

# Socialist OUTLOOK

**LABOUR CONFERENCE  
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# BLAIR CRAWLS TO BOSSSES



TONY Blair was touted as the best thing for Labour in years. But as the opinion poll lead fades to that before his election as leader, the reality of Blair's Labour Party is obvious: it is becoming the party of permanent retreat. Blair has:

- REFUSED to back the signal workers.
- REFUSED to criticise Chancellor Clarke's deflationary interest rate

rise.

- DOWNPLAYED Labour's union links, stating they "have no special place" in the Labour Party.
- REPUDIATED any form of social ownership as an alternative to market capitalism.
- RETREATED on Labour's education promises.
- RIDICULED Labour pledges to have more women MPs.

● CHAMPIONED right-wing Tory "family values".

No wonder big business is becoming friendly to Labour, and many Liberal Democrats want a coalition; no wonder millionaire David Sainsbury gave money to his leadership campaign.

As the bankruptcy of Tory policies is evident to the whole world, Blair wants to adopt them wholesale!

# Wrong turn for signal workers

By a railworker

LAST WEEKEND's Signalling Grades Conference brought into the open frustration at lack of progress in the dispute and allowed Knapp and the RMT right to keep open the basis of retreat.

The conference was presented with a number of emergency resolutions, ranging from a call to accept arbitration to a call for all-out strike action.

To many, arbitration seemed an attractive proposition if it meant that Railtrack would be forced to re-enter serious discussions with the RMT.

In the end however the conference agreed to ask the na-

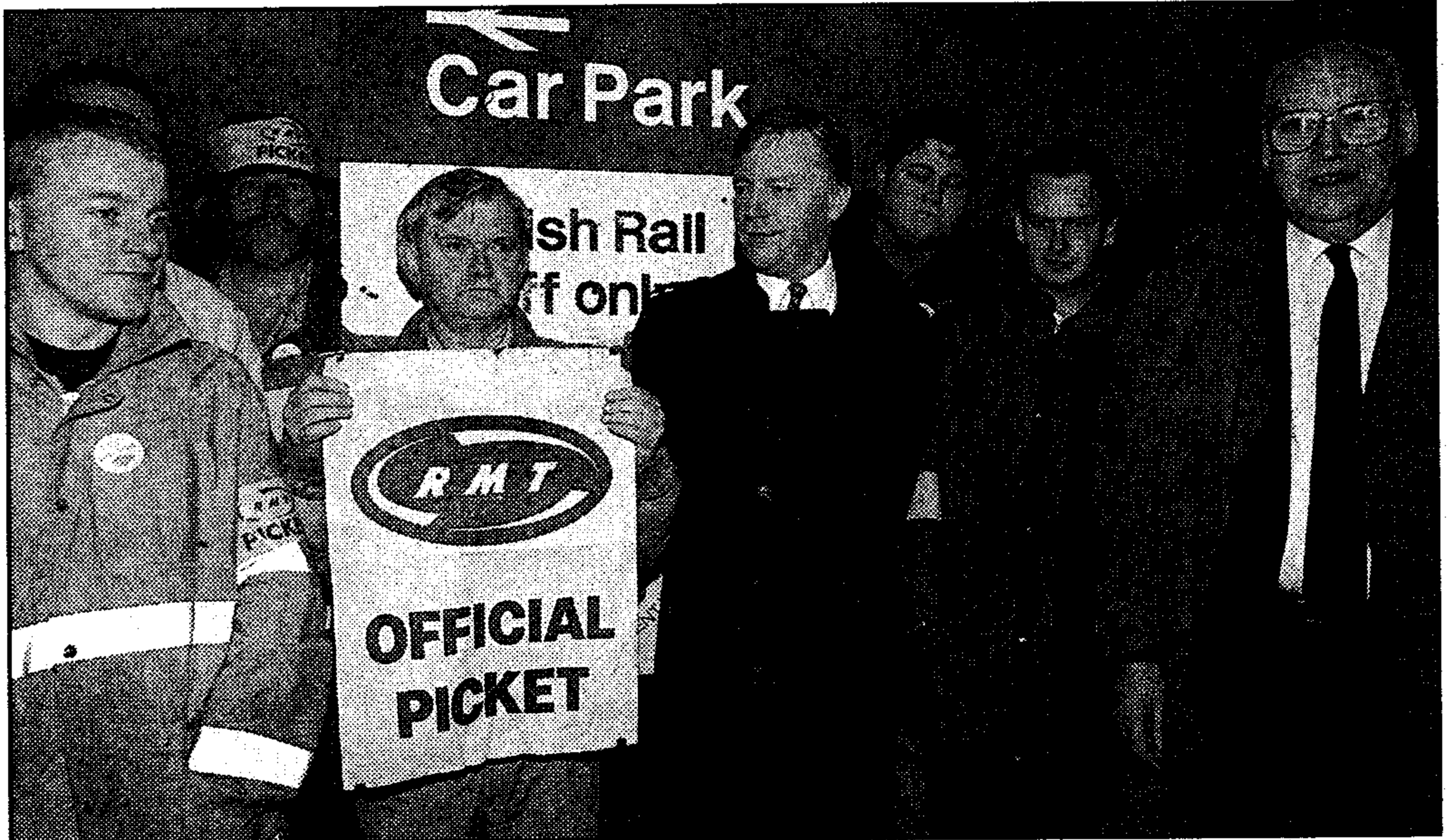
tional executive to examine re-suming talks on the claim while at the same time progressing restructuring talks - and if this was not possible to look to escalating the dispute. Any agreement on restructuring would be put to a ballot.

The idea of parallel talks had been raised by Knapp and some other executive members as a way of breaking the deadlock.

## Climbdown

In practice it is a climbdown which gives back the initiative to Railtrack. There is no indication that the government is prepared to allow a settlement in any way favourable to RMT.

Now Railtrack can push its restructuring agenda, which



means job losses, without having to make any concessions on the claim.

Only victory on the claim can put the RMT in a position of strength in restructuring discussions.

Any further talks will break down rapidly unless RMT makes major concessions: it is a recipe for demoralisation.

What is needed is a way of the RMT seizing the initiative. Escalation confined to signal workers is not an option; the dispute must be extended to other rail workers.

In line with health and safety

legislation, drivers and guards who believe they are in imminent danger are entitled not to work.

There have been a series of near misses, as managers staff the signal boxes. The RMT strike committee has called a meeting with the Traincrew Grades executive to discuss these issues. Guards and drivers are extremely frustrated to be told to work normally on strike days.

The issue of health and safety must be used to underpin a call for guards and drivers to refuse to work on strike days.

North West railworkers say..

# All out to win!

By Glen Voris

FIVE HUNDRED people marched in support of striking signal workers in Liverpool on Saturday 10 September, in a demonstration organised at short notice by the Merseyside County Association of Trades Councils.

Speakers included Vernon Hince (deputy general secretary RMT), Alan Simpson (secretary of the Campaign Group of Labour MPs), Nigel Flanagan (one of the UNISON Sefton 2) and Sylvia Pye of Women Against Pit Closures.

The general mood of the signal workers was that they remained solid, but did not want to escalate the strike action since they were not convinced they could sustain it.

This reluctance to escalate the strike stems from a feeling of isolation, since the RMT leadership are hesitant to step up the action.

## Demoralised

Without spreading the strike, signal workers will become demoralised and Railtrack will have won an important victory; the government would have kept the lid on public sector pay.

St Helens Trades Council has already taken the initiative in establishing a support group, to organise workplace collections and a speaking tour.

## "If the Labour Party support our claim, then they should support our action"

Socialist Outlook talked to RMT executive and strike committee member ALAN POTTAGE.

"The signal workers have done well. After three months the strength is still there, but we have to find a way to apply more pressure to Railtrack.

This has become a political dispute, with the stumbling block of the government not allowing negotiations. They must be forced to withdraw. This will take more than the signal workers themselves. It is an attack on the whole movement: the question is what is the movement going to do?"



## Second front

We must alleviate the pressure on the signal workers by opening up another front. The issue of safety for other railworkers gives us the means of doing this.

We also need to get other unions to act. The TUC must mobilise the movement to defend trade unionism. We know they

are capable - but so far they have been unwilling.

Pressure must be applied to make the TUC work for us. At the TUC conference other trade unions took inspiration from the signal workers. But it is not something for the history books, we need action now. Their disputes must be brought to a head while ours is continuing, not left until ours is finished.

The Labour leadership say they believe our claim is just, but with a few notable exceptions Labour MPs have refused to back our strike. Their failure to support us makes it look as if we are at fault.

With the opinion polls overwhelmingly supporting us, they have shot themselves in the foot.

While telling us that they cannot get involved, the Labour leaders have been urging arbitration, which is a major reason why it was an issue at the Grades Conference.

If the Labour Party support our claim they should support our action - what is needed is for the Labour conference next month to come out 100 per cent in favour of the strike."

## Solidarity meeting calls for escalation



HAVING HEARD Jimmy Knapp explain the latest details of the dispute rank and file railworkers called for a broadening of the action at a packed solidarity meeting in central London last Tuesday.

While a successful meeting saw £1250 handed over to strike funds, one RMT member pointed out:

"Collecting money is fine, but we need to extend the ac-

tion. We have got to use the health and safety argument."

## Walking across

As a guard from north London explained:

"I stand on my picket line telling signal workers not to cross, then take off my picket's armband and walk in to work as usual. I think it's a disgrace that my union is defeating itself."

Another asked: "Why are

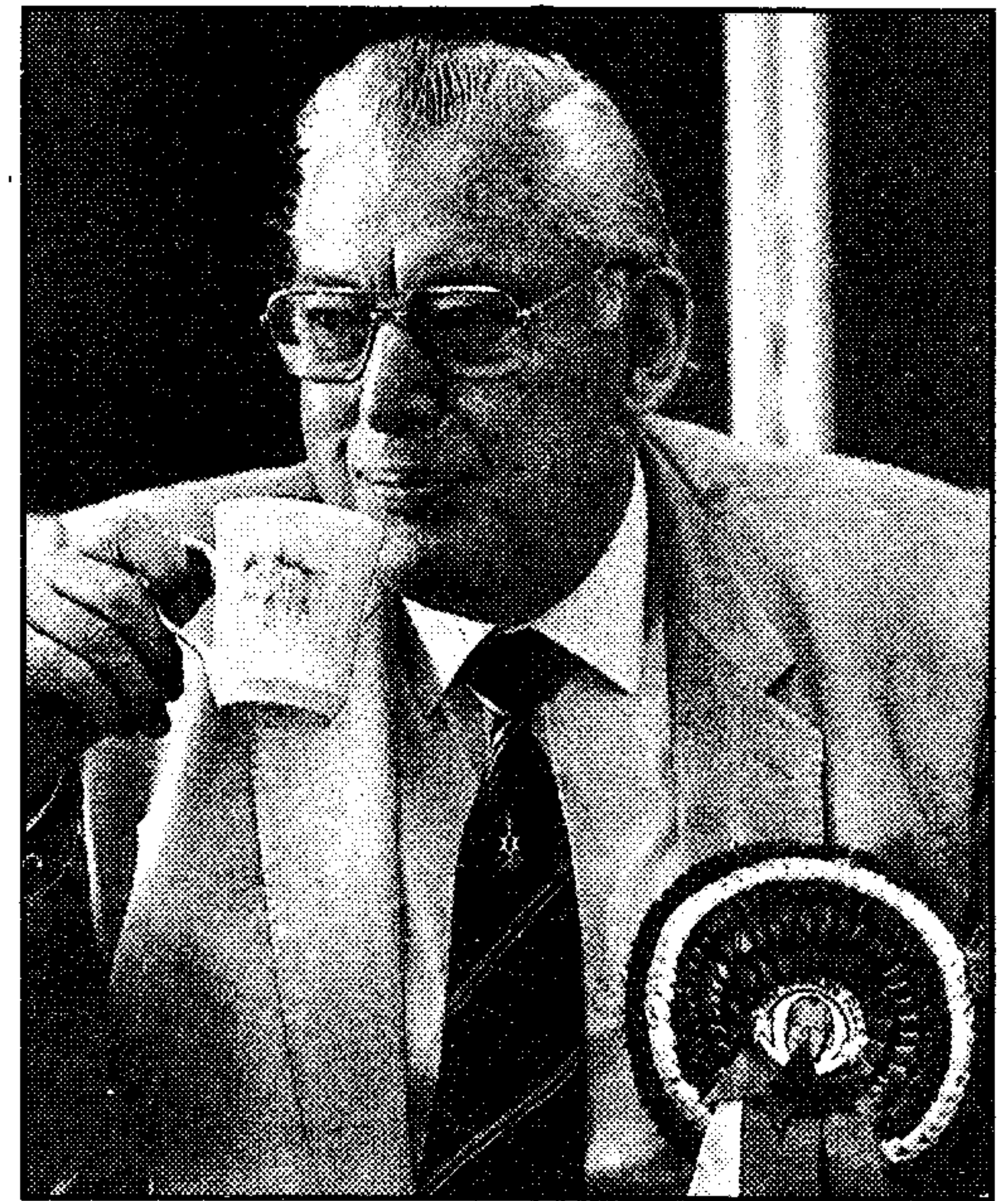
signalling grades the only ones involved in the dispute? Every argument about signalling grades applies to every other grade on the railway. So why not broaden the dispute?"

Speaking from the platform a signal worker explained that his branch would be calling for indefinite strike action adding, "and if anyone is dismissed as a result the executive should call out all RMT members in support."

TRADE UNION NEWS

# Peace process 'clarified'

## Major upholds Loyalist veto



THE BRITISH and Irish governments have moved decisively to reassure Loyalists in the Six Counties that their interests were not threatened by the "peace process".

John Major, while abandoning government restrictions on the broadcasting of Sinn Fein representatives, made it clear that there would be a referendum in Northern Ireland over the outcome of any peace talks.

The restriction of such a referendum to the North effectively seals the right of the Loyalists to a veto on unification.

Major also stated that Sinn Fein would not be admitted to peace talks unless and until it clarified that the IRA ceasefire was "permanent".

The statements by Major were reinforced by the frank admission by Irish premier Reynolds that Irish unification was off the agenda for decades.

The "peace process" package is now absolutely clear. First, the IRA calls off the armed struggle. Then there are talks, eventually involving Sinn Fein, which lead to the creation of a new Northern Ireland assembly, to which Adams and other Sinn Fein representatives are elected.

The government hopes that Loyalist opinion would be reconciled to this, and their paramilitaries demobilised. "Peace" would thus be established. But what exactly would be achieved from the viewpoint of the Republicans and the struggle for Irish unification?

While the whole process will be subject to a referendum in the North, the British state is not going to allow a 32-county referendum on unification. The outcome will thus be the election of a Six County assembly, and the transformation of Sinn Fein into a more-or-less radical nationalist, but constitutional, electoralist party.



It is highly unlikely in such a scenario that Sinn Fein will replace the SDLP as the dominant nationalist party; indeed the political differences between sections of Sinn Fein and the SDLP will begin to erode. After all, what is the SDLP but constitutional, reformist, nationalism?

### National rights

What this scenario does not include is anything to address the national rights of the Irish people, or indeed of the nationalist community in the North.

In other words, there is nothing in this package which addressed the question of the Orange nature of the Six County statelet; its existence as the institutional-

isation of the Protestant ascendancy and the union with Britain.

Recent surveys have revealed that sectarianism, in the form of massive job and housing discrimination against Catholics, is alive and well. The privileges of the Protestant workers in a period of recession may be marginal, but they certainly exist.

The "peace process" as offered by Major and Reynolds is now being revealed for what it really is: an operation to tame and integrate the Republican movement, especially to end the armed struggle.

In this new situation Sinn Fein will of course carry on its political campaign for Irish unification. But then that is nothing new. There is a long history of reformist

nationalist politicians being elected to local councils and as MPs to the British parliament. That was the situation in the 1950s and 1960s, when such people called themselves simply "Nationalists".

It was precisely the failure of this type of communal electoral politics, and the continuation of mass discrimination, which led to the emergence of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, which through its strategy of mass direct action broke with the old communalist and clientelist nationalist politicians.

### Naive

Evidently, a lot of left-wing people naively welcoming the peace process don't know very much about the history of northern Ireland before the civil rights movement.

A regression to the pre-1968 days in nationalist politics would be the waste of 25 years of struggle.

The Republican movement stands at a crossroads. The peace process in the hands of Reynolds and Major is not going to deliver a united Ireland because it leans on the Loyalist veto as sacrosanct. And that veto will be delivered time and again.

The way forward is not to make an "historic compromise" with imperialist domination of Ireland, but to elaborate a new strategy based on mass action, and linking up with the struggles of workers in the South. That means the inter-twining of the national and social struggles in Ireland.

It means a movement which fights for workers unity and a 32-country socialist republic. It means campaigning here and now for the release of all political prisoners; and for self-determination for the Irish people as a whole.

Old style nationalist reformism is not going to deliver it.

## Join us for memorial dinner

SOCIALISTS from all over the country will gather in London on October 22 for a dinner to honour the memory of our comrade Bob Smith, who died earlier this year at the age of 46:

Bob, who lived in Birmingham, was well-known in the anti-racist and Irish solidarity movements, and devoted much of his final year to the

struggle of Asian women at the Burnsalls factory.

The dinner will see the launch of a book, dedicated to Bob's memory, on the anti-racist and anti-fascist struggle - *Here to Stay, Here to Fight*.

It will also feature speakers prominent in the anti-racist struggle.

The dinner will raise

money for the memorial fund.

This fund will be used to finance the book, as well as to refurbish *Socialist Outlook's* offices and buy new, and urgently needed, computer equipment for the paper.

The dinner is not just for *Socialist Outlook* supporters, but open to all those who knew Bob and those dedicated to

the anti-racist and anti-fascist struggle.

**Be there!**

Tickets cost £12 waged, £7 unwaged from:

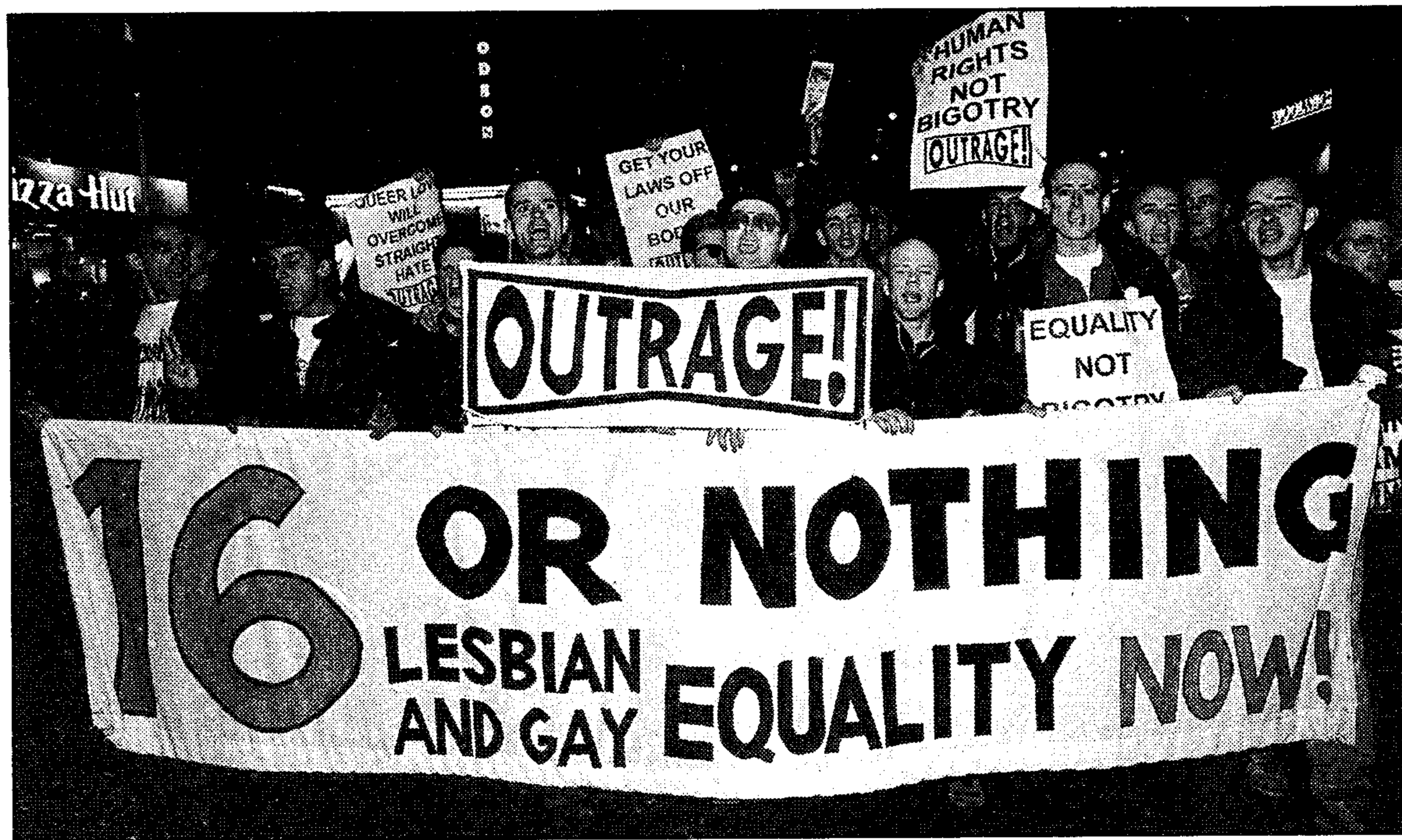
*Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Cheques should be made out to 'Bob Smith Memorial Fund'.*

Please send me ... tickets for the Bob Smith memorial dinner (... waged, ... unwaged). I enclose a cheque for £.....

Name .....  
Address .....

Send to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

EDITORIAL



## Another Labour betrayal on Ireland

By Liam Mac Uaid

THE GOOD news is that the Labour leadership is still in favour of Irish unity – by consent of the Unionists of course.

The bad news is that they do not intend to do anything about it.

So they do not intend to become “persuaders” and will rely on the Unionists eventually changing their mind.

Thus another squalid footnote is added to the history of Labour’s leaders agreeing with every major policy decision taken by the Conservatives in Ireland.

So reluctant are they to take an independent position that Mo Mowlam, the Shadow Cabinet member responsible for broadcasting, was prepared to say on television that now is not the time to press for the repeal of the ludicrous, anti-democratic ban on the transmission of the voices of Sinn Fein members.

She does “not want to complicate the negotiation process for the Tories” – and has now found herself outflanked by them as the ban is ditched.

### Degrading

How much more can these people degrade themselves? Even Patrick Mayhew, the Tory minister responsible for the North of Ireland, let it be known that he wanted the ban to be lifted. There are times when words are not adequate.

An element in Blair’s calculations is that the next election may be a rather close-run thing and his parliamentary majority will not be as comfortable as he would hope.

Major has had occasion to rely on the support of Unionist MPs, and it is not out of the question that Blair will also find himself in some tight corners.

He appears to believe that it is better to abandon any hint of an Irish policy which may distinguish Labour and Tories now while in opposition, than be seen to make sordid compromises in government.

In any case at least that fire old Labour tradition of bi-partisanship can be upheld.

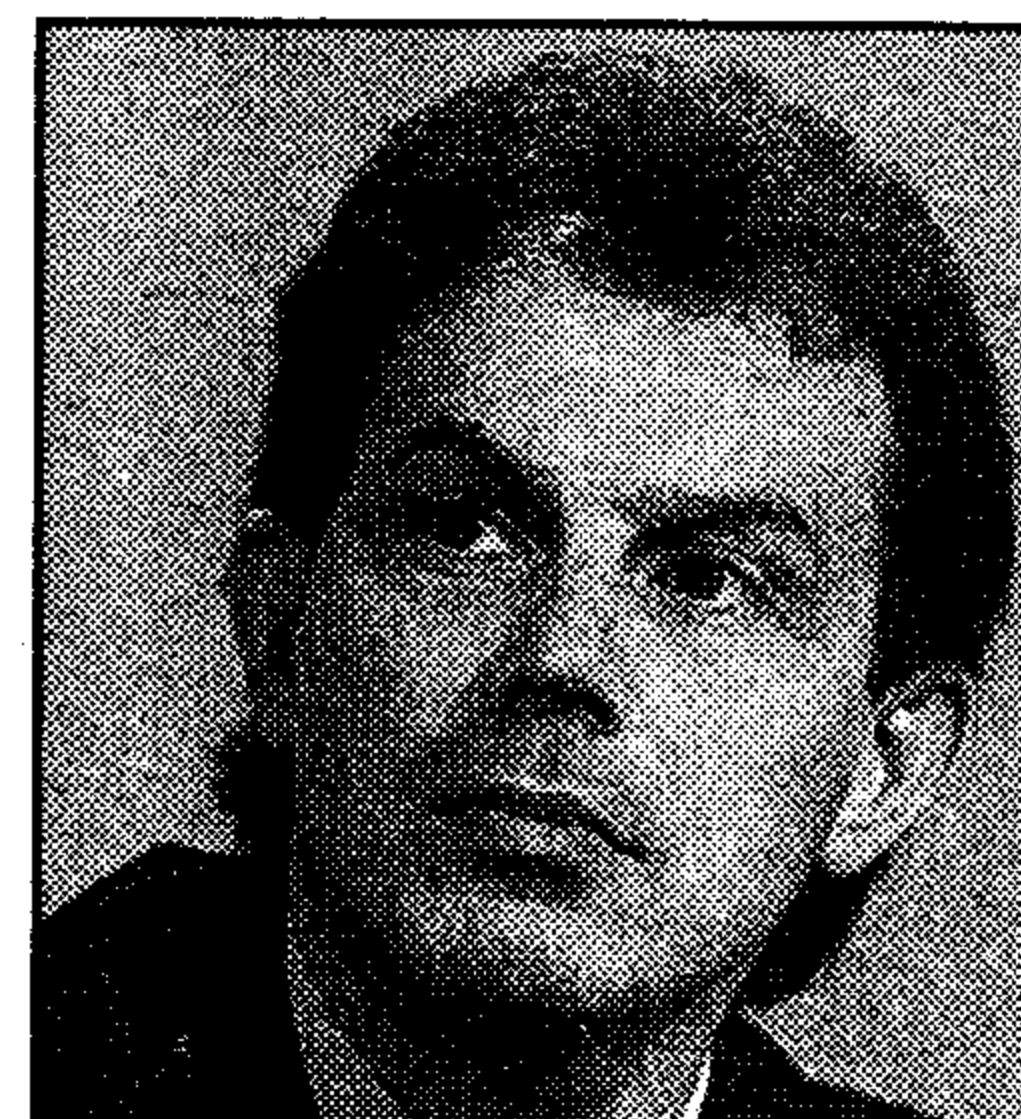
If, like Blair, you accept that Britain has the right to a dominant role in Irish politics, then it is better to be consistently pro-imperialist. At least Kate Hoey and *Democracy Now* have that merit.

Since the IRA ceasefire they have been receiving quite a bit of publicity for their demand that the British Labour Party organise in the North of Ireland. They claim to have the support of more than 50 MPs and leaders of the UCW and AEEU.

Only the fact that part of Ireland is occupied by the British state make their principal demand possible. It is thoroughly reactionary.

The North of Ireland regularly has the highest turnout in elections in the British state. Politics there may not be to everyone’s taste, but people create and vote for organisations which they perceive to represent their interests.

More British interference is the last thing any part of Ireland needs and the people of the six counties have suffered enough in the last two decades. Why export the squalor of Blair’s Labour Party to them?



## Blair boost for Tory ‘family values’

By Peter Purton  
(LGLCR - personal capacity)

THE “NEW model” Labour Party has benefited from a resurgence of support from lesbians and gay men. A poll for Channel 4’s “Out” programme has found 50 per cent of lesbians and gay men voted Labour at the last election.

The election of Tony Blair has seen this process continue. At this year’s Pride, the Labour Party stall did a thriving trade signing up new members.

Blair is the first Labour leader to openly signal support for an equal age of consent.

This, and strong support from the front bench – with the notable exceptions of Blunkett and Taylor – suggests that Labour is strongly committed to social equality policies.

However beneath this veneer of progressiveness, Blair’s social policies are based on the same fundamentally “pro-family” stance that traditional labourism has always had – a position it shares on all fundamentals with the Tories.

The limitations of the new

Labour liberalism have been exposed during the furore over single parents.

While Labour might argue for the more “humane” treatment of lone parents, it shares with the Tories the view that lone parents are inferior.

Blair has reiterated his view that two parents are better than one. For him this view is self-evident.

For the vast number of people for whom the world is different, regardless of whether or not their “family” position is one of choice or necessity, such a view is scarcely comforting.

### ‘Model family’

Labour’s “model family”, as codified by the new leader, is based on a substantially mythical “golden age” when we all lived in two parent (white, heterosexual, able-bodied) households.

This view conveniently overlooks that such households are also the location of domestic violence, abuse, including sexual abuse of children, abuse of the elderly and a vast, but concealed, world of privatised dreary unhappiness.

It fails to take account of the diversity of forms of social organisation prevalent in different

communities, and the strength against diversity that the lesbian and gay communities, for example, have been forced to develop.

It ignores evidence that it is not the number of “parents” or solely their biological relationship which determines that children are reared “properly”.

The controversial issue of access to fertility treatments and to donor insemination are profoundly influenced by whether (for example) lesbians and gay men are recognised as “suitable” parents.

Despite a hostile political climate, stoked up by “back to basics” rhetoric and tabloid homophobia, progress is being made.

A recent court judgment confirmed custody of children to lesbians.

The TUC has promised a negotiators guide to “family leave”, which consciously includes black families, lesbian and gay relationships and adoptive families.

If the Labour Party is to give meaning to its equality policies, then it has to begin by questioning the privileged position it continues to assign to just one of the many different forms of social organisation.

mittee, to water down TOM’s traditional anti-imperialist objectives.

This would have involved building an ad-hoc Peace Committee, with the specific aim of campaigning for “peace” in Ireland.

There was a clear majority at the meeting for continuing to build TOM on its two basic

demands - “Troops Out Now” and “Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole”.

### Forgotten

Many speakers in the debate voiced fears that if TOM did not campaign for these demands, anti-imperialist objectives would be forgotten.

Delegates also voiced

fears that TOM’s anti-imperialist solidarity role would be submerged in “popular front”-type politics.

Attempts by the Editorial Committee to get through a resolution welcoming the IRA ceasefire were also defeated, as being contradictory to TOM’s basic objectives, and traditional stance of not tak-

ing position for or against the republican armed struggle.

It was agreed to hold the next Bloody Sunday march and rally in Manchester. It was also decided to hold a November day-school on the current situation in Ireland, for TOM members to fully debate their views on the current political situation there.

LABOUR PARTY

## TOM reaffirms anti-imperialist stance

By Bernie Hynes

DELEGATES to a national Troops Out Movement conference in Leeds on September 10 rejected proposals from the South London branch, endorsed by the new Editorial Com-

## Italian workers show the way

WHILE British pensioners call in vain on Labour and the TUC to take up the fight for their living standards, Italy's unions have threatened general strike action if their new right wing government attempts to cut back on pensions.

Silvio Berlusconi's government is under increasing pressure from the bankers and money markets to slash back on the historically generous pension entitlements squeezed out of previous weak governments by strong unions.

It has little obvious base of popular support in its bid to slash up to 10 trillion lire from pensions; even the employers, who use pension funds Maxwell-style as cheap loans, are opposed to plans to privatise the scheme.

Workers retiring now can pick up 80 percent of their average income as a lifetime pension.

But the pensions bill is central to a rocketing state deficit predicted to amount to 124 percent of GDP this year: interest payments alone on this deficit consume almost 10 percent of GDP.

Italian ministers hope to cut the benefits for new retirees to 60% of final income. For millions of British pensioners facing winter, even that much would be a treat.

# Lift-off for Welfare State Network

By Harry Sloan

A NEW initiative to link up the campaigns, unions and individuals fighting in defence of the Welfare State was launched on September 18.

A full hall of 100 activists turned out to the meeting, convened under the sponsorship of the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee and the Socialist Campaign Group Network.

From the chair, Trudy Saunders told the meeting that over 300 individuals (including MPs and national trade union officials) and some organisations have already signed the basic policy statement on which the meeting had been called.

Platform speakers included a student nurse from Guy's, pensioner's activist Joe Harris, Islington councillor Liz Davies, John Lister from London Health Emergency, and Tony Benn MP.

A lengthy written message of support from Alan Simpson MP, secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group, was read out.

Platform and floor speakers were agreed on the need to support the various local and sin-

gle-issue campaigns which have sprung up across the country to defend the existing welfare state against Tory attacks (hospitals, nurseries, nursing homes, pension rights, social security benefits, student grants, education services), and demand improved services, including civil rights for disabled people.

Benn argued that the Tory drive to strip workers of social security and other benefits goes well beyond any economic motives, and is driven by their strategic desire to restore the power and disciplines of capitalism.

"The Tories don't just want to end the welfare state, they want to take the whole country back to where it was in the nineteenth century," warned Benn.

"We must do more than defend the welfare state, we must campaign for the things we want," he stressed.

John Lister from LHE pointed to the political significance of struggles over pensions and welfare state benefits in Italy and in the Swedish elections.

"We need a campaign like the Network to make sure that these issues punch their weight in British politics, the way they do elsewhere," he said. "We need to break down isolation, inform



and link up campaigns, and reach for support into the labour movement, which has been too slow and timid in taking up these issues."

### Newspaper

There was overwhelming support in the meeting for the Network to publish a tabloid newsletter, aimed at building a base of affiliations and sharing the experiences of successful campaigns.

The first, pilot issue, to give a taste of what could be done, will be published at Labour Party conference. This and future issues will be funded through donations, affiliations

and selling advertising space to supportive organisations.

Also endorsed by the meeting was a call for a lobby of parliament on Budget Day, and the suggestion of a major national conference of the campaign to take place next spring.

While targeting activists in the existing campaigns and the labour movement, the Welfare State Network is committed to forming a broad coalition of those prepared to fight the Tory attacks.

■ **More information from, and donations/messages to Welfare State Network, c/o 22, Maude Rd, London SE5.**

## Labour's education policies: a dream or a fantasy?

By Richard Hatcher

Labour's education policies are spelled out in the new White Paper *Opening the Doors to a Learning Society*. Out goes the prescriptive National Curriculum, to be replaced by a common curriculum framework.

Out go league tables based on national testing. Opted-out schools and new City Technology Colleges will be brought back into the LEA system. These and other reforms will be widely welcomed by teachers and parents as an improvement on unpopular Tory policies.

But Labour's reforming zeal is a pale shadow of the Tories'. The fundamental feature of our education system is that it is much better at reproducing social inequality than reducing it.

This is the acid test for Labour: will it produce policies which do as much for working class children and students as the Tories have done for a privileged minority?

The White Paper is full of the rhetoric of overcoming disadvantage and fulfilling every child's potential, but the remedies aren't radical enough to achieve it.

Labour's White Paper is trapped in the dilemma of trying to serve two masters - the demands of working class parents and students for an education system that works for them, and the demands of business for an education system that delivers a profitable workforce.

### 'Opportunity'

Labour's document constructs a post-Fordist fantasy. It begins, "A whole series of changes - economic, technological and cultural - has presented us with the opportunity of building a genuinely learning society - a society in which all individuals can fulfil their potential as active citizens in a prosperous, civilised and caring community".

Note that these changes *have already occurred* - in other words, Labour's vision of citizen and community is based on the

existing economic order.

This scenario, which promises that economic success goes hand-in-hand with social justice, is crucial to Labour's perspectives for education.

Modern capitalism, it claims, requires all workers to be highly educated, and that will provide the motivation which the White Paper sees as the key factor in working class achievement in education.

This is a castle built on sand. In reality, new economic order combines high skill jobs for some with low-skill jobs for many, plus permanent high unemployment, all shaped by gender and ethnic inequalities. An education system geared to this economic order will continue to reflect those inequalities and demotivate many working class students.

It is the acceptance of the logic of capital - not just pre-election caution - which explains the absence of resource commitments in the White Paper.

Nursery education is also to be expanded, but only for half-time provision for three and



four-year olds. Class sizes are to be reduced, but no targets are set. Special needs are to be met in mainstream schools, but no extra funds are guaranteed.

No details are given of whether schools will be funded according to need rather than on a competitive numbers-led basis.

### Democracy

It is also why the White Paper shies away from the principle of elected democratic control when it might offend dominant interests. The private schools retain their privilege.

The Training and Enterprise Councils will remain outside local democratic control. School governing bodies will not be directly elected.

The White Paper equivocates on other issues of inequality too.

The sections on racial equality and especially on gender are weak. "Parity of esteem" between academic and vocational qualifications is promised, rather than the abolition of A Levels and the creation of a genuinely unified qualification.

Perhaps the most blatant omission in the document is the lack of a clear commitment to abolish 11+ selection in state schools.

There are good things in the White Paper. Some of them - such as the full reintegration of GM schools and the end of league tables - may well have to be defended against Blair as the general election approaches.

But the linchpin of the White Paper, as with Labour's policies as a whole, is "partnership" with capital, and its logic sets narrow limits to Labour's education reforms.



## Hunger strike highlights Campsfield campaign

By Paul Clarke

TEN Algerian detainees started an indefinite hunger strike at the Haslar immigration prison, near Portsmouth, on September 15.

The ten, protesting their indefinite detention under immigration laws, are some of the thousands of people who are imprisoned each year because of racist immigration and asylum laws.

The hunger strike is likely to become another flashpoint in the campaign by prisoners and campaigners to stop human rights abuses by the British government.

For the last year campaigners against the immigration and

asylum laws have highlighted the Campsfield special immigration prison at Kidlington outside Oxford. Opened last November, it has since been followed up with the announcement of special immigration wings at several other prisons.

### Asylum seekers

These facilities are being added to the existing prison facilities used for asylum seekers at Harmondsworth, Haslar and Portland.

One year on the Campsfield campaigners are determined to continue and have announced a programme of activity to mark one year of Campsfield's existence.

Next Saturday, September 24, at 12 noon there will be a

"Sing Down Campsfield" demonstration outside the prison gates, featuring Cardiff Red Choir.

On 29 October a further demonstration outside the prison will link the campaign against the immigration laws and the fight against the Criminal Justice Act.

November 13 will see a conference against racist immigration controls in Oxford (details to be announced).

To commemorate one year of Campsfield there will be a demonstration from Oxford to London, starting on November 30 and arriving at Downing St on December 4.

■ **Help is needed with all these plans. If you want to get involved ring Oxford (0865) 724452.**

## New left wing in UNISON

By Fred Leplat  
(Islington UNISON)

A NEW left wing is being organised in UNISON, Britain's largest union formed from the merger of NALGO, NUPE and CO-HSE. The launch conference of the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting UNISON (CFDU) will take place on 3 December in Leeds.

The need for an organised left has never been so great, with so many attacks raining down on public service workers.

Privatisation, pay freeze, cuts in services and attacks on union organisation are just some of the issues on which a fighting leadership is required.

The CFDU was initiated at UNISON's first national con-

ference last May, at a meeting called by several regional left caucuses. The meeting had been organised to fight for national campaigns, including industrial action, against the attacks we face and for real democracy in the union.

The 150 delegates at the meeting unanimously agreed there was a need for a permanent left organisation in the union.

The CFDU is appealing to "Fightback", a group of UNISON branches influenced by the Socialist Workers Party, to join with the CFDU to ensure there is one large, united, left in UNISON.

There is much in common between the CFDU and Fightback, and those members who want to see real action to defend conditions and services will not understand why the left is split.

The launch conference of the CFDU on 3 December is

at Swarthmore Centre, 4 Woodhouse Square, Leeds 3 (creche available, accessible venue). It is being organised by the following regional caucuses: London CFDU, UNISON Left (North East), Campaign for Lay Control in UNISON (Yorks and Humber-side) and East Midlands CFDU.00

These regional lefts have agreed a draft Statement of Aims which will be submitted for amendment and adoption at the conference.

All UNISON branches are invited to send up to five delegates (£5 per delegate). Any UNISON member can attend as an observer with speaking rights (£3 each).

■ **Write to: CFDU, c/o Glen Kelly, Bromley UNISON, Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, Bromley BR1 3UH. Phone 081-464 3333 ext. 3273 for further details.**

## Nazis beaten back in Shadwell by-election

THE ATTEMPT by the Nazi British National Party to stage a comeback in Tower Hamlets, after the defeat of their only councillor Derek Beackon last May, has flopped.

In the September 15 by-election in Shadwell ward, they took 305 votes against the Labour Party's 1800. Shadwell is bisected by Cable Street, site of the historic anti-fascist battle against Moseley's black-shirts in 1936.

Despite their defeat, the BNP came within 12 votes of the second-placed Liberal Democrats and beaten the Conservatives who got a wretched 74 votes.

Although the BNP have not succeeded in capturing another seat, their vote shows that they are a factor in the politics of the area.

Shadwell borders onto Canary Wharf, where conspicuous luxury stands cheek-by-jowl with the desperate housing conditions and general squalor in Shadwell itself.

There is a large Bengali community. Bad housing together with a significant immigrant community leads to racist accusations that immigrants are getting preferential housing allocations.

In every case this has been proved to be nonsense. The BNP are adopting typical "divide and rule" tactics, where homelessness and unemployment is blamed on immigrant workers.

Last year's BNP Millwall victory has however had a salutary effect in mobilising anti-fascists and the local community every time the BNP show their faces.

Millwall will be much more difficult for the BNP to repeat.



## UNISON 'Fightback' conference: a sad new SWP stunt

By Tim Foxley

TWO HUNDRED activists attended last Saturday's UNISON "Fightback" conference in solidarity with the Sefton branch, which after having been found in contempt of court for defying the union laws, is now being persecuted by its own union leadership.

UNISON General Secretary Alan Jinkinson repudiated the action of Sefton branch, which successfully, but illegally, took strike action against council privatisation. Now he is threatening disciplinary action against the whole branch.

Sefton's 'crime' is to have paid the fines levied on two branch officers for defying the laws. A letter from UNISON HQ has been sent to all branches forbidding them from contributing to the defence fund.

### Defiance

Despite this Sefton branch has twice voted to pay the fines of the victimised officers, Nigel Flanagan and Martin Murphy. A number of other branches have similarly defied the UNISON ban and sent money.

Attendance at the Fightback conference was a further show of support from 60 branches. There was also a useful discussion about fighting the government's public sector pay limit.

However the weakness of the Fightback campaign was revealed when a motion was ta-

bled calling on it to organise further meetings and conferences in its own name.

Fightback is basically an SWP front in the mould of the ANL. It calls initiatives and invites affiliations, but has no democratic structure.

In fact, despite arguing that it is premature for the left to organise in an ongoing way, Fightback does have an organisational backbone - the SWP.

### Join forces

The Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Union (CFDU), which is working to build a democratic and, non-sectarian left network, made a proposal to join forces with Fightback, to organise a democratic, united conference of the left.

This proposal was not just rejected by the Fightback organisers but ruled out of order (!) and not allowed for discussion on the spurious grounds that it had been submitted too late - despite the fact that no one knew in advance of the conference that resolutions were to be taken at all!

The SWP bureaucratic ham fist went to absurd lengths; delegates were required to submit speaking slips giving an account of what the speaker intended to say!

Fightback will not be a real organisation, but will be taken off the shelf and dusted down when the SWP feel like it. The CFDU must go ahead with its December conference to create a united and democratic left organisation within UNISON.

## Brazil strikes in poll run-up

CAR WORKERS in Sao Paulo and the surrounding area have gone on strike against a government wage freeze, as the country prepares for a decisive presidential election in a few weeks time.

Car workers' unions, led by the radical CUT, itself linked to the Workers Party, want a sliding scale of wages to compensate them for the declining buying power of their wages.

It is estimated that more than 80,000 workers took strike action.

The car unions want monthly cost-of-living increases because of massive inflation. Monthly increases were common before the new currency, the Real, was introduced on July 1.

Then the government insisted that workers should only have wage increases once a year.

But union leaders say that price have gone up nearly 12 per cent since then. Car production has been badly hit because of high demand and low stocks.

At the country's largest car-making company, Antavea (a joint venture between Ford and Volkswagen), production was said to be at a near-total standstill.

The country's right-wing controlled media, especially the reactionary TV Globo which is always used against the left, is using the car strike to launch a smear campaign against Lula, presidential candidate of the Workers Party.

Lula has been trying to run a "moderate" campaign, distancing himself from workers' radicalism, and giving guarantees to big business.

## Mexican car workers walk out

VICTIMISED union leaders at the Ford-Cuautitlan plant near Mexico City are still fighting for their jobs after they were illegally sacked in June 1993.

After a sit-in at Ford's Mexico City head office, the company again refused to reinstate the sacked leaders. This in turn provoked protest stoppages at the Cuautitlan plant.

On September 2, a mass meeting of 90 per cent of the unionised staff voted for an indefinite stoppage demanding reinstatement of their sacked leaders, recognition of the union, and fresh elections for the national leadership of the union.

# Gunboat diplomacy will not bring democracy to Haiti

By Charles Mullet

Restoring democracy, ending human rights abuses and upholding international law: these are the arguments used by US President Bill Clinton to justify sending a massive military force to remove the ruling junta in the Caribbean island of Haiti.

Desperate last-minute negotiations led by former President Jimmy Carter appear to have extricated Clinton from having to mount a frontal military onslaught in the teeth of US opposition.

But anybody who believes that a US-led occupation of the island will fulfil the initial high-flown promises must have been on another planet for the last few years.

Remember:

● **PANAMA 1989:** where the US replaced one corrupt and brutal regime (headed by a former American agent) with another, at the cost of massive destruction and loss of life.

● **THE PERSIAN GULF, 1990-91:** Operation Desert Storm did indeed kick Iraq out of Kuwait, but Saddam Hussein continues his reign of terror in Iraq and the Kuwaiti ruling family continues to treat the oil-rich country as its own preserve.

Tens of thousands of Iraqis died in the war, many more as the result of sanctions.

● **SOMALIA, 1992:** this intervention was meant to protect aid efforts and end civil war.

While relief effort was in-



initially protected, the US presence has just been wound up. According to a report in the *Guardian*, "UN officials said Washington did not want public attention drawn to its officials leaving Somalia in chaos under clan warlords

"...aid workers ... are retreating from all outlying garrisons, abandoning areas of the country to gunmen."

### UN backing

America's gunboat diplomacy in Haiti has the backing of the UN Security Council and a number of Caribbean states are sending troops contingents.

However, the US policy's main source of credibility at the outset is given by Haiti's Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Elected by a two-thirds majority with a popular mandate to carry out radical social and economic change, Aristide was driven from power in September 1991 by the Haitian army and a reign of terror followed.

By aligning himself with US intervention, Aristide has turned his back on the poor of Haiti who brought him to power.

UN sanctions against the island have already inflicted terrible suffering on them; and indeed it seems a reasonable assumption that the hope of seeing sanctions ended is one of the main reasons for alleged popular support for intervention on the island.

According to as leading US foreign policy analyst "all the US wants from Aristide is his legitimacy, not his policies".

Reforming the Haitian army and police will be in the hands of the same US services who have aided murderous ultra-right formations throughout Central America.

### US-trained

Along with hundreds of other Haitian officers, the current Haitian chief of police, Colonel Michel Francois, was trained at

the US Central Intelligence School for the Americas.

A huge US-led force on the island would be on hand to suppress movements for social justice.

### Asylum seekers

It could also prevent Haitians fleeing the country to seek asylum in the US far more efficiently than the present military government.

Once in Haiti, the US will not find it easy to leave. Haiti is the US's back yard, and unlike Somalia, failure there would not go unnoticed by the voters.

On the other hand, according to American Haiti expert Walter Fauntroy, at least ten years would be needed to reshape Haiti to US designs.

### US-dominated

Even if the Haitian junta retires from power next month as agreed, a 6000-strong US-dominated force wearing United Nations headgear will remain to "install and maintain a secure and stable climate".

Among its tasks will be modernising the armed forces and creating a separate police force, and it is scheduled to stay until 1996.

If far-reaching social and political engineering is envisaged then this has major implications for the sovereignty of all nations in the region.

From this angle, intervention in Haiti looks like marking a new watershed in the 150-year battle between US imperialism and the rest of the Americas.

Will Cuba be next?

# Left throws out Swedish Tories

By Paul Clarke

THE RIGHT-wing coalition government in Sweden, led by Carl Bildt's conservative "Moderate" party, has been beaten in the September 19 general election by the Social Democrats.

The Social Democrats, who ruled Sweden for decades before the right wing came to power in 1991, won 45.6 per cent of the

vote, alone gaining more votes than the four right-wing parties of the government coalition, who garnered 41.1 per cent of the vote between them.

An overall majority for the left was secured by the 6.1 per cent vote for the Left party, most of whose members come from the former Communist Party, while the green Environment Party won five per cent of the vote.

The extreme right New Democracy party failed to get the 4

per cent needed to get parliamentary representation.

The question now posed is what coalition of parties will form the government.

### Welfare state

While the right-wing coalition made huge attacks on Sweden's welfare state, the Social Democrats have made no clear commitment to reverse these cuts.

Social Democrat leader Ingvar Carlsson wanted to form

a coalition with the Liberals, one of the participants in the previous government coalition; but this objective has been undermined in the decline of the Liberals vote.

Carlsson has ruled out as "unrealistic" attempts to form a coalition with the Left Party or the Environment Party, since the Social Democrats are likely to come into sharp conflict with these forces over social security cuts and other austerity measures.

# Where is Labour going?

By Helen Shaw and Pete Firmin

Tony Blair's election as Labour leader on July 16 was heralded as a great exercise in party democracy; but it presented little real choice to left wing party members and trade union affiliates.

In the short time since then, Blair has already revealed himself as willing to go to any length to gain the support of the establishment in his quest to become Prime Minister.

Blair's victory has been widely heralded as the culmination of a long struggle in the party between the "modernisers" and the "traditionalists".

The project of the modernisers has been to make the Labour Party electable at virtually any cost.

Initially, Blair's election seemed to have given a significant boost to that project. On August 5 the party had a 31 point lead over the Conservatives.

Now, however, the polls are virtually identical to the state of play before Smith died - prompting hasty press coverage of the "new attack on Tory taxes" over the few days following the latest polls.

The modernisers' whole strategy has been based not on providing any genuine difference between Labour and Tory, but on convincing the electorate of Labour's ability to do the same thing better. This inevitably means that successive Labour leaderships have worked to repudiate the last vestiges of socialist policy and Blair has shown no sign of changing this approach.

## Market values

In his first two days as party leader he bluntly repudiated any form of socialist values and attacked the trade unions. His inaugural speech was notable for his declaration that the party must move away from 'Marxist socialism based on social ownership' and fully embrace the market.

The idea that the Labour Party leadership has at any time this century had anything to do with 'Marxist socialism based on social ownership' is laughable.

But the use of the term 'social ownership' as opposed to 'old-fashioned nationalisation' is significant. It is clear Blair wants to repudiate anything but the market.

He said 'common sense' would be the driving force behind Labour's approach to social policy rather than ideology. He has lauded the family as 'the essential, stable social unit'. Whilst he attacked the Tories for stigmatising single parents he said that adults should not choose to have children outside of stable relationships, claiming that women who did so were 'wrong'.

His pro-market view also came out on taxation. He claimed that 'only million-

aires will pay more tax under a Labour government'. He has also been equally keen to woo the middle classes by his attitude to the trade unions warning them that they should not expect privileged access to the next Labour government.

Blair told BBC radio on July 22 that unions would have no more influence over the next Labour government than employers and his urging of the RMT to move to arbitration to settle the signal workers dispute makes it clear that he wasn't exaggerating.

The tactics of the modernisers have to be judged against the background of widespread disenchantment amongst business and the middle classes with the Conservative Party and a significant divide in the ruling class, itself reflected in divisions inside the Conservative Party.

On the one hand there are those who, as a generalisation, defend and pursue the interests of international finance capital - continued high military spending, a qualitative break with the post 1945 settlement, anti-European (and invariably pro-US) etc. On the other, is Thatcher's ruling class adversaries, traditionally associated with manufacturing capital and relatively pro-European.

## Accommodation

It is to the latter that Blair (and with him the John Monks leadership of the TUC) has accommodated ideologically. They share the common belief that what is required today is a more thorough integration within the project of European unity and the establishment of what we could describe as a post-cold war settlement to replace the post 1945 consensus - this time based far more explicitly on capital's interests.

While the Conservatives remain divided - and the Major leadership has



largely failed to paper over the increasing number of cracks - Blair's aim is to exploit the situation in order to establish Labour as the new, natural governmental representative of pro-European capital for the next century.

There have been a number of indicators that this project is progressing, at least in so far as small sections of the ruling class are taking tentative steps away from the Tories and making overtures to Blair.

Despite repeated assurances and figures indicating recovery in the economy and pointing towards steady, non-inflationary growth, the conventional assumption that this will translate into support for the government has not proved to be correct.

The last recession hit the middle classes hard. House prices significantly dropped after a boom in the late 1980s and the shake-out in the labour market not only affected the working class but hit the service sector and white-collar employees.

## Career uncertainty

The insecurity in the labour market and the increasing flexibility in working practices has meant even middle class professionals now face constant career uncertainty and even they are forced to accept terms and conditions previously deemed unacceptable.

Economists at Morgan Grenfell have commented in the *Financial Times*:

"In people's perceptions the recovery is not due to the government's good management but to an accident - our departure from the Exchange Rate Mechanism. And a government that got re-elected on the basis that it was the party of low taxation then hit voters with one of the largest tax increases in history".

Companies ranging from the Japanese electronic games manufacturer Sega to the security group Securicor are queuing for exhibition stalls at Labour's Conference in October.

## Corporate images

The Labour Party's corporate relations manager commented, "It really feels as if we are pushing at an open door. Corporate UK is clearly disillusioned with the Tories". The pro-Labour think tank, the Institute of Public Policy Research now includes amongst its clients Rupert Murdoch's News International, and multi-nationals Glaxo and Shell.

Their chief economist Mr Dan Corry said, "Our clients want to know what a Labour party is going to do because it is quite obvious to some of them that a Labour government is what they are going to end up with".

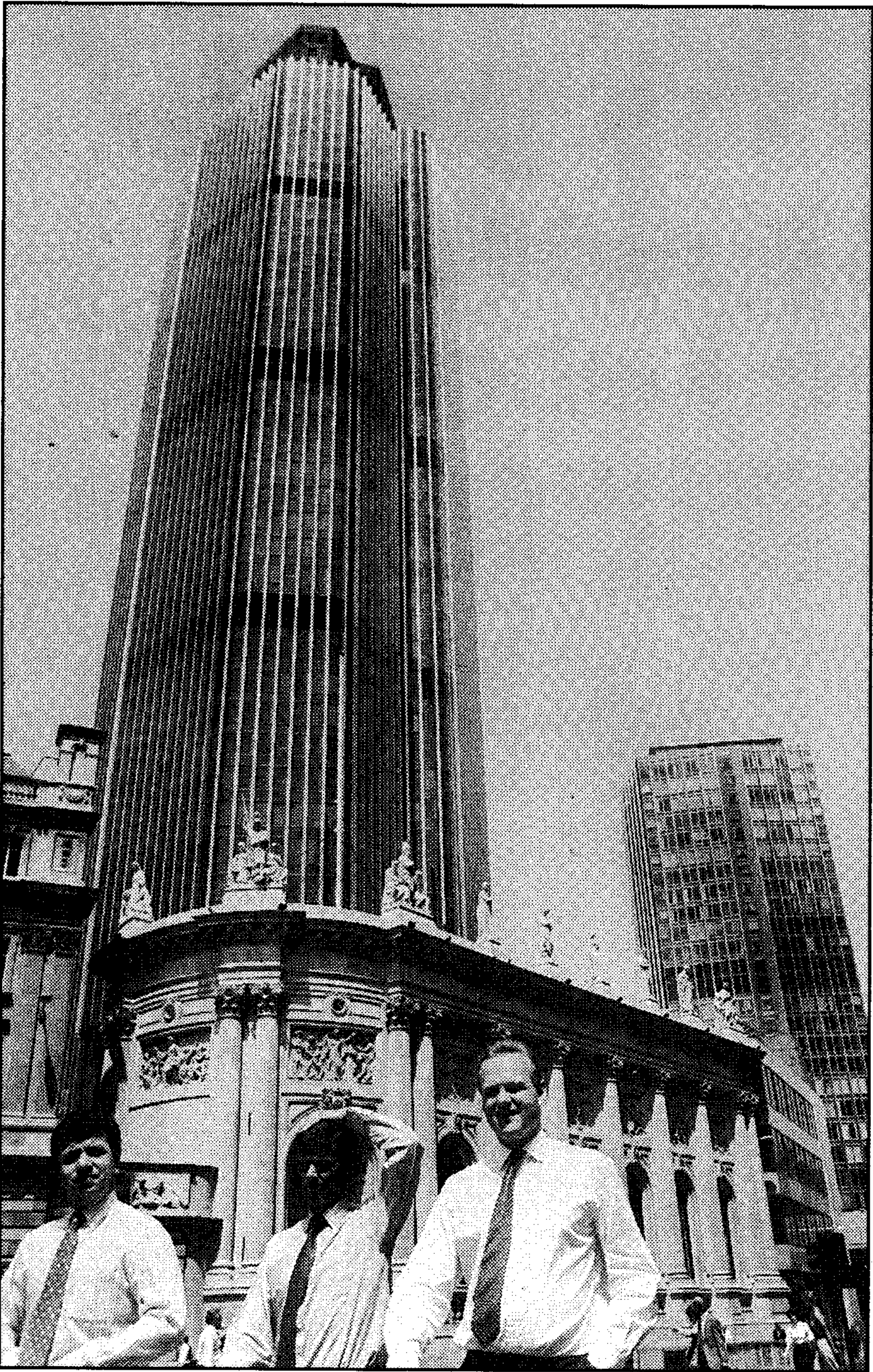
Marks and Spencer invited Blair to talk about whether the company could give financial backing to the Labour Party. At the same time there were reports that David Sainsbury, the millionaire supermarket chief, financially backed Blair's campaign for the Labour leadership.

Whilst Labour's public relations machine is keen to emphasise that Blair could not be expected to tailor policies in exchange for financial backing this development indicates the distance the party has travelled to the right with the "modernising" project.

The Blair-led Labour Party has also had a significant impact on the standing of the third major party in Britain, the Liberal Democrats.

Their popularity in the recent past has rested on being anti-Tory but not linked to the trade unions and the left as Labour has been. In many constituencies in





**City bankers and big business are the target audience for Blair's sound-bites**

the south of Britain they have been the main opposition to the Tories but Blair's victory has pushed them way down in the polls.

There has been a project inside the Labour Party in favour of coalition with the Liberal Democrats to get rid of the Tories but with Blair's victory that no longer seems necessary on a formal basis. As Roger Liddle, a member of their policy committee said, "there are in reality no philosophical differences of substance between Blair and the vast majority of Liberal Democrats".

The pressure from the right of the Labour Party for coalition is off because the party has moved so far to the right that they will win Liberal Democrat voters anyway.

**Breaking links**

The project of the modernisers has been to lessen, and for some of them

break the organisational link the party has with the trade unions, and to build a mass party which relates directly to its members rather than an activist party which relates to its members through local democratic structures. But their project is not yet won.

Despite Blair becoming leader, 43 per cent of those voting in the leadership election voted against him, with some of the major unions backing one of the other two candidates who campaigned on a more left social democratic basis around defence of the welfare state and for full employment.

There is a significant split amongst the "new realist" union leaders supported by left and centre left MPs who will not accept much of the modernisers' project. These are many of the same bureaucrats who were the architects of the reforms in Labour Party structure gradually introduced during the 1980s to curb the power of the left.

What is at stake is the very nature of the British Labour Party. Will it retain its constitutional link to the trade unions and will it champion policies like full employment, defence of the welfare state and the collectivist ideology which in the public perception characterised the post 1945 Labour Party?

Or will it totally 'modernise' breaking its link with the unions, accepting much of the damage done to public services during the Thatcher years and become the acceptable party of the middle ground?

Alliances are beginning to develop around the defence of the welfare state which include hitherto "modernising" trade union leaders such as John Edmonds of the GMB. He posed the question at a conference of the Tribune newspaper during the election campaign that it was time for the Labour Party to make its mind up - which side was it on that of the employers or that of the workers? What were its policy commitments on full employment. He sited that issue as the most important in order for there to be strong trade unions.

Whilst far from the hard left of the party it is a significant break from the new realist project of keeping their heads down and not rocking the boat that these sorts of union leaders have made such comments, spoken at conferences of the 'left' and are prepared to back initiatives such as the Campaign to Defend the Welfare State.

It is also significant that the motions submitted to Labour Party conference show substantial support from unions and CLPs for renationalisation of the gas, water and electricity industries, scrapping anti-trade union laws, against "family values", for full employment, universal benefits and in defence of the National Health Service.

**Rightward motions**

It is a measure of how far to the right the Labour leadership has moved that motions committing the party to universal benefits and full employment are now seen to be of the left. Throughout the 1980s those issues were seen as immovable.

There are also many motions on the economy calling for the renationalisation of the railways, basic industries such as steel making, coal mining and shipbuilding and the Post Office which the government wants to privatise.

The battle lines inside the Labour Party are being drawn up, and there is the possibility of a real fight back from some of the previously dormant union leaders.

It remains to be seen whether the British bourgeoisie will really choose Labour as the next party of government, but in the run up to that possibility at the next General Election in 1997, there will be a significant fight for the heart of the Labour Party.



**A genuine commitment to a minimum wage would be of immense benefit to people like homeworkers, but Blair is unprepared to give any substance to Labour's policy for a minimum wage, fearing that it would deter potential capitalist support for the "new look" Labour Party**

**What's HAPPENING**

**at Labour Party Conference**

**Tuesday 4th October**

**Campaign Group of MPs Rally**

**7pm  
Cliffs Hotel,  
North Prom**

**Speakers include: Jeremy Corbyn MP, Alan Simpson MP, Dawn Primarolo MP, Ken Livingstone MP, Diane Abbott MP, Dennis Skinner MP, and Alice Mahon MP**

**Thursday 6th  
October**

**Socialist Campaign Group Network Fringe meeting**

**7pm  
Central Library  
Speakers: ALAN SIMPSON MP, DAWN PRIMAROLO MP, and a rail worker**

**Network Bulletin**

**The Socialist Campaign Group Network will be producing a daily delegates bulletin at this year's conference. Please come and help with the writing producing and distribution of it. They will be at:**

**34 Leopold Ave,  
Blackpool**

**Fight for the right to strike**

**Conference  
26th November  
1994  
Birmingham Trades  
Union Social Club**

**For further  
details contact:  
PO Box 6498,  
London N1 1QW**

**LABOUR CONFERENCE**

# “In many ways the general public are much more radical than the Labour Party”

Alan Simpson was one of the 1992 intake of Labour MPs and is secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group. Rod Marshall asked for his views on the Labour party and socialism today.

**SO: What's your perception of what people feel about Tony Blair?**

AS: I remember hearing someone on my street saying that all this stuff about Labour's values sounds really good, but it's like being taken into an orchard and being shown these beautiful apples on the trees and you ask "I like the apples, where's the ladder?"

But, I think there is a real danger of focusing too much on the personality of the Labour leader. The real challenges is what are we going to do?

**SO: What can be done to stop the Labour Party from dying on the ground?**

AS: The base of the party has been demoralised as a result of several things. First, by being in opposition for a long time and second by having been told for much of that time that all we needed to do was to look more respectable and be less political.

The problem has been reinforced by the erosion of party democracy and the hunting out of decent socialists within the party.

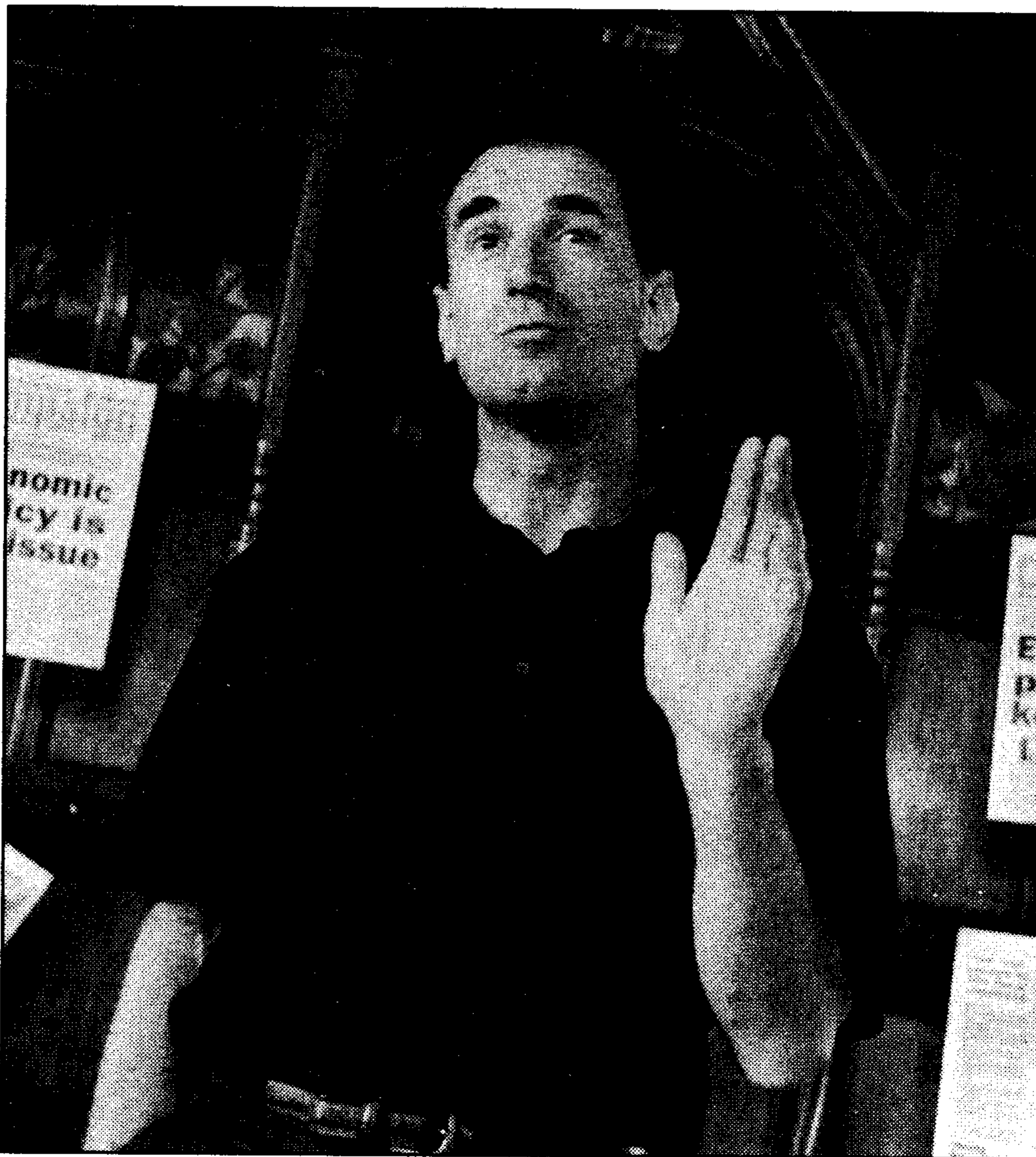
The good news is that increasing sections of the general public haven't waited for permission from the Labour Party to start clamouring for specific areas of policy change and specific issues to be pushed back into the national political agenda.

In many ways the general public are much more radical than the Labour Party and there is a real opportunity for the party to revitalise itself simply by getting involved in campaigns at local level.

**SO: What would somebody gain by joining the Labour Party if they're already campaigning successfully on the issues that affect them?**

AS: In the past we've often done ourselves no favours by going round saying "vote for us and we'll do this". I think we have to be taking out a different message. If you want changes in the way the country's run then address the systems of government that ultimately make the decisions.

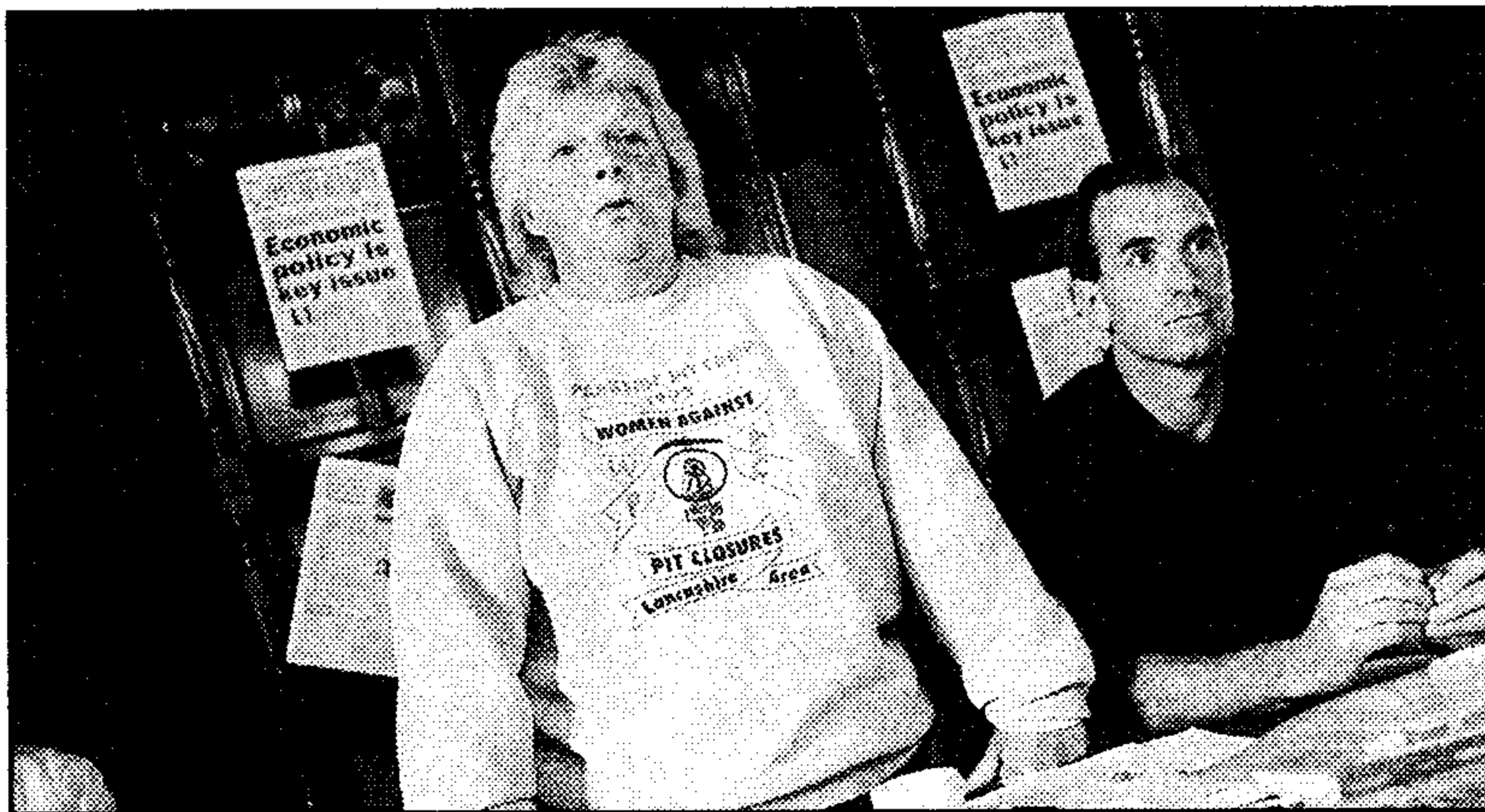
There are many lessons to be learnt from the '80s about the decline in campaigning activity which followed from



people removing themselves from the Labour Party saying "its all just too much of a muddle". I think the muddle has been because radical and critical voices have stood outside. We need to bring people in from the campaigns.

**SO: Are you in favour of 'mass entry' into the Labour Party, of lots of different groups and ideas and of a federal Labour Party of all different kind of organised groupings?**

AS: No. I think the sectarianism of



the left is a pain in the bum. What I'm talking about are people are involved in real campaigns around local, national or global issues.

The priority is how you build a broad left. I don't care how many different newspapers are on sale. What worries me is that we often lose sight of the main issues.

**SO: What do you think you've achieved since becoming secretary of the Campaign Group?**

AS: Most important has been a strengthening of the links between the Campaign Group in parliament and the network of socialist campaign groups around the country because it's brought people together who were wanting to talk about active campaigning and policy issues in a comradesly and supportive fashion.

The linkage between the left in parliament and radical voices outside is extremely healthy.

On the other hand, those who have talked about a sort of Red-Green alli-

ance outside the Labour Party and encourage people to leave the Party were more responsible for the defeat of Dennis Skinner and Tony Benn on the National Executive Committee than anyone else.

**SO: How far does Clintonisation in the party have to go before the party ceases to be a Labour Party? And if it ceased to be a Labour Party would you cease to be a member of it or one of its representatives in parliament?**

AS: We need to look at the position that Clinton himself is in as a result of Clintonisation. He is in deep trouble. It wouldn't surprise me if the Democratic Party didn't turn around and say to him 'you're unelectable' for a second term. Because you don't stand for anything.

I'm certain that Labour will get elected at the next general election. The real questions are what happens six to nine months in when the really deep rooted problems in the economy start to become absolutely clear and the press start to wade in wanting Labour to do even more of the dirty work that the Tories wouldn't do. Labour would be faced with very stark choices.

**SO: There has been a lot of discussion in the leadership election about the enormous constraints placed on MPs from the Left who get into the shadow cabinet.**

AS: The left have got to decide whether they want to be only in opposition.

I think we have to have an agenda which sees more and more members of the left in parliament getting into positions where they can shape policies and where they hold a corner in the ring whilst other people are climbing into it.

**SO: Is that the same reason why you think the NEC slate is important?**

AS: No, the NEC slate is quite different. I'm in favour of separating the NEC from the shadow cabinet.

You have this absurd position of the same people talking to each other about the same issues and just wearing different hats. So I think that the slate for the NEC has to address first of all the primacy of going onto that body to carry out party conference decisions. And second is to reclaim the NEC as a child of party itself...

**SO: Then the Campaign group slate for the NEC should include members of the party who aren't MPs and should be decided more by the actual supporters of the network rather than by the Campaign group MPs?**

AS: I'm quite happy to see an increase in parliamentary Labour Party or shadow cabinet representations on the NEC and determined by the shadow cabinet. But there is an equally compelling case to have membership of the shadow cabinet incompatible with membership of the NEC.

If you go one step further, it ought to follow that there should be a guaranteed number of places on the NEC for party members not necessarily members of the parliamentary Labour Party.

# Field day for zealots

## Cairo Conference traps women between two fundamentalisms

By K. Govindan

WITH ALL the fuss the Vatican created at the Cairo summit, you would have thought it was a conference on abortion and not the International Conference on Population and Development.

The Holy See, a mini-state populated entirely by men and boasting a birth rate of zero, stalled the conference for a week on paragraph 8.25 of the draft declaration which it read as condoning the right to abortion on demand.

In fact the text only recognised that with between 50 and 60 million abortions performed worldwide each year, an estimated 250,000 women are dying from back street operations and this is a primary concern for women's health campaigners.

### Failed alliance

Meanwhile, the so-called "Holy Alliance" between the Catholic Church and Muslim countries didn't materialise.

Many Muslim countries tolerate abortion when the woman's life is at risk. Even Iran is now vigorously pushing family planning programmes.

The women Prime Ministers of Turkey and Bangladesh who stayed away did so to avoid antagonising fundamentalist movements. Muslim delegations concentrated on removing references to what they understood to be "sexual and not reproductive rights".

By choosing to focus on abortion and not contraception, the Vatican accepted that most of its flock is disobeying it anyway.

All delegations accepted the premise of the conference, that

at current fertility rates there will be 12.5 billion people by 2050, but if the "programme of action" is implemented there would be 7.8 billion, the difference being the world's current population.

The implication of this is no longer the Malthusian nightmare that population growth would outstrip food production (that correlation has been empirically disproved) but of large-scale human migrations from the poor countries to the rich and intensified environmental degradation.

In reality, there is consensus between the developed countries and their neo-colonies that curbs on population growth are necessary to prevent social and political chaos.

Authoritarian regimes in poorer countries fear being overthrown if they cannot meet the expectations of their people. Western countries are concerned that demands on natural resources in the Third World will affect supply to their economies.

The social context within which targets are to be reached is possibly the best aspect of the conference declaration.

It rightly identifies the importance of "1. education, especially for girls; 2. infant, child and maternal mortality reduction and 3. universal access to family planning and reproductive health services."

### Feminist success

These aspirations reflect the success of the feminist movement in placing the woman and not her womb at the centre of any sensible discussion on population.

Unfortunately, these are only "goals" in the official rhetoric



and unsurprisingly there is no binding political and financial commitment in this area.

We should be cautious too about the use of terms like "empowerment of women" and "reproductive rights".

The US government among others admit that their involvement in coercive programmes like forced sterilisation in Latin America have exposed the oppressive and selective nature of any population control scheme.

To mask this, feminist language is appropriated so that the woman's right to choose seems

to be their prime consideration.

The fundamentalism that affects most women is the international monetary fundamentalism of neo-liberal economic policies which makes early marriage a survival strategy, reduces health care and removes food subsidies.

### Literacy

Where birth rates have gone down, even in poor countries, it is because of political and economic conditions: freely elected governments, land reform, literacy drives, minimum wage

laws, food security and so on.

Crucial to this is improving the status of women within the family and society and their economic advancement through rural credit schemes and co-operatives.

None of this is possible without challenging the unfair and unjust distribution of wealth between and within countries and the patriarchal nature of society. That is why the Cairo conference centred on a symptom of poverty and exploitation and not its root cause.

## Oil strike crushed by crackdown

By Bala Kumar

NIGERIAN oil workers called off their eight-week pro-democracy strike on September 6 as repressive measures taken by the military dictator General Sani Abacha and popular suffering wore them down.

The strike had been prompted by the June arrest of millionaire businessman Moshood Abiola, widely thought to be the winner of the 1993 presidential election, which was annulled by the military.

Abacha has been under foreign and local pressure to

rein-in protests which cut oil production, Nigeria's main economic activity, by one third. The strike paralysed life across much of the south west, although its effects were felt everywhere.

On August 17, Abacha dissolved the executives of the two oil workers' unions, Nupeng and Pangassan, and for good measure that of the Nigerian Labour Congress, appointing state administrators in their place.

The arrest and detention of leading strike activists like Nupeng general secretary Frank Kokori, and the difficulties faced by strikers' families, contributed to the drift back to work.

It was the poor who bore

the brunt of the strike as the authorities channelled oil abroad to satisfy foreign creditors, while rationing it within the country.

Prices of basic foodstuffs and necessities like beans, bread and kerosene shot up — as much as 70 per cent in the case of bread.

### Fare increases

Millions were unable to travel to work as bus fares rose by 150 per cent in Lagos and 300 per cent in Ibadan, to make up for the cost of petrol. This closed factories, banks and government departments.

Two problems weakened the strike and have had an adverse effect on the course of

the mass movement. The oil workers' actions were isolated from the rest of the labour movement and betrayed by the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) leadership.

A general strike in August was suspended by the NLC after two days, in return for negotiations with the military authorities. The rotten deal arrived at included the release of Abiola, in return for not involving himself in politics for the rest of his life.

This would have left unchallenged the military hold on power and removed from the scene the most popular political figure. Abiola refused, but the opportunist NLC leadership meekly abandoned any threat of strike action, and

with it the oil workers.

The second problem is the political leadership of the democracy movement.

The National Democratic Coalition (Nadeco) is composed of ex-generals, old guard civilian politicians and big business people.

They would like Abiola, a member of their class, released because his policies don't threaten their power and wealth — unlike a popular upsurge from below.

General Abacha followed up his clampdown on the workers' movement with new, draconian, military decrees. Hundreds have been detained over the last year and may now be imprisoned without trial.

# Invasion ideology

The New Ideology of Imperialism, by Frank Ferudi, Pluto, £8.95

Reviewed by Paul Clarke

AS THIS review is written, the United States is preparing another invasion - this time of Haiti. This follows US military action in the last decade against Nicaragua, Libya, Grenada, Panama and of course the huge Gulf War operation.

Once again, the sanction of the UN is being sought, and the facade of a "multilateral" operation is being cranked up, with small numbers of troops from other Caribbean states.

That the US has the right to invade other "terrorist" or "gangster" states is now hardly contested.

The idea that each nation possesses sovereignty, that countries have no right to interfere in the internal affairs of others, has been quietly dispensed with. Yet national sovereignty is the very basis of the UN charter.

## Two worlds

In fact the world has, in the official ideology of Western states, been divided into two: those states disposing of full sovereignty, and those without it.

As Frank Ferudi rightly points out, this is a function of a new and open rehabilitation of imperialism. In the academic and semi-official jour-

nals of political science and "foreign affairs", imperialism is being touted again as a progressive and civilising influence.

This is in marked contrast to the 1945-75 period, where open justification of imperialism was not respectable. This conformed to the period, roughly coinciding with the long boom and the Cold War, when third world nationalism was in the ascendency and imperialism on the defensive.

## Academic

Ferudi, despite being in his *nom de guerre* Frank Richards the guru of the RCP, is in his heart-of-hearts an academic. Thus the book is a detailed piece of research of the evolu-



Traveller and baby lobbying the Commons

## Signals of women's resistance

Inbar Tamari reviews the photo exhibition 'I won't give up or shut up'

"I am dangerous because I won't give up or shut up Or put up with your version of reality"

Thus says the "dangerous woman" in Joan Cavanagh's poem dedicated to the Greenham women. This provides a fitting title to an impressive exhibition by photojournalist Caroline Austin under the title 'I won't give up or shut up', part of the Signals Festival of women photographers.

The women photographed by Caroline Austin are *not* going to shut up. The exhibition provides a graphic history of women's resistance and grass roots politics in the last five years.

These warm and supportive pictures cast a fresh light on events in which many *Socialist Outlook* readers will have taken part. The themes include women and violence, travellers' rights, anti-war campaigning, support for a nuclear-free Pacific and the current struggle against the Criminal Justice Act.

Though Caroline Austin is particularly interested in Ecofeminism, the photos and struggles they represent are situated within a clear anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist framework. The viewer is brought face to face with a realisation that, though the degree and type of oppression suffered by the poor and oppressed of different nationalities are very different, it is caused by the same enemy.

The Signals festival comprises over 30 exhibitions and events in venues from community centres to international galleries all over Britain during September and October. It concludes with an international conference hosted by the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television in Bradford on October 28-30.

■ *I won't give up or shut up* is at the London Women's Centre, 4 Wild Court, London WC2 until 12 November. Signals can be contacted on 071-267 7531.

tion of Western thinking on imperialism, but is surprisingly weak on analysis of the dynamic of the imperialist system.

Although Ferudi correctly highlights the collapse of the Soviet Union as being an essential moment in freeing the hands of the Western powers to "do what they like" against the poor and dominated countries, that's about it in terms of analysis if the imperialist system.

Imperialism has entered a new phase, marked by deepening inter-imperialist rivalry and a redoubled militarisation.

It's in that context that the re-arming of Japan and the Germany have to be consid-

ered. Rather than endless quotes from US think-tanks, some analysis of what the new imperialism represents would have been useful.

Equally, the failure of third world nationalism is noted, but hardly analysed. This is a massive topic in itself.

Pan-Africanism and Pan-Arabism are now almost defunct. National development of the poorer countries within a capitalist framework was possible during the boom, but today has very limited potential.

Socialist strategy has to analyse and draw all the lesson from the new phase of imperialism, and the failure of all forms of third world nationalism, including the most radical.

It has to radically break from "third worldism" and the grotesque tail-endism of third world regimes exhibited by much of the Western left.

On much of this of course Ferudi has completely correct positions. But the usefulness of so much re-

search into official thinking in Western universities, military academies and foreign ministries has to be questioned.

It's an old problem for the RCP, with its one-sided concern with official, and especially liberal, *ideology*.

Socialist readers of this book will find a lot of quotes to back up what they already know about how imperialist thinking is evolving.

But what they need is a detailed analysis of contemporary imperialism - the laws of motion of the modern world system - not just examples of the latest outpourings from Western think-tanks and right-wing academics.

# Sleeping with the enemy?

*Straight Sex - The Politics of Pleasure*, by Lynne Segal (Virago £8.99)

Reviewed by Ellen Moore

'PENETRATION enacts the subjugation of women by men' claims Andrea Dworkin. Lynne Segal's book takes issue with this idea, which, in her view, has come to dominate much of feminist thinking on sexuality since the late 1970s.

Central to 'Straight Sex' are the questions of what is at stake in women's sexual desire for men and whether women can express their pleasure in heterosexual sex without increasing men's power.

She argues that the feminist project has been derailed by the focus on heterosexual sex as linked and fundamental to the domination of women by men

in all spheres of life.

The book traces both feminist theory and practice, focusing on personal experience and history as well as covering the contribution of sexological and psychoanalytic theory and of 'queer' politics to the debates.

## Repercussions

Segal acknowledges the debt to lesbian feminists in the development of a feminist theory of sexuality, taking up and describing many of the practical repercussions in the feminist movement resulting from some of the debates and battles over sexuality.

She describes the marginalisation of lesbians in the women's liberation movement, the subsequent development of 'political lesbianism' and how its general thesis came to dominate much feminist thinking on sexuality.

How the views articulated by Adrienne Rich, amongst others, in her essay 'Compulsory Heterosexuality' that

heterosexuality was 'forcibly and subliminally imposed on women' and all women were really part of the 'lesbian continuum' became centre stage in the women's movement.

In this process straight women were silent and guilty about their sexual practice and desire as were many lesbians who felt unable to talk about the reality of their sexual lives.

Lesbianism was held up as an ideal and heterosexuality as an institution to enforce male dominance. The complexity of sexual desire, the contradictions and the complex issues of power and consent were swept under the carpet.

As American lesbian feminist Joan Nestle commented later, 'We lesbians made a mistake in the early seventies: we allowed our lives to be trivialised and reinterpreted by feminists who did not share our culture.'

The slogan 'Lesbianism is the practice and feminism is the theory' was a good rallying cry but it cheated our history.'

Segal asserts that women enjoying 'sex with men, confident in the knowledge that this, just *this*, is what we want, and how we want it...confound the political and cultural meanings given to heterosexuality,' which define 'sex' as something 'done' by active men to passive women, not something women do.

## Equality

She rightly asserts that all of us struggling for women's equality must attack the idea of heterosexuality as a confirmation of 'manhood'.

We must struggle against the idea that there is a necessary correlation between maleness, activity and desire as much as we struggle against the similar notion which associates women with passivity and sexual responsiveness.

As Joan Nestle said amidst great controversy, 'Don't scream penis at me, but help to change the world so no woman feels shame or fear because she likes to fuck'.



# “I’d say I was a socialist, if the Labour Party hadn’t devalued the term”

**KEN LOACH has established himself as the world’s leading socialist film maker working in the English language. Since 1991 he has twice won major prizes at the Cannes film festival, for *Hidden Agenda* and *Raining Stones*.**

**His new film *Ladybird*, *Ladybird* is released this month. He is currently editing his next film, *Land and Freedom* about the Spanish Civil War. Phil Hearse spoke to him.**

**In the mid-1980s you had a lean time of it, unable to get commissions either for television or cinema. This was obviously linked to the political reaction of the Thatcher years. But in ideological terms this has hardly changed. How, then, do you explain the widespread critical acclaim you are now getting?**

■ At the start of the 1980s, I don’t think I came up with the right ideas for fictional films. It was a time of huge attacks on the left, when being a socialist film maker was not very fashionable.

I thought the best way to respond to that period, of mass unemployment and huge attacks by the right, was to make documentary. Feature films, once you’ve worked on the script, got the money together and actually made the film can take three or four years.

But I thought it was necessary to make an intervention at the time by making documentaries – not wait for several years. But the documentaries I made, like *Which side are you on?* about the miners’ strike or *Questions of Leadership* about the unions, was effectively censored.

When you’re involved in lots of things which are banned, then the word goes out that you’re not safe. It seemed for a year or two that everything I touched got elbowed.

The turning point really was a telephone call from David Putnam asking whether I would be prepared to do a film about the Stalker Affair. That turned into *Hidden Agenda*.

That then won the prize at Cannes; and international recognition then gives people confidence at home. But I’m not under any illusions. Things could easily swing back, and I could find it difficult to get work again.

**What are the political benchmarks which determine your choice of topic. How do you describe yourself politically?**

■ I’d say I was a socialist, if the Labour Party hadn’t devalued the term. For me as a film maker, if I define political allegiances much more specifically, then it can be used as a weapon against me. But I guess it’s pretty clear where my sympathies lie.

The topics for the films generally arise from a conversation with a writer. It’s a matter of finding a story which is valid in itself, but then has a significance and reverberation beyond its own limits.

The subjects which have drawn me are those which relate personal and emotional life to a wider background – a class background and an economic background. I’ve tried to show how people’s personal lives don’t exist in a vacuum from these things.

To put it crudely, it’s matter of hu-

man interest put in a social framework.

**You use a lot of non-professional performers in your films. Why? Hasn’t this brought you into conflict with the actors’ union Equity?**

■ Not at all. We’re one of the few companies left which are still working on Equity contracts. If you’re making a serious film, not just a commercial enterprise, the people you have in the film are there because of who they are and the performance they can give, and that relates closely to their own experience. They reveal their own personalities in the performance.

Thus the people you choose may not be experienced film actors. Social class is important, so that people are not pretending to be what they’re not.

Experience is important, so that performers can relate to the story and bring their own three-dimensional personality into the story. So the people you choose may not be professional actors; but of course they have to be able to act, to make a fictional story credible.

**How do you respond to the accusation that your films are just agit-prop and political polemic?**

■ The accusation that actors are just “observed functions”, to go through a certain plot development without any real character depth, is much more true of the average Hollywood film.

I think there was a danger of descending to polemic in some of the films, where perhaps I should have made a documentary instead.

That’s why I made *Questions of Leadership* about the unions as documentary – so that people could put a political analysis very directly, without the mediation of fiction.

There is an idea among film critics

that people in movies shouldn’t be political, that there’s no place for political argument in film. But why shouldn’t fictional characters argue politics?

It’s interesting and absorbing, and people don’t have to lose their personality to make a political argument.

The scene we’re cutting at the moment from *Land and Freedom* is a passionate political argument in a very dramatic situation during the Spanish civil war. The Republican militia have just taken a village and the people of that village are discussing whether to collectivise the land.

It’s very appropriate that people involved in a civil war because of politics should be able to actually discuss politics in the film! On the other hand it’s going to be a matter of fine judgement how long we can let this scene run, because if it goes on for 20 minutes the audience will have left the cinema. We’ll have to make sure that polemic doesn’t take over the film, but in a sense the politics *is* the film.

**You’ve been known for taking a very outspoken position on Ireland. For example at the time of the Warrington bombings, when two children were killed by IRA bombs, you went on television to denounce the hypocrisy of the media coverage. How do feel about the IRA ceasefire?**

■ I haven’t studied and discussed it enough to make a firm judgement. What’s interesting is the continued hypocrisy of the media coverage.

On the day after the ceasefire, when a Catholic was shot dead by Loyalist terrorists in Belfast, the press headlines were all about the controversy surrounding the transfer of four Republican prisoners to prisons in Northern Ireland from Britain, not about the shooting.

Now by any objective criterion, what was the real story that day? But of course on Ireland, as everything else, Tony Blair has nothing to offer.

FEATURE

# Bosnia set for new bloodbath

By Alan Thornett

A NEW escalation of the war in Bosnia, including Serbian ethnic cleansing pogroms and the likely break-up of the 'federation' between Muslim and Croat areas of Bosnia point to a disastrous winter for the region.

Large areas of north eastern Bosnia have been "ethnically cleansed" in recent weeks by Bosnian Serbs, with thousands of Muslim families driven from their homes. The Serbs claim that these areas are now completely 'Muslim free'.

The Serbs have also been attacking Bihac and Gorazda in an attempt to destroy both Bosnian enclaves.

Nor will the rift between Milosevic and Karadzic and the so-called 'blockade' of the border between Serbia and Bosnian Serb territory stop the escalation of the war.

The rift between Serbian leader Milosevic and Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic is real: Milosevic is desperate to get the

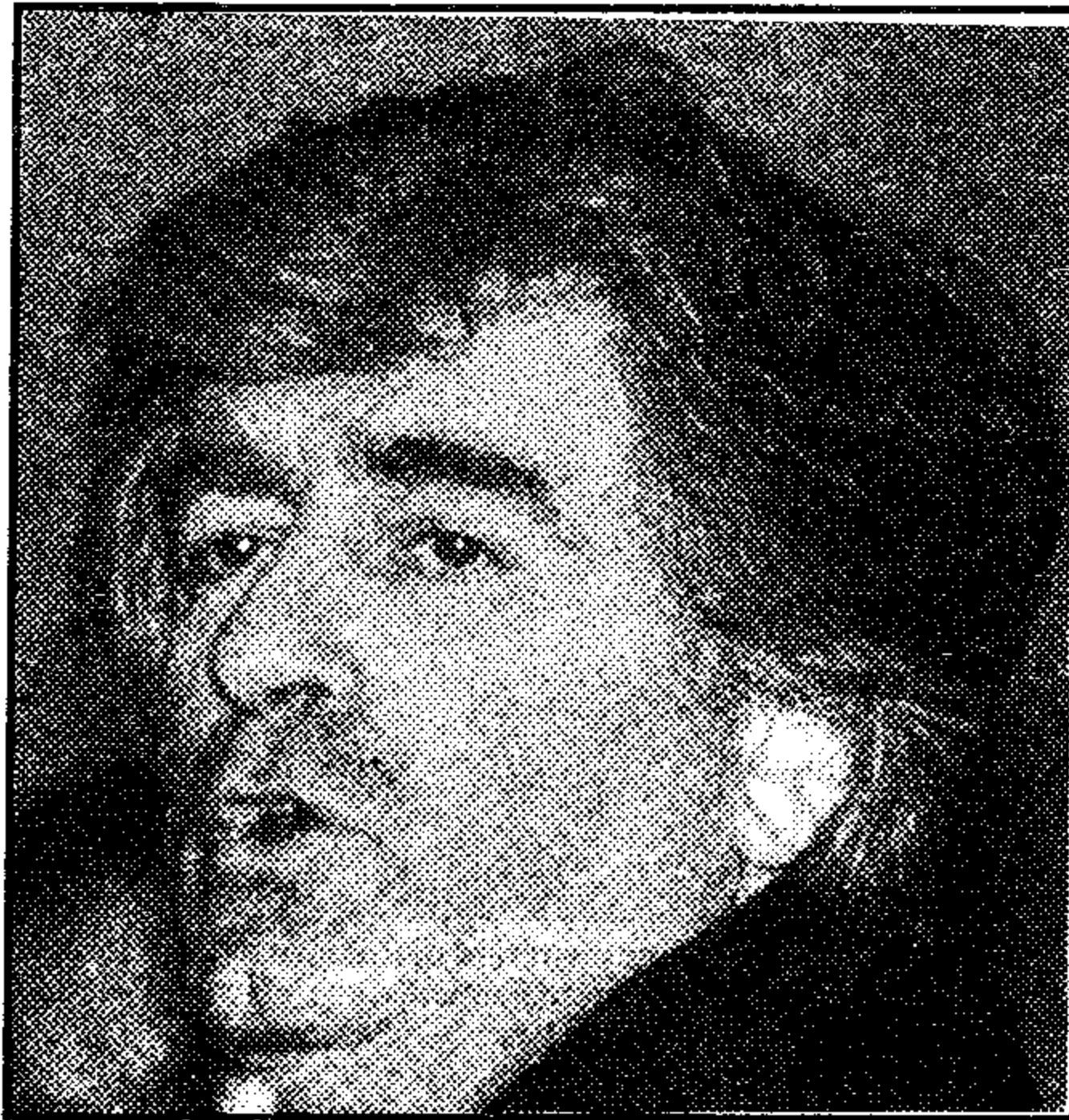
sanctions, which have had a disastrous effect of the Serbian economy, removed.

Nonetheless he is not going to abandon his 'Greater Serbia' plan. Before the rift, Bosnian Serb fuel and munition dumps were topped up by Serbia. Supplies are secretly crossing the border by land and by helicopter.

Serbia has agreed to a 135-person UN mission, with no powers of search, to patrol the 375 mile border and attempt to monitor the situation. But this will not stop the secret movement of supplies.

Milosevic may be prepared to settle for the 60 per cent of Bosnian territory offered to the Bosnian Serbs in the US-sponsored settlement; but he will not ultimately abandon the Bosnian Serbs, since he runs the risk of being outflanked by Karadzic, who increasingly presents himself as the real defender of Serbian interests.

The Bosnian Serb position



Karadzic: new ethnic cleansing

may well be strengthened by the breakdown of the Bosnian-Croat Federation. If this happens it could well lead to a resumption of the war between Bosnia and Croatia.

The 'Federation' has only existed in the form of an uneasy ceasefire between the Croat HVO and the Bosnian Army. In fact the Bosnian Croat min-state continues to exist despite the claimed existence of the federation. Now the Bosnian Serbs and hard line Croatian nationalists are determined to destabi-

lise the fragile situation.

This would have serious implications for basic supplies into Bosnia. Even in its emaciated form, the Federation has provided a land link from Bosnia to Split and the outside world. Without it Bosnia becomes land-locked and vulnerable to short term starvation.

Tuzla airport remains shut after the fanfare of its opening at the beginning of the year.

There is little real chance that the Clinton administration will lift the Arms embargo against Bosnia.

The US has given a deadline of October 15 for the Bosnian Serbs to accept the proposed settlement, and stated that the arms embargo will be lifted if they do not agree.

But the US is under extreme pressure from the European powers, and could run the risk of defeat in the UN Security Council.

The implications of this are obvious. Although the Bosnian army is now better equipped and has been getting limited light

weaponry, the military advantage remains with the Serbs.

Multi-ethnic Bosnia is also politically threatened by the upcoming elections.

The importance of Tuzla is that it is the best remaining example of a multi-ethnic community which has survived the ravages of the conflict. Tuzla is governed by a multi-ethnic coalition.

The elections, which will take place at the end of the year, directly threaten this situation.

There is a serious danger that the secular and multi-ethnic parties could lose out to the Islamic organisations. Such a result would be a serious blow to the defence of a multi-ethnic Tuzla and of Bosnia as a whole.

The core of the current projects of International Workers Aid is a recognition of this and a campaign, based on a multi-ethnic convoy, which will give direct political and material support to the multi-ethnic forces.

The convoy will coincide with and participate in a conference in Tuzla defending the continuation of a multi-ethnic society.

WORLD OUTLOOK

## IWA convoys defend multi-ethnic Bosnia

THE SIXTH meeting of International Workers Aid, held in Stockholm last weekend and attended by 40 delegates representing campaigns in 11 countries, reviewed the progress of the campaign so far and decided ambitious new plans.

Reports confirmed that the programme of providing bread to the Tuzla area remains the basic solidarity initiative of IWA.

IWA has won a prestigious silver diploma from the Tuzla municipality for the work of the bread programme in supporting the miners.

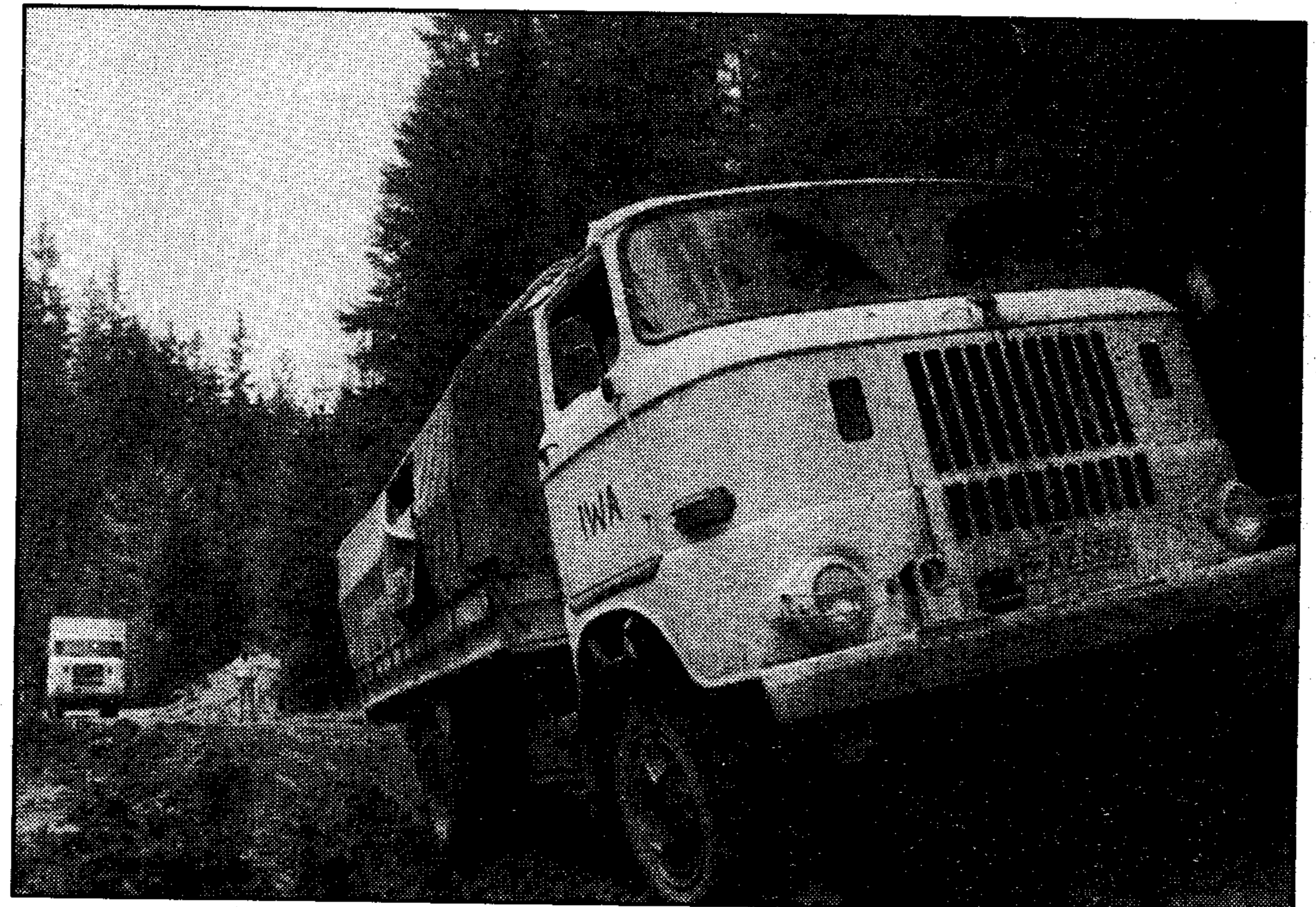
Reports from the IWA office in Tuzla described the conditions faced by the miners and the rest of the population. Although there is more food in the shops no one has money to buy it.

A Tuzla miner's pay is just £1 a month; thus international aid is absolutely vital.

IWA activists reported standing for two hours outside a food shop, without a single person going in.

IWA has now sent 14 convoys to Tuzla and 7,000 miners and their families continue to receive IWA aid through the Kreka miners union.

Flour, sugar and yeast is distributed through 12 distri-



bution centres and miners and their families collect it directly from there.

Much of the discussion at the conference centred of the additional "Multi-Culture" convoy which is being organised in advance of the elections, due at the end of the year.

This is aimed at giving direct support to the continuation of a multi-ethnic Bosnia, against the political threat posed by Islamic fundamentalist organisations.

It will link directly with a

conference in Tuzla organised by the Verona Forum, together local multi-ethnic organisations, which is being held in defence of a multi-ethnic Bosnia.

### Women's convoy

An important component of this initiative will be a women's convoy.

This unique initiative will take aid from women to women and womens organisations. Lorries from several countries are already organised for this.

There will also be a student contingent which will take aid directly to students in the university of Tuzla.

The budget for running the IWA convoys from now until January is £10,000 - plus the aid itself. Funding for this is urgently needed.

Send a donation or move a resolution at your union branch or collect a contribution from your friends.

All donations should be sent to: IWA 12-14 Thornton St, London SW9 0BL (071 978 8622).

# What's HAPPENING

## SEPTEMBER

**EAST LONDON** Signal workers Support Group meets every **MONDAY**, 7.30pm, BRSA Club, Angel Lane, Stratford.

### Saturday 24

'Sing Campsfield Down' demo, Campsfield Immigration Prison, Kidlington, nr Oxford. 12 noon. With Cardiff Red Choir.

### Sat 24/Sun 25

**COVENTRY** Conference: towards a working class politics 10am-4pm Barras Green Social Club Coventry Street CV2 cost £4/£1 details 051 260 9273

### Sun 25

LABOUR Campaign for Les-

bian and Gay Rights NC

### Friday 30

'Radical Chains' discussion. Trotsky and the Transitional Epoch. Conway Hall, London WC2. 7pm. £1.50/75p

## OCTOBER

### Sunday 16

WORLD day of action against McDonald's and National Free Speech day details 071 837 7557

### Sat 22

**BOB SMITH** Memorial Fund book launch and dinner 7.30 South Camden Community School entrance by advance ticket purchase only. Send £12 (£7 students/UB40) to 'Bob Smith

Memorial Fund', PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU by 15 October.

## NOVEMBER

### Sunday 13

**OXFORD** Conference against racist immigration controls. To be hosted by Close Down Campsfield Campaign. (Details to be announced)

### Saturday 19

**BIRMINGHAM** Community Conference in defence of public sector jobs and services. 10.30-4.30 The Union Club, 723 Pershore Rd, Selly Park. Details 021-451-2555

### Weds 30

**MARCH** to London, to mark one year of Campsfield immigration prison, starts in Oxford.

## Small Ads

20p per word (minimum ten words) semi display £3.00 per column centimetre. Special offer three issues for the price of two. Larger ads by negotiation. All copy should reach here by first post Friday and must

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'FASCISM AND MARXISM BETWEEN THE WARS' resource pack used at last month's Socialist Outlook Summer School. includes fascist programmes and articles by Gramsci, Mussolini and Trotsky. Send £1 cheque/PO payable to 'Bob Smith Memorial Fund' to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

**FOLK** music cassette by songwriter Pauline Bradley. Send £5 cheque payable to 'Bob Smith Memorial Fund' to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

**HEAR** Ernest Mandel speak! tape available - Mandel on fascism - send £6.00 cheque/PO payable to 'Bob Smith Memorial Fund' to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Coming soon - 'Malcolm X speaks', 'Mandel on the Popular Front'.

**HOUSESHARE** large room in spacious three-bedroom house London N4 all

## Sarah Lovell

VETERAN US socialist Sarah Lovell died in June at the age of 72.

Born in Brooklyn, she joined the US Socialist Workers Party in 1938. She was a leader of the SWP until being expelled in 1974.

After her expulsion she helped found the monthly magazine "In Defense of Marxism".

She also helped George Breitman edit some of the volumes in the Trotsky Writings series. She was an early member of the Coalition of Labor Women and the National Organisation of Women.

# Anti-Hawk campaigners plan global day of action

"Stop the Hawks - No Arms to Indonesia" is the theme of a day of action on 12 November. Britain is supplying Hawk attack aircraft to Indonesia, which are being used against the people of East Timor, illegally occupied by Indonesia in 1975.

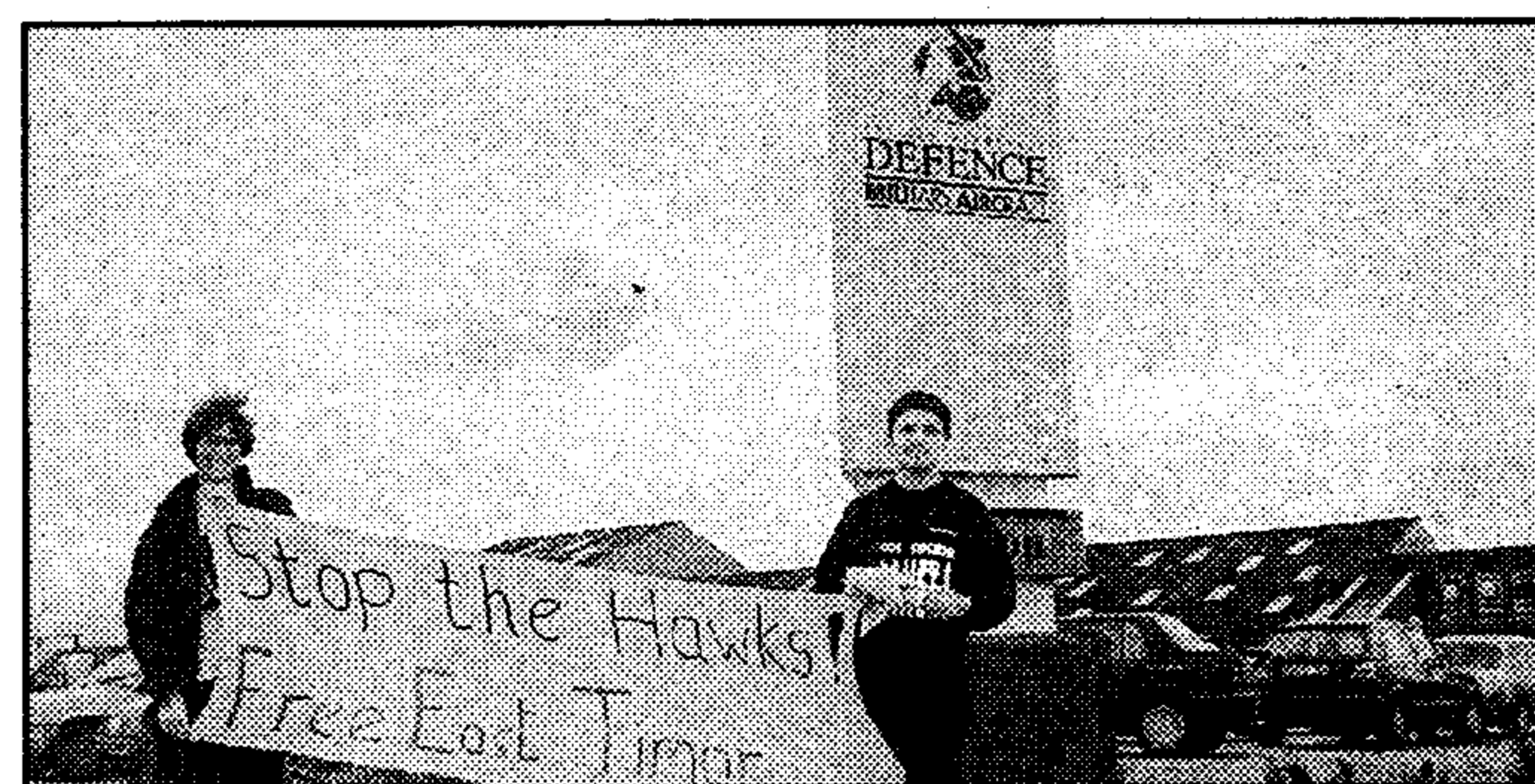
During the past 19 years hundreds of thousands of people have been murdered by the Indonesian occupiers.

The day of action coincides with the third anniversary of the Dili massacre, when 200 people were gunned down in cold

blood during a funeral procession. Others were later murdered as they lay injured in Indonesian custody.

The day of action will see demonstrations in Canada, the US, Portugal, Ireland, Britain and Australia. Over 100 separate events will take place in England Scotland and Wales. Central to the action will be a protest outside the Indonesian Embassy in London's Grosvenor Square from 12 noon to 1pm.

For further information contact the Stop the Hawks coalition on 071-252 7937.



## Surinder Bassi

A MEMORIAL meeting for Surinder Bassi, a leader of the Burnsalls strike in Birmingham, was held in London's Con-way Hall on 20 September.

Surinder was on the picket line for over a year outside the Burnsalls' factory in Smethwick. She had gone on strike for over a year to join a trade union - the GMB, for health and safety, and against forced overtime and the meagre wages for dirty and gruelling work.

Surinder, together with Darshan Kaur, became a spokeswoman for this historic strike of Asian workers. They travelled the length and breadth of the country - speaking to Timex strikers in Dundee; at

the benefit held for Burnsalls strikers in London and at national conferences and rallies.

She was always the first to challenge racist management, the strikebreakers and the police who continually harassed the strikers.

Together with Darshan she won the Martin Ennals Award for Civil Liberties in recognition of the Burnsalls workers struggle for basic trade union rights.

Surinder was born in 1950. She came to Britain from India in 1968.

Earlier this year Surinder used her Industrial Tribunal award to take her daughter for a holiday in India. Soon after she was taken ill and died in Queen Elizabeth hospital, Birmingham, at the age of 44.

## National Conference

# Fight for the Right to Strike

**SATURDAY 26 NOVEMBER 10am-5pm Birmingham**

Speakers include: Ken Cameron (Gen Sec FBU); Bob Crowe (NEC RMT); Doreen Cameron (NATFHE); John Ireland (UCW)

Organised by Birmingham, Lambeth and Oxford Trades Councils.

Sponsored by Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, NCU Broad Left, Socialist Campaign Group Network.

Delegates from TU organisations £8 each; from Unemployed Centres/unwaged £3. Send cheques made out to "Right to Strike Conference" to TUN, PO Box 6498, London N1 1QW.

HOME NEWS

# Socialist OUTLOOK

Where is  
**LABOUR**  
Going?  
Centre Pages



# NO RETREAT ON SIGNAL PAY FIGHT!

The RMT Signal Grades conference on September 18 agreed to link talks on their pay claim with talks on "restructuring". This is a step backwards in the dispute. It is preparing the basis for a climbdown by the RMT leadership.

The signal workers' fight has become a test case for government attempts to hold back public sector pay. Railtrack wants to hobble the RMT before full privatisation of the

industry.

There is no chance of the government agreeing to a settlement which is in any way favourable to the RMT – unless they have to.

Signal workers are becoming demoralised by the lack of success of one day stoppages confined to a small number of workers.

This is not the time to expect the government or Railtrack to be reasonable. This is the time to go for

escalation.

It is absurd that other rail workers are working normally, while signal boxes are staffed, unsafely, by managers and scabs.

The safety issue must be used to bring out other RMT workers on strike days, as part of a programme of escalating the action.

Without such escalation, there is a danger that the signal workers' fight could drift to defeat.