

Socialist

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OUTLOOK



Tear down 'Fortress Europe!'

During the European summit in Seville on June 22-23, 400 migrant workers staged a hunger strike to demand that they be given work permits and the right to stay in Spain. For their pains they were locked in Seville University, while anti-globalisation protestors staged demonstrations in their support.

Mainly because of opposition from Sweden and France, the summit did not adopt the proposals originally put forward by Spain's Aznar and our own Tony Blair – that countries that refuse to co-operate with the European Union on asylum and immigration should be penalised by cuts in their aid payments.

But there can be no doubt that the walls of Fortress Europe are getting higher all the time. The summit itself laid plans for harmonisation of anti-asylum procedures, for stronger measures to get cases dealt with in the first country in the EU in which someone arrives, and for greater co-operation between border officials.

Most individual states are also introducing more restrictive measures themselves.

None of this will do anything other than give succour to the far-right across Europe, by legitimising their policies and rhetoric.

The way to undercut their growth is not through restrictive asylum policies but rebuilding public services and investing in the polarised communities in which they have sought to develop and base

We say "Fortress Europe – tear it down"! (See inside pp 10-11)

Stop the War Coalition steps up fight Build a massive march on Sept 28!

Paul Wilcox

The Stop the War Coalition, with the support of the Muslim Association of Britain and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign are building for the biggest Anti-war demonstration yet on September 28, the eve of Labour Party conference. Up and down the country local groups are organising against Bush and Blair's war.

A number of events have already taken place as part of the build up. In Hackney the local Stop the War coalition organised a showing of the film 'Not in My Name', where over 200 turned up to watch and to debate the ongoing war and the situation in Palestine.

On June 16 the Coalition organised a activists conference in London, where over 150 people from all over the country discussed the politics of the US and British war drive, as well as how to build the coalition.

Speakers from the Iraqi Workers Communist Party, Mike Marqusee of the Socialist Alliance, Asad Rahman, Lindsey German and Andrew Murray and Jeremy Corbyn MP addressed the gathering.

At UNISON Conference the coalition held a successful fringe meeting attended by 140 delegates and addressed by Lindsey German (Stop the War



Bush: which country is next in US gunsights?

Coalition) Bob Oram (UNISON) and Betty Hunter from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

The discussion from the floor focused on how to build the coalition in branches and to win the resolution before conference to get UNISON to affiliate to the Stop the War Coalition. (Sadly this was not successful). Other national trade unions have affiliated to the Coalition such as the RMT, ASLEF, NAPO and NATHFE.

It is vital to build inside the trade unions. The government continually tell the unions that there is no money for a decent wage but there seems to be plenty of money for bombs. We need trade union branches to mobilise their members and bring their banners to the

demo. Let's make it clear to Blair the trade unions are against his war.

The next step in building for the 28th is a week of action from July 15th. All local groups are being asked to organise activities in their local areas to really get the momentum going for this demonstration.

Biggest

Britain has seen the biggest anti-war demonstrations in Europe. Last month when George Bush visited Europe, it was no surprise that he did not visit Britain despite the fact that Tony Blair is Bush's closest ally.

Since last September some of the largest protests in Britain for many years have worried Blair and his New Labour cronies. The first

demonstration last year received little press coverage, but a short piece in *The Guardian* commented that the Government was worried at the size of the demonstrations.

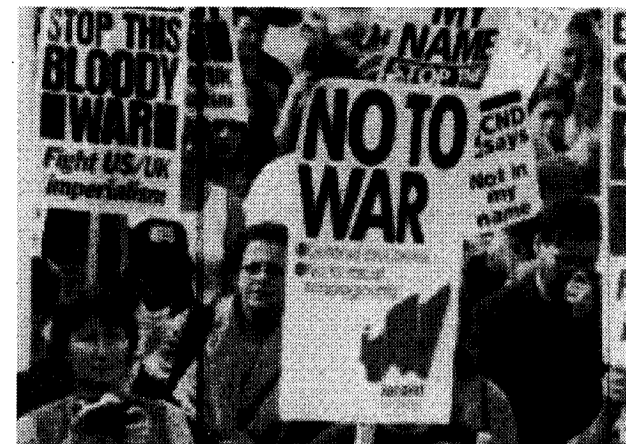
Now well over 100 Labour MPs have signed a early day motion against the war on Iraq, and the mobilisations against this so called "war against terrorism" have put new Labour on the back foot.

Opinion polls show that there is a majority against a war against Iraq. So the reason Bush did not come to visit Blair in Britain was because of the rising anti-war feeling that has built up.

With Blair as George W Bush's closest ally, campaigners have an important job to break Blair from Bush. The US government has said that to bomb Iraq they need Saudi Arabia and Britain on board.

This of course will not stop Bush, but we can make a difference by mobilising and telling the people in this country the truth about the war and untangling the spin that New Labour and Washington are weaving.

Now we hear that Bush is planning what he calls a "pre-emptive retaliatory strike". Many may laugh at the linguistic contortion, but the vicious intent is clear enough. This sort of "Bushism" is not just coming



from the mad Texan in the White House but is being spread by sections of the British media. We have no control over the media - but we have to get the message out about the truth about the war.

When Northern Ireland Minister John Reid spoke at UNISON Conference he told delegates how caring the government is and how much they care about children. This 'care' doesn't appear to extend to the million children in Iraq who have been killed by sanctions, or the children in Afghanistan who have been killed in the so-called "war against terrorism".

Iraq bombing

This "caring" government, which supposedly stands for social justice is pursuing a right wing reactionary agenda and lining up to support the US Government's so-called precision bombing in Iraq.

And today, US and British troops are being deployed, not in the interests of humanity but the interests of profit and those who control that profit.

The US and British governments do not even respect international law and blatantly ignore UN resolutions that do not suit them.

When Saddam Hussein sent the UN Weapons

Inspectors home, the US Government bombed Iraq. But when Israel refuses to allow a UN team to visit the occupied territories, the US doesn't even protest.

And now Bush is breaking the American constitution (not a first in US politics) when he says that the US is sending in teams to assassinate Saddam Hussein, even though it states in the constitution that no foreign leader can be murdered or government toppled.

The cover that is used is to call this a "pre-emptive defensive" measure. Can you imagine what Bush would say if Iraq pre-empted this attack by sending its agents to kill him?!

With the racist Israeli state terrorising the people of Palestine, the threat of nuclear war between India and Pakistan, CIA-backed murders in Columbia and a list a mile long of US and British-backed atrocities across the world, it is vital that we build the biggest anti-war demo that Britain has ever seen.

This war against terror is smokescreen for US Imperialism's drive to totally dominate the globe politically and militarily. Building for the demo on the 28th is an important and significant part of the global fightback against the profit or death capitalist system.

Blairite stitch-up ensures Health Committee report slams PFI critic

John Lister

AT FIRST SIGHT it may be hard to see why the Commons Health Committee report on The Role of the Private Sector in the NHS, published in mid-May, should have been greeted with delight by Alan Milburn, and by the various banks, construction firms, property developers and service providers looking to make profits from the Private Finance Initiative.

Much of the report is at least implicitly, and sometimes openly, critical of government policy of steadily increasing the share of the growing NHS budget that finds its way into the pockets of private shareholders.

But ministerial eyes were focused on just five key - highly contentious - paragraphs (65-69) of the Report. These were written by Blairite stooge Julia Drown, and adopted on the votes of just three of the Committee's 11 members, with two voting against, in the face of opposition from chair David Hinchliffe.

Under cover of Parliamentary

privilege, these paragraphs effectively hijack the Committee's name to mount an extraordinary, personalised and baseless challenge to the credibility of detailed research by one of the sternest academic critics of PFI, Professor Allyson Pollock.

The three Labour members of the Committee who promoted the paragraphs declare themselves "unimpressed" with much of the research presented by Professor Pollock and her University College London's Health Policy and Health Services Research Unit.

But they present no documented argument to refute Prof Pollock's conclusions, which have been presented over the past nine years or so, not only in detailed articles in academic journals but also in verbal evidence and an extensive 4,000-word written submission to the Committee itself.

To ensure that the political significance of their attack on Professor Pollock was made clear, the three Labour members explicitly argue that: "We found the lack of sound

analysis from the HPHSRU additionally worrying because it has been the source of advice for many groups including unions and professional associations, all of whom have used parts of the Unit's work as a justification for their antagonistic attitudes towards the private sector." (para 68)

By attacking Allyson Pollock, the clear intention is - without presenting any coherent alternative evidence or argument - to undermine every reasoned criticism of PFI, and every organisation which continues to uphold those criticisms.

In part this clearly stems from a sense of weakness: while Allyson Pollock's research has won the support of trade unions including UNISON and the GMB as well as the BMA, and has been published subject to peer review in academic journals, the government has been unable to produce any comparable serious response.

Not one article arguing the case in favour of PFI as value for money has been published

in any academic journal - indeed the only substantial study endorsing PFI was a blatantly partisan piece by consultants Arthur Andersen, at a time when they were already making large sums of money by acting as advisors in PFI schemes.

No substantial organisation representing health workers has endorsed PFI.

Despite the loud attempts by a minority on the Committee to frighten off critics of PFI, the remainder of the report underlines widespread popular concerns with the way in which the government is increasing the role of the private sector within the NHS.

Even the section dealing with PFI repeatedly calls - in the paragraphs preceding Julia Drown's outrageous insertion - for "more transparency, openness and accountability", calls for more investigation by the Department of Health and/or the National Audit Office, and questions key aspects of the process by which PFI deals have been claimed to represent 'value for money'.

In addition the opening section examining the use of private hospitals to treat NHS patients under the so-called 'Concordat' drawn up by Alan Milburn repeatedly questions whether such policies offer value for money, or threaten to undermine staffing levels in NHS hospitals.

The Committee urges that the Concordat should be seen as no more than a temporary measure to bridge a gap in capacity until NHS provision can be expanded - asks Trusts to investigate whether they would find it more cost effective to use their own pay beds to treat NHS patients, rather than buy in operations from private hospitals.

Predictably these recommendations have been brushed aside contemptuously by ministers: indeed Milburn has since stuck up two fingers to the Committee by insisting that the Concordat is a permanent arrangement, secure enough for private hospitals to borrow money and invest in extra capacity.

The Report lends the Committee's support to the highly controversial "Retention of Employment Model" under



which most support staff in PFI hospitals would remain in NHS employment, but work under private management (a deal since rejected by UNISON's health conference and the GMB).

But the Committee does not ask the fundamental question: what is supposed to be gained from this planned privatisation of management?

There is no evidence that this would do anything to improve services or patient care, though the opportunity to manage support services offers extra 'profit streams' for the PFI consortia.

Taken as a whole the Report can be seen as signs of a toothless Committee on which some Labour members are desperate to be seen to toeing the line of Labour ministers - in defiance of the weight of evidence before them.

The Report itself with the hallmarks of yet another exercise in control-freakery by ministers who know they cannot win the argument. It is a missed chance to draw hard conclusions from a large body of hard facts. It will delight the fat cats and dismay health workers.

New Labour: new barbarism!

In a stark reminder of the long-term choice for society – between a move forward to socialism or a lurch backwards into barbarism – Blairite Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon has nailed his colours firmly to the mast of barbarism.

Hoon's repeated insistence that New Labour – going far further than any previous Labour or Tory government – would be prepared to use nuclear weapons in a preemptive nuclear strike, even on a country which does not itself have nuclear weapons, will bring warm smiles among George Bush's war-mongering US cabinet, and a chill sense of foreboding to thinking people everywhere.

Hoon's first warning that a new policy was emerging on what appeared to be a largely forgotten and almost academic question of the use of weapons originally designed during the Cold War to counter an alleged Soviet nuclear "threat", came back in March.

Questioned by the commons Defence Committee, Hoon expressed fears that in four "states of concern" (Iraq, Iran, Libya and North Korea) the regime may not be deterred from mounting a chemical or biological weapons attack on Britain by the UK's stock of 185 nuclear missiles.

"In those kinds of states, the wishes and needs and interests of citizens are clearly much less regarded, and we cannot rule out the possibility that such states would be willing to sacrifice their own people to make such a gesture."

Hoon made it clear that in such circumstances Britain's New Labour government would be willing to sacrifice those innocent lives on their behalf:

"They can be absolutely confident that in the right conditions we would be willing to use our nuclear weapons."

Hoon's promise to match and exceed the disregard for human life displayed by Saddam Hussein followed obediently after the announcement from the State Department that the US will now consider using nuclear strikes pre-emptively against non-nuclear states which are claimed to be contemplating the use of weapons of mass destruction.

But just a few days after MPs heard the new British policy, the shaky and unreliable basis on which such attacks might be justified was exposed. The alleged "biological and chemical weapons laboratory" which Downing Street briefings claimed had been found in Afghan caves, and which were used as the pretext for the dispatch of 1,700 Royal Marines, supposedly to fight al-Qaeda, turned out to be a figment of ministers' imagination.

Even Washington denied any knowledge of such a laboratory, and soon afterwards British intelligence, the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office were denying it too.

But by then the decision had been made to dispatch the troops – who have since returned having fired not a single shot in anger, after seeing neither hid nor hair of a Taliban or al-Qaeda fighter in their tour of Afghan mountain scenery.

However if ministers had decided to respond to this alleged "threat" by dispatching not troops but nuclear missiles, countless innocent lives could have been lost, and untold damage done to the planet for generations to come.

Hoon, however, is unrepentant and utterly committed to the new policy of threatening nuclear destruction.

Asked in the Commons on April 29 if the government had abandoned the long-standing policy of successive governments that nuclear weapons should be regarded as "weapons of last resort", Hoon stressed that while the form of words remained, the policy had indeed changed:



Mad bo nber: Geoff Hoon

"For that to be a deterrent, a British Government must be able to express their view that, ultimately, and in conditions of extreme self defence, nuclear weapons would have to be used."

So what, asked Diane Abbott, was "extreme self defence"? Hoon's reply again restated the willingness to push the nuclear button:

"I accept that there are those – some of whom may well be sitting on the Labour Benches – who do not believe in the use of nuclear weapons in any circumstances, but this is not the position of the Government or of the Labour Party."

"It is therefore important to point out that the Government have nuclear weapons available to them and that – in certain specified conditions to which I have referred – we would be prepared to use them."

Given yet another chance by Tony Lloyd in the Commons on June 17 to make clear that he was not talking about a preemptive strike, Hoon again refused to do so:

"I have made it clear before how important it is to recognise that they would be used only in what are described as extreme conditions of self defence. I want to emphasise that it does not help the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons to spell out precisely what those circumstances might be."

Worse, Hoon went on to claim that "nuclear weapons would be used proportionately and consistently with our obligations in interna-

tional law."

Exactly how Hoon imagines that the mass slaughter of a nuclear strike can be carried out "proportionately" is of course not explained.

The legality of the threat is also in doubt: under the UN Charter, both pre-emptive action and even retaliatory action to isolated attacks are illegal. The nuclear non-proliferation treaty also hinges on the joint pledge made in 1978 by the US, Britain and the Soviet Union never to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states.

But George Bush is into tearing up treaties that stand in the way of the new, fearsome US war-drive that has followed on the September 11 events. The ABM treaty has been scrapped to make war for the "star wars" project, which in turn would (if successful) enable the US with impunity to threaten any other country with nuclear annihilation.

Washington has openly threatened war and possible nuclear attacks on a growing list of supposedly rogue states in its "axis of evil", while US nuclear scientists are hard at work on a new generation of smaller "tactical" nuclear weapons for more casual use against "hardened" targets like Afghan caves or Saddam's bunkers.

Trailing behind the US offensive comes Tony Blair's fawning team of lap-dogs, eager for an invitation to be part of any military action.

Some of today's Labour ministers have in recent memory been members of CND: some like foreign office minister Peter Hain, still are. As they allow themselves to be pulled by Hoon and Blair into an indefensible policy, can they all have forgotten the gruesome facts about nuclear weapons that every CND activist used to know?

Can they be unaware that even a one megaton blast would vaporise every living being for a six mile radius? That the light from the blast would blind people and animals for ten miles around? The huge firestorm that will follow the explosion, the radiation burns and subsequent sickness that will spread and kill tens of thousands under the fallout zone, carried by the wind for hundreds of square miles around the explosion? The electro-magnetic pulse that will wipe out electric power sup-



plies, equipment and the whole communications infrastructure over an even wider radius?

To use nuclear weapons is to unleash genocide – and wreak indescribably environmental damage for generations to come.

A nuclear strike can never be a "proportionate" response to anything. There can be no justification for using such weapons either pre-emptively or as a retaliation.

How does Hoon imagine British and other ministers can hope to convince the governments of India and Pakistan to set aside the threat to use these instruments of barbarism while the leading western powers are openly threatening the same themselves?

Socialists can't sit idly by in the vague hope that good sense will prevail, or that hitherto spineless Blairite ministers will return to their CND past and challenge this latest switch of policy.

Labour Party members need to fight this hijacking of the Party to embrace a crazy, irresponsible policy that nobody has ever been asked to vote for.

We need to raise now, within the trade unions, wider and in anti-war campaign work, the demand that ministers renounce any threat to use nuclear weapons.

Far from stoking the fires of the US war drive, the international labour movement should be seeking to build links with US workers to oppose the star wars programme, nuclear weapons research and Bush's massive military build-up.

Hoon's line shows that if this fight is not stepped up, New Labour really could unleash unspeakable horrors on the world.

Tories gain as more see Blair's party as untrustworthy

Dangers in Labour's decline

After winning a landslide win on the Labour Party's lowest ever share of the vote in last year's general election, Tony Blair's team has been plunging in the popularity stakes faster than England's World Cup song.

The belated ditching of the shifty and terminally useless Transport Secretary Stephen Byers has not been enough to salvage the dwindling credibility of a government that promised to change so much, but has wound up so similar to the Tories they replaced.

Sleaze has continued to dog New Labour, and the continuing debate over the links between the self-styled squeaky clean, bible-bashing Blair and the donations from Daily Express owner and porn baron Richard Desmond has filled many column inches for journalists bored with Alistair Campbell's ineffective spin, and hungry for news. Even Blair's efforts to bask in the



Drumming up another donation? reflected glory of the Royal Jubilee were soured by the long-running row over the apparent botched attempts of his office to muscle in on the Queen Mother's funeral. Now, as the England football

team packed their bags and headed for the airport, an opinion poll just after their defeat by Brazil has shown Labour support just 3% ahead of Iain Duncan Smith's anonymous bunch of faceless Tories – and the horrible thought arises that maybe British politics are not so different from those on the continent of Europe, where failed social democratic governments have been ousted one after another by right wing opponents.

Even before the inflated dreams of football success were so rudely punctured by the skills of a clearly superior team it was obvious that Labour's star was on the wane.

Early in June, just after Byers finally fell on his sword, an ICM poll for Radio 4's Today programme showed 54% of respondents had less trust in the government than a year ago: more people thought Labour rather than the Tories was the least trustworthy party.

81% said Labour had failed to meet expectations on transport policy, 65% on health and 51% on education.

Perhaps even more worrying for Blair as he cuddles ever closer to his new pal George W. in the USA, opinion polls also now show a clear majority opposed to any military attack on Iraq.

New Labour's policies are unravelling, and the opposition to them in the unions is continuing to gain strength, with the prospect of more strikes to come from public sector unions.

But the lesson from Europe must be learned by the left, too: it is not enough to see social democracy discredited – a credible socialist alternative must be built, or the only beneficiaries from Labour's decline would be the far right, and IDS's hopeless, reactionary shower of Tories, seeking to outdo Blair from the right.

PCS: Blairite union baron threatens union democracy!

Paul McGowan

The attempt by former General Secretary of the PCS Barry Reamsbottom and his Moderate grouping to prevent Mark Serwotka, his socialist successor, from taking office is a serious attack on the democratic rights of all trade unionists.

The actions of Blairite Reamsbottom and his cronies has led to a situation where the courts will decide who is General Secretary of the Union not PCS members.

In October 2000 Mark Serwotka was elected PCS General Secretary with 42,000 votes in a postal ballot. However due to an agreement between Reamsbottom and the Union, Serwotka was only to take over all the General Secretaries duties after May 31 2002, when Reamsbottom should have retired.

Unfortunately Reamsbottom refused to go quietly, claiming he had a legal opinion stating Serwotka's election was illegal and he should retain his position until 2004. His supporters on the National Executive Committee claim to have removed Serwotka

and reimposed Reamsbottom at a meeting at the end of May.

The President of the Union, Janice Godrich, ruled this meeting was unconstitutional as notice of it was not properly served. In order to defend the democracy of the Union, Godrich and Serwotka have taken these issues to court.

So far the court has ruled that Serwotka should remain as General Secretary elect until a full hearing in July and that both sides should have their court costs paid by the Union.

Mark Serwotka is viewed by the press as one of a 'dangerous' breed of new union leaders, perceived as willing to take on the government and represent their members' interests.

So far Serwotka's leadership has been instrumental in leading to a growing membership and growing militancy in the union. He is openly a supporter of the Socialist Alliance.

According to The Sun, Tony Blair was 'delighted' with Reamsbottom's coup. Blair needs right wing union leaders to quell growing discontent over his Thatcherite

policies.

Unfortunately for New Labour their attempts to interfere in the internal politics of the unions do not seem to be paying dividends at present. A Blairite candidate recently lost the election for Deputy General Secretary in the Transport and General Workers Union.

Meanwhile New Labour's favourite union General Secretary, Ken Jackson is facing a tough fight to retain control of amicus, the engineering and white collar union.

Support for Serwotka has come from many of the leftist union leaders. Bob Crow of the RMT and Billy Hayes of the CWU have both backed him: they recognise the Blairites in the PCS cannot be allowed to get away with thwarting the democratic wishes of members.

The key to the struggle in the PCS is the mobilisation of grassroots members of the union in Serwotka's support. So far the signs are good. Serwotka reached out beyond the traditional constituency of the left in his election campaign, and has remained popular ever since. Left Unity (the main left

grouping in PCS) despite their failure to galvanise support for Mark in his election bid, have now taken him to their heart and are mounting a vigorous campaign in his defence. Even Hugh Lanning, his defeated opponent for General Secretary is backing him.

The attack on Serwotka is a symptom of the weaknesses of Left Unity. Reamsbottom was encouraged to take action by the victory of his Moderates allies in elections to the National Executive Committee, on a very low turnout.

Left Unity's dismal NEC results should partly be blamed on their poor running of the Jobcentreplus screens campaign through their control of the Benefits Agency (BA) and Employment Service (ES) Executives.

Left Unity's defence of Serwotka seems more spirited than their defence of members' terms and conditions. Many of their own leaders' jobs are on the line if Reamsbottom can get rid of Serwotka.

These leaders have often seemed more concerned in the past with protecting their



Fighting for the job he already won: Mark Serwotka

positions as left bureaucrats rather than representing members willing to fight.

Even with a victory for Serwotka in the courts, the Moderate majority on the NEC will remain. The Moderates are rattled by the level of support Serwotka has amongst ordinary members. However they will only become less of a thorn in the side of the Union, if the left can inspire the membership.

The left must ensure members are mobilised around the big issues of the day, as well as the Serwotka dispute.

In the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP), management are attempting to shut a third of old BA and ES offices and introduce outrageous sickness and disciplinary policies.

Despite what is happening

elsewhere, the Left Unity DWP Executive must start to lead a fight against such plans.

Members voted for Serwotka as they could see he had a record second to none of struggle on their behalf. Left Unity must demonstrate it can lead a fightback against management, and is not a vehicle for Left bureaucrats to gain positions. Only then can it start to make real progress in the PCS.

Hopefully Reamsbottom and the Moderates are courting disaster. Mark Serwotka and PCS members deserve our support in their fight for a democratic Union. Trade Unionists can exert pressure on their leaders to isolate Reamsbottom. His breed has no place in the labour movement.

MSF left squeezed since AEEU merger

Terry Conway

The first conference of amicus-MSF section brought only lean pickings for the left.

While this partly reflects a real relationship of forces on the ground, it is also a product of the fact that Unity Left, now the only left grouping in the union, was seriously divided over the merger terms which created the new union from MSF and the AEEU.

This conference not only didn't see its recovery, but its further weakening with the defeat of the left candidate for Vice President.

Unlike the last few conferences of MSF prior to the merger with the AEEU, there was not one debate that dominated the week. However, it is fair to say that while the platform did not get its way on every issue, it was not overturned on any decisive question.

The biggest success for the left was in getting an emergency resolution on asylum passed, committing the union to support for the week of action. In opposing the motion, the NEC hypo-



Gordon Brown at MSF

critically claimed that though they supported the "spirit" of the motion, they called for it to be remitted or rejected because there was not time to carry it out. They added insult to injury they suggested that to show their "goodwill" they would make a donation of £100 - but not to the organisations calling the week of action but to the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants. Despite this conference overwhelmingly agreed to support the motion. However, while this was important - and while the number of MSF banners on the June 22 march was pleasantly high, there was no sign of the national ban-

ner or of any information to branches or members that the resolution was passed.

On privatisation, delegates were angry that last year's MSF conference policy opposing PPP in the NHS had not been implemented and gave the Executive a hard time. Conference committed the section to opposing PFI, PPP or any new privatisations in the health service. Unfortunately it also decided that not to campaign to take privatised industries back into public ownership.

On Europe, the union agreed to instigate a wide-ranging debate on the Euro and what position we should take in the forthcoming referendum. The President-elect made many delegates furious by refusing to take any speakers other than the mover in support of an amendment opposing entry to the Euro. Branches that oppose entry to the Euro will need to look at making sure the debate in the union as a whole is rather more balanced and wide ranging than the one at conference.

Chancellor Gordon Brown

addressed conference, giving a speech full of left-sounding rhetoric in which he emphasised his working class roots, and talked passionately about how his policies at home and debt relief abroad were supposedly taking many people out of poverty.

Though he received a warmer and more lengthy standing ovation than any government minister has done for a number of years, by mid-afternoon the gloss had begun to wear thin. Many delegates could not connect his picture of the world with the one in which they lived and worked.

It seems perhaps as if Gordon Brown has become Prescott's replacement in attempting to keep some connection with Labour's traditional working class base.

On pensions, the union committed itself to a campaign to restore the link between the state pension and earnings. General Secretary Roger Lyons launched a campaign to defend occupational pension schemes, including possible

strike action. The union's press office made sure this was in the hands of the press before the speech was even made, but miraculously weren't able to deliver a press release on asylum 5 working days after the motion was passed.

Probably the low point of conference was the eventual failure to exert any degree of accountability at all over Margaret Wall, MSF's representative on the Labour Party NEC. Wall was instrumental in preventing a vote on a left motion (moved by Mark Seddon and Mary Turner of the GMB) being voted on at the March NEC.

Wall, who is chair of the NEC, manoeuvred at the March meeting to ensure the motion, which opposed any further privatisations, was referred to the policy committee - from which it may never return.

This was first raised by a delegate in the PFI discussion when Margaret Wall was not on the platform and Roger Lyons responded twice, making sycophantic comments about what a wonderful job Margaret was doing. He told delegates how important it was she sat on so many committees - but refused to say anything about the particular issue that had been raised.

Subsequently delegates attempted to take back the section of the NEC report on the Labour Party, which had no political content but only listed the committees on which Margaret Wall sits.

Again Lyons took the microphone to lecture conference about how Margaret Wall did could not be accountable to us, because she was representing the whole trade union movement. He failed of course to point out that both the GMB and RMT supported the motion in question.

Although the reference back clearly received more than a simple majority of delegates the President ruled that it did not have the two-thirds majority needed for a reference back. This was one of many occasions during the week when the supposedly left outgoing President supported the top table rather than the activists.

In many ways conference was a surreal event, because policy that was passed will anyway go to the new joint Executive and so is even less likely to be implemented than before the merger.

It is true that the left in MSF needs to strain every muscle to ensure the victory of Derek Simpson over Sir Ken Jackson. But there also needs to be a major discussion about developing a left that does not see internal elections as their main focus.

We need to build a real base amongst those members who want to fight in the workplace and against the leadership which undermines that struggle time and again.

One year on: 500 rally behind Friction Dynamics strikers

Jack Johnson

Over 500 demonstrators, most of them TGWU members, assembled in Caernarfon's municipal car park on June 8, before marching through the town in support of the sacked strikers at Friction Dynamics.

Delegations had come from England and Scotland as well as all over Wales, and the march was applauded by local people who lined the route to the centre of the town.

A rally there was addressed by Labour and Plaid Cymru MPs, each of whom promised to support the campaign by the TGWU for a change in the law, which currently allows strikers to be sacked after eight weeks in dispute.

The main speaker at the rally was TGWU General Secretary Bill Morris, and the best-received part of his speech was when he attacked the lack of support from the Blair government.

"It cannot be right for people to be sacked for defending their conditions. How can it be right for our Labour government to stand idly by for 12 months, and do nothing?" he asked.

"We elected a Labour government to protect British workers, not to let employers attack them."

Morris wound up by warning Friction Dynamics boss Craig Smith "We ain't going away,"

and telling the Labour government to "lose the chains of the CBI".

The best received speaker was strike committee leader Gerald Payne. He insisted that even after a year out the strikers were not going to give up. But he pointed out that even if the legislation was changed to prevent strikers being sacked, it might mean that employers would lose tribunal cases – but tribunals cannot force reinstatement.

Though the march and rally were very militant, those present weren't asked to do any more than continue their support. No future plans were announced for more demonstrations – and there was certainly no mention of trying to get boycotts of the products being produced by scab labour at Friction Dynamics.

The only future event mentioned was the tribunals on October 7.

So it is up to the left in the unions to sustain this fight. Cash must be raised for the strikers, and visits should be made to the picket line (though this is difficult from many areas).

But above all there must be a discussion within the TGWU on how to get a boycott that can hurt the employer and force a victory.

■ For details go to www/frictiondynamics.co.uk



Caernarfon: some of the 500 demonstrators who have stayed loyal to the Friction Dynamics strikers

Tougher line demanded on privatisation

Left turns up heat on UNISON chiefs

Fred Leplat, Islington UNISON (in a personal capacity)

Every day of UNISON's national conference in Bournemouth, June 17-21, was not surprisingly dominated by the question of privatisation. Every area of local government and the health service is being "reformed" along private sector lines. However, during the 30

minutes of the speech by the Northern Ireland minister John Reid the P-word was not mentioned at all.

The conference of local government branches, held for 2 days before the main conference, agreed to a campaign of nationally co-ordinated action against privatisation including a one-day stoppage and a demo.

The effects of privatisation, in particular the "two-tier" workforce and low pay was at the heart of these two-days.

Delegates rejected a voluntary code of practice negotiated by UNISON with the government. Under this code, private employers are supposed to offer new employees in privatised services terms and conditions which are "broadly comparable" to those of transferred staff. Delegates recognised that this voluntary code was not even worth the paper it was written on.

Conference heard of the tremendous victory of tenants in Birmingham and Southwark voting against the stock transfer of their homes. UNISON is now committed to affiliate to Defend Council Housing and to oppose Arms Length Management Organisations running housing.

Tracy Twist of Birmingham UNISON told delegates "We won a tremendous victory by uniting tenants and the council workforce. The national Defend Council Housing played a key role".

Low pay in local government is being challenged by regional and national industrial action. Over 250,000 earn less than £5 an hour. UNISON local government members in London have already taken 3 days strike action for a £4000 London Weighting claim.

July strike

A further day's action may take place on the 17th July with the GMB and TGWU. This day would coincide with a one-day national strike of UNISON over a national claim of £1,750 or 6% whichever is the greater.

The continuing privatisation programme of the government has hardened delegates' view that the union's funds should not be handed over so liberally to New Labour. Nearly £2million

increase of the strength of the left on the NEC.

So concerned is the majority of the NEC about this development that it attempted to introduce a rule change preventing NEC members speaking in conference against the NEC. Delegates, who clearly saw this as an attempt to gag the left, also rejected this.

United Left

The strength of the left at conference was reflected by the United Left holding a 300-strong fringe meeting and selling nearly 500 copies of its bulletin.

Racism and the attacks on asylum seekers by the government was also an important feature of the conference. In the debate, delegates repeatedly condemned David Blunkett, Home Secretary and UNISON sponsored MP, for his reference to asylum seekers "swamping" schools and GP practices.

UNISON is now committed to support asylum seekers' right to work, against their forced dispersal and for the closure of detention centres.

Delegates recognised that New Labour is laying the seeds of racism through many of its policies which have increased poverty. Conference therefore agreed to campaign against the BNP and to call with the TUC a demonstration in Manchester against racism.

On international issues, the conference also unanimously agreed to support the Palestinian people and work with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, to oppose any attacks on Iraq and to affiliate to the Stop the War Coalition, and to continue oppose neo-liberal globalisation and support the European Social Forum this November in Florence.



was donated to New Labour over and above the basic affiliation.

Last year delegates agreed to have a review of the union's two political and had instructed the NEC to bring a report to this year's conference. Instead the NEC has just started the consultation.

Delegates therefore passed overwhelmingly a motion censoring the NEC for the slow pace of the review of the political funds. Desperate attempts by the NEC to save its skin from a hiding failed as it described the motion as a "Trojan horse" for disaffiliation from the labour Party.

The mood of the membership and of delegates at conference is more critical of New Labour and UNISON's NEC for its lack of action against the attacks on services and members. This has been translated into an



Firefighters seek £30k basic

AN estimated 12,000 firefighters from across the country turned out on June 11 to show their support for an FBU rally in London to press home their pay demands.

The FBU has been demanding an increase in the basic wage from the current £21,500 to £30,000, and General Secretary Andy Gilchrist drew massive applause when he warned the employers that the union had a strong mandate to take industrial action if no progress is made in negotiations. He has already told the FBU conference delegates that neither the November 2002 deadline nor the figure fixed in the claim is negotiable.

The FBU has for years seen pay pegged against the top quartile of male manual earnings, in accordance with a deal secured after ten weeks of national strike action

against the Labour government in 1977-78.

Now they're seeking improvements to the formula along with a major increase in the basic rate.

The militancy on pay has not been matched by political developments inside the FBU, which this year saw a bitter conference argument over the democratisation of the union's political fund.

Following a hard-line intervention by Gilchrist, who argued that democratisation was equivalent to disaffiliating from the Labour Party, delegates voted for a leadership proposal which effectively overturned last year's policy of preparing the rule changes necessary to democratise the fund.

Events will show how his loyalty to New Labour is rewarded by Blair's team.

Gordon Morgan

On June 22 the SSP held a special one-day conference which discussed wide ranging changes to the SSP constitution designed to bring the party structures into line with the expanded membership.

The constitution being reviewed was, with only minor amendments, that adopted when the Scottish Socialist Alliance was formed. At that time the National Council was small enough and met frequently enough to take all decisions. Most members were in the central belt of Scotland, so there was reasonable representation and any member could attend the national council. Each branch had one member on the National Council.

Over the years an ad hoc executive committee grew up consisting of National Officers and full time staff, the number of branches grew and regional councils started to meet. The National Council met less frequently due to its size and the centrality of the Executive increased.

The democracy of the Executive began to be questioned, given that the ISM platform had around 12 of the 16 members, and that there were few lay members involved and no direct elections.

At the National Conference in 2001, a working party was set up to review the constitution. The February 2002 conference took some steps regarding internal democracy, but also called a special conference to review the constitution. The draft constitution was issued to branches for consideration and amendment in early May.

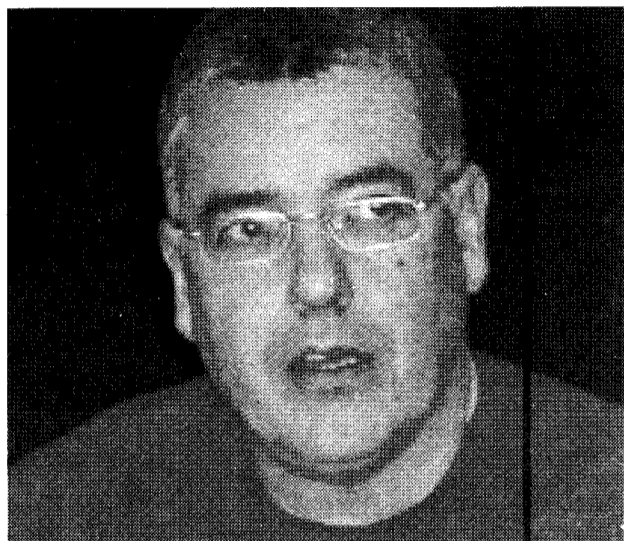
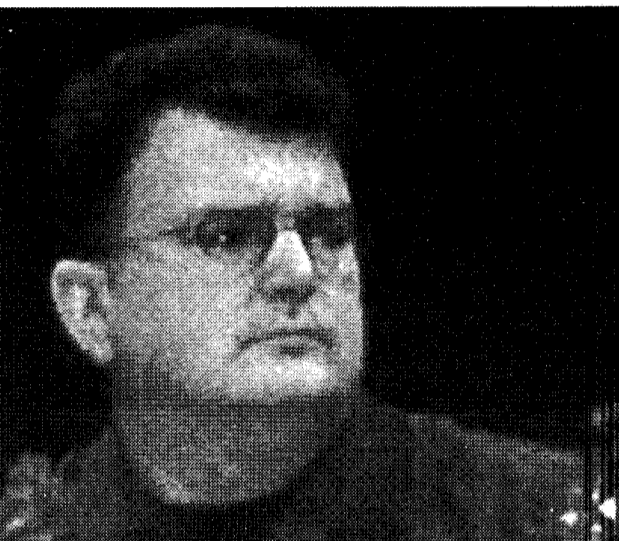
Implemented changes.

SSP membership communications have significantly improved in recent months.

Two monitored SSP members-only email groups exist; a National Council mail group in which Executive papers and minutes are circulated, and an SSP debates mail group. Each branch should receive information through the former, and proposed resolutions and amendments rapidly get to all members. The latter has carried discussion on for example the Euro debate.

Two national members' mailings have been produced, mainly dealing with the special conference. The

SSP democratises its party structures



Debating the fine print of the reforms: National Secretary Allan Green (left) and Alan McCoombes

plan is to produce 10 mailings to all members a year. The latest, as well as dealing with the conference, invites members to join newly formed working groups to prepare the 2003 Manifesto and reports on progress on the School Meals Bill; mobilising for the European Social Forum.

It carries the timetable for selection for the Scottish parliament, reports from regions and on Youth work and a member's diary.

Regional committees are now functioning in all 8 regions and act as the main forum for branch reports and setting local campaigning priorities.

As a result of a response to a dues appeal, more party organisers have been appointed and the national office has expanded to a second office suite.

Special Conference

The Special Conference was always going to be sparsely attended. Only the Euro and the constitution were being discussed, the World Cup was on, and it was a sunny Saturday. In the event around 200 delegates (1/3 of those eligible) attended.

The morning was devoted to the Euro debate (see over), and as the temperature in the room rose and constitutional

discussions started at 2pm numbers dwindled.

The report from the working group comprised a complete redraft of the constitution. The "Aims and Principles" are broadly unchanged with five broad aims: socialist transformation of society; campaigning and solidarity; opposing discrimination; an independent socialist Scotland; international solidarity.

The main change proposed was a redefinition of the role of the National Council, Executive Committee and Regional Councils.

The National Council was to be responsible for implementing party policy between conferences; and monitoring the work of the Executive, standing committees and working parties. It would comprise at least 2 delegates per branch - 1 per 20 members, plus the executive committee, regional organisers and platform representatives. This would give it around 180 members in current circumstances and will in effect act as a mini conference, meeting every 2 months.

The monthly Executive Committee will provide political and strategic leadership and be responsible for day to day running of the party. The proposal was for an executive of 5 national officers plus 14 members (7 men, 7 women) directly elected by national confer-

ence plus a top up of 1 from any region not otherwise represented. Regional organisers and other officials would not be members by right but could attend as observers.

The proposed constitution defined branches as the building blocks of the party, based on geographical, normally electoral areas. Rules for branch AGMs and officials were detailed.

Regional Councils were defined for the first time having the role of co-ordinating and prioritising campaigning based on national priorities. Regional Councils will consist of 2 delegates from each branch, regional affiliates, and network representatives and will meet monthly.

Office bearers, organisers and spokespersons have their roles defined for the first time as are do Conference Arrangements Committee and other Standing Committees which will generally be elected by National Conference. Other groupings such as Networks, Youth and Student Groups and Trade Union groups are also included in the constitution.

The right to organise platforms or tendencies is guaranteed: "members have the right to organise in Platforms or Tendencies". "Platforms/Tendencies have a right to be heard, to organ-

ise meetings, to produce literature, to distribute materials at SSP meetings", and "platforms/tendencies are not expected, however, to organise public campaigns against the overall aims or policy of the party."

The constitution aims for gender equality on all national bodies and specifies voting mechanisms to achieve this.

For the first time the constitution makes elected bodies accountable to the membership and elected officers recallable. Rules for electing/selecting members standing in elections are also set out including a requirement for gender equality.

Amendments

There were 3 main sets of amendments to the proposals.

Proposals to ensure all member regional meetings were held regularly were felt over prescriptive. A proposal to elect Regional Officers for 4 year terms was defeated as it would change the relationship of regional full timers from volunteers to paid officials.

A proposal to cut the size of the National Council and remove officers from it seemed odd until the discussions began on the amendments relating to the Executive.

It became clear that there was a concerted attempt by most Regional Organisers to

retain their right to automatic membership of the Executive. The proposed changes to the National Council flowed from an assumption that this would continue to be the case. In effect the National Council would have been prevented from effective scrutiny of the Executive.

This amendment to the National Council proposals was defeated 65 to 70 on a card vote. The changes to the National Council will come into effect from the August.

Amendments to the proposals on the Executive focused on electing the Executive from the Regional Councils, with the regional organiser automatically elected. These proposals were backed by all but one regional organiser.

In opposing them, both Allan Green, the National Secretary and Frances Curran the ISM organiser, made clear the need to break the perceived hold of the ISM over the party apparatus, for political pluralism.

The proposals would have allowed the ISM to continue to dominate the Executive. Alan McCoombes and I argued against regionalism and for the Party Conference to decide the National Leadership.

This debate raged for over an hour and ended in a series of card votes. On a show of hands most votes appeared passed, but were all narrowly defeated after a count, the final vote 64 to 67. All other amendments to the new constitution that was then endorsed were remitted to next year's conference. Most of these were minor.

Political Effect

This conference was a strike against the potential for bureaucracy. Regional organisers have played, and continue to play a key role in building the party, have been prevented from translating this into political control. Conference will decide the leadership.

Representation of political currents and tendencies and lay members on the leadership is guaranteed by the STV vote system. All regions will be represented; gender equality is built in.

Regional organisers will remain on the Executive till the February conference where most of them will be re-elected. There is no doubt that individually they play an invaluable role.

The ISM was once again divided over constitutional proposals, as it was at National Conference over women's selection in winnable seats. Alan McCoombes and Frances Curran strongly backed the proposals but were opposed by 5 ISM regional organisers. The SWP, who had at peak 37 delegates, effectively ensured the constitutional proposals were passed.

The new constitution is designed to facilitate party growth both in numbers and influence over the next 5 years. The working group, which comprised people from all the main platforms and none are to be congratulated on a job well done.

SSP to campaign against the Euro

The SSP special conference overwhelmingly voted to campaign for a "No" vote in the referendum on the Euro.

The February conference had deferred discussion on this issue to the special conference. 10 branches put forward a "No" motion while there were 2 alternative motions advocating an active Boycott position.

In the lead up to the conference there had been a lively discussion on email group and debates in at least 15 branches. Many valuable clarifications were made through this pro-

cess and both sides accepted that the others shared a common analysis of the EU and globalisation.

In moving the "No" motion I outlined our analysis of the capitalist EU and contrasted it with the type of Europe we want. I emphasised the need to campaign with other workers groups opposed to a bosses' Europe; with anti capitalist groups like Globalise Resistance; and with Socialist parties across the EU and outside.

I noted it was inconceivable

we would vote Yes, however, this position was not being advocated.

We essentially had a tactical difference with the comrades arguing for a boycott.

They seriously underestimate the qualitative shift of power from workers to capitalists the Euro is attempting to achieve and minimised the impact the SSP could have through a "No" campaign not based on defence of the pound.

After a very interesting and fraternal discussion lasting 90 minutes, over 80% of confer-

ence backed the Vote "No" motion - only 27 delegates voted against.

The SSP has now committed itself to produce a pamphlet on the EU and promoting a tour of European workers organizations.

We will not share a platform with pro bosses "save the pound" campaigns, however, we will work with other socialist and labour movement organisations in Britain and in Europe to achieve a successful "No" vote in the referendum.



Seville protests show the way

Stuart Piper reports from Seville

100,000 protestors mostly from Andalusia but with sizeable contingents from across the rest of Europe marched in party mood through the streets of Seville on the hot summer evening of the last day of the European summit.

The Aznar government and the mainstream media tried to claim there were only 20,000 – but no one believed them.

Though the protests were not as big as those in Barcelona which marked the beginning of the Spanish Presidency, they were bigger than expected.

They brought an upbeat close to three days of protest against the Europe of Capital and War represented by Aznar and his fellow leaders barricaded inside their air-conditioned conference suites.

No windows were smashed and the only things that rained down on the



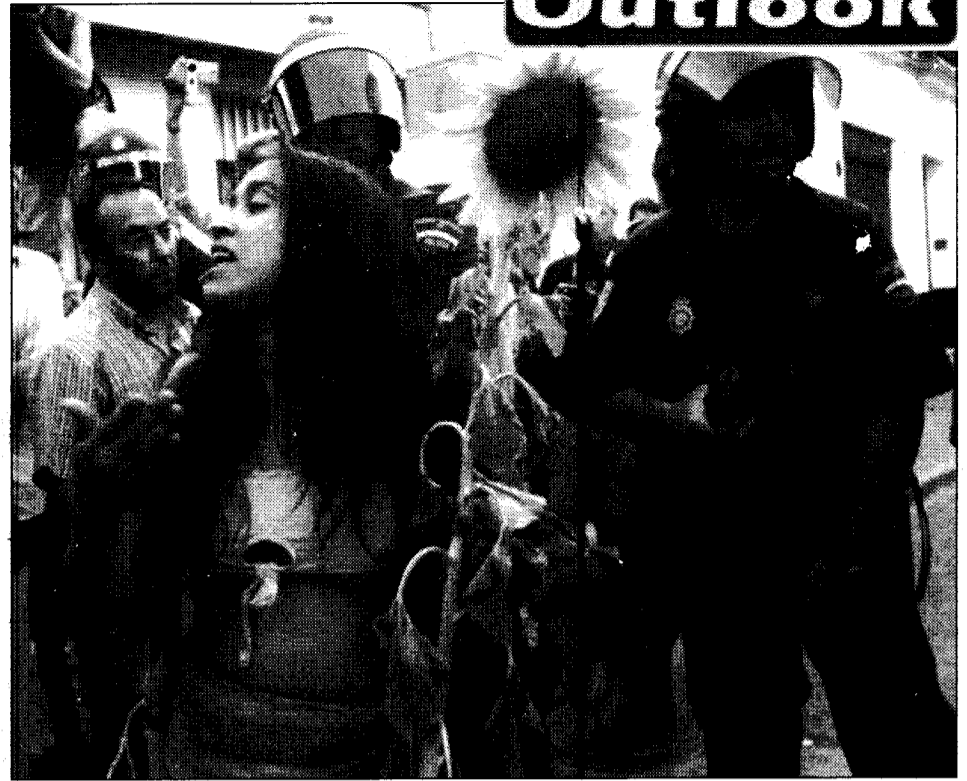
protestors was not tear gas but showers of water from the hoses of residents coming to the rescue of demonstrators desperate to cool down in the blazing heat.

We wove through the streets chanting the slogans of the Seville social forum: "Another world is possible against the Europe of capital and war" and "no person is illegal",

This second slogan of

course was particularly important given the focus of the Seville summit in erecting still higher the walls of Fortress Europe, though fortunately the most restrictive proposals put forward by Aznar and Blair were not agreed.

The tone of the resistance was set on Thursday when millions of workers brought most of the Spanish State to a standstill. The day saw massive huge demonstrations in



Barcelona, Madrid (where estimates suggest 500,000 marched) and Seville, with smaller echoes in many other cities.

In many parts of the country, the pickets were accompanied with cacerolas – the banging of pots that has been made popular from the mass movement in Argentina.

The considerable trade union presence in final demonstration was just one sign that alliance between organised labour and youth is asserting itself as the back-

bone of the anti globalisation movement. This was clear in Genoa, in Barcelona and now again in Seville.

This is a remarkable achievement given that one of the targets of Bush, Blair and their friends after September 11 was to silence

and dissipate the anti-globalisation movement all together.

Instead we have become stronger, as a movement against both war and capital, and strengthened our links with organised labour.

Blair, Aznar count cost of summit failure

The Seville summit will not be seen as an overwhelming success by either Tony Blair or Spain's Jose Maria Aznar. Aznar certainly was not pleased that the trade unions chose to mark the end of his Presidency of the EU with a successful general strike, or that the anti-globalisation protestors greeted the summit in such large numbers.

The question of asylum and immigration was a key question facing European leaders, and the one that has dominated media coverage. Britain's Foreign Secretary Jack Straw declared that all countries agreed on the importance of tackling the asylum issue, particularly in the wake of the electoral success of the far right across Europe. "We are inoculating ourselves against the virus of the far right. The way you deal with matters that the far right are seeking to exploit is by recognising where there is a legitimate problem and then dealing with it, in a proportionate, determined and humane way," he said.

Unfortunately this reactionary approach is not unique to Britain and Spain, the two countries that pushed this agenda most determinedly in Seville. Denmark for example, which traditionally had a liberal policy on asylum has imple-

mented new restrictive laws in the wake of the election of a centre right government, propped up by the extreme right Danish People's Party.

As right-wing governments are elected in more and more of EU countries, we can look forward to tougher laws being implemented at a national level to complement the decisions made at summits. From this point of

view, while it is positive that the most restrictive proposals from Aznar and Blair were not agreed, there can be no doubt that Fortress Europe is alive and well.

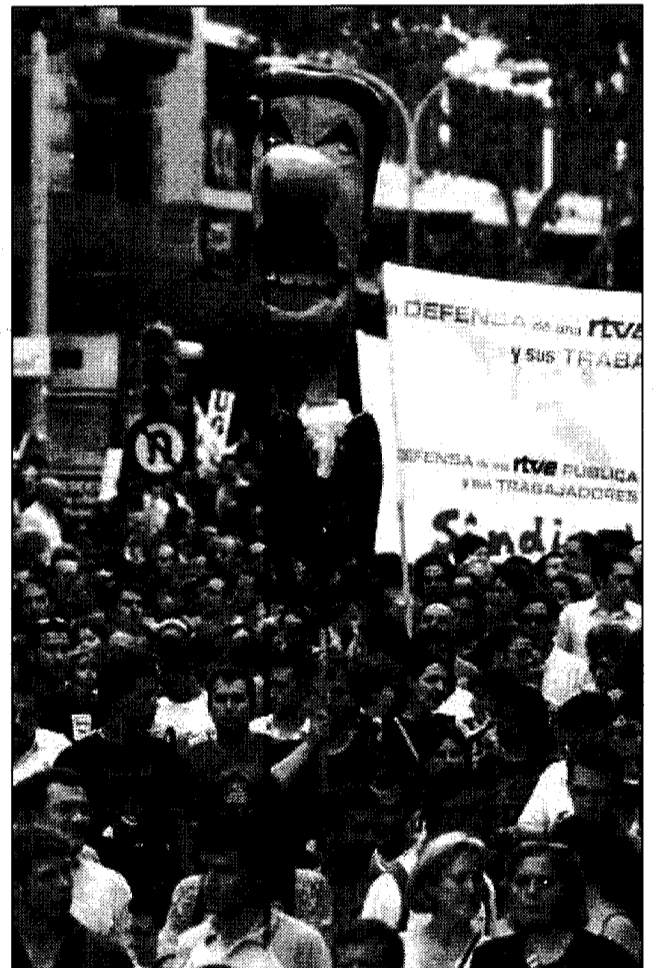
For the anti-globalisation movement this must mean that the question of asylum has to take a higher place on our political agenda. Links between the movements need to be strengthened across Europe, actions

like that of the migrants workers in Spain and the solidarity occupation of the church in Seville by anti-capitalist protestors need to be strengthened.

In the meantime, the big question facing the European Union is how to deal with impending enlargement – and what constitutional changes to make to streamline decision making in its wake.

Structures that had just about coped with a single tier EU of 15 will not meet the needs of a larger membership – and one in which it is clear that not every country will have the same weight. EU President Romano Prodi takes this into account with his proposals for an inner cabinet.

All of these questions will have to be addressed with sharper focus under the forthcoming Danish Presidency.



DECLARATION OF THE SOCIAL FORUM OF SEVILLE

The Social Forum of Seville declares that the summit of European heads of government due to be held in our city on June 20 and 21 is not welcome here.

These leaders of the rich Europe are those with the greatest responsibility for the policies of globalisation that hold sway in their respective countries, policies that put the profits of multinationals, militarism, sexism and racism before the life and health of working people. The Social Forum of Seville identifies with the underprivileged, those who bear the brunt of the self-interested and unjust policies implemented by these gentlemen.

For this reason, as citizens of Seville, we ask the Andalusian government to join us in our request for the aforementioned summit not to be held and to support the demands we make of the Spanish and European government.

Among the most urgent demands, we should like to stress the following:

■ Immediate and energetic intervention in the Palestine conflict, condemning the terrorism being exercised by Sharon's government against the Palestinian people and putting pressure on his government to respect UN resolutions. For suspending diplomatic relations with Israel and imposing an eco-

nomic boycott on its products; suspending arms sales to Israel and imposing an arms embargo; offering support and cooperation to the Palestinian people; denouncing the complicity of the United States in recent events.

■ Abolition of foreign debt, which amounts to a total debt of more than two billion dollars with the countries of Europe, a sum which is stifling third world economies, as shown by the devastating crisis in Argentina.

■ Our immediate withdrawal from NATO, the termination of the bilateral treaty with the United States, and dismantling of the military bases of Rota, Morón, Gibraltar and all the other European enclaves.

■ The recognition of immigration as a right belonging to any human being, and of the free circulation of persons, rights that are violated in European immigration laws and the Schengen agreement.

■ Economic policies that lead in the opposite direction to the one being taken at present (Maastricht, economic and monetary union, Lisbon agreements, stability pacts etc.). We want guaranteed employment and labour rights, an end to the privatization of public services, and an end to the pockets of poverty and social exclusion that affect women and young people

in particular; and the Spanish government's immediate withdrawal of its project for a labour reform law.

The Social Forum of Seville believes in a new, more egalitarian set of economic and social relations, in a Europe that is committed to the environment and those who live in it; that defends the equality of men and women; that defends Peace, the rights and liberties of its citizens and its national communities.

For all these reasons, we should like the institutions of Andalusia not to agree to receive the heads of government of the EU in our city, thereby also saving us the considerable inconveniences and costs that this will represent for the citizens of Seville.

Nonetheless, given that the central and Andalusian administration seem resolute in their intention to host the aforementioned summit, the Social Forum of Seville will show its opposition, convoking for the days in question various acts of protest and alternatives to the neo-liberal policies of the aforementioned summit. Alternatives for a globalization of solidarity and justice.

We call upon the people of Seville and Andalucía to take part in this social mobilisation, starting by supporting our opposition to the above summit taking place.

3 May 2002

PORTO ALEGRE AND BEYOND

Putting democratic principles into practice

EDINHO: As soon as we won the elections in October 2000 we began a series of discussions to decide our priorities. We settled on three main areas – popular participation, policies to promote social inclusion, and a more efficient delivery of services to the population.

In this latter area we wanted to wrest back the idea of modernity from the right, and show that it was possible to apply measures of efficiency and technology with a completely different logic – to promote popular interests.

But of course the first two, popular participation and social inclusion, were to be our strategic priorities. The popular participation had two main aspects, the participatory budget and municipal councils. The social inclusion was centred on the idea of workers' self-organisation – that is that workers are capable of organising themselves to generate jobs and income without being entirely dependent on the whims of capital.

So, for example, we've encouraged the formation of co-operatives. One of them, a recycling co-operative formed by families who used to live on the council rubbish tip sorting through garbage, has now become the basis of the town hall's recycling programme and has won national recognition.

These two areas then – popular participation and social inclusion – were the strategic axes because they were the ones which, within a capitalist society, could show the city as a whole that it IS possible to build relations of power based on very different ideas.

We had a long debate on what kind of popular partici-

Participatory democracy – and especially the participatory budget – is what has turned the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre and its Workers Party (PT) local government into a point of reference for the global justice movement around the world. It was this 12-year long experiment in letting the people decide directly how the town hall's money should be spent, which made the city an obvious choice to host the World Social Forum.

But the participatory budget idea – "OP" as it's known in Portuguese – has been taken up by many other local administrations in Brazil and beyond, and applied in many different ways. Some are far from radical, some claim to be revolutionary.

Socialist Outlook talked about the possibilities and contradictions to **Edinho Silva**, who is just completing his first 18 months as PT Mayor of Araraquara, a city of 200,000 inhabitants in the north of Sao Paulo state. Edinho is a member of Socialist Democracy, the left tendency in the PT that supports the Fourth International.

pation we wanted to promote. **How much power do these municipal councils have to take decisions, say about where a new bus route should go...?**

The town hall does what the popular council says. **Is it obliged to?**

Yes, and we've already lost a number of arguments in the transport users' council – areas we really didn't think were priorities for new routes, but the council insisted... and the town hall had to carry out their decision.

It's the same in health and education. We've set up users' councils for each hospital and health centre, for each school. ...

So we've adopted a model where the town hall administration stimulates the orga-

nization of the population, and where these popular organisations have decision-making powers and are autonomous.

These popular councils are separate from the Participatory Budget process, because we realized that the PB cannot cope with all the population's demands. The Participatory Budget is not a panacea that can solve all problems. There are some services that need to be managed on a permanent, day-to-day basis, by the population.

Aren't there likely to be conflicts between these popular councils and the participatory budget process?

Not really. The transport council can demand a new bus route for a neighbourhood that's not properly served. But it can't demand that the road to that neighbourhood be asphalted. That's a question of investment and has to go through the Participatory Budget.

So the members of the transport council are likely to take that demand into their PB assembly, and the two things cross over. But in the mean time the buses on the new route will have to make do with the dirt track that exists at the moment.

It's the same with a programme we have developed to bring the local government closer to the people. We call it "the town hall in



the neighbourhoods".

Every week all the local government departments – health, education, transport, environment and so on – move into a particular neighbourhood, and attend to the public there on the spot, so people don't feel they have to come into the city centre to be dealt with.

Obviously in the process people come up with many demands for particular investments – we need such and such built – and we have to explain, budget matters have to be taken to your Participatory Budget assembly.

So with the co-operatives I mentioned before as well, we were looking for ways of building a structure of alternative power within the existing society, and we had big theoretical debates, amongst our PT members and supporters, about what would be the basic principles of a socialist society. We wanted to create the conditions for workers to be able to organise themselves, to break with the subordination of their labour, and show that it is possible for civil society to CONTROL the state. And this alternative power-structure is a way for us to begin to democratise the state.

So our approach to the Participatory Budget fitted into this. Because there's been a lot of debate within the PT – and beyond the PT it's been even worse – and we decided the Participatory Budget should have decision-making powers over 100% of the municipal investment budget.

So what is the debate?

Because in many PT municipalities it's not 100% of the investments. In others it doesn't have decision-making powers, it's merely consultative. In other words it simply expresses an opinion about where the town hall should spend its money, but in the end the local government decides. And there are other, mixed variants. But we went for 100% of the budget from the very first year.

Our model was based on that applied in Caixias do Sul (the second city in Rio Grande do Sul state, where the mayor is also from the DS tendency), but we've changed some things. It's

not that are big differences with Porto Alegre – that's obviously a model for the whole country. But we studied the experience in Caixias do Sul because it's more similar to our situation, in terms of size, social makeup and so on.

Do you have the same list of priorities for people to choose from – education, health, roads, sanitation, etc. – as they do in Porto Alegre?

No we don't provide a list, people come up with their own. In that sense ours is more open than in Porto Alegre. If people decide landscape gardening is the priority, then we'll do what they say.

So then the administration has to come before the assembly and argue its own case. And we were defeated in several regional assemblies last year. For example, we would come forward with all the technical arguments to explain why the priority had to be education, but no, people voted for health.

We've made some changes too this year, because the PB is a process which is still under construction. Before, for example, once the assemblies in the regions and sub-regions had decided their priorities, it was the delegates, elected by those assemblies, who went away and decided in their Delegate Council how the resources should be split between the different regions and their priorities, and which schools, health centres, roads or whatever should be built where.

But we discovered that people on the ground were complaining they never found out exactly how the money was spent. We saw there was a real danger of the PB delegates losing touch with the people who'd elected them.

So now the delegates will decide on how the resources should be split up, but it'll go back to the regional assemblies to decide exactly which pipes, paving stones or football pitches should be put in where, using those resources. In this way we're strengthening still further the element of direct democracy.

The Council of Delegates then still has the important task of supervising the financing and execution of

those works.

Some of the other local administrations where other versions of the participatory budget have been applied argue that people are too prone to vote only in function of their own immediate neighbourhood's interests, and that the broader projects, which are of interest or need to the wider community, don't get a look in.

My position is that the town hall has to go into those regional assemblies and argue the case for the works of more general interest. You cannot start from the assumption that people have corporatist instincts, that they will only perceive the immediate interests of their own neighbourhood. If that happens it's because we aren't sufficiently politicizing the debate.

What we are finding is that it may be necessary to set up some additional thematic assemblies to discuss particular areas which it's difficult to address adequately in the ordinary regional assemblies. So this year we're introducing assemblies dealing specifically with the needs of women, black people, the disabled, youth, the elderly.

And we're looking at the possibility of one devoted specifically to urban development, which would be able to deal more adequately with environmental questions for example. And the Council of Delegates has already decided that 20% of the budget will be set aside for the priorities decided by these new thematic assemblies – the other 80% going to the regional assemblies.

It's a process and we're learning. But the fact our model of PB has decision-making powers means we're expanding the democratic space. When we said that from the first year we would open 100% of our investments to a PB with decision-making powers, and that we'd leave it to the assemblies to come up with their own lists of priorities to choose from, we were heavily criticised by some other administrations.

People said we were mad, they asked how we expected to fulfil our election promises. I said, well we'll have to go into those plenary sessions and defend our proposals, as a local government



Above: demonstrators in Porto Alegre last year, and (top) the education conference

we mustn't be afraid of direct democracy. And of course we often lost last year, and we're often losing again this year.

I went just the other day to one of the assemblies – we KNOW the region needs a creche, I went with all the figures, but the assembly voted in favour of tarmacking the road! So they won't get their creche. Will the mothers complain? Yes they certainly will. What can we say? Only that it's the PB that decides, and you'll have to go back into that assembly next year and argue for it. It's an educational process too.

I got it in the neck in one neighbourhood. The majority of the population only took part in some of their local assembly. So it was a particular minority that got to decide which streets would be the priority. The others went to the press and accused me of being responsible.

So what could I say? Simple. Next year you make sure YOU take part and decide. That's the way people learn. In fact they were right. The other streets were much more of a priority, that's where the asphalt should have begun. But they didn't go to the plenaries, and they didn't argue their case.

If I back down, accept their argument, over-ride the PB, even in the case of one single street, then I undermine the entire participatory budget. So it's a permanent political dispute.

Are there clear differences between a revolutionary way of implementing the participatory budget and a reformist way?

There certainly are. If you want to apply it in a reformist way, with a social democratic approach, then the participatory budget is in fact easier to apply in that way than in a revolutionary way.

How is this?

If you have consultative assemblies, if you create mechanisms for indirect representation, hold discussions of this and that in forums, then you ARE mobilizing the population; but you're not actually building a structure of power. Because when the PB is revolutionary that's what it's doing.

It's beginning to build a power structure – an

autonomous power structure within the society. From a theoretical point of view what you're doing is building structures of control within the state apparatus, whereby civil society begins to exert control over the state.

It demystifies the notion that the budget is something technical, fixed in stone, out of reach, and shows it to be something very basic that can be controlled and supervised by the population, month after month.

So the model of which Participatory Budget you choose is absolutely fundamental.

So are you saying that a participatory budget with decision-making powers is incompatible with a reformist approach?

Yes, it is incompatible. A budget is the expression of a government's priorities. It's the expression of the economic class that dominates the state apparatus. That's the same whether it's the state at municipal, state or national level.

As soon as you create the space for the majority of society to control this instrument, it becomes incompatible with any rightwing project, because the working classes and other sectors that are excluded from power will begin to express their class interests and not those of the capitalist class.

So when the World Bank and the UN praise the participatory budget as an example of transparent, efficient local administration ... ?

They don't understand. Not that they're being ingenuous, but they don't understand that when the model is a decision-making one, and when the state structures stimulate the popular classes to exercise that power, they don't grasp the significance of that.

The World Bank can praise you when you organise forums and debates, invite civil society to spend two days discussing housing, two days discussing health and education, hear what they have to say.

But the difference is if you create a structure of power, where people discuss the income, discuss the expenditure and decide the investments. That is incompatible.



Another Europe is possible!

Greg Tucker reports from the fourth Conference of the European Anti-Capitalist Left

As Tony Blair and Spanish prime minister Aznar put together their final plans for building Fortress Europe in Seville, key elements of the anti-capitalist left from across Europe have met in Madrid to affirm that another Europe is possible.

The fourth Conference of the European Anti-Capitalist Left, hosted by the Spanish Espacio Alternativo brought together representatives from parties and currents in eleven European states including the English Socialist Alliance, the Scottish Socialist Party, the Danish Red Green Alliance, French LCR, Portuguese Left Bloc and Rifondazione Comunista from Italy.

Previous meetings in Porto, Paris and Brussels had opened up discussion between groups, begun to map out points of common analysis and set out basic agreements on joint action. Madrid has taken the debate a stage further.

Key to this was the deeper involvement of Rifondazione Comunista. Gennaro Migliore of RC opened the conference outlining the profound crisis of the traditional left and the need for unity across Europe of the alternative anti-capitalist left.

From their different experiences delegates outlined a common process.

In 1998/99 social democracy led 12 of the 15 EU member states and was able to dominate the main EU institutions. But rather than use this exceptional power position to break with neo-liberal policies it deepened this drive. Now we are faced by an EU dominated by an aggressive, xenophobic and reactionary right (led by Tony Blair!).

But this is not a simple electoral move

to the right across Europe. Right wing gains facilitated by the collapse of social democracy and other participating plural left parties (Greens, CP etc) have been accompanied by massive abstention and alienation from conventional parties. Whilst this has been exploited by the far right it has also led to modest but important gains for the far left. The growth of the anti-capitalist globalisation movement is a challenge that the workers movement has to embrace.

Whilst the EU summits continue the process of constructing the EU through economic integration and attacks on social rights there is a counter trend –

the anti-capitalist globalisation movement. These are complementary tasks."

The Conference outlined an alternative programme for Europe:

Against the Bush-Blair war drive and the growth of a European army - no war in Iraq, withdrawal from Afghanistan and for Israeli troops out of Palestine;

Against Fortress Europe – freedom of movement and equal rights for all;

Against the undemocratic plans to build a small strong EU Executive directly in the service of European big capital, a war machine against the people –

For a radical democratic constituent process from below to allow the peoples and the working classes to truly decide what sort of Europe they want to live in;

Against the neo-liberal offensive – putting people before profit.

Confident that an alternative is possible, that for the first time in ages a political polarisation to the left of the social-liberal left has begun, the conference looked to the future deepening of collaboration between its participating parties.

Among other things this means mobilising with the social movements for the European Social Forum in Florence and planning further discussion for our next meeting at the end of the year in Copenhagen.

This will particularly focus on whether it is possible to prepare a common European platform for the European Parliament elections in 2004.

The Socialist Alliance and SSP must see themselves as part of this process – building a real common European anti-capitalist left identity.

Practically, in finally deciding to try to mount a collective campaign against Fortress Europe and in defence of the rights of immigrants and asylum seekers the conference outlined one way in which militants from right across Europe can work together in common cause.



Migrant workers protesting at the Seville summit, demanding work permits and the right to stay in Spain

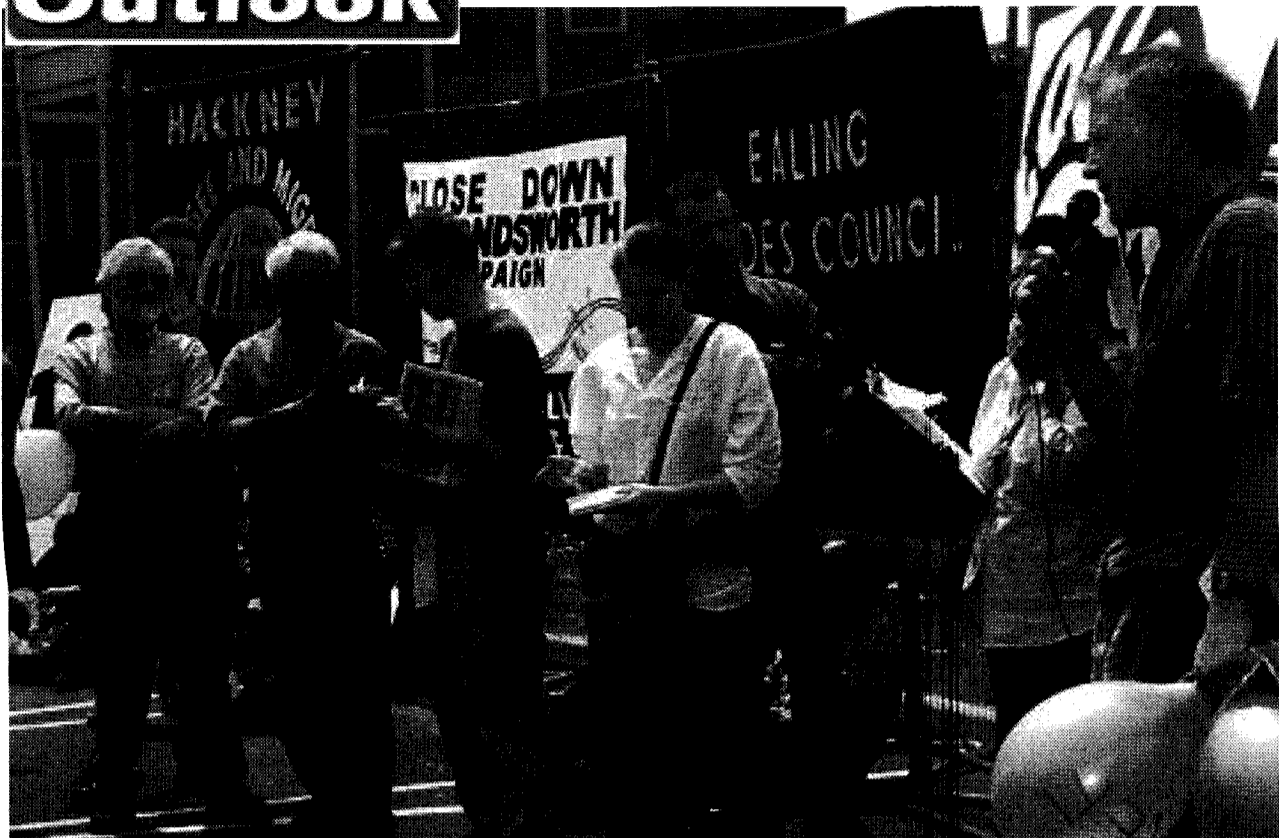
strengthening social resistance movement, seen on the streets of Nice, Genoa, Brussels and Barcelona. The question is how to give these social struggles a political form.

As a representative of the LCR put it, "We used to say we were blocked by the SP and CP, but with their collapse we have space to operate in. We are in a race with the far right to occupy this space in the working class.

"Our class is not beaten – our task is to organise its defence and link it up with



"We mustn't be afraid of direct democracy"



Bill MacKeith of the Close Campsfield campaign (right) speaking at the protest outside Harmondsworth detention centre

Scandal of Labour's war on asylum seekers

Terry Conway

New Labour have launched a veritable war on asylum seekers over the last few weeks, ably helped by their friends in the media. This government is preparing for the biggest assault on the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees that this country has ever seen, with the fourth "crack down" on asylum and immigration that we have seen in a decade.

The response of New Labour to the rise of the far right across Europe is to repeat the lies of the racists. But such a pandering to prejudice by the governmental parties is partly responsible for the growth of the BNP and their like in other countries in the first place.

Their racist and reactionary policies give credibility to the idea that asylum seekers are to blame for the real problems that other poor people experience - unemployment, bad housing, lack of services. In fact migrants contributed more in taxes in the financial year 1999-2000 than they used in services.

We need to build on cam-

paigns like that in Sighthill in Glasgow, where after the murder of a young Kurdish asylum seeker the local community united with the asylum seekers who had been dumped in the area, behind the banner Sighthill United against Racism and Poverty.

Blair and Blunkett don't tell us that Britain takes far fewer asylum seekers than much poorer countries like Iraq and Pakistan.

The press doesn't point out that the number of refugees and immigrants who came to Britain last year make up a minuscule 0.12% of the population and that the number of people seeking asylum in Britain fell last year.

Armed by Britain

Nor are we reminded that many refugees and asylum seekers - fleeing from wars our government has backed, or that have been fought with arms sold by Britain are being locked up in soul-destroying immigration prisons.

And those that are fleeing poverty and starvation are also often running from the effects of policies imposed by governments of the rich and

powerful countries and the institutions like the World Bank and the IMF, which they control.

Globalisation has meant an increasing gap between rich and poor. Structural adjustment has led both to the decimation of what little public services existed in many parts of the world, but also to mass starvation as crops are diverted to export in order to pay off debts, rather than to feed local people.

But then when refugees and asylum seekers flee this devastation in search of a better life - sometimes in search of any life, they are met with draconian laws and with racism.

Already under the previous law brought in by New Labour:

Asylum seekers, including women and children, are imprisoned in detention centres and prisons though they are not accused of any crime

Although the hated voucher system is being abolished, people are left to live on only 70% of impossibly low income support levels.

Asylum seekers are being

forcibly moved to parts of the country where they are isolated from their own communities and have no support services.

The proposals in the new Immigration and Asylum Bill currently going through parliament are even worse.

◆ As well as increasing the number of people who are in detention so that at any one time 4000 people will be imprisoned,

◆ They want to segregate children of asylum seekers into separate schools

◆ They plan to use the RAF to beef up deportations, and the navy to police the seas

◆ They seek to disperse children and young people who have fled to this country on their own.

◆ The immigration service is being told that it can reject applications from particular countries - reintroducing the Tories' hated "white list" (which Labour opposed when they were in opposition) through the back door.

◆ Quotas are being set for the numbers of deportations.

But the fight back is only just beginning.



"Freedom is the sound outside the gates"

End immigration detention!

A SUCCESSFUL fringe meeting at UNISON conference on the question of detention of asylum seekers heard Hayes and Harlington's Labour MP John McDonnell make an impassioned attack on government policy.

McDonnell has been one of a small group of MPs who have met regularly with Barbed Wire Britain and is an active supporter of the Campaign to Close Harmondsworth.

He suggested that if Labour supporters had been out of the country for a number of years and recently returned they would find it very difficult to believe that there was a Labour rather than a Tory government in office.

He argued that policy on asylum was the clearest indication of how far new Labour have travelled to the right, and that far from undercutting support for fascists, the government was doing their work for them.

Arguing for open borders,

McDonnell also called for wealth to be globalised so that people were not forced to leave their homes because of starvation conditions brought about by unfair trade.

McDonnell backed up his political arguments with real-life stories of human tragedies amongst asylum seekers in his constituency. He quoted a poem written by children in Harmondsworth detention centre: "Freedom is the sound outside the gates".

The meeting also heard from Nigerian-born Seun Oropo, an ex-Yarlswood detainee, who emphasised what a huge difference campaigners on the outside could make. He called for people to contact those detainees from Yarlswood who are currently languishing in prisons.

Practical discussion focused on the possibility of branches adopting detainees as a concrete way of developing solidarity.

Key things you should know about immigration detention

- Immigration prisoners have not been accused of or convicted of any crime
- Immigration prisoners are rarely given full written reasons for their detention, making it very difficult to challenge the legality of that decision
- In the UK, detention is for an indefinite period - sometimes over 2 years. Malta and the UK are the only European countries to have no time limits
- The procedures under which detention takes place are arbitrary and unaccountable and not subject to judicial oversight.
- Medical provision for detainees is completely inadequate - there are a number of cases where asylum seekers have not received treatment when they need it and have then subsequently been taken to hospital in handcuffs.
- Detainees are neither provided with adequate legal representation or the financial means to access it appropriately
- Some asylum seekers are in actual prisons usually being locked up for 23 hours a day.
- Some detainees have been coerced into signing forms to drop their asylum applications
- Detention criminalises asylum seekers and thus feeds the reactionary idea that all refugees and asylum seekers - whether or not they are detained - are criminals.

Prisoners from Yarlswood

Kayode Abdul	HMP Bedford	EM9674	HM Prison St Loyes St, Bedford MK40 1HG
Emmanuel Kouakou	HMP Bedford	EM9675	HM Prison St Loyes St, Bedford MK40 1HG
Lucky Jacobs	HMP Bedford	HE5352	PO Box 50, Bicester, OX25 IWD
Tomas Kalu	HMP Bullingdon	GP7444	PO Box 50, Bicester, OX25 IWD
Nassem Mosstaffa	YOI Glen Parva	HF5951	10 Tiger's Rd, Wigston, Leicester LE18 4TN
Klojan Gaba	HMP Wandsworth	CT8540	PO Box 547, Heathfield Rd, London SW18 3HS
Yusuf Biodun Giwa	HMP Chelmsford	FM9819	200, Springfield Rd, Chelmsford, Essex, CM26LQ

The prisoners above are detainees from Yarlswood who have been transferred to prison following the fire.

They have not been charged with any offence either relating to the fire or in any other regard.

They would be very pleased to receive a letter from any individual or group.

They would also be very grateful to receive any money: send postal orders made payable to "The Governor" with

your name and address on the back together with the detainees name and prison number.

In your covering letter please mention that you have been put in touch with them via the Campaign to Stop Arbitrary Detention at Yarl's Wood.

For further information contact Campaign to Stop Arbitrary Detention at Yarl's Wood 07786 517379

Week of action spreads message on asylum rights

Before Blunkett launched his war on asylum seekers, campaigners had already put in place plans to mount a fightback against the crack-down we knew was coming.

Though no-one could have predicted the ferocity of what we would encounter, New Labour has made it plain since being elected in 1997 that it would carry out – and strengthen – Tory policy on asylum and immigration.

Knowing roughly the timetable of Blunkett's planned new legislation, a conference in Manchester called by the major organisations campaigning for the rights of asylum seekers on March 23 launched a call for a week of action from June 15-22.

The only partial concession that has been wrought from the government – the abolition of the hated voucher system – came as a result of mass campaigning.

The fact that Blunkett's plans have been accompanied by reactionary rhetoric, which can only give succor to the far right, has further strengthened the importance of the campaigning approach.

Campaigners up and down the country have built the week of action with street stalls in many localities that have challenged government and media racism. Activities during the week have built on these successes in most major towns and cities.

There has been some work in the trade unions – including a successful emergency resolution at amicus-MSF conference, carried overwhelmingly despite the opposition of the NEC, and the fringe meeting at UNISON conference on which we report here.

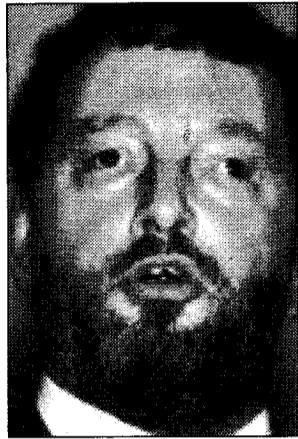
But trade union work needs to be developed on a more systematic basis. The support is there amongst activists, but work around asylum is unlikely to be a spontaneous priority for shop stewards fighting privatisation, redundancy and low pay, unless campaigners from the outside are there push for it.

The lesson of the partial victory over vouchers however is that substantial trade union support is vital to turn back the government's attacks.

At a national level, the week of action started with a demonstration at Harmondsworth detention centre, which gave activists the opportunity to express their practical solidarity with those asylum seekers at the sharpest end of government policies – immigration prisoners.

Some of the men, women and children held in this detention centre were able to show their pleasure at seeing and hearing the demonstrators by waving from their prison.

The ingenuity of some of the protestors in getting



Time he was swamped ...

close to the wire fences, which are protected by a moat, may mean that future actions at the centre will be permitted to follow the same route.

Those few extra yards definitely make a difference, because they obstruct the closer communication that is possible for example at Campsfield detention centre near Oxford, where some detainees have been able to respond to our chants or hold up their own messages in a way visible to supporters outside.

The Harmondsworth protest was followed on Sunday 16 by action at Dungavel, the only immigration detention centre in Scotland, where speakers called for the STUC to lead a mass campaign against immigration detention.

The same day there was also a picket of the new detention centre in Dover. Protestors there particularly focused on the fact that this new centre was opened immediately after the fire at Yarl's Wood, without any enquiry into its causes.

London protest

The culmination of the week was obviously the demonstration on June 22, which saw nearly 5000 march in colourful protest through central London.

It was good to see such a range of banners parading through areas off the normal Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square march, with local campaigns mixed in with trade union banners and those of particular immigrant communities.

The march for a minutes silence in China Town to mark the anniversary of the 58 Chinese migrants who were found dead in a container lorry at Dover trying to reach the supposed safety of this country.

There were rallies at both ends of the demonstration, addressed by a range of speakers of whom a majority were themselves asylum seekers, who told first hand of the realities of Britain's immigration system and detention centres.

Many also pointed out that British governments had been key actors in causing the wars or supporting the dictators from whom they and others had fled in the first place.

The final rally was closed by Jeremy Corbyn MP, who also brought a message from Bill Morris, General Secretary of the T&G, who apologised for his absence as he had prior union business in Oxford. Given Morris' role in the fight against vouchers, his continued support for not unexpected, but nevertheless extremely welcome.

All the events during and in the lead up to the week of action have meant that campaigners have been out putting the argument as to why asylum seekers should be welcome here to greater numbers of people. This begins to act as an effective counterweight to the racist rubbish spewed out by government and media.

More people have developed a greater understanding of the breadth of the assault we face on immigration and asylum and of the realities of immigration detention.

Asylum seekers and detainees have had the opportunity to tell not only the heartrending stories of their flights from torture and persecution into the unwelcoming arms of the British state, but also to inspire many through the resilience and courage of their resistances to these outrages.

The week was planned and executed through growing collaboration between the four sponsoring organisations: Barbed Wire Britain, the Campaign to Defend Asylum Seekers, the National Civil Rights Movement and the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns.

Each of these campaigns fulfills a valuable and distinctive role, but it will be vital that this co-operation continues and deepens in the months ahead in battling against the reactionary legislation this government is introducing and in combating its effects.

We need a massive political campaign of opposition to what the government is proposing; within which asylum seekers themselves are given the opportunity to take a leadership role.

This need to be combined with continuing work in support of the families and individuals whose lives have been devastated by the racist legislation and practices already in place

Swamping David Blunkett

Home Secretary David Blunkett's speech in which he talked about the children of asylum seekers "swamping" schools was one of the most despicable pieces of racist rhetoric since Enoch Powell's infamous "rivers of blood" speech in 1968. The fact that it was made by a Labour politician makes it doubly offensive.

But fortunately there has been a

massive wave of protest in response. The National Union of Teachers agreed a strong statement of opposition, and many local associations have launched petitions.

Teachers who work with asylum seekers know that many contribute a great deal to the schools where they are learning.

They also know first hand the trauma that many have suffered

both in their home countries and from the iniquities of the asylum system here.

The opportunity to study and develop friendships with children from a wide variety of backgrounds is of benefit to all our children.

Don't let David Blunkett take this away.

Let's swamp him with our opposition.



Defend the Roma Seven Stop ethnic cleansing

The Roma community in Britain is facing attacks from several directions at the same time. There seems to be a conscious decision by the government to refuse asylum applications from Roma leaders in an attempt to undercut the increasing political effectiveness and cohesion of the community. This is despite the fact that the Roma people have been the target of rising racism particularly in Eastern Europe.

Meanwhile, Roma travellers in Mid-Bedfordshire are facing a nasty right-wing council bent on ethnic cleansing.

In a deputation to Downing Street on June 6, The Trans-European Roma Federation told Tony Blair: "In the present political climate, we have become the scapegoats of right-wing extremists in all parts of Europe

including the UK.

TERF urged the Prime Minister to take on board the fact that Roma are the target of neo-Nazi groups bent on ethnic-cleansing of Gypsies. Several hundred Roma have been murdered and tens of thousands made to flee their homes, "We appeal to you to allow Roma leaders, actively engaged in combating human rights abuses both here and abroad to stay in the UK so that they can continue these efforts – thus contributing to the real, long-term solutions".

It is just as futile and inhumane to deport Roma back to countries in Eastern Europe who are applying for membership of the EU, as it is to allow local authorities to "move on" travellers who likewise have nowhere secure to live.

Declared government pol-

icy is to encourage Roma Travellers to buy land and set up private caravan sites. One such group purchased "Woodside", a site in Bedfordshire already licensed for 150 caravans.

Crackdown

Nevertheless, the local Mid-Bedfordshire council is spending £1 million to "clear the site" and crack down on all travellers.

"This is ethnic cleansing UK style," says Cliff Codona, part owner of "Woodside" and chair of the National Travellers Action Group. "We appeal to all those in the pro-asylum and anti-Nazi lobby to support the Roma Seven and Woodside.

A tent city has been set up and the campaign is appealing for support, as the eviction is expected any day.

Contact TERF at: ustiben.2@ntlworld.com

Statistics to answer the damned lies

Behind all the racist rhetoric of the government and media are myths that campaigners need to rebut at the same time as arguing against the negative stereotypes that they also put forward

They suggest:


- that Britain is overwhelmed by the number of refugees and asylum seekers that come here
 - that Britain takes more than its fair share of asylum seekers and refugees
 - that most refugees and asylum seekers coming to Britain are economic migrants
- The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has just published a mass of statistics for 2001 which demonstrate how

inaccurate this picture is.

The statistics show:

- that the top 10 countries to which refugees fled in 2001 do not include any country in the European Union, North America or Australasia.
- that Britain is not one of the top 10 countries in which refugees settled in 2001.
- that within the European Union Britain has around an average number of asylum seekers per head of population.
- that there has been a declining trend across the EU in the three years up to 2001 of the number of asylum applications.
- that more than 60% of refugees coming to Britain in 2001 came from war zones.

TEN things you should know about Israel & Zionism

- 1 Anti-Semitism is a racist ideology directed against Jews. It must be fought by attacking its economic, social, political and psychological roots in society.
- 2 Anti-Zionism is the struggle against the Zionist movement, a movement which was born in the 19th century, and which eventually projected the gathering of the Jews in Palestine to establish a mono-cultural Jewish state at the expense of the native Palestinian population.
In practice Zionism was translated into the expulsion of the majority of the Palestinian people from their homes, reducing them to refugees. The struggle against the policies and structure of Israel is thus an anti-colonialist struggle to restore to the Palestinians their national rights in their country.
- 3 Zionism and the state of Israel are not representative of Jews or the Jewish religion as a whole. Not all Jews are religious. And some Orthodox Jews are hostile to Zionism. Some Orthodox groups who live in Israel do not recognise the Israeli state. Some Orthodox groups have participated in recent actions in support of the Palestinian people such as demonstrations of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign in London (see opposite).
- 4 Not only does Israel oppress the Palestinian Arabs, but its existence also makes no contribution to eliminating anti-Semitism. By improperly posing as the representatives of world Jewry – even though six-sevenths of the Jews live outside of Israel – and by spreading in international public opinion the notion of unconditional solidarity of Jews with Israel, Zionist leaders in fact stimulate anti-Semitism. This is especially true in the Arab countries.
- 5 Israel was not born as the result of Nazi persecution. The foundations of the Zionist colonisation of Palestine were laid way back during the last quarter of the 19th century.
- 6 It is necessary to refute the purported “historical rights” of the Jews to Palestine. Even before the Roman conquest of Judea in 70AD. Three-quarters of the Jewish population lived outside Palestine. Those who remained were gradually absorbed by neighbouring populations over the coming centuries, in the same way the Philistines, Phoenicians and others were. In fact, paradoxically, today’s Palestinians are to an extent descendants of the original Hebrews.
- 7 Zionism was able to gain Palestine because it had the support of a succession of imperialist powers; first the Ottoman Empire, then the British, and later the United States. To this day, it is the leading military power in the Middle East because of the aid and active support of the United States, who uses Israel to further its economic and political interests in the region.
- 8 Israel is not a “socialist” state. On the contrary, it is the firmest bastion of capitalism in the region. The kibbutzim – which are collective farms – are not the socialist oases often depicted by simplistic propaganda. They are highly dependent on the banking sector, often rely on the exploitation of Arab and poor Jewish labour, and in many instances are used as military bases to aid in the colonisation of newly occupied Palestinian territory.

Blair with Sharon
- 9 Within Israel Arabs are subjected to colonialist “exceptional” laws that were originally instituted by the British when Palestine was their colony. These laws allow military authorities to expel, imprison and confiscate land and property without cause. When the British applied these colonial ordinances to Zionist settlers just after World War II, former Israeli Minister of Justice Shapira asserted, “Even in Nazi Germany there weren’t such laws.”
- 10 The only future that Zionism and the structures of the state of Israel offer to the Jewish population of Palestine is war. The solution for Jews is to seek fraternal integration with Palestinian Arabs in a democratic and secular Palestine within a socialist federation of the Middle East.

Palestinians: On the wrong side of the road!

Martin Wicks, editor of the trade union magazine *Solidarity* recently visited Israel as a guest of the Workers Advice Centres, a trade union initiative. Below is an edited version of his report.

This was my first trip to Israel. I’ve read widely on the conflict and know a fair amount about it, but seeing the reality before your eyes gives you a much more graphic sense of the political, social and economic situation than just reading from the printed page.

I went as a guest of the Workers Advice Centres (WAC), which was originally an information centre that also provided legal assistance for Arab workers, who comprise nearly 20% of the population. It ran practical campaigns eg securing benefits for unemployed people in annexed East Jerusalem after the authorities closed down the benefit office. It also continues to provide legal assistance for individual workers.

After a number of years of this activity it decided to try to organise a new trade union.

Histadrut is the internationally recognised ‘trade union’, yet it is not a real trade union. It originated as a Zionist labour organisation to create jobs for Jews in Palestine. Until 1956 it did not allow Arabs to join, and even since it has done little for them. When the government decided to introduce foreign labour, Histadrut agreed that they could be employed at lower rates than Israeli workers.

Histadrut used to be a major employer itself, but faced a big crisis when all its companies were privatised recently and as a result it lost most of its membership.

Riding on the train from Tel Aviv to Haifa, the first thing that struck me was the militarisation of Israeli society. Everywhere there were men and women in uniform, some with heavy weapons

nonchalantly slung across the shoulder (hopefully with the safety catch on).

Israel is a paranoid society, in which “security” is a big industry. There are “guards” everywhere, many of them civilian, who check your bags when you enter railway stations, public buildings or even gardens. Indeed you can imagine an economic crisis if peace reigned and all these people were put out of work.

I visited Madj al-Krum, an Arab village, really a small town, with a population of 11,500. It sits on the slopes of a valley along which there five Arab villages are spread. Through the floor of the valley runs a road that splits it in half.

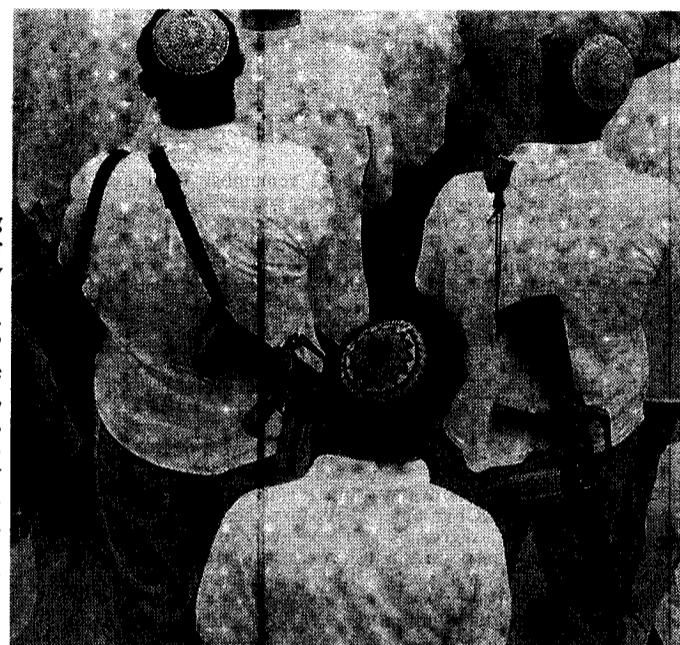
On the other side, on a higher site, lies the city of Carmiel, a Jewish city built on confiscated Arab land. In this valley there are two communities, as different as chalk and cheese.

On the Carmiel side is wealth and opulence, covered with greenery. There is no shortage of water here. On the other side you see an arid picture, a neglected community, with houses rising on the craggy, barren slopes. There is a water shortage, not because of any technical difficulties but because these people are Arabs.

The flowers of Carmiel are treated better than the Arabs on the other side of the valley. Even though they are Israeli citizens they are denied the same rights as Jewish citizens and they are denied the resources which the latter have.

The richness of Carmiel looks down on the other side of the valley seemingly mocking the Arabs and reminding them of their true place in Israeli society – at its very bottom.

But even this is not enough. There are some Arab houses on the wrong side of the road further down the valley. Carmiel wants them to cross the road to where they are supposed to belong. They want to develop the ‘Jewish’ side but these Arabs are in the way. They have bought out some of them, and they are seeking to pressure the rest to move from homes in which



Armed to the teeth: Israeli settlers use terror and violence to keep control of land seized illegally from Palestinians

they have lived for years.

No Arabs can live in Carmiel. They must cross the road to where they belong! Samia Khatib, a woman activist in Majd al-Krum, described the situation as “third world over here, first world over there”.

This is Israel, a colonialist and deeply racist society. The same traits are reflected elsewhere, in different ways.

I was shown around Jaffa, originally an Arab city (with a small Jewish population), by Asma Agbaria, a young Israeli Arab woman, who is the chairperson of WAC. Jaffa is just outside Tel Aviv. As Tel Aviv expands, Jaffa is needed for housing for Jews, and the town is being ‘developed’ with luxury apartments.

In the shadow of one big block I saw a couple of rough and poor one storey houses of bloody minded Jaffan Arabs who will not move. As you walk around Jaffa, a neglected city, you see islands of opulence, as if you have a ‘first world’ city co-existing with a ‘third world’ city in random arrangement, which makes a mockery of the word planning.

Jaffa is an old port that has been left to rot. In the harbour is a fishing fleet that supports 300 families. Once again these people are in the wrong place. The fishing fleet has to move to re-develop the harbour as a marina for rich Israelis. Capitalism will, of course, take the money of a few rich Arabs, just to show there are no hard feelings.

The fishing fleet might have to travel further for their fish, but no matter. Such is the path of progress in Israel.

Whilst the Arabs suffer national oppression in Israel there is also a class division which cuts across communities. The Arab leaders of the council in Jaffa, associated with the Israeli Labour Party, have gone along with the plan to ‘re-develop’ Jaffa. This will bring plenty of money into the town – but it is unlikely that many Arabs will see much of it.

Everywhere there is national oppression, some members of the oppressed minority will make their peace with the ruling power to further their own interests at the expense of the majority. In South Africa for example there has been the enrichment of a small number of black people whilst the majority remain in shanty towns.

I visited the WAC office in Nazareth, the only predominantly Arab city in Israel. However, it has suffered the consequences of a new Jewish town, Upper Nazareth (or Nazareth Illit), built near-by, overlooking it from a hill-top, like a fortress.

Two activists of WAC, Khitam Na’amneh and Manal Jabour showed me round. They told me Nazareth used to have a thriving market. But since the building of Upper Nazareth and the arrival of hypermarkets, this has declined. When I visited, the old town centre, where the market used to be, was lifeless.

The WAC has mainly but not exclusively concentrated on organising Arab workers (it was involved in a campaign in a Heineken Factory which involved both Arab and Jewish workers). Arab



In Britain: Orthodox Jews join Palestine Solidarity demonstration

workers face a job apartheid, mostly confined to construction and labouring jobs, as well as service sector jobs. Official unemployment rate is 20% but the real figures are undoubtedly higher.

I sat in on a meeting with some local people who WAC were trying to persuade to take building jobs they had negotiated with the employers. Asked whether they had any experience of this work, one young man said: "Every Arab knows this work." They wondered whether these were jobs worth taking because of their experience of being turfed out of jobs that were supposedly permanent but had proved to be temporary.

At the time of the first Intifada, when the borders with the West Bank were closed, workers who had jobs in Israel could not get to work. This created a shortage of labour that led the government to introduce foreign labour. Many of these workers have worked under virtually slave labour conditions - earning wages below the minimum level for Israeli workers. Unemployment levels have risen amongst Arab workers and add to their discrimination.

WAC has fought for jobs for Arab workers in the building industry. But the employers prefer to employ imported labour because it is cheaper and these workers are more quiescent because they do not want to lose their jobs. The building employers federation is currently taking the government to court since it reduced the number of foreign labourers allowed in the country. They want more.

A couple of companies said they would take local Arab workers if they could find them, so WAC has put this to the test. Whilst the work of WAC is on a small scale (it has secured around 100 jobs, and has less than 500 members) it is nonetheless politi-

cally important, since nobody else is attempting to organise Arab workers.

Obviously the Israeli regime is not enthusiastic about an independent union for its Arab population. WAC was registered with the Registrar of Non-Profit Associations only after a 2-year struggle. Since then the Registrar has again raised questions about the registration - though without definite charges.

WAC asked the International Labour Organisation to intercede with the Israeli authorities. Unfortunately the ILO disingenuously responded that WAC was not "a workers' organisation", therefore, they could not help.

My Trades Council in Swindon wrote in support of WAC to the ILO, who responded that if they had evidence that 'the situation' had changed then they would reconsider their decision.

Perhaps the real point is that the ILO don't want to upset the Histadrut. The work of WAC in the building industry shows that it is building trade union organisation, if anybody doubted it. Labour movement organisations should write to the Israeli Registrar protesting and call on the ILO to intercede.

My trip to Israel gave a graphic and indelible impression of the reality of 'the state of the Jews', as experienced by the 20% of the population that is Arab/Palestinian. Racism and discrimination is a consequence of such a state. The fact of the Holocaust does not justify the dispossession and oppression of another people.

But, of course, the conflict is not one of Jews versus Arabs. The numbers of Jewish opponents of the Israeli state is growing, as shown by the brave stand of the young refusers and the



A vain call for restraint and justice: the relentless growth of settlements never stopped

refusal of the reservists to serve in the occupied territories. It was inspiring to see Jews and Arabs working

together, as equals in their joint struggle against the Zionist state, giving us a glimpse of a possible future.

Key role played by Israeli 'Refusers'

The crisis in Israeli society has been deepened by the latest incursions into the West Bank. A statement by 52 young people refusing to participate in the oppression of the Palestinian people marked the first collective refusal to serve for some years.

It was followed by a statement of over 50 army reservists that they would not serve in the occupied territories in a "war for the settlements". Military service is compulsory for Israeli Jews, save for the ultra-orthodox. It is no easy thing to refuse in a war zone in which the propaganda of the Israeli war machine presents this service as defending "Israeli democracy".

I met with a number of young people, from 16 to 18, involved in the Forum in Support of Conscientious Objectors. They were somewhat shy with somebody who had travelled from abroad to meet them. However, once they opened up, the discussion showed that unlike the reservists they were asking questions about the very foundations of Israeli society.

They told me about the racist attitude of many of their fellow school/college students, most of whom never come into contact with Arabs, except when they go to an Arab village to buy some cheap goods at a market, or maybe one of them serves them.

"They don't deserve water and electricity," was a comment which summed this attitude up. They feared that change would be very slow to come because of what they considered to be the brainwashing of young Israeli Jews.

Naomi commented that "instead of the army being a tool in the hands of the country, the country was a tool in the hands of the army".

Whilst their views on a solution were different they all agreed that the starting point was Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. They also believed that Arab Israelis should be full citizens, with all the rights that Jews have.

My impression was that these young people tend to feel somewhat isolated, pointing to the fact that there are few people in their classes who have taken their stance. There is a lot of anger against them from their fellow students.

But they are taking a stance which they feel they are morally obliged to take, whatever the consequences. Although many of them most of them have parents who are sympathetic, their decision, nevertheless has the potential to turn them into social outcasts.

Yet they represent a trend in Israeli society which runs far deeper than might first appear. It struck me that these young people do not realise how important they are. They deserve the support of the international labour movement to give them a sense that there is an international movement which is with them, recognising the courage of their stand against the injustice and racism which is a cancer in Israeli society.

In particular, those who suffer imprisonment as a result of their refusal should receive letters which show that there is an international movement growing which supports their stand.

At the time of writing two members of the Forum, Yigal Rosenberg and Yair Hilou, have

been given their fourth and fifth terms of imprisonment. Send letters of support to them via the Forum (e-mail: matzpoon@yahoo.com)

Tyneside Palestine Solidarity

A new branch of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign was launched in May, initiated by a secondary school teacher who had recently been to Palestine with the International Solidarity Movement. Louise van der Hoeven, Treasurer of the campaign reports.

Our first meeting was not only well attended with nearly twenty people present but also involved a spread of nationalities: Palestinian, Lebanese, French and British. We were trade unionists and students and people from different political organisations and traditions as well as those from none. Despite this diversity, we quite easily reached a consensus about our objectives.

Our first public event was a stall in Newcastle City centre with about ten people working on it. We got a very good reception from shoppers, who showed a lot of interest. The only negative reaction

we got was when a man with an Israeli flag appeared opposite the stall, but after being immediately approached and confronted with our arguments he soon left. (His arguments were apparently based on his interpretation of the Bible)

We are holding fortnightly branch meetings and while some are larger than others we have a regular core with several committed members around us. We are holding regular protests at supermarkets, a different one every time to educate people about the Boycott Israeli Goods Campaign, handing out leaflets and talking to shoppers.

Local trades councils and several union branches have affiliated to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign nationally. The possibility of twinning Newcastle with Bethlehem is being seriously looked into, which will be excellent in terms of solidarity and profile.

Two of our branch members are going to Palestine with the



Local campaigns have sprung up around the country, attracting an important layer of young supporters

International Solidarity Movement soon. This will create a good platform for us to educate people, through the local media and talks, about the truth of the situation in Palestine, as opposed to the sanitised fantasy, which we are so often confronted with.

We are also building for the national day of action on September 18.

If all the members of the branch sat down to debate the practical options as to the solution to the situation in Palestine I very much doubt we would reach anything approaching an agreement. However we have quickly become a dynamic and cohesive group, united by our revulsion at the Israeli State's oppression of the Palestinian people.

Debate on French
Presidential elections: two
letters – and a reply

Wrong to vote for Chirac (1)

SHOULD socialists have voted for Chirac in the second round of the French presidential election? I quote from "Débat Militant", an electronic bulletin produced by the Voix de Travailleurs current in the LCR (my own amateurish translation):

"The slogan "blocking the road against Le Pen" becomes the starting point of all the confusions and manoeuvres. The false evidence becomes gospel truth, and the charge is: those who do not vote Chirac support Le Pen! The far left is the target of this political campaign, as are all those who, whatever they did with their ballot paper, immediately voted in the street in their thousands.

"Breaking with this political absolutism – used as an indictment, by the guilty and responsible themselves, against their own victims, the population – is a vital necessity for the workers' movement, for all those who want to make democracy an instrument of freedom of expression and control and not a machine for duping the masses.

"The workers have no interest in giving their vote to Chirac, by this they lose their independence and their dignity. Some Communist Party militants claim, as if to convince themselves, that this is a move without conse-

quences. Wrong, there is no move without consequences.

"We understand those who sincerely do not see another way to block Le Pen except voting Chirac, but they are wrong to believe that this move will not turn against them, that it will not be used tomorrow, as it is today, to silence the discordant voices of the women and men who mean to oppose the neo-liberal policies of the future government which we may get.

"However together we may make something of this experience. It will open people's eyes, and free their consciousness from these strange dialectics which wants to convince us that it is in our interest to vote for our enemy.

We will say no to the republican front, and prepare the united front of all the workers and the youth."

Are we invariably in favour of stopping fascist candidates at any price?

Should socialists have voted Conservative in the Cliviger and Worsthome ward in Burnley, a normally Conservative ward where the BNP won a seat?

If opinion polls in France had predicted that Le Pen would beat Jospin for a place in the next round, then should Besancenot and Laguiller have stood down in favour of Jospin?

Campbell MacGregor



A reply to SWP's Chris Harman Left abstention would have boosted ballot share for Le Pen

Alan Thornett

The June edition of the SWP's Socialist Review carries a rather vitriolic attack by Chris Harman on the LCR (French section of the Fourth International) over its call for a vote against Le

Pen (and thereby for Chirac) in the second round of the recent presidential elections. Chris Harman insists that this was the political equivalent of support for the treacherous popular front in France in the 1930s.

To compound such a ridiculous allegation he then

goes on to compare the policy of the LCR with the call by German social democracy (the SPD), in the presidential elections in Germany in 1932, for a vote for Hindenburg against Hitler.

This reflects a rather sterile approach to the application to political principle, taking

it out of its context and repeating it by rote.

The popular fronts of the 1930s involved strategic alliances with sections of the bourgeoisie, and bourgeois parties, as a conscious alternative to promoting the mass actions of the working class.

But how can the mass popular slogan of the French presidential election "vote for the crook rather than the fascist" be seen as an alliance (strategic or otherwise) with Chirac or the RPR? To ask the question is to answer it.

Chris Harman goes on to imply that a vote for Chirac would sow illusions in him.

But how can "vote for the crook rather than the fascist" or having yourself sprayed with disinfectant, as many did, after voting for Chirac, be seen as sowing illusions in him?

It makes no sense. And these were the actions, and slogans, not just of a few left voters but the mass reaction of millions of people who were determined to cast a vote against Le Pen as well as confronting him on the streets.

How does this compare with the vote for Hindenburg in 1932 – which was, by the way, a three-way contest between Hindenburg, Hitler, and the German Communist Party (KPD)?

Not at all. The issue then was to strengthen the KPD as a bulwark against Hitler.

The SPD called for a vote for Hindenburg as a conscious alternative to the mobilisation of the working class to stop Hitler – who was choosing his moment to

Wrong to vote Chirac (2)

In the first round of the French Presidential elections, the Trotskyists made an historic breakthrough in getting three million votes, with the LCR getting the biggest portion of the youth vote.

It was also a good development that Trotskyists got more votes than the Stalinist PCF. Unfortunately the LCR made a major mistake in supporting a vote for the conservative bourgeois candidate: Chirac in the second round.

The Revolutionary Marxist tradition is not to support bourgeois candidates or bourgeois parties, but to argue for the workers to fight independently for their class interests in the industrial, political, and social fields.

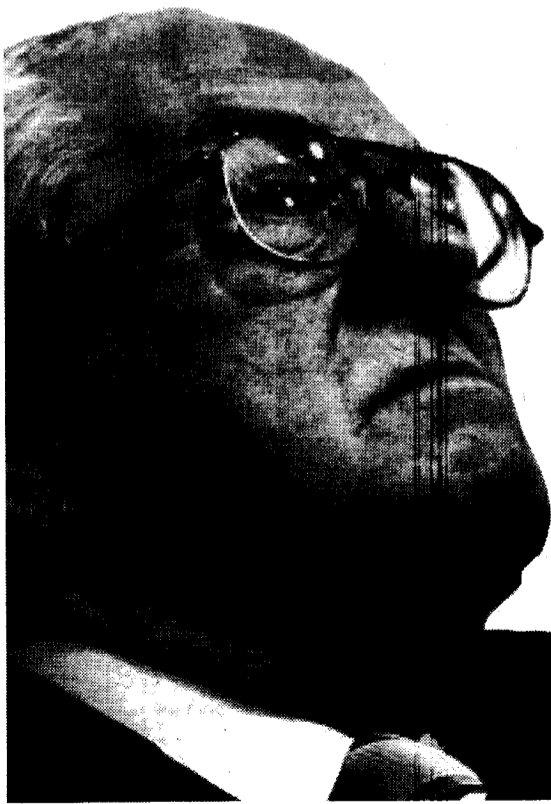
Chirac should not have been supported in the second Presidential round. He represented the conservative wing of the bourgeoisie, which is planning massive attacks on workers, ethnic minorities, and youth.

Chirac is proposing to lower the penal age from 13 to 10, and go after third generation immigrants by integrating the National Police with the Gendarmerie (Militarised Police). Certain layers of the ethnic minorities may have cheered when Chirac won the elections. They won't for long as the Chirac administration's plans become clear.

Since when did Revolutionary Marxists follow the mistakes of oppressed elements? To take two extreme examples: certain Jews voted for Hitler in the 1930s thinking that he would rein in the extreme Nazi anti-Semites, and there were Black people on the FN demonstration on May Day.

The bourgeois press in France are calling Raffarin's government "Juppe's revenge". Raffarin's government is proposing to raise the retirement age for workers.

If the Gaullists form the government workers will lose the 35-hour week, which (despite its watered-down character and get-out clauses for the Employers) represented a major concession



Le Pen: correct to mobilise against him

that the most radicalised working class in Western Europe had wrought from the ruling class.

There is obviously a distinction between conservative bourgeois politicians and fascists. However there is no real possibility of a fascist government at present. Rather the fascists are being used as

a spectre to disorientate workers from the need to fight the bourgeois programme.

Trotskyists should have fought for a boycott position, or better still an organised spoiling of ballot papers, preparing the working class for the battles against both anti-working Class and anti ethnic minority politicians.

The balance of forces was in Chirac's favour. Due to Le Pen getting into the second round the Social Democrats and Stalinists managed to get the working class tied to a viciously anti-working class politician.

It was correct to initiate and participate in demonstrations against Le Pen. Trotskyists will fight for this to be the beginning of a campaign of strikes and demonstrations against the programme of a right wing government.

Fascism has been strengthened by the drift to the right in the second round. They gained an extra 700,000 votes. Unless the working class puts up serious resistance to Chirac's attacks, fascism will be further strengthened. Fascism grows out of the despair of the middle class and growing lumpen proletariat, who are taken in by their anti-capitalist demagoguery.

Gaullism will grow in the Parliamentary elections among the middle class because the main workers' parties supported Chirac in the second round of the Presidential elections. Layers of the middle class will vote Gaullist because they see them as all-powerful, and follow them because they feel that's the only real force in French politics.

The correct lesson of the first round result was that the discredited reformist and stalinist parties offer no way forward.

In the present situation workers' interests can only be defended by extra-parliamentary action and a boycott was the clearest way to express this.

Marian Brain.



seize power. He already had a party of a million people and a private army of 400,000 storm troopers, and could only be stopped by mass action.

The working class were deprived of the most effective way of stopping Hitler – which was a united front of the SPD and the KPD – by both of those organisations.

The SPD relied on the parliamentary process and the KPD regarded the SPD as 'social fascists', as a part of their third period line, and ruled out a united front on the basis that there was no difference between the SPD and the Nazis.

When the KPD failed to stage an uprising against the rise of Hitler to the Chancellorship Trotsky declared the Comintern dead and unreformable, and called for a new, Fourth International.

In the very different conditions of France in 2002, did the LCR propose a vote against Le Pen in the ballot box as an alternative to mobilising the working class?

Q uite the reverse! The LCR was the first to call for demonstrations against Le Pen, and they were the most consistent mobilisers of them. Its call was first to get onto the streets, and only secondly to vote against Le Pen in the ballot box.

The LCR was responding to a situation which was created by the choices thrown up by the peculiarities of the French electoral system. This produced, in effect, a referendum on Le Pen, since only way of voting against him was to vote Chirac, or as the spontaneous response of millions put it, for the 'crook against the fascist'.

W ith no reformist candidate to vote for, the left were faced with a choice: either vote for Chirac against Le Pen – and be accused of supporting a right-winger – or be seen by the mass movement on the streets as being indifferent to Le Pen getting a higher share of the vote and being strengthened by it.

What Chris Harman misses out is the political dynamic of those mobilisations, which culminated in 2 million on the streets on May Day, or the shock to French society of Le Pen reaching the second round. It produced the biggest demonstrations in France since the Liberation, even bigger than 1968.

To tell the hundreds of thousands of young people who were pouring onto the streets that they should then abstain at the ballot box (as LO did and as Chris Harman advocates) made no sense at all.

Why demonstrate on the streets in huge numbers ... and then strengthen Le Pen by giving him a higher percentage of the vote in the ballot box? As Chris Harman acknowledges, the size of the Le Pen vote mattered, even if he was bound to lose.

In fact Chris Harman contradicts himself on this point. He argues firstly that there was no need for the left to vote against Le Pen because there was no chance that he could win: but he then goes on to say that the size of the vote against Le Pen was important, and criticises LO for implying that it was not.

The effect of the mass campaign and the second round vote was to contain Le Pen's rise in popularity. He got 18%, against 82% for Chirac. Thus despite a hugely high profile for two weeks as a second round candidate, he failed to raise his vote. In fact it fell by 1%, although due to the much higher turnout he got 500,000 extra votes.

A higher percentage of the vote for Le Pen, 25-75 for example, or even 30-70, would have strengthened the far right, both in France and across Europe. It would have been a defeat for the working class. Those standing on the side lines were therefore seen as abstainers from an important aspect of the struggle, suggesting that they thought that the outcome of the ballot did not matter.

Of course Trotskyists do not vote for bourgeois candidates or for bourgeois parties without exceptional reasons. In the second round of the Parliamentary elections the LCR adopted a different position – since the dynamics are different, and the stakes were not so high and the issue of Le Pen becoming the President of France was not posed.

Consequently where FN candidates got through to the second round the LCR called for a vote for the left candidate with the best chance against them.

I t is not true, however, that Trotskyists never vote for bourgeois candidates or bourgeois parties. Social demo-

cratic parties are bourgeois through and through, but we vote critically for them, because of their working class base which we want to relate. We support them, as Lenin and Trotsky said, "as the rope supports the hanging man". The left were "supporting" Chirac in a similar way.

Thus in the second round of the French presidential elections it was in the best interests of the working class to mount mass demonstrations on the streets against Le Pen – and then defeat him at the ballot box by the biggest possible margin.

S ome people who argue for an abstention point to the reactionary programme of Chirac, and suggests that to vote for him is to take responsibility for it.

But this same logic that would have prevented the left from voting for Jospin had he got through to the second round, or indeed voting for any social democratic party in Europe. It would certainly prevent a vote for Blair or New Labour in Britain.

Now it is also being suggested that the victory of Chirac in the presidential elections (and the left's vote for him) was responsible for his success in the Parliamentary elections. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The defeat of the Socialist party in the Parliamentary elections was for exactly the same reason as Jospin was defeated in the Presidential elections – traditional voters turned away because of his and the Socialist Party's record in government.

The Parliamentary elections were always going to be a mirror image of the presidential elections. The collapse of the centre left was compounded by the unpopularity of 'cohabitation'.

What the mass campaign against Le Pen did achieve was greatly to strengthen the left and the radical movements in France. The task now is to consolidate that new strength into a new unity of the left, which can build on what has been achieved.

Results of the far left Credibility and division

Yvan Lemaitre

Our candidates got 1.25 % of the vote (1.64 % in the areas where we stood), 320,594 votes in total. Lutte Ouvriere got 1.19 %, 304,100 votes. The Lambertists who stood 193 candidates got 0.30 % and 81,597 votes. The total of 2.76 % is far below the 10.44 % the far left got in the Presidential elections, but it is necessary to compare like with like.

In the legislative elections in 1997, the far left received 2.2 %. Thus there is a progression because of an essential revival of militancy that made it possible to present a much more significant number of candidates.

This militant dynamism has not been able to find a unitary framework that would have enabled it to resist the political pressure that was exerted in these elections by their antidemocratic character. It is a lost opportunity.

We were not able to meet the challenge to maintain the momentum of the presidential elections. But the far left confirmed that it has become a national political force with weight.

If there has been a failure, it is relative and must be analysed within the framework of the former relationship of forces and their evolution. The division of the far left, vis-à-vis the extreme right and the governmental right, was deeply felt by many of our voters.

"The reflex of the useful vote on the left" was also a pressure as *Le Monde* noted. The absence of candidates who were well known in their areas was certainly a factor – as was shown, in reverse, by the excellent result of 5.47 % for Olivier Besancenot.

From this point of view, the results of the legislative election indicate the relationship of forces: the dynamism of the far left was not enough to compensate for the weakness of its local base. Only a daring policy aimed at regrouping the forces that were breaking with the parties of the plural left, would perhaps have made it possible to compensate for this handicap. It was for this reason that we proposed an agreement with LO.

However, LO preferred confrontation when it could have taken initiatives itself. LO thought it could use the presidential elections to confirm its supremacy on the electoral front because of the popularity of Arlette Laguiller and then to appear like a new party with candidates in every constituency in the legislative elections. This reasoning is not concretised.

The issue was not that LO called for an abstention in the second round of the Presidentials, because it was the first round votes for Olivier that showed the error of their reasoning. This electoral re-balancing between our two tendencies corresponds to an affirmation of the need for unity, openness and democracy. The aggressive and moralistic way in which LO defended their position underlined the problem.

In the great majority of districts where we were in competition, our score was slightly higher than LO. This re-balancing operates within the same working class and popular electorate, indicates clearly a will for openness and transparency, a need for renewal corresponding to the major social and political evolutions.

New responsibilities

This re-balancing between LO and the LCR must be understood in the context of developments since 1995, when Arlette Laguiller, for the first time got more than 5% in the face of the eruption of the vast movement of November-December.

These were the first two great demonstrations of a revival of social conflict and rupture with the parties of the governmental left. This revival has limits but it was also confirmed at the political level by progress of far left – as well as by the growth of the social movement in all its forms.

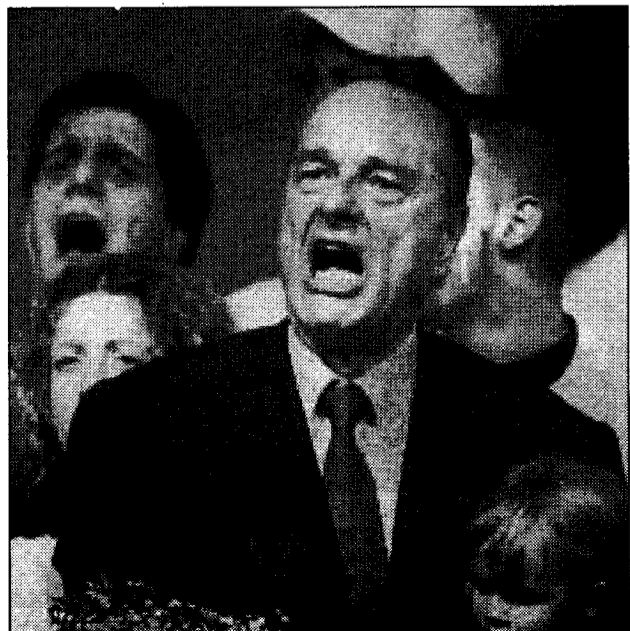
LO is wrong footed by this evolution. It is too used to present itself as a minority opposition in the face of the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the trade-union bureaucracies: it does not know how to relate to the new social movements. On the contrary, it tends to retreat into itself.

At the moment when social democracy is becoming neo-liberal, and where Stalinism is collapsing, the construction of a new working class and popular force is the order of the day. The results of the presidential and legislative elections must be assessed in this light.

Today it is necessary for us to take the initiatives necessary to contribute to the emergence of such a force by taking support from militant realities. These elections were based on the relationship of forces created by twenty years of the ruling class offensive. But they cannot only be read through the distorting prism of electoral results. These are only indications.

Things are less unfavourable in the world of work than it appears. They show primarily the shift between the potential forces of the social movement and its militant reality, and consequently our tasks. It is time for debate, and assessment and through this the formulation of a policy for the battles ahead and a regroupment of those who are the breaking with the parties of the governmental left.

(From *Rouge*, weekly paper of the LCR)



Chirac: the crook won: but this does not mean that workers saw him as anything other than a way of voting against the fascist

The Socialist Alliance - a united front of a new type?

A reply to Alex Callinicos

Alan Thornett

Alex Callinicos's article entitled "Unity in Diversity" in April's *Socialist Review* raises a number of interesting issues which are the subject of debate on the left in Britain today. He discusses the various radical movements that have been thrown up both in response to capitalist globalisation since Seattle, and against the US war drive since September 11th, and then goes on to discuss the role of the left, and the far-left, within these movements. He focuses, in particular, on the united front tactic - or as he puts it "the relevance of the united front today".

This article certainly reflects the positive development the SWP has made in recent years in seeking to break from a sectarian and isolationist past. It is a development which has come, most importantly, through the SWP's involvement in the Socialist Alliance, the Scottish Socialist Party and Globalise Resistance (GR).

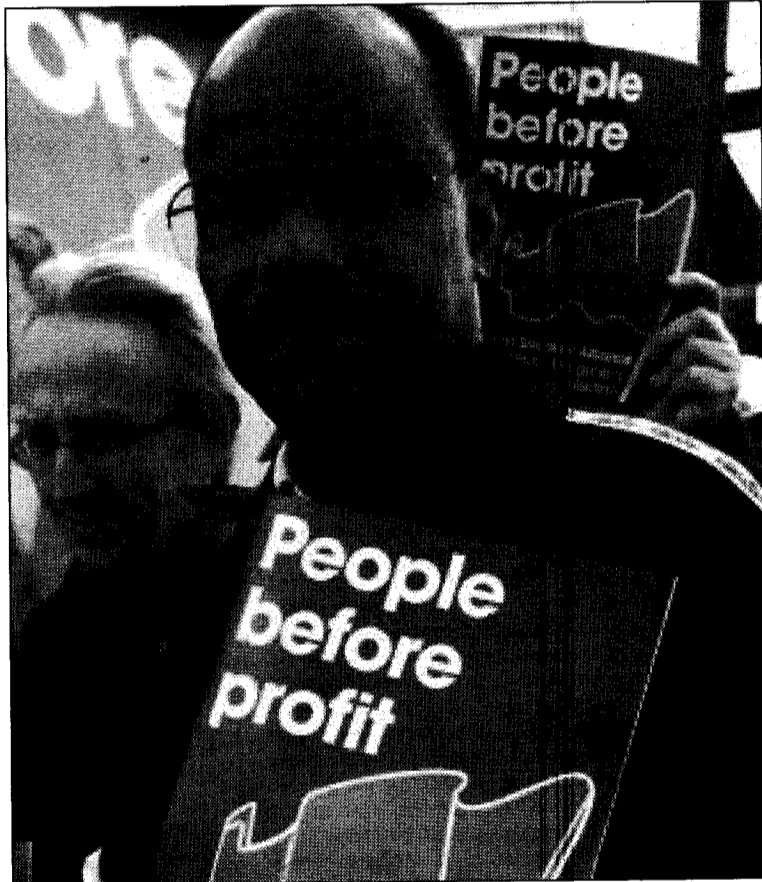
The article also reflects, however, some of the SWP's ambivalence as to the longer-term development of those organisations, particularly the Socialist Alliance. It is therefore an important discussion, since, given its size and resources (as well as its positive development) the SWP occupies a pivotal position on the British left, and carries a prime responsibility for its future.

Alex Callinicos characterises the political period we are currently in as "a new era of mass movements" which developed during the 1990s. This is true, but it needs more definition.

In fact the new period arises out of changes in economic conditions in the mid-1970s (the end of the post war boom), which created a more defensive situation for the working class internationally. This was followed by the rise of neo-liberalism under Reagan and Thatcher in the second half of the 1980s.

The early 1990s then saw the fall of the Berlin wall, the collapse of the USSR, the crisis of most of the Western Communist Parties, and the rightward march of European Social Democracy - which accepted the neo liberal agenda whole-sale under pressure from European integration and the Maastricht project.

Most of the left, internationally, was disoriented by the collapse of Stalinism, but began to regenerate by the mid-1990s. This process was boosted, in Europe, by mass strikes



Socialist Alliance Manifesto 2001: went well beyond "single issue" politics

in France at the end of 1995, which were followed by further major actions across Europe mostly in response to the Maastricht criteria.

In the mid-1990s the recomposition of the left was reflected in the emergence of important formations such as Rifondazione Comunista (PCR) in Italy and the United Left in Spain - both of which emerged from the break-up of mass Communist Parties. This came alongside the emergence of new, post Stalinist, resistance movements in the third world, most importantly the Zapatistas in Mexico.

The growing resistance to the neo-liberal agenda in Europe was reflected in the success of the European Marches in 1997. The Marches originated from various points around Europe (including in Britain) culminating in a 50,000 strong demonstration in Amsterdam. It was reflected in a similar size demonstration in Cologne the following year.

The SWP were not involved in these demonstrations. They did sponsor the 1997 Marches in Britain, but did not give practical support. Yet the European Marches

were the forerunner of the anti-globalisation movement that emerged a few years later.

Further developments in the recomposition of European left were reflected in the emergence of other new left formations: the Left Block in Portugal, the Red Green Alliance in Denmark, and the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) and later the Socialist Alliances (SAs) in England and Wales.

By the end of the 90s, Social Democratic parties held power in 13 of the 15 countries of the EU. Every single one took the radical neo-liberal road and launched attacks on the working class. Recently we have seen the consequences (or "blow back" as it is being called) from this in the defeat of centre left governments in a number of countries and a polarisation of European politics.

In the Presidential elections in France in May this resulted not just in an advance by the far right but a massive 3 million votes for far-left candidates and the collapse of the vote for the Communist Party. This opens up the prospect of a new party of the left - which the LCR has already called for.

The rise in the level of class struggle in Europe in the second half of

the 1990s was not reflected in Britain, since the defeats of the 1980s, particularly, the miners, had been far more profound than anywhere else in Europe.

The political developments on the left in Britain, however, followed a not so different pattern to the rest of Europe. The Communist Party disintegrated and the Labour left suffered a huge decline.

Blairism emerged as the radical (rightist) wing of European social democracy, reflecting the defeats of the 1980s. It is now in alliance with the most right-wing and reactionary governments and political leaders in the EU, including Italy's Berlusconi and Spain's Aznar.

The rightward march of Blairism and the reshaping of the Labour Party under Blair (including the destruction of its democracy), have alienated the Labour Party's traditional base of support in the working class and opened up space to its left which is there to be filled.

Fortunately this was recognised by the bulk of the far-left in Britain and became the political driving force behind the emergence of the SSP in Scotland and the Socialist Alliances in England and Wales.

The demise of the Communist Party and the decline of the Labour left have resulted in the British far-left becoming stronger, relatively speaking, than at any other time in the post-war period. It is able, therefore, to be the driving force behind major initiatives (such as the strong anti-war movement) that in the past would have been the prerogative of the Labour left and the Stalinists with the far left kept on the sidelines.

It was not only the crisis of Stalinism and reformism, however, which shaped the end of the 1990s, but the emergence of the anti-globalisation movement, on a new level after Seattle.

The SWP responded strongly to this growing movement and launched Globalise Resistance 2 years ago. GR went on to become the most important component of the anti-globalisation movement in Britain, mobilising large delegations for all the European anti-capitalist demonstrations, starting with Nice and then Genoa.

Although there have been many legitimate criticisms of the way the SWP have used their influence and superiority of numbers in Globalise Resistance, it was and is far more

open than previous such initiatives, again reflecting the positive political evolution of the SWP.

After September 11th US imperialism responded with a war drive designed to reshape the world in its own strategic interests. We now have a single super-power with virtually unchallengeable military force to back up its neo-liberal offensive and a world-wide attack on democratic and civil rights and the world is a much more dangerous place.

Crucially, however, this has not demobilised the anti-globalisation movement. The events at Porto Alegre were twice as big this year, and 500,000 people demonstrated in Barcelona. In Italy we have seen the huge success of the Genoa Social Forum reflected in massive demonstrations in defence of trade union rights and a 13 million-strong general strike. Even in the USA the movement is regrouping.

The fight-back against the US war drive is led by the tremendous resistance of the Palestinians, alongside the anti-war movement itself - which has partly merged with the anti-globalisation movement. In Britain there have been a series of major demonstrations against the war and in solidarity with the Palestinians.

We, therefore, face a contradictory situation today. The world is a much more dangerous place, with US imperialism more dominant than any imperial power in history. Yet, certainly in Britain, there is an important radicalisation, particularly amongst young people. This reflects itself in the various, and diverse, resistance movements: in particular the anti-war movement, the anti-globalisation movement, and solidarity with the Palestinians.

The potential for the growth and recomposition of the left is, therefore, enormous. Whether this potential is realised, however, depends to a great extent on the organisations of left itself.

This is why it is important that the current direction of the SWP, in working with the rest of the left, continues. A reversal to the old isolationism would be a disaster. This is why the debate on the issue of the united front, raised by Alex Callinicos, is so important. It is the issue around which the next stage of this development is being debated.

The nub of the debate has been whether the Socialist Alliance is a developing political organisation (a crypto-party) en route to becoming a full blown political party, or whether it is one of a number of united fronts with its specialised slot (election interventions) within the overall spectrum of activity.

At its own last conference the SWP took the position that the SA is simply one of a number of currently existing united fronts - the others being Globalise Resistance, the Anti-Nazi League, and the Campaign for Palestinian Rights.

This view has rightly been hotly disputed within the SA by most of the non-SWP forces.

It is a view which is difficult to defend, since the SA is clearly a political organisation with an extensive programme covering the full range of political issues. It could hardly be less of a single-issue united front campaign.

The aim of the SA is not to campaign around a single issue, but to build a political alternative to Blairism. How can a political alternative to Blairism, if it is to be effective, remain at the level of a united front?

Even the SA's structure is more

that of a party than a united front campaign. The election of its leadership is not just based on the requirements of campaigning activism but on the political considerations of running a political organisation.

Alex Callinicos's purpose, in this article, therefore, seems to be to modify the SWP's line on this in an attempt to make it more defensible.

His answer is to argue that whilst the SA is indeed a united front, it is a united front of a special kind. Whilst some of the new "mass movements" of today – such as Globalise Resistance and the Anti-Nazi League – correspond to the classical united front advocated by Leon Trotsky in the early days of the Communist International (Comintern), he argues, the SA is different – but only in so far as it is a "united front of a special kind".

This doesn't hold water. The classical tactic of the united front as argued by Trotsky, as Callinicos rightly points out, involved the formation of united fronts between mass parties – communist and social democratic – in defence of the working class, or against the threat of fascism.

Such mass communist parties do not in general exist today – and where they do, such as with the Communist Party in France, it has been in coalition with social democracy attacking the working class.

Callinicos also argues, to sustain this point, that the parties of the Comintern were also minorities. But this misses the point. The parties of the Comintern in the early 1920s had the massive authority of the Russian Revolution, then only 4 or 5 years old, behind them. Much of social democracy had been forced to the left by the revolution and the Comintern could address them in a way which is inconceivable with today's movements.

The issue, however, is not what corresponds today to the classic united front as advocated by the Comintern of the early 1920s, or fought for by Trotsky against fascism in Germany in the early 1930s – when the German Communist Party certainly was a mass party. We can draw the general lessons from those experiences, but we cannot replicate them today.

The united front, as developed by the far left in the post-war period, has not been based specifically on united front alliances with the mass parties of social democracy but alliances between revolutionary organisations and reformist currents on the left of social democracy or with non-revolutionary forces outside of social democracy. The same principles apply – "march separately; strike together" – but the forces involved are more limited because we are in different political conditions.

So where does this leave the debate? The united front as we understand it today – the non-classical united front if you like – is a coalition of forces, reformist and revolutionary, organised around a particular issue, and based on a democratic and inclusive framework.

This fits the ANL (although many would question the democratic framework), Globalise Resistance, and the Campaign for Palestinian Rights.

It does not fit the Socialist Alliance or the SSP. As argued above, the SA is a political organisation with an extensive political platform covering the full range of political issues. It does not just mobilise in elections, but also in the trade unions and on a full range of campaigning issues.

"March separately strike



A correct issue for united front: mobilising broadest possible anti-war campaign

together" makes no sense as a policy for a political organisation – only for a single issue campaign.

Even Globalise Resistance – which sets itself against global capital – is a single issue campaign in this sense. It does not have a manifesto like a political organisation. It does not offer a solution – other than "we want a different world". And it is not ideological, in that you don't have to be a socialist to join it – as you do the SA.

So why do Alex Callinicos and the SWP stick so hard on this point? The answer lies in the future. The development of the SA into a full blown political party is seen as incompatible with the existence and functioning of the SWP itself. Callinicos wants to defend the "organisational independence" which a united front provides, rather than the organisational integration which a new party implies.

Callinicos is rightly very positive about the Scottish Socialist Party, which SWP members in Scotland joined a year ago. He rejects the SSP, however, as a model for England since it requires the agitational activity of the component parts to go through the SSP. SWP members in Scotland, for example, sell Scottish Socialist Voice publicly, and not Socialist Worker.

Alex Callinicos says that the problem with the SSP model is that the SWP in England is too big for it! It is true that the relationship is different and therefore the exact model may not fit. But the idea that the main problem is that the SWP is too big makes no sense.

To argue that if the SWP in England was, for example, 1,000 members, it would be all right to have a new party of the left, but because it is five or six thousand it is wrong, is hardly a political argument. The logic of this position is that in the end it will be the SWP which will itself build an alternative to Blairism, and not a broad party.

It is true that the SSP is not the only model for a new party of this

type. It was shaped for the specific situation in Scotland, just as the Italian equivalent, the PCR was shaped by Italian realities. But there are some general principles that apply to the building of such parties that are not so specific to the local situation.

There has to be a democratic and inclusive structure – which allows the existing revolutionary organisations to be structured into it. Democracy must not be seen as a luxury, or a secondary issue, but an essential prerequisite for effective coalition building.

This means transparency in decision-making, the accountability of leaders and the space for political debate as to the tactics and strategy for the movement. In the SSP this is achieved by means of political platforms, whilst in the SA it is achieved by means of a protocol on their inclusion on the executive committee at the time of elections.

There needs to be a centralisation of agitational work. It may take time to achieve this – and the route may not be the same or as quick as in Scotland – where the Scottish Socialist Alliance had built a reputation through mass campaigns such as that over water tax – but it is essential it happens.

Such a party needs to have a publication or publications. It may be difficult to go quickly to a single paper sold publicly, as with the SSP, given the greater diversity of revolutionary groups in the SA and the greater overall weight of the SWP. But if the Alliance is deprived of its own paper it is also deprived of the political developments, discussion and common experience which the production and maintenance of a newspaper provides.

There needs to be a regular forum for political discussions, at every level of the organisation, as issues come up, and a paper can help provide that. There is an ongoing debate on this between the SWP and the other forces in the SA on this issue.

The SA in England is not ready yet to become a full-blown party. It has moved significantly in that direction, but further development is necessary. But becoming a party needs to be seen as the next goal we are working towards. In the end an organisation like the SA will have to go forward or will be forced to go backwards.

Alex Callinicos is right to argue that the SA or the SSP should not become revolutionary parties at the present time, since in the current political conditions this would simply reduce them back to their revolutionary components.

He is right to stress that the best way to win those in the Alliance today who are not revolutionaries to a revolutionary position is to work with them within a broader formation.

Those left groups within the SA who argue that it should become a revolutionary party immediately potentially jeopardise the existence of the Alliance – since if they were successful it would break up.

But this does not mean that the revolutionaries within the SA do not want it to become a revolutionary party when that becomes possible. It is essential that they remain organised in the SA as in the SSP, otherwise the revolutionary component can be lost. The aim of revolu-

tionaries must be to win the whole party to revolutionary Marxism when political conditions are ready for that.

And that means remaining organised inside such a party in order to play an organised political role in the development of the organisation and in order to make the difficult decision as to when to propose that it adopts a revolutionary programme.

The dynamic of recomposition which creates the SA and the SSP is also a dynamic towards revolutionary unity. And the evolution of the SWP points in that direction as well. There is no previous example, that I am aware of, of an organisation of the size and importance of the SWP breaking from an isolationist past in the way the SWP is attempting to do.

At the same time many of the issues which have traditionally divided the British far left – in particular the class nature of the USSR and entry into the Labour Party which were the main divides on the British far left for 50 years – are losing their significance.

The USSR no longer exists, and the vast bulk of the far-left is outside of the Labour Party.

The ISG in Britain has had discussions with the SWP, the IST (the international grouping of the SWP) is having discussions with the Fourth International. Even the exchange of views represented by these articles represent a new level of engagement between the various components of the far left. (1)

Further developments will not happen overnight. But times are changing and opportunities must not be missed when they present themselves. Meanwhile the task is to reshape the left and build new broad parties that can be useful to the working class in today's conditions.

In practical terms the SWP leadership made clear after the local elections that it did not want a repeat of the difficulties after the General Election – where the dynamic created by the campaign was allowed to recede because local Alliances did not function.

Today the Alliance is maintaining a much higher profile at a national and local level – around a whole myriad of political questions. The recent decisions of the National Council to hold a trade union activists' meeting, a conference on Europe and a conference on world politics aimed mainly at young people will strengthen that healthy trajectory. In practice the Alliance will become more and more of a party.

The SWP needs to grasp the nettle on the future of the Socialist Alliance – and support that development in theory as well as sometimes in practice.

(1) Versions of this article and the Callinicos piece have been published in Critique Communiste – the theoretical magazine of the LCR, French section of the Fourth International.



Globalise Resistance and anti-capitalist campaigns can also build on the basis of less definite and more limited policies than the Socialist Alliance

Irish electorate's thumbs down to opposition parties

Joe Craig

So, despite the brown envelopes and blank cheques, the off-shore accounts and tax evasion, the dissatisfaction over health services and growth in inequality, Fianna Fail (FF) are back in government following the election on May 17.

Their vote increased from 39.3% in 1997 to 41.5% but because of clever vote management and transfers from other parties it will obtain around 49% of the seats, just short of an overall majority. If five independents, who might more accurately be called Independent Fianna Failers, are included then Bertie Ahern already has his majority.

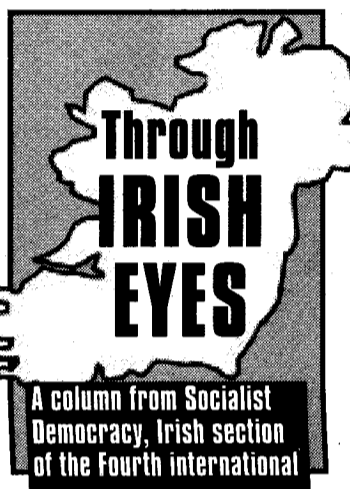
It is noteworthy that despite this he formed a new coalition with the Progressive Democrats (PDs) - Ireland's unashamed Thatcherites. Noteworthy because despite their success, it is widely recognised that the boom economy that won Fianna Fail the election has decelerated sharply and that severe challenges loom ahead.

This is what lies behind Ahern's remark that he seeks a strong and stable government. He knows that unpopular attacks on living standards are going to be required very soon, not least to fill the 1 to 2 billion euro hole in the public finances and to win the re-run of the Nice Treaty referendum. As strong a government as possible will be necessary and the PDs can help provide both the votes and political cover.

Fianna Fail

In an election studded with significant developments it would be easy to pass over the FF performance without giving it the attention it warrants. Commentators are now saying that 'the Republic (could) be a one party state in which Fianna Fail (is) the only credible candidate for power' (Fintan O'Toole, Irish Times).

It commands the allegiance of a significant section of the working class and its vote in Dublin and other urban areas is not a great deal below that in the rest of the state. This means a significant section of workers display no evidence of political consciousness of themselves as a class and accept the political arguments advanced by their class enemy. While Fianna Fail is



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

presented as a catch-all party it is in fact the main party of the Irish capitalist class.

While the vote for FF is the most significant result of the election it should be appreciated, after all the praise for Ahern dies down, that Charlie Haughey won a higher slice of the vote in each of the five elections in which he put himself forward for Taoiseach. The party vote has shown no significant reversal of the decline evident since the landslide election of 1977 when Fianna Fail gained its last overall majority.



Adams can only offer "change" - while SF's TD backed Ahern

Its coalition partner the Progressive Democrats presented themselves as the only party that could 'mind' FF and prevent its arrogance and corruption getting out of control. Such a cynical platform - don't trust the bastards but trust us to put them into government - doesn't do justice to the nasty character of this party.

Its revival is one reflection of the growing inequality that has characterised the boom economy, although its vote actually fell by 0.72% to 3.96% even while it doubled its seats from four to eight.

Its election platform of income tax cuts for the rich, from 42 to 40 percent, and its promotion of wide scale privatisation allows it to be the perfect foil to FF which still likes in some quarters to pre-



(Clue for British readers: Naas is a town not far to the west of Dublin)

sent itself as a party of the people, a party of the left.

Fine Gael

The election ushered in a period in which FF is the only perceived possible head of government because of the collapse of Fine Gael, leading to confident announcements of 'the end of civil war politics.'

only among large farmers. Leader Michael Noonan has resigned, and no one is sure who might replace him.

Fine Gael seems finished as the alternative pole of government, not least because FF will have many suitors for coalition among the so-called opposition parties. For a capitalist party this spells real problems. What careerist wants to join a party that cannot promise the Mercs and perks of office?

There never was any fundamental difference between the two 'civil war' parties and in this election the realisation that Fine Gael, with nothing to offer from an unpopular leader, could not form an alternative government persuaded many of its middle class supporters to vote for other parties. For socialists this is a welcome development. It clarifies the choices facing workers.

An exit poll conducted for RTE reported that one third of FG defectors went to FF, one third to Labour and one third to independents with only 4% going to the PDs. If this is true then underneath the surface greater changes are taking place, with FF possibly losing some of its working class support to be replaced by defectors from FG. This may also be true of the Labour Party, which had a very poor election.

While it retained its total of 21 seats its vote fell by 2.14% to 10.77%, in circumstances where other perceived 'left' parties made gains.

When we realise that the combined force of the Labour Party and Democratic Left that are now merged lost over 13% of its vote on the 1997 result and since 1992 its vote has nearly halved, we can see that it has fared even worse

than FG.

It lost Dick Spring, its previous leader, and very nearly its current leader Ruairi Quinn. Its result fits a pattern across Europe in which social democrats have been punished for implementing neo-liberal policies that have hurt their working class support.

This is no less true of Ireland despite their lack of working class support in the first place, their earlier drubbing in 1997 for entering coalition with FF, and the economic boom that has allowed limited increases in living standards while inequality has increased.

Labour fundamentally failed to identify or be identified with the dissatisfaction with this rising inequality and the crisis of public services which became its most open expression.

Its failure, along with that of FG, revealed the election as a vote of no confidence in this 'official' opposition. Indeed this is perhaps, for socialists, the most significant feature of the political landscape.

A crisis of perspectives has been opened up for all those claiming opposition to the returned governmental majority. It's just that some don't yet recognise it, and in failing to do so reveal only their short term horizon and ultimate failure to represent a genuine opponent.

Greens and Sinn Fein

This is certainly true of the Green Party and Sinn Fein (SF), widely credited as the winners in the election. The Greens increased their vote by 1.09% to 3.85% but increased their seats from

two to six. However it was Sinn Fein who were undoubtedly the real winners, increasing their vote from 2.5% in 1997 to 6.51% and adding four seats to their existing one.

However while the figures may be relatively impressive, the politics are not: and while the foreign, especially British, press sounded some alarm at Sinn Fein's rise, the Irish establishment appeared to take a relatively relaxed view, which is perfectly understandable.

Waving the tricolour doesn't have the same effect in the South, though some Sinn Fein members appear not to appreciate this.

All Gerry Adams could promise both during and after the election was an undefined 'change' which could be interpreted in the banal sense of today being different from yesterday and tomorrow being different from today - but which in the North has meant a reactionary politics completely compatible with coalition with the most bigoted parties of unionism.

The vote for other candidates increased by 1.11% to 10.94%, but these range from Fianna Failers who failed party selection contests, to the Socialist Party's Joe Higgins, who was returned with 6,442 first preference votes, almost the same total as in 1997.

Noteworthy was the emergence of at least five candidates campaigning on health related issues - highlighting the neglect of the service despite, or rather in many ways as a result of the boom economy.

It is notable that the emergence of this vote ran parallel to, and not through, the rise of Sinn Fein, even in Cavan-Monaghan where SF had its sitting TD. SF was obviously not seen as an adequate vehicle for expressing these concerns.

While reflecting genuine anger and a willingness to oppose establishment parties these candidates can in no way be identified as socialist, or even left wing, and often reflect the most localist of concerns.

To lump together all the independents in one category of 'radicalisation' as we can expect some on the left to do obscures what is happening as much as it informs. It is certainly no guide to future strategy.

Crisis of Perspective

A crisis of opposition now exists. Fine Gael has been advised by well-wishers to position itself on the left, to capture the perceived radicalisation of those opposed to Fianna Fail: but the 'blueshirts' as a party of the left have no credibility.

Others recommend it being true to itself, and predicting that FF will balk at attacks on living standards required to correct the public finances, advise a shift to the right. The implausibility of both strategies shows the depth of their crisis.

The Labour Party may con-

sider moving left, but its increasing reliance on middle class votes risks losing as much as it gains. Its recent history under Dick Spring of exploiting anger at a Fianna Fail government, only to keep it in power after an election has not been forgotten. Its ill concealed craving for office, which could only be with FF or FG, rules out a credible 'left' approach.

Quinn has waxed lyrically about Labour being well placed to 'provide strong opposition,' 'coherence to the opposition' and 'crucially placed to provide leadership' but the election results have already exposed such nonsense.

The alternative of 'rolling up our sleeves and getting involved more in community issues' as Roisin Shortall TD put it simply represents a strategy of going deeper into the clientelist politics that FF made its own until Sinn Fein came along.

The Greens have not even tried to conceal their disappointment at not being asked to go into coalition with Fianna Fail: 'it would have been nice to be in government' said its leader Trevor Sargent but they would just have to 'make the best of it.'

By way of opposition they can do no more than look forward to the next elections, at which point presumably they will have the strength to move effortlessly from opposition to the establishment, becoming its most conscientious members, like their counterparts in Europe.

Mitchell McLoughlin of Sinn Fein called immediately after the election for an opposition within the opposition and 'an alliance of progressive, radical forces to bring about equality.'

The Greens have already refused, and it has been reported that some independents are already uniting to determine the price of supporting Fianna Fail.

The alternative being offered by SF is nothing radical anyway. Its publicity director, Dawn Doyle said 'it means convincing business that we have solid business policies, that we are not anti-business.'

After the last election the sole SF TD supported Bertie Ahern for Taoiseach and McLoughlin has said that 'something similar is very possible on this occasion'

Sinn Fein, like the Greens, wish to be in government with FF, and having spent most of the last couple of years denying such intentions they spent most of the last six months declaring that FF would come knocking if they needed to.

The likelihood of a FF/PD or FF/Independents government coalition will continue to allow both parties to play at loyal opposition, all the longer to lead workers up yet another blind ally.

But the potential sharpness of the struggles to come, over public sector pay, privatisa-

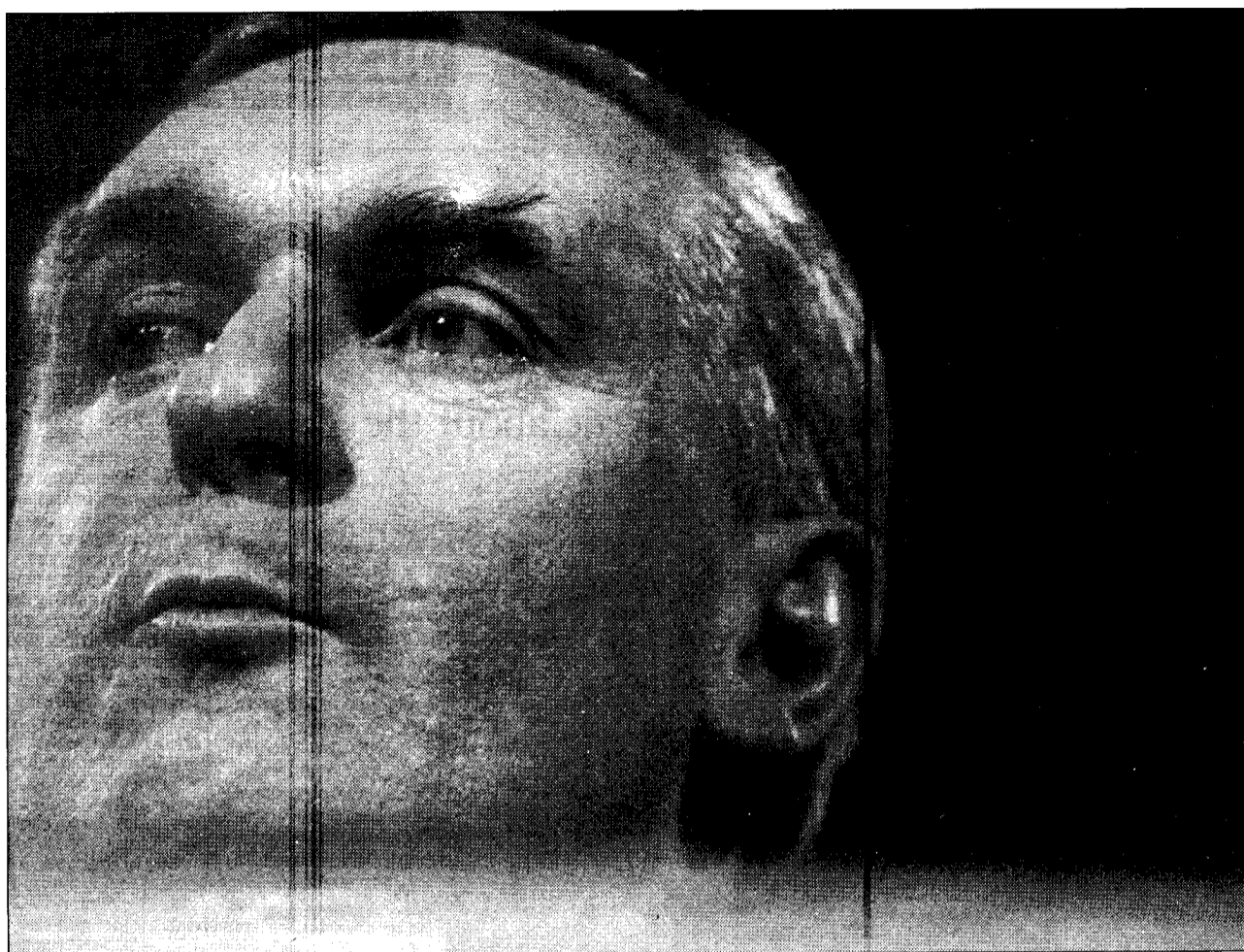
tion and Nice will still create problems for this deceitful strategy.

The contradiction in this election has been that the victorious government party was defeated in two major referenda in the past year, and lost the abortion referendum just weeks before the election - seeing a sustained attempt by Bertie Ahern to build a more stable coalition with the Catholic right come crashing down in flames.

Now we have a Fianna Fail triumph and the appearance that they no longer need a coalition - but they are still in danger of losing the next Nice referendum and face major struggles over public services such as health and education.

The contradiction is easy to understand. It is the contradiction between class consciousness and combativity. Workers don't recognise the class interests served by the Fianna Fail party, but, partly because of this lack of class understanding, they are willing to oppose the government and fight on local or immediate issues.

There can however, be only one eventual outcome to a struggle in which one of the contestants is blind and the fragmentation of the opposition in the elections shows how far we have to go to build a credible opposition.



Ahern: head and shoulders above a confused and divided opposition

In this regard the left made a miserable contribution.

The Irish State, in common with the rest of Europe, witnessed a continuing fall in turnout that has occurred in seven of the last eight general elections which was only slightly reversed in 1987.

Twenty years ago over 76% went to the polls while in this election the figure was down to 62.73% with even lower turnouts in working class constituencies.

This reveals, along with the disaffection of increasing numbers with the main

establishment parties, the search for new vehicles of opposition and fragmentation of that opposition, a growing alienation from the existing system even while it delivered unprecedented economic growth.

The domination of the

working class by parties that don't even claim to represent their interests is a measure of the poverty of class consciousness that has to be transformed if the existing economic and political system is to be successfully challenged.

Irish socialists appeal for support in stand against sectarianism

WE THE UNDERSIGNED wish to declare our absolute opposition to the growing bigotry and sectarianism within society in the North of Ireland as shown by events at Holy Cross, the Short Strand and countless other incidents.

Far from being the dying gasp of an old order, all the signs are that a new and even more virulent sectarianism is emerging as a direct consequence of the structures and way of thinking built into the Good Friday Agreement.

The new institutional sectarianism is not confined to a few bigots. It involves most of the political and institutional structures of our society displaying a willingness to define incidents in terms favourable to the bigots, to accept the sectarian logic of the bigots, and to collude with and make concessions to bigotry with the end result that sectarian arrangements are built into every level of society.

Thus the self-evident fact that the loyalist organisations are carrying out an organised programme of intimidation, which the main unionist parties are quite



Bigotry on the hoof: the clash outside Holy Cross school

happy to excuse while conducting their own campaign that feeds the violence, goes without comment.

The British administration and the media immediately redefine the situation as 'community conflict'.

All the main political parties go along with this and the trade unions offer to act as 'honest brokers'.

The inevitable outcome is a settlement that further entrenches religious apartheid and institutionalises sectarianism.

We reject the contention of the British Government, sec-

tionary politicians and media commentators that sectarianism is the result of 'community division' that can only be addressed through accommodating or compromising with the demands of sectarian intimidation.

Sectarianism is not ingrained in working class communities but fostered by the politics of bigotry and intimidation. Sectarianism cannot be combated by appealing to those carrying out the intimidation or acceding to any of their demands.

We reject the logic of sec-

tionary apartheid which states that housing can be allocated by religion and that working people are not free to live in whatever location they desire.

We reject proposals for provision and use of social facilities on a sectarian basis. We also reject 'solutions' that see walls built higher around communities most under attack, creating jail like structures in which it is the victims who are imprisoned.

The trade union movement's lofty condemnation of 'all' sectarianism is cover for its failure to identify the source of bigotry and assign responsibility for the real sectarianism that exists.

Its attempts to advise loyalism on how their sectarian politics can be advanced in a more articulate fashion is accommodation with bigotry and not opposition.

The trade union role is particularly shameful in that it denies the possibility of an alternative identity, as members of the Irish working class.

It stands opposed to the desire of many workers who want to stand with us in defending the right of work-

ing people to live and work where they wish, who oppose the programme of loyalist intimidation and who oppose official promotion of a sectarian logic involving collusion with, and appeasement of, the bigots.

We the undersigned call for a real campaign against sectarianism within the Protestant and Catholic working class.

Many working class people despair of the violence and can see no way out of it. Such despair is precisely the object of sectarian attacks.

We are confident in the belief that a large current of Irish society seeks a means to declare its opposition to the sectarian 'solutions' on offer and wishes to hear a new voice articulate its hopes.

We the undersigned affirm that only the united organisation of workers across the island and beyond can promise defeat for bigotry and that a first step in this is a united socialist voice declaring No to Sectarianism!

Signed: Belfast International Socialists; Socialist Democracy

UN junkets can't solve world hunger

Phil Ward

Amid almost total indifference from major imperialist media and politicians and behind a cordon of 16,000 police protecting the politicians from 30,000 anti-globalisation demonstrators, the second World Food Summit of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation took place in Rome on June 13. Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi closed the meeting 2 hours early in order to watch the football.

This symbolic act possibly marks the beginning of the end for UN-sponsored summitry as a means of defusing the demands of the masses of the South for an end to hunger, environmental degradation, exploitation and oppression.

As one of the delegates to the Civil Society Forum for Food Sovereignty (CSF), an organisation

of third world farmers, fisherpeople, forest dwellers and aid workers, put it: "We should have no more food summits".

Earlier the summit had rejected the FAO's bureaucrats' call for a \$24bn-a-year investment programme to cut hunger by half by 2015, merely reiterating that aim (currently running 45 years behind schedule).

Instead, they forlornly called for imperialist countries to honour their commitment, from the 1992 Rio World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), to increase aid to 0.7% of GNP.

The summit declaration is otherwise full of pious words but no serious concrete measures are suggested to advance their aims. Instead of answering farmers' demands for land reform, protec-

After the rich have taken their "share" their is only rubbish left for the rest



tion of biodiversity and ending the dependence on international markets and transnational corporations, the declaration, at the insistence of the US delegation, committed the FAO to "facilitate the responsible use of biotechnology in addressing development needs".

The CSF suggested that this was the key decision of the summit. It presages a major offensive by biotech companies to promote GM crops as the answer to world hunger at the upcoming "Rio Plus Ten" WSSD in Johannesburg in August and at a US-hosted ministerial-level International Conference on Agricultural Science and Technology early next year.

The CSF rejected the declaration, with the claim, not that it lacked political will, but that it had too

much will to promote globalisation, trade liberalisation, GM and military domination that are the main causes of global hunger.

The aim of biotech and agribusiness is to increase their control over world food production. There has never before been so much food produced and production methods are now so intensive that land degradation threatens an even greater disaster than the 815m people officially classified as hungry.

Another major threat is global warming: possible sharp changes in local climate could make some strains of crop currently grown unviable and also increase problems from pests. Biotech companies promote GM to combat this (e.g. introducing genes for pest or drought resistance or salt tolerance).

A report in New Scientist of June 22 indicates that yield gains of using such technology are at best marginal, further emphasising that the issue is who controls production and the markets rather than some technical fix.

The debacle at the World Food Summit (and the likely one at the sustainable development summit in Johannesburg) may have a positive spin-off for the anti-globalisation movement. We could be at a point when Green and environmental organisations realise it is useless to put their efforts into presenting their positions at such summits.

It is reported that there are to be 45,000 delegates to the Civil Society Forum in Johannesburg, and there are complaints about delegates from Western NGOs lording it in an exclusive white suburb right next door to the township of Alexandria.

Hopefully, the large majority will have no illusions in the ability of imperialist-controlled talking-shops to rectify the problems of world food security and environmental degradation and will make sure in future that their campaigns for land reform and debt relief are addressed in the fields and in the streets.

FAO World Food Summit Declaration: (<http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/MEETING/004/Y6948E.HTM>)

Fourth International Youth Summer Camp, France 2002

Calling all young activists ...



Brioude, France from Saturday July 27 to Friday August 2

"This globalisation is not ours, let's build another world"

The Fourth International Youth summer camp gives young revolutionaries from across Europe the chance to come together for a week to share experiences from the campaigns in which they have been involved.

What is even better is that this takes place in the context where having fun is also part of the official programme!

The camp is organised on the basis of collective living - with its own currency - with participants taking responsibility both for the political programme and for the practical tasks that need doing.

This year the camp takes place in the context of:

- ◆ The recent Presidential election in France where the LCR, French section of the Fourth International, got 4.2% of the vote - and 13.9% of the vote amongst 18-24 year olds
 - ◆ The growth of an anti-war movement in response to the so-called "war against terrorism" and the continued development of the anti-globalisation movement
 - ◆ The build up to the European Social Forum in Florence in November
- Certainly the elections in France have resulted in

many people, including many young people rushing to join the LCR and its youth organisation - the JCR. A lot of these people will be coming to the camp, making it even more interesting than usual

Among the sessions planned:

SATURDAY

Opening meeting of the 19th international youth camp, with Olivier Besancenot, LCR Presidential candidate

SUNDAY

Forum on the international situation.

Speakers include Catherine Samary

MONDAY

Forum against privatisation

Speakers include Michel Husson

TUESDAY

Forum: New period of imperialist wars

Speakers include Gilbert Achcar

WEDNESDAY

Forum: organising to overthrow this society

Speakers include Francois Verammen

THURSDAY

Forum: Struggles and alternatives

Speakers on Argentina and building the ESF

FRIDAY

Forum: The socialist world we want

Speakers on self organisation, workers control

Closing meeting: It's all ours - everything belongs to us

Speakers include Penelope Duggan

How the camp works

Each day apart from the first and the last will begin with a morning forum, after which there will be a series of workshops, organised in four cycles which are women, neo-colonialism, ecology and lesbigay.

On some days there will be additional workshops linked to the theme of the forums. There will be a series of 5 educationals on Basic Marxism.

There will also be two women-only discussions: one on "Women's place in revolutionary organisations" and one on prostitution. Comrades from Britain will meet every-day as a delegation to talk about how we think the sessions have gone. We will elect someone to serve on the leadership of the camp. We will also meet collectively with delegations from other countries.

If you want to find out more, get in touch. ■ RING us on 020 8800 7460, ■ email outlook@gn.apc.org or ■ write to Youth Camp c/o Po Box 1109, London N4 2UU

Fields of danger

Terry Conway reviews 'Fields of Gold' (Alan Rusbridger and Ronan Bennett) BBC2

I didn't manage to watch "Fields of Gold" live, so when I finally snatched time to sit down and watch the video I had not only read the reviews that appeared before it was shown but also those printed afterwards. What I saw on screen was a much more complex story than that which I read about.

The reviews, be they supportive or damning concentrated on one single aspect of the drama - whether it is possible for genes to transfer from genetically modified crops to humans. I don't claim to be an expert on such questions but I do remember stories of certain recent and virulent strains of flu perhaps originating in chickens. Then there are theories about HIV mutating from a virus amongst chimpanzees and of course the troubled relationship between CJD and BSE.

There is of course a much greater leap - scientifically as well as imaginatively speaking to get from wheat to human than from other relatively complex animals to humans. But as I understand it, the disease in the wheat was something that could develop amongst Homo sapiens in the first place. And we know that GM technology is dependent on transferring traits from one species to another - between bacteria and crops for sure.

Many scientists have expressed concern that antibiotic resistant genes that are usually used in the process of making GM crops could enter the genes of bacteria - and from there have a devastating effect on our immune systems.

Then there has been the development of GM crops that produce their own pesticides. These are only supposed to kill the pests that feed on that particular crop.

However in 1999, researchers at Cornell University found that the pesticide produced by genetically modified BT corn also killed 50% of the caterpillars of the harmless - and stunning - Monarch butterfly.

There is also concern that the development of superbugs will be speeded up, as pests become resistant to more and more of the toxins produced by GM crops. This is more likely to happen even than in other forms of intensive farming because the use



As the going gets tough, Anna Friel (below) gets going



of pesticides is more intensive.

At any rate, the point that the environmental movement makes in relation to genetically modified food is not that they are sure that it is a danger to human health, but that it must be to be down to those who advocate its use to prove that it is not a threat. When there is no proof, then we have to apply the precautionary principle.

This is even more true in terms of genetic modification than most other issues. The only parallel that I can think of is nuclear technology where again the fundamental issue is the same - you can't reverse either the reaction or its effects...

And in terms of GM while there is no certainty in terms of human health there is in other regards. The way GM crops are being used deprives small farmers and peasants of the means to restock their crops without paying out huge sums of money to the multinationals that hold the seeds - and the pesticides.

The big GM multinationals such as Monsanto are already furious that in general the European market remains much more cautious than that in the States - because of the relative strength of the environmental movement here. All of Blair's fawning to US corporations has not persuaded people in Britain that GM is safe - and the government has now been forced to concede that we need a "national debate", with

meetings held throughout the country this summer.

It will be down to the movement to ensure that this is less of a pious exercise playing to the cameras than most of this government's previous debates and consultations.

No wonder there was a furious reaction from the establishment and media - outside Rusbridger's own Guardian of course - who even tried to have the pro-

gramme pulled. The Science Media Centre, which promotes GM companies and is funded by companies such as Dupont, Meril Biosciences, Pfizer, PowderJet and Smith & Nephew pushed hard that the BBC, which had run a major promotion campaign for the series, withdraw it at the last moment.

In particular they trumpeted the views of Doctor Mark Tester of Cambridge University who had been used as a scientific adviser during the making of the programme.

Tester, who apparently calls himself a Green socialist, subsequently rubbished the scientific credibility of the thriller, claiming that the drama was full of "ridiculous errors of fact to inflame uniformed anti-GM hysteria". He conceded that what was shown happening was possible, but claimed it was rare and difficult to transmit.

For a former worker for the Green Party, it is remarkable that Dr Tester didn't even find it necessary to address the precautionary principle.

Needless to say he also made no concessions to the idea that fiction will treat science in a different way than a theoretical paper... Some strange Green socialist methinks...

At the same time, Ronan Bennett's republican views were also raised in order to suggest that the programme must be off the wall. After all, its fine to have people biased in favour of establish-

ment views putting them in front of the masses, but not those who are critical...

All of this certainly was not a secondary issue to the film - either at the level of plot or message but it was by no means the totality.

In fact what I thought was most impressive was the way Bennett and Rusbridger treat the wider social context - the relationship between government and big corporations most obviously. It is impossible to think that the Prime Minister's press officer is modelled on anything other than the one we know and love... The whole cynical way that "Feed the World" used their supposed concern about famine in Africa in order to boost profits rang loud bells close to home.

In fact you could see the whole script as a rewrite of 1984 - perhaps set only 20 years later...

There were aspects of the drama I was more ambivalent about. There

were no images of mass resistance to this nightmare. The plot is peppered with ex-members of the SWP in various positions from cabinet minister, newspaper editor and past-it reporter.

OK, so it's not unrealistic that many of those who were involved in the far-left in their youth take very contrary positions in later life - and any way that has its uses in terms of the final plot twist. Then there is the desperate environmentalist wanting to shock the world into saving itself.

But there is no movement

of any kind - only individual actions. Rusbridger can justify this all he likes - as he has done in his account of the programme, but as well as defying reality, actually it makes for a less powerful story.

Contrary to much of traditional literary theory, people acting in groups open up far more dramatic possibilities than individuals on their own.

Then I didn't like the fact that the only black woman is probably the only major character who has not a single redeeming characteristic or moment though the main black man is more ambivalent.

The acting was compelling and believable, particularly from the completely believable Phil Davies as the burnt out hack. Anna Friel's role as the young photographer was in many ways less challenging, but her portrayal had depth. Friel has also made clear that she sees the issues explored in the piece as being ones she personally sees as important.

Most of the cinematography was crisp and well framed with the irritating exception of the crucial final sequence... I could forgive the melodramatic twist - which I won't share in case you haven't yet got to your own video copy - because it seemed the only way of getting to a redemptive climax.

But the power of this was undercut for me by the fact that I was preoccupied not by thinking no one would act like this in that situation but that fire doesn't behave like that, why aren't they coughing and why don't they remain pristinely clean despite the smoke?

Despite these reservations, Fields of Gold was one of the most compelling pieces of TV drama I have seen in a long time - and one that dealt with serious issues in a compelling manner.

Global Action Against Incinerators

Susan Moore

On Monday June 17 some 125 groups from 54 countries launched the first Global Day of Action Against Waste Incineration. Events around the world continued throughout the week including in Turkey, the Philippines, New Zealand and Norway.

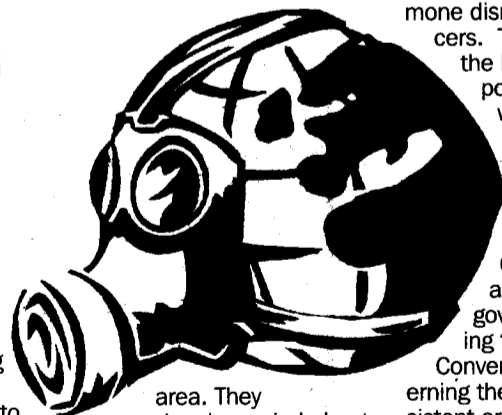
The Global Day of Action challenged governments to put a stop to incineration of waste, which emits dangerous toxins, and move towards sustainable waste systems.

Friends of the Earth UK called on the government to rule out the building of new incinerators and concentrate instead on improving

the UK's "woeful" recycling record. A meeting took place in Parliament on June 18 to launch a Zero Waste Charter and Ten Point Plan supported by Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, SERA, Communities Against Toxics and the UK Zero Waste Alliance.

Recycling experts demonstrated that elsewhere in the world 60-85% of waste is recycled and composted.

Claire Wilton, incineration campaigner at Friends of the Earth said, "Communities across the UK are fighting vigorous campaigns to prevent incinerators being built in their



area. They are deeply worried about the potential impacts on their health and recognise that burning our waste is harmful to the environment."

Although modern incinerators are designed to reduce emissions, they still emit chemicals that cause concern. Smoke, gases and toxic ash can contain dioxins that are extremely harmful even at low levels.

The chemicals released from incinerators can cause immune and reproductive system defects, spontaneous abortions, respiratory

diseases, diabetes, hormone disruption and cancers. Toxic ash left from the burning is disposed of in landfills where it can release harmful chemicals into rivers and streams.

In Sydney, Greenpeace accused the federal government of ignoring the Stockholm Convention, a treaty governing the emission of persistent organic pollutants (POPs).

POPs remain intact in the environment for long periods, become widely distributed geographically, accumulate in fatty tissues and are toxic to humans and wildlife. POPs circulate globally and can cause damage wherever they travel.

Incinerator campaigns in Britain such as those in North London, Sheffield and Newcastle will be encouraged by the growing worldwide attention this issue is now attracting.

Stephen Jay Gould, evolution theorist, dies aged 60

Stephen Jay Gould, the evolutionary theorist at Harvard University whose research, lectures and prolific output of essays helped to reinvigorate the field of palaeontology, died yesterday at his home in Manhattan. He was 60.

The cause was cancer, said his wife, Rhonda Roland Shearer.

One of the most influential evolutionary biologists of the 20th century and perhaps the best known since Charles Darwin, Dr Gould touched off numerous debates, forcing scientists to rethink sometimes entrenched ideas about evolutionary patterns and processes.

One of his best known theories, developed with Niles Eldredge, argued that evolutionary change in the fossil record came in fits and starts rather than a steady process of slow change.

This theory, known as punctuated equilibrium, was part of Gould's work that brought a forsaken palaeontological perspective to the evolutionary mainstream.

Gould achieved a fame unprecedented among modern evolutionary biologists.

He was depicted in cartoon form on "The Simpsons," and renovations of his SoHo loft in Manhattan were featured in a glowing article in *Architectural Digest*.

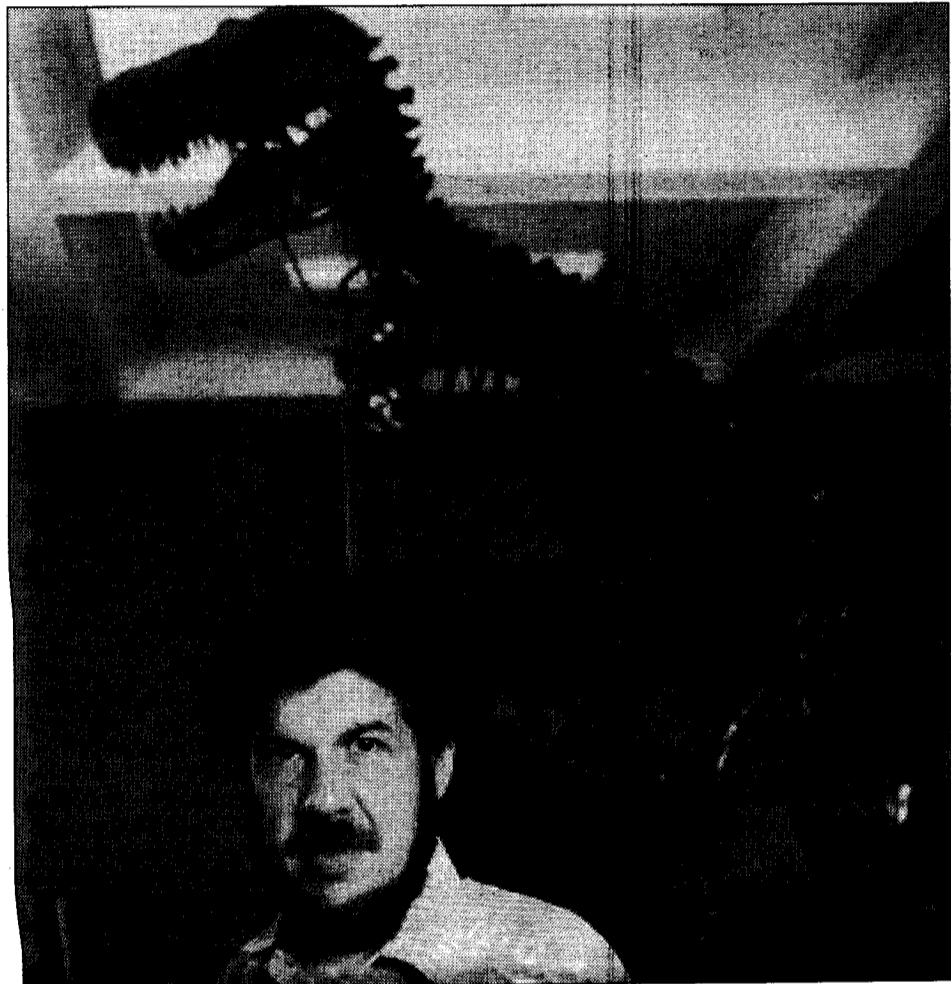
Famed for both brilliance and arrogance, Gould was the object of admiration and jealousy, both revered and reviled by colleagues.

Outside of academia, Gould was almost universally adored by those familiar with his work. In his column in *Natural History* magazine, he wrote in a voice that combined a learned Harvard professor and a baseball-loving everyman. The Cal Ripken Jr. of essayists, he produced a meditation for each of 300 consecutive issues starting in 1974 and ending in 2001. Many were collected into best-selling books like "Bully for Brontosaurus."

Other popular books by Gould include "Wonderful Life," which examines the evolution of early life as recorded in the fossils of the Burgess Shale, and "The Mismeasure of Man," a rebuttal to what Gould described as pseudoscientific theories used to defend racist ideologies.

Dr. Gould was born on Sept. 10, 1941, in Queens, the son of Leonard Gould, a court stenographer, and Eleanor Gould, an artist and entrepreneur. Dr Gould took his first steps toward a career in palaeontology as a 5-year-old when he visited the American Museum of Natural History with his father.

"I dreamed of becoming a scientist, in general, and a palaeontologist, in particular, ever since the Tyrannosaurus skeleton awed and scared me," he once wrote. In an upbringing filled with fossils and the Yankees, he attended P.S.



The bare bones of the problem: Gould's main specialty was palaeontology

26 and Jamaica High School. He then enrolled at Antioch College in Ohio, where he received a bachelor's degree in geology in 1963.

In 1967, he received a doctorate in palaeontology from Columbia University and went on to teach at Harvard, where he would spend the rest of his career.

But it was in graduate school that Gould and Eldredge, a fellow graduate student, now a palaeontologist at the American Museum of Natural History, began sowing the seeds for the most famous of the still-roiling debates that he is credited with helping to start.

Studying the fossil record, the two students could not find the gradual, continuous change in fossil forms that they were taught was the stuff of evolution. Instead they found sudden appearances of new fossil forms (sudden, that is, on the achingly slow geological time scale) followed by long periods in which these organisms changed little.

Evolutionary biologists had always ascribed such difficulties to the famous incompleteness of the fossil record. But in 1972, the two proposed the theory of punctuated equilibrium, a revolutionary suggestion that the

sudden appearances and lack of change were, in fact, real.

According to the theory, there are long periods of time, sometimes millions of years, during which species change little, if at all. Intermittently, new species arise, and there is rapid evolutionary change on a geological time scale (still interminably slow on human time scales) resulting in the sudden appearance of new forms in the fossil record.

This creates punctuations of rapid change against a backdrop of steady equilibrium, hence the name.

Thirty years later, scientists are still arguing over how often the fossil record shows a punctuated pattern and how such a pattern might arise. Many credit punctuated equilibrium with promoting the flowering of the field of macroevolution, in which researchers study large-scale evolutionary changes, often in a geological time frame.

In 1977, Gould's book "Ontogeny and Phylogeny" drew biologists' attention to the long-ignored relationship between how organisms develop - that is, how an adult gets built from the starting plans of an egg - and how they evolve.

"Gould has given biologists a new way to see the organisms they study," wrote Dr. Stan Rachootin, an evolutionary biologist at Mount Holyoke College. Many credit the book with helping to inspire the new field of *evo-devo*, or the study of evolution and development.

Gould and Dr. Richard Lewontin, also at Harvard, soon elaborated on the importance of how organisms are built, or their architecture, in a famous paper about a feature of buildings known as a spandrel. Spandrels, the spaces above an arch, exist as a necessary outcome of building with arches.

In the same way, they argued, some features of organisms exist simply as the result of how an organism develops or is built. Thus researchers, they warned, should refrain from assuming that every feature exists for some adaptive purpose.

In March, Harvard University Press published what Gould described as his magnum opus, "The Structure of Evolutionary Theory." The book, on which he toiled for decades, lays out his vision for syn-

thesizing Darwin's original ideas and his own major contributions to macroevolutionary theory.

"It is a heavyweight work," wrote Dr. Mark Ridley, an evolutionary biologist at University of Oxford in England. And despite sometimes "almost pathological logorrhea" at 1,433 pages, Ridley went on, "it is still a magnificent summary of a quarter-century of influential thinking and a major publishing event in evolutionary biology."

Gould was dogged by vociferous, often high-profile critics. Some argued that his theories, like punctuated equilibrium, were so malleable and difficult to pin down that they were essentially untestable.

After once proclaiming that Gould had brought palaeontology back to the high table of evolutionary theory, Dr. John Maynard Smith, an evolutionary biologist at University of Sussex in England, wrote that other evolutionary biologists "tend to see him as a man whose ideas are so confused as to be hardly worth bothering with."

Sometimes these criticisms descended into accusations that were as personal as intellectual. Punctuated equilibrium, for example, has been called "evolution by jerks."

Some who study smaller-scale evolution within species, called microevolutionists, reject Gould's arguments that there are unique features to large-scale evolution, or macroevolution.

Instead, they say that macroevolution is nothing more than microevolution played out over long periods. Gould also had heated battles with sociobiologists, researchers using a particular method of studying animal behaviour, and there are many there who reject his ideas as well.

Others criticized him for championing theories that challenge parts of the modern Darwinian framework, an act some see as aiding and abetting creationists. Yet Gould was a visible opponent of efforts to get evolution out of the classroom. An entertaining writer credited with saving the dying art form of the scientific essay, Gould often pulled together unrelated ideas or things. (He began one essay by noting that Abraham Lincoln and Charles Darwin were born on the same day.)

A champion of the underdog (except in his support of the Yankees), he favoured theories and scientists that had been forgotten or whose reputations were in disrepair.

Gould also popularised evolutionary ideas at Harvard, sometimes finding his lecture halls filled to standing-room only. But while his adventures typically took place in the library, colleagues said that Gould, whose specialty was Cerion land snails in the Bahamas, was also impressive in the field.

Noting that in graduate school Gould dodged bullets and drug runners to collect specimens of Cerion and their fossils, Dr. Sally Walker, who studies Cerion at the University of Georgia, once said, "That guy can drive down the left side of the road," which is required in the Bahamas, "then jump out the door and find Cerion when we can't even see it."

Then, she recalled, this multilingual student of classical music and astronomy and countless other eclectia might joyously break out into Gilbert and Sullivan song.

Gould had an earlier battle with cancer in 1982. When abdominal mesothelioma was diagnosed, he reacted by dragging himself to Harvard's medical library as soon as he could walk.

In a well-known essay titled, "The Median is not the Message," he described discovering that the median survival time after diagnosis was a mere eight months. Rather than giving up hope, he wrote that he used his knowledge of statistics to translate an apparent death sentence into the hopeful realization that half those in whom the disease was diagnosed survived longer than eight months, perhaps much longer, giving him the strength to fight on.

"When my skein runs out, I hope to face the end calmly and in my own way," he wrote. However, "death is the ultimate enemy - and I find nothing reproachable in those who rage mightily against the dying of the light."

He survived the illness through experimental treatment, but died of an unrelated cancer, in a bed in his library among his beloved books.

Gould received innumerable awards and honours, including a MacArthur "genius" grant the first year they were awarded. He served as president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, was a member of the National Academy of Sciences and won the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award. He was the Alexander Agassiz Professor of Zoology at Harvard and the Astor Visiting Research Professor of Biology at New York University.

Whether eloquently and forcefully championing new or forgotten ideas or dismantling what he saw as misconceptions, Dr. Gould spent a career trying to shed light on an impossibly wide variety of subjects.

He once wrote, "I love the wry motto of the Palaeontological Society (meant both literally and figuratively, for hammers are the main tool of our trade): *Frango ut patefaciam* - I break in order to reveal."

By CAROL KAESUK YOON
New York Times May 21, 2002

Tony Southall Peace campaigner, Labour activist, Marxist

Gordon Morgan

Veteran socialist and peace campaigner Tony Southall died on May 22 at the age of 59. Tony became known to most of his friends through his work for the Peace movement, the wider Labour movement, the IMG and the Fourth International.

In 1959 age 16 Tony got involved with the Young Socialist and with CND and the Aldermaston marches.

He helped found Croydon Youth CND, then became chairman of Cambridge University CND. The

involvement of young people in the campaign at that point played a crucial part in building a popular movement against the bomb.

At this time the committee of 100, led by Bertrand Russell was organizing sit down protests against the bomb which led to many arrests. Tony was added to the Committee of 100 and in 1961/62 he became full-time acting Secretary of the committee in 1961 and 1962.

In 1962 whilst a student at Cambridge Tony got involved with a Nottingham Trotskyist group called The Week which was the



The first Aldermaston march: Tony was involved with CND from the age of 16

forerunner of the International Marxist Group.

Every weekend for nearly a year, Tony caught a milk float to Nottingham from Cambridge for discussions and political activity. His association with the Fourth International and his close friendship with Charlie van Gelderen, which was formed then, lasted for 40 years.

In 1963 Tony came to Glasgow as

a lecturer and throughout the '60s became a core member of the Labour and Peace movement.

He was very handsome, charming and self assured but above all excelled as an organiser of campaigns and other activists. Otago St quickly became the nerve centre for left activists in Glasgow and Tony became widely known throughout Scottish socialist circles.

He toured across Scotland giving talks on Marxism to Red Circles, and was the central builder of the IMG in Scotland in the '60s.

Party remained committed to Nuclear disarmament.

Norman Lochart recalls staying with Tony in 1992, that Tony combined a deep appreciation of jazz and classical music as well as art and film with a rigorous examination of the issues he analysed politically such as events in or individual politicians manoeuvring here in Scotland. He was often surprised by his knowledge of football or the characters and plot of the TV soap opera Coronation Street!

An impressive example of his determination was that he commuted by wheelchair from South side of Glasgow across the river Clyde and was eventually forced to take early medical retirement in 1993 after his wheelchair 'couped' in rush hour traffic in mid winter.

The loss to formal teaching was Scottish CND's gain as it established offices nearby. This enabled Tony to be even more the living embodiment of the United Front in practice as his home was a centre for people of different parties as well as all ethnic groups and religions who agreed to campaign against the threat of nuclear barbarism.

Tony then became Joint secretary of Scottish CND.

When he lost power to his hands he continued to write letters and organize protests using a computer with voice recognition. He continued to participate in the Faslane demos and recently pointed out this is the 40th anniversary of his first Faslane march.

Despite deteriorating health Tony participated in the demonstrations against Afghanistan and spoke at a major peace conference in January. He also participated in the ISG pre conference discussions.

Tony remained politically involved to the end. He urged nurses to Ban the Bomb and insisted on getting a Palestinian flag for his hospital bed.

I counted Tony as a comrade and friend for 30 years. I will remember a stalwart fighter and organiser for Peace and Justice.

Letter

Surrealist problems for women

Congratulations on the article by Jay Woolrich on 'Andre Breton and the politics of Surrealism' (SO No.55 May-June 2002).

It showed clearly the political intent of Breton and remind us that the manifesto Breton wrote in collaboration with Trotsky, and with Diego Rivera's name appended, is indeed a model, expressing as it does the necessity for artistic experiment and cultural freedom within the socialist revolution and after.

It is true that Breton came very close to Trotsky's politics in the 1930s, rejecting Stalinism, at a time when it was difficult to do so, but we should not be totally uncritical of Breton and Surrealism. In one area in particular they were less than radical.

Attracted to Surrealism by their liberatory ideology, and in particular by their critique of marriage and the bourgeois nuclear family,



Breton (left) with Diego Rivera and Trotsky

many women artists - painters, sculptors and writers - were attracted to the movement.

Some, such as Meret Oppenheim and Leonora Carrington, were younger partners of more established artists; others also younger than most of the originators of Surrealism, were part of the wider circle, but, like Leonor Fini, found Breton in particular an impossibly egocentric

and dominating personality, and kept their distance from membership of the group.

While Surrealism had revolutionary ideals, their views on women in general and sexuality in particular were not so revolutionary. Breton was homophobic, and in the discussions on sexual practices (attended only by men) he condemned homosexuality. Women were depicted as

muse or femme enfant (woman/child), as passive, erotic objects, and many women Surrealists, finding these representations oppressive, but failing to find alternatives, retreated into mysticism (Carrington) or equating women with nature (Agar).

Few confronted their own, female sexuality in the way that Bellmer, with his 'Dolls', investigated his, male sexuality. Only Fini, who lived her Surrealism in practice, explored her sexuality in such an open way, showing women capable of all sorts of practices, active and passive, sadistic and masochistic, both in drawings, illustrations for erotic novels and in some paintings.

The rediscovery of the work of women Surrealists by feminist art historians over the last 20 years, has led to re-readings of Surrealist art revealing some of the shortcomings of the movement.

It was Trotsky, after all, who said 'in order to change the conditions of life, we must learn to see them through women's eyes.' This, the Surrealists signally failed to do: after all, while there is no women's liberation without socialism, nor is there socialism without women's liberation!

**Jane Kelly
Southwark**

Socialism on the internet

Socialist Outlook web site: www.labournet.org.uk/so
International Socialist Group: www.3bh.org.uk/ISG

Socialist

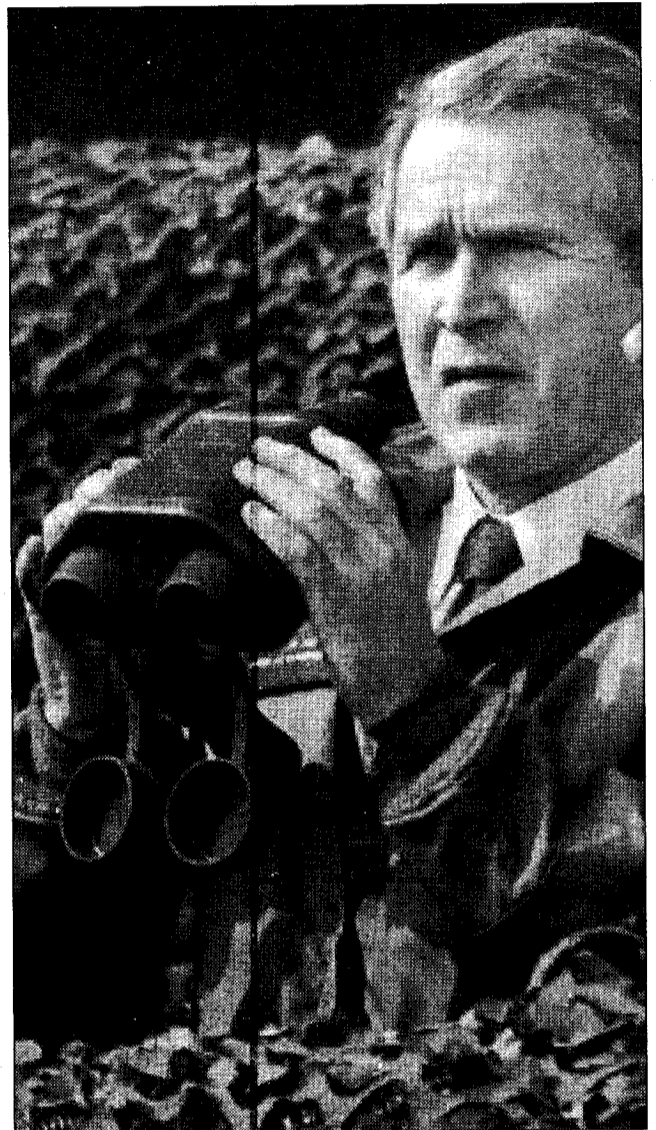
A monthly marxist review. No 56. Summer 2002. 50p

OUTLOOK

As US threatens to strike Iraq and other countries ...

Stop the Blair-Bush war drive!

March in London September 28



INSIDE: New Labour, new barbarism – Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon threatens pre-emptive nuclear strikes.

Editorial page 3
Stop the War Coalition steps up the fight – page 2



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