that they can do nothing about the economy, due to globalisation. The workers' movement across Europe needs to be demanding otherwise.

Sweden - Left Party gains in elections

Peter Lindgren

THE EX-COMMUNIST Left Party (Vänsterpartiet) are the most impressive winners of the recent Swedish parliamentary election. They are now the third largest party in the Riksdag (parliament). The Social Democrats and the Left Party are one vote short of a majority in the 349-seat assembly.

The Social Democrats, still Sweden's dominant party, have been forced to start negotiations with the Left Party and the Greens about a "long-term co-operation" agreement to cover the four-year term of parliament.

In elections between 1948 and 1994 the Left Party seemed stuck at 3-6%. This time they won 12%, with 20% of the vote among young first time voters, and about 27% of unemployed voters. Among members of the LO trade union confederation, which organises 84% of blue-collar workers, over 30% supported it.

The Communist Party of Sweden developed to the right much like other European CPs. It changed its name to the Left Party Communists in 1967.

In 1968 the party strongly condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia, even demanding that Sweden should break off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union! By the 90s, several leading members joined the Social Democrats.

Autumn 1994 was a decisive moment. The new Social Demo-

cratic government pushed through an aggressive cuts package of 126 billion kronor (US\$16.7bn.). These cuts particularly hit the unemployed, social welfare recipients and single mothers.

The "savings-parcel" was only passed in parliament because of the votes of Left Party deputies.

In 1995 the Social Democrats turned their back on the Left Party, preferring to agree their cuts programmes with the liberal Centre Party (Centerpartiet).

One reason for the strategic shift was the Left Party's critical view of the European Union. The Swedish establishment is committed to this, but all polls since 1995 particularly among working people show that a majority want Sweden to leave.

In this election, in the eyes of the voters, the Left

Party was standing for a traditional, social democratic, welfare policy. The true face of the "responsible" Left Party could be seen in some municipal governments. For example, in Stockholm in 1996, a Social Democrat-Left Party-Green coalition cut 3 billion kronor (US\$400m.) from the health budget. Not surprisingly, Stockholm voters have since elected a bourgeois majority.

Tragically, the left inside the party reacted in a very confused way. At the 1996 congress of the Left Party, left-wingers denounced any co-operation with the Centre

Party, while voting in favour of the Stockholm council's health cuts.

The "markets" have reacted to the elections very mildly indeed. The Left Party made it clear they will not "put at risk the repayments of the budget deficit", only wanting to pay slightly more slowly than the Social Democrats. In fact, Sweden's public sector debt is only 30% of GDP, much lower than the EU average of 50%.

Social Democratic Finance Minister Erik Åsbrink has promised to comply with European Commission demands to cut unemployment benefit. But he will not have an easy ride.

The party leadership suffered a rare defeat on this question at the Social Democratic congress last year, showing the strength of traditional welfare state support that remains in the party.

The Left Party's election campaign included a pledge to increase unemployment benefits. But party leaders would rather prove their "responsibility" by going along with neoliberal policies.

Not all their strong parliamentary group had expected to be elected, and some might stand up for their promises (though initial statements are not encouraging).

There is no cause for exaggerated optimism about an extra-parliamentary fightback. Only one demonstration in the nineties attracted more than 8,000 participants - one of 30,000 against the austerity policies of a conservative government in 1993.

The masses will not be flooding the streets in protest against the Social Democrats in the near future.

MPs pull plug on Italy's government

Veronica Fagan

On Friday October 9 the Italian 'Olive Tree' coalition lost a confidence motion in parliament by one vote, throwing the government into disarray. It is not yet clear if and when there will be new elections because of complex rules about presidential terms.

This has attracted some comment in the British press with a suggestion that it could threaten NATO intervention in Kosovo. This seems unlikely as there is a clear majority for intervention. Threats to the lira given general economic chaos seem better founded.

The trigger for the confidence motion was the government's budget for next year. The Partito Rifondazione Comunista (PRC) decided it could no longer support the government, voting 188-112 on its Central Committee to break with the government. The majority around Fausto Bertinotti was supported by the left minority of which Fourth International supporters are a part.

Rifondazione had previously debated whether it should support the government and its austerity budgets even this far. These debates saw not only the right within the party, but at times Bertinotti arguing 'lesser evilism' as the basis for sticking with Prodi. They drew comfort from

the fact that the last time a break was posed, it was apparently unpopular. In fact it is likely that these statistics were manipulated because the right was better organised.

However, when it came to the vote of confidence in parliament a majority of the PRC's MPs voted with the government against the party line. This majority of MPs, together with a small minority of the PRC under the leadership of party chair Armando Cossutta have announced they are forming a new movement.

This time it was it was Cossutta who argued that anything would be better than letting in the right, raising the spectre of television magnate Silvio Berlusconi.

At the party's political committee on October 3 he argued that his aim was "to defend the interests of the workers and not go on some wild adventure" and that this budget was more socialist than the last.

However an opinion poll in Italian paper Corriere della Sera on October 11 shows that more people support Bertinotti's stand (5.3 per cent) than Cossutta's (3.4 per cent).

Clearly the situation is evolving as we go to press. Livio Maitan will be speaking about these developments at the Socialist Outlook event on November 14 (see p17)



Right wing spectre: Berlusconi

In Stockholm in 1996, a Social Democrat-Left Party-Green coalition cut US\$400m. from the health budget

The forgotten heroines of revolution

In the 20th century the rise of the women's liberation movement has reinforced the tendency witnessed in previous centuries - for women to come to the forefront in battles against exploitation and oppression. This has reflected itself in all three sectors of the world revolution. MARIAN BRAIN has been looking back in admiration.

Women have played a remarkable role fighting for democratic rights against our own oppression but also identified with the struggles of the so called third world, anti racist struggles, struggles for lesbian and gay rights and ecological struggles.

One of the dominant features of the 20th century has been the uprisings against colonialism, and women have played an indispensable role in these armed struggles.

Internationally the same pattern has been seen across North America, and Western Europe. The women's liberation movement in America sent shock waves throughout the whole world and affected the language and attitude of many layers.

One of the main gains in the 1970s was around the abortion issue. This was a development from early in this century, when women gained rights for contraception.

Women now make up more than 50 per cent of the workforce. The development of affirmative action has led to a beginning of changes in women's status.

The revolutionary left has been pushed into understanding the centrality of the struggle for women's liberation to the project of socialist revolution. An slogan that I remember vividly from my early years of involvement is: "No women's liberation without the socialist revolution. No socialist revolution without women's liberation"

It is just as relevant today.

Perhaps one of the most impressive expressions of women's self organisation in Britain was the development of women's support groups during the miners' strike. These lessons have been built on in more recent disputes; the dockers, Burnsalls, Hillingdon, Magnet and Critchley labels.

In recent years there has been a major ideological attempt to turn this back. There have been set backs too on affirmative action and as a result of individual terrorism by the right wing against abortion clinics in the USA.

In reasserting that we will not be post-feminists until we live in a post-patriarchal society, women - and men - can draw inspiration from the struggles of our sisters



Bolshevik leader Alexandra Kollontai brought the demands of women to the forefront. It was women whose struggles sparked the February Revolution in 1917, and they helped neutralise the Tsarist troops: the demonstrators below carry a banner appealing for support from the soldiers

throughout history. Indeed rediscovering our history which had been hidden from us has been one of the crucial gains of the modern women's movement.

In 1884 Flora Tristan was on an organising tour in provincial France to promote the ideas of an international association of workers. Harassed and exhausted, she fell ill and died. Her name became a legend in the French working class.

Shortly time before her death she summed up her fate in a letter to one of her friends and comrades. She wrote

"I have nearly the whole world against me. Men because I demand the emancipation of women, and the owners because I demand the emancipation of wage-earners"

Seven years later at a Women's Rights convention in Ohio, the former slave Isabella, who is better known as Sojourner Truth, took the floor. She rose to answer a preacher who had ridiculed women as weak and helpless and therefore undeserving of the right to vote. In a stirring speech that turned the entire convention around she declared:

"The man over there says

women need to be helped into carriages and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages or over puddles, or gives me the best place - and ain't I a woman?"

"Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns and no man could head me - and ain't I a woman?"

"I could work as much and eat as much as man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman?"

Between these two events came the historic year of 1848. This was the year that women gathered in Seneca Falls, New York, to adopt their own Declaration of Independence and to launch a conscious, organized movement of women against their oppression as women.

It was also the year that the *Communist Manifesto* was published, proclaiming to the world the birth of scientific socialism. This marked the beginning of the working-class movement as a self-conscious, political movement of the majority of humanity in the interest of the majority.

This coincidence of dates is no real coincidence at all. Both movements came onto the historical stage with the rise of industrial capitalism. Both were generated by the changes that capitalism brought in the social relations of production and reproduction. the twin pillars of all

human societies.

The oppression of women did not begin with capitalism. On the contrary, it extends back to the dawn of recorded history. But it was the advent of capitalism with its continuous, revolutionary development of productive capacities that made women's liberation a realisable goal.

Just as capitalism itself organised the working class as a whole - increasing its size and concentration, skill, educational level, and political consciousness it also transformed the conditions of women. It brought millions of women out of the countryside, and out of the home and into the labour force.

It began the process of socialising the chores of the individual family - "women's work" - such as baking, weaving, and making clothes. New social and political horizons were opened for women.

Not only did masses of women begin to become conscious of their oppression, but more importantly they began to see a way to end that oppression. They began to raise demands, formulate a programme and organise themselves for struggle.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of the Paris Commune in 1871 was the formation of mass independent all-women organisations which fought for women's interests and mobilised them in

In 1848 women gathered in Seneca Falls, New York, to adopt their own Declaration of Independence

defence of the commune.

Separate women's organisations first emerged during the siege by the Prussians, and there was considerable discussion then about establishing a separate women's battalions.

A number of women's organisations came together and won mass support and important gains for women. These included equal pay for teachers, and pensions for any women who asked for a separation even if it was a common law marriage.

Pensions were given to women and children of National Guardsmen killed defending the commune. The hated Morality police, used to hunt down prostitutes, were abolished, and technical and professional education for women and free compulsory and secular education for everyone were introduced.

The women's organisations enforced the latter demand by forcibly removing priests, nuns and mother superiors from the schools when they refused to comply. Women participated in the six-person "Society for New Education", which in five days drew up a new educational programme for presentation to the Commune.

The women's clubs usually met in churches they took over for the meetings. They discussed child-care centres and nurseries, divorce laws, and many other topics.

The extent of the reforms was limited by the harsh military necessities of defending the Commune, in which women played a heroic role.

Not only were they nurses and canteen workers, many of them were soldiers on the front line. There was a separate women's company, commanded by women officers.

Louise Michel a leader of the First International and one of the most important figures of the Paris Commune

recounts "The army fraternised with the people instead of shooting them down. That triumph of the popular cause is perhaps chiefly due to the intervention of the women, who covered the artillery with their own bodies, and even placed themselves at the muzzles of the guns, to prevent the latter being fired."

She also argued that in the last desperate battles within the sectors of Paris itself, the women "flinched at nothing. They reconcentrated themselves much more speedily to the inevitable" It took Thierez's troops another week to break the resistance.

The history of the Commune illustrates that Andre Leo was right when she wrote during the Commune, pointing out that women had not helped 'dethrone the Emperor and God' simply to let the ruling class re-establish power:

"The Revolution means - since we must take its side - liberty and responsibility for every human being, with common rights as their only limit, and without any privilege of race or Sex."

The experience of 1871 showed the world the power of women,



Fearless resistance: Burnsall strikers (above) and Women Against Pit closures. Gains like abortion rights have had to be defended against attack (bottom)

organised and ready to throw off their yoke of oppression. As Louise Michel noted,

"In rebellion alone woman is at ease, trampling upon both, prejudice and sufferings. All intelligent women will sooner or later rise in rebellion."

I would want now to look at the struggle in China in the early 1920s. Through the eyes of Chen Pi-lan we see how the struggle for women's liberation from feudal traditions developed into a struggle for socialism.

Chen Pi-lan was a leading member of the Chinese section of the Fourth International, having originally been recruited to the Chinese Communist Party in 1922. A party leader came to her girls boarding school and gave a speech on "women's position in society".

Li Han-chun described the different positions of women in different societies, beginning with primitive communist society, through feudal society, capitalist society and finally the future socialist society. He concluded that if women wanted equality they must have economic independence.

The prerequisite for achieving complete liberation was a change in the social system. Only after the proletariat had been freed would women have their liberation. He had used Auguste Bebel's *Women and Society* as his text.

Pi-lan describes how they went on to organise the girls' school, demanding the right to cut their hair, to have coeducation, to hold discussion circles on questions such as freedom to love and freedom of marriage. They later participated in strikes, May Day demonstrations and formed working women's clubs.

In an article in *International Socialist Review* September 1976 she states: "In describing my experiences in the revolutionary movement, especially my activi-



ties and role in the women's movement, I cannot separate it from the earlier history of the Chinese Communist Party, because the women's movement was part of CCP's work, and the women's movement in each period has its different historical and political background."

The highest form of revolutionary leadership to this date was the Bolshevik Party's leadership of the 1917 Russian Revolution. Although Stalinism later destroyed many of the gains of the revolution, the lessons remain vital because they pose the way for women's emancipation.

One of the highlights of the Russian Revolution was the role women played in the February revolution. Women from the textile industry went on strike and held mass demonstrations and sparked the uprising that led to the fall of the Tzar.

Petrograd women

poured into the streets demanding "bread for our children" and "the return of our husband from the trenches" The Russian Revolution marked its beginning that day.

After the victory in October many changes began to take place. The concept of social responsibility rather than individual burdens being placed on women started to lay the basis for women beginning to break the chains of our oppression.

Free abortion on demand meant that for the first time women had some control over their fertility, instead of being bogged down by unwanted pregnancies. Women for the first time could plan their lives.

In order to remove the economic chains of dependency that form the basis of the patriarchal family it is necessary to replace the family with institution that can provide the valid functions of the family even better. Nurseries and socialised kitchens were developed.

Government agencies and women's commissions were set up as a way of reaching out to women in the remote rural areas. This was crucial as the Bolsheviks and socialist ideas were less strong in these areas and the hold of religion was stronger.

In 1917 when the All Russian Congress of Soviets convened in Petrograd on the evening after the fall of the discredited Kerensky regime, Lenin went to the tribune and announced quite simply and with an acute sense of history, "We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order."

Over the next weeks, months and years ahead, in our battles to free the world from barbarism and in our struggle to construct a socialist alternative, we know that women will play their full role.

Without women's liberation there can be no socialism and without socialism there can be no women's liberation.

One of the highlights of the Russian Revolution was the role women played in the February revolution



Unnatural Disasters

Veronica Fagan

MORE THAN 300 million people in Asia alone have seen their lives and livelihoods destroyed by floods over the last three months. An area the size of Europe has been affected. Floods have also occurred in places as diverse as Chiapas in South East Mexico and in Belgium.

Other weather related disasters include Hurricane Georges which resulted in Puerto Rico being declared a disaster zone as well as the rather more publicised effect it had in the United States. Over the past 200 years the frequency of El Nino has increased from one every 5 years to every 2.8 years and there is increasing evidence that this is as a result of global warming - in other words, of human intervention.

In other areas droughts and or forest fires have been prevalent. In Indonesia in 1997 two million hectares of land was burned mainly by plantation companies and logging concessions in Kalimantan and Sumatra leaving an incalculable human, animal and ecological disaster in its wake. This year new fires have been detected and old ones restarted. The causes are the same and the damage if anything worse. Meanwhile in West Papua famine is killing thousands after last year's El Nino driven drought destroyed crops and dried up rivers. Those who are surviving the famine are likely to fall prey to malaria.

These tragedies are not however the result of 'freak' weather con-

ditions. Climatologist Mick Kelly of the University of East Anglia explains: "There is a long-term underlying trend of climate change but no great increase in extreme weather or any greatly increased severity." Instead he points out; "There is a greatly increased vulnerability of people following over-exploitation of resources, the clearing of forests and changing of river courses".

Disasters mainly hit poor people in poor countries. In Japan the average disaster kills 63 people. In Peru the average death toll is 2,900.

This summers floods in China and the Indian sub-continent have been directly blamed on massive deforestation in the uplands. Forest cover slows or prevents the run off of water. The issue is not so much how much rain falls but onto what sort of ground. Floods affect more people than any other disaster other than drought, but they occur much more frequently.

Now the Chinese government have declared that reforestation will begin after this summer's disasters. In the case of Bangladesh most deforestation took place outside the countries lowland borders. More than half the country is only 5 metres above sea level and three quarters within the largest delta in the world.

At the same time the Ganges has been diverted from its course into the Hoogly Channel for irrigation purposes. This means that a great



Desperate times in Bangladesh: but the crisis was worsened by human intervention

deal of river sediment that sued to pour into Bangladesh does not do so. The country is effectively sinking - a fate it can definitely not afford.

These examples demonstrate graphically that ecological issues around need to be tackled on an international basis just as issues around the ozone layer and global warming do.

Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed pointed out "This kind of flood never happened in Bangladesh, although flooding is very common in our country. Had it been a natural flood, we could have faced it."

But Bangladesh's own development has also contributed to the problem. During the 1980s some 100,000 tube wells and 20,000 deep wells were sunk into the delta to provide drinking water for the rapidly growing population. More than 110 million people live in 149,000 sq km - the world's densest population. The wells have altered the water table to such an extent that they added to

the country's subsidence at an annual rate of 2.5cm.

Global warming itself contributes to the rise in sea level - threatening the country and its mangrove swamps and fisheries still further.

Modern methods are not necessarily the best way to cope with floods. The Flood Action Plan funded by the World Bank and Western governments set out the construct embankments along all the major rivers in Bangladesh to contain the floods. This has not helped, as the floods have been so fierce that they have swept away the embankments or have diverted water to other parts of the country. There is an urgent need to return to widespread low tech irrigation canals and dykes which provided ample flood protection prior to colonisation.

Peter Walker of the International Red Cross states that one third of all disasters today are weather-related as distinct from 5 per cent only 5 years ago. The agency has appealed for funds to deal with situations in more than 25 countries.

"Governments are increasingly unable to support public works like embankments and flood control" he says "Private capital has flooded into many poor countries but it is after the quick buck. It is not interested in public works, social welfare or development projects which can increase people's abilities to cope in crises."

Existing flood protection systems are old and the cost of repair or replacement is mounting. At the same time the IMF and the World Bank insist that governments invest in commodities for export - if there is anything left after debt servicing.

Kevin Watkins, senior policy advisor at Oxfam points out; "They tightly control public expenditure and in many countries have slashed preventative health and welfare programmes which would help people cope with disasters".

Far more people will die of disease as a result of flooding - from water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera and typhoid and from malnutrition - than from drowning. In Bangladesh more than 668,529 hectares of crops were destroyed by the floods - over one third of the country's annual food production. In Vietnam epidemics of dengue fever followed the floods, killing 1,500

Unnatural disasters are increas-

ing in number and in effect. In the 1970s six times more people died as the result of weather-related catastrophes than in the 1960s, but the number of disasters went up by only 50 per cent. The capitalist system misuses the environment in ways that makes it more prone to disasters and makes poor people more vulnerable to its effects.

The greed for profit is polluting our water, our food and destabilising our weather systems. Socialists have every interest in raising these issues and working around them. It is our planet too!



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Impeachment starts for Bill Clinton

THE US House of Representatives Judiciary Committee voted last week to start impeachment proceedings against Bill Clinton - only the third time such proceedings have been used in the history of the United States.

The decision, taken by the Republican majority, will have to be endorsed by the full House of Representatives - which also has a Republican majority.

Clinton will be charged with perjury, obstructing justice and abusing the office of President. Although Clinton is clearly guilty of those charges it is difficult to predict the outcome. Nor are the tactics of the Republicans clear. They may opt, for electoral purposes, to keep Clinton on the hook rather than complete the process and eject him from office.

Clinton, of course deserves to be thrown out of office for a series of war crimes, from Iraq to his recent bombings of Afghanistan and Sudan, as well as financial corruption and the way he has collapsed into the Republican agenda since he was elected.

His motives for bombing Afghanistan and Sudan are increasingly being questioned even amongst the US establishment.

Veteran American journalist Seymour Hersh revealed how Clinton by-passed both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the FBI (who were asking for more hard evidence on the targets) in order to co-ordinate his missile strikes with the Lewinsky hearing. Hersh says: "There was speculation that the missile strikes were ordered as a distraction at a time when Mr Clinton's grip on the Presidency was coming under renewed assault".

Despite Clinton's crimes, however, it is clear that there is a right wing conspiracy seeking to replace him, at some stage, with a right wing Republican. US imperialism wants to establish its domination at every level of world politics, particular its ability to use military force.

The conspiracy is driven by the

Republican right and the religious lobby. By basing its case on the Lewinsky affair it is also having a regressive effect on American society. It is 'back to basics' writ large.

This has created a dilemma for sections of American society. The black population are polling 90% against impeachment, and parts of the women's movement do not wish to defend what Clinton has done but fear the alternative.

This is not to say that the Republican right have been very clever in the way they have operated in this.

Clinton has remained high in the opinion polls because a lot of people do not want to go along with what they see as a reactionary witch hunt against him. On a world scale, the humiliation and impeachment of Clinton can only sap confidence still further and add to the crisis in the stock exchanges and the money markets. But for the Republican right, the main issue is to get rid of Clinton and replace him in their own image.

His motives for bombing Afghanistan and Sudan are being questioned

End scandal of British support for Kurdish slaughter

A DELEGATION from the Turkish Confederation of Public Servants Trade Unions (KESK) visited Britain in September to meet British workers and raise support for their struggle for workers rights and democracy, and against the vicious war in Kurdistan. Sefik Türk, a primary school teacher from Diyarbakir, spoke to Socialist Outlook about this struggle.

KESK was established in 1985. Its founding principles are members' democracy, workers' rights, equality, and peace. From 1990, government workers had previously had been fighting for the right to join a union.

Although this has now been granted, and about 500,000 workers in 22 different unions organise through KESK, it is not recognised. Since 1990, over 200 trade union members have been murdered by government forces while carrying out trade union activity.

Other union members have been relocated from their homes to distant parts of the country; often, they are sent to areas with a strong fascist presence.

KESK currently seeks to achieve two goals: to restore the right to strike, and to end the war in Kurdistan. As Sefik stressed, until the war ends, there will be no work-

ers' rights and no democracy in Turkey.

The government is spending \$40 billion a year on the war, which is thus a main cause of the low wages. Inflation has been over 100% over the past year, but public sector wages have risen by only 25%. Some 12 to 15 million workers are unemployed, nearly 60% of the workforce.

The repression, the lack of recognition and the denial of the right to strike mean that many workers see no point in joining unions; many civil servants are not in a union, while millions of workers have been threatened with the sack if they join.

Teachers' strike

Despite this, workers continue to strike. Last year, for example, 4000 teachers in Diyarbakir went on strike before the January wage round. This brought no results. A subsequent union meeting in March in Ankara was attacked by police with dogs and tear gas.

On 28 August, the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) announced a unilateral ceasefire in its war with the Turkish state, and called on the government to open negotiations. KESK welcomed this step, and took part with others in rallies in Ankara and Diyarbakir calling for a positive government response.

Hundreds of demonstrators were arrested. If the government refuses to talk directly to the PKK, says Sefik, then they should talk to the legal - but severely repressed -

Hadep party. However, the banning of a rally planned by Hadep in Diyarbakir on 27 September shows that the government has no intention of accepting the ceasefire.

No freedom

Although millions of Turks would support a ceasefire, there is little prospect, says Sefik, of mass political struggle to achieve this, since there is no freedom of association, speech or publication, human rights offices have been closed by the government, and peace activists are under constant attack. PKK President Abdullah Öcalan has warned that, if the government rejects the PKK's offer the war will spread through Turkey.

In this war, Turkey will continue to gain the support of the British and other western governments.

Despite all the froth about an 'ethical foreign policy', Britain continues to sell arms to

Turkey, its NATO ally - most recently, 800 armoured personnel carriers.

These arms are used directly in the Turkish government's near-genocidal attacks on the Kurds, who form some 20% of

Turkey's population. In the course of this conflict, 50,000 people have been killed, and the government has burned 3000 villages to the ground.

Thousands of Kurdish refugees have fled Turkey and neighbouring Iraq. In an attempt to prevent

them entering Western Europe, the EU is establishing internment camps under Turkish military control, according to "Statewatch" magazine.

Despite its alliance with NATO and the EU, Turkey's application for admission to the EU is being delayed. Officially, this is because the EU is concerned at civil rights in Turkey, and its role in the Cyprus conflict.

Although this may be part of the reason, it is clear that the real concern is the possible admission of a state with such huge unemployment, which could lead to large-scale immigration to Western Europe, and capital transfers to Turkey from the EU budget. At present, such transfers would merely subsidise the war in Kurdistan, rather than developing the Turkish economy.

A new and disturbing factor in the Turkish crisis is the deepening alliance with Israel, based on a treaty signed last year enabling Israeli pilots to conduct "training flights" in Turkey. The Turkish press reports that Israelis are now piloting Turkish military planes in attacks in Kurdistan.

Meanwhile, Turkey has threatened Syria with attack if it does not withdraw support from the PKK and hand over Öcalan - currently based in Damascus - for trial in Turkey. Turkey and Syria have long had an unresolved territorial dispute over the incorporation of the coastal Hatay region into Turkey.

There are also serious disagreements about water resources; Syria claims that irrigation schemes in Anatolia and the construction of



What was that about "ethics" in foreign policy, Robin?

the Ataturk dam on the Euphrates in Turkey are depriving it of the water necessary for its economy. The latest developments, combined with Israeli involvement, threaten to ignite a further war in the region.

With a collapsing economy, a vicious war, a restless military, a succession of corrupt civilian governments, and a banned Islamist party, the Turkish state is in possibly terminal crisis.

Turkey's workers are paying the economic and social price for this. The trade union movement in Britain must extend its full solidarity to trade unionists in Turkey.

Further information on trade union rights in Turkey and on the war in Kurdistan can be obtained from the Kurdistan Information Centre, 10 Glasshouse Yard, London EC1A 4JN. Phone 0171 250 1315; fax 0171 250 1317; e-mail kiclondon@gn.apc.org

Britain continues to sell arms to Turkey, most recently, 800 armoured personnel carriers.

Why NATO bombs will not rescue Kosova

Geoff Ryan

NATO threatens air strikes against Serbia. Richard Holbrooke continues discussions with Milosevic. These two courses of action are inextricably linked. Both are designed to impose a solution on Kosova's Albanian majority a long way short of self-determination.

Socialist Outlook is totally opposed to NATO attacks on Serbia, despite our hostility to the brutal Milosevic regime. NATO is an imperialist political and military alliance: its role is to make the world safe for capitalism. It never has been, and never will be, an agency for 'peace' or 'democracy'.

Opposition to 'repressive' regimes has never figured highly in NATO's aims.

We understand why many Kosovars, who have suffered the brutality of Milosevic's troops, would like NATO air-strikes on Belgrade, and even why many supporters of the Kosova struggle in the west support this. However, they are profoundly wrong.

NATO intervention whether military or political is directed primarily against the major demand of the Kosovars - the right to independence.

This is demonstrated by Richard Holbrooke's plan for 'autonomy' in Kosova, which would have given Kosovars less autonomy than they



NATO's man for stability: Slobodan Milosevic

enjoyed under Tito and left them at the mercy of a Serb dominated police force.

This was so unlikely to be accepted by even the most moderate Albanians that Holbrooke didn't even bother showing his plan to a single Kosova Albanian.

As far as he was concerned, the fate of the Albanian population was simply a matter to be discussed between himself and Milo-

sevic. Albanian hostility forced Holbrooke to modify this plan and remove the proposal for a largely Serb police force.

UN resolutions and NATO statements show that military threats are not solely directed at Milosevic. They call on both sides to cease armed actions.

Earlier this year Holbrooke was arguing that the KLA were not 'terrorists' and had to be included in any talks. Today the KLA have become terrorists again in his eyes and are being sidelined in favour of the self-styled President of Kosova, the pacifist Ibrahim Rugova.

The KLA has recently announced a unilateral ceasefire. This may be an astute political move on their part, focusing attention on Serbian responsibility for continuing violence. It may reflect a genuine desire for peace by Kosovars.

At the same time it is a recognition of their military weakness, both against Milosevic and - even more so - against NATO. The KLA ceasefire is, in essence, imposed by NATO.

We should not however denounce the KLA for calling off their armed struggle: the Kosovar people have the right to conduct their struggle by peaceful as well as military means.

We do reject the right of NATO to force the KLA to abandon

armed struggle.

An active, armed KLA is a major stumbling block to western policy: imposing a 'solution' within the framework of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This is surely one reason why NATO threatens strikes now, when it hopes the KLA have been defeated by Serbia.

No western government has even hinted that it would consider the creation of an independent Kosova state. On this central question there is full agreement between the west and Milosevic.

Against independence

NATO military intervention - especially if it included ground troops - would be directed primarily to ensuring Kosova never achieved independence.

NATO rhetoric may be directed at Milosevic at the moment. There may even be some limited military actions, designed to push Milosevic into making sufficient concessions to the Kosova Albanian majority to undermine support for independence.

NATO's and Milosevic's aims are not opposed: they are fundamentally the same.

NATO does not seek the overthrow of Milosevic. It desperately needs him to restore 'stability' in the region. NATO simply wants him to be a bit more compliant.

In many ways the current sabre rattling has little to do with Kosova. Nor is it merely an attempt by Clinton to divert attention from his domestic problems in the hope of Democratic Party success in the November 3 elections.

The major problem for the west is that its imposed solution in Bosnia is in danger of falling apart. Bosnia is of much greater concern than Kosova. The recent Bosnian elections saw a rise in support for Serb nationalists in the Serb 'entity' with a member of the extreme right-wing Serbian Radical Party winning the election for President.

The Dayton accords, which allowed for the imposition of 'peace' on Bosnia, require Milosevic to play the key role in limiting Serb nationalist demands. Indeed, Dayton was impossible without a major role for Milosevic. That has not changed.

NATO threats against Milosevic are simply designed to show him who is boss and to encourage him to act 'responsibly' again, so he can resume his allotted role in maintaining the effective partition of Bosnia imposed at Dayton.

The people of Kosova would be well advised to consider the devastation wreaked by Dayton on Bosnia before supporting NATO intervention in their affairs.

Republicanism's blinkered vision of Irish boom

'Inside The Celtic Tiger': Denis O'Hearn, Pluto Press, 200p.

IN AUGUST 1994 the American investment bank Morgan Stanley published a laudatory prospectus about the southern Irish economy comparing it favourably with the Asian Tiger economies. The Irish government was so chuffed by the praise that ever since its agencies have sought to promote the country as the Celtic Tiger.

In these days of collapsing capitalist confidence, southern Ireland with its six per cent annual growth rate is increasingly being heralded as a model economy that others should imitate.

SNP leader Alec Salmond recently explained that Scotland would seek to follow the southern Irish example if and when it became politically independent. It is timely then to have a book that casts a critical gaze over the life and times of the Celtic Tiger.

O'Hearn's book deserves to be read, but not welcomed unconditionally. There are major faults with his analysis.

O'Hearn pulls together much previously scattered information, to some extent helps update the chapter on the southern economy in our own 'Promise of Socialism'. That chapter was conceived at a time when the Irish economy was in crisis, when the State Treasury was close to the point of bankruptcy, unemployment close to 20 per cent resulting in a massive flight of people from the country.

Giddy with success

Today things have turned around. Instead of feeling a deep gloom about the present and fear for the future the Irish capitalist class is giddy with the feeling of success. Conspicuous consumption is the order of the day. There has never been a boom like it - housing prices are heading for the stars.

On the surface everything looks wonderful. Since 1992 the economy has grown by an average of 6



Their turn soon? Scottish National Party leader Salmond hopes to cash in on a similar flow of capital investment.

per cent per annum and the bourgeoisie now believe they can sustain a high growth low inflation economy into the future. Some pundits believe that they are about to surpass the

British in productivity and average living standards. The poets are instructed to compose in praise of the Celtic Tiger.

O'Hearn essentially warning them not to get carried away. He punctures the idea that the southern economy is a Tiger economy by pointing out that the Asian Tigers experienced three decades of annual growth rates of around the 8 per cent mark - and are now in crisis.

For us though the key question is has the economic boom transformed Ireland from a semi-colony into an advanced industrial nation?

The evidence amassed by O'Hearn suggested not. The recent boom, he maintains, is but more evidence indicating just how dependent the Irish econ-

omy is on foreign capital. In the period of the crisis foreign capital deserted Ireland: its return has induced the upturn.

He argues that it was been the rapid influx of American capital that has caused the boom. He gives the lie to the Irish government's view that it has put in place the ideal macro-economic (neo-liberal) conditions.

O'Hearn shows that American owned Trans National Corporations were directly responsible for 15 per cent of Irish GDP in 1990, and today this has reached a staggering 24 per cent. Government figures for 1995 and 1996 suggest that 60 per cent of all new fixed investment in Ireland came from a handful of American TNCs.

American-run

Since 1988 Ireland has attracted 40 per cent of all the American electronics investment streaming into Europe. O'Hearn believes that, at a minimum, 45 per cent of the growth that has occurred in the Irish economy since 1990 has stemmed directly from American investments.

It was the arrival of Intel that made the big difference: "Ireland captured a crucial segment of foreign investment into Europe during a time when such investment was agglomerating in fewer locations following the global restructuring in the 1980s."

In 1991 Intel made a £31 billion investment in Ireland, this was followed by another £3,750 million investment in 1996.

O'Hearn argues that the Intel investment caused a sudden agglomeration of investment in a couple of areas: computers and electrical engineering. With Intel

Through Irish Eyes

A column from Socialist Democracy, Irish section of the Fourth International

The left republican is a nationalist first and a socialist as an afterthought

came PC manufacturers Gateway, Dell, SST, Apple, and Hewlett-Packard.

Then came Disk Drive makers Seagate and Quantum and the software giants Microsoft, Lotus and Oracle. Ireland is now the fourth largest exporter of software packages in the world.

The Irish economic miracle is in fact in the hands of a handful of American TNCs. O'Hearn's main worry is that what they have so quickly brought they can just as quickly take away. Ireland remains a privileged semi-colony.

O'Hearn has certainly brought much useful information together. He explores why almost uniquely the Irish GNP statistics are 14 per cent below those for GDP.

Incredible figures

He raises questions as to the credibility of the economic statistics i.e. how come Ireland's dynamism is accompanied by the lowest investment in the means of production in Europe, and how is it that American firms in Ireland are able to declare such fantastic profits - five times larger than anywhere else in the world? The case that massive tax fraud and transfer pricing must be occurring is well made.

He proves that the much trumpeted Irish-owned software industry is still very much small change, subordinated to the American giants and accounting for only 3 per cent of exports.

However his book ultimately disappoints. This is a lot to do with O'Hearn's politics.

Although not an overtly political book, nevertheless his left republican political credentials shine through.

There is a world of difference between a left republican and a socialist. The left republican is a nationalist first and a socialist as an afterthought: as egalitarian

nationalists, they are not in principle opposed to capitalism or in principle in favour of the political independence of the Irish working class.

What O'Hearn is criticising is not the inherent tendencies of capitalism but its political form of regulation. This limitation badly skews his whole analysis.

His method is to use one mode of regulation, the more productive Japanese organised one that assisted the development of the Asian Tigers as a template with which to test and criticise the American or "Western" policies.

"Thus the Japanese model is more constructive to the development strategies of lesser nations, the Asian model is more employment friendly and more egalitarian than the one that is imposed on countries like Ireland" (p147)

Because of this favouritism the crisis in the East has to be explained bizarrely as a crisis of "strength" (p151), indeed as a crisis caused by American mismanagement of its domestic economy:

"Asian producers by and large, depended on the US as the major market for their expanded manufactures. By the 1990s however American consumers could no longer purchase what Asia produced."

"Foreign" capital

O'Hearn is against the "market limitations of export-led development or industrialisation in a liberalised global economy". This is a repackaging of the traditional left nationalist dislike of 'foreign' capital.

He consistently plays down domestic Irish class exploitation and plays up foreign exploitation: "The main recipients of the fruits of economic growth are a foreign capitalist class rather than a domestic one" (p127)

What is essentially wrong with capitalism in Ireland is its mode of political regulation - a useful argument for republicans, which allows them to sound radical while not calling for a break with capitalism.

In his concluding chapter O'Hearn advises an economic development strategy for Ireland that does not put all of our hopes in one basket i.e. depending on TNCs.

He calls for "movements of the periphery to organise to demand new European rules that allow their states to implement development policies that are currently disallowed, just as peripheral regions world wide urgently need to unite to reverse global liberalisation.

"Moreover such peripheral movements need to pressurise the EU for a new technology policy where major innovative research and design projects would be located in the periphery."

This is pure new Sinn Fein speak, after having dropped its former anti-imperialist anti-EU stance.

What could best develop the Irish economy "is the removal of the economic partition of the island. An all-Ireland economy would substantially reduce transaction costs and enable Irish producers to take advantage of scale economies that would arise from an enlarged Irish market".

This is certainly untrue, and a long way from being what most Irish workers would need, but it is exactly in tune with current Sinn Fein orthodoxy.

OUT NOW!

The Real Irish Peace Process available (£6 plus 70p p&p) from Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109 London N4 2UU

Joe Gray, John McArthur, Paul Sheehan

A Socialist Democracy Publication

Susan Moore reviews:
Zapatista! Reinventing Revolution in Mexico.
Edited by John Holloway and Eloína Peláez. Pluto Press

Dignity's Revolt



FIGHTING neo-liberalism world wide. Struggling to rid Mexico of the suffocating party-state system under the corrupt domination of the Party of Institutional Revolution (PRI). Fighting for justice alongside the indigenous peoples of Chiapas. These banners have been raised and embroidered by the Zapatista army (EZLN).

This collection of essays published by Pluto Press is the first collection to bring together contributions on this movement which brings together contributors from Mexico, the United States and Britain. It is a vital contribution to a debate that should engage not only those interested in Mexican or Latin American politics but in fighting the neo-liberal offensive that crushes and distorts all our lives..

When the Zapatista army announced their existence to the world on January 1 1994 the reaction from left and right, inside and outside Mexico was stunned silence. The lack of comprehension has hardly lessened as time has gone by despite the fact that it is easy to access their communiqués through the internet.

While the tradition of the guerrilla has deep roots in Latin American society it was immediately apparent that this was no traditional guerrilla army. The dismissal by ladino society of the indigenous communities was challenged by a revolt in the heart of the Lacandon jungle, by a movement that brought together people without a common language and wove them into a people in arms fighting for dignity and justice.

One central myth about the Zapatista rebellion that this book gives a decisive lie to is the idea that this struggle, in so far as one of its focii is the self-emancipation of the indigenous peoples, is a backward looking, utopian and even reactionary process.

The book explains for example that the first revolution the Zapatistas provoked and experienced was among women. Zapatista women were not content to accept the traditional role in their communities and their voices and demands posed uncomfortable challenges for the men. What is particularly refreshing is that Marcos, at least in retrospect, reflects on this conflict as a positive development, without at all papering over the resistance it met.

The rebellion grew out of the reality that conditions in Chiapas today and in 1994 are and were the product of the neo-liberal offensive. Globalisation has

sharpened the already acute contradictions that exist not only in the urban centres but in rural communities, among indigenous peoples. It was not accident that the first Zapatista uprising took place at the very moment the North American Free Trade Agreement – the clearest fist of neo-liberalism in the region-came into force.

As the EZLN said :
"We are the product of the encounter between indigenous wisdom and resistance and the rebelliousness and valour of the generation of dignity which lit the dark night of the Sixties, the Seventies and the Eighties with its blood"

It is true however that the Zapatistas pose a challenge to any socialist who has a mechanical view of history, who does not understand that in terms of forms of socialisation, creativity and ideas supposedly primitive societies often have things to teach as well as to learn from westernised, urbanised traditions. Indeed one can feel from the stories here that the traditions of self-organisation in these communities are far closer to the vision of socialist democracy than for example the trade union model which permeates our own British experience

At a seemingly trivial but none the less vital level how can one conceive of a movement that has propagated its ideas so widely through electronic media as backward looking? At a more serious level it can scarcely be argued that slogans around Dignity and Justice are not socialist in their content.

After all the Russian Revolution raised the slogans of Bread, Peace and Land – it is the context of slogans as well as the content that gives them their dynamic, progressive, reactionary self-limiting.

The strengths of this book are the strengths of the Zapatistas and its weaknesses likewise. Key concepts of the movement such as "everything for everyone,

nothing for ourselves" and "command obeying" require more than a instant dismissal as foreign to our ways of thinking in the revolutionary tradition.

"Command obeying" for example is being articulated in a society where the PRI have been in government for 68 years and wreaked untold devastation on the Mexican peoples during that time.

But they are the Institutionalised Revolutionary Party. They still use the word revolutionary, manipulating and claiming for themselves the legacy of Zapata. It as if they have the divine right of Presidents – after all not so different from the divine right of kings. They certainly do not command respect, do not command obeying.

Similarly one can read "everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves" as a comment on a system where in an incredibly blatant way politicians aspire to power in order to lavishly feather their own nests rather than to enhance the lives of those they supposedly represent. It also has something to say about the legacy of Stalinism where again the bureaucracy became a parasitic leech sucking blood from working people.

But it seems that the balance sheet that the Zapatistas – and the authors of this book – draw from both Mexican and international history is that these problems need to be solved by counterposing living democracy to the dead hand of party organisation, be that parliamentary or Leninist and by rejecting the idea that they want to take state power or indeed power at all.

Within the book concepts of power are dealt with in a relatively detailed way, especially in Patricia King and Javier Villanueva's essay 'Breaking the Blockade' and in Luis Lorenzano's 'Zapatismo: Recomposition of Labour Radical Democracy and Revolutionary Project'.

'Breaking the Blockade' argues:

The first revolution the Zapatistas provoked and experienced was among women

"Yet the struggle is not about taking power. The efficacy of one praxis over another is not something which can 'be taken' as you might pick up a tool; it must and can only, take shape from the material through which it works.

Power in action takes from in the political institutions it creates and shapes to extend its rule.

"Taking power means that a new community takes control of the institutions formerly used by the old community to exercise its power, thus displacing and reducing the old community. A revolutionary community cannot do this because the efficacy of such institutions lies in their capacity to maintain the collectivity of loneliness and eliminate revolutionary communities".

This argument is profoundly frustrating at many levels. It misunderstands the whole point of the Leninist legacy and praxis - that is that in order to take power, revolutionaries have to destroy the bourgeois state for precisely this reason (albeit explained in rather different language) It is not only the legacy of the PRI which blocks dialogue here, but the way that Stalinism has warped the reading of Lenin's thought.

Our argument exists not only on the level of theory, but with the practice of the Zapatistas too. In so far as they not only spurn the notion of taking power, but of forming a party in the sense they understand it, and certainly of participating in elections they de facto give credence to other political forces which limit struggle and self organisation far more.

The PRD under the leadership of Cardenas was a break with the PRI on an anti-corruption and democratic ticket. But the rupture is very much a partial one - Cardenas' party in my view remains a bourgeois

formation. Initially in practice only, but increasingly going beyond that, the Zapatistas have given legitimacy to this formation on the electoral level – a process which has both limited their own political development and the self organisation of the Mexican peoples.

However while this discussion and praxis is frustrating in the brick walls it builds as well as illuminating in those it bulldozes, the response of thinking socialists cannot be to sit on the perimeter fence and throw stones.

If we are to reach new audiences for our ideas, whether in Chiapas, Mexico or internationally we have to relate to and engage with this movement and run with the challenges it poses.

Zapatistas on-line

Electronic sites which contain information about the Zapatistas and Chiapas including archived material can be found at :

gopher
eco.utexas.edumailinglists/Chaipas95
or
<http://www.eco.utexas.edu:80/Homepages/Faculty/Cleaver/chaipas95.html>
<http://www.eco.utexas.edu:80/Homepages/Faculty/Cleaver/index.html>

MexNews and Mexico Update are news services on Mexican politics, economy, and the situation in Chiapas which are posted in English - among other languages. Information can be obtained from co-ordinator Jose A Briones at brioneja@town.apci.com

Zapatistas! Documents of the new Mexican Revolution is available on the Net at <gopher://lanic.utexas.edu:70/11/1a/Mexico/Zapatistas>

Join the Mexican Support Group

- THE MEXICAN support group fights to promote the interests of the people of Mexico and in particular the poorest sectors by increasing awareness in Britain, promoting self determination of the indigenous peoples and highlighting human rights violations, promoting support for Mexican groups which represent and defend the rights of popular sectors and monitoring Trans-nationals, particularly British business in the Mexican economy and British state involvement in Mexico.
- Membership is £5 waged, £7 low waged, £10 waged, cheques payable to Mexico Support Group. send to MSG, Latin American House, Kingsgate Place, London NW6 4TA

Zapatista Action Project

The Zapatista Action Project (ZAP) is a network that includes the Mexico Support Group, For Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, the Green Student Network, the Kings Cross Women's Centre and many other groups.

ZAP demands that the European Union suspends its Free Trade Agreement with Mexico until human rights are fully respected there. We demand that the European Union suspend its Free Trade Agreement with Mexico until human rights are fully respected there.

We demand that the Mexican Government : demilitarise Chiapas, Guerrero and all of Mexico. Withdraw Troops from the Zapatista areas. Respect and implement the San Andres Accords on Indigenous Rights. Dismantle the Death Squads. Hands off Human Rights Observers.

Contact ZAP c/o BM CRL London WC1N 3XX , phone 0181 679 6930 e-mail chaipaslink@acephale&fhuman@btinternet.com UK Zapatista Challenge website:<http://www.acephale.org/encuentro>

Trotsky's 'Transitional Programme' and its value today

John Lister

The 'Transitional Programme', drafted by Leon Trotsky, was the main programmatic document adopted by the Fourth International at its founding Congress in Paris sixty years ago - in September 1938.

Trotsky had been, with Lenin, a leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, and had continued to fight on, after Lenin's death, against the decline of the Soviet Union into bureaucracy and the politics which were imposed upon the Third International (Comintern) under the influence of the arch-bureaucrat Joseph Stalin.

By the mid 1920s Trotsky had lost the battle in the USSR and been driven into exile, but despite Stalin's determined efforts to suppress (and eventually murder) those within the Communist Parties who remained loyal to revolutionary politics, and rejected Stalin's "theory" of building "socialism in one country", he was able to find principled supporters and continued the fight.

Not until the Comintern had refused to discuss the political lessons of the catastrophic defeat of the German working class after Hitler's rise to power - a victory made easier by the ultra-left policy of the mass German Communist Party, as dictated by the Kremlin - did Trotsky draw the conclusion that the International formed by Lenin to lead the world revolution had become an irreformable obstacle to revolutionary struggles.

He reluctantly concluded that it was necessary for the small, beleaguered forces which had rallied to his International Left Opposition to begin to build a new, Fourth International to carry forward the legacy of the October Revolution and honestly analyse the class struggle in order to give a lead to the working class.

The Transitional Programme and the Fourth International were both born, as Trotsky put it, "amid the roar of defeats". Stalinism was rampant in the USSR; fascism stalked Europe, and the Spanish Revolution was providing bitter proof of the bankruptcy of Stalin's policy of forming "Popular Fronts" with sections of the bourgeoisie as a means to fight fascism.

Trotsky's text is therefore a remarkable achievement, in that while it confronts the grim reality of the period, and spells out the historic defeats that had been suffered, it sets out a confident, optimistic programme of tasks for the Fourth International, based on a continued confidence in the revolutionary power and potential of the working class.

The problem, Trotsky (and the new FI) insisted, was not the strength of capitalism, which he argued was locked in its "death agony", but the fact that workers were prevented by their bureaucratic leaders from feeling and using their strength as a class in order to sweep away this wretched system and lay the basis for socialism. The very first sentence of the Transitional Programme bangs this point home:

"The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterised by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat."

In less than 50 pages Trotsky manages to capture the revolutionary commitment which helped drive through the victorious October Revolution, contrasting this with the bankrupt policies and actions of the various leaders of the working class - the timid trade union bureaucrats, the social democrats making May Day speeches about socialism while seeking only reforms within the capitalist system, and the Communist Parties which, under Stalin's control, had become another means to restrain the strength of the working class, and tools of Kremlin foreign policy.

But the Transitional Programme is even more remarkable than this: not only does it draw the political divide between the revolutionary fighters of the Fourth International and the bureaucrats and misleaders, it is also a guide to action, setting out a series of slogans and demands aimed at mobilising and organising the maximum strength of the working class, popularising the basic notions of socialism, and leading wide sections of workers to recognise the need for socialist revolution.

The notion of "transitional demands" was not new: the Third and Fourth (pre-Stalin) Congresses of the Comintern had discussed ways of enabling the new Communist Parties to reach and mobilise wider layers of the working class, winning them over from social democratic leaders. The *Theses on Tactics* in the Third (1921) Congress urged parties to:

"put forward demands whose fulfilment is an immediate and urgent working class need, and they must fight for these demands in mass struggle, regardless of whether they are compatible with the profit economy of the capitalist class or not."

"These partial demands, anchored in the needs of the broadest masses, must be put forward by the communist parties in a way which not only leads the masses to struggle, but by its very

nature also organises them. ...

"It is not a question of proclaiming the final goal to the proletariat, but of intensifying the practical struggle which is the only way of leading the proletariat to the struggle for the final goal ..."

These methods had long been discarded by the Stalinist leaders of the Comintern, who had directed CPs to abandon even the most minimal reformist demands in the search for "popular front" alliances with sections of "liberal", "democratic" or "anti-fascist" capitalists.

Trotsky not only revived the method of transitional demands, but expanded them and brought the argument for them up to date. There was, he argued a glaring contradiction between the fact that objective conditions were ripe for revolution, while the working class was not equipped politically to wage a revolutionary struggle:

"It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily



struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist programme of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat."

The Fourth International was not to be a propagandist sect, standing on the sidelines of the class struggle, abstractly denouncing social democrats and Stalinists and simply proclaiming the need for revolution.

On the contrary, its forces would intervene into all of the daily struggles of the working class, defending all of the democratic rights and social gains that had been won, while advancing also transitional demands - "the essence of which is contained in the fact that ever more openly and decisively they will be directed against the very foundations of the bourgeois regime."

The scope of the transitional demands was wide indeed. The

most simple was for the defence of working class living standards through the protection of wages against inflation, with a *sliding scale of wages* - a demand which nevertheless challenges the 'right' of employers to protect their profits at workers' expense.

A more obvious challenge to the very logic of capitalist "viability" is the rejection of employers' right to slash jobs at will. The call for a *sliding scale of hours* (popularised as "work sharing on full pay") to share available work throughout the whole working class raises also the issue of who should organise the system, and the question of workers' control.

Other transitional demands take up the same theme, with the call for *factory committees* to link, organise and lead the most militant workers, establishing "dual power in the factory", and for these committees to demand *an end to business secrets*, forcing employers to "open the books". Banks and heavy industry were to be among the first for scrutiny by workers' committees, to expose the hidden links, deals and the true scale of profits concealed behind the bosses' pleas of financial pressures.

While it could help build working class opposition to a particular employer, the fight to open the books would also serve a wider purpose: it would begin to train a layer of worker militants to understand the workings of the economy, and thus to develop an alternative plan to counter the anarchy of crisis-ridden capitalism and its "free market".

The fight against unemployment should include, but go beyond the fight for a *programme of public works*: it should lead to ways in which the enormous productive power held back by capitalism could be unleashed:

"Thus workers' control becomes a *school for planned economy* ... If the abolition of business secrets is a necessary condition to workers' control, then control is the first step along the road to the socialist guidance of the economy."

In this context Trotsky argues that the generalised socialist programme of expropriating the capitalist class should not be allowed to stand in the way of demands for *specific firms or branches of industry to be expropriated*.

He draws a line between the reformist approach to "nationalisation" - in which lavish compensation is paid and the nationalised industry remains part of the capitalist economy (as in post-war Britain) - and expropriation without compensation as part of the fight for the "seizure of power by the workers and [poor] farmers".

The call for a *workers' and farmers' government* is also part of the system of transitional demands, which also include calls for the *expropriation of the banks*, organising *workers' defence squads* to protect picket lines, and a *workers' militia* to combat fascist thugs, and a struggle against imperialism and war.

Trotsky forcibly argues that the traditional organisations of the working class - the social democratic and Stalinist parties - did not want to take power in their own hands: "they do not wish to tear themselves away from the political semicorpse of the bourgeoisie".

This lesson has been repeatedly confirmed by events over 60 years, most vividly in recent times by the actions of the British Labour Party up to and since May 1997: despite their massive landslide majority, Blair's team have been determined to keep the bankers and bosses in the driving seat, and to ensure that the working class movement is kept as far away as possible from the real levers of power.

The transitional demand for a workers' government is therefore quite different from the tactical electoral call for a Labour government: it is a fight for the political demands of the working class, which can help to expose the limits of social democracy, to be used "as an antibourgeois and anticapitalist slogan":

"The sections of the Fourth International should critically orient themselves at each new stage, and advance such slogans as will aid the striving of the workers for independent politics, deepen the class character of these politics, destroy reformist and pacifist illusions ..."

As if to underline still further that the transitional demands are designed to go well beyond any parliamentary solution, Trotsky goes on to spell out a perspective of linking factory committees into local *soviets*, revolutionary councils of workers' delegates, based on the experience of the Russian Revolution, which can offer coordination and a forum for political debate across a town or city.

Trotsky emphasises the extent to which such bodies, at a time of rising struggle, represent the emergence of dual power, a challenge to the capitalist state and its machinery of repression:

"Dual power in its turn is the culminating point of the transitional period. Two regimes, the bourgeois and the proletarian are irreconcilably opposed to each other. Conflict between them is inevitable. The fate of society depends on the outcome."

So despite the limited numbers and political isolation of many of the Trotskyist forces at the time of the formation of the Fourth International, the founding programme set out a bold series of *agitational* demands, designed to win wider support among sections of the working class.

This, coupled with the essential principles spelled out in the Transitional Programme - setting out a line of political independence from the social democratic and Stalinist leaderships, up to and including the call for a political revolution to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR while defending the nationalised property relations



Trotsky could draw upon experience of revolution

established in 1917 – has proved to be an abiding strength of the Transitional Programme.

Some of the demands seem very advanced in their revolutionary content: but Trotsky was basing them on the experience of struggles both in the run-up to the Russian Revolution, but also the more recent experiences of Trotskyists in the USA.

Led by James P. Cannon, the US Trotskyists had been able to play a key leading role in the explosive unionisation struggles which began in Minneapolis and which built the Teamsters union in the mid-1930s.

In the course of these battles, the small forces of Trotskyists had been able to reach and mobilise tens of thousands of workers: but they had also been obliged to build workers' defence squads to defend picket lines against violence from the state and the bosses' armed thugs.

It was Trotsky's recognition of the need to find ways to strengthen and deepen the foothold that had been established in the American trade unions which led to the emphasis on a programme of transitional demands that could popularise socialist ideas among even the most non-political layers.

Many of the 1938 transitional demands retain their full force sixty years later, though others reflect the time in which the programme was developed. We can be sure that if Trotsky were writing a programme in the 1990s a wide range of additional themes would be included, notably the fight against racism, and the struggle for women's liberation, which receives only a passing mention in the 1938 programme.

The post-war Trotskyist movement has also responded to the struggle for the liberation of lesbians and gay men, as well as defence of the environment against the ravages of international capital and the cynical Stalinist bureaucracies.

The 1938 programme was not written as a Bible of unalterable and fixed pronouncements, to be dusted off and quoted: it was a

guide to action for the newly-founded FI and its sections.

Today we would want to amplify the section on the imperialist countries, to include defence and extension of the welfare state provisions that have been won in the post-war period, and to oppose the privatisation of nationalised utilities and industries.

The massive numerical expansion of the working class, and the increasingly capitalist character of agriculture in the post war period also mean that it is also not appropriate in many imperialist (and even some less devel-



oped) countries to maintain the slogan of a workers' and farmers' government, which in 1938 was used by US Trotskyists. The section on "backward countries" needs extensive re-working in the light of subsequent developments, though the emphasis upon the leading role that must be played by the working class, and on a working class programme which includes but goes beyond democratic demands which can win support from the peasantry, remains crucial in today's "Third World" struggles.

We have seen many examples in which radical petty bourgeois nationalist leaderships have emerged, mouthing left rhetoric, only to turn sharply against the working class once imperialist rule has been defeated.

But these later developments do not invalidate the programme: it was written as a topical analysis in which the general political principles of the new International were strengthened by the use of current, concrete examples.

Far from standing as a fixed

monument, the strength of the Transitional Programme is that its method of approach gives today's marxists the basis to expand and develop a programme for action today.

Among the huge upheavals and political changes since 1938, perhaps the biggest has been the collapse since the late 1980s of the apparatus of Stalinist rule across much of Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union itself, which in turn has led to a prolonged crisis of the Communist Parties around the world.

Trotsky had mercilessly attacked the reactionary politics of the Kremlin bureaucracy, and insisted in the Transitional Programme that "Each day added to its domination helps rot the foundations of the socialist elements of the economy and increases the chances for capitalist restoration."

Indeed the extension of Stalinist rule in the grotesquely deformed "workers' states" which were created in post-war Eastern Europe served also to discredit the ideas of Marxism among millions more workers.

The collapse of these unloved and repressive regimes has exposed the lack of any developed socialist opposition: unfortunately the political vacuum is all too often being filled by reactionary nationalism, a revival of religious superstition, and desperate attempts to enter the capitalist market system.

If the post war Trotskyist movement has a recurrent weakness, it has been its tendency to refer back to texts such as the Transitional Programme and to look to the past for finished answers to problems and analysis of events which have happened decades later.

Sixty years on, while there have been important developments on specific areas of policy – notably women's liberation – there have been few serious attempts to revisit the task which Trotsky took on in 1938, of putting forward a systematic programme to encapsulate the principles, traditions, method and orientation of the Fourth International.

A 1998 programme would begin from the same premise as in 1938: six decades on, the key to the situation remains the crisis of leadership of the proletariat.

The "death agony" of capitalism has been interminably prolonged by the ability of the Stalinist and social democratic leaders to contain and derail the struggles of the working class: Trotsky and Lenin had both warned that no crisis would lead automatically to the end of capitalist rule as long as workers could be forced to pay the price.

But the crisis is entering a new, acute phase with the collapse of the Asian "tiger" economies and panic on the money markets.

The task of Trotskyists and the Fourth International today – still, unfortunately, limited in numbers – is to work within the struggles and mass movements of the working class for demands which mobilise workers and organise them, and in so doing raise their consciousness of themselves as a class, and the need to fight for a socialist society. The 1938 Transitional Programme offers a priceless starting point for the development of policies, slogans and action to that end.

60 YEARS

INTERNATIONAL

60 Years of the Fourth International

FIVE veteran members of the Fourth International discuss the early years of the Trotskyist movement.

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- * CHARLIE van GELDEREN
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- * LIVIO MAITAN * JOHN ARCHER

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UNL (details above)

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Remembering Paul Wozny

Comrade and class fighter

IT IS WITH sadness that Socialist Outlook has to report the death of Paul Wozny, a long standing supporter and militant labour movement activist on September 20. He was 44 years old.

Born Pavel Wozney, Paul was brought up in New Jersey, USA, before moving to England in 1970. Paul's political upbringing was heavily influenced by his Polish father, and a brother who was active in Solidarnosc.

Paul will be remembered as an active trade unionist. He first got involved with the NUS (RMT) on the Harwich ferries. He was a full-time UNISON convenor when he died. He was also an active member of the Labour Party.

Paul's funeral took place on September 28 in Southampton and was attended by nearly 100 people, his family and many friends from all strands of his political life. Labour Party members, sisters and brothers from UNISON and the Trades Council and members of every different left current present in the city he had made his home.

If one thing stands out in the many tributes we received - only a sample of which we are able to print here - it was Paul's non-sectarianism.

While always defending his own deeply-held views, Paul never let this stand in the way of working with those he disagreed with. He was looked to for guidance by many in other left currents who valued his ideas and experience. He was the backbone of everything that happened in Southampton and played a broader role in the left of UNISON.

He will be sorely missed.

Simon Letts (Southampton Campaign Group)

I FIRST met Paul when - shortly after joining the Labour Party in 1985 - I attended the AGM of our local St Luke's Ward.

It was attended by nearly 70 people and it soon became clear that they divided neatly into two groups. Paul was one of the more vocal members of the smaller of the two groups, as he was for the majority of his political career.

Even those who were opposed to his politics saw him as a worthy advocate for principled red blooded socialism.

I saw Paul on many occasions in the years that followed, at constituency meetings or at the various rallies against the Poll Tax or pit closures, but I only got to know him well just after Tony Blair was elected leader of the party, when many of us on the left in Southampton came to



Paul Wozny (right) in characteristic relaxation at this year's Outlook Summer School with Glen Vorriss and Steve Hall

form the Southampton Socialist Campaign Group.

Paul was immediately elected on to the Committee. I was surprised to discover that far from being the harsh unmoving figure of his GC contribution, he was a decent, honest and principled man, and frankly a little soft.

It was often Paul who would support a position of compromise when we discussed tactics and strategy, and this spirit of working together washed over into his political contributions.

He was probably listened to more in the last two years of his life than at any other time. Consistency of political position and the principled logic of his arguments are what Paul will be remembered for.

I spoke to Paul three days before his death. As usual, it was in the pub.

I had been at the Labour Party GC. Paul had been defending a trade union member at an appeal. We had both had minor victories. Paul was in good spirits. His evening's work had resulted in somebody else keeping their job. I had been completely exonerated on a charge of bringing the party into disrepute. We were both optimistic about the chances of the Grassroots Alliance at the Labour Party Conference, scheduled to start the following week.

I wished Paul goodnight as we left the pub together, little knowing that I would never see him alive again. He will be sadly missed.

Steve Fricker (Socialist Appeal)

Paul Wozny was a good mate and comrade of mine. His death was a terrible shock to me, we had enjoyed a pint or three with other comrades only on Thursday in the local pub.

He will be sorely missed by his comrades and all on the left in Southampton Labour Party and throughout the labour move-

ment in Hampshire.

In the Labour Party Paul was an inspiration, continually taking on the right throughout the difficult period that the left has been through. It is dreadful for all of us that just as the tide is turning in the left's favour, this tragedy should occur.

Rod Marshall

I would like to say that while I didn't always agree with Paul when I discussed issues with him that I thought he was a great comrade who had a real passion and humanity.

I remember going to Southampton for a meeting and Paul was really welcoming and comradely despite the pressures of work he was under.

It's so sad for the left to lose someone of his calibre and I'm really saddened on a personal level as I look back on my meetings with Paul with real fondness.

Terry Conway (Socialist Outlook)

While I am still reeling from the news of his untimely death, I am pleased that my last memory of Paul is one in which he was thoroughly enjoying himself. It was at our recent Socialist Outlook Summer School in Bangor, North Wales. We discussed political theory and lessons from the history of the worker's movement during the day. In the evenings there was time to relax, to talk with comrades one hadn't seen for a long time or were meeting for the first time.

On the last evening of our stay the session of talking, drinking and listening to music culminated late into the night in a prolonged session of singing political songs. Paul was one of those who gave voice, entertaining us with songs from his native America and revelling in its great tradition of political folk music.

He sang 'Union Maid' (one of

my favourites) and then Joe Hill. Its in the words of the later that I can find the best tribute to Paul's work, to what he did so well and how I will long remember him:

"Where working folk defend their rights, it's there you'll find Joe Hill"

Glenn Kelly, National Secretary CFDU

On behalf of the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic UNISON National Committee I wish to send our sincere condolences to Paul's family and friends at this time of their tragic loss.

Paul had been a member of the CFDU National Committee since its inception in 1993 and was always an ardent defender of the need for socialists within the union to organise themselves, and to mount a campaign not only to force the union to fight for its members but to win the union to socialist ideas.

Our memorial to Paul must be to continue that fight and to organise the left unity within the union that Paul always held so dearly.

Jonathan Joseph (Workers Action)

Paul will be remembered as a great class fighter and comrade of the highest integrity and principle. There was no messing around with Paul. He meant what he said and then did it.

In this respect he was the best militant activist that I have come across.

But it wasn't just activism for the sake of it. Paul was always clear about what he was doing and what he aimed to get.

Paul always knew the battleground. The right in the Labour Party and unions were running scared of him because he could always turn their arguments round or quote facts back to them.

Paul never compromised his

principles. However, he was always concerned to build as broad an opposition in the labour movement as he could.

It is a testament to Paul that in Southampton he has helped to build probably the biggest Campaign Group branch, one of the most militant UNISON branches (solidly supporting the CFDU) and one of the few functioning Trades Councils.

When I first met Paul I was demoralised and my politics were ill informed and wildly ultra-left (very funny - I know they still are!). Paul patiently reintroduced me to the labour movement. Along with Nigel we worked together as *Socialist Outlook* supporters. We argued out our differences until we developed joint positions.

Paul was angry when I joined what became Workers Action. However, he understood my reasons and his arguments never became bitter.

Paul's typical day involved working full-time for UNISON, going to political meetings, then going down the pub. Then he drank and smoked some more at home, watching several hours of pre-recorded films and US sitcoms, kicked us out, went to bed and read historical books.

He identified with the Muddy Waters' line, "I live for comfort not for speed" (I was one of the few who he could get away with playing his doggy music to). Unfortunately comfort can be just as dangerous if it involves lots of smoking, junk food and beer. He would tell people off if they offered him things like low tar cigarettes!

Paul's aggression at meetings was his way of overcoming nerves. If people didn't like speaking at meetings he'd tell them about his own fears to try and encourage them. Paul would speak with a loud voice but his hands would be shaking.

If Paul shouted or got shouted at in meetings I would wind him up by telling him how soft he really was. He'd do all kinds of stupid things like sending chocolates or flowers.

For the three years I was in Southampton he was my best mate and biggest influence. But this is something that many others might also rightly claim. His tragic death is a huge loss to the labour movement and the revolutionary left. The class struggle will be worse off without him.

■ A trust fund has been set up in Paul's memory which will be used for educational purposes. Cheques should be made payable to Hampshire UNISON and sent to St Thomas' Centre, Southgate St, Winchester SO23 9EF.

■ A memorial meeting is being organised for Paul, probably on November 20. Call *Socialist Outlook* to confirm details.

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 building simultaneously 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.

WHAT'S ON

October

Thursday 15. Public Meeting, 'Indigenous and Zapatista communities confront state terror'. Report back from fact-finding delegations to Mexico and a report from a Zapatista Liberation Front representative. 7.00p.m., PRAXIS, Port St., London E2 (Bethnal Green tube). Speakers: Richard Howitt MEP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Nikki Crosse, representatives of the delegations to Chiapas and a representative of the Zapatista Liberation Front. Organised by the Mexico Support Group.

Friday 16 United Friends and Family Campaign. Protest in support of those who have lost relatives in police custody at conference called by Police Complaint Authority. Church House, Westminster. Phone 0370 432439 for details.

Saturday 17 Network of Socialist Campaign Groups Steering Committee, 1-4.30p.m., Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham.

National Conference 'End Sanctions Against Iraq' - 'The Silent Holocaust'. Supported by FBUI. 10a.m., Mechanics Institute, Princess St., Manchester.

Cameroon Democracy Campaign and Cameroonian Asylum Seekers defence campaign demonstration. Assemble 12 noon, Palace Gardens Terrace, Notting Hill Gate (Notting Hill tube). Supported by National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns, Newham Monitoring Project, Socialist Party and others.

Friday 23 Tameside Careworkers Benefit, Foo Foo's Place, Dale St., Manchester. Tickets £3. Contact 0161 308 2452.

Saturday 24 Campaign for State Education 'Say No to Selection'. Speakers include Roy Hattersley. Jeffrey Hall, Institute of Education, London WC1, 2.30-4.30p.m.

Berwick-upon-Tweed Trades Council Day school, 'Towards 2,000 - A People's Europe?', discussions on trade unionism and the way forward for the left in Europe. 10.00a.m.-4.30p.m. The Castle Hotel, by Berwick Railway station. Details 01289 304812.

'The Betrayal of Stephen Lawrence, Grassroots

responses and the way forward.' A National Racial Harassment Conference, organised by Sia, the National Development Agency for the Black Voluntary Sector and the National Racial Harassment Network. 10.00a.m.-4.30p.m., Camden Centre, Camden Town Hall, London WC1.

Saturday 31/Sunday 1 November Left Forum '98. Speakers include Tony Benn and Ken Livingstone. 10a.m., NATFHE Britannia St. Conference Centre, London WC1.

November

Thursday 5. Blair Peach 20th Anniversary Committee organising meeting, 6.30p.m., Camden Town Hall, Judd St., London WC1.

Saturday 7 Open meeting Euromarch steering committee, 1p.m. Leeds TUC, 88 North Street.

Saturday 14. 60 Years of the Fourth International, 5 veteran Trotskyists discuss the early years of the movement. 1-6p.m. (registration from 12noon), University of North London, Spring House, N7 (near Highbury and Islington underground).

Saturday 14 Labour Left Briefing AGM, Somerstown Community Centre, 150 Ossulston St., London NW1, 11a.m.-5p.m. Speakers include Liz Davies, Jeremy Corbyn and Geoff Martin.

Sunday 15. Fighting neo-liberalism world-wide. One day public event organised by Socialist Outlook with speakers from the Fourth International. 11.00a.m.-4p.m., University of North London, Spring House, N7 (Highbury & Islington tube).

Wednesday 18 National demonstration 'Unite for Free Education, Grants Not Fees'. 12 noon University of London Union. Speakers include Tony Benn, Steve Bell and Kate Buckell (Campaign for Free Education).

Saturday 21 National Assembly Against Racism AGM. 28 Commercial St., London E1.

December

Saturday 5 Network of Socialist Campaign Groups AGM, London.

Clinton's real crimes

THE MEDIA are raising a hullabaloo. Clinton, President of the United States, the most powerful man in the world is facing impeachment and the end of his political career.

Why? Because he conducted himself in an inappropriate manner with a young woman in the White House and then lied about it.

That at least is the official version on which the hypocrites in Congress - not many of whom could stand scrutiny of their own sexual peccadilloes are threatening him.

Of course we do not condone his conduct, using the boss-underling relationship to obtain sexual gratification. This is only too common in many commercial and industrial enterprises. It has even been known to happen in the police force, the armed services and government departments....

But Clinton's real crimes are much more serious than these episodes in the Oval office.

Clinton's Presidency has been characterised by a marked deterioration in the lives of the submerged underclass in American society.

In this, the wealthiest country in the world 21.5 per cent of children live in poverty - two or three times more than in other major industrial countries.

Charges for emergency food at soup kitchens rose by 16 per cent in 1997/

The increase in wealth from the currently booming economy has gone almost entirely to the rich, especially the super-rich.

After 6 years of the Clinton administration 40 per cent of US assets are owned by the richest one per cent - up from 21 per cent in 1949.

Clinton is the man who ordered the destruction of a chemical plant in Sudan which it has now been proved was manufacturing medicines not poison gasses. He has continued the criminal boycott of Cuba causing poverty and hunger.

Letters



We welcome readers' letters on any topic. Letters over 400 words may be cut for space reasons. Write to *Socialist Outlook*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. email: outlook@gn.apc.org

These are the crimes for which he will be indicted by history long after his affair with Monica Lewinsky is forgotten.

Charlie van Gelderen, Cambridge

Query over queer article

I've just read your September issue. Generally the articles were good - for example the page by Socialist Democracy, the article on Permanent Revolution, on Zheng Chaolin and parts of the article on the current economic crisis.

However the article "A strategy for a queer planet" was not so good. The title itself reflects the confused political mish-mash of the content.

It was a passive list of observations and suffered from the absence of any concept of the application of transitional demands. You report on the arguments - without any detail - without saying which if any you agreed or disagreed with.

The term "straight left" brings to mind petty-bourgeois phrase mongers who refer to the "white left" or the "male left". What does the

term actually mean.

What is the nature of the room wanted in the "straight left". Why won't you say what you think - if you have anything to say.

I would be wary of any promotion of illusions in gay/lesbian separatism. This kind of politics may endear you to middle class/ non-socialist elements but it won't contribute an inch to really striking at the root of homophobia ie the family and the capitalist system that requires its existence.

Those who support gay/lesbian separatism are either unconvinced of the Marxist case or more commonly drawn from the middle class/ petit bourgeoisie. My own experience leads me to think that certain gay/lesbian people have some material stake in maintaining homophobia eg owners of gay/lesbian clubs

which to an extent only exist because of homophobia.

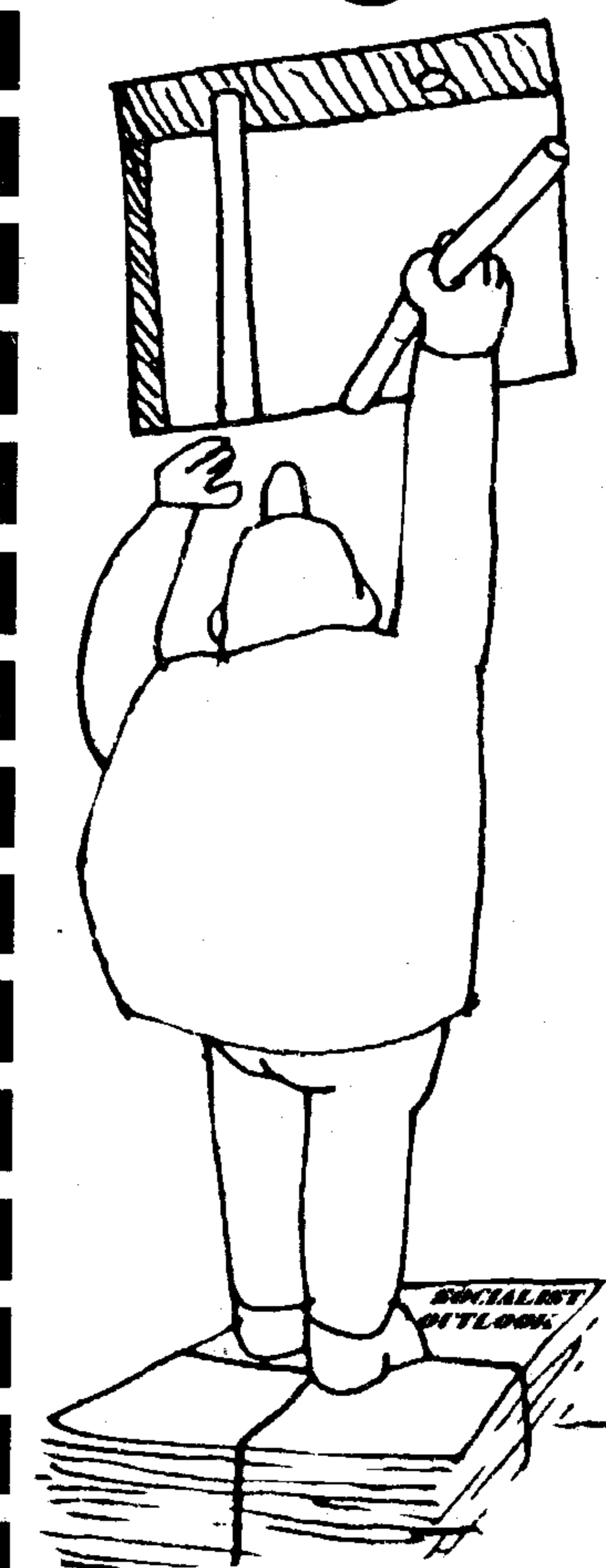
I certainly would not advocate that working class gays/lesbians should surrender fighting for their class interests in the cause of a "queer planet".

Steve Collins, Wolverhampton

Ed note: Neither *Socialist Outlook* or the article advocate separatism - instead we support autonomous organisation which we believe is absolutely complementary to the class struggle not a detraction or diversion. (see centre spread in this issue).

The article itself suggests that part of the basis of a separate sub-culture is the discrimination that lesbians and gay men face and certainly puts the capitalist family at the centre of our oppression.

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Socialist Outlook

**Asia, Brazil, Russia... capitalism's
casualty toll grows longer**

Victims must challenge bankrupt system!

See our
economic
analysis,
inside page 8



1,000 unemployed workers in the queue for work in Moscow

IS IT A SLUMP, a downturn or a recession? Day after day the pundits debate the scale of the crisis spreading through the capitalist system since the collapse of the Asian "Tiger" economies.

One corporation publishing local newspapers in Britain has now banned its journalists from using the word "recession", for fear of its impact on advertisers!

Bankers, who neither foresaw the present crisis, nor have any idea how to resolve it, manoeuvre as best they can to safeguard their profits, as their weaker rivals and whole sections of manufacturing industry collapse.

But the people with nowhere to run and no power to influence events are those hardest hit by

the crisis – the millions of workers in Thailand, Indonesia, Korea, Japan and in Russia who have already been thrown out of work, with no prospect of getting their jobs back.

Thousands of workers in Britain are now facing the same problem as the microchip industries which were supposed to represent the future lead the way in slashing back production and sacking staff.

When the system bares its claws in this way, ruthlessly seeking its survival, all the pretence of "partnership" is thrown immediately out of the window. There is no "third way" out: only the first way – a frontal challenge to capital and the governments and state

forces which prop it up across the globe.

The solution is not for workers to accept ever lower wages, or more "flexible" and exploitative working conditions: these "beggar your neighbour" tactics might appear to offer security in the short term at the expense of workers elsewhere, but they simply start another round of worldwide wage cuts, speed-up and rationalisation.

The key is class action: strikes, occupations and international solidarity against the bankers and corporations which have grown fat from decades of exploitation.

Unless there is resistance, the misery will increase. It's time the victims began the fightback.

60 YEARS
INTERNATIONAL

**60 Years of the
Fourth
International**
**1pm-6pm, Saturday
NOVEMBER 14**
(registration, bookstalls and meet speakers from 12 noon)
FULL DETAILS inside, page 17