

Socialist OUTLOOK

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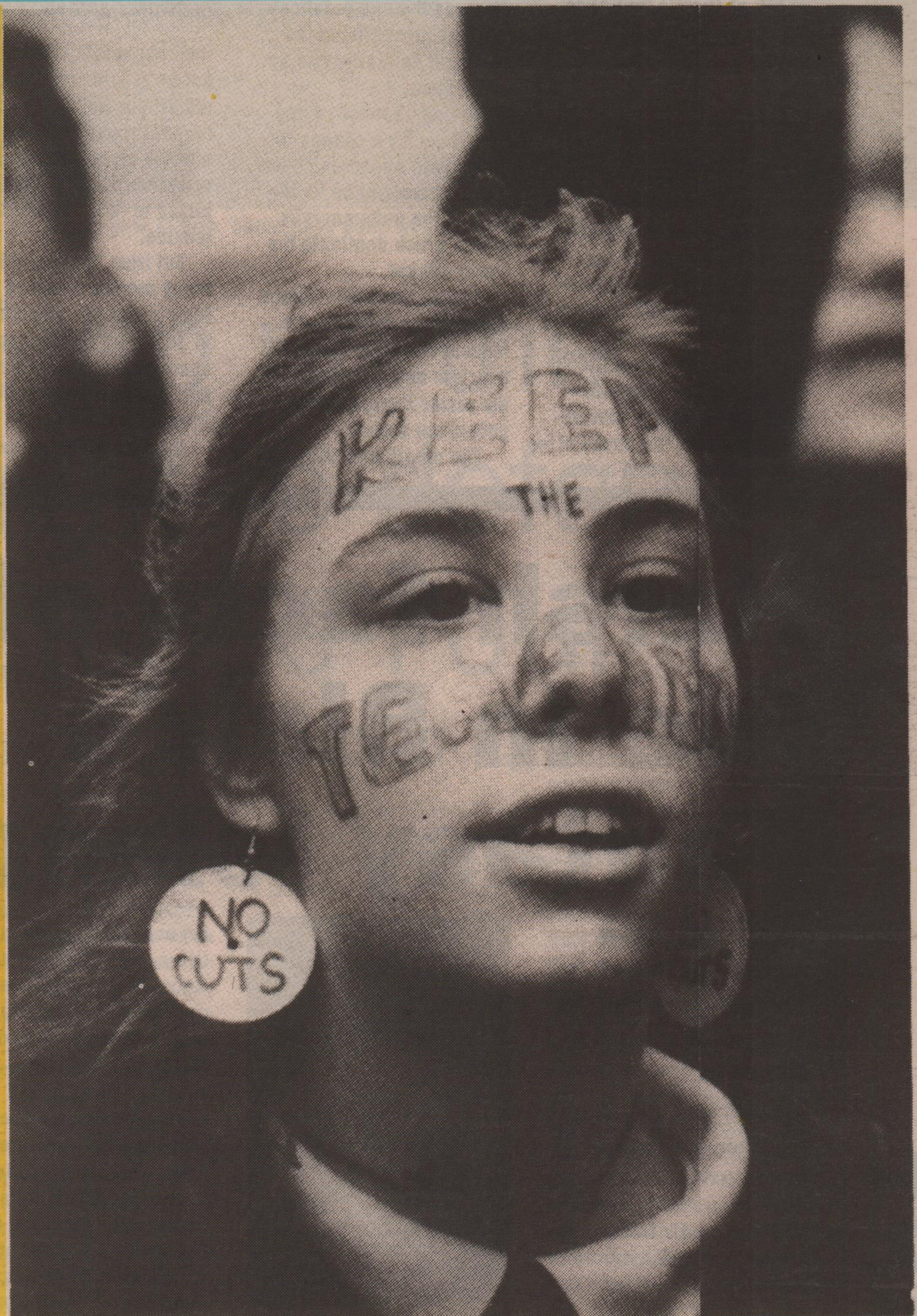
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Sack Major, not teachers!

SAVE OUR

SCHOOLS!



MARCH 25 will see the biggest national demonstration against education cuts for many years. It has been called by an ad-hoc campaign, FACE (Fight Against Cuts in Education), which cuts across conventional party lines.

Parents, school governors, school students and teachers from all over the country and from all political backgrounds have been showing that they reject the Tory policy of cutting schools to finance tax cuts for the rich.

Governors in many schools have

been refusing point blank to make the kind of cuts forced upon them by government under-funding and councils meekly passing on the problem.

Some have resigned en bloc. Others have voted through deficit budgets, defying local education authorities to step in and take direct control. These bold actions must be supported locally by strong campaigns targeting the councillors that voted through the cuts.

Teachers in many areas have already staged protest strikes.

But with thousands of jobs at

stake, and the threat this poses to class sizes, many may have to contemplate more determined action.

They will find tremendous support. On education, as on the NHS, there is an overwhelming public consensus against the Tory policy of squeezing spending – and their hidden agenda of forcing increased numbers to contemplate private provision.

And there is irritation at the lack of any clear alternative from Tony Blair's new, toothless Labour Party. The vast majority of people want to defend and improve our welfare state, not cut it back.

The protests and the battles on education will go on in the localities long after March 25.

Local branches of FACE must be built to unite all those committed to saving our schools.

But links can also be made with those fighting health cuts and other attacks on the welfare state.

On April 8 in London a conference of the Welfare State Network will bring together people defending education, the NHS and pensions. All campaigners are welcome. (Details page 4)

Together we can beat the cuts!

Catchphrases won't convince voters

Defend Clause Four Campaign

TONY Blair's proposed replacement for Clause Four is little more than an exercise in evasion, with the intellectual depth of the Neighbours' theme song ("Everybody needs good neighbours... with a little understanding, we can make a better world.")

The new clause makes no serious attempt to address any of the key challenges facing the modern world: the growing gulf between rich and poor, the unaccountable power of multi-national corporations and global financial markets, the mounting environmental crises, the decay of public services, and mass

unemployment.

It is a classic specimen of professional politicians' waffle. Though pledging to place "power, wealth, and opportunity in the hands of the many", it leaves economic ownership concentrated in the hands of the few, and thus deliberately discards the one practical strategy for realising the values of solidarity and social justice.

Having abandoned any ambitions for a change in the system under which we live, Labour will be a prisoner of the undemocratic forces which dominate the world market.

It is not those who defend Clause Four, but Labour's leaders who "fear change" - they fear any challenge to the vested interests which govern our society.

The media has allowed



Buzzwords aplenty: Prescott out fighting for Blair's clause

the Labour leadership to get away with persistent distortions both of the content of Clause Four itself and the arguments for its retention. No one has objected to renewal and extension.

But from the beginning, many members feared that Blair's real aim was simply to delete all references to common ownership. That fear has now been confirmed.

In place of the long-term

economic strategy clearly articulated by the existing Clause Four, we are offered an empty string of catchphrases, buzzwords and 'feelgood' rhetoric.

There is little in Blair's proposed new clause to which Liberal Democrats or even many Tories could not subscribe.

Labour lost in 1992 because it was not trusted by sufficient numbers of voters. The replacement of a clear and cogent statement

of principles with empty phrase-mongering will, in the long run, merely re-enforce public suspicions that Labour politicians will say anything to win the City's approval.

Had Blair's new clause been presented to regional Labour Party and trade union conferences, it would certainly have been rejected.

On 12 March, the North-West Regional Labour Party Conference voted overwhelmingly to demand the inclusion in any new Clause IV of a clear commitment to common ownership.

The London and South-West Conferences voted to retain the existing wording of Clause IV.

The Scottish Conference voted to renationalise all utilities.

The GMB and other un-

ions asked for a commitment to full employment.

In light of the leadership's decision to ignore all these appeals, the Defend Clause IV campaign believes the Party as a whole now has no alternative but to reject the new wording.

This week, the Defend Clause IV campaign will be sending out 100,000 copies of a detailed critique of the leader's proposed replacement for Clause IV.

Lacking the financial resources and favourable media coverage enjoyed by Tony Blair, we are appealing to all sections of the labour movement to help us ensure the Party takes this crucial decision after fair and informed debate.

■ Contact the campaign c/o NUM, 2, Huddersfield Rd, Barnsley S60

Harsh facts of life in Blair's Fantasy Island

HARRY SLOAN examines the words on offer in Tony Blair's new Clause.

"IT OFFERS an excellent guide to what the next Labour government will do."

These words from former Labour leader Michael Foot, welcoming Tony Blair's new Clause Four, sum up the problem.

Blair's determination to force through a new Clause flows from his relentless drive to ditch any radical commitment in advance of the next election.

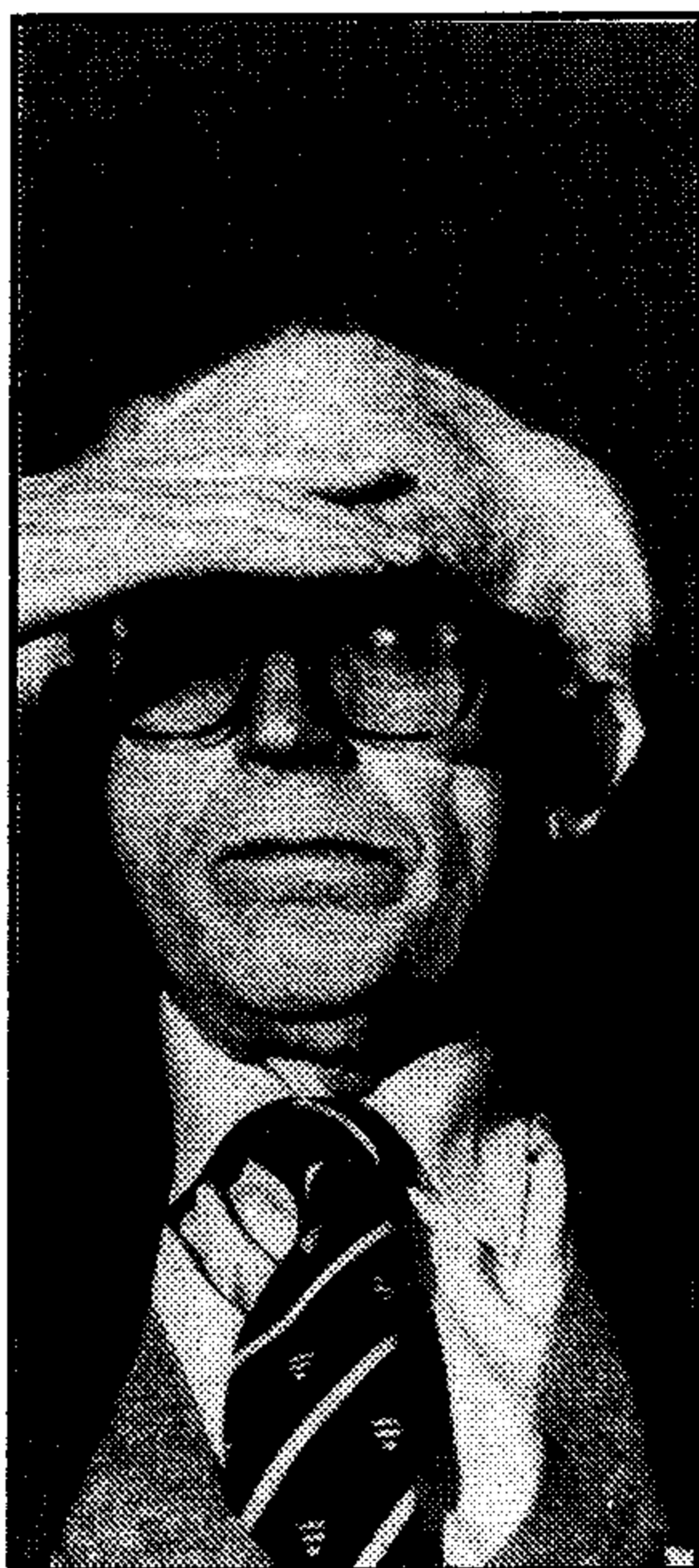
The formulation he has put forward encapsulates the timid policy options for a Labour government wedded to the market system.

Of course there is a load of flannel in the first paragraph about enabling individuals to 'realise our true potential' and a Fantasy Island aspiration to a world without class divisions, where nothing impedes 'a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect'.

Tooth and claw

But in the real framework of a capitalist system red in tooth and claw, Blair is promising a Labour government's solidarity with the bankers, tolerance of unemployment, and respect for the private profits and property of the ruling class.

This is spelled out quite clearly in the second para-



Foot is right behind Blair

graph, which is little more than a Charter for Big Business. If the new Clause is adopted, Labour's constitution will commit a party funded by trade unions and working people to preserve capitalism.

According to the wording, New Labour would work for "a dynamic economy" - which is a mealy-mouthed way of implying minimal taxation, and therefore minimal welfare provision.

This capitalist economy, driven in reality by the quest for private profit, is naively described as "serving the public interest". Once again the harsh fact that the 'public' is divided into classes with opposed interests is brushed aside by Blair's Clause.

In Blair's dream-world: "the enterprise of the mar-

ket and the rigour of competition are joined with the forces of partnership and co-operation to produce the wealth the nation needs and the opportunity for all to work and prosper..."

In other words the very same market pressures and drive for competition that have triggered the collapse of British manufacturing industry, thrown hundreds of thousands out of work, and plunged millions into poverty through low pay and part-time employment are now supposed to create the 'opportunity for all to work and prosper'.

How is this to be achieved? We know about the bosses' offensive, we have seen 16 years of the 'enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition': nobody needs to vote Labour for more of that.

Mystery forces

But just what are these mysterious "forces of partnership and cooperation"? Where are they to be found? What powers do they have? By what magic mechanism is New Labour expecting to tame the tiger of market capitalism?

Of course they are not expecting to tame it at all: the Clause is a celebration of market capitalism. It eagerly anticipates a new golden age with "a thriving private sector", supported by state funding where there are no profits to be found.

Hence the new Clause retreats from any concept of



How many Labour supporters really want to support the market system?

renationalising the privatised utilities, promising only "high quality public services, where those undertakings essential to the common good are either owned by the public or accountable to them..."

Once again Labour is being steered towards the illusory notion of 'planned' capitalism, in which services are 'regulated' rather than owned, in which profits go into private pockets, and only expensive, non-profitable liabilities are publicly owned.

The remainder of paragraph two elaborates the deluded hope for a 'just society' under capitalism, again ignoring the essential reality of a class-based system, in which real economic power remains in the hands of a tiny, reactionary minority which shares none of Labour's aspirations to equality or democracy.

By embracing the traditionally Tory notion of 'nurturing families', Blair's Clause effectively tramples on years of patient work by feminists, single parents and by gay and lesbian activists who have argued that the family unit is a key element in sexual oppression under capitalism.

Paragraph three sets out a long-standing Labour commitment to British imperialism: behind its support for

"defence and security of the British people" is an implicit pledge to maintain Britain's nuclear arsenal and armed forces.

But New Labour is the strongest advocate of European integration, and Blair would tie the Party's constitution to 'co-operating in European institutions' that mean a commitment to the emerging European Union of the capitalists.

Paragraph four takes a significant step away from the trade unions by significantly pledging the Party to work as closely with "voluntary organisations, consumer groups and other representative bodies".

Eloquent silence

Four significant omissions from the 349 word text eloquently demonstrate how far the new draft drags Labour from its electoral and social roots.

● There is no reference to defence or improvement of the welfare state - pensions, benefits, health or education, despite the fact that this became a defining feature of Labour after 1945.

● There is no commitment to restore trade union rights destroyed by successive Tory laws. Cynical hints that unions might find concessions

in the new draft have predictably come to nothing.

● Behind the vacuous phrase offering the 'opportunity to work' there is no commitment to full employment, which was another decoy designed to win over wavering union support.

● The evasive references to 'equality of opportunity' and freeing people from the 'tyranny of prejudice' offer no pledge to promote rights for women, for black and ethnic minorities or for lesbians and gay men.

The Clause is a mini-manifesto for a Party that wishes to abandon any pretence of socialism or social radicalism.

Socialists who wish to see a different type of Party and programme have a long battle on their hands.

As the *Sunday Telegraph* has pointed out:

"Mr Tony Blair ... does not try to persuade Conservatives to stop being Conservative, only to stop voting Conservative."

DAY SCHOOL

Socialism, Social
Democracy and
REVOLUTION
Saturday May 13
London
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TUC women unimpressed by new Clause

By Marian Brain

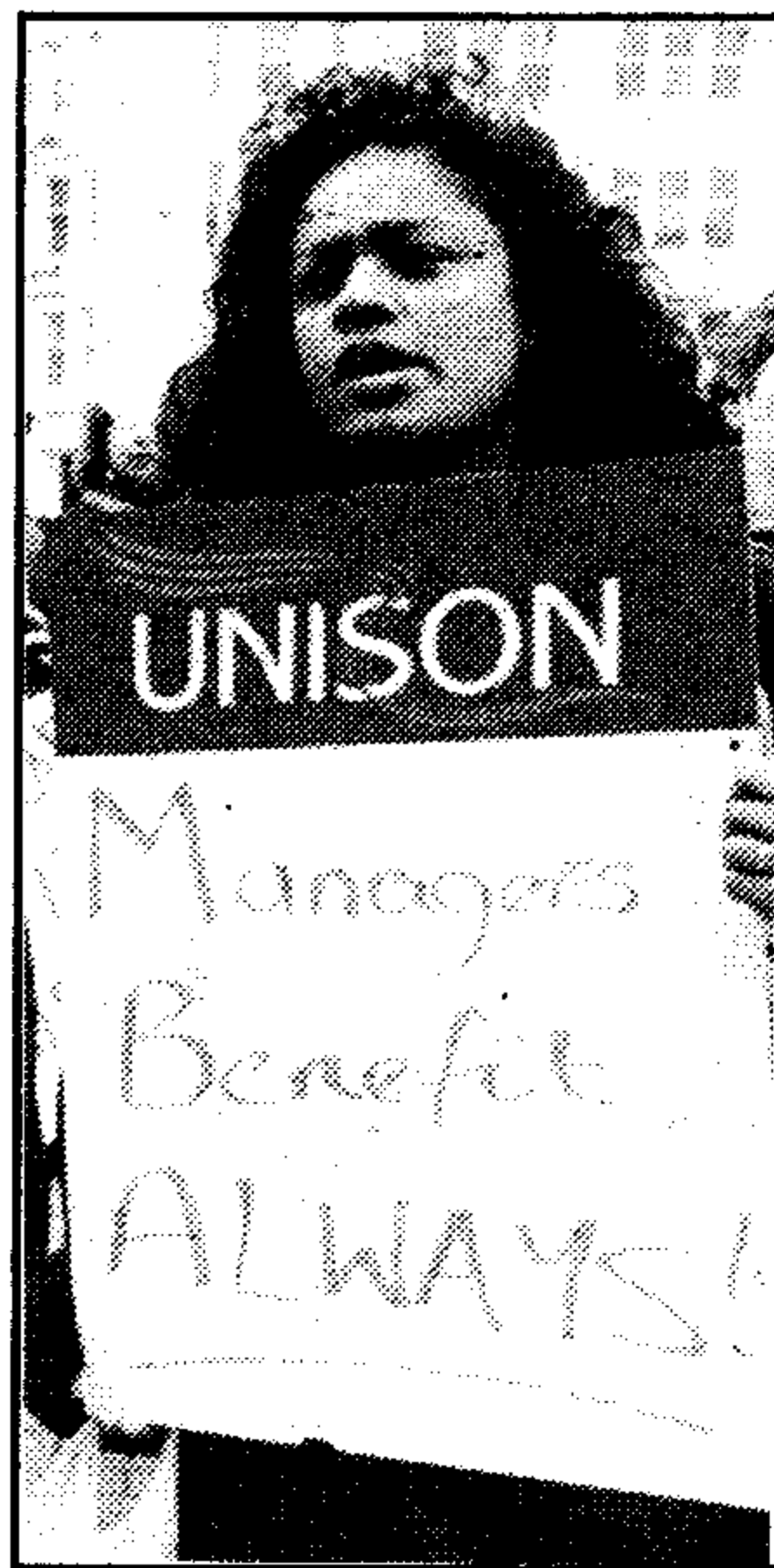
"YOU'VE been had," was the message for women trade unionists delivered by USDAW president Audrey Wise MP.

At a packed fringe meeting at Women's TUC over 100 delegates heard the case for common ownership and the defence of Clause IV.

The 'New Clause IV' does not include race or gender - as was hinted in Blair's attempt to persuade women to support the rewrite.

Audrey Wise argued that the key issue of how Labour is to control the economy was better expressed in the present Clause IV than in the rewrite.

Michele Emerson from the Communication Work-



ers Union spoke about how workers in a privatised industry had faced the 'rigours of competition' in BT. So far it has meant 80,000 jobs lost and conditions of work continually attacked. The future of the communications industry in

Britain needs common ownership to spread the benefits of new technology and the information super highway to working women.

Jennifer Davis from UNISON warned that "The New Clause IV does not speak to Labour's real constituency. Women who are active fighting for their communities are seeing the Labour Party increasingly irrelevant to their politics."

Doreen Cameron from NATFHE said she defended Clause IV as it stands as a vision of a different society based on economic democracy.

Delegates at the meeting expressed disappointment and anger at the forced rewrite of Clause IV.

Many viewed the ditching of Clause IV as a preparation for a Labour government not much different from the Tories.

Left gains ground in North West battles

By a CLP delegate to the conference

THE DITCHING of Clause Four dominated the North West Regional Labour Party Conference held in Southport on 10-12 March.

No resolutions were contained in the Conference booklet, but many delegates were aware that resolutions had been submitted and kept off the agenda.

There was high drama when the Conference sessions began, ending in a major victory for the left delegates.

After several debates and votes on Friday and Saturday, in which the Conference Arrangements Committee and elements did everything in their power to prevent a debate taking place, the Conference finally overturned the platform and voted to debate Clause Four.

This was a major victory for democracy, fought for and won by left delegates at the Conference. The Regional Executive then produced a statement, that while being diplomatic towards the Blair leadership, stated that the Party in the North West wanted the special conference on April 29 to confirm "a commitment to Common ownership..un-



UNISON: retreat on Clause leaves members stranded

der democratic control". Having such a clear statement for common ownership was a victory for the left, and the statement was overwhelmingly carried by conference.

Unfortunately a resolution from Jack Straw's Blackburn CLP defending the existing Clause Four was defeated by a two to one majority, mainly because GMB, UNISON and other unions argued that it wrongly linked Clause Four and the need for Regional Government.

Forcing the Blackburn resolution onto the agenda, which required two card votes, was the high spot of the left's intervention in the conference.

In the evening nearly 80 delegates packed into a fringe meeting to hear Audrey Wise MP and Michael Hindley MEP defend

Clause Four. The meeting brought together union and CLP delegates and was in total contrast to last year's Socialist Campaign Group fringe meeting, which attracted only ten delegates.

The Blackburn motion was strongly supported, notably by the RMT and by the TGWU, whose 150,000 block votes were cast consistently with the left. But the balance of speakers was in favour of Blair's line.

A motion from Ribble Valley CLP which called for affiliation to the Defend Clause Four Campaign was ruled out of order.

A further sign of the resistance to the Blair leadership was the fact that a number of left wingers were elected to the Regional Executive, including active supporters of the Socialist Campaign Group.

What we think



Scargill: Blair's new Clause 'could have been written by Jeffrey Archer'

Step up the fight to defend Clause Four

THE PUBLICATION of Tony Blair's dreadful new Clause 4 should fire up socialists for a renewed struggle against it between now and the special conference at the end of April.

The new text spells out a full-blooded commitment to the principles of the capitalist market system, and contains none of the additions - on women's rights or anti-racism for example - which Blair's supporters were saying it would introduce and which are not in the existing clause.

On top of this it includes a commitment to the kind of family values traditionally endorsed by the Tories, and to national defence.

Not mentioned

Neither of these far-reaching commitments to uphold the status quo has ever been mentioned in the course of the fraudulent 'consultation period' on the Clause.

Blair is claiming that the acceptance of the new Clause by the NEC is a defining moment in the history of the Labour Party. If it were accepted by the Special Conference it would certainly represent a major victory for the right.

Indeed Blair has made no concessions to any of those (like the GMB leader John Edmonds) who have been offering their support in exchange for the inclusion of certain specific commitments.

Of course the soft left advocates of such trade-offs - who claimed to be seeking a pledge to full employment, a minimum wage, and other policies - had given up on defending Clause Four. That's why they have immediately welcomed the new

Clause, despite having been so obviously kicked in the teeth.

Now there is an even bigger threat looming. Clause Four is crucially important as a reference point for socialism within the Labour Party's constitution. But it is not the feature which ultimately defines the Party's character.

Union link

What singles out the Labour Party, despite all the right wing policies of its leaders, is its links to the *trade unions*, which have existed since it was formed.

But, as the Clause 4 campaign has repeatedly warned, the union link is itself at stake in the battle over Clause 4. Blair's moves are not the tail-end of a process started by Neil Kinnock, as often presented in the media, but a part of a long term strategy to take Labour in the direction of a capitalist party like the US Democratic Party. This process would eventually require a decisive organisational break with the unions.

In pursuing this objective, the Blair leadership is backed by the whole of the British establishment and the media.

Blair's campaign is also the start of a new drive by the right wing to prepare Labour for office. They are preparing an even bigger backtracking on any attempt to reverse large sections of existing Tory policy, including their attacks on the NHS, education and welfare state as well as the anti-union laws.

Europe

At the same time a big section of British capital is looking to Blair for a smooth the road to European integration. These are decisive pressures behind Blair's anti-socialist

offensive. The new clause specifically emphasises the commitment to 'co-operating in European institutions'.

In defending Clause Four, therefore, we are defending an important socialist reference point and at the same time fighting to stop and turn back the wider right wing offensive - and ultimately to defend the trade union link.

Destroying this connection with the working class will be key to Blair's new agenda, with the proposal for state funding of political parties ready in the background if the loss of trade union funding appears to be an obstacle to breaking the link.

That is why we must fight for rejection of the new Clause both in the CLPs and the unions - right up to the final Conference vote.

Bandwagon

Blair hopes to get a bandwagon rolling after last week's vote at the NEC, and then force through an undemocratic vote at the Special Conference, with his wording as the only option. This must be vigorously challenged.

Blair's ambition is to remodel Labour into a new 'left of centre' capitalist party. This stark fact must be born in mind by those in the labour movement who are bending under the pressure of the argument that this is the only way to a win a general election.

Those who desperately want a Labour victory to offer a radical alternative to the Tories must join the fight to stop Blair in his tracks, and reaffirm instead an agenda for change which starts from the needs of the working class and oppressed, and rejects the values and logic of the capitalist market.

EDITORIAL

NHS pay fight refuses to die down

By Harry Sloan

THE MISERABLE 1% pay offer to nurses and midwives has created a new eruption of anger – and a historic vote by midwives to drop their no-strike rule.

Over 80 percent of the Royal College of Midwives voted to drop the 115-year ban on industrial action, and the professional body is now setting the pace in the fight for a decent pay increase.

Even the Royal College of Nursing, traditionally a dead weight of conservatism among health workers, has been making noises about possibly considering doing something, though readers are advised not to hold their breath waiting for them to call a strike.

No rush

There is no formal prohibition on strikes in UNISON, but no rush to call or build for action either.

A 'major consultation of

health service members', to find out if they are willing to take industrial action, will not begin until April, and will last six weeks.

UNISON, which claims over 200,000 nursing members, is opposed both to the 1% basic offer and to the attempt to force in local pay bargaining by offering a possible extra 2% to be negotiated with individual Trusts.

Even where Trusts offer this cash 'without strings', the fact is that accepting a top-up would also mean ac-



RCN: don't hold your breath waiting for them to strike!

cepting the end of national pay scales, and set a precedent for local pay bargaining in future years.

In practice many Trusts will want to cover the costs of any additional payment by imposing new 'effi-

ciency savings'.

A nationwide day of action on March 30 is being built under the bizarre slogan 'Out to Lunch'. UNISON suggests that staff take lunch outside their workplaces and hold rallies.

Though Trust bosses are scarcely quaking with fear, strong support on March 30 is essential if UNISON's timid national leadership is not to seize on a poor turnout and RCN inaction as an excuse for doing nothing.

NHS chiefs put a price limit on life

By Terry Smith

IF CASH were no object, the tragic case of 10-year old Child B would never have happened.

Cambridge Health Commission refused to pay £75,000 to treat her rare form of leukaemia, arguing that it could not be justified since she stood only a 10-20% chance of recovery.

Of course most people would readily risk this money if a life could be saved. Instead the health authority spent more money in the courts justifying their refusal to treat Child B than they would have spent trying to

cure her.

They claimed that the case would set a precedent. If she succeeded, others might demand their right to expensive treatment.

In today's cash-limited NHS, if they spent this much on her, the argument goes, they would have less to spend on patients with less unusual and more easily cured health problems.

It all comes down to cash.

The root problem is that there is not enough cash to go round. Britain spends less of its national wealth on health care than almost any advanced economy. The result is over a million on waiting lists, and growing gaps in care when the money runs

out.

Ironically, in the USA, where consultants and private hospital corporations get rich by forcing additional treatment on to patients, to be paid for by insurance companies, the problem would have been the other way round: relatives would have had to step in if they *didn't* want her to undergo chemotherapy.

Neither system is geared to the needs of patients. The British system prioritises tax cuts for the rich, the largely privatised US system leaves tens of millions without health insurance and rips off the others.

In Britain as hospital bosses and doctors struggle to make ends meet, more and

more are falling back on the argument that demand for health care is 'infinite', while resources are finite.

This is absurd. There is a finite, measurable number of people waiting for treatment. A relatively small percentage increase in NHS spending would increase capacity to deal with these cases and keep pace with the health needs of Britain's growing elderly population.

An expansion of the NHS would also create vital new jobs.

But of course it is not only Tories who claim that the present situation of inadequate resources is inevitable.

Labour's Margaret Beckett, the merest Shadow of a spokesperson on health, told the *Independent* that "The National Health Service cannot possibly afford what is



Beckett: no alternative to Tory rationing

now medically possible."

Labour has gone along with the Tory 'community care' plans that have privatised most care of the frail elderly: now they appear to be signing up for permanent rationing of health care.

And in place of opposing the Tory programme of hospital closures and bed reductions – which led to the tragic fiasco of Bexley man Malcolm Murray being airlifted

from south London to Leeds in search of a neurosurgery bed – Labour calls weakly for endless meaningless 'inquiries' and 'reviews'.

There are even hints that Blair's modernisers might be preparing a historic retreat on that most sacred of welfare state ideals: opposition to private medicine.

All of which goes to show that scrapping Clause Four would be bad for your health.

WELFARE STATE NETWORK

campaign conference

From the **CRADLE** ...
... to the **GRAVE**
DEFENDING EDUCATION, HEALTH AND
PENSIONS

**11am-5pm Saturday
April 8**

Speakers (personal capacity) include:

- ALICE MAHON, MP ● JACK JONES (National Pensioners Forum)
 - SUE LISTER (Chair, FACE) ● DOREEN CAMERON (NATFHE)
 - CAROLE REGAN (NUT/STA) ● ALAN SIMPSON MP
- Manning Hall, University of London Union,
Malet St, London WC1

Quango vote to axe Edgware hospital

HEALTH chiefs in Barnet, north London have voted unanimously to rubber-stamp plans to close the busy casualty unit and acute beds at Edgware Hospital.

Over 55,000 A&E cases a year attend the Edgware unit: under the new plans most of these would be forced to make long, awkward journeys to other hospitals.

The Barnet Health Authority decision rode roughshod over the vocal objections of the entire local community in the boroughs of Barnet, Harrow

and Brent, many of whom had backed the vigorous Hands Off Our Hospitals campaign.

This breaks a run of retreats and concessions by health chiefs across the country, as plans for high profile closures have stirred deep-going public anger.

The Edgware closure vote runs alongside the surreptitious decision of health chiefs in South East London to proceed with the run-down of Guy's Hospital even while they hold back the closure of the casualty unit until after the

next general election.

It seems that the more incidents and reports expose the folly of Tory health cuts in London and the dire shortage of beds for emergency cases, the more desperately keen health chiefs have become to force through their closure plans.

Many of the campaigns already established have shown the scope to link community organisations, unions and political parties. The fight must be stepped up now!

FACE of middle England challenges school cuts

THE MARCH 25 demonstration against cuts in education will be the first national protest on this issue in many years. The march has been called and organised by an ad-hoc campaign, Fight Against Cuts in Education (FACE), launched only two months ago. Socialist Outlook spoke to SUE LISTER, national Chair of FACE, and a chair of governors in Oxford.

SO: I gather the police are telling you the march will be very big?
SL: Yes, we were originally hoping we might get around 20,000.

But when we went to discuss arrangements with the Metropolitan police, they told us it was certain to be more than that. It must be the only time a police estimate has inflated the numbers on a protest. They even told us it was a 'good cause'!

I think the march will be a genuine show of strength from all over the country. Oxfordshire alone is sending 15-20 coaches, with the same expected from Warwickshire. There is a bit of rivalry there - I think Warwickshire are determined to send more than us.

We have also heard that there will be coaches from all over Wales as well as England. Even towns like Leeds where there are no cuts are sending coaches to back the protest.

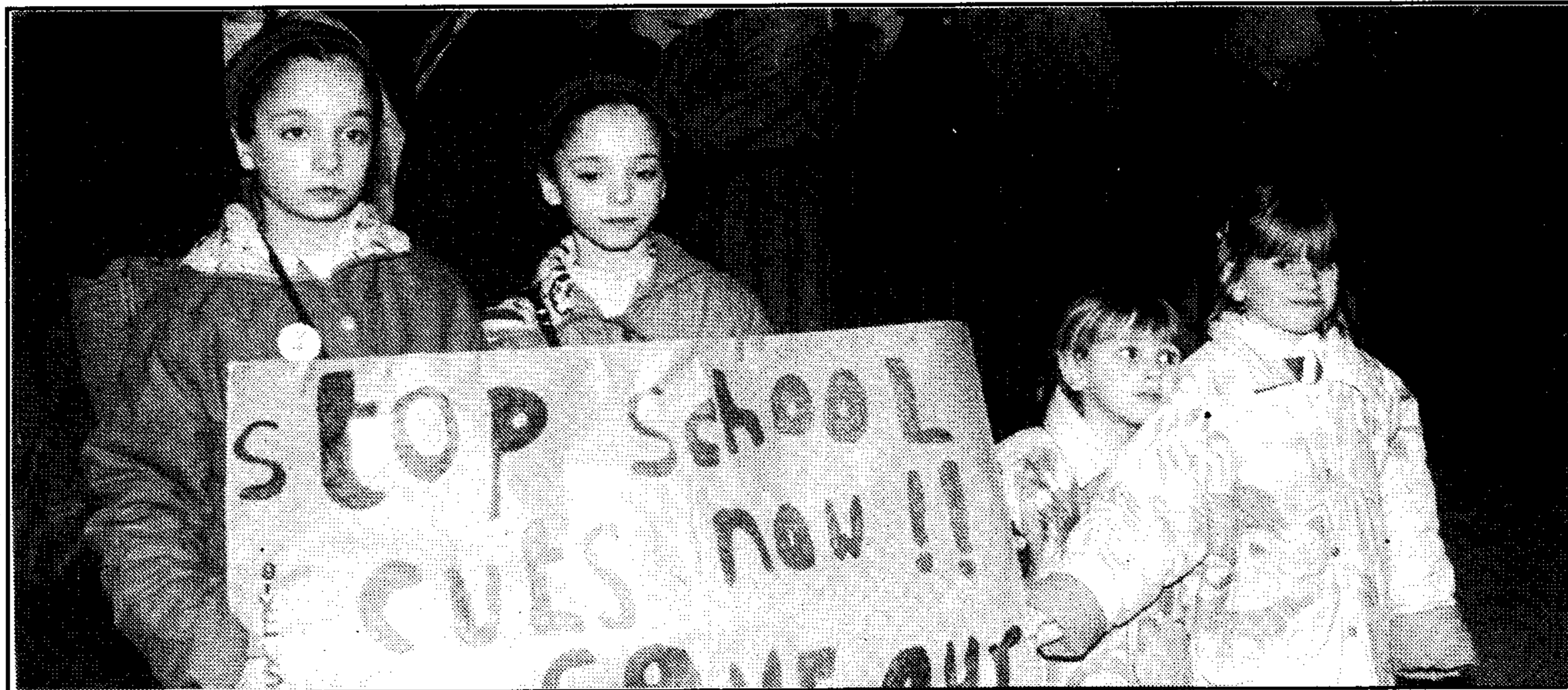
The FACE mobile phone which takes all our messages has been ringing literally all the time.

SO: Where is the support located? Is it mainly parents?

SL: Yes, the numbers are almost all coming from local groups of parents and school governors, sometimes organised as local campaigns, and sometimes just looking to support the national protest.

But most of the financial support we have had so far has come from teaching unions, mostly NUT branches - despite attempts by their national leadership to limit support for FACE.

NUT members have rec-



The opposition to education cuts reaches far wider than the traditional left circles of activists

ognised the importance of this fight, even though our campaign is not primarily aimed at teachers. One London NUT branch has financed a brilliant poster. While they would like the money back, they have said that if need be we should just use the poster.

Our finances have been very stretched in organising the national demonstration - with costs like the PA system. Many of these expenses have been underwritten by London NUT branches to make it possible to go ahead, although obviously they will want the money!

SO: London branches? Surely most of the big cuts are outside London?

SL: There are very big cuts in parts of London, too.

In Camden for example some schools are facing budget cuts of up to £100,000. Lambeth is making cuts. And many London schools have been hit especially hard by the underfunding of the teachers' pay award.

SO: What scale of cuts are being suffered outside London?

SL: One school in Derbyshire was given a budget which means that out of an establishment of 80 teachers, 17 would lose their jobs.

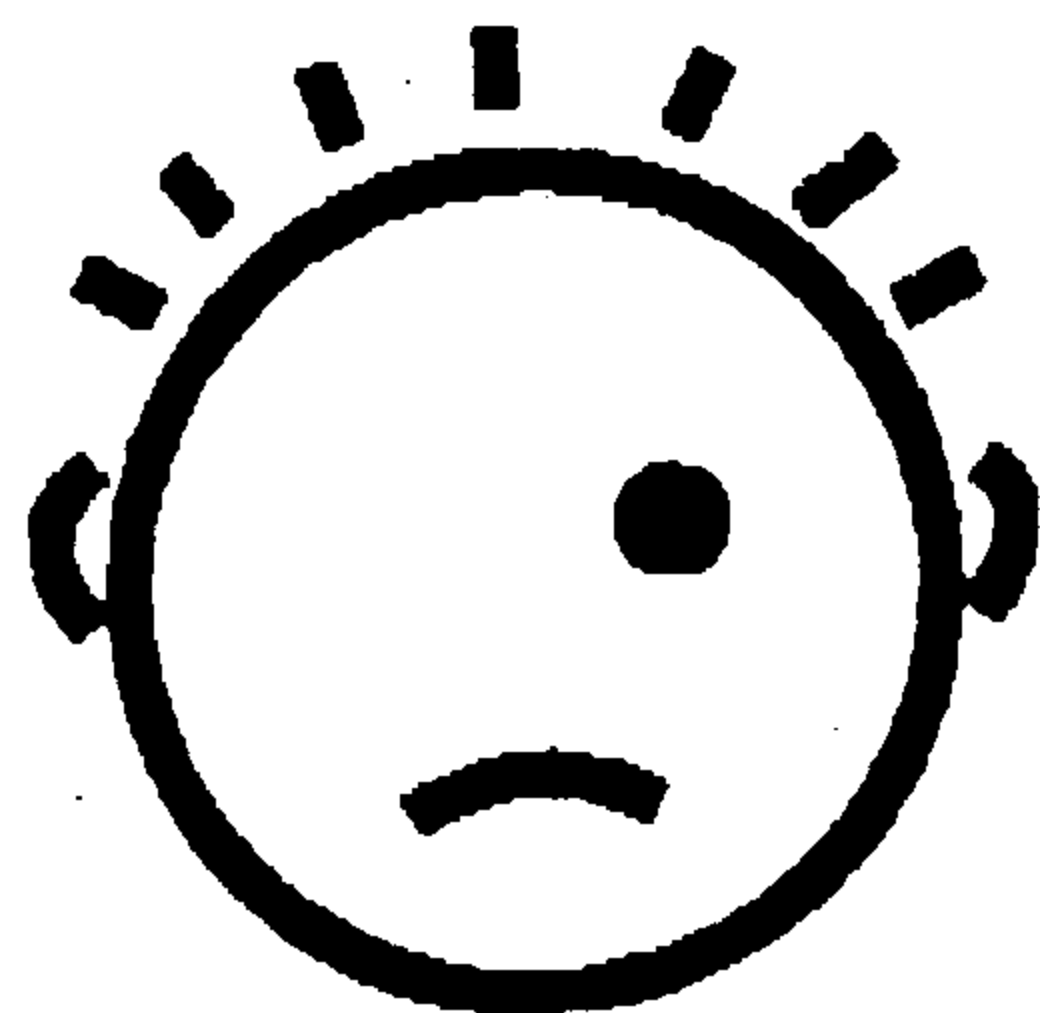
The entire board of governors walked out and resigned en masse. Of course some get away with smaller cuts.

SO: What has happened on the issue of deficit budgeting?

SL: This is now so widespread that it hardly rates a mention in the news any more.

Of course when the first school set a deficit budget - Wheatley Park school in

fight against cuts in education



FACE can be contacted by phone on 0589-789104

Oxfordshire - it was national news. Now so many have followed that it isn't even reported in local papers.

This is very important. Most local authorities now admit that if more than four or five local secondary schools set deficit budgets they will not have the resources to intervene in each of them. Of course the LEAs have been cut as well.

SO: What kind of support is there from left wing organisations?

SL: Most of the left are obviously backing the demo and local activities. I'd be surprised if they didn't.

But there is a problem with the way in which some, especially the Socialist Workers Party, have put out material implying that

concerned about their children's education.

They don't want anything to do with the SWP. Indeed many of us on the left don't want much to do with them either.

We are trying to build a genuinely broad campaign on the specific issue of education cuts. So far we have succeeded. But many of those running FACE locally and nationally are not members of any party at all, even the Labour Party. Our campaign has been described as 'the rise of middle England'.

We don't want to have to waste our time and energy explaining to everyone that we are not an SWP front organisation, or contacting some of the organisations which have supported us to reassure them.

It's our campaign as parents and governors.

We are happy for the SWP - and anyone else on the left - to support us as long as they don't try to take it over, or give the impression they already have.

SO: What next after March 25?

SL: The fight is far from over. FACE will be fighting on until we reverse these cuts.

We are calling a national one-day conference in Coventry on June 1. The details are still being worked out now, but they will be publicised on the demonstration. It will be open to local campaigns, to unions and other organisations and to individuals. We hope it will be very big.

There will also be more local activities across the country, especially to build support for those schools which have adopted deficit budgets, but also to resist cuts and redundancies in schools which have not.

The tempo of national

leadership meetings will slow down a little when we have had the demonstration, but we will continue producing a regular newsletter to local groups, holding meetings, issuing press releases, organising letter-writing, and seeking publicity.

SO: Can you explain a little about the new logo for the FACE banner?

SL: Yes, we had a number of suggestions put to us by a graphic designer who backs the campaign.

In the end we chose a face with spiky hair but only one eye. It is a 'smiley face' - but not smiling.

Some of us are a bit worried that this might be seen as getting at people with disabilities - but the image is effective. I haven't shown it to anyone who hasn't immediately asked 'Why has it only got one eye?'

It's an important part of the cuts that they effectively disable children by denying them proper education. And one of the areas worst cut is special needs support, because it's the easiest to cut without interfering with the national curriculum.

SO: Have you had any support from the Labour Party?

SL: We haven't asked them for any, but they haven't been very forthcoming.

Education cuts are political, but the FACE steering committee is not party political, not least because I think we're all fairly certain that if we had a Labour government in office we'd probably be fighting a similar battle now.

We're under no illusion that we're just fighting the Tories, and we have to be willing to fight any government that fails to fund education.

Apart from trying to dissuade NUT members from staging protest strikes, David Blunkett has not had much to say. He has only really argued about the underfunding of teachers' pay, which in most areas is a tiny fraction of the cuts. In my school the cuts this year are £40,000, but only £6,000 of this is from the pay award.

Of course teachers' pay is important. Their increase should not be funded through loss of jobs. But the main issue is an increase in overall funding for education, and on that Labour is silent.

SO: And in conclusion?

SL: Be on the demo. Come to the conference. Build local campaigns. And get us a donation, so the fight can continue!

EDUCATION CUTS

Can laws stamp out racial harassment?

THE DEMAND for a law against racial harassment has become central to a wing of the anti racist movement. Ten years ago, HARRY COHEN MP introduced a Bill into parliament calling for such a law, and has been one of the main motivators of such demands in parliament since then. SOCIALIST OUTLOOK spoke to Harry Cohen about the aims of such legislation, and some of its limitations.



SO: What did you aim to achieve with the Bill on racial harassment?

HC: The Racial Harassment Bill was an extremely radical Bill; it was the first time that any legislation against racial attacks had been presented to the House of Commons.

Before that it was claimed that it was not possible to introduce this kind of legislation, as it was claimed that it was not practical. This bill showed that it was: it had a whole schedule that pointed out the different types of racial harassment that black people had to face from day to day.

Since then it's got worse and worse. The British Crime Survey, which only showed the major racist attacks, estimated attacks on Black and Asian people at something like 140,000 per year. That's an enormous number.

SO: The vast majority of these attacks are already a criminal offence, only the perpetrators are seldom prosecuted. How would further legislation help to deal with this?

HC: Well the fact of the matter is that a lot of these attacks may already be illegal, but the law doesn't recognise the racial motivation behind them.

That does add a new and most serious dimension to the crime. It should be recognised in the law and recognised in the punishment.

My bill did three things; it made a specific offence of racial harassment – the "smaller" levels of racial harassment that still make people's lives a misery still are not covered in the present law. My bill would make that an offence.

It also puts a specific duties on the police to investigate all reported cases of racial harassment and then to make public what they've done. That isn't the case now.

Thirdly, instead of the victims having to flee for their own safety from their own homes, it meant that action could be taken against the perpetrators.

The overtly racist elements could be evicted if they were tenants; and if they were owner occupiers measures

could be taken to get them out. That isn't in the law at the moment.

Some councils are doing their best against racist attackers, but they are very few. There is very little coordinated action from the law or from the government saying that racial harassers have got to be dealt with. The current law doesn't cover any of those points.

SO: There is an argument that the demand for new legislation could prove a diversion to the anti-racist movement from the day to day struggle against racism which by necessity can't be determined simply by legislation.

HC: No, I don't agree with that, I think they go hand in glove.

I'm not saying that you can pass a legislation and all the problems are solved: far from it.

Most of the problems as you rightly pointed out are on the streets, and racist and fascist organisations need to be tackled there, but it needs to be done in a climate and a legal framework that makes it clear that the state is against racism.

At the moment we have a number of examples of institutionalised racism; immigration law, the way the police deal with Black communities, stop and search and things like that.

All this legislation positively promotes discrimination: the state is perceived as encouraging racism.

The Tory government plays a role in appeasing racism when they feel there are

votes in it for them.

Tory backbenchers are constantly playing the racist card when it suits them, ranting about "floods of immigrants" which is just a great lie.

The state is seen to promote racism far more than it promotes anti-racism, despite the fine words that ministers occasionally speak.

The law should take an absolutely clear position that it is anti-racist, and then we can put pressure on the organisations of the state, the police to actually implement it. Then there would be no excuses.

SO: How do you see the development of the European Union, and its immigration policy in relation to this?

HC: The only major contribution I made in parliament on the Maastricht debate was on immigration controls.

What was being proposed there was that everything should be decided by an unelected committee which could put the barriers up around fortress Europe in a big way.

This body would not be accountable to anyone, and every state would have to comply, and would be bringing racism to a new dimension.

Now I oppose what our government does here on immigration, because they break up families and won't allow them to be reunited; they deport people – often with considerable violence, and I object to that.

But at least we do have a say through parliament, we can raise it with the minister re-

sponsible, maybe if we get a Labour government we can make some changes to that sort of policy and how it's implemented.

If it goes to an unelected European commissioner, the power to get anything altered will be minimalised. I think that the Maastricht treaty is bad in the respect that we will have even more racist legislation.

SO: What should the demands of the anti-racist movement be?

HC: There are a number of demands that anti-racists should make. Some are to do with changes in the law.

I think that the overwhelming majority of anti-racist activists would like to see a change in the law, and would like to see a racial harassment bill.

Things have moved on since 1985 and there have been new drafts of legislative change, by ARA, the Society of Black Lawyers and by the Commission for Racial Equality.

I would like to see a change in immigration laws, which are grossly unfair. I would like to see discrimination ended.

I've just received a paper from the GMB which points out that for black youth in London between the ages of 16 and 24, unemployment has reached 60%. We have anti-discrimination legislation on the statute book that clearly is not being carried out.

It is appalling that 60% of black youth are unemployed in London, and we need to strengthen legislation to deal with this.

Of course the struggle also goes on on the streets: for example the BNP in Tower Hamlets must be defeated in the elections, and can't be allowed to assault and intimidate black people, so self-defence organisations do have an important role to play.

Again self-defence does have an important role to play, though at least part of that pressure must be on the police to act against racists and racism.

In some areas the police have improved since 1985 but in other areas there has hardly been any change at all and adopt policies of blaming the victims.

There has got to be community pressure on the police to deal with racism, so it's a mixture of the law and the community, and both are vitally important.

SO: Tony Blair said in an interview with *The Voice* last week that he was supporting a law against racial harassment. Is the Labour Party likely to carry this out?

HC: Well it is Labour policy; that is the impact that my Bill has had, even though the government has opposed it and dragged its feet all the way.

The Labour Party will implement it, I think, or a form of it, though that will depend on the wording and what it commits it to.

But it is an enormous step forward, in the context of the overall picture.

FIGHTING RACISM

"At the moment we have a number of examples of institutionalised racism; immigration law, the way the police deal with Black communities, stop and search and things like that. All this legislation positively promotes discrimination: the state is perceived as encouraging racism"

Zionist 'union' that sets dogs on strikers

By Roland Rance

IN ISRAEL under a 'Labour' government, just as in Britain under the Tories, the talk is of privatisation and market values.

But, in a twist characteristic of the distinct form of capitalist exploitation brought about by the Zionist colonial project in Palestine, many of the enterprises involved are under the direct control, not of the state, but of the Histadrut, Israel's TUC.

In last year's elections, the Labour Party, which had controlled the Histadrut since its foundation, was defeated by a new coalition of Zionist left and liberal parties and independents, headed by former Health Minister Haim Ramon.

This new bloc, which took almost 50% of the votes, represents a new generation of Israeli activists who call themselves 'post-Zionist'.

Ramon, who resigned from Rabin's cabinet in protest at the government's failure to expropriate the Histadrut's sick fund, which insures over 70% of Israel's population, campaigned against the corruption and bureaucracy of the Histadrut old-guard.

A technocrat and a moderate on Israeli-Palestinian affairs, he is considered by many as a likely successor to Rabin as leader of the Labour Party.

Although often depicted as 'Israel's powerful trades union confederation', the Histadrut is far from being an independent trade union. It is in fact a vast corporation, one of the major economic powers in Israel, and a central element of the unique Israeli mixture of state capitalism and a free-market bourgeoisie.

It is also a full participant in the economic exploitation of the Palestinian people and the Occupied Territories. From its establishment in 1920 (as the 'General Federation of Hebrew Labour in the Land of Israel'), the Histadrut was an avowedly Zionist and exclusively Jewish body, committed to the principle of 'Conquest of Labour', ie excluding Palestinian workers from employment.

Former Prime Minister Golda Meir remarked that in 1928 she "was put on the Histadrut Executive Committee, at a time when (it) was not just a trade union organisation. It was a great colonising agency".

Banks

As part of its contribution to the creation of a Jewish state, the Histadrut developed many institutions not normally associated with trades unions, including a bank, an insurance company, a construction company, bus, shipping and air transport companies, a sick fund, newspapers, agricultural and industrial trading agencies, a publishing house, bookshops, hospitals, department stores, supermarkets, vocational schools, an electronics company, and even Israel's major soccer clubs.

The 'Department for Trade Union Affairs' is a tiny part of this vast empire, which has become the country's largest employer after the state,



producing 21% of Israel's GNP in 1988.

It controlled one-third of the private sector of the economy, including 82% of agriculture, 90% of transport, 25% of industry, 35% of banking and 23% of insurance.

Employers

But this vast wealth and power is not used for the benefit of Israel's working class. In fact, 80% of the citizens of Israel are members of the Histadrut, and there is no bar to private employers joining, and even holding office.

The Histadrut, like any other employer, has sacked workers, cut wages, and worsened working conditions. In September 1990, the Histadrut-owned Soltam company fired workers, whom it described as 'riff-raff', from its Yokneam factory; when the workers protested and set up a picket line, the company set dogs on them.

Although affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the Histadrut was a leading participant in Israel's trade with South Africa. The Israeli daily Ha'Aretz reported in 1982 that Histadrut-controlled companies "constitute the main part of foreign trade with South Africa".

The Histadrut's Koor subsidiary set up, in partnership with the Iron and Steel Corporation of South Africa (ISCOR), a major sanctions-breaking enterprise, known as ISKOOR to import coal and semi-processed steel from South Africa, process it in Israel, and export it to the EC under Israel's preferential

trade agreements.

ISKOOR, Soltam and the electronics company Tadiran also provided arms and other military equipment to South Africa.

The colonisatory role of the Histadrut is seen most clearly in its relation to Palestinians from the Occupied Territories.

All workers in Israel, whether or not they are members of the Histadrut, are obliged to pay an 'organisation tax' of about 0.8% of their salary to the Histadrut for 'trade union protection'.

Palestinians from the Occupied Territories are also obliged to contribute to it, even though they cannot become members of the Histadrut.

Most of the trade union work of the Histadrut is carried out by local trades councils; these have not been established in the Occupied Territories, and would in any case have no standing against employers in Israel.

Workers' Hotline, a group working with Palestinian migrant workers, has raised dozens of cases in which the Histadrut has failed to represent the interests of these workers in cases of redundancy, breach of collective agreements, denial of minimum wages, discriminatory treatment by Israeli social security, illegal arrest and other denials of their rights.

Palestinians

In effect, millions of dollars have been exacted by the Histadrut from Palestinian workers, for minimal services. The Histadrut, which formally does not support the annexation of the Occupied Territories, is

heavily involved in construction work in the illegal settlements.

It has also established Workers' Councils - for Jewish settlers only - in the Occupied Territories. Most strikes in Israel have been coordinated by local Workers' Councils, which are generally more militant than the officials of the Histadrut's "Department of Trade Union Affairs".

The Histadrut itself has never conducted a major strike. Instead, it has frequently faced strikes of its own workers.

These it has either repressed with state help, as with the Haifa seamen's strike of 1952, or through co-optation of strikers leaders, as with the El Al strike of 1982.

It is this body which both the government and its own leaders are now attempting to dismantle. Labour Party leader Rabin has made his position explicit:

"Trade unions that reject privatisation are worse than Hizbollah", he said during a recent visit to New York.

Histadrut Secretary-General Ramon, meanwhile, wishes to develop the Histadrut's core enterprises, while divesting it of encumbrances such as the sick fund and the Department of Trade Union Affairs. This could lead to the development of truly independent trade unions in Israel.

However, unless these groups clearly identify the reasons for the Histadrut's failure to operate as a true trade union - in particular, its task in the Zionist colonisation of Palestine - then they will remain

JOHN MAJOR's flying visit to Gaza on March 14 appears to have been a pathetic effort to bolster the credibility of Yassir Arafat's desperately impoverished Palestinian ghetto statelet.

Major, no doubt with one eye on the prospects for forcing further concessions from Sinn Fein leaders in Ireland, declared his support for the 'peace process' which is designed to leave the Palestinians powerless and poverty-stricken in their own occupied homeland.

He announced a tokenistic new aid package worth just £82 million, and cynically urged the British private sector to get involved in the development of Gaza.

marginal, unable to avoid making the same mistakes.

The development of an independent workers' movement in Israel and Palestine requires a break from Zionism, from the Histadrut's support for Israeli apartheid, and from Israeli state capitalism.

While pro-Europe bosses look to Blair...

Tories have never had it so bad!

"Lord McAlpine is right. The Conservative Party does need a spell in opposition. ... Few self-respecting people today would want to join the Conservative Party, and fewer still will be new recruits to work for it in the constituencies. ... A Tory Party in opposition would be different. Galvanised by defeat, it would rethink, regroup and reorganise. Membership would grow and the money come in once more."

Editorial, Sunday Telegraph

HARDLY a week goes by without another crisis over Europe rocking the Conservative Party. Why has the issue caused such rancour? Why have such deep splits emerged? TOBY BREWSTER offers an answer.

FROM THE OUTSIDE there seems to be no good reason why Britain's "natural party of government" seems intent on knocking itself to pieces.

To explain the last five years of bruising battle we have to trace the origins of the profound breach that has opened up in the British ruling class. This is primarily a difference over how to govern.

While it is true that they do not face a crisis of rule in the classical Marxist sense - they have not been seriously challenged by an alternative class leadership for generations - they nevertheless do face the destruction of the political bloc which has been in power for most of the twentieth century. Things are starting to fall apart.

When Geoffrey Howe put the knife into Thatcher he hardly mentioned the state of the economy, which was in a deep trough at the time. Nor did he focus on the poll tax, probably the most unpopular measure ever introduced by a Tory government.

The main issue was Europe.

His speech addressed as its prime target the dire consequences of Thatcher's hostility to the EU and the effects it would have on British capitalism.

Ever since Heseltine first walked out of a cabinet over Westland helicopters, this question has split the Tories from top to bottom. The pro-Europe wing ruthlessly used the opportunities created by the poll tax's unpopularity to settle the dispute in their favour.

In this context it is possible to see what a wise choice Major was for them. He was elected not as the man who would get rid of the poll tax, but as the man to resolve the battle over Europe. It is not possible properly to understand British politics in any other way.

He was picked because he was as far to the right as the pro-Europeans could stomach. He also has the advantage of understanding how important it is to appease the Eurosceptics - having them on the inside looking out is part of the strategy. That way potential opponents are locked into the present leadership, ham-



Union man? Major (here with French President Mitterrand and premier Balladur) is bogged down in European impasse

strung and disarmed.

The pro-Europe wing is all too aware of the depth of reaction in British society - especially at the base of the Tory party - and how it yearns for strong leadership.

"Major was elected not as the man who would get rid of the poll tax, but as the man to resolve the battle over Europe. He was picked because he was as far to the right as the pro-Europeans could stomach."

Norman Lamont was not the only one singing in the bath when sterling fell through the ERM trap door.

It would have been possible - metaphorically - to fill Dublin's Lansdown Road stadium twice over with Tory party workers willing to smash up their seats and throw them at the pro-Europeans. British Conservatives of all shades think the ERM is a one way ticket to rule by foreigners. And they hate the thought.

Douglas Hurd was forced to acknowledge as much in the *Financial Times*, "we have a problem in the Parliamentary Party and a problem among Conservative activists, no doubt about that".

Such is the rancour that the whipless nine have reduced their own party to a minority

government. These people explicitly advocate a turn to the right of the sort so ably argued for by Lord McAlpine.

Hurd battles on, arguing that the last thing the Tories need is "a new raft of ideological

policies". This contribution is clearly aimed at Redwood, Lilley and Portillo. These heirs to the leadership of Britain seek to restore it as a world power through a frontal assault on the labour movement and welfare state.

These divisions therefore cannot just be reduced to a question of finance versus industrial capital. While it is a neat counterposition, the question should not be posed so simplistically.

It misses the critical point - the battle in the Conservative Party is a deeply ideological battle, one fought on the terrain of ruling class strategy.

Europe is how it is expressed in public. It is their most concrete expression of division. Concrete enough to bring down Thatcher, their anointed representative of a decade's

standing; tossed away in tears without remorse when she was no longer needed.

It is on this matter that the failure of the British left to challenge the pro-European capitalists is so appalling and debilitating.

Just where is the anti-Maastricht campaign that is mobilising people from a left-wing perspective?

The absence of any serious left challenge over the key issue in British politics would be laughable if it was not so serious. The terms of the debate are being set by the right. It appears to people only as a discussion among capitalists - a socialist alternative is nowhere to be seen.

Acceptance of the conditions of monetary and economic union will undoubtedly require huge attacks on the welfare state. This is the context in which a Blair-led government will find itself. A massive battle will be declared. It will be fought out through the public sector unions and through the structures of the historic party of the working class.

The bourgeoisie are currently fighting tooth and nail for the soul of the party of the working class. Marxists must be at the centre of this struggle, to make sure the odds on them winning are reduced.

The ferocity of the argument within the Tory Party is therefore set in place by Britain's special historical position in the world.

CENTRE STAGE



From populist triumph to poll tax fiasco: even the glory days of Thatcher did not resolve the historic problems of the British ruling class

For 150 years it was the most powerful capitalist power on the planet. The success of the British Empire allowed the Conservatives to establish an historic bloc which maintained it as the ruling class party for a whole period.

The creation of this bloc was a response to i) the development of a mass working class movement in the middle of the nineteenth century around Chartism and ii) the settlement that came out of the end of the Corn Laws, which indicated the predominance of finance capital over manufacturing capital.

The Tory party organised a bloc of Unionists, the military, petit bourgeois layers, banking and finance capital and, later, skilled workers.

To weld this alliance together it was necessary to have both a strong exchange rate and to make limited concessions to the working class. The high exchange rate also established London as the centre of finance capital in Europe.

The capacity to maintain this double act was underwritten by the enormous inward flow of profits from Britain's capital which had been exported abroad.

This strategic bloc worked very well. It allowed the ruling class to maintain the Tory Party as the natural government under conditions of developing bourgeois democracy while coping with the emergence of an organisationally strong labour movement.

This arrangement was complemented by a powerful trade union bureaucracy that could be relied upon to both police and depoliticise the workers' movement.

Their success is underlined by the fact that between 1886 and 1945 the Tories won the largest share of the vote in 12 out of 13 elections and were almost continuously in office throughout the period – bar the pre-First World War Liberal victory and the two Labour governments.

This is also the reason why the crises of rule which effected the European ruling classes in places such as Italy, Germany and Spain did not have the same devastating effect in Britain. We have no equivalent to the upheavals in Germany 1918-19, Spain 1934-39, or Italy in the early to mid 1920s.

The 1926 General Strike hardly comes into the same category.

The strategy continued to work as long as Britain remained a world power. Yet from the end of the First World War it became evident that the balance of world power was already beginning to shift. A number of powers began to jockey for position. Two decades of an unstable global multipolar system could only

be resolved by another world war.

What was implicit in 1945 became explicit during the Suez crisis. Britain was now a junior partner of the US. The phrase "special relationship" was no more than a euphemism for domination by the United States and the subordination of Britain by consent.

The far sighted members of the bourgeoisie saw that such a reorganisation of the world political system and Britain's reduction to second rank would need a thorough strategic re-orientation. This would have to involve the rebuilding of Britain's domestic industrial base and domestic investment patterns in a re-orientation toward continental Europe.

In this way the welfare state can be seen as the product of two different sets of circumstances.

"It has become common sense to many political leaders that the only safe place for British capital lies in an alliance with those the other side of the English Channel. Yet this contradicts everything the Conservative Party has stood for. Thus the crisis. There does not seem to be a week that goes by without another European crisis gripping the Tories. They've never had it so bad. Yet this is not just a passing ailment. It is more a fatal disease. Currently they are too weak to carry out monetary union or to get out of their sick bed to smash the welfare state."

First as a response to the enormous popularity of the Soviet Union following its vanguard role in the defeat of fascism and second as the basis of a new way to organise capitalism for the British ruling class. A modern capitalism requires a healthy educated workforce in order for it to compete on a world scale.

However this new orientation immediately began to cut across the historic bloc on which the Conservative Party had been based.

The cost of the welfare state to the working class was part of a drive by the Tories to reduce the cost of labour to capital. The attempted change of strategic orientation from international to domestic investment undermined both the military and some sectors of finance capital.

From the early 1960s until 1979 the ruling class tried by various means - usually incomes policies - to reduce the wage levels of the working class within the framework of the post-1945 settlement. Only Callaghan's Labour government had any success here, but was eventually brought down by industrial militancy.

The conclusion was unavoidable. If British capital was to survive embedded in a medium size power then the whole 1945 deal had to be trashed.

In stepped Mrs Thatcher.

The leadership created for the job was the ideological representative of the old empire alliance. What other Prime Minister since the end of the Second World War summoned up more the ghosts of empire past? Hers was a mobilising ideology rooted in the imperialist ideas resident in all classes of British society.

But while Thatcher did deliver massive blows to the political and organisational strength of the working class, she was unable to reverse Britain's long term decline as a manufacturing power.

Consequently it has become commonsense to many political leaders that the only safe place for British capital lies in an alliance with those the other side of the English Channel.

Yet this contradicts everything the Conservative Party has stood for. Thus the crisis.

There does not seem to be a week that goes by without another European crisis gripping the Tories. They've never had it so bad. Yet this is not just a passing ailment. It is more a fatal disease.

Currently they are too weak to carry out monetary union or to get out of their sick bed to smash up the welfare state.

We should not get carried away with complacency, however. This is not a qualitative



Still singing in the bath: Norman Lamont

crisis of ruling class rule of the sort that has convulsed Europe earlier in the century. It is a very specific moment.

The capitalist order is safe for the time being – because the party of pro-European capital is alive and well and living in John Smith House. This emphasises further the importance of the Labour Party.

The lessons of the poll tax struggle have to be learned. Mass action can win concessions, but if the political and ideological struggle is not taken through the structures of the labour movement, then it not only lets the labour bureaucrats off the hook, but it means an effective challenge cannot be mounted.

In the end all it took to take the wind out of the anti-poll tax campaign was another regressive tax – in the shape of 2.5 per cent on VAT.

That the bourgeoisie now have a second eleven fit to govern is due in part to the abandonment by British Marxists of the terrain of battle. They have preferred the comfier climes of left-wing conferences declaring the "new party" or "movement", or low level rank and file cabals which challenge no-one, involve no labour movement leaders and are not based on the struggles in the trade unions and Labour Party.

Such an abstention weakens not only the revolutionary left but fails to shift the balance of forces in the direction of our class.

CENTRE STAGE

UN's great Copenhagen cop-out

By Bala Kumar

THE INDIFFERENCE of rich countries to global poverty and their inability to propose even half-hearted measures was clear for all to see even before the UN Summit for Social Development.

Aimed at placing on the international agenda three main issues: Poverty, Unemployment and Social exclusion, the Copenhagen conference was ignored by leaders and by the media.

Unlike the Rio conference on the Environment and the Cairo conference on Population, the issues here were of little interest to them.

According to a UN fact-sheet, one in five people lives in absolute poverty. While most of them are in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, 15 per cent of the population in the United States and Western Europe are in this category.

550 million people go to bed hungry each night; 1.5 billion have no access to clean drinking water; One billion adults are illiterate and 550 million children do not go to school. Women are especially affected, comprising 66 per cent of illiterates and 70 per cent of the world's poor.

While the statistics are persuasive in themselves, they did little to move the representatives of the ruling rich who deigned to attend the centre-piece event in the UN's fiftieth anniversary year.

The main commitment that

was to have come out of the Summit was the 20:20 compact. 20 per cent of state spending in the Third World and 20 per cent of 'aid' from the richest economies should be spent on basic needs like health care, sanitation, education and nutrition.

In the event even this bargain between the plunderers of the world's resources and the rulers of the poor countries who collude with them didn't have enough support to become an enforceable obligation. It becomes a recom-

ment interest payments to banks and international financial institutions are greater than flows of loans and grants to the Third World.

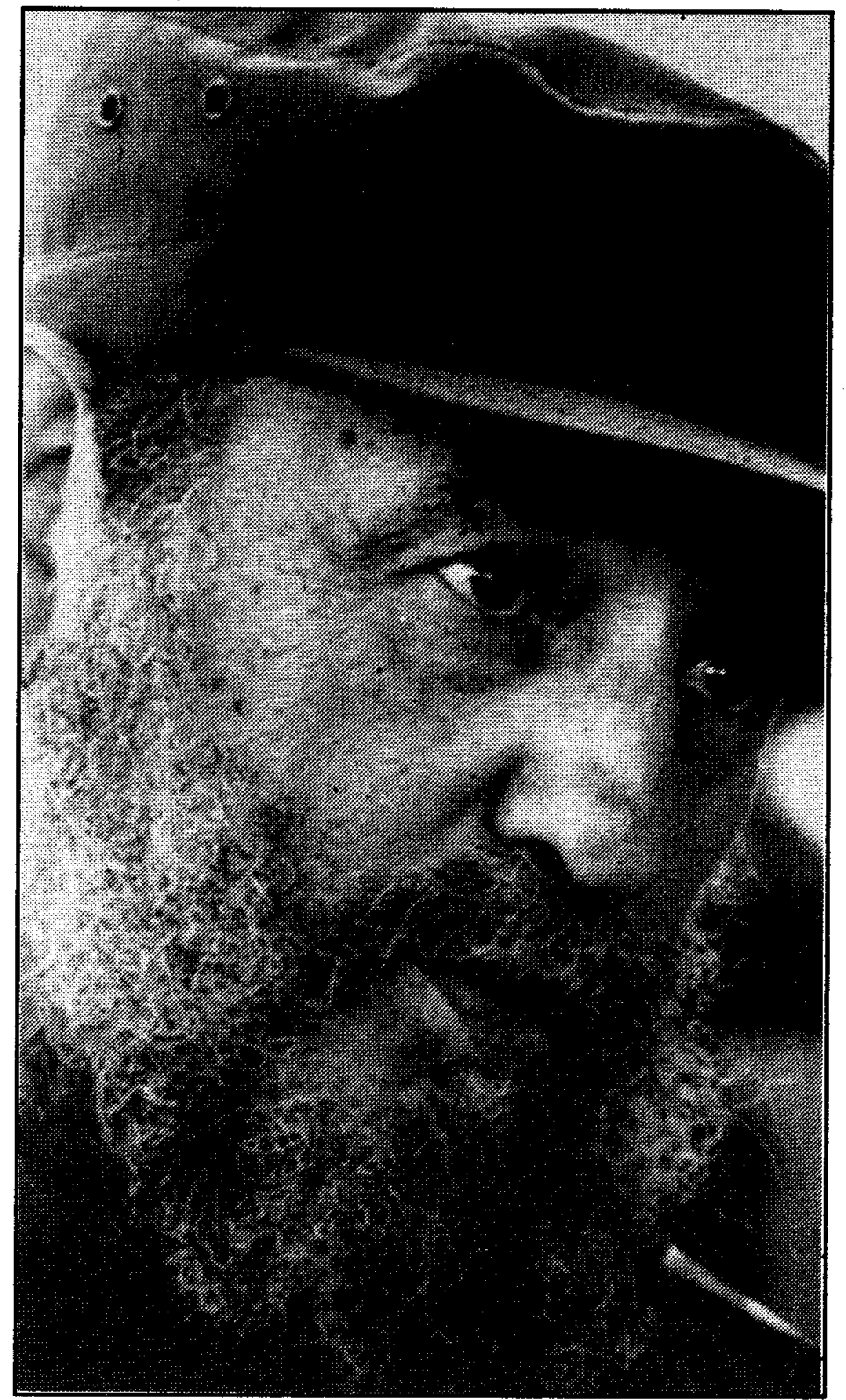
Fees for health

Over 100 countries have had Structural Adjustment Programmes as their economic strategy, obliging them to repay loans before social welfare spending, creating unemployment by reducing the public sector, introducing user fees for health and education services and so on.

up and administered by the IMF and with slight modifications, the so-called 'International Bank for Reconstruction and Development', or the World Bank.

As important and as useful a focus these NGO demands are, their moderation and short-sightedness is disappointing.

Instead of simply reducing the debt of the fifteen poorest countries, we demand total cancellation of all debts of the Third World and Eastern Europe. Instead of SAPs re-

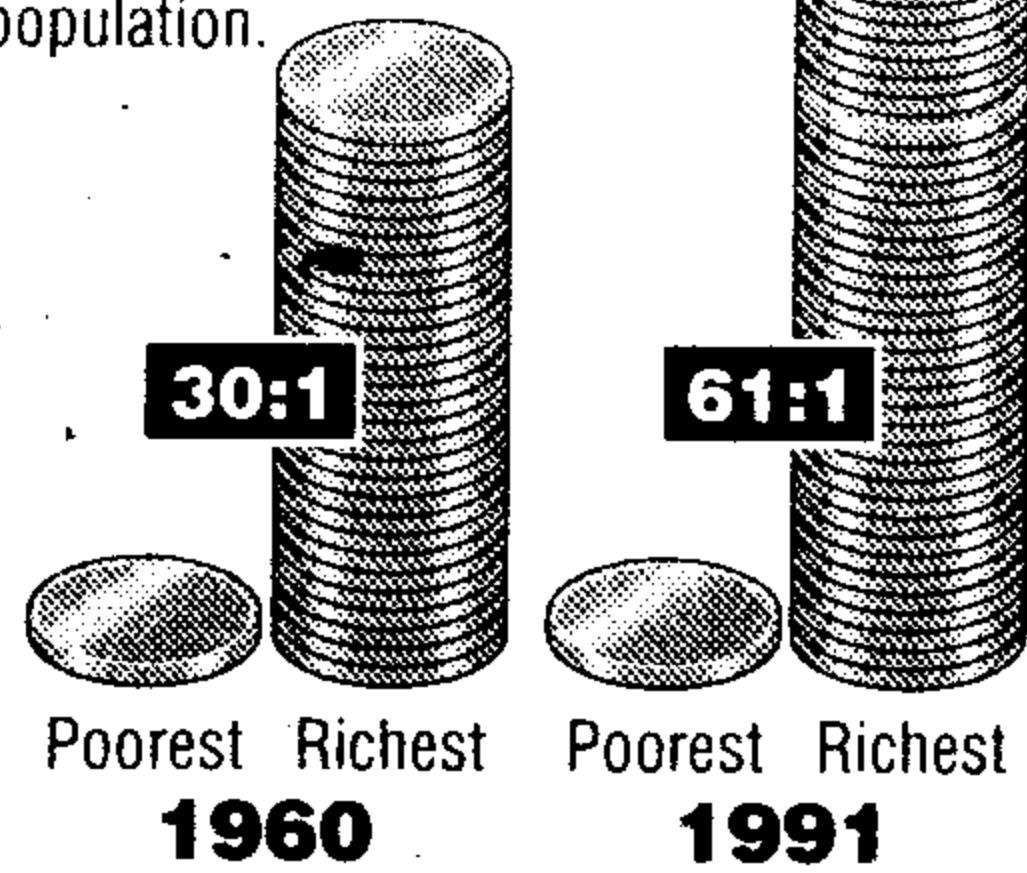


Castro: struggling against effects of US blockade

Now over to the UN

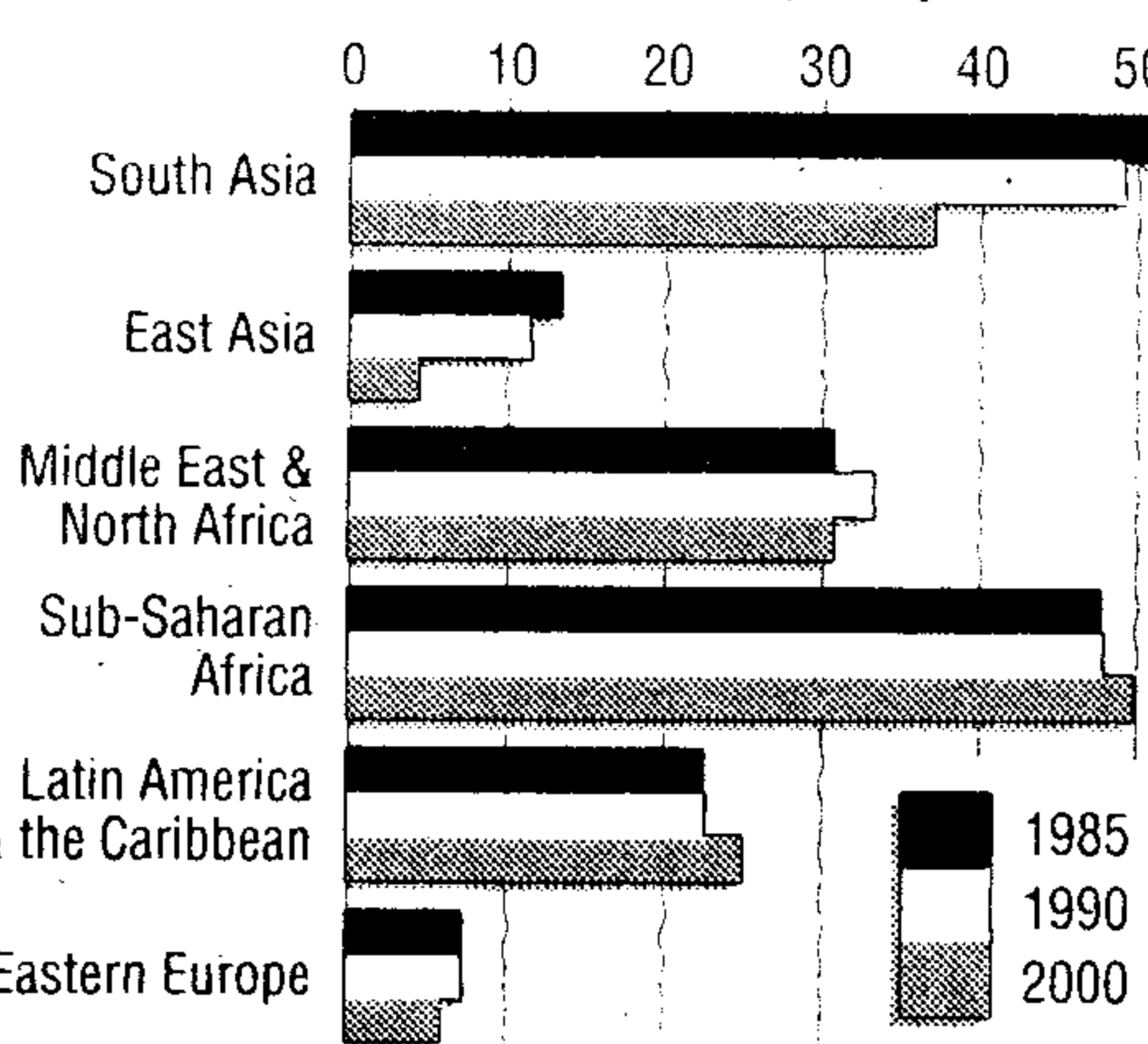
Poverty gap

The widening gap between rich and poor. Ratio of income shares - richest 20%: poorest 20% of world population.



Poverty in developing countries

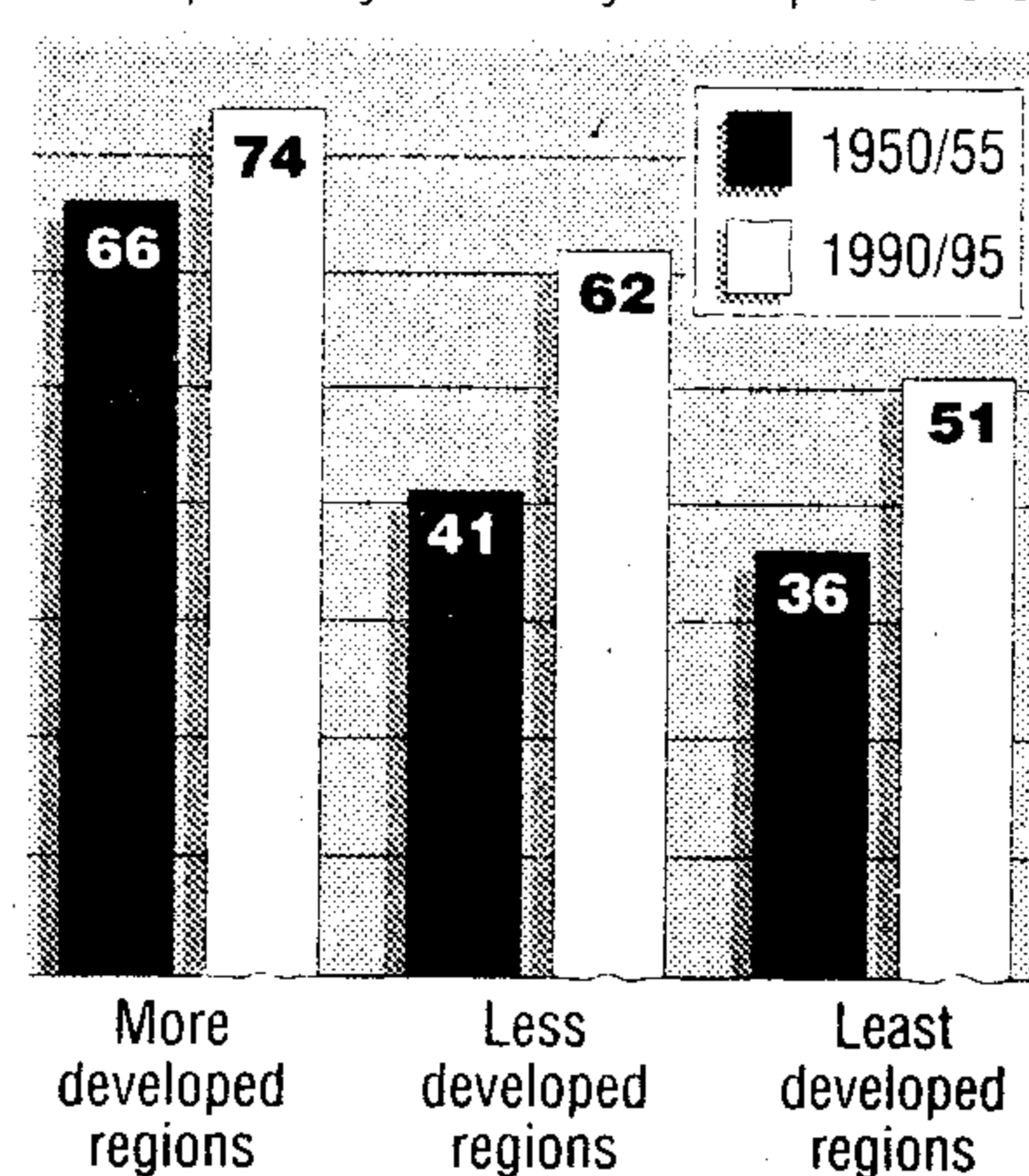
Percentage of population below poverty line.



Source: UN

Life expectancy

Life expectancy at birth by development level.



the market", boundless in its ability to cause greater and greater misery to more and more people, Fidel Castro was left to speak the truth.

Lambasting the final Summit Declaration, he said, "There is no mention of unequal trade, of capital flight or that the developing world is financing the developed world".

Failure

The Cuban leader pointed out that countries following the capitalist path had failed to resolve problems of mass unemployment and environmental crisis. Cuba is the envy of Latin America in all social indicators, in spite of the loss of its main trading partners in Eastern Europe and the effects of the barbaric US embargo.

"In a world where the rich are becoming richer and the poor are growing poorer ...there can be no social development. Where there is no human feeling there can be no human rights."

Copenhagen was a sham. A few crumbs from the master's table was all we were promised - and even that didn't materialise. We want the bakery!

Total foreign debt now stands at US\$1.4 trillion, and interest payments to banks and international financial institutions are greater than flows of loans and grants to the Third World.

These austerity programmes tied to neo-liberal reforms, hurt the poor and favour the rich. They are drawn

designed with a social clause, we demand national budgets which are determined by and responsive to the exploited

majority.

Instead of reform of the IMF and WB which are controlled by the advanced capitalist countries, we demand their abolition.

The sad fact is that many of the NGOs, and the governments they justly criticise, are tackling the symptoms of inequalities of wealth between and within countries, and not their root cause - capitalism.

While UN Secretary General Boutros-Boutros Ghali and US Vice President Al Gore proclaimed their faith in the "boundless potential of

WORLD OUTLOOK

Mass strikes rock Bangladesh

By Tafazzul Hussain
President Bangladesh National Workers Federation

ON FEBRUARY 13 unions representing jute and textile workers in Bangladesh began a three-day general strike to demand an end to the privatisation and dismantling of the jute

industry.

The workers are further demanding that the government live up to the agreement it signed last year, which would raise the minimum monthly wage of jute and textile workers to US\$23.

The government's response to the general strike and its massive support was to violently repress the strikers.

During the first two days of the strike four workers were killed and

300 injured.

In response to this unprovoked act of aggression by the government numerous trade union federations as well as the Democratic Front decided to call a one-day strike on February 15.

The strike paralysed the entire country. They also staged a mass rally in Dhaka which drew tens of thousands of workers to protest the police violence and to demand that the government heed the strik-

ers demands.

The government responded to these mobilisations with more violence.

By the end of the day of February 15 a total of eight strikers had been killed and hundreds more had been injured. One hundred and twenty workers and strike leaders remain in jail.

This three-day strike came up on the heels of another series of mass actions by the jute and tex-

tile workers.

On January 21-24 a three-day general strike took place with more than 500,000 participating. One worker at the Kakurghat Jute mill in Chittagong was killed and more than 100 were injured.

The embattled jute and textile workers have risen up to save the jute industry - which sustains 30 million people in Bangladesh alone, 1.2 million of whom are industrial workers.

IG Metall gains will fuel pay fight

TWELVE days of selective strikes by the giant IG Metall engineering union have forced concessions from the employers.

All 3.4 million union members will begin a 35-hour week from October 1 this year, despite bosses' attempts to delay the final one hour cut.

And the 3.8 percent annual pay increase this year and next, while falling short of the union's 6 percent claim, is higher than most employers had expected the engineering firms to concede.

It appears that the union threat to spread the strike beyond the initial stoppages in Bavaria forced the hand of the negotiators for the bosses' Gesamtmetall confederation.

In the event they even dropped their call for 'offsetting measures' to finance the shorter hours.

The outcome will encourage other unions to fight for their outstanding pay demands. A million construction workers are demanding 6.5 percent, and chemical workers are seeking 6 percent.

The fight should also reinforce demands across Europe for the 35 hour week.

Germany: battles rage among Stalin's orphans

By Charles Mullet

IN THE NEW unified Germany the successor to a party which once locked up dissidents the Democratic Socialist Party (PDS) has become itself become a party of dissidence.

The survival of the PDS in the face of unrelenting establishment hostility makes it, almost despite itself, a part of the radical opposition.

Following the collapse of the Stalinist German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1989 the West German capitalists pushed hard to ensure that the new united Germany would be built on their terms.

The PDS however has weathered the storm, and at the general elections last October won seats in the German Parliament owing to its continuing strength in East Germany - especially in Berlin.

Among those elected were Winfried Wolf, a long-standing supporter of the Fourth International.

Defending GDR

Dissidence, however, is not a political programme. The PDS's real concern remains defence of a separate East German identity and, by implication, defence of some aspects at least of the former GDR.

While efforts are being made to expand the party westwards, almost all PDS members are in the GDR



Stalinist rule in the old GDR collapsed in the face of mass opposition from the working class

(130,000 as against 2,000 in the West). Sixty per cent of the membership is over 50 years old.

The debates at the PDS conference at the end of January were dominated by the GDR problem.

The party's well-known "human faces" - such as Gregor Gysi and Hans Modrow - wanted to drive the Communist Platform current out of the party.

The Platform's best known figure Sarah Wagenknecht has said that the GDR should have been saved and improved. Other supporters of the Platform have espoused unrepentant Stalinist positions.

Gysi and his right wing allies want to get rid of the Communist Platform as part of their bid to make the PDS an acceptable partner for the major parties in local or national government coalitions - a real possibility given the current parliamentary arithmetic.

Fond memories

On the other hand in order to survive the PDS must seek both to attract electoral support on the left and maintain such support from those with fond memories of the former East German state.

It must therefore try to be all things to all people. Point two of the "five points"

adopted by the conference says "whether a parliamentary fraction of the PDS finds itself playing in parliament an oppositional role, supporting a government from outside, or in a coalition, does not affect the PDS' principled oppositional stance".

At the same time the leadership's efforts to exclude members of the Platform were thwarted by conference delegates.

Half of the PDS parliamentary group issued a statement opposing exclusions and calling for an open debate on all fundamental issues.

The PDS is both a major opportunity and a big problem for the German left. In-

volvement in its debates is both an inevitability and a potential trap.

Above all the GDR problem is a potential quagmire for anybody who shares the prevailing confusion between socialism and the bureaucratic caricature that existed in the former East Germany.

The heritage of Stalin therefore continues to cast a long shadow over the left, despite the collapse of the one-party regimes in Central and Eastern Europe.

The radical critique of Stalinism carried out by Trotsky and others in the 1930s retains all its relevance today.

Big Mac puts greens in the dock

By David Thomas

A HIGH Court libel trial brought by the \$24 billion a year McDonald's Corporation looks likely to become the longest libel trial in British history.

It began in June 1994 and is expected to last until at least December 1995. The defendants are two unwaged London Greenpeace Supporters, Helen Steel and Dave Morris.

The libel is alleged to have taken place in the mid-1980s. London Greenpeace activists distributed a factsheet accusing McDonald's of, amongst other things, ruining the environment, committing cruelty to animals, and of exploiting children through advertising and workers through low pay.

After sending private investigators into London Greenpeace meetings McDonald's issued five people with libel writs. Though three of those served apologised, Steel and Morris decided to fight on.

At McDonald's request the

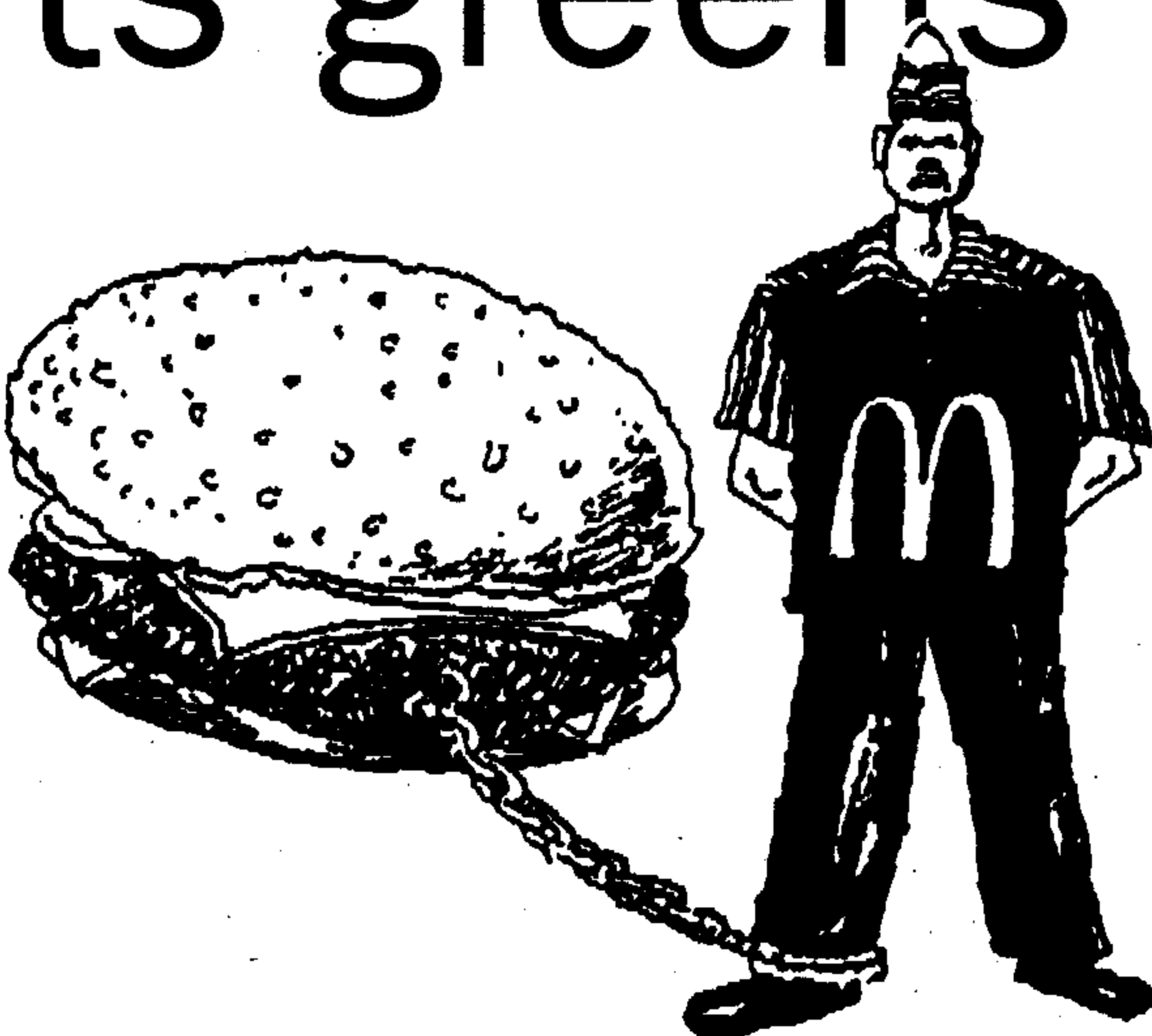
defendants were denied a jury trial (McDonald's argued that the issues were too complex to allow their assessment by a jury). The case is being heard by a single Judge and, with no legal aid in libel cases, the defendants are forced to conduct their own defence against McDonald's team of top libel lawyers.

The trial is of particular importance to trade unionists and the labour movement. The defence will be calling 40 ex-McDonald's workers as well as trade union activists and officials from around the world.

These will include trade unionists from Lyons in France, where ten McDonald's managers were arrested in July 1994 for trying to rig union elections.

Historically trade unions have been given a rough ride by McDonald's management. In the 1970's McDonald's in the USA used to send "flying squads" of managers to "restaurants" the moment union organisation began.

The "flying squads" were generally successful: trade



unions have made very little headway in the USA or anywhere else for that matter.

Sweden

The exceptions are Sweden and the Republic of Ireland where after protracted struggles unions have gained recognition.

In Ontario during a recent long running dispute McDonald's management took the extraordinary measure of getting its employees to lie in the snow forming the word "NO" (to trade unions!)

Working conditions are poor. Wages are low, and workers do not have guaranteed hours. 80% of McDonald's employees work part time, while annual staff turnover is 60% (in the USA it runs at a staggering 300%)

McDonald's UK President, Paul Preston, maintains that £3.10 an hour for crew members is not a low wage. When asked why the company could not pay higher wages out of the \$1 billion profits made last year, he replied that "people are paid a wage for the job they

do." A 1992 Health and Safety Executive investigation into the working conditions of McDonald's employees criticised the company's policy of getting staff to "hustle" i.e. work at speed at all times.

Safety last

The HSE report concluded "the application of McDonald's hustle policy in many restaurants was, in effect, putting the service of the customer before the safety of employees."

The McLibel defendants are not the only people to have been threatened by the company with legal action.

McDonald's solicitors have sent legal threats to a number of labour movement and campaigning organisations, including the Scottish TUC to try and suppress criticism.

Corporations like McDonald's are precisely those which any incoming Labour government has to come to grips with.

A statutory minimum wage

set at a decent rate, maternity and paternity leave entitlement, the right to join a trade union are reforms which can start to lay the basis of decent standard of living for those workers in the private sector who are the victims of "a dynamic market economy."

The McLibel Support Campaign is asking union branches and other labour movement bodies to pass the following Model Resolution.

"This branch/organisation recognises the poor working conditions at McDonald's and their hostility to trade unionism and supports the rights of staff to organise and take industrial action; protests against the company's attempts to suppress criticism, in particular the use of libel laws as censorship. We agree to circulate information about the trial."

Send copies of the resolution and donations to McLibel Support Campaign, c/o London Greenpeace, 5 Caledonian Road, London, N1 9DX

WORLD OUTLOOK

Disclosure: a parable for anti-feminist times

Kathryn Marshall reviews *Disclosure* Cert. 18, 128 mins.

IN THE 1980s, Barry Levinson's *Toys* gave us a view of the world which said that if people could only join together in action, any ruthless dictator could be overcome.

In the 1990s Levinson has left behind such childish things with a vengeance to create *Disclosure*.

This film is a nasty 'feminist backlash' bonanza, with a rousing endorsement given to all the most reactionary attitudes towards women in the home and at work that come alongside the belief that some sort of equality has been achieved

The film opens panning around Tom Saunders' beautiful house. Distant voices herald a type of ideal domesticity which is shaken during the film. Michael Douglas plays Saunders, a good family man who makes himself late for work by helping his wife, Susan, with the kids.

It's clear that Susan (Caroline Goodall) could go back to her full-time law career anytime she liked, but she prepares to look after her home and children out of the sunniness of her heart.

This film makes no secret of the fact that this is how a woman should behave. Female strength should be channelled into making such a choice with a smile on your face. The alternative use of

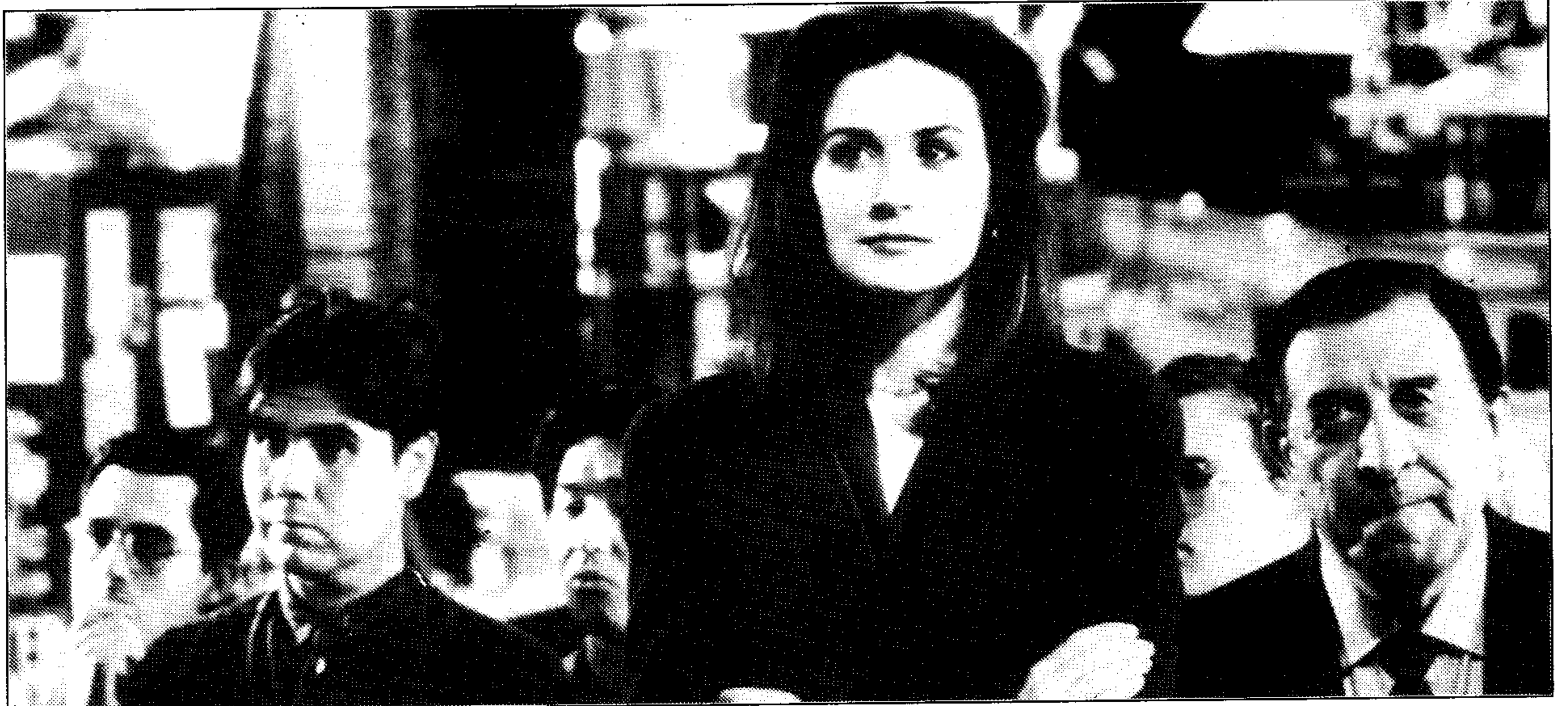
female strength is embodied in Meredith Johnson, played by Demi Moore.

Johnson is assertive. She knows what she wants. She's risen high in her career and is given the job that Saunders expected to drop into his lap. Sounds good, doesn't she?

Unfortunately, this film tells us that such characteristics in women combine to make a monstrous creature who manipulates the weak, but essentially good, Saunders into her pants and into a real mess at work.

Meridith's assertiveness is equated with aggression and general unpleasantness.

Then there's the sex scene: a still of it is plastered all over billboards. Meridith makes the first and second moves on Saunders and, true, he jab-



Head and shoulders above the men: Demi Moore in the film adaptation of Michael Crichton's novel

turned and Saunders jumps on Johnson. His anger, over her ignoring his asking her to

Later, that is glossed over - but crucial to understanding this film is recalling that it is

Saunders will not agree to sex with Johnson, despite all her strenuous efforts, until he is on top and calling the shots. Then, he very nearly goes through with it.

the glitch in the company's hardware production.

Predictably, Meredith Johnson is sacked and replaced by a supportive and passive woman, a sender of secret messages which helped Saunders bring down Johnson.

This is how the film wants women to behave at work and in life. They should quietly and calmly support men. That way, they will be granted responsibility.

The only alternative is to be some kind of comic strip villainess, so truly loathsome she has to be crushed.

There is no room for a female rising star who can succeed through her work, talents and initiative. The possibility of such a creature does not ever arise.

Disclosure looks slick and shiny, but it's actually a very grubby and nasty business. There are far better ways to spend your time.

Passive

Saunders wins a sexual harassment charge against her with the help of several more supportive and passive women. There's Susan, and there's Cindy, who helps him to understand how close he has come to sexual harassment himself when he patted her on the bottom. Finally there's Catherine Alvarez, but it is Saunders, not her, who uncovers all the evidence.

It becomes clearer that Johnson is trying to make Saunders a scapegoat for the company's difficulty in clinching an important merger. We are encouraged to be ecstatic when he exposes her as responsible for



Caroline Goodall and Michael Douglas play Hollywood's ideal family

bers 'no' repeatedly. But halfway through their coming together the tables are

stop, comes out in an even more aggressive sexual display than she had mustered up.

about men reclaiming power over women and restoring the status quo they are used to.

Guardian of today's 'modernisers'

Clare Murphy reviews Will Hutton's *The State We're In*

TODAY THE supremacy of the market as a mechanism for regulating virtually every area of life is a dogma which goes virtually unchallenged.

This is a big success for the Tories management of the British economy since 1979 and their project. They have done away for ever with the Keynesian consensus which dominated every parliamentary political party in the post-war period.

Hutton identifies a number of features of British capitalism which have given the new right their victory.

• The influence of the City

of London and the financial markets in British political life and the short-termism which characterizes their dealings have ensured the elevation of the interests of finance over production.

• "Gentlemanly capitalism" - the reproduction of the stultifying British class system through its network of public school, Oxbridge, the civil service, city boardrooms, Royal and upper class social circles - has ensured the dominance of Conservative political values in every important institution and prevented the development of a more free-thinking, critically-minded capitalists class.

• The absence of a written British constitution has enabled a single-minded government to ruthlessly pursue its political project by centralizing power.

The Tories have seized

control of those institutions of the state essential to their purpose unashamedly using patronage to put their toadies in place. Those, like the GLC, which they can't control are broken up.



Ally of Labour right: Hutton

The weakness of Labour, argues Hutton, and the ideological vacuum which it has floated in since the collapse

of its welfare-state capitalist project, have meant the absence of any serious opposition to the new right project.

The strength of Hutton's book is the immensely readable and convincing dissection of the British economy. His knowledge of the international capitalist institutions is instructive.

There is a particularly interesting section comparing British market institutions with those of the United States, Japan, and other parts of Europe.

The greatest strength of Hutton's book is, however, its biggest flaw. He mistakenly identifies the problems produced by British capitalism as a by-product of its unique national character.

But revolutionary marxists understand that capitalism is an international system and that, while nation states give it a distinct character, it

is the system itself, not its precise form, which demands change.

So Hutton ultimately calls only for a reform of British capitalism. He wants to see the establishment of a form of "stakeholder capitalism" in which those who run the economy do so in the interests of a wider public good.

The financial system must be republicanised; there must be regulation and management of the market economy; a stable international financial order must be constructed; political democracy strengthened with the aid of a written constitution; the welfare state democratized.

In all of this the institutions of Europe must play a leading role and new Labour must transform itself into a party fit for government - a step Hutton believes is already being taken with Blair's commitment to abol-

ish Clause four. Hutton's book provides a prescription for how this may be achieved.

The State We're In is part of a growing body of work designed to give credence to the political project of Labour's right.

It is an ambitious project. Even though it is based on the incredibly naive belief that modern capitalism can be shackled and civilized by good intention alone, it is nevertheless building up a very broad basis of support.

These are the ideas that will underpin the next Labour government. This is why it is important that revolutionary marxists intervene into the developing debate to pose an alternative that truly confronts the power of capital.

Socialists should read this book for it is set to become one of the important political texts of the 1990s and beyond.

Whose 'community' is it, anyway?

Communitarianism: a fashion for the '90s

Bill Clinton has his book on his White House desk. Tony Blair swears by him. Serious journalists are writing pages and pages based on his ideas: the man of the moment is Amitai Etzioni.

On the same day Blair launched his new clause The Times sponsored a central London lecture by this would-be guru of new Labour. SIMON DOYLE was there for Socialist Outlook.

WHENEVER a society enters decline, people look for a way out. The first place they look is not to the future but to the past. This is the crux of Amitai Etzioni's message - a return to a time when we all shared common values and these values gave society a stability the whole community could share. It is another "golden age" philosophy. It is based on a mythical time of social peace and harmony that is supposed to have existed

in 1950s America. It seeks to recreate this Nirvana in a modern setting.

The communitarianism that Blair and sections of the political classes are discussing originates in US colleges. Formally it is an intellectual response to the liberal theories of justice, government and social conduct promoted by the philosopher John Rawls.

Its basic case is that people are social beings first and foremost. They cannot be individuals except in a social setting. We stand in society, and cannot do otherwise.

As a political philosophy this dates back to the first theorists - Aristotle spoke of something similar when he said that "man is a political animal".

Fashion

But communitarianism has exploded on to the scene for more reason than it is just another fashionable ideology for academics. All ideas have a reason for their popularity. This is no exception.

It is gaining support because it seems to offer a way out of social and moral decline. The streets of most US cities are not pleasant places to be. Crime and social decay is everywhere. This ideology claims to offer a solution.

Etzioni poses his message very simply. People should live freely

in society taking responsibility for themselves and for their families. The state should not get involved unless the community cannot solve the problem, and the community should not get involved unless the family cannot resolve the difficulty.

His is a simple hierarchy of responsibility relying on the family as the basic unit of a society welded together by shared values. These values should embody a balance between rights and duties. What we have to do is get the balance right.

Etzioni appeared at the *Times* lecture more as a missionary proselytizer than an academic. In the audience was David Blunkett, dozens of middle ranking academics and most of the columnists from the major newspapers.

He was trying to convince us of his political programme, not win us to a high minded theory.

He argued we need three precepts to set our civic house in order.

First, we must address ourselves to moral issues. Society needs a moral "glue" to keep it all together. Only by establishing a set of institutions founded on this morality can we promote our "noble selves" over our base natural urges. These "mediating structures" are needed also to protect the family from the powers of government.

Secondly, we must pay much



more attention to human needs. High on the list of needs is for people to know where they stand in a moral community - what is right and what is wrong.

Thirdly, the point of balance of rights and responsibilities has to be appropriately shifted. In the US there is too much emphasis on rights. Peoples' responsibilities to their communities are being forgotten.

Completely absent from Etzioni's politics is any conception of social structure. His is a world where the realities of class and gender don't operate.

Idealised

Instead of examining the detail of division, inequality and the operation of social forces he gives us an idealised picture of moral consensus. There is no recognition of culture, of economics, of ethnicity, of sexuality, of most of the things that shape our lives.

In contrast to the rather complicated reality we have to live through the communitarians assert a shared core of values that bind us together. Little attempt is

made to question where these values come from, or whose interests they serve. Indeed no attempt is made to challenge them at all. We're told they're necessary - that's all.

In this sense communitarianism accommodates to whatever is the "commonsense" of the moment. This is no way to analyse the world.

Commonsense is a place where different ideas compete for dominance. It was once commonsense that "witches" should be burned alive. Sexism and racism are "core" values of our society. This does not make them acceptable, necessary or desirable.

Behind the vagaries of the modern communitarian message lies a set of deeply reactionary assumptions. In their hands so called "consensus" politics becomes a veil behind which to hide the realities of modern capitalism and the inequalities on which it rests.

There is no "common good" to defend because all capitalist societies are deeply divided. It is an ideology of passivity in the face of the offensive.

A theory tailor-made for young Tony

IN THE *Sunday Times* Sarah Baxter relates a little story about being invited over to Etzioni's restaurant table after his *Times* lecture.

The topic of conversation was the new Clause Four, "Etzioni immediately recognised its 'on the one hand and on the other' quality", she recalls, "and claimed it as his own. 'It is a communitarian document' he explained. He was right."

All the themes are there: rights and duties, nurturing families as the agency of stability, decisions being taken "as far as practicable by the communities they affect".

Blair has put his reading to good work. He has picked out communitarianism as a mobilising ideology for his new party.

It is clear that Blair has no

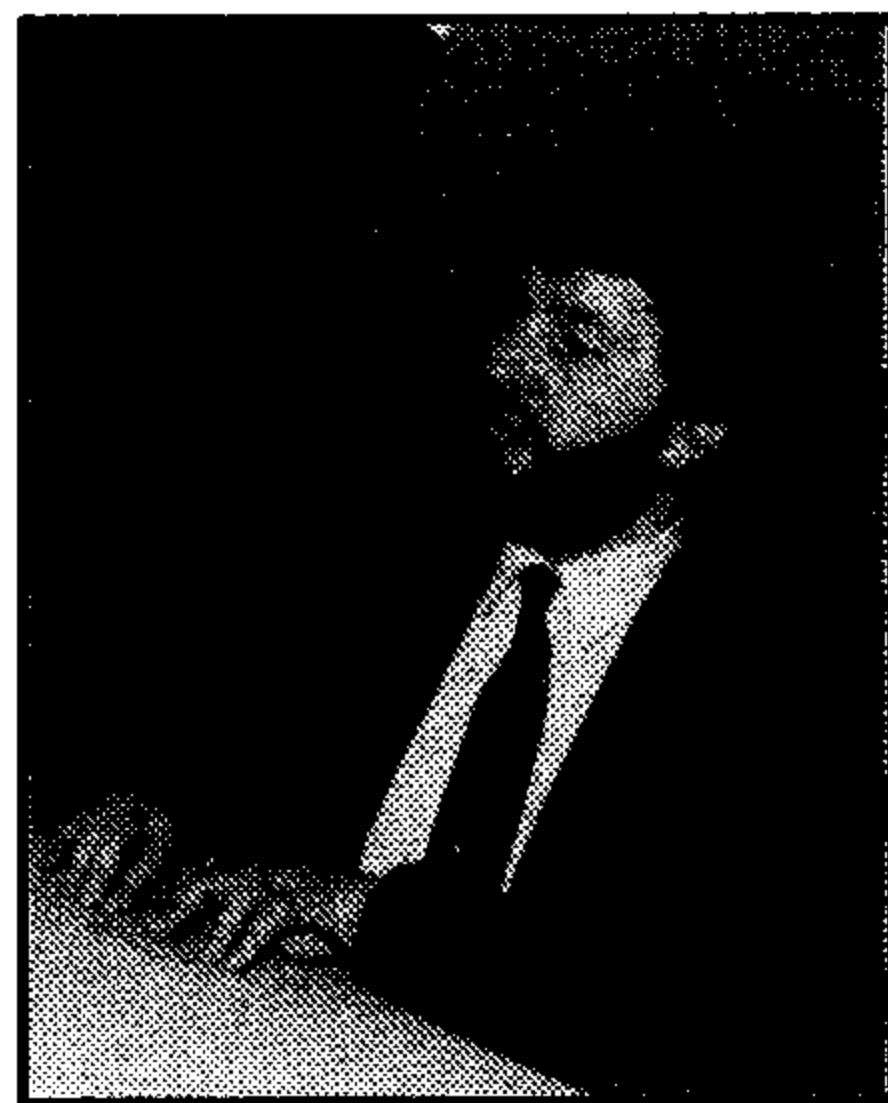
meaningful policy alternative to the new capitalist offensive. The Labour Party leadership have capitulated on every issue that counts.

But whereas Kinnock attacked the left because he was told to, Blair has a much more conscious project.

At its centre is a massive shift to the right. As the *Daily Telegraph* writes "He does not try to persuade Conservatives to stop being Conservative, only to stop voting Conservative".

He is having great success - the Liberal Democrats are dead in the water. The Lib-Lab coalitionism that the left feared through the 1980s has been carried through without having to formally announce it: every political programme, bar that of the far right, is now to be found in the Labour Party.

In order to carry the pro-



Etzioni fan: David Blunkett

ject through he has to mobilise the activists in his own party, end the trade union link and break Labour from its working class base.

If he smashes up the Labour Party as we know it he will be forced to find a new social base to rely upon. It is a credit to his farsightedness that he is beginning to put it in place.

This base needs a set of ideas that will sound progres-

sive and comforting, but that will not challenge the programme of European capitalism he wants to adopt. A Blair government will carry on the attack on the welfare state. It will do nothing to reverse unemployment and poverty. It will deliver no substantial reform.

Communitarianism provides the means to justify all this.

Its themes of home and hearth offer a reassurance to middle income families who are beginning to feel the pinch, who are concerned that the homeless will start camping on their front lawn, who are aghast at the prospect of their children having to go to the same school as the offspring of the chronically poor.

In this sense then communitarianism is also the ideology of middle class despair.

Thus its attacks on the traditional targets of the right: single parents, drug users, those who don't join in with "normal society". "We will be the ones to protect you from the nastiness of the world outside" says Blair.

Marginalised

For the poor and the dispossessed, for the marginalised and unemployed, for those permanently threatened with losing their jobs, those struggling on low wages, communitarianism has nothing to offer.

It is a response to moral panic. Because it does nothing to confront the power of capital and the deunionised, deskilled, privatised, market regulated economy the bosses are imposing on us, it will not be able to even begin to address the crisis.

This suits Blair down to the ground.

That the empty phrases of communitarianism are the best he's got to offer should reassure us a little. Nevertheless the new ideological block that is being constructed around anti-labour movement ideas is an obstacle that must be seriously confronted by the left.

Communitarianism throws down a gauntlet to socialists. We need to come up with answers that are not only more persuasive, but that show their value in the struggle to reorganise the world.

Theirs is a mobilising ideology for the current attack on the labour movement. This is its danger. That Blair has already been able to win his communitarian clause on the Labour Party NEC is an indication of its effectiveness. We cannot ignore it.

WHERE WE STAND

FACING MASS unemployment, rampant employers equipped with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-won education, health and welfare services, the working class in Britain faces a real crisis - an avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

Socialist Outlook exists to fight for a new type of working class leadership, based on the politics of class struggle and revolutionary socialism, to tackle this crisis.

The capitalist class, driven and politically united by its own crisis, its requirement to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has been given determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal class-war Tory high command.

The Tory strategy has been to shackle the unions with legislation, and to fragment and weaken the resistance of the working class and oppressed, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time, using the full powers of the state.

In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defeatist politics of 'new realism', effectively proclaiming total surrender on every front, while ditching any pretence that they offer a socialist alternative. Every retreat and concession they have made to the employers and the government has simply fuelled and encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form taken by the politics of reformism, seeking no more than improved conditions within the framework of capitalist rule.

Socialist Outlook rejects reformism, not because we are against fighting for reforms, but because we know that the needs of the working class - for full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy - can never be achieved under capitalism.

Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of Stalinism, could these demands ever be achieved under the bureaucratically deformed workers states and degenerated USSR, whose regimes survived only by repressing their own working class.

We are a marxist current, based not on the brutish totalitarian parodies of state marxism, nor on the tame, toothless version of 'marxism' beloved by armchair academ-

ics, but the revolutionary tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

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

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, working to link and unite the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities and ethnic minorities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth - and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and throughout the world.

Socialist Outlook is above all an internationalist current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises co-thinkers in 40 countries worldwide.

Unlike some other groupings on the British left, we do not believe a mass revolutionary party can be built simply by proclaiming ourselves to be one. Too often this degenerates into sectarian posturing and abstention from the actual struggle taking shape within the labour movement, playing into the hands of the right wing.

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland and Wales should be left to await the outcome

of a socialist revolution. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now around their own demands, which are a part of the struggle for socialism.

But propaganda alone, however good, will not bring socialism. The fight for policies which can mobilise and politically educate workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour Party and every campaign and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

To strengthen this fight we press for united front campaigns on key issues such as fighting racism and fascism - in which various left currents can work together for common objectives while remaining free to debate their differences.

If you agree with what you see in *Socialist Outlook*, and want to join with us in the struggle for socialism, readers' groups meet in towns across the country. Contact us now, get organised, and get active!



SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

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'Polers' Vs. 'Boulders'

THERE IS no doubt that the Scottish Labour Party conference in Inverness led to a realignment in world politics.

Gone are the left, right and liberal. A new vocabulary was forced on stunned delegates through the inexorable logic of deregulation and the global communication revolution.

There is an unsubstantiated rumour that some delegates had read the recent International Labour Organisation report which highlights a third of the world's 820 million workers as under- or un-employed.

In this vicious world of rumour and counter-rumour, some Machiavellian tactician with a warped sense of the ridiculous has alleged that the Labour Party 'modernisers' have come up with 'the' so-

lution to the Missing Link of Our Times - the market mechanism, which hereto will be called Socialism. It will be infantile and discourteous in the extreme to disagree.

The name Inverness will reverberate around the world as the place where the new fault-line definitions for the next century first poked through. In the interests of clarity, each MP must be issued with a choice of tattoos to be imprinted on their foreheads as they enter the town's borders. One is of Sisyphus rolling a boulder up the hill. The second is a greasy pole.

Thus straight away we differentiate between those prepared to proclaim their powerlessness in a parliament which has little or no influence as capital ups and does in the twinkling of a unselected stock broker's eye (they get the boulder), to be lined up against the 'greasy pole to nowhere brigade' suffering from the self-delusion that they can regulate the market.

The 'Polers' by their nature will be duty bound to exterminate the handful of troublesome 'Boulders' who will not accept the rules of the game, but by default this will expose a great historical truth; all the energy, flare, commitment and blood which has led to change in the past has begun as extra-parliamentary struggle and usually, those with an eye for the past will have noticed, criminal.

Let's face it. If we are going to save the planet and begin the Great Democratic Debate over the liberation of Capital between the 'Polers' and 'Boulders' we need something spectacular upon which to distract attention from the OJ Simpson trial.

Paul Laverly, Givan

[Paul Laverly worked in central America as a human rights lawyer and wrote the script for Ken Loach's next film.]

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What's HAPPENING

To advertise your event write to 'What's Happening', PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU by Friday March 31.

MARCH

Thurs 23

SOCIALIST Outlook Clause IV forum with Peter Purton 7.30pm Red Rose Club Seven Sisters Road North London.

SOCIALIST Outlook Clause IV forum with Steve French Brighton.

ASIAN prisoners demand Justice 1pm-3pm with Jeremy Corbyn MP House of Commons Committee Room 7 Details: 0171 713 7907

Thurs 23- Sat 25

INTERNATIONAL bookfair of radical Black and Third World books Camden centre Bidborough Street WC1 Entry £1.

Fri 24- Sun 26

SCOTTISH Dimensions: a

History Workshop Journal conference at Ruskin College Walton Street Oxford. £22.50/£5 from the college. Details 01865 284333.

Sat 25

FACE national demonstration against Education cuts, London. 1pm Embankment. March 2pm to Hyde Park. BIRMINGHAM March for jobs and services 12 noon Victoria Square.

DEMONSTRATE For Justice! Protest against police inaction on racist attacks! meet 1pm Altab Ali Park Park Whitechapel Rd E1 details: CAPA 0171 729 1404.

NEWHAM anti-racist and anti-fascist day. 2pm-12 midnight Old Town Hall Stratford Broadway Details: NMP 0181 552 6284.

BADGERLINE national dem-

onstration meets 10am Central Park Chelmsford BR

FULL Employment conference 11am - 5pm Congress House Great Russell Street WC1 tickets £2/free.

Weds 29

'WHERE is Russia going?', Leeds Socialist Outlook public forum with Duncan Chapple 8.00pm Adephi pub Hunslet Rd nr Leeds Bridge.

'WORLD in crisis: an international socialist response' Socialist Outlook forum with John Lister 7.30pm Hurts Yard off Upper Parliament Street Nottingham

RAALY to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal speakers include Green Party, George Silcott, RMT and NUJ officials 6.30pm Friends Meeting House Euston Road NW1

Thurs 30 - Sat 1

INTERNATIONAL bookfair of radical Black and Third World books Partick Burgh Hall Glasgow.

APRIL

Sat 1

UNION Drive '95 national demonstration called by the NUJ in Sheffield. Speakers include Arthur Scargill.

GROUNDSWELL - a national forum for independent unemployed and claimants groups. 11am - 5.30pm East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street Oxford, OX4 1HU For details write to Oxford Unemployed Workers' & Claimants Union at the Community Centre telephone (01865) 723750 Fax 724317.

Sat 1 - Sun 2

LABOUR Party Women's Conference, Derby.

Sat 8

'FROM the Cradle to the Grave' Welfare State Network Conference on education, pensions and the NHS. 11am University of London Union, Malet St. WC2.

Fri 28

WORKERS Memorial Day 'Remember the dead: fight for the living'. Fight for safe working conditions. Leafleting and demonstration in London. Details: 0171-226-5436.



Over 1,000 will attend July International Youth Camp

Sat 29

DEMONSTRATION in Manchester against deportations called by Okolo Family Defence campaign 12.00 noon All Saints' Park Oxford Road.

Sat 29 - Sun 30

LABOUR Party special conference, London.

MAY

Sat 13

SOCIALISM, Social Democracy and revolution Socialist Outlook dayschool London. Speakers include Francois Vercammen, United Secretariat of the Fourth International. Tickets £6/£3 from Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

Sat 27

DAY of Action by Campaign

to Close Campfield.

AFRICAN Liberation Day march 1.00pm Kennington Park London SE11. Rally at Trafalgar Square Details: 0171 924 9033.

JULY

Sat 9

CRIMINAL Justice after the Bill a day conference sponsored by the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers. 9.30am - 4pm Camden Town Hall opposite St Pancras BR. £3/£10 from 20-21 Toaks Court EC4.

Fri 22 - Fri 29

INTERNATIONAL Youth Camp in southern France. Send £35 deposit to 'Liberation Publishing Association', PO Box 1109, N4.

Campaign opens to win more IV subscribers

By Duncan Chapple

FIVE HUNDRED of Socialist Outlook's sellers, supporters, subscribers

and sympathisers are about to receive a complementary copy of the new *International Viewpoint*.

It is a confident and ambitious start to the Prague-based monthly's campaign to

greatly extend the marxist review's circulation in Britain.

The March issue, out this week, features an experimental cover re-design as well as special in-depth analysis on women and fundamentalism and other issues world wide.

By offering a free copy of the 36-page magazine, *IV* hopes to help readers see first-hand all the reasons for subscribing as soon as possible.

It is the second issue of the Fourth International's magazine to be produced in Prague. New mailing and printing facilities in the Czech Republic have greatly strengthened the magazine's finances.

New electronic mail, editorial, translation and proof-reading systems introduced for the March issue have improved both production and distribution times and increased the international spread of contributors to the

magazine.

Sixteen contributors from around the world write in this issue.

International Viewpoint is one of the linked publications published by the Fourth International's United Secre-

tariat. German, French, and Castilian editions appear monthly as *International Press Correspondence*, the name of the magazine of Lenin's Third International. Czech, Polish, Russian and Arabic versions are also issued.

Subscribers this year will get an additional bonus: as before, the resolutions of the World Congress of the Fourth International will be compiled and published by *International Viewpoint*.

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT costs just £22 for 1 year.



Send your cheque, payable to 'Outlook International' to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

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12 issues: Britain £9, rest of the world £12 (air mail: £30, Australasia, Japan, China £38.)
Make cheques out to Socialist Outlook Fund.
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Socialism, Social Democracy & REVOLUTION

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK is holding a special day of discussion and debate for defenders of Clause 4. To be held in London on Saturday 13 May, the school will examine the historical record of social democracy, the relationship between revolutionaries and the reformist organisations, and the future of the Labour Party. Discussions will cover nationalisations, why marxists call for a Labour vote, and other important issues of concern to those fighting for socialism in the 1990s. Open To Socialist Outlook Supporters. For tickets, send a cheque for £6 waged, £3 unwaged to Socialist Outlook Fund, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

Socialist OUTLOOK

**Liberation!
Youth
Pull-out
Inside**

Mass action, not 'outing', is the way forward

Be Out! Be Proud!

By Peter Purton

Bishops are being outed. The Church of England is reviewing its position on lesbian and gay equality. Catholic Cardinal Hume condemns homophobia. Fanfares greet the opening of "Priest" with its gay theme. What on earth is going on, and should socialists care?

Homosexuality and heresy used to be regarded as identical. Those practising homosexuality were burnt at the stake.

Churches saw homosexuality as not just wrong, like non-procreative heterosexual sex, but as positively needing to be exterminated.

It is a view still held today by most fundamentalists.

So why is a liberal tide washing the steps of Canterbury Cathedral?

Certainly the concentrated "outing" of bishops campaign waged by Outrage has brought the issue to tabloid attention. But underlying it has been the conscious, if snail-paced, accommodation of church leaders to social reality.

This process is essential to the survival of their institution – as with the movement towards accepting women priests.

Religions are an ideological prop for social orders. Churches are the institutional representations of superstitions. They are the visible form of divine presence, something actual which people can worship, and so achieve relief and compensation for a world which is beyond their control or understanding.

But as societies change so must the way religions present their ideological packages. Otherwise they



run the risk of being left on the side-lines.

Islamic fundamentalism tries to re-assert laws which were developed to cope with seventh century nomadic society. Christianity has had to adjust from being a creed for a feudal peasant society to life in a

modern industrial world. In some areas they haven't quite made it yet.

Socialists applaud any improvement in human rights. For lesbian and gay priests not to be discriminated against by their church is a good thing, both for them, but also because another ideological

prop for homophobia is weakened in the process.

But it is not enough.

Real liberation of lesbian and gay sexuality can only develop in a society where people understand that they themselves can change the world and their lives – not some divine being.

So good luck to the gay bishops – and when they finally break down their sexism the lesbian bishops too.

But they shouldn't expect those of us who have seen the suffering imposed by their institutions to give them more than half a cheer.

So is "outing" justified?

In a society where lesbians and gay men are sacked, lose their children, are discriminated against, beaten up and ridiculed all without any legal recourse, the decision to come out has to remain a personal one.

Campaigners for lesbian and gay liberation want people to come out and take part in a struggle for our own liberation. But first we have to create an environment where it is safe for someone to do so. That is what is lacking.

In the end what is the difference between forcing "out" a public figure from a homophobic institution and being forced "out" by a reactionary tabloid?

Who gains from the outing of gay bishops who are so terrified of their sexuality that they support the homophobic institutions of religion and church?

If clergy genuinely support equality then they can join the many organisations which take forward the struggle. But to see this through they'll have to break with religion too. The Church of England will never become an organisation which is really on the side of the oppressed.