

# Socialist OUTLOOK

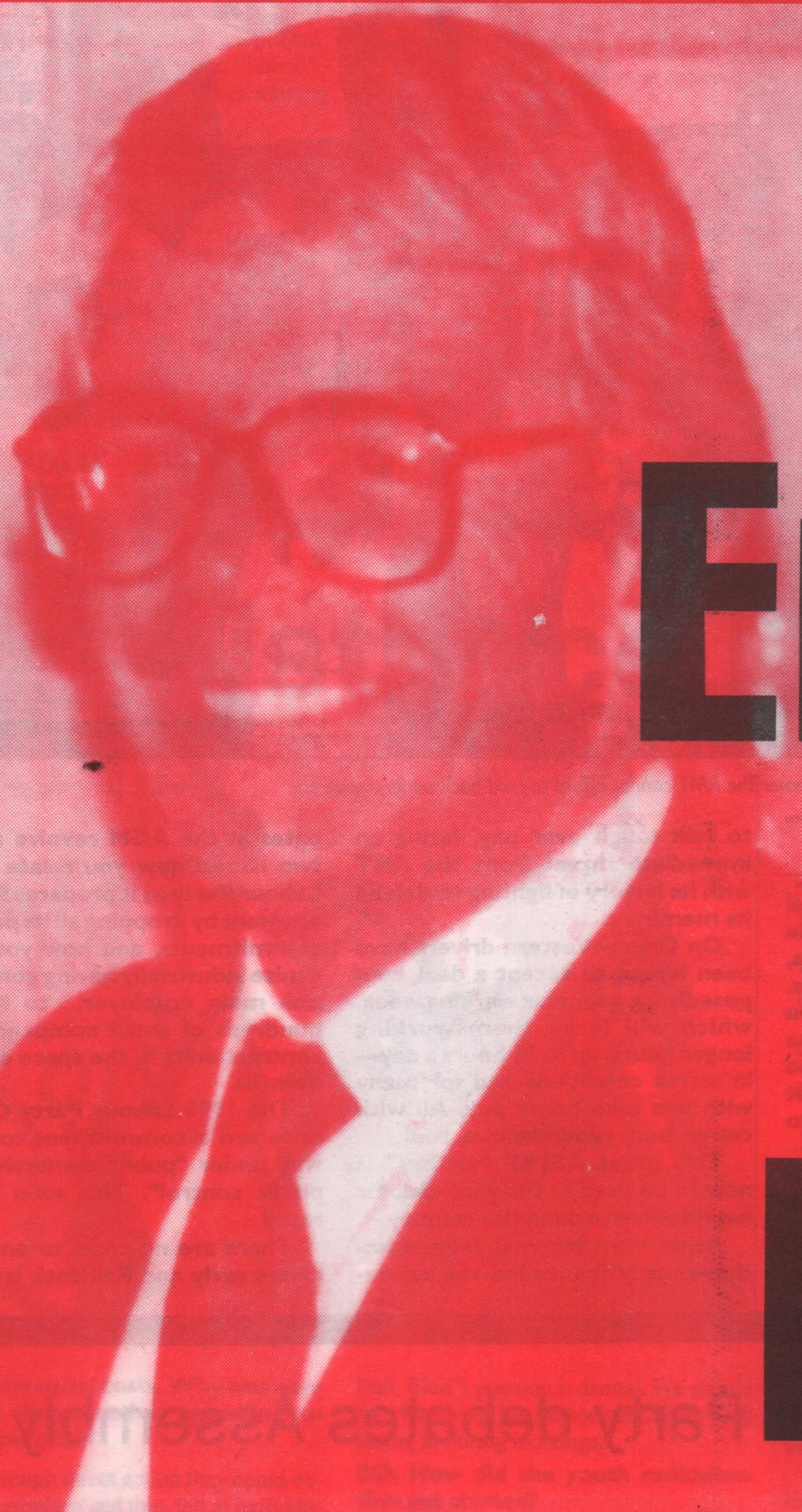
On the back of  
Gazza's goal, the  
Manchester bomb and  
the beef war Major is  
once again plumbing  
the depths of little  
Englandism to get the  
Tory machine cranked  
up for an election.

But the old banger  
refuses to budge.

He has gone too far  
down the road to  
Europe to turn back.  
The rabid racist right  
are too true blue to  
be convinced.

His attempts to stir  
up a chauvinist  
Summer whirlwind to  
propel him back into  
office has turned into  
a pathetic whimper.

With the Tories  
fighting like rats in a  
sack, Labour and the  
unions must organise  
the fight-back.



# The Enemy Is At Home

## Post workers deliver strike

**P**OSTAL workers are set for their first national postal strike since 1988. The negotiations between Royal Mail and the union have failed on the issues of teamworking and delivery standards. This makes a national strike inevitable.

The Communication Workers Union conference outlined their demands: no teamworking; no-one to be worse off under pay restructuring; protect the second delivery. Royal Mail failed to meet any of these demands.

Teamworking is the buzzword used in the Royal Mail's "Employee Agenda". Postal workers must

cover all absences and vacancies for no extra pay. The union fears that bosses secretly aim to completely abolish the second delivery. Massive job losses would result.

Despite this conflict the union's joint General Secretary, Alan Johnson, is doing everything to avoid a prolonged strike. He is a keen supporter of Tony Blair and frequently at odds with his own executive. Johnson does not want to upset Labour's electoral prospects.

The one-day strike has been called in a confusing way. Instead of calling a simple 24-hour stoppage Johnson has issued complicated instructions to branches stating which shifts workers should not turn up

for. This will mean some will strike while others are working.

This confusion may influence union members to stay at home rather than join a picket of their workplace. The lessons of the last national dispute are being ignored.

The 1988 dispute also began with a one-day strike. When union members returned to work, some found their offices were full of casual labour. This caused an immediate walk-out in 14 offices.

The dispute escalated when other offices refused to handle the work. Royal Mail forced a lock-out but failed to defeat the union's membership. It was left to the union leadership to sell out its workforce

despite solid industrial action initiated by the branches.

None of this has been lost on Royal Mail. Managing director Richard Dykes has spoken openly about the possibility of a lock-out this time round. Post Office bosses have at their disposal a vast array of anti-union laws, not all of which were available in 1988.

The stage is set for a major industrial confrontation. The task for CWU branches is to put pressure on the leadership of the union to call an indefinite national strike. They should continue to organise independently of the leadership. This will encourage the executive to stand firm against the manoeuvring

of Johnson.

CWU branches have shown time and time again their ability to take effective industrial action. If the dispute is to be won the branches should not allow the executive to become isolated from the striking workforce in secret negotiations. If action is effective and pressure on the executive is maintained, Alan Johnson will find it difficult to sell out the workforce.

The dispute could turn into a long hot summer of struggle. Labour movement activists should be preparing to back the postal workers in their demands and set up support groups where this is possible.



## News in brief

**Attack after Euro '96 march:** Brothers Dilwa and Hakim Motin were assaulted by fifteen drunken England fans who had watched the England-Switzerland match in a pub on Old Bethnal Green Road. Local residents have formed 'Community Action Against Racial Attacks' in response.

**Nazi backs out:** Protests have forced out Hull's nazi school governor Michael Cooper, the fascist candidate in the Hemsworth by-election. His resignation came at a meeting of the Andrew Marvell school governors lobbied by anti-fascist activists.

**Labour dumps lefty:** Labour members of the NUS executive suspended leftist Vice-President Education, Clive Lewis. Union president Jim Murphy suspended Lewis by memorandum for opposing the Union's ending commitment to free education.

**Dockers' London blockers:** The London office of a company supplying scabs to Liverpool docks and other industries will be picketed. The dockers' London Support Group pickets the Drake International offices every Tuesday afternoon between 3.30pm and 6pm. The company is based at 66 High Holborn, London WC1.

**Scargill spurns Militant:** The Socialist Labour Party has rejected a call from Militant Labour for a joint list of general election candidates. The SLP now plans to stand seven: Militant Labour hopes to stand 23.

**Geras at Mandel seminar:** Norman Geras will speak at the Amsterdam-based Ernest Mandel Study Centre's first seminar next month. Geras, senior lecturer at the University of Manchester, is the author of *The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg*.

**Leeds Labour left rallies:** "Dinosaur bites back" announces the first issue of *Leeds Socialist*, the bulletin of the Leeds Socialist Campaign Group. The group explains: "We believe that there is opposition to the changes taking place in Labour Party policies and the way to articulate this is to develop a collective of members who wish to retain socialist principles working within the party."

**Feathering nuclear nest:** Britain's most modern nuclear power stations are to be sold for around £1.5 billion. £6.9 billion of taxpayers' money will be given in subsidies to aid the sale. The plants will make £2 billion in profits over the next five years.

**Won't top bill:** Israeli Fourth Internationalist Michel Warshawski was mistakenly billed as speaking at the school of the journal *Workers' Liberty*. He never was.

**Knights of the Blair table:** Labour Party whip Ray Howell MP has been awarded a knighthood, in breach of long-standing tradition. Sitting MPs are not normally given knighthoods from the Opposition's share of the Queen's birthday honours.

**Agenda for Socialist Alliance:** Manchester Socialist Alliance hosts the conference launching the 'Socialist Charter for a Socialist Future' on Saturday 13 July. A spokesperson said: "The Charter will provide a framework for all socialists to unite behind. It can be used to promote positive socialist campaigns in the workplace and communities as a whole."

**Cattle cull coup:** the EU veterinary committee looks set to call for the cull of cows in BSE-infected herds to be extended to include those born since 1989. This means around 100,000 cattle being killed.

**£225,000 to dine with Blair!** Ruth Rendell and Sir Richard Attenborough are amongst 450 celebrities and employers invited to pay £500 each for the Labour Party's gala dinner at London's Savoy Hotel on July 11. Private donations now account for £6.5 million of party income each year—more than any trade union gives.

**Presidential hunger striker:** A picket of London's Argentine embassy protested against the imprisonment of Alcides Christiansen. Christiansen was the presidential candidate of the MAS (Movement to Socialism). He was imprisoned after police attacked a peaceful demonstration for unemployed rights at Neuquen. On May 15 Christiansen started a hunger strike to demand freedom for himself and fellow imprisoned MAS member Horacio Panario.

Compiled by Duncan Chapple

# Rail workers re-organise after BR break-up

## All change on rail



As the CWU enters into action over the summer the RMT cannot afford to hold back on its disputes.

Greg Tucker

**DELEGATES** at the RMT annual general meeting have had to grapple with a number of serious problems, not least an ongoing financial crisis. Caused in part by loss of members—a result of BR's withdrawal of the check-off—delegates can take some heart from the fact that for the first time membership has started to rise.

Significantly, TSSA and ASLEF members have been joining the RMT in disgust at their unions' failure to represent their interest. ASLEF on LUL has been forced

to talk tough over pay, facing an immediate threat from the RMT with its history of fighting to defend its members.

On Great Western drivers have been forced to accept a deal, supposedly for a shorter working week, which will leave them working longer hours, up to 11 hours a day—in worse conditions and for many with less take home pay. All with compulsory redundancies, too!

This great ASLEF "victory" is now to be used as the yardstick for negotiations around the country.

Aside from internal reorganisation—mostly finance-led—the key de-

bates at the AGM revolve around two issues: how you relate to the Labour Party as it prepares for government by dropping all its previous commitments, and how you reorganise industrially having gone from one main employer, to literally hundreds of small companies and contract units in the space of a few months.

The 1995 Labour Party Conference saw a commitment to a railway under "public ownership and public control". This soon evaporated.

There are no plans to end franchises early and Railtrack is not to

be renationalised. For some leading RMT members this has prompted a turn to a party which does propose renationalisation—Scargill's Socialist Labour Party.

Others on the right have opted for a Labour government at any price. If this means dropping commitments so be it.

Neither is a solution. We have to maintain our links with Labour and pressure Blair, Short and company.

Industrially, the full legal effect of the breakup of BR is being felt. In a series of disputes the RMT is having to grapple with how to organise "legal" national disputes.

There are two answers. On the one hand we need to accept reality and devolve power to new union structures based at company level.

But this is only viable with proper education and backup for company level representatives and with a structure that allows both the views of the ranks to be expressed and for the union's national policies to be enforced. Too often we have suffered from weak representatives prepared to go behind the membership to accept management's wishes.

On the other hand, national action is being hampered because the union is finding it impossible to collate significantly detailed membership records to meet legal ballot requirements. The Executive has got to act, even if this leaves potential legal problems unresolved.

RMT policy over a number of years has been for repeal of all anti-union laws. In practice, however, the leadership—even in its current left majority—has always shied away from open defiance of legal restrictions. The time has come for this to end.

As the CWU enters into action over the summer the RMT cannot afford to hold back on its disputes.

In particular, its Train Crew dispute (as featured in the last issue) cannot wait any longer. Ballot papers must be issued immediately, with a clear date set for the start of action.

• London Train Crew Mass Meeting — 3 July Friends Meeting House Euston 7 pm.

## Wales Labour Party debates Assembly and Europe

# Where for Wales?

Dafydd Morgan

THE Welsh Assembly and Maastricht were key issues at this year's Welsh Labour Party conference, the most animated for many years.

Tony Blair's speech to conference struck a strange note, given Labour's recent emphasis on a Welsh Assembly:

"You still believe in British values, in decency, hard work and fairness... You are proud to be British but too much of that pride depends on history and nostalgia and not on what Britain is today."

Little wonder that many delegates complained that the speech was "too British" and of little relevance to Wales.

Conference voted against the executive, affirming its opposition to any kind of selection in education and its commitment to a comprehensive system.

A vote on renationalising the public utilities was lost 2:1 on a show of hands.

Strikers from Cardiff County Unison, who were opposing the Labour council's

cuts in housing staff, picketed the conference and moved an emergency resolution.

Welsh Labour Action (WLA), which is campaigning to strengthen Labour's Assembly policy, was extremely active and effective, with a successful fringe meeting and a good intervention into the assembly debate—despite attempts by the conference platform to demonise and marginalise the campaign.

**Maastricht's economic consequences will spell disaster for peripheral regions like Wales, which rely so heavily on social spending and public sector employment.**

Evidently deep divisions exist on the Assembly within the Welsh Executive. On one wing Anita Gale, Ken Hopkins and Terry Thomas, represent the worst kind of arrogant, complacent and bureaucratic labourism.

The other wing consists of Ron Davies and his supporters, including a large number of Welsh MPs who favour change but shy away from an open fight.

Differences over Proportional Representation reflect these divisions.

Ron Davies spoke at the IPPR meeting of the need for an "inclusive assembly" and for a "consensus amongst pro-devolution parties to make it a truly Welsh Assembly and not simply a Labour Assembly".

He also expressed his support for PR and his view that the policy might change

between the general election and the elections for an Assembly.

While *Socialist Outlook* disagrees with Ron's approach—we believe that most would be gained by staging an open fight within the party—it is clear that he was giving the green light for others to campaign around the issue.

Of course, our vision of the Assembly must also go much further. Cardiff coun-

cillor Sue Essex said in the fringe meeting: "the Assembly that we offer must be something genuinely new, which wakens and enlivens Welsh politics."

The issue of Maastricht arose at another fringe meeting, organised by Llew Smith MP to oppose the Single European Currency.

Its economic consequences will spell disaster for peripheral regions like Wales, which rely so heavily on social spending and public sector employment.

The *Socialist Outlook* view is that the Welsh Assembly should decide whether Wales joins up or not—and that it should decide to reject Maastricht.

The Assembly should be able to choose what powers to retain in Wales and what to pass on to a British or European level.

We favour electing the Assembly on a proportional basis and allowing it to decide on all the key questions which affect the Welsh people.

In this way it could express Welsh autonomy within a wider British and European federation.



# Beg, steal, and borrow

Labour's education policy is borrowed from another party, writes HARRY SLOAN

**IS there any Tory policy which Tony Blair and his team will not shamelessly steal and proclaim their own?**

John Major and Gillian Shephard thought they had the field to themselves when they began to whip up a backlash against comprehensive education.

Shephard began floating the idea of replacing the 11-plus exam and giving all secondary schools the right to select their entire intake, with the overt intention of destroying comprehensive schooling.

Major went further, urging the restoration of a grammar school in every town—though he is clearly out of touch even with the true-blue electorate of his own Huntingdon constituency, who have thrown out plans for the biggest local comprehensive to revert to grammar school status.

Gillian Shephard, eagerly assisted by the servile Chris Woodhead, right wing

boss of the Office for Standards in Education, raised the banner of "traditional teaching", declaring war on the "liberal" methods being taught in teacher training colleges.

But just as the Tories worked themselves into a lather they were overtaken by Labour's terrible twosome, Blair and Blunkett.

Blair has called for greater selection in comprehensives, while making it clear that no grammar schools will be abolished, nor will private schools be touched by "new Labour".

Blunkett has outflanked Shephard as the scourge of failing teachers, echoing Woodhead's calls for more traditional methods.



Thirty years ago there was a wave of popular support for the end of selective education: here Liverpool schoolgirls show their backing

Blair's speech, a logical development from his and Harriet Harman's choice of grammar schools for their own children, paid lip service to comprehensive education. But his attack on the blanket application of mixed ability teaching—a method barely practised since the 1960's—was a shameless lurch to the right.

In fact the most recent survey of comprehensive schooling has shown it to be a huge success story, with the biggest successes in Scotland where the comprehensive system is most developed. It has also shown that despite Blair's concessions,

grouping pupils by ability is no guarantee of improved exam results.

Blair's speech had little to do with education and everything to do with his political plans. As one Labour MP told the *Evening Standard*, this latest policy shift seems like another loyalty test, to check how much further to the right MP's will allow Blair and Co. to go.

Focusing the debate on the abstractions of teaching methods rather than on the grim realities in today's crumbling classrooms, enables Blair's team to slide away from the crucial questions of funding and

teachers' jobs.

Without more cash for schools to retain and increase their staffing levels and hold down class sizes, none of the available teaching methods will deliver quality education.

Blair's latest comments have been correctly criticised by Doug McAvoy of the National Union of Teachers. The NUT must now implement its own conference decision to call a national demonstration this autumn, piling on pressure for Labour to adopt a progressive policy on education in the run-up to the general election.

## Road to resistance

**GEORGE THOMPSON** spoke to Phil Mcleish, who was the last resident of Claremont Road on the M11.

**SO: When did you get involved in the M11 road protest?**

Phil: I got hooked during Operation Roadblock which was a sustained month of direct action, occupying the building sites etc. It was so exciting, the sheer intensity of day to day campaigning.

**SO: Why did you see the campaign as important?**

Transport's a key issue and shows the connection clearly between green and social issues. The Intergovernmental Conference on Climate change pointed out the dangers to the world without a 60 per cent cut in carbon emissions by the end of the century (for Britain, a rich country, this would mean a reduction of 92 per cent).

For me, the high consumption lifestyle is not the biggest thing and its more important that a kid doesn't suffer asthma than I have a car. The car represents a triumph of bourgeois individualism, not a mode of transport designed by a society, where the collective principle means anything. The car was designed by the bourgeoisie to get around fast.

**SO: But now most of the working class has a car - they see it as a 'need'!**

Yeh, people have become dependent, because the car, petroleum, rubber industries have made it like that. Alternatives have been run down. In the US, General Motors bought up buses, trams, the public transport system and closed it down.

**SO: It's happening in UK through rail privatisation!**

Phil: Well, the Government's policy in favour of roadbuilding instead is short-sighted, even for them the knock on effects will outweigh the advantages.

**SO: But when they destroy industries like mining for example, they seem to have a blind eye to its effect on other industries and don't care**



Capitalism cannot make the huge changes that are necessary

**about the social costs. Why was non-violent direct action appealing to young people?**

Phil: Through direct action they could express themselves and they felt as individuals they could have an effect. Yet people could become too obsessed with building barricades and seeing the situation as a battle between us and them—the roads contractors—and not spend enough trying to draw in new forces into the campaign.

Non violence was a tactic. Few people were principled pacifists. Yet by practising non-violence, we could draw in youth who might have been put off by joining actions where we were often outnumbered and if violence had occurred we would have got a kicking.

**SO: What forces do you see changing Government policy on roads?**

Phil: We were always saying we need strong alliances with the working class movement. During the Tube strike we stood on the workers picket line. They collected loads of money for the campaign in their canteen.

**SO: Shouldn't we put pressure on the Labour leaders to change their policies and try and encourage the members to turn out to campaigns like the M11?**

Phil: Blair's position is dismal. We should try everything, but I associate Labour with sitting in boring meetings.

**SO: How did the youth radicalisation get started?**

Phil: When we started Reclaim the Streets, we instantly had a database of 2,500 people, mainly youth cos of the M11 campaign. We organised a protest against Shell's role in Nigeria and youth who had never thought of international issues prior to the M11 came along.

**SO: How can we stop car use?**

Phil: Public transport, freight off the road, mixed use areas, less compulsion to travel. In the Thatcher years there was a presumption that development was good if it was profitable. It was cheaper to use green field sites than derelict land in cities - although this leads to more cars.

**Can capitalism plan the transport system we need?**

Phil: I don't think capitalism can make the huge changes needed. There can't be an ecologically sustainable capitalist economy. The anti-roads protest attacks consumption for its own sake and therefore is implicitly anti-capitalist. Stopping economic growth is about saying we want to reorder economy according to human need rather than profit.

## Disarm the police

**SIMON DEVILLE** spoke to Helen Shaw from Inquest which has been campaigning around deaths in custody since 1981.

**Socialist Outlook- Inquest deals with the system after someone has been killed. How can we try to prevent deaths happening in the first place?**

Helen- There is a much wider issue than deaths in custody, and that is of racism in the police, which we do take up to an extent, but that really needs to be addressed by the anti-racist movement and the left as a whole.

These deaths are just the tip of an iceberg, we really need to look at the whole way communities are policed, what happens to people who are involved in these killings, the fact that no one has ever been prosecuted (except for one case after a white man was killed in 1979).

**Socialist Outlook- Has Inquest had to take on the role of an anti-racist organisation in recent years?**

Helen: Inquest always has had that perspective; it doesn't just see black deaths as being amongst a wider number of deaths in custody because there are particular issues of institutionalised racism within the police and the prison service. Inquest isn't purely an anti-racist organisation but we do work very closely with the wider anti-racist movement to bring these issues into the public domain.

**Socialist Outlook- Has there been an increase in black deaths in custody over the last few years?**

Helen- No, but what there has been is an increase in awareness amongst black people and possibly amongst the left.

In our view there is a disproportionate number of black people who die in custody after the use of excessive force or through

gross medical negligence. Since 1979 there have been nine verdicts of unlawful killings in custody. Seven of them were for black people and one was an Irish man.

**Socialist Outlook- Is the issue of policing something specific to black communities?**

Helen- There are specific problems faced by all ethnic minority communities but there is also a wider issue—most deaths in custody are of poor working class people.

There is not just a crisis of policing ethnic minority communities but a much wider crisis of policing working class communities as a whole.

**Socialist Outlook- What should activists be doing in their communities around policing then?**

Helen- This is a difficult question as there is a big gap.

Where there is a death there is sometimes a campaign, but there is no national group which looks at the wider issue of policing as a whole, of injuries at the hands of police, the enormous increase in actions against the police, the massive sums of money the police are having to pay out in compensation for wrongful arrest, violence from the police and so on.

There is an utter lack of knowledge within the labour movement about the incredible amount of injustice people face after a death in custody. It's easy to understand what a terrible thing it is when someone is killed by the police, but what many people don't understand is the further injustice people face when they try to find out what happened or when they try to bring those responsible to account.

There is no independent complaints system, no form of independent inquiry into deaths in custody and no police accountability.

The left needs to debate how to respond to all of this. It's not really up to Inquest to tell the left what they should be doing. We can merely identify this gap.



# Ireland's British problem

**T**HE Manchester bomb has proved the occasion of a return to the post-cease-fire media hysteria towards Republicanism. But behind the empty posturing the British strategy is proving remarkably durable.

The British state claims it has "no selfish strategic or economic interest" in Ireland. With the end of the cold war there is less of a threat in the Western Approaches of the North Atlantic.

The Common Agricultural Policy has put an end to Ireland's traditional role as what Marx called "an agricultural district of Britain".

But Britain still has a crucial political interest in Ireland.

This is not just because of the presence of 18 MP's from the North of Ireland in the British Parliament, but because the British government has a strong and continuing interest in stable bourgeois rule on the island of Ireland.

It shares with the Dublin ruling class the desire, as one Dublin commentator put it, "to eradicate the cancer of republicanism from the island of Ireland" because of the threat it poses to both of them.

John McNulty of the Irish group *Socialist Democracy* assesses the long-term effects of the latest developments and *Socialist Outlook's* David Coen examines the role of Ireland in British politics and the importance of the question to British socialists.



Despite the financial cost of the bombing campaign, Britain still a crucial political interest in Ireland

## Neither peace nor war

**John McNulty**

THE recent elections to the new Northern Ireland assembly represent a tactical problem for the British and a triumph for the Adams leadership of Sinn Fein.

However in the longer term the British have won important strategic advantages.

Now the short-term setbacks and the more general problems of the conservative administration in Britain mean that we face a period of neither peace nor war.

The British began by proposing that new initiatives must have broad support. They then adopted an election strategy that only unionists supported, declaring that these would solve all problems and act as a "gateway" to all party talks. Of course they were nothing of the sort.

Even with almost half the nationalist vote and 15 per cent of the overall vote Sinn Fein are to be excluded unless there is a new IRA ceasefire. Behind this condi-

tion lie others like the decommissioning of weapons—essentially calling for the surrender of the republican forces.

A major British aim was the creation of a new assembly. This is a mere talking shop, but it establishes the shape of the outcome the British plan—an improved partition that will be able to garner some support from the Dublin government and sections of the Catholic middle class.

The new body also represents a trump card—an embryo solution that the British will be able to threaten to implement unilaterally if the Irish capitalists prove hesitant in falling into step.

The outcome was very revealing. A voting figure of 65 per cent despite boycott calls showed massive illusions in the "peace process" on the part especially of nationalist workers. Yet within this vote was a major turn to Sinn Fein—their best ever result in Northern elections.

Nationalists are very angry with British

foot-dragging. They blame them for the breakdown of the ceasefire.

Rather than feeling defeated and demoralised and ready to accept whatever the British hand out they have enormous expectations.

The overall message of the election is that the Irish question is far from being resolved. Britain has won major advantages but has a long way to go if it is to inflict a decisive defeat on the nationalist population.

The implied threat will be felt most sharply by bourgeois nationalism.

This was most clearly shown in West Belfast, where Sinn Fein took four of the five seats after Joe Hendron, the sitting SDLP MP, called them a sectarian and fascist organisation.

This is a major upset. Much of the dynamic of London-Dublin collaboration since the Hillsborough agreement has involved the need to suppress the Sinn Fein

electoral threat to the SDLP following the hunger strikes.

Now they obtain their highest vote ever. Implicit in the vote is a serious challenge to the hegemony of the SDLP.

Also it poses a threat to the Dublin government. They can only sell an agreement if they are not seen as openly selling out the Northern nationalists.

Yet the framework document involves such a sell-out and goes on to deny the democratic rights of the Irish people as a whole.

The role of capitalist Irish-America, represented by the involvement of US Senator George Mitchell and his team, cuts much less ice than was supposed.

Unfortunately this development is innocent of any conscious revolutionary dynamic. The Sinn Fein leadership entered the election as the "peace party" explicitly to preserve the unity of the "nationalist family".

So the immediate political future is quite clear. Unionist positions are hardening and they will not agree even to reform of the existing system without substantial pressure from the British.

There is no possibility of such pressure being mounted at any level by a British administration which needs unionist support in the Westminster parliament.

All this began to play itself out in the jostling for position before the all-party talks that the election gateway was supposed to open.

Like the hall of mirrors the door to the talks keeps receding. It is now made clear—as if it were not clear all along—that only formal opening positions will be taken and the talks kicked into touch for September.

But the talks are not waiting for the

collapse of IRA determination not to surrender arms.

The presence of the US means that a settlement to restabilise partition will be attempted. It will be thoroughly reactionary and will remain so whether republicans participate or not. The demand for surrender is a confession in advance that the settlement cannot be squared with the programme of republicanism or with the democratic rights of the Irish working class as a whole.

The republicans see much of this and have now adopted a longer term strategy. They will not wait for a new government in England, not dependent on unionist votes and a return of a Fianna Fail government in the 26 counties.

In the meantime Sinn Fein will create more space between itself and the IRA in the hope that its electoral mandate will force the British to eventually admit them to talks.

They hold to the illusions of British disinterest and of bourgeois nationalist support for a united Ireland, that US and European imperialism can play a progressive role, to the idea that they can go back to a militarist strategy that failed and maintain a strategy of secret diplomacy that has sharply eroded their activist base.

The situation in Ireland is familiar to socialists in many areas of the world—the political offensive by imperialism far outstrips its physical impact.

There is a weak and limited regroupment by the class within traditional structures but no real independent self-organisation or leadership. Given the difficulties of imperialism and the lack of any real reform on offer there will be further opportunities to regroup and rebuild.

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# Supporting self-determination

David Coen

**SOCIALIST** Outlook supports the republicans' demand for British withdrawal and self determination.

Only the Irish working class can lead the fight for self-determination. This struggle needs to lead not to the creation of a united capitalist Ireland but to a workers' republic.

Loyalist workers have no interest in unity with a sectarian 26-county state. They will not be won over by a programme of national unity and independence.

Secondly we believe the Republicans have been the leading force fighting British imperialism in Ireland.

If successful the struggle could only lead to the break up of the British state. This would be a huge step forward for the workers movement. It does not matter that Britain is no longer number one imperialist power. Defeat and dismemberment of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland would be of world-wide significance.

Socialism in Britain requires that the British working class breaks from reactionary chauvinism and supports Irish self determination against its own ruling class.

The reason for the present failure of the republican movement lies in its almost wholehearted embrace of reformist policies. Once it became clear that military force



Supporters of the Fourth International have played a leading role in the struggles to build a British movement against the occupation of Ireland

would not drive the British out, Sinn Fein threw in its lot with the Southern ruling class in a pan-nationalist front. This failure should not however

blind us to the fact that working class nationalists, North and South, support Sinn Fein because they see this as a way of advancing their class interests.

Opposition to discrimination in jobs and housing is at the root of their demands. But these reforms cannot be achieved within the context of a future Northern statelet.

Nor can they be achieved within a framework of direct rule from London, a situation which has been in place since 1972 when Stormont was abolished.

Large numbers of the nationalist working class have come to see that reform requires dismantling the remains of the six-county statelet. This is why they voted in their tens of thousands for Sinn Fein, the only party which up until now has consistently raised this demand.

But even in a unified state which ended discrimination, the nationalist working class would still come up against local and multinational capital.

They would still face the problems of unemployment, emigration, low wages and sweatshop conditions.

This would immediately put them into conflict with a Republican politics which has no answer to such problems. It would also force them to recognise that the Protestant working class are their allies in this struggle against capital.

Independence and self-determination are therefore cast in completely different light. The demand for reform leads to the demand to end partition, which in turn leads to the question of the character of a new 32-county state.

The dynamic is towards revolutionary politics. The only organisation capable of leading such a struggle would be a revolutionary socialist party.

## Unworkable union



Charles Haughey: old-time petty-bourgeois Catholic nationalism personified

SINCE at least the time of Gladstone the British ruling class has had a strong desire to disentangle the "Irish Question" from British politics. Since the mid-nineteenth century Ireland has been a continuing source of deep division and even sometimes outright warfare among the bourgeoisie.

One of the most serious examples of this was the Curragh Mutiny in 1912 when the army rebelled rather than move against Unionist gun runners.

The question of the union has always had the capacity to be a catalyst for splits in the British bourgeoisie. This has been demonstrated again only recently with significant numbers of right-wing Tory MPs stating that defence of the union is a re-

signing matter.

It is likely that the Irish question will remain close to the centre of the fight for the future of the Tory Party.

The 1921 partition treaty was an attempt at a neo-colonial settlement. In the South this was relatively successful.

Its failure in the North was mainly due to the fact that power was left in the hands of those who had previously been the instruments of imperialist oppression—the Unionists.

The main founding block of the sectarian state of Ulster was discrimination. The Unionists ensured their own survival by perpetuating divisions in the working class along religious lines and creating a powerful cross-class alliance based on the Or-

ange Order.

The perceived threat from the South was used to cement this popular front. But after 1926, when the creation of Fianna Fail brought forth a new constitutional republicanism, that threat was nothing more than fantasy.

The neo-colonial solution also failed in the North because of the area's economic dependence on the empire and the close political integration, expressed in a title only recently abolished—"The Conservative and Unionist Party of Great Britain and Northern Ireland".

At the same time this very geo-political and economic closeness became an obstacle to the kind of state terrorism required to defeat the IRA. The British bourgeoisie were unable to mount military operations on the same scale as those against so-called insurgents in Aden, Kenya and Malaya.

In the post-war period, as the British Empire disintegrated, the ruling class were generally able to impose solutions, even if that meant sacrificing the interests of some of their own.

In the case of Ireland this has never been possible. Major cannot do it now without dividing the Tory Party from top to bottom.

The irony is that leaving aside the general world view of the British Conservative Party, a bourgeois solution to the Irish problem is now more than ever in sight. Unionism is fragmenting and important sections of capital, North and South, while not necessarily favouring radical constitutional solutions, at least favour economic ones.

Ireland's economy is one of the fastest growing in the European Union and Irish capital senses the rapid investment opportunities which will arise following a political and economic settlement

## Hume's European solution



Sinn Fein: continues to win support away from Hume's SDLP

JOHN Hume of the Social Democratic and Labour Party has played a key role in the current "peace" process. He persuaded Gerry Adams that Unionist consent rather than the British state was the main obstacle to Irish unity.

Hume's solution to the impasse of nationalist politics was to use the European Union to downplay the importance of independence in his concept of a "Europe of Regions". This cleverly linked in with the perception that internal economic borders were being dismantled in Western Europe as European capitalism geared itself to compete with the US and Japanese blocs on a world scale.

In a world of trading blocs, trans-national capitalism and massive international capital flows, "self-determination" appears less relevant.

Hume's concept of Northern Ireland as a semi-autonomous region within the EU, equidistant from Britain and the South has found some favour with both the British and Irish governments.

But what seems rational from the point of view of the ruling class as a whole may not appeal to some of its key sections.

The right wing of the Tory Party cannot stomach Hume's ideas, especially now they have begun to take an openly anti-EU position. Their current antics show that whatever the interests of European capital as a whole, any quick fix on the issues of state power and self determination is likely to be difficult.

In this sense, the relationship of Ireland to the British State will be crucial to the debate about the future of Europe.



# Russian elections resolve nothing

Gerry Foley

IT IS clear that the elections have not "consolidated democracy" in Russia or resolved any of the problems that the society is facing.

None of the major contenders represent the working class—the only force that can solve the economic and political crisis in Russia and that can end the economic and social chaos.

None of the major candidates offers a programme in the interests of the Russian workers, or seeks to mobilise them.

In the first ten months of 1995, non-payment of wages increased by 136 percent, according to the Russian trade union federation, and sparked 6,000 strikes.

This tendency is continuing. A new wave of strikes began in April.

At the same time, the only instrument controlling the workers by force, the army, continues to disintegrate.

Thus, the social situation is not likely to be defused by the result.

The bureaucratic factions contending for the mantle of electoral legitimacy have carried demagoguery to dizzying heights. Of course the most adept and best placed to play this game was the incumbent Boris Yeltsin.

His populist denunciations of bureaucratic abuses got him to the top of the bureaucratic heap in 1991, when it was already obvious that the old Stalinist system could not go on.

He promised then that under his management the procapitalist reforms would not hurt the working people. But since he assumed political power the reforms have had a more devastating impact on the living standard of the masses of the ex-Soviet Union than even the destruction of World War Two.

"Reformed" Communist parties have been winning elections in country after country in Eastern Europe on the basis of a mass rejection of capitalist restoration. These reforms are identified chiefly with the so-called democrats—the self-proclaimed anti-Stalinist sections of the old bureaucracy.

This is despite the old-line Stalinists acceptance of the restoration of capitalism.

In the post-Soviet republic of Belarus a populist old-line Stalinist Aleksandr Lukashenko recently scored a sweeping electoral victory over the "democrats".

So Yeltsin has been running scared. He announced an end to military conscription, obviously to appeal to the young voters, who are less inclined than their elders to



Yeltsin's electioneering will continue until the second round in early July

look back to the Soviet era as a "lesser evil". Up until now, the under-25s have tended to spurn voting.

Yeltsin's sudden acceptance of a ceasefire in Chechnya, followed by a tour by the president himself, was a stroke of demagoguery worthy of the historic masters of electoral manipulation.

A Polish daily reported how in the first Chechen town he visited Yeltsin "flooded" the computer room of a local school with electronic goodies.

This bureaucratic lord bountiful also promised to build a textile factory to employ women from the neighbouring villages—as a result of the procapitalist reforms, the Russian textile industry has shrunk to less than one-fifth of what it was before.

On the next leg of his journey, Severny airport outside the Chechen capital of Grozny, Yeltsin promised 90 billion rubles in children's aid. He also pledged to pay all back wages before June 15, which just happens to be the day before the elections.

After agreeing to talks with the Chechen leaders—hich he had vowed never to do—eltsin proclaimed to Russian troops in Chechnya both that he was "bringing them peace", and that they had already won the war having "annihilated" the Dudaev [Chechen rebel] regime.

Supposedly, only small bands of Chechen rebels remain, which had to be "exterminated"—but presumably not right now.

Yeltsin's security chief, General Aleksandr Korzhakov—who recently proposed calling off the elections—declared that the Chechen leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiev had not been informed of Yeltsin's visit, so

that the latter could not claim credit for the Russian president's security in Chechnya.

Actually the Chechen chief had already issued a personal guarantee of Yeltsin's safety as a prelude to the talks in Moscow that led to the ceasefire. Yandarbiev's safe conduct from the Russian president that the Chechen leader could attend the Moscow talks.

However the Chechen fighters, who have the support of the population but are heavily outgunned and outnumbered by the Russian army, can undoubtedly use a respite.

And there is no obvious reason for them not to play along with Yeltsin's electoral manoeuvre, since his main challenger, Gennadi Zyuganov of the "reformed" Communist Party of the Russian Federation, would be no better and could be worse.

As the campaign proceeded the contradictions in Zyuganov's bloc have become more apparent—the CPRF's economic programme was only published on May 25.

The CPRF's most prominent economist Tatyana Koryagin described their

programme as similar to Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal to save American capitalism in the Great Depression.

CPRF has made "restoring" the Soviet state the central plank in their programme. It is allied with extreme and aggressive Great Russian nationalists. The old-line Stalinists indeed denounce Yeltsin for not having cracked down on the Chechens enough.

But state-managed capitalism is out of sync with the "neoliberal" offensive of the Western capitalists. *The New York Times* denounced the CPRF programme:

"to its many critics in Russia and the West, the plan is closer in spirit and theory to the Soviet command economy of old".

However, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, one of the main "democrat" papers, published one article on its front page distinctly friendly to the actual CPRF programme. It described it as "high quality and literate" and "for all practical purposes," devoid of "Marxist dogma".

For a considerable time now intelligent pro-capitalist economists have been saying that some renationalisation and government intervention into the economy are necessary in order to smooth the path for the transition to capitalism.

The Russian business magazine *Vek* asked "Why should we wait for the Communists to renationalise?", concluding, "Privatisation has not led to a competitive private industry but rather to the decentralisation of state property".

Programmatic differences have appeared in the bloc backing Zyuganov, which includes left Stalinists, represented most prominently by Victor Anpilov of the Communist Workers Party, as well as anti-Marxist nationalists. Anpilov has criticised Zyuganov for being weak in opposing the parasitic capitalists, especially the banks.

The CPRF reply that Zyuganov's programme also has to get the support of the anti-socialist nationalists.

Besides the uninspiring record of the Communist majority in the Russian Duma, there is the experience of the slightly reconstructed, old-line Stalinist politicians in Belarus, who were swept into office in a vast wave of rejection of the reforms.

Yeltsin may have gained a few points recently when he criticised the Belarus regime for its political repression, although he is allying himself with it to bring Belarus back into a new union with Russia.

In an article on the "Post-Socialist Transformations in Eastern Europe" in the Cuban government publication, *Cuba Socialista*, Francisco Browne Infanta noted that the political changes in Eastern Europe retain far more support than the economic changes with which they have been associated (over 60 percent as opposed to less than 40 percent).

This indicates that the rejection of the procapitalist reforms does not mean that the majority of voters in Eastern Europe are inclined to forget the Stalinist repression. And the chauvinist programme of the CPRF and its "brown" allies involves a clearer threat of strong-arm methods than in the cases of the other "reformed" CPs that have won elections.

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# Maastricht: the cat's out of the bag

François Vercaemmen

The OECD, the organisation of the main Imperialist states, has broken a taboo with its latest report. It admits that Germany and France will not meet on time the criteria set by the Maastricht accord.

The 'pact for jobs' of Germany's Chancellor Kohl outlines the prospects for the whole European Union—frontal assaults against social security.

Maastricht is running into ever bigger problems.

Someone suggested that one day the forecasters of the official institutions should be dragged before the courts, just like manufacturers who make dishonest adverts or put false information on the labels of their products. The prisons would have to act quickly. Everyone locked up for petty crimes would have to be freed in order to make space for those responsible for the economic situation which has developed over the last 15 years.

Not so long ago we were being told that economic growth was just about to restart, and that the recession was temporary. They said 1995 was a disillusioning year, but 1996 would be much better.

Right-winger Jacques Chirac won the French presidential elections on the back of these reports. He had been able to go to the G7 summit in Lille and present himself as the champion of all forces



joined up in the fight against unemployment.

There was the same refrain at the G7's Washington summit a few weeks later. 1997 would be a year of strong growth, explained *Le Monde* back in April, because "the fundamental economic indicators remain promising".

However the only countries

with these results are those that have given up obeying the Maastricht plan and do not intend going back to it in the short-term: Sweden; Britain and Italy.

The chief economist of the International Monetary Fund Michael Mussa has had thunderbolts rained down on him by the great and good for pointing out this troublesome truth.

The facts speak for themselves, and Mussa has simply put his finger in them. His team, made up of one expert from each major government, predicted back in April that the German economy would

grow by one per cent this year. Last year it grew 1.9 per cent.

Just a few days later the 'five wise men' who advise the German government cut that prediction in half—growth would be just half a per cent. That respectable institution also reaffirmed that the single currency should not be introduced until the criteria had been modified.

A few days after that statement, the OECD announced that neither France nor Germany would fulfil the criteria on time.

These 'reports' have very little to do with science and everything to do with political tactics. Since 1995 their tactics have revolved around the question they dare not ask in public—when and how can they tell the truth?

The truth?

The truth is that it is impossible to introduce a single currency within the timetable fixed at last December's Madrid summit. It is quite a problem for the dominant classes. To come out with the truth now would deprive them of the most powerful argument they use to justify their austerity policies.

Yet the closer it is to the end of 1997, the more any admission will destabilise the financial markets and put the single currency even more in danger. A special Inter-Governmental Conference at the start of 1998 will assess the situation, studying statistics from the different countries.

On top of all this, the financial markets threaten to resume speculating in currencies. If the Euro comes too late, or even not at all, one knock-on effect will be a spectacular appreciation of the value of the Deutschmark, with all its negative implications for German exports and the balance of the whole European Union.

### The politics of 'Socialist Outlook'

## WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# Socialist OUTLOOK

## German workers defend welfare state

HUNDREDS of thousands of German workers assembled in Bonn on Saturday 15 June for the largest trade union rally since the Second World War.

Called by the unions and supported by the Social Democratic Party, they were protesting against government plans to cut public spending and social benefits.

The rally was a climax to weeks of protests and brief strikes by public sector workers which have taken place since Chancellor Kohl announced plans for £21.7 billion of cuts in April.

The background is a familiar story across Europe: forecasts for next year predict that Germany's public spending benefit will exceed the three per cent limit set by the Maastricht Treaty. There are growing doubts as to whether Germany will be able to meet the strict criteria required to qualify for European Monetary Union.

Kohl has been careful to argue that the cuts are about making German firms competitive and cutting unemployment rather than securing Germany's place in Europe. But the two are inseparable.

Kohl has been calling for a two-year pay freeze in the public sector. However, the unions demanded a 4.5 per cent increase and it looks like they will settle for a



"In England they are killing cows; in Germany they are killing the social state": a banner at the hundreds-thousands strong march in Bonn

1.3 per cent increase. This will increase the pressure on Kohl to push through the cuts.

There are even doubts about whether the cuts proposed by Kohl are actually enough to bridge the budget deficit, given the fact that the

economy is unlikely to grow by more than half a per cent this year—less than the European average.

On top of the job losses that have taken place recently in major German companies, these public

spending cuts look like producing the class conflict which the German capitalists have long sought to avoid by their sham of 'social partnership'—drawing union leaders into joint decision-making about jobs, pay and conditions.

The strength of the German unions could well prevent Kohl's cuts and set another example, after the French one, to workers across Europe about the real meaning of European Union and how to fight it.

## Euro march to challenge Maastricht

Harry Sloan

TWO key political meetings take place in Florence next week.

One will hit the press headlines. The EU's IGC, Inter-Governmental Conference, will attempt to map out the steps for implementing the Maastricht treaty and moving towards a single European currency with or without John Major's 'cooperation'.

The other meeting will be out of the limelight, but potentially vital for the European workers' movement. Trades unionists and employed activists will discuss an ambitious series of marches against unemployment, from capitals and big cities, converging in Amsterdam in June 1997. Striking Liverpool dockers and British unemployed Centres will be at the meeting.

The conferences will discuss the same problem, but with opposing arguments. Governments across the EU are cut-

ting public spending savagely in order to reduce state deficits to below the maximum allowed by the Maastricht accords. Few EU countries can get below the limit of three per cent of each country's Gross National Product.

Trades unions opposing cuts in pensions, benefits, public sector jobs, health and welfare service have given an angry response to the cutbacks.

The German government aim to cut their deficit from 3.8 per cent to three per cent with £20 billion in cuts. German unions have organised protest actions which promise further action to come.

The resistance is best developed in France. Maastricht-driven cuts forced sustained public sector cuts last Autumn. More cuts are now being planned.

Spain's new rightwing government has also moved swiftly towards cuts in education and new charges for health care. They aim to trim the deficit from 4.4 per

cent to three per cent.

Britain's deficit runs at five per cent. The Maastricht target implies cuts totalling £10 billion. That is the equivalent of the NHS hospitals budget or all education spending. The need to cut poses sharp difficulties for the Conservative government and any future Labour party government.

The plans for a single currency has openly split the Conservative party in half. Major's 'beef war' aims to heal the rift. Most of the European ruling class now thinks that Labour leaders Tony Blair and Gordon Brown are more likely to deliver monetary union.

A 'New' Labour government would be a tool for European capitalism. It could not reverse the 17 years of asset stripping by the Conservative government. Instead Labour will have to cut deeply into the welfare state with new 'Maastricht' cuts.

The Maastricht restrictions prevent

governments from reducing the official EU total of 20 million unemployed. Existing welfare rights are attacked while 50 million live in poverty.

The European march is proposed for next Spring when the British general election campaign may be under way. The timing gives socialists and trades unionists throughout the EU an opportunity to challenge the capitalist logic of monetary union with the politics of solidarity and socialism.

The proposal was made in April by Italian, Spanish and German militants at meeting in Turin organised by the city's unemployed branch of the CGIL union federation. The activists called for wider discussion of possible European initiatives against unemployment.

A European conference, or common initiatives in every European city, are also possible.

The appeal was endorsed in France by

ACI, Act together against Unemployment, which organised five successful marches across France in 1994 which converged in a 20,000-strong march through Paris.

ACI has drawn up plans to deal with technical and organisational problems and extract the maximum advantages of a similar series of marches across the EU. A full-time staff would co-ordinate the campaigns. A Europe-wide leadership team would travel throughout the EU to address planning meetings and campaign rallies.

The political gains of the marches would repay campaigners who build up resources and practical support along the routes. The marches will highlight the need for full employment and the work of the internationalist opposition to the Maastricht process. They will give the best conditions to unite trades unions, working-class parties and campaigns.