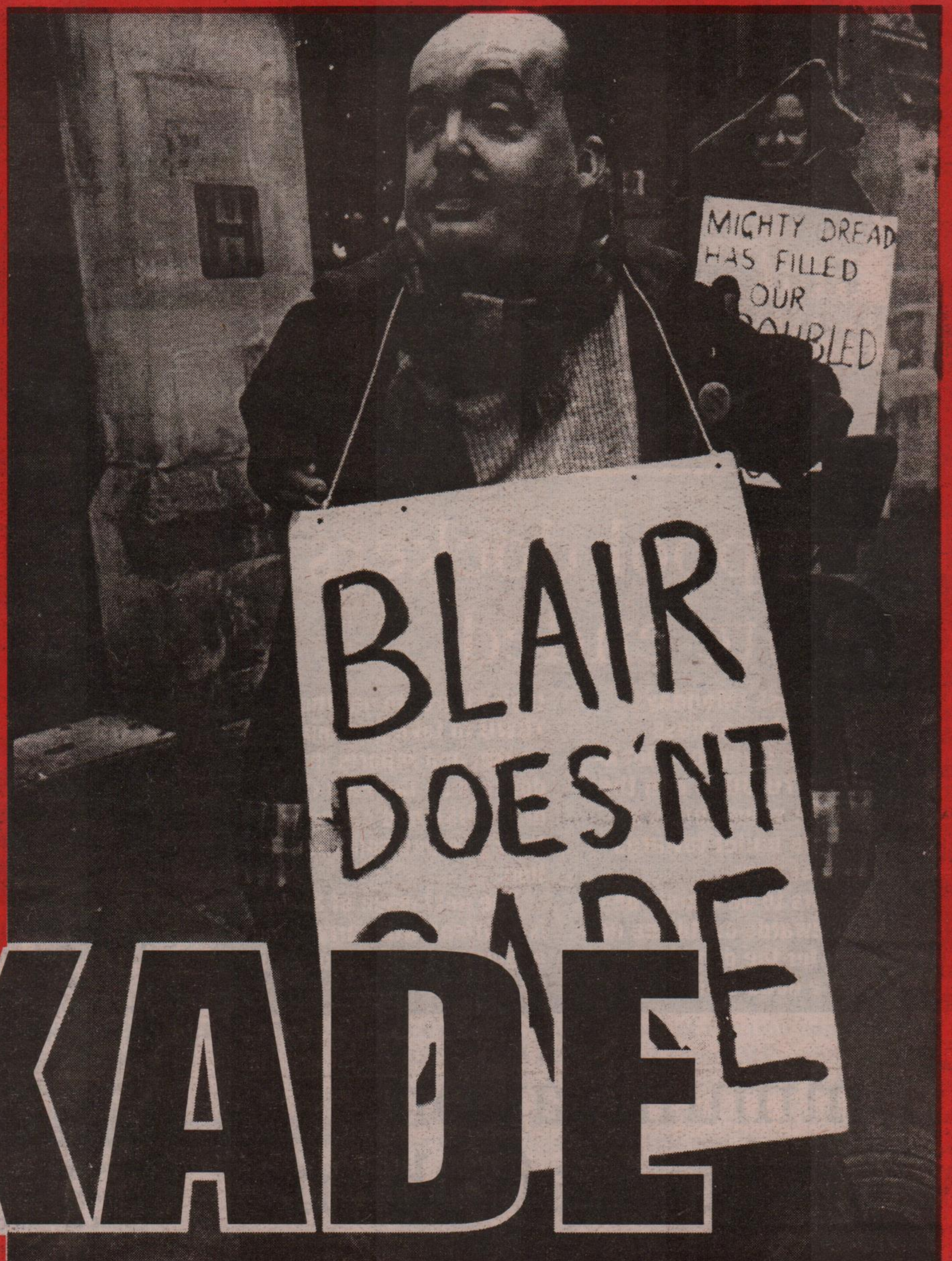


NS 12

Socialist OUTLOOK

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BLOCKADE

BLAIR'S ROADSHOW TO RUIN!

Defend the
welfare state –
see inside,
page 3,4,5,6,7



Stalingsrad O'Neill

Jack Straw holds the key - set Roisin free!

AFTER MONTHS of demanding Roisin McAliskey's attendance in person, the courts have finally agreed that she should be committed for extradition to Germany.

Strange as this may seem, this is in some ways a step forward for the campaign in that now direct pressure can be brought to bear on Jack Straw who holds her fate in his hands.

Roisin and her baby daughter are still in Maudsley psychiatric hospital trying to recover from the traumas she has been subject to since her incarceration.

She will have no chance of recovery if she is sent to Germany - where the legal process could take up to two years.

Yet there is clear evidence that she could not have committed the crime for which she is wanted - proof that she was at her workplace at the time - and no proof that she is indeed the person sought for the bombing of Osnabruck.

Stop this fit-up now and send your protests and those of your organisations to Jack Straw at: The Home Secretary, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW, England. to urge him not to extradite Roisin McAliskey.

Liverpool dockers dispute ended

As we go to press (Monday 26/1) we hear that a mass meeting of the Liverpool dockers has voted 70-30 to end the dispute on the same terms as rejected in the ballot towards the end of last year.

This appears to be mainly because the stewards could see no way forward for the dispute, having reached a dead end with

their efforts to get the TGWU to take up their cause, and reports that dockers on the East Coast of the USA had called off their planned solidarity action.

The next issue of *Socialist Outlook* will carry a full analysis of the dispute and its ending.

Communication Workers Left shuns 'dream ticket'

Pete Cooper

THIS SPRING the Communication Workers Union (CWU) will hold the first General Secretary election since the formation of the union.

The Broad Left has already selected its candidate, Billy Hayes, an elected full timer on the numerically larger ex UCW side of the union. The other certain runners will be the current joint General Secretaries Derek Hodgson (Postal) and Tony Young (Telecom), both Blairite right wingers.

Unfortunately the recent Broad Left AGM did not discuss the election policies and campaign, but a proposal from Hayes and his supporters that the BL should immediately adopt a 'running mate' for the Deputy General Secretary position. This election is not due to take place until the autumn at the earliest. The aim would be to create a broad coalition across the three union constituencies, including sections of the right wing Clerical Constituency leadership.

Opponents rejected the necessity for this move and called instead for a vigorous campaign to mobilise support amongst activists for clear socialist policies in Hayes' campaign. The campaign has yet to produce its first leaflet.

One potential effect of this 'dream ticket' approach would be to drag the BL into an amorphous framework of "new realist" politics, and it could seriously undermine any elements of accountability to BL activists. The proposal was rejected by a 2-1 margin.

BT's introduction of Profit Related Pay, unopposed by BL NEC members, was rejected as a blatant attempt by BT to claw back its £500m windfall tax, and as a softening up exercise for its plans to introduce Performance Related Pay.

Problems with the democratic functioning of the BL surfaced when the AGM was denied the opportunity to vote on all its NEC candidates. The disillusion these practices create amongst some branch activists enables opportunist anti BL candidates to gain support.

UNISON drags feet on fighting gas victimisation

Elkie Dee

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK reported recently on Bernie Hynes' derecognition as a trade union rep by his employer, British Gas, and the disgraceful role of a national UNISON official in the affair.

Attending a meeting at UNISON HQ in December, Bernie was asked to meet with the Head of Energy, Mike Jeran. Unannounced, Dave Johnson, Deputy Head of Energy, and Chris Gorman, Chair of the Service Sector Executive, also turned up.

Jeran interrupted Bernie's account of his Industrial Tribunal case over his derecognition by producing copies of the articles about Bernie published in this paper - so this was what the meeting was about!

The AGM agenda of the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic UNISON (CFDU) and resolutions were also produced, although Jeran did say he didn't have a problem with the resolution on Bernie's

derecognition.

Bernie was asked to sign a letter saying there had been a misunderstanding over the article in *Socialist Organiser*. Bernie was more than happy to sign the statement: since there is no such paper as *Socialist Organiser*, there must have been a misunderstanding!

It's good to know these bureaucrats regard us as so influential, even though they can't get the name of our paper right, and that they appreciate the dangers of being seen to sell out.

Meanwhile, Bernie Hynes has as yet found the regional officer less than helpful in preparing for his industrial tribunal case, which was originally scheduled in December but was adjourned to 8 January at the regional officer's request.

On 5 January, Bernie had not seen management's witness statements or submitted his own documents to the IT, although evidence should be exchanged 14 days in advance of the tribunal date.

He had to ask the tribunal office

for another adjournment himself, until 9 February. The regional officer wanted to go ahead in a situation in which Bernie felt he was at a complete disadvantage.

As we go to press, with just two weeks to go, witness statements and other written documentation have still not been exchanged, or on Bernie's side, prepared.

Bernie's case raises serious questions about the union's willingness, nationally and locally, to defend the right of trade unionists to choose their own reps, and those reps' ability to stand up for members in the workplace.

Very basic union rights are under attack.

We welcome Mike Jeran's support for the CFDU resolution and will report in future issues of *Socialist Outlook* how Jeran and other officials have put this into practice in vigorously defending Bernie's fight against derecognition.

Guards win 37 hour week

Steve Leslie

TRAIN GUARDS on South West Trains and Wales & West have forced their companies to implement reductions in their working week by two hours, with no strings, in campaigns over the new year.

The result will be increases in the establishment for both companies as well as improved conditions for the guards.

In both cases industrial action ballots were necessary, but whilst SWT agreed to settle

when the determination of the workforce became apparent, Wales & West only saw sense after two days of industrial action.

Both days the strike was solid in all depots.

Management responded by bringing in scab supervisors from another rail company and by trying to victimise strike leaders.

But with the RMT refusing to enter into negotiations until all threats against individuals were lifted, Wales & West were finally

forced to back down on all fronts.

It is clear that the privatised rail franchises are particularly vulnerable to this type of pressure, paradoxically in a way that the old British Rail was not.

It is the intention of the RMT to test this further this year with further reductions in the working week for all staff turning a main plank of the 1998 pay claim.

Defend disability rights - defend welfare rights

**Simon Deville and
Susan Moore**

THE LABOUR leadership are concerned about their policy on disabilities. For Blair and co the problem is that New Labour isn't getting its message across clearly enough.

For the 6.5 million disabled people in Britain the problem is a different one: for them the message has come across all too clearly.

The Labour leadership are planning to force through massive benefit cuts to some of the most vulnerable members of society.

Whilst feigning astonishment that anyone could believe that New Labour will attack the poorest sections of society (65 per cent of disabled people currently live on or below the poverty line), Blair has at the same time made it perfectly clear that is precisely what he does aim to do.

As if the prejudice and exclusion disabled people already face in society wasn't bad enough, Blair and Harman have consistently stated that they aim to introduce further means testing for disabled people who receive benefits. Disabled people will have to face even more rigorous testing to prove that they are disabled.

Even the most generous reading of what Blair has said so far would suggest that New Labour will only avoid attacking the poor and those with disabilities by re-defining what they mean by poor or disabled.

For many people with disabilities the benefits they receive enable them to achieve a modicum of independence and dignity. Running a car for example may be a 'luxury' for someone who could use public transport. Given that most public transport is completely inaccessible a car can be a life line for someone in a wheelchair.

For others their disability may mean that they need to spend extra money on heating, for example, or to pay for forms of treatment such as massage or acupuncture that are rarely available on the NHS. Others may need to pay someone to assist



Who says Blair's government doesn't want to help disabled people ... into police vans if they fight back?

with personal tasks that other people take for granted.

Disabled people need benefits to pay for the extra costs of their disability - whether those costs are inevitable or as a result of the inaccessible way our society is organised. Disabled people need those benefits - and should be entitled to them - whether or not they are in paid work.

In 1995 the Tories introduced Incapacity Benefit to replace the previous Invalidity Benefit. The new benefit was subject to tax and

counted as income - which means that those receiving it get less income support.

At the same time the government introduced the hated "All Works Test" through which the Benefits Agency attempts to show that disabled people are able to work, and therefore, not entitled to Incapacity Benefit.

Through this 1,700 people have lost their benefit entitlement, many of whom are judged not sufficiently disabled for these benefit rules, but are not able to work. In many cases people with a condition that fluctuates may lose benefits because their condition was not sufficiently bad on the day of their All Works Test.

Even the application for Incapacity Benefit asks a staggering 96 questions about what the claimant is or is not able to do (including a question halfway through the booklet that asks if you are able to turn a page!)

In opposition Labour officially opposed these attacks. Now they are in government they have changed their tune. Their document leaked in November of last year reveals plans to cut £2.5 billion of disability benefits by the year 2000, from Incapacity Benefit and Disability Living Allowance.

At the same time they plan to privatise BAMS, the hated Benefit Agency that runs the All Work Test. As if it wasn't demeaning enough to be seen by a doctor from the DHSS now disabled people will be examined and quizzed by a doctor employed by a private agency.

They also plan an assault on Industrial Injuries Compensation.

For workers who are injured at work this compensation may prove a vital life line. The fact that claims can be made for 3 years after an accident takes place is especially crucial when many, especially in less organised workplaces may not think to put in a claim when the injuries seem slight.

Problems like back complaints - not to mention industrial diseases often surface long after the incident. Nor is this only an issue for workers in manual jobs - the growth of complaints such as Repetitive Strain Injury makes that clear.

Of course the attacks on disability benefits are not planned in isolation from the overall assault on the Welfare State. They are part of Labour's overall plans to defend profits for big business by slashing the social security bill and the welfare state overall.

This will obviously impact on people with disabilities even further as cuts hit other benefits, as the crisis in health care deepens and so on.

Whilst we must organise to reject any plans by the government that aim to cut disability benefits, such a fight must be linked up with a struggle to defend and extend welfare services and provision overall, that involves an alliance of disabled people with all sections of the labour movement.

The Labour leadership are masters of political spin and any such attacks are likely to be couched in terms of cutting down on fraud, directing limited resources to those most in need and so on.

We must be absolutely clear that no attacks on welfare are acceptable.

The millions spent on harassing the poorest and most vulnerable in society should be diverted into chasing up the far more lucrative tax evasion of the rich and of big business.

To say the money isn't there is simply ludicrous in the country that charges the lowest level of corporation tax of any advanced capitalist country.

We say the problem isn't that Labour has failed to get its message across: the problem is what the message is in the first place.

Disabled people are fighting back

Veronica Fagan

LAST YEAR Keith Rushmore from Leeds went on hunger strike for 40 days to protest against the treatment of disabled people by the Benefit Agency Medical Service doctors and through the All Work procedures.

Fifty Activists from the Disabled People's Action Network and other groups picketed Downing street on December 22 in the famous 'red paint' action.

This protest gained a lot of publicity - partly because it was very dramatic but probably because it challenged the stereotype that disabled people are passive and long suffering.

Not a chance! It should be little surprise that disabled people are

angry - and that some have developed a political approach that uses the prejudices against them and inverts them to good effect in such protests.

Forced to up their level of campaigning by these latest disgraceful attacks, disability groups are desperately short of money.

If you can make a donation - or get your trade union, labour party or other group to do so, or if you want further information about how to support the campaign against these attacks contact:

Incapacity Action, 65 Casimir Rd, Hackney, London E5 9NU. 0181 806 6455

Disabled People's Action Network, 3 Crawley Rd, Wood Green, N22 6AN.

The changes we want to see

Terry Conway

NO ONE supports the existing system of benefits for disabled people.

Welfare reform is needed - but on a completely different basis than that currently proposed by New Labour. The existing system is extremely complicated, which means that the rate of take-up is lower than the number of people who qualify for existing benefits.

The qualification basis is different for different benefits, but in general people with some types of disability find it easier to get benefits than those with others - regardless of the level of impairment or the consequent costs.

Organisations fighting for disability rights and of carers are agreed that what is needed is a comprehensive disability income scheme as well as proper legislation - which goes well beyond the so-called Disability Discrimination Act - for civil rights.

The elements of such an income scheme should be:

* A disablement costs allowance - a tax free, non-means tested benefit designed to cover the costs of disability and based on its severity not its cause

* A disablement pension - payable to anyone of working age unable to work because of long term sickness or disability, non contributory and non-means tested.

* A partial capacity benefit - payable to people whose work capacity is reduced because of their disability, non-contributory and non-means tested.

* A carer's pension.

Take this chance to improve abortion rights!

Elkie Dee and Terry Conway

THIRTY years after the 1967 Abortion Act, reform is proposed. For once, the proposal is for easier access to abortion.

Following Frank Dobson's comments, John Austin, Labour MP for Erith and Thamesmead, has said that he plans to draft a new bill so that a woman seeking an abortion could be referred by one doctor rather than two.

Walker had already done some ground work last year when, around the anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act, he proposed two five minute bills – one welcoming the existing legislation, and one calling for abortion on request in the first trimester.

This move, planned in co-

ordination with pro-choice forces such as the National Abortion Campaign, was intended not only to get publicity but more importantly to get some idea of how MPs would line up on the question of women's right to control her body.

It is welcome that Dobson, as Health Secretary, has stated that he supports changing the law, even if he didn't mean his comments, wrung out of him by *The Telegraph* to get the attention they have. As one of the few (only?) atheists on the front bench, he has already been subject to a good deal of flack from the moral majority religious lobby.

There is still a struggle to be taken up on this issue.

Firstly, the proposed change would mean women would still have to gain one doctor's consent. This may still put off women who

do not want to go to their GP, and importantly, women whose own GPs refuse to sign the form.

In many parts of the country, access to NHS abortions is restricted because of anti-abortion doctors, and the vast majority of abortions are carried out at private clinics. Abortion is only available on demand for those who can afford to pay.

Combined with the shortage of resources that means many health authorities are means-testing and/or otherwise restricting access to NHS abortions, this maintains huge inequalities.

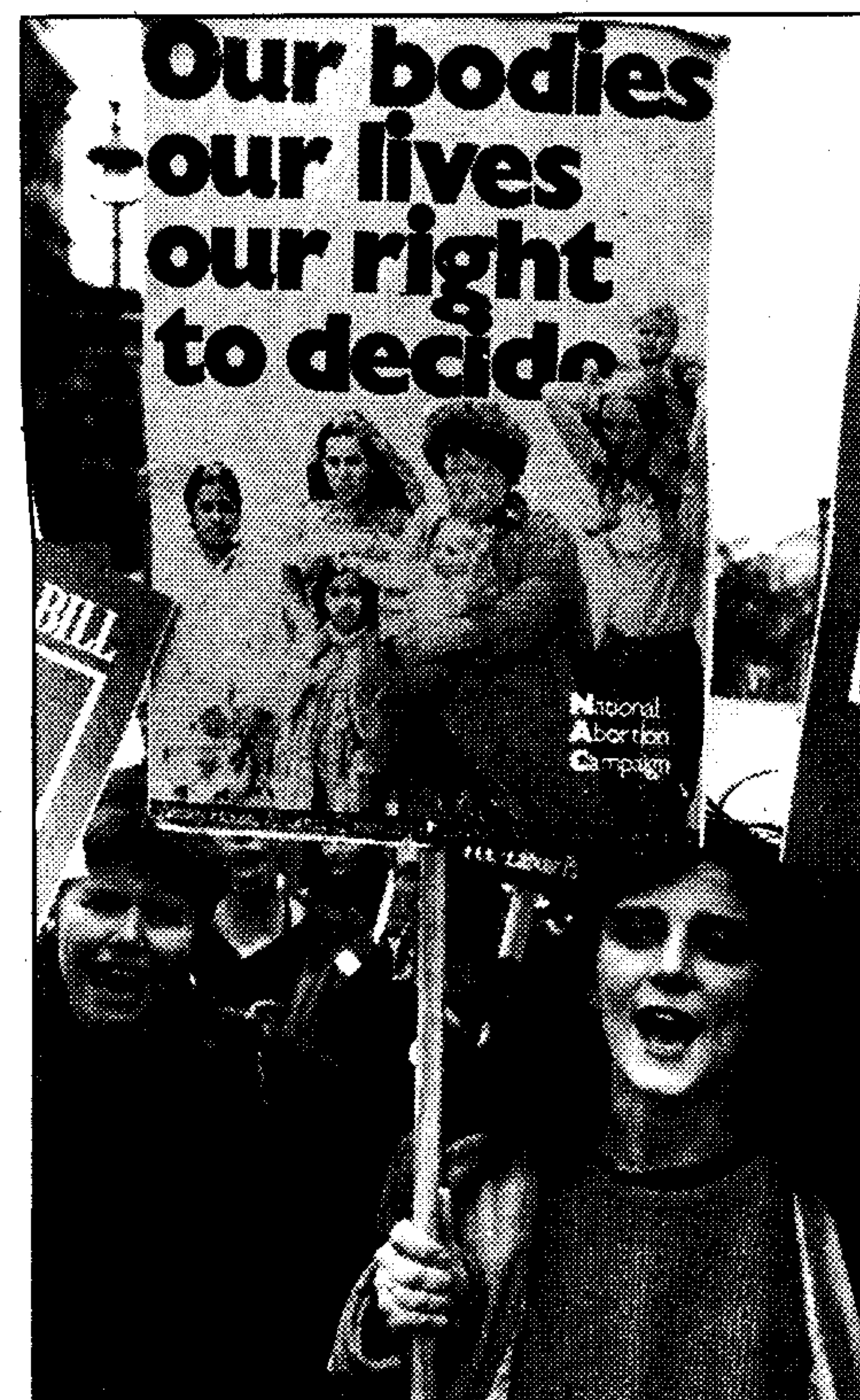
Still, the bill is a step forward. We must fight for the right to choose for all women, and the principle that this should be a woman's right to choose, not a doctor's.

Dobson has refused to commit the Labour Party to a position on

the issue. It is clear that he was speaking as an individual and that he had not sought – or obtained – sanction from the hierarchy.

As before, when the limited rights granted under the 1967 Act were under attack, any bill proposed will be "a matter of conscience". Even before this stage is reached, there needs to be a campaign to push the government to give the bill time, otherwise the issue may not even be debated.

Women and labour movement activists should call on the Labour Party to take a position, and put pressure on MPs to support a woman's right to



choose. Not for doctors and MPs, but our bodies, our lives, our right to decide!

Welfare state under seige:

Women in the firing line

Terry Conway

MANY WOMEN had high hopes from May 1 1997 that the election of a Labour government after the long years of the Tory nightmare.

That optimism was based not only on the same feelings that drove other working class people to deliver such a landslide victory for Tony Blair, but also at least partly on the fact that there were an increased number of women in Parliament and that Labour had taken some steps to target women in its election material.

It was not that they expected the earth – but surely things couldn't get worse and hopefully they would slowly improved.

But yet again over the subsequent months it has been women that have been at the sharp end of the attacks that have continued – the pace of which seems to be escalating now on an almost daily basis.

Women always suffer most from attacks on the Welfare State. More of us work for it – often in the lowest paid and least well treated jobs. Many of us are losing our jobs – others are being hived off to private contractors who will treat us and pay us even worse.

Then we are also more affected as users of services, whether through cuts and closures of the resources we depend on or by other changes such as the imposition of contracts on parents of school age children. Even in two parent families it will most often be the mothers who will have to take the responsibility – and the worry for all this.

The announcement by Frank Dobson that he is in favour of improved access to abortion is good news for all women, though the battle over that is far from won.

But there was other disturbing news before Christmas that New Labour is considering plans to

charge women for the pill. Such a tax on fertile women would be a disgrace, and would undoubtedly increase the numbers of women needing abortions. This would cause deep distress to those directly affected, and cost the NHS more in the long term.

Women are poorer than men. We earn lower wages when we work. So more of us are dependent on benefits and will be affected disproportionately by the new assault on the benefit system – even on benefits that are claimed by both sexes.

We have been long prey to DHSS snoopers under the co-habitation rule. While the rule can be applied to both women and men there is still an assumption – even in areas of the country where male unemployment is higher than female – that if a man is having a sexual relationship with a woman he will take financial responsibility for her too. The converse is less likely to be assumed.

Then there was the introduction of the Child Support Agency which has increased surveillance into women's lives.

The agency poses particular problems from women fleeing violent partners or to lesbians or other women who have chosen to have children without having men around who will lose benefit if they fail to pass on the details of the man.

But for any woman caught in its snares it is intrusive – and as it unlikely to come up with any money from the father, there is no compensation for most.

The disgraceful decision to target lone parent benefit will obviously impact more on women than men. The change will push more and more women into poverty.

The proportion of one income that you spend providing for a child is clearly higher than the proportion of two. The idea that this



Low paid – and angry. Women are ready to fight back against New Labour's attacks

tiny amount of money was an incentive to women to become pregnant without a man to support them is moralistic nonsense of the most outrageous kind. In the end, though, the drive was not for moral reasons but Treasury-driven.

Lone parents

The government hoped that its attacks on lone parents – and the mooted ones on disabled people – would go through quietly. They expected that attacking people they saw as marginalised and unorganised they could slash their budgets easily. Fortunately they have been proved wrong.

One of the glosses they have tried to put on their overall project to slash the benefits budget in recent weeks is that unlike the Tories they are not in favour of means testing but of "affluence testing" instead. This way they say they can ensure that resources go to the people who really need it.

This is nonsense which ever

way you look at it. First it is clear that if benefits are not universal it is the most vulnerable who will not claim even where they are entitled to it.

For example at the minute many pensioners who are entitled to income support to top up their pension do not claim. This is not at all because they don't need the money but for a variety of reasons from lack of information to a feeling – and a justified one – that they should have a decent income as of right.

One of the areas in which the government is talking about introducing affluence testing is in maternity benefits.

Harriet Harman has tried to use ludicrous and rare examples of a handful of extremely wealthy women who currently are entitled to high levels of maternity benefits as she tries to get others onside for this change.

Of course Harman has a point that it is obscene that some women

– and rather more men – have huge incomes while others live in poverty. The way to deal with this however is not through affluence testing but through higher taxes. That way there would be more in the kitty for those that need it.

Extra costs

One of the key arguments used by disabled people not only in campaigning against the recent threatened changes in their benefits but in fighting for a decent income for all people with disabilities is that there should be payment on the basis of additional costs incurred – in their case as the result of disability.

The same holds true for women who become pregnant and give birth.

Women have not just been on the sharp end of the attacks – we have been in the fore front of resistance. We won't take these new threats lying down – we can't afford to.

NHS: in desperate need of cash therapy

Harry Sloan

THE NATIONAL Health Service enters its 50th anniversary year facing one of the worst financial crises in its history. Although the predicted "winter-crisis" appears to have melted away in the relatively mild weather and without the usual flu epidemic, waiting lists are soaring and even bigger problems are being stored up.

Labour's imposition of Tory cash limits means that health authorities and Trusts have to cut spending by almost £500 million in the next 15 months – and the position continues to deteriorate.

Many local Trusts are facing multi-million pound deficits, with the Royal Hospitals Trust in east London leading the pack, seeking to axe 200 jobs as it wrestles with a £14m shortfall.

Other Trusts, most of them already reduced to little more than an emergency-only service, are cutting jobs and services, while health authorities scale down contracts and look for bed closures to balance the books.

North Essex, which has gained an extra £20m real terms spending power in the last 3 years, still requires cuts of over £6m, and has opted to close 70 beds in community hospitals. Community beds are also the main target for closures in Lincolnshire, where the deficit is £4m. 80 beds could go, creating huge logistical problems for patients and visitors in one of England's largest counties.

Prison

South Essex, which has enjoyed generous increases in funding, is looking to cut a massive £9.8m in 1998-9, including a mean-spirited £90,000 cut in liaison services for mentally disordered offenders which the health authority admits will result in more people being inappropriately jailed rather than receiving treatment.

West Hertfordshire, facing a £12m shortfall, is floating plans to turn either Watford General or Hemel Hempstead Hospital into a "community hospital" – with no beds! A vigorous campaign of resistance is being led by UNISON.

A Rescue Plan for the NHS Conference

SATURDAY March 14
12noon - 4.30

ULU, Malet St, London WC1

Called by Welfare State Network

Speakers include Tony Benn MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Geoff Martin (London convenor UNISON), John Lister (London Health Emergency)

Details from WSN c/o Camden People's Centre, 183 Queen's Crescent London NW5 4DS. 0171-639-5068

Lurking in the wings is the unresolved question over the future of hospital services in London. With the Tory axe still chopping away at services at Guy's Hospital and Queen Mary's, Roehampton, and with Bart's Hospital facing extinction, the independent review set up by Health Minister Alan Milburn submitted its report at the end of October, but this has been followed by a constipated silence.

It is believed that the panel came to the conclusion that too many beds had already closed in London's hospitals, leaving the capital up to 1,000 beds short of the required provision – not the message the government wished to hear.

Rubber stamp

As we go to press the report, and the government response to it seem likely to be published in early February. Despite the bed shortage, it is believed that the de facto closures of Guy's and Queen Ma-

ry's will be accepted, and that the Bart's closure will be rubber-stamped, on the assumption that a new £200m hospital will be built with private finance on the Royal London Hospital site in Whitechapel.

If this is the case, the net result of Labour's first year in charge of the NHS will be to maintain every significant element of Tory policy.

In fact Labour's policy is even more Tory than the Tories – since they have embarked on a ruinously expensive programme of hospital building under the Private Finance Initiative, which is set to shovel profits into the coffers of private banks, building firms and service contractors for a minimum of 30 years and up to 60 years.

So keen has Labour become on the private sector that the celebrations for the 50th birthday of the NHS are to be sponsored by private health insurance companies including Norwich Union (which makes profitable use of NHS pay-



Protestors rally to defend Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton, where key services have been axed during Labour's "moratorium" on closures

beds) and possibly BUPA. Drug companies, which also coin millions each year from the NHS will also be urged to participate.

Nothing could better sum up the prostration of national union leaders than the absence of any plans for the labour movement to celebrate the NHS Anniversary: instead union bureaucrats will be sitting down with NHS bosses and the RCN to plan feeble jamborees – while cash cutting redundancy and closure plans are forced through

which sack front-line NHS staff.

Pathetic plans so far unveiled by Health Secretary Frank Dobson to mark "50 golden years of the NHS" include a "health village at the annual Lincolnshire agricultural show", "publication of a book in Barnsley", and an orgy of bible-bashing and religious mumbo-jumbo, with church and cathedral services, including one in Leicester "with a sermon by Health Minister Paul Boateng".

Now that's what we call radical!

More hand-wringing won't restore mental health

John Lister

FRANK Dobson stirred a hornet's nest of media interest when he hinted at a change of government policy on the care of people with chronic mental illness. But there are good reasons to doubt that anything will change at all.

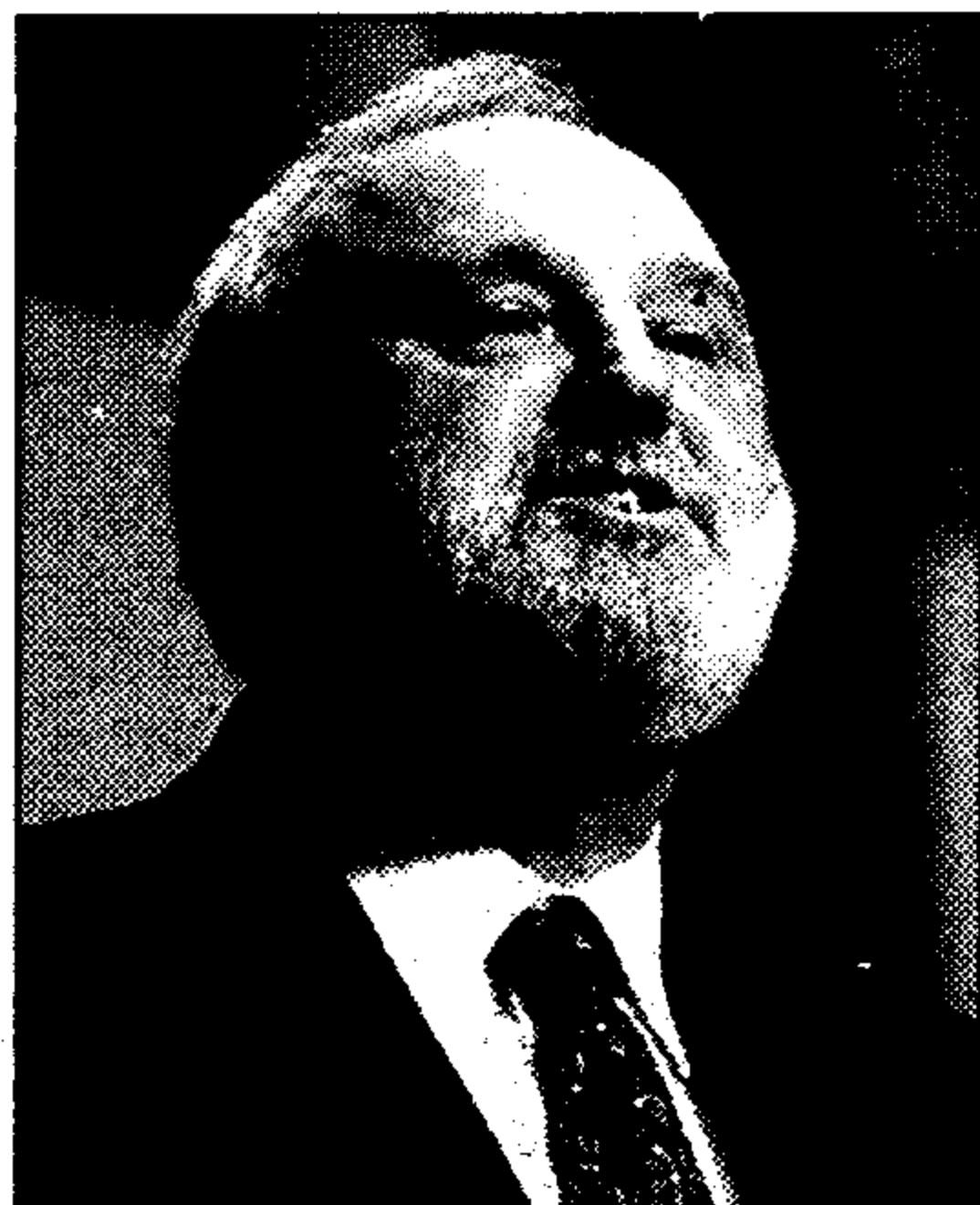
Newspapers, TV and radio stations which have only ever reported on mental health services when things went wrong and ended in murder, insisted that Dobson had "scrapped" the policy of community care, which has run into increasing disrepute.

They seized upon the frightening figure that a murder every two weeks is carried out by a mental health sufferer – downplaying the even more alarming fact that 40 times more mental patients – 1,000 a year – commit suicide, and welcomed the idea that more of these people would be effectively locked away.

In fact, Dobson's statement was confused and mutually contradictory: he appeared to be echoing the view of his predecessor Stephen Dorrell that there is a need for extra facilities, 24-hour nursed accommodation, to care for those who are seriously ill. This same message has been consistently relayed by anyone who has seriously examined mental health care in the last 13 years.

Early in 1985 the Commons Social Services Committee published a damning critique of the progress so far on community care, insisting that:

"The stage has now been reached where the rhetoric of com-



Dobson – echoing Dorrell

munity care has to be matched by action, and where the public are understandably anxious about the consequences.

"...The pace of removal of hospital facilities for mental illness has far outrun the provision of services in the community to replace them. It is only now that people are waking up to the legacy of a policy of hospital rundown which began over 20 years ago.

"...We do not wish to slow down the exodus from mental illness ... hospitals for its own sake. But we do look to see the same degree of Ministerial pressure, and the provision of necessary resources, devoted to the creation of alternative services. Any fool can close a long-stay hospital: it takes more time and trouble to do it properly and compassionately".

Following on the heels of the Social Services Committee came an equally withering and embarrassing report from the Audit Commission, which commented:

"It must be a matter for grave concern that although there are

37,000 fewer mentally ill and mentally handicapped patients today than there were 10 years ago, no-one knows what has happened to many of those who have been discharged. Some, of course, have died; others are likely to be in some form of residential care; the rest should be receiving support in the community.... If recent US experience is any guide, it is likely that a significant proportion of those discharged from NHS hospitals will have been before a court and will now be imprisoned; others will have become wanderers, left to their own devices with no support from community-based services."

Early in 1996 Stephen Dorrell said almost exactly the same thing. The Department of Health report *The Spectrum of Care* admitted that the closure of thousands of long-stay mental health beds had left thousands of chronic and severe sufferers without the care they needed.

Many of these chronic sufferers were inappropriately occupying beds in acute (short stay) units, where throughout the country bed occupancy figures have in many cases been pushed well above 100%.

The DoH report calculated that there was a need for around 5,000 extra places offering 24-hour nursing care for people with severe and enduring mental illness across the country.

Each place would cost between £35,000 and £50,000 a year in revenue, while the capital cost of building the smaller-scale housing units would be up to £400 million. In London alone, where 60% of long-stay adult psychiatric beds have

closed since 1990, the cost could be £70m in capital and £60m a year.

Without new money on this scale being pumped in to desperately under-resourced mental health services, the present shambolic, crisis-ridden arrangements were set to continue.

But of course Dorrell, like Dobson today, offered no extra cash to put things right.

A *Daily Telegraph* editorial, welcoming Dobson's apparent change of heart, bleated that – bad as services have become – "It would be unfair to pin all the blame on the Tories". While we can blame the Tories for reducing services to danger point over 18 years, we should begin now to blame Dobson and Labour if the only injection to mental health is another lungfull of ministerial hot air.

*** As we go to press yet another inquiry has been launched into yet another failure of mental health services, which led to yet another tragic murder – this time of a woman in south London. Acute psychiatric beds in Guy's Hospital were reported to have hit 230% last autumn, with staff at their wits end trying to contain and control seriously disturbed patients.**

None of the lessons of previous such inquiries have been taken on board – because the system is fundamentally flawed, and the resources required are lacking.

The starting point of the inquiry should be how to attract sufficient cash, staff and resources to restore a viable service, and how to sweep away the chronic regime of buck-passing created by the Tory market system and community care reforms.

Will teachers be first to feel lash of Labour discipline?

Roy Leach (NUT Executive, personal capacity)

THE TORIES sought (with some success) to introduce market relationships into state education.

Local management of schools (LMS) gave head teachers greater control over their schools' budgets (particularly in relation to the employment/dismissal of staff).

Open enrolment encouraged competition for pupils and the funding that followed them.

Opting out created a privileged tier of better funded schools, the heads and governors of which were not obliged to follow LEA procedures.

However, while consultants and others were able to take advantage of this market (competing with LEAs to provide services to school "purchasers") the core function of schools, remained firmly in the public sector and free from profiteering.

Labour, in a breathtaking extension of its capitalist-friendly policies, is now proposing to hand over to big business the running of state schools. So-called Education Action Zones, consisting of 10 to 20 schools, will be put under the control of Action Forums, at least one of the first five of which will, according to the DFEE, be led and run by a business.

As Dr James Tooley, director of the Institute of Economic Affairs (a right wing think tank), pointed out, "the government has accepted that there is no matter of principle that the government should deliver education".

EAZs will attract an additional £500,000 above schools' normal budget - £250,000 from the government and £250,000 from business; however, the latter may be paid "in kind".

The Action Forums will be empowered to tear up the existing pay and conditions of teachers.

With so much talk of increasing the working day and year for teachers (led by Labour's Margaret Hodge, chair of the Education Select Committee) it is clear that the "carrot" of extra pay will be small compensation.

Attack on contracts

Once EAZs have driven a coach and horses through national pay and conditions, it won't be long before the rump LEAs follow suit, and indeed a complete rewrite of teachers' contracts cannot be ruled out.

Any doubts about this have been answered by Schools Minister Stephen Byers who is on record as saying "I want zones to pilot new ways of thinking as far as teachers' conditions of service go... If we put extra demands on teachers to work in the evening, at the weekend..."

The government's stated aim of

creating a more flexible teaching force which anyone working for a gung-ho employer in the private sector would be entirely familiar with.

New Labour has thrown down the gauntlet to the teacher unions and is clearly spoiling for a fight. As predicted in the columns of *Socialist Outlook*, it is only a matter of time before New Labour seeks to take on a section of organised labour in order to prove its capital friendly credentials. It looks odds-on that teacher unions are being set up to be the fall guys in this set piece.

The response of the unions has been strong on rhetoric ("NUT to fight privatisation of education"). But what is the proposed method of fighting privatisation? Local NUT branches are being urged to promote LEA bids to set up EAZs in order to forestall more draconian business run ones.

Teachers only need to look at what has happened to other local government workers who cut their own terms and conditions to keep contracts in-house and who now face being sold off at or even before



While students have fought back against fees, Labour has lined up to hit schools

the end of 5-year terms. Such a response will just make taking over Action Forums easier, cheaper and more attractive for the profiteers at a later date.

EAZs pose a threat to every single teacher, whether or not they teach in working class areas with so-called "failing schools".

The leaderships of all the teacher unions have either failed to grasp this inescapable conclusion or they lack the will to lead their memberships into the sort of industrial action campaign that is

needed to defeat the proposals.

Doug McAvooy has identified the creation of business-run EAZs as the most right-wing anti-educational initiative in 20 years, yet the strategy he has announced is depressingly familiar and completely inadequate, given the scale of threat they pose.

Teacher illusions in Labour have already largely disappeared. Whether or not they are prepared to stand up and fight is a question which as yet remains unanswered.

London Underground: privatisation not so "different" under Labour

By an RMT NEC member

With British Rail privatised by the Tories, London Underground remains the only major rail system in public hands. Underground workers were banking on the new Labour government safeguarding their future.

Nine months after the election they are finding out the hard way that new Labour means no change. The only reason LUL has not been privatised is that Labour ministers cannot agree amongst themselves what form the sell off should take.

Lack of investment over the last decade has meant a continued deterioration in LUL services and massive fare rises. With London's roads grid-locked it is broadly accepted that LUL requires a major injection of capital as part of an overall transport strategy.

Rail unions have long argued that such capital can be raised through a mixture of business levies and government borrowing, adding that with a change of Treasury rules this would not even require a major change in existing budget assumptions.

However, it now appears that the best offer from John Prescott is that the majority of the infrastructure would be leased off under

a form of Private Finance Initiative with jobs being handed over to the private sector.

Only a core of operational staff would remain in the public sector. Other options include franchising the whole of LUL off to the likes of Richard Branson.

In the mean time LUL management have begun the process of selling off peripheral parts of the system. Electrical control staff, advertising display staff and others face transfer into private hands.

RMT members on LUL are adamant that they will oppose all threats of privatisation. And whilst it is undoubtedly hard to mobilise when only a handful are currently under threat, so far it has been possible to force LUL and the government to hold off.

At the end of last year, for instance, a series of mass pickets of the Department of Transport by staff from Acton Works forced Prescott to concede that their jobs would not be hived off before the



Passengers are already counting the costs of rail privatisation: but Labour wants to flog off tube

future of the whole of LUL was decided.

Now, it is essential that broader forces are brought into play to defend LUL. As a first start to their campaign the RMT's London Transport Regional Council has called for a mass picket of the Department of Transport on the afternoon of Friday 13 February. As well as large numbers of LUL workers the aim is to involve other trade unionists, pensioners groups, road protesters and others.

The time is fast approaching

when industrial action will become necessary if LUL workers are to defend their jobs and conditions.

While this policy is formally supported by the RMT at national level, which is itself committed to organising rallies in defence of a public sector LUL, it is clear that General Secretary Jimmy Knapp is reluctant to do anything that upsets his cosy relationship with John Prescott.

Rather, at every turn, he has tried to pose this as a dispute with the "Treasury", with Prescott really

thing more concrete. The whole membership must be mobilised.

While the whole of British Rail was sold off bit by bit by the Tories we were told to wait until the Labour government. Now we are being to hold back in case we weaken our "friends" in their behind the scenes battles. Enough is enough - privatisation can be stopped - but only if we are prepared to act in our own defence.

Mobilise against Cardiff Summit

Darren Williams

THE FORCED march towards an economically integrated capitalist Europe is to advance one step further with the EU Heads of Government Summit in Cardiff on 15/16 June.

At a meeting in Cardiff on 25 January a significant cross-section of the left agreed to organise a march and rally on 13 June in opposition to the integration project being pursued by the summit.

Among those present were leading left activists from the Labour Party and Plaid Cymru, as well as representatives of the Communist Party, the SWP, Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (the Welsh Language Society), Unemployed Action Groups, the Campaign Against Euro-Federalism and the Euromarch Network.

People's Europe

Under the slogan "No to a big business Europe, Yes to a people's Europe!" It was agreed to base the platform of the demonstration around the following key demands:

- * Against the austerity measures to meet the convergence criteria for the single currency.
- * Against cuts in the welfare state and social spending and the privatisation of public services.
- * For full employment, with real permanent jobs on a living wage.
- * For the equality of all nations in Europe.
- * Against the racist "Fortress Europe".
- * For a halt to the degradation of the environment.

A demonstration against these key aspects of European integration, at a time when so much attention will be focused on the summit, can play an extremely valuable role in opening up a real debate on Europe in Britain.

And nowhere is this widening of the debate more vital than in Wales, the summit's host-nation, where the leadership of both the labour and nationalist movements, and much of the reformist left see the EU as holding out solutions to their country's many problems.

Six months of British Presidency of the EU Time to veto Blair's European agenda!



Thousands marched through Paris and 50 other cities on January 7 protesting against unemployment

Alan Thornett

THE BIGGEST political issue in Europe in 1998 will be the preparation for the single currency, due for introduction on January 1 1999, and the implementation of its notorious job-cutting convergence criteria.

The key task for Blair during the British Presidency of the EU, which runs from January until June is to oversee these developments.

During this time the remaining preparations for the single currency have to be completed, including agreement on the final list of member states which will be going into the single currency from the outset.

That list will be agreed at an EU EMU Council to be held in Brussels on May 1-3, chaired by Robin Cook. Thus even though Britain will

not be on the list, and even though – against Blair's wishes – a committee of those involved directly is to be set up, there is no doubt that Britain under New Labour is playing a very different role than under the Tories.

The British Presidency will culminate in Cardiff on June 15-16 with a summit that will be the launch pad for the single currency six months later. As always it will be this event at the end of a presidency that marks its focal point and acts as a balance sheet of what has and has not been achieved.

Common policy

The Cardiff conference will also focus on employment conditions across Europe – following on from the so-called "Jobs Summit" held in Luxembourg last November. That

conference introduced a new principle into the EU that the issue of employment, and unemployment, should be treated as an issue of joint concern and the subject of a common policy.

Under pressure from Tony Blair, the conference adopted a remarkable set of "employment guidelines" which the member states will be required to implement. The implementation will be monitored at the Cardiff summit.

The statement adopted puts it this way:

"The implementation of the Guidelines will be regularly monitored under a common procedure for assessing results: each year from now on, the Commission will report on the implementation by the Member States of the employment Guidelines. The Commission may

present updated Guidelines and – if necessary – propose Recommendations to individual Member States.

"This type of approach to coordinating national employment policies draws directly on the experience built up in the multilateral surveillance of economic policies, a method that proved particularly successful in the case of convergence.

"The aim is to achieve a convergence process of Member States' employment policies and to create for employment the same resolve as that applying to economic policy, so that targets can be jointly set, verified and regularly updated."

What are the policies they want to monitor and converge? This is made clear under the guideline entitled *Modernising Work Organisation*:

"The social partners are invited to negotiate, at the appropriate levels, in particular at sectoral and enterprise levels, agreements to modernise the organisation of work, including flexible working arrangements, with the aim of making undertakings productive and competitive and achieving the required balance between flexibility and security.

Annual hours

"Such agreements may, for example, cover the expression of working time as an annual figure, the reduction of working hours, the reduction of overtime, the development of part time working, lifelong training and career breaks.

"For its part, each Member State will examine the possibility of incorporating in its law more adaptable types of contract, taking into account the fact that forms of employment are increasingly diverse.

"Those working under contracts of this kind should at the same time enjoy adequate security and higher occupational status compatible with the needs of the business."

This agenda echoes completely the position Blair has been putting to Europe and which he put to the Amsterdam Summit: that the solution for the EC is to follow Thatcher's Britain in forcing in employment "flexibility".

Already we have seen the difficulties posed for many of the member states, as resistance to the convergence criteria has led to huge demonstrations, strikes and other protests. Unemployment and flexibility has already been central to these shows of resistance – and this will become even more explosive now.

This makes the Cardiff summit important not just for the single currency but also for the issues of unemployment and job insecurity. Across Wales, Scotland and England – indeed across the whole of Europe – we must work to organise a sizeable protest against these plans in June which can link up with the mood of discontent that is already escalating here and abroad.

Paris Euromarch meeting

Alan Thornett

DURING the unemployed protests a successful meeting of the Euromarch campaign was held in Paris.

"Delegates from Belgium, Spain, Luxembourg, Finland, Sweden, Britain and Switzerland all expressed their solidarity with the French occupations and calling on solidarity actions to be organised across Europe.

The French delegates were actively involved in the movement's leadership. Some delegates had to leave the meeting to attend a press conference

following a meeting between Jospin and leaders of the occupations.

The reports from delegates were extremely positive and many countries sent large delegations onto the European TUC demonstration in Luxembourg last November:

The meeting agreed to organise a number of European wide actions. Firstly, in Brussels in May European governments aim to agree on the list of countries to enter the single currency in the first round. Though it was recognised that there was not

time for a major mobilisation at Brussels, all countries will attempt to send small delegations.

Cardiff Summit

The second action called for was around the European Summit in Cardiff on June 13. Every country was asked to send a delegation. Obviously this will be of central importance in Britain to build the maximum possible mobilisations.

There were initial plans laid for another European-wide mobilisation when Germany holds

the Presidency in the first half of 1999. It is likely that a demonstration will be called probably in Cologne in June 1999.

It is expected that this will be pitched to attract more sizeable delegations from each country than will be possible for Cardiff though discussions are still in the early stages.

At any rate the meeting was buoyed up by the protests of the French unemployed movement and more determined than ever before to organise across the continent to resist the drive to social exclusion facing us all.



Jospin sends in riot police against unemployed

Simon Deville

THE FRENCH premier and his ruling Socialist Party have been facing growing opposition to its plans for the unemployed and on the working week.

Across the country job centres were occupied by unemployed people, in a campaign initiated by forces involved in last year's Euro-marches demonstration in Amsterdam in the run up to Christmas.

From targeting job centres the movement progressed to occupying prominent tourist sites – including for example the glass pyramid at the Louvre.

Clashes broke out as Jospin ordered riot police to break up the occupations, resulting in representatives of students and low-paid workers committing themselves to defend the movement in 77 of France's 95 regions.

Increasingly workers and students have joined the unemployed in their protests to demand an increase in benefit levels.

A month after Blair's election in Britain, Lionel Jospin was elected as French Prime Minister at the head of a coalition of the Socialist Party, Communist Party and the Greens. The Socialist Party was kicked out of office in the '80s after moving rapidly to the right.

Following the strike wave in France towards the end of 1995, the SP adopted much more leftwing rhetoric, and specifically stated that it would deal with unemployment, a reduction of the working week and so on as part of its election manifesto.

The Prime Minister has simply

stated that he is on the left and "understands" the unemployed, but that there isn't the money to pay for a benefits increase. In France the richest 1 per cent of the population own the equivalent of £200 billion, and the previous government had made a tax concession of £2.5 billion to the wealthiest. There is a great deal of anger over Jospin's refusal to even consider taxing the rich to pay for these demands.

At the same time, whilst the government is intending to introduce a 35 hour working week, there are no measures to reduce overtime worked, or to apply the measures immediately.

Without combining the 35 week with any other measures it is widely felt that this would simply be used to undermine workers' rights.

Obviously all this is taking place in the context of meeting the Maastricht convergence criteria. Jospin has placed meeting this criteria above any considerations of reducing unemployment and so on.

Jospin's attacks on the unemployed are increasingly helping to develop a mass unemployed movement that is building support amongst low-paid workers and students.

Now the movement looks like spreading beyond France's borders. The Co-ordination Centre for Trade Unionised Unemployed in Germany announced plans to follow the French example by occupying unemployment on February 5, followed by monthly protests in the run up the elections in September.

UNISON: branch democracy under attack

Fred Leplat, UNISON London Regional Committee (personal capacity)

A REPORT which attacks the right of branches to campaign to change the union's policy was adopted by UNISON's National Executive Committee on December 10.

This surprising move was initiated by UNISON's general secretary, Rodney Bickerstaffe, at the NEC in September when he alleged he had received unspecified complaints about the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic UNISON (CFDU) – the broad left inside Britain's biggest union.

Senior officials in UNISON have been concerned about the influence of the CFDU for a while. This left was launched when UNISON was formed in 1994 by the merger of Nalgo, NUPE and COHSE.

In 1995, the CFDU candidate for general secretary, Roger Bannister, running against Bickerstaffe, got 18 per cent of the vote.

Last year, the CFDU produced a well researched pamphlet arguing against the deal that had been negotiated for the "Single Status" – the harmonisation of blue and white collar terms and conditions for local government staff.

While supporting Single Status, the CFDU argued that the deal had too many pitfalls, including allowing employers to unilaterally move away from national conditions.

The CFDU arguments had such an echo that 40 per cent of delegates from local government branches rejected the deal at a special conference.

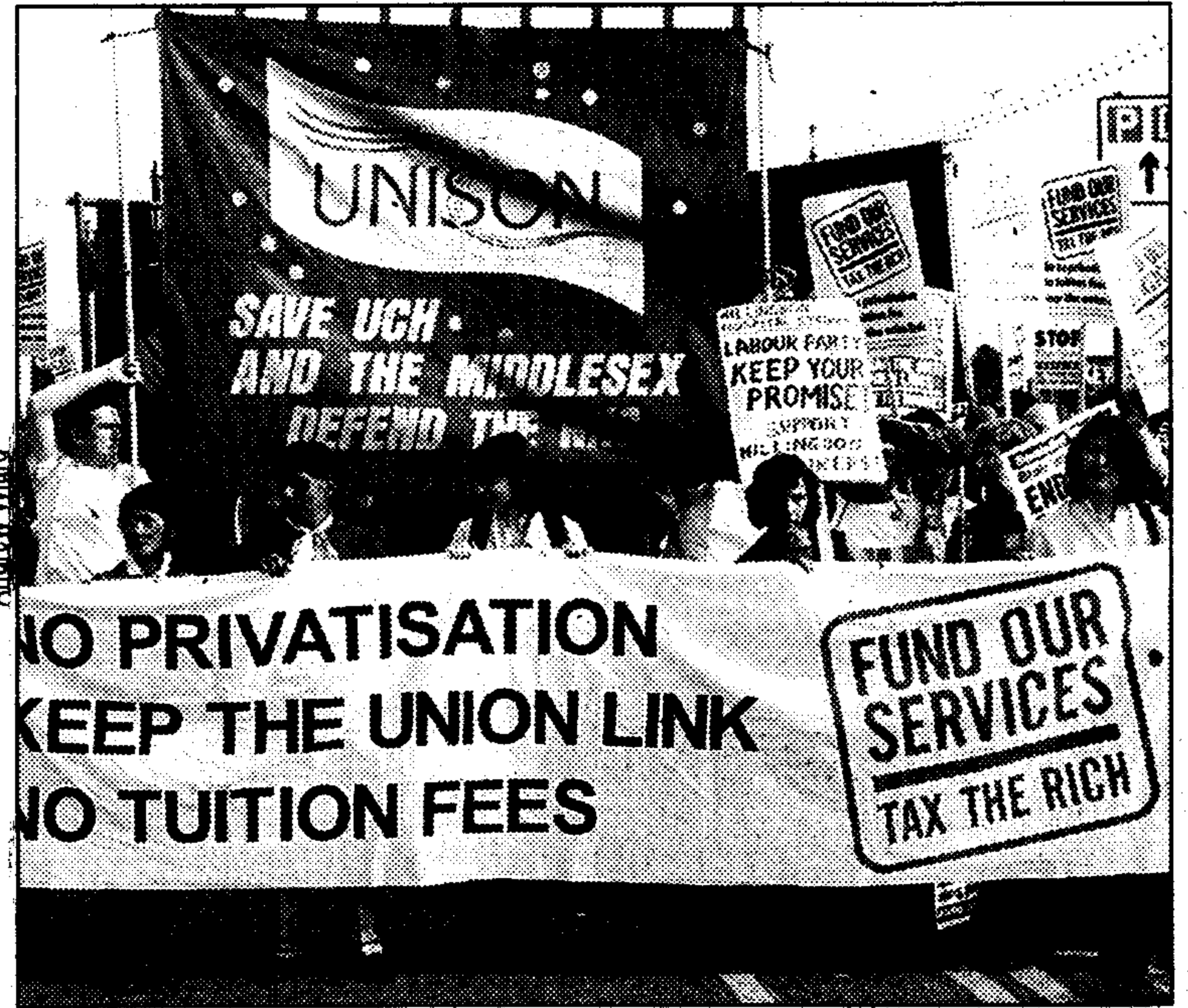
With the election of a New Labour government, UNISON's leadership could not afford the risk of the left winning on a key issue. An inconvenient decision at a conference could sour its relationship with Tony Blair.

The need to maintain a honeymoon with the new government is seen as central – even if it means holding back a campaign for a minimum wage, negotiating "Best Value" (a form of voluntary privatisation) despite it being contrary to union policy, or attacking union democracy by witch-hunting individuals and restricting the right of branches to influence union policy.

Greetings

This orientation is spelt out in a New Year "greetings" letter from Bickerstaffe to all branches in which he states that: "The Government will listen if they know that we are relevant and representative of our members. That is why we must challenge all attempts to subvert internal democracy by outside groups who put their interests ahead of our members."

The report on the CFDU adopted was produced by Brian



Last year's lobby of Labour conference: boosted by UNISON witch-hunt

Langstaff QC at a cost running into five figures, probably ten times the money received by the CFDU from UNISON branches and individuals.

Its 8 pages of recommendations are based on spectacular insights such as "individuals who are active in the CFDU may also be active in UNISON", and is followed by 52 pages of documents from the CFDU assiduously collected by some UNISON bureaucrat over a 3 year period.

The report speculates that the CFDU has the support of Militant Labour and other socialists, that it has links with similar organisations in other unions. It argues that the left seeks to influence union

A strict interpretation of this decision could lead to branches being stopped from circulating solidarity appeals for disputes or circulating resolutions to obtain support from branches at national conference.

But the immediate intention of the NEC's decision is to prevent the modest financial support from branches in the form of affiliations to the CFDU, in the naïve hope that this would kill it off.

Fortunately, this attack on the union's democracy is being vigorously opposed. Sixteen members of the NEC voted against the conclusions of the report, and supported a resolution which recognised that the right to campaign to support or change policy is actually in the rules.

These members of the NEC, while not agreeing with the CFDU, supported our right to exist.

This attack has brought together SWP members, UNISON Labour Left (another broad left), and the

CFDU in the same room – something unprecedented – to plan a response.

Branches and regions are now considering initiating a campaign from a conference in March which would hopefully lead to overturning the NEC's decision at UNISON's national delegate conference in June.

This attack on democracy will distract activists from developing a response to the new measures from the Labour government such as Best Value, welfare reform, and funding of public services.

But this situation has been initiated by the union leadership.

It is necessary to defend UNISON's democratic founding principles, that it is a member-led union with autonomous branches and a sovereign national conference.

These principles ensure that the interests of public sector workers are defended by their elected representatives, whether a shop steward or an NEC member, rather unelected officials being able to impose deals. They will not be given up without a bitter fight.

It is necessary to defend UNISON's democratic founding principles, that it is a member-led union with autonomous branches and a sovereign national conference.

policy and replace members of the leadership with its own nominees.

All this is typical of a broad left that seeks to organise branches and individual members to steer their



Reaching for gag: Bickerstaffe

union in a particular direction. A perfectly legitimate democratic exercise.

Yet the QC's report manages to conclude that only the NEC may use union finances and resources to form or change union policy, as there is nothing in the rules to allow branches and regions to do likewise.

As racist governments fall out, could this herald

The collapse of Fortress Europe?

Simon Deville

THE BEGINNING of 1997 was marked by a story that exposed the thoroughly reactionary nature of the EU's "Fortress Europe" policy.

Over 300 migrants from South Asia were forced at gunpoint on to a boat that was then rammed by the boat that was smuggling them into Greece, killing nearly all of them. Though this massacre was widely known throughout the media, it hardly got a mention.

Almost exactly a year later, the arrival in Italy of around 1,200 migrants, mainly Kurds from Turkey and Iraq, threatened to bring about the collapse of the 1985 Schengen Agreement, the cornerstone of Fortress Europe. Unfortunately it has threatened to collapse into an even more reactionary nationalism.

Schengen has 3 central points. Firstly, the free movement of people within the European Union. Secondly, a common policy of policing the borders of Fortress Europe. Finally it establishes what

is a de facto European-wide police force.

Whilst Britain has not signed the Schengen Agreement, it has agreed to co-operate with the creation of European-wide security measures, and has increasingly moved to adopt the most reactionary aspects of immigration policy of each member state of the EU.

The only aspect of the agreement that has not been implemented in Britain is the abolition of border checks on people travelling from other EU countries.

Italian president Oscar Luigi Scalfaro in his new year message stated that "Italy's arms are wide open to genuine refugees". Whilst this statement is not exactly true, there is no law in Italy to deport asylum seekers: immigrants can be served with an order to leave the country within 15 days.

Various Schengen signatories have seen this as a breach in Fortress Europe. As a result France, Germany and Austria have re-established controls on the Italian border, and enormous pressure has

been brought to bear on Italy and Greece to tighten up their external border controls.

Turkey has been put under pressure to prevent Kurds fleeing the country - rather than to end their persecution of Kurds. The Turkish government is attempting to use the tightening up of its controls as a bargaining chip for admittance into the EU.

The German government has been at the forefront of opposition to immigration into Greece and Italy. The Right wing German interior minister Manfred Kanther called on Europe to see itself as a "security community" in the face of what he called "this threatening situation".

With elections this year in Germany the Social Democrats have been competing with the Christian Democrats to be the toughest on immigration and law and order, and have called for ditching the Schengen agreement until Greece and Italy come into line.

French foreign minister Hubert Verdrine summed the situation up



Outside looking in: Kurdish refugees from Turkish government repression

"The EU should do everything possible to have a co-ordinated, homogeneous position... When there is mass immigration, the principles should be different to those in day-to-day immigration."

In fact the idea of mass immigration is a myth: immigration into Europe is far lower than to many other parts of the world. People in Britain however, should be well used to right wing agitation about being "swamped by aliens" as a means to whip up racism.

Anti-racists have consistently argued that the Schengen agreement would be used to create a common immigration policy based on the worst aspect of each particular

member state. What we are seeing now is the most concerted efforts to bring into line those states who's laws are not sufficiently racist for the rest of the EU.

Whilst the left has begun to address questions such as unemployment and the working week on a Europe-wide level, it has yet to really take up the question of racism in any significant way.

This current crisis in the Schengen agreement should make it absolutely clear to anti-racists throughout Europe that to really challenge racist laws in one country, we need to link up with those struggling against racism throughout the whole continent.

Fight for welfare, not workfare!

Paul McGowan

In Tony Blair's crusade to make Britain meet the Maastricht convergence criteria, he has reduced public spending even below the Tories' limits.

He has targeted the social security bill for particularly large savings. Although Britain spends less on it than 17 other industrialised nations, he tells us we can no longer afford it.

Despite paying higher taxes and national insurance contributions than ever, the working class is receiving less and less from the Welfare State.

'Affluence tests' already force the better paid to spend their savings on student fees or their parents' care in old age. Now Blair is removing their right to the few remaining benefits they are still entitled to.

New Labour claims it is targeting welfare to the poor, but it is obviously allocating less resources excluding the £3.5 billion for the Welfare to Work programme. Most of this money will go to providers of options on New Deal and not the young unemployed on the scheme.

However, according to Blair tens of thousands of new jobs will be created through Welfare to Work and the unemployed filling these vacancies will be lifted out of the poverty



Steve Bell, The Guardian

trap. Who is he kidding?

At the most it is expected 40,000 of the 100,000 youth initially employed for six months on New Deal will be offered a job placing.

Yet there is no guarantee that a youth working six months for a boss on as little as his or her Jobseekers Allowance will be offered a permanent job at the end of it. Even if they get a job, it doesn't mean it will be on decent wages - New Labour is unlikely to allow a minimum wage for under 25s.

Without New Deal it has been estimated the same number of

youth would have found jobs (possibly with the same employers) within six months anyway - and they probably would have received better money than the pittance they will receive under it.

A recent London School of Economics study shows such employer subsidy schemes are less successful than employee subsidy schemes in creating jobs.

Youth would be more likely to stay with a New Deal employer if they saw a greater reward.

Despite New Deal the Bank of England predicts rising unemploy-

ment with a slow down in the economy later this year.

When the employer subsidies dry up, many youth will be dumped back on the dole queue. It won't be a quick fix for Blair in his efforts to reduce welfare spending.

Welfare to Work is the government's big effort to alleviate the twin evils of unemployment and poverty in their term of office. It won't work and will be a massive waste of money and the talents of young people.

Youth not on the New Deal employment option will be either compelled to work for a voluntary organisation, or an environmental task force (doing work in some areas similar to community service study for an NQSVQ level or lose their dole. These are hardly exciting choices.

Although specialist help will be given to about 10 per cent of the youth involved who have major problems like learning difficulties, criminal records and so on, we must ask if the government will change the policies (such as school exclusions, section 11 cuts, tough sentencing, etc...) which made them 'unemployable' in the first place.

Now New Labour's economic experts have realised there are half

as many youth unemployed over six months as they earlier predicted, they have decided at the last minute to rope lone parents and other unemployed age groups into Welfare to Work. Blair is getting rid of universal welfare and replacing it with universal workfare.

Revulsion

Blair should be made to work for the benefit of the community. Public revulsion and a backbench revolt greeted his cuts for lone parents, and the level of opposition now emerging to his plans to reform the welfare state was unthinkable six months ago.

Through the Welfare State Network, local campaigning groups and the labour movement we should demand the government introduce alternative policies to reduce unemployment and poverty.

We need a decent minimum wage, a shorter working week, and an expanding public sector. We should demand better pensions for the elderly, higher benefits for the victims of capitalist slumps and greater help for lone parents, the sick and disabled.

The bosses can well afford it, and should pay for it through increased taxes. The Welfare State should again redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor and provide real opportunities for the working class.

Unite to stop Blair's reactionary roller coaster

Neil Murray

BLAIR'S HONEYMOON is well and truly over, at least in one important sense. Many now realise that the programme he stood on in the election was for real, not some disguise to be discarded to reveal a government determined to redress the damage done by 18 years of Tory rule.

What remains for Blair is "presentation". The honeymoon with the media is also long over.

What remains absent of course is sustained resistance by sections of the working class to Blair's programme. While the long heroic disputes (Dockers, Magnet, Hillingdon and Critchley labels) continue, and there have been protests by students, lone parents and disabled groups, we are a long way from a fightback by the unions to the relentless attacks on working and living conditions.

By and large, the union leaders are proving Blair's most reliable supporters, despite the occasional whimper of disapproval. They still hope that the White Paper on "Rights At Work" will deliver something they can claim repays their loyalty.

Serious discontent has been shown elsewhere in the movement, however. The magnificent revolt by 61 Labour MPs in December against the cut in lone parent benefit was only disappointing in that not enough MPs had the nerve to vote against and defeat the measure.

Disgust

The news that significant numbers of Labour Party members are leaving in disgust – including many activists who have stuck it out through hard times to see Labour elected, but also newer members, who thought they would lend their weight (and money) to getting rid of the hated Tories – should come as no great surprise.

The rapid expulsion of Ken Coates and Hugh Kerr is an omen of things to come. They had known for some time that Blair would attempt to exclude those MEPs who are not abject loyalists as Party candidates for the Euro-election in 1999.

The introduction of a system of proportional representation for the election in Britain for the first time provides him with a golden opportunity, since the number of Labour MEPs is likely to fall by at least 20.

Straw has compounded this by decreeing that the election will be by the "closed list" system, allowing neither Party members nor the electorate any say in either who is on the Party list or in what order they would be elected.

Even before the run-in which Coates, Kerr and two other MEPs had with the Labour hierarchy in October over the right to criticise the "closed list" system, they knew they were extremely unlikely to be allowed to stand with any hope of being elected.

Their disaffection with and criticism of the programme being carried out by Blair in Britain (and the likelihood that the manifesto for the Euro-elections would reflect this) made it almost a certainty.

As Ken Coates explains, they did not apply to join the Green Party as the spin doctors claim, but they should have foreseen that their actions would leave them wide open to expulsion, given the leadership was looking for any opportunity.

We wholeheartedly blame the Labour Party hierarchy for the policies and undemocratic practices that created this situation, and support Coates and Kerr in their protests against them. It is unfortunate therefore that they have been rather tactically inept in the way they have proceeded, and have thrown away an opportunity to fight within the Labour Party against Blair's policies.

They did not discuss any of their actions with other Left Labour Party activists – or even, apparently, Left MEPs or MPs. This could have provided for a coordinated fightback, rather than two individuals being forced out.

Their letter to Euro-constituency Party members, rather than being part of such a discussion, provided ammunition for the bureaucracy because of the way it mooted standing protest candidates against Labour.

It is inevitable the different individuals, currents and left groups will make different tactical decisions about how to fight the Blairite tide most effectively. It is inevitable that some will have stronger stomachs than others, while others will carry on battling in the structures out of habit long after there is any point to it.

However it does seem that Coates and Kerr decided on a course of action as individuals rather than attempting to achieve a common approach by the Labour and Trade Union Left. In doing so they have weakened the fight against the "closed list" system in the Labour Party and confused many who also oppose the policies they detest. They have made it extremely difficult to defend them as individuals within the party.

Despite these problems, our main energies will of course be devoted to the sharpest possible criticism of the Blair clique – on questions both of democracy and policies.

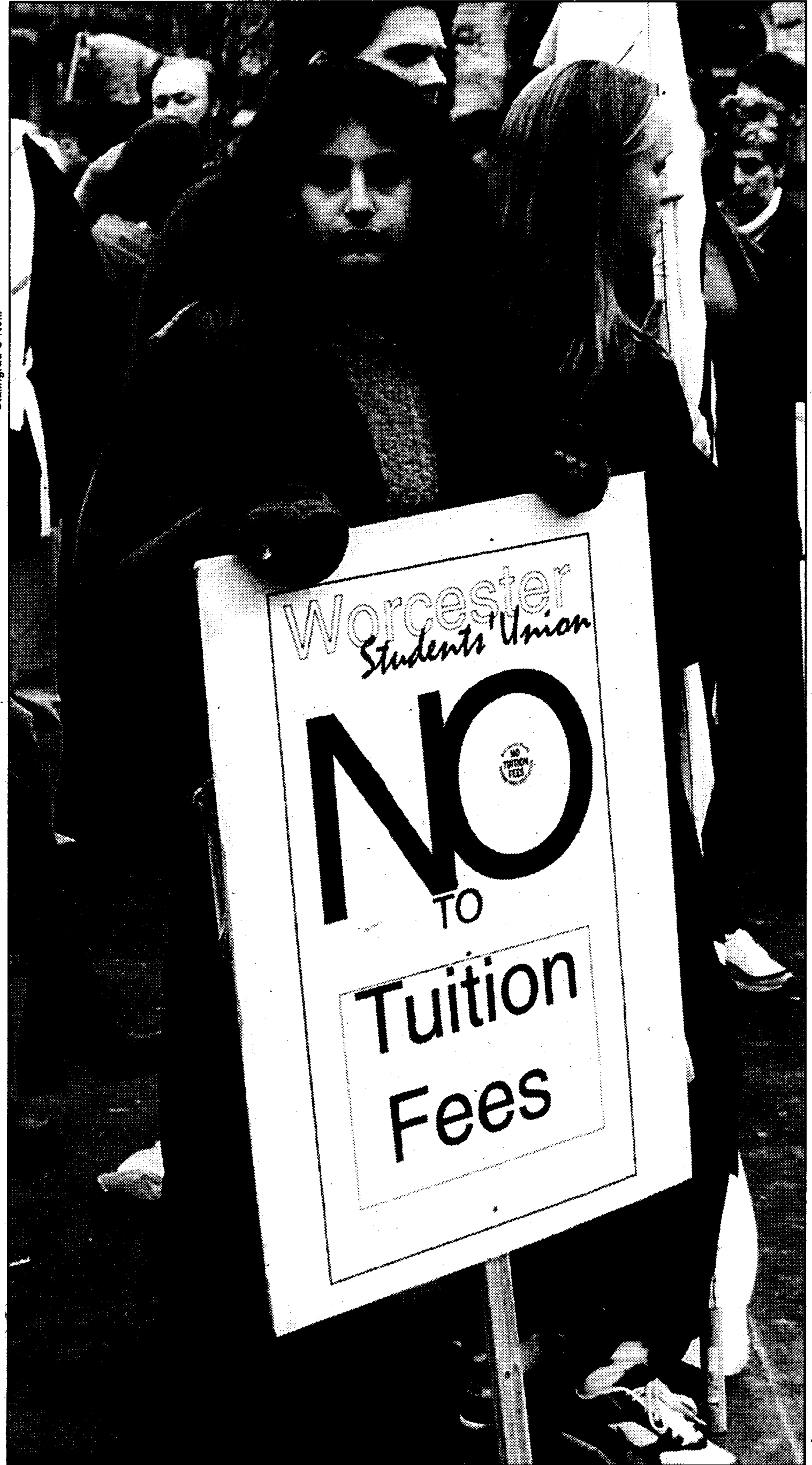
We welcome many of the points made by Ken Coates in the interview overleaf in particular his call for activists in the Labour party to organise and his assertion that there needs to be strong networking between those fighting inside and outside the Labour party.

Arthur Scargill, when he decided to form the Socialist Labour Party, also acted primarily as an individual and failed to consult more widely across the Left. While it was not inevitable that the SLP became the bureaucratic monstrosity its recent conference shows it has become, the seeds were sown at this initial stage.

Socialist Outlook believes the debate on how to resist the Labour government's policies needs to be brought out in the open, encompassing all areas of the movement, rather than be driven by responding to the actions of individuals.

As *Socialist Outlook* argued at the time, to launch a new party in such a dictatorial manner, when the majority of class conscious workers were crying out for Labour to defeat the Tories in the general election, and the class struggle was still at a very low ebb, was a big mistake.

Socialist Outlook supporters fully share the anger and frustration with Blair's policies of Coates and Kerr and those who joined the SLP. We disagree, however, with the impatience this frustration has produced among both groups. Neither has really attempted to



Students were the first to reject the right wing logic of Blair's "modernisation"

map out a strategy for the Left, let alone the wider class, to fight back against Blair.

The SLP put all its eggs in the basket of standing candidates in the general election, while the emphasis from Coates and Kerr has been on the Euro-elections.

Coates may say that his re-election is not the issue in this paper and other publications of the left. His letter to *The Guardian* calling for extra-parliamentary action in defence of the excluded was undoubtedly welcome. However this will not be the main dynamic of

than a strengthening of the fightback.

Over the next months we hope to print a series of articles in our paper representing a series of different viewpoints on how to begin to achieve these goals.

We need a strategy that involves a fight across the labour movement: in the Labour Party and unions, at all levels, against those carrying out or refusing to fight Blair's policies.

It must be one that can reach out to new forces coming into activity, be it in opposition to tuition fees or to the attacks on disabled people. It means building democratic organisations prepared to link up with, encourage, and give a lead to, those prepared to struggle.

Unlike the comrades who are now known as *Socialist Perspectives* we did not feel the formation of the SLP was correct, but we warmly welcome the politics encompassed in their statement.

As well as analysing the Blair project, they call for unity in action amongst all those prepared to fight it. Such a call, which echoes that made the recent Socialist Alliances Conference needs to be met with the warmest possible response by the whole left. The absence of such calls for unity – and practical organisation towards them have been the biggest failure of the isolationist SLP.

The left will continue to disagree about many things – but we cannot allow this to prevent the most effective possible resistance to the Blair roller coaster.

Ken Coates on fighting "the incubus of New Labour" "We must network, bringing those in the Labour Party and those outside in order to oppose this agenda."

SO: There's been a lot of confusion over your actions over the past few weeks. Can you explain what has happened, and whether you felt it necessary to pre-empt moves from Millbank?

KC: Well, that's simple. I've been expelled three times – from the European Parliamentary Labour Party, from the Socialist Group of MEPs, and from the Labour Party. There was no hearing, and I was not asked even one question. I was informed after this that there was no right of appeal.

It was only after this that I decided to sit with the GUE (Gauche Unifié Européenne) bloc as an independent Labour MEP. I chose to sit with the GUE because it consists of socialists, and because I am following the socialist whip in exile, and from where I now sit I can see when the whips put their thumbs up or down.

I have an amicable relationship with the socialist group, the GUE, and the Greens – we have all been working together in the Full Employment Convention. We established an inter-group structure on employment a year earlier, to prepare for the Convention last May. I have no problems relating to any group on the European left.

SO: What do you think lies behind the moves of Blair and the Labour bureaucracy to change the electoral system for Euro-MPs? Were they simply motivated by a wish to get rid of supposed "trouble-makers", or is there more behind it?

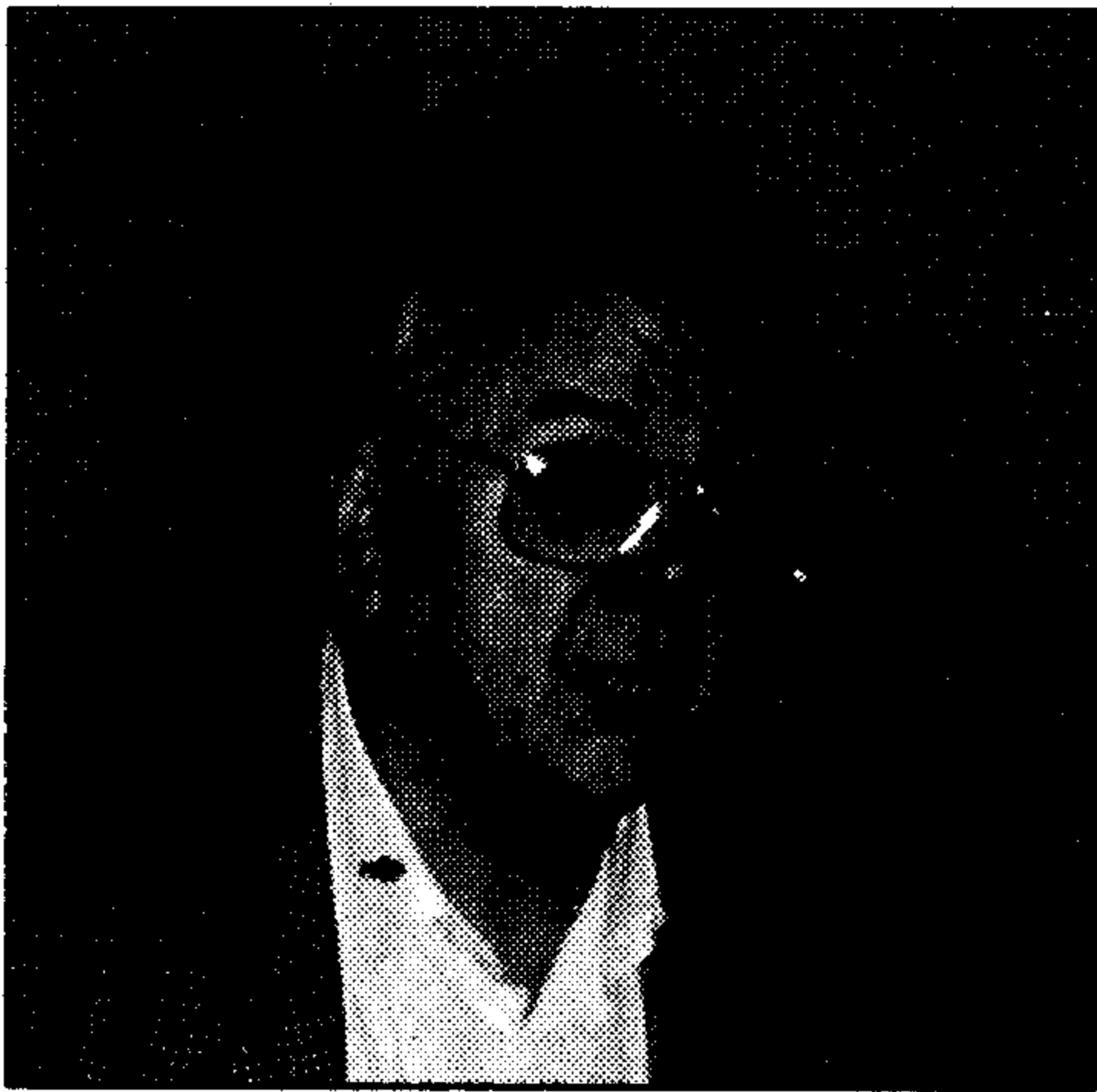
KC: Oh, there's clearly more behind it. It would be very vain to think that they needed this mighty steam-hammer merely to get rid of a couple of nuts.

The fact is, any system of proportional system would purge the European Labour Party – it would halve the numbers, assuming that the voting figures remain more or less the same as last time. So there would be 30-odd Labour MEPs, rather than the current 62.

What Blair and the leadership wanted to do was not only to get rid of the critics, but also to make the EPLP obedient. There is some evidence that they are pursuing this goal by changing the calibre of Labour MEPs. They would like a strong business element, and many business people would follow Blair's restrictive view of the social dimension of the EU.

The move towards feminisation of the list also goes with a Blairite shift. Of course, if we had a different Labour Party, then different women would be able to come forward.

At the same time, there is no regional party structure to match the electoral regions coming into existence. Several years ago, I proposed that the Labour establish functional regional parties, as part of the move



towards regional government.

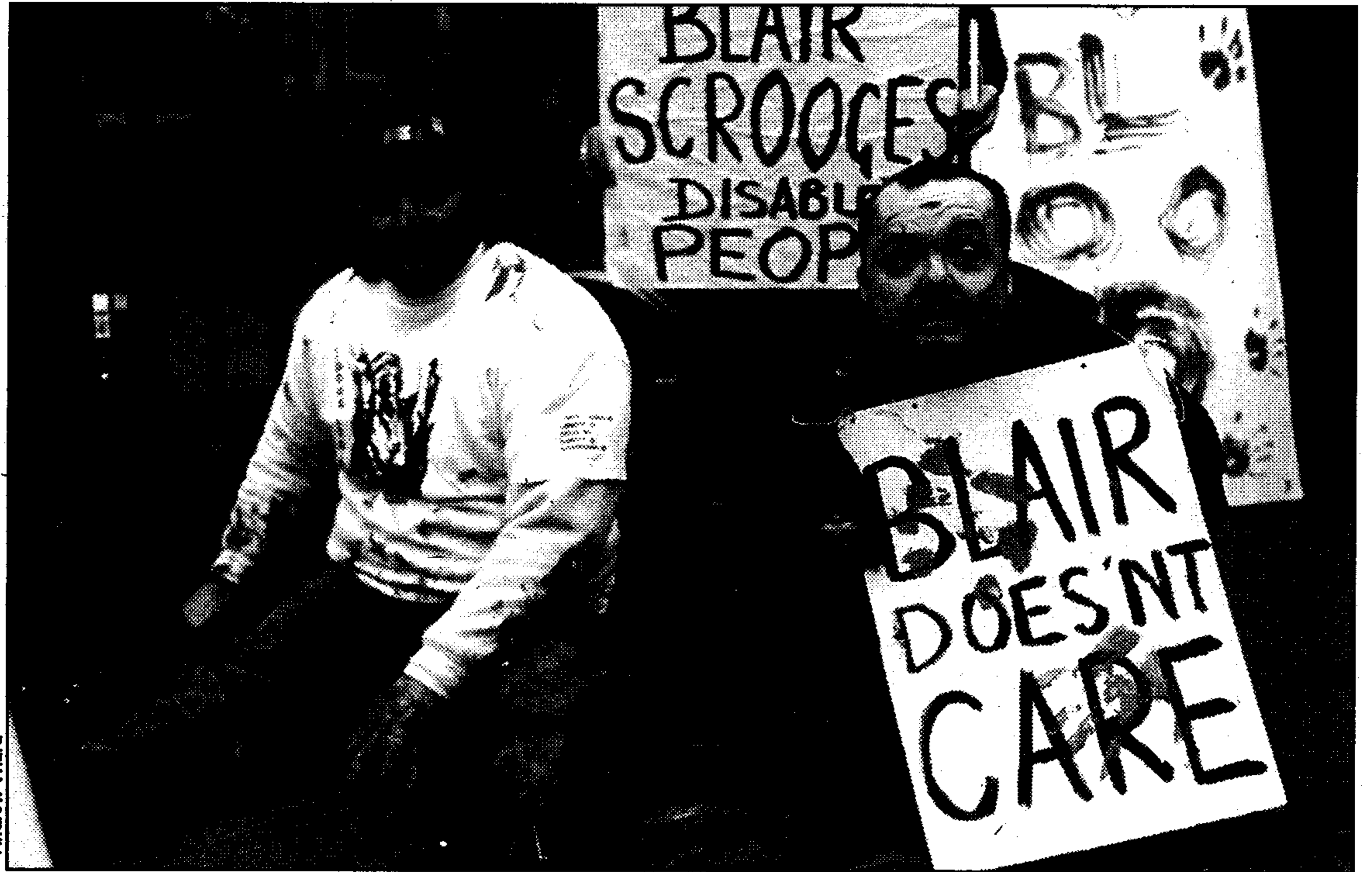
If my advice had been followed then, the Labour Party would now have a regional structure following the proposed European electoral regions.

The new MEPs will represent regions, and be appointed by the party; they will not be answerable to any constituents. My region will have six members for three million voters, who will simply vote "Labour", "Conservative", "Liberal", or whatever.

SO: What response have you had to your expulsion?

KC: The response has been remarkable. I have had an enthusiastic fan mail, with hundreds of letters of support. Over 400 members of my constituency have replied to the questionnaire I sent out; 87 per cent of them oppose the changes to the electoral system, and 78 per cent are against welfare cuts.

The rest favour reforms to the welfare system, some of which I



It is vital to defeat the cuts in benefit for people with disabilities

would support. Reform has got a bad name now, and become synonymous with "cuts". I would support reforms to make welfare services more answerable to their users, and more accountable to their workers.

SO: What role have you been able to play as an MEP? If you were to be re-elected as an independent, how would this affect your work?

KC: The issue is not about re-electing me, but opposing the incubus of New Labour.

I have worked hard as an MEP; I represent a large coalfield, which has seen mass unemployment, minimal job opportunities and widespread reliance on the welfare system. My book "Community Under Attack" discusses many of these problems, which have kept me very busy.

SO: Will you form a new party, link up with existing formations, or campaign to be re-admitted to the Labour Party?

KC: No, none of these. I have written to all members of the Labour Party NEC pointing out that it is a bit vindictive to expel me from the European Socialist Group, and asking them to confirm that there is no objection to my continued membership of that group as an Independent

Labour MEP.

At one time, there were three different Italian Socialist parties in the group. But my continued membership depends on the decision of the Labour Party leadership.

But I am not appealing for reinstatement to the Labour Party, because I have no right of appeal. I expect this right to be reinstated when we get rid of Mr Blair.

Nor do I want to establish a new party. Rather, I favour a network bringing together people who have stayed in the Labour Party and want to fight against the cuts, and those who have left because they oppose the cuts.

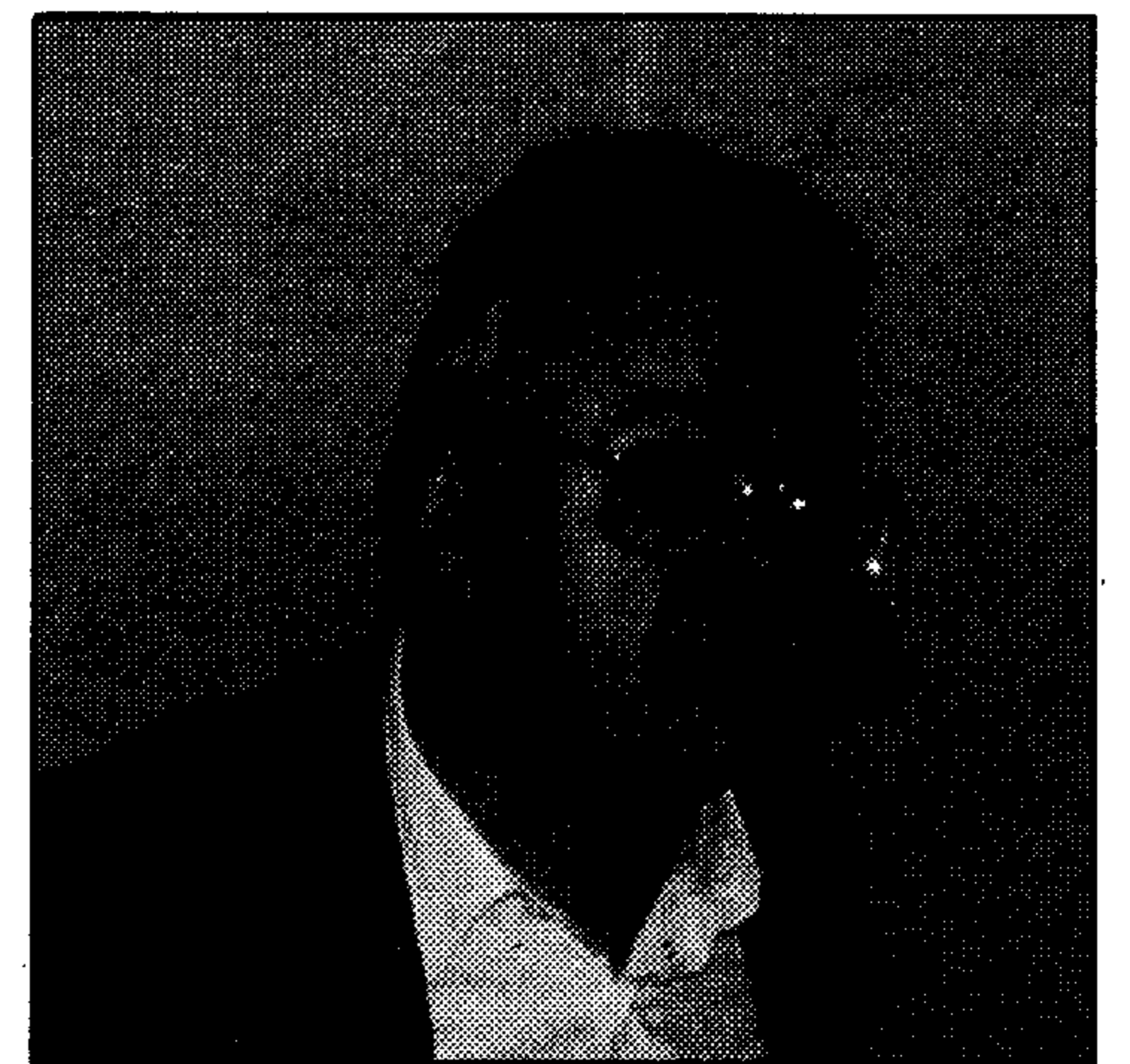
In my region, I have had correspondence from dozens of people, many in the Labour Party. I want to try to bring these people together, to see how we can organise. We need a wide network around a few simple demands:

- * for defence of the welfare state and redistribution of wealth;
- * for full employment, and against the current state of permanent mass unemployment;
- * against undemocratic changes to the electoral system and abolition of constituencies. Members must be elected by the electors, not appointed by the party leaders.

SO: We would see the attacks on welfare as linked to the drive towards a European single currency and the attempt to cut government spending across Europe.

KC: It's partly linked to the single currency, but I think you are mistaken to see this as central. The convergence criteria are being fudged. Britain in fact easily meets all of them, and is not participating for other reasons, mainly Rupert Murdoch.

Maastricht is the wrong target.



Belgium and Italy will be admitted to the single currency, even though they fail by a long way to meet the criteria.

It is true that the bankers are setting the agenda, but that doesn't mean that governments can just do as they want. For instance, there are massive battles going on across Europe over a shorter working week.

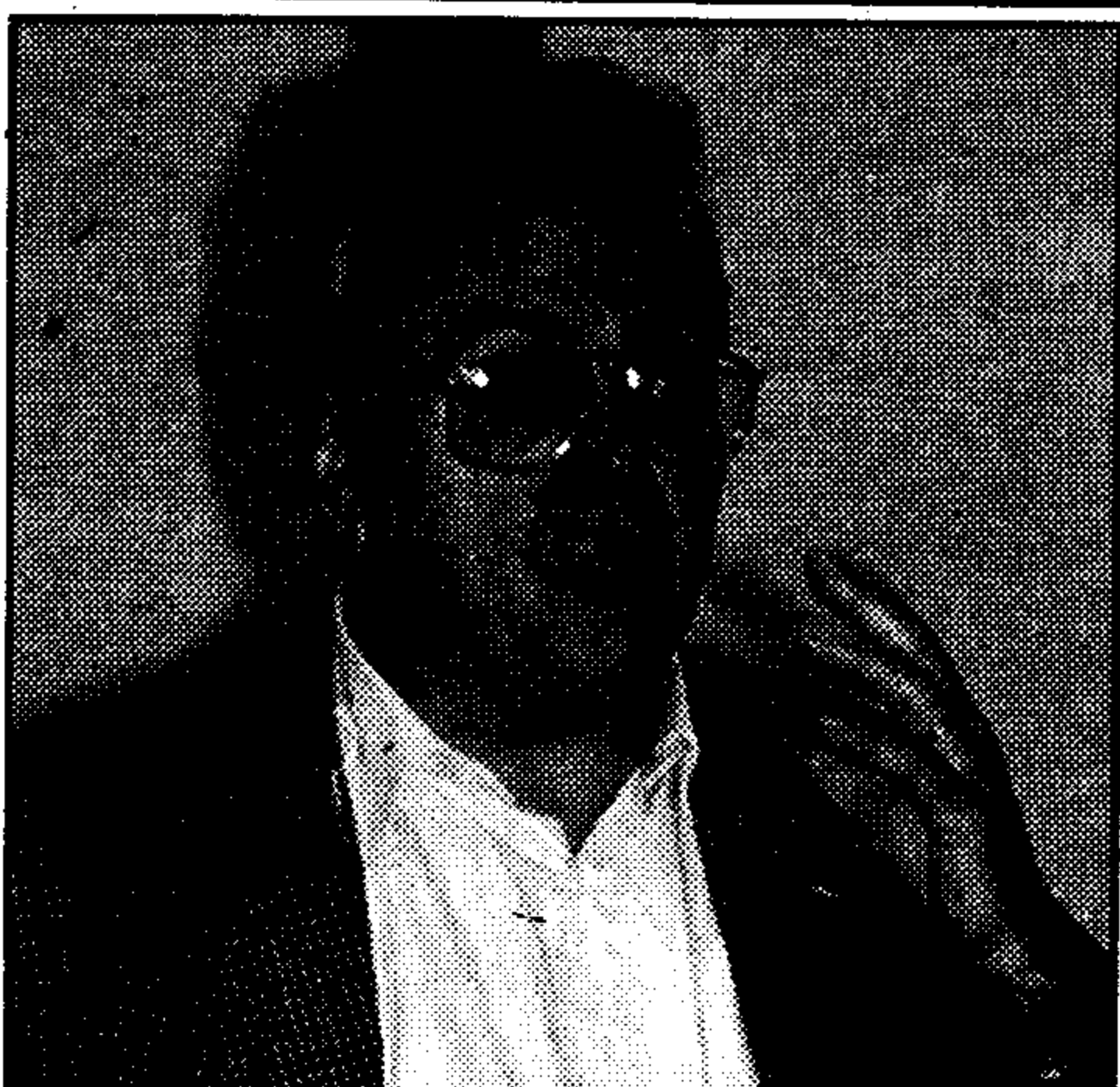
This is not to say that we disagree over the effects of Maastricht; much of the discussion on this was fuelled by my report some years ago to the European Parliament on the results of its application.

But what will be a hundred times worse than Maastricht will be Agenda 2000, which governs the expansion of the EU to the east. The GDP of the eastern European states is under half that of western Europe. Most of them are under 35 per cent.

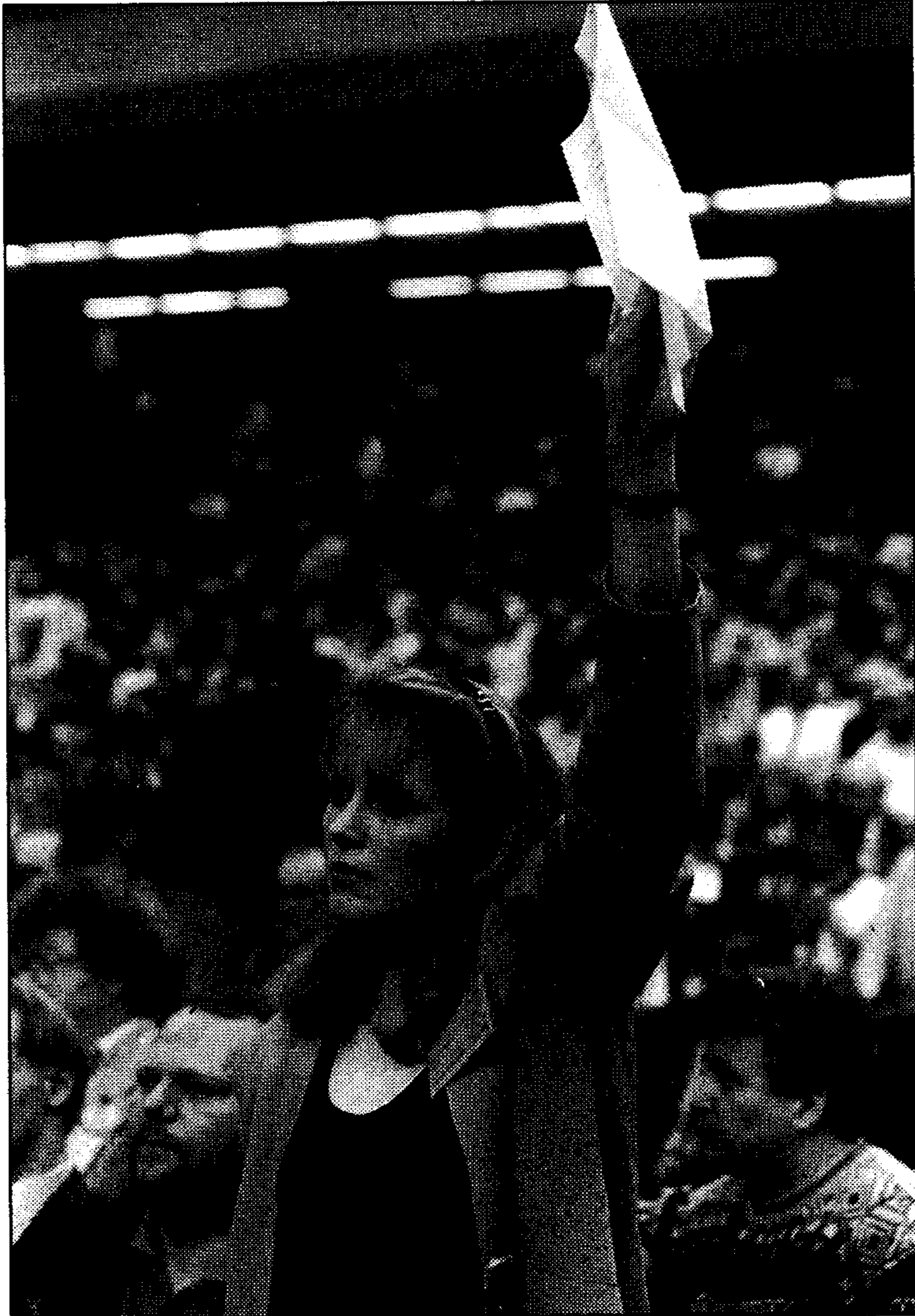
This will mean a huge export of unemployment from east to west, undermining all of the welfare provision. It will lead to the wrenching apart of the capacity of these systems.

I am for an expansion of the EU to the east, but this must be properly funded, to protect the social gains of the post-war years.

SO: What about Blair's agenda as President of the EU for Europe-wide legislation enforcing job 'flexibility'?



"I have had an enthusiastic fan mail, with hundreds of letters of support. Over 400 members of my constituency have replied to the questionnaire I sent out; 87 per cent of them oppose the changes to the electoral system, and 78 per cent are against welfare cuts."



You can't take resolutions to Labour conference any more: it will be sent to a policy forum for a possible decision in three years!

– ie weakening of workers' rights and lowering of wages?

KC: We should not presume the battle is over merely because this is what Blair has said.

Many European ministers did not agree with the Thatcherite agenda of the Tories, and do not agree with it now that Blair is pushing it.

He wants to prevent a 'social Europe' and to bring about the unravelling of the welfare state, but he will have a hard fight.

Part of the problem of the left in Britain is its failure to understand Christian Democracy. These parties should not be equated to wet Toryism; they are sociologically different.

They were part of the resistance to Nazism, they are mass popular parties, some with their own trade unions and cooperatives. They are far removed from Conservatism, leave alone Thatcherism.

If we fail to understand this, we will not realise the difficulties in the way of Blair's Thatcherite agenda.

SO: What advice would you give to activists, particularly to those in the Labour Party?

KC: Organise. Fight to defend the welfare state. We must win the battle over disability benefits.

The proposed education reforms are unsustainable, we must campaign to restore grants and abolish fees. There must be a major allocation of resources to the health service.

Britain devotes a smaller proportion of its resources to welfare services than any EU state except Greece, Ireland and Portugal.

Activists can and should persuade MPs to vote against these cuts. But MPs will pay as much attention whether or not these activists are members of the Labour Party. People who say "stay and fight" have to explain how we can

fight. Otherwise, people will stay and dig their allotments.

Actually, you can oppose from inside or outside, if you work out what you can actually do. It is true that Labour Party members still have a distinctive role in this struggle, but it is becoming more difficult than ever before. The changes in party structure mean that it will no longer suffice to win an argument and take a motion to conference; instead, it will be sent to a policy forum for a possible decision in three years – by which time we will have lost the welfare state.

There is a mass exodus taking place from the Labour Party – 10 per cent of my CLP have left. And these are not the 'Blair levy', but Old Labour, single mums, people who are losing welfare benefit.

The opposition, after much effort, was proud that it rightly persuaded 47 Labour MPs to vote

against the cuts in lone parent benefit. But single mums in my constituency said to me "What? Only 47? Only 10 per cent of them? That's not what we voted Labour for".

So we must network, bringing those in the Labour Party and those outside in order to oppose this agenda. The trade

unions too must join this opposition. And no-one should write them off – when they move, they can move surprisingly fast.

SO: We have been working in such a network, with trade unions, campaigns, labour party and other activists, as well as with people in Europe, to build the Euromarch last year, and now towards a demonstration at the June meeting of European heads of government in Cardiff.

KC: Well, I supported the Euromarch from the beginning.

I have a good working relationship with Christophe Aguiton. And of course I will support the protests at Cardiff.

After leaving the SLP: a statement from Socialist Perspectives.

"We have suffered many years of defeats. We need to create the conditions for some victories..."

THE STATEMENT by Ken Coates and Hugh Kerr has posed once again the question of the need for a new party of the working class, in the light of the political direction of 'New Labour' and the actions of the Blair government.

Although they did not pose this directly themselves, it was clear that Blair and his clique would not countenance such opposition even if posed in terms of a 'protest' slate of candidates offering an alternative to his warmed-up and barely disguised Thatcherite offering. Their expulsion without a hearing has underlined this.

As a group of people we joined the Socialist Labour Party because we believed that a new party of the working class was necessary to fight for the interests of working people, the poor and the oppressed.

We have, however, left the SLP as a result of the grossly sectarian and undemocratic methods of its leadership, which has meant that it has failed to serve as a focus for those who are fighting the actions of the Blair government. However, we will continue to work for the building of a socialist alternative outside of the SLP.

The statement by the two MEPs was welcome, despite its limitations. In a letter to *The Guardian*, Ken Coates was right to stress the need for opposition to be mobilised outside parliament against the attacks which Blair is launching on the poorest and most oppressed.

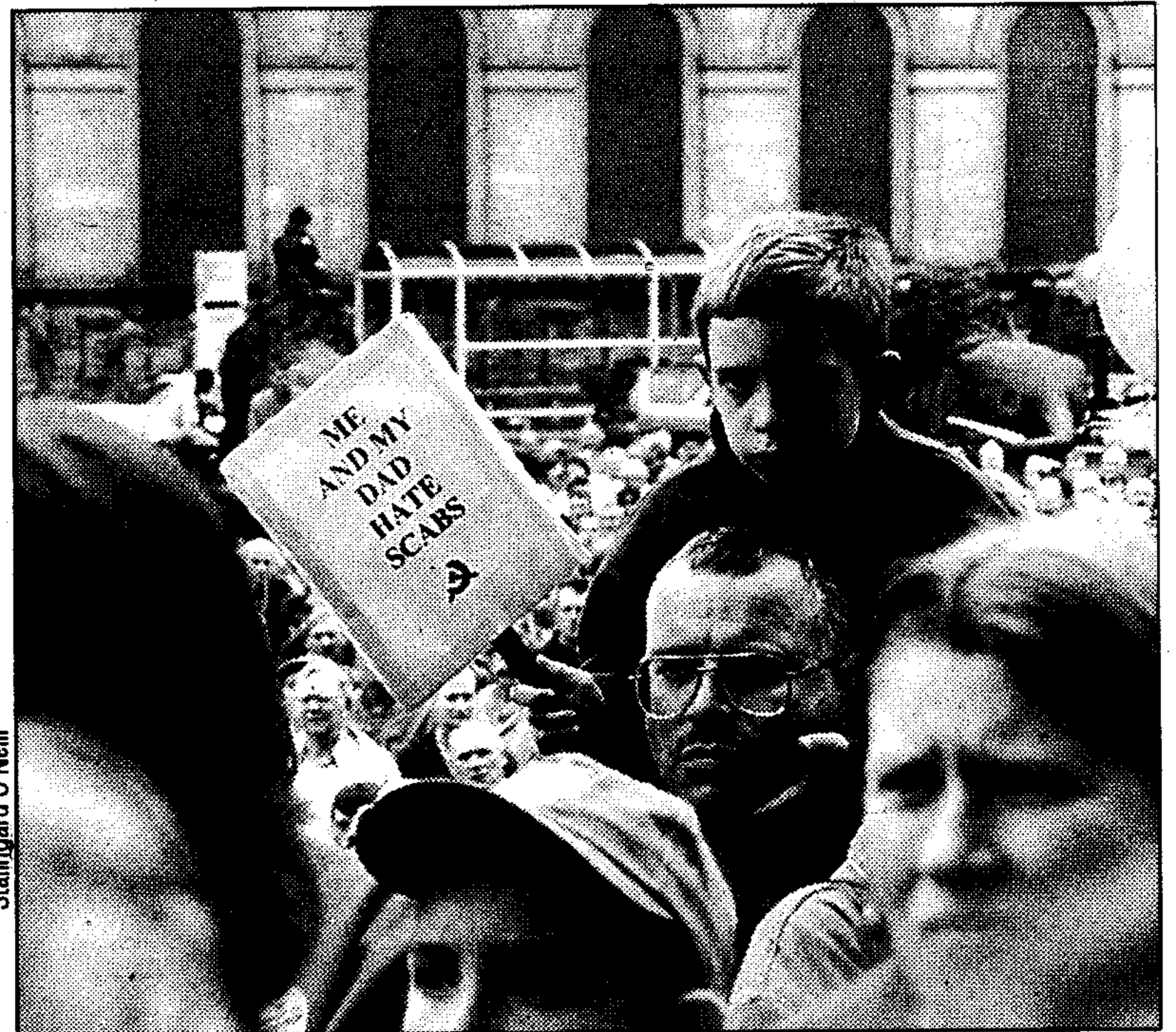
Opposition is undoubtedly growing as the reality of the Blair programme emerges, but it needs to be organised.

We believe that there is a crying need for an alliance of socialists and those under attack from this government, to campaign in defence of the interests of single parents, the disabled, public sector jobs and services, as well as opposing the various forms of privatisation which the government is applying (out-right privatisation as in the case of Benefits Agency offices, the Benefits Agency Medical Service, the building of privately owned hospitals under the Private Finance Initiative and the recent announcement opening up schools to private management in 'Education Action Zones').

There are many other issues, of course, including the ending of student grants and the imposition of fees.

In our view there is no reason why such an alliance could not be built, bringing together those in the Labour Party resisting Blair's attacks, the Socialist Alliance, and those in other organisations, as well as unaligned activists.

We would propose discussions be opened up to try and reach agreement on a small number of crucial areas, in order that the forces of the left, and those resisting attack on their rights and benefits, can concentrate their efforts on mobilising



Support for the dockers – but not from Labour ministers or the TUC

against the attacks of the government on the welfare state and the poorest sections of society.

For our part we are convinced that a genuine socialist alternative to Blair's neo-liberal New Labour will be necessary in order to successfully defend the interests of workers and the oppressed and to fight for a new society.

We believe that there needs to be a complete political break with the politics summed up in the 'social partnership' agenda which the trades union leaders have swallowed.

This was reflected in the fact that Church and business leaders could address the TUC Conference but the Liverpool Dockers were locked out.

The sectarianism which has dominated the British left for so long must be overcome.

What is crucial today is to seek to

all those resisting the direction taken by the Blair government and striving to build a mass movement in defence of what remains of our gains of the post-war years. Our differences can be tested out in the light of experience.

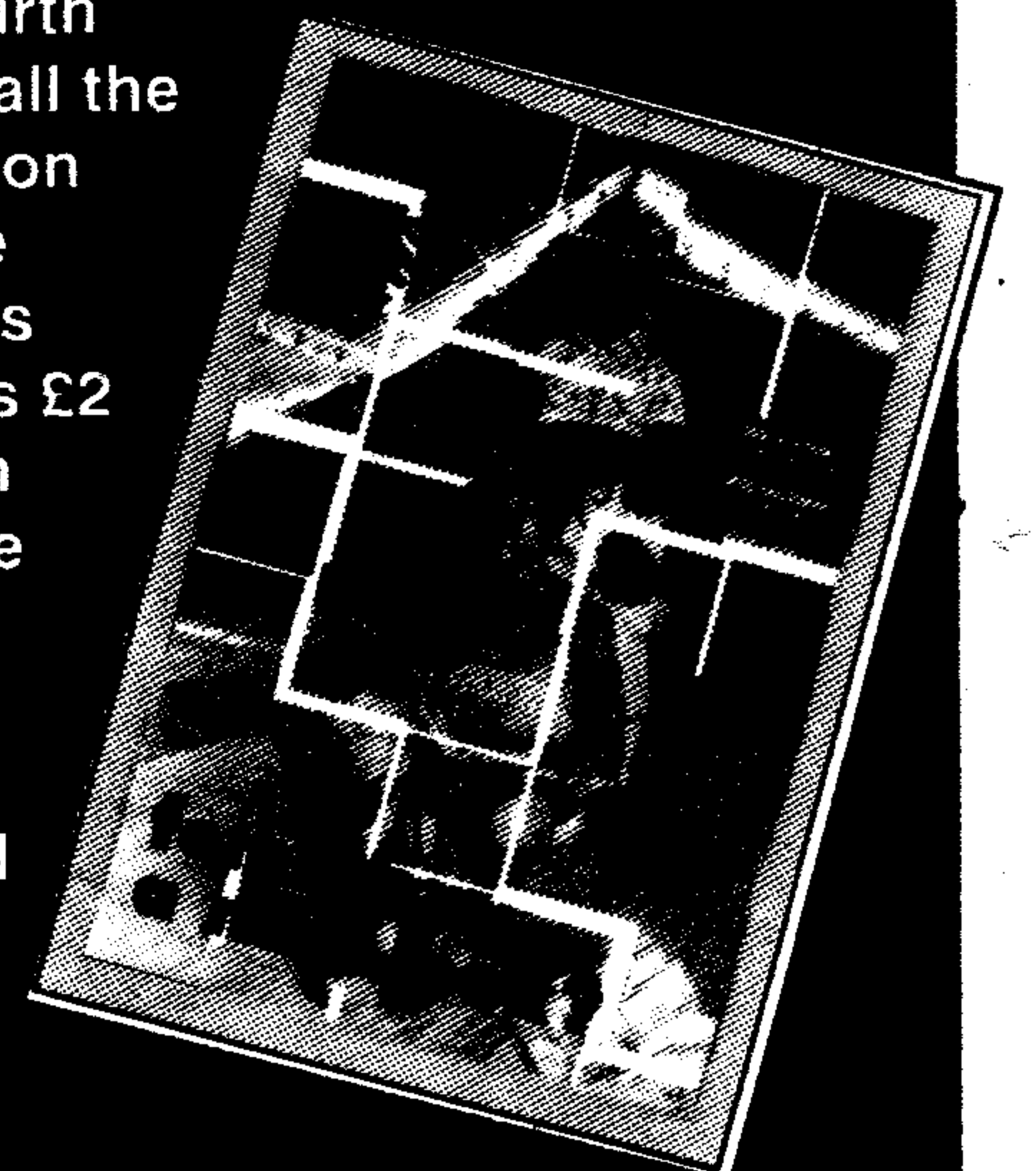
We have suffered many years of defeats. We need to create the conditions for some victories, and to discuss how we can build a socialist alternative which connects with the living experience of millions of people.

Socialist Perspectives is a group of people involved in the struggle for democracy in the Socialist Labour Party. At a meeting on January 10 we decided to leave the SLP after the fiasco of its December Congress.

For information or further comment contact: 333 Welcombe Ave Park North, Swindon, SN3 2PF 01793 496816

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Serfs revolt in the court of King Arthur

THE SECOND congress of the Socialist Labour Party took place on December 13-14 1997. After the debacle that took place it must be an open question whether Arthur Scargill's party will survive long enough to hold a further congress.

Below we print an account of the meeting and the issues arising from it from PETE BLOOMER, previously chair of Birmingham SLP and a supporter of Workers Action.

In the next issue of Socialist Outlook we will carry more material from different points of view of the evolution of the SLP and the broader question of how the left can organise against Blair's project.

WELL IN ADVANCE of the Congress itself it was clear that democracy was under concerted attack.

One third of the resolutions submitted – those from the left – had been ruled out of order.

The rules about electing delegates had been changed in the recent past as part of other structural changes to try to stem dissent. It seemed clear that there would be a majority of Stalinists and Scargill loyalists amongst the 250 delegates.

As the meeting got under way a number of delegates stood up to challenge the fact that resolutions had been ruled out of order. The chair moved the whole agenda to the vote and called for ratification of the constitution at the same time.

Through this manoeuvre, anyone not in the know was pressurised to cast a loyalty vote without a chance to hear what the real issues were. Next there were many resolutions on the question of membership eligibility, unfathomable to an



Scargill: his new deal with IWA rests on dodgy block vote from an organisation of ex-miners

outsider.

The constitution rules that only people with one year's 'residency' in Britain can join – excluding people in a totally racist way.

Amendments were also debated which raised the question of Irish people's membership eligibility. Rather than attack the reactionary idea of citizenship, the leadership pushed legal questions of interpretation.

Scargill may protest that the reason for the rule is not racist – but he has yet to come up with any other

rationale.

The possibility of organising within the North of Ireland was also not ruled out, with the resolutions on this question voted down or rejected.

It is inconsistent for those who oppose the partition of Ireland to support the continued organisation of British trade unions and workers' parties in Ireland. We must stand for an independent, all-Ireland, basis of organisation.

Another amendment, to take the provision for a Black Section out of

the constitution was moved by Indian Workers Association member, Harper Brar. In an animated speech he argued against the self-organisation of Black people, decrying it as tokenism.

The voting on this issue was to cause probably the greatest controversy of the weekend.

On the eve of conference North West, Cheshire & Cumbria Miners Association (NWC&CMA) affiliated to the SLP. Under the constitution a trade union affiliate commands votes according to its membership figures.

It is questionable whether a Miners Welfare Association of ex-miners is a trade union, but the NWC&CMA delegate was given 3,000 votes! The rest of the conference had around 1,000 – giving one delegate an absolute majority. What a sham!

Pandemonium

Pandemonium broke out after the first card votes were announced. The organisers had not bothered to tell the delegates of this development with the NWC&CMA – and the size of their voting block. People were already scandalised.

Then the NWC&CMA delegate announced that their vote on the amendment to close the Black section hadn't been counted. At this stage the amendment had been narrowly defeated – but as this delegate was supporting it, this would obviously change.

The embarrassed top table mused over what to do, then called a

re-vote. During this furore a number of left delegates walked out of the conference, to jeering and abuse from the Stalinist wing.

The so called FISC-ites around the Sikorskis and Brian Heron knew about the block vote before congress and raised no objection to it. But when the block vote was used to vote the Black Section out of existence they went ballistic.

It seems that this move was an attack on them and their influence within the Black Section. Scargill went on a new tack, and cemented an alliance with the IWA. By closing the Black Section he was attacking them.

Heron in flight

After the re-vote closed, the Black Section – a procession of FISC-ites announced they would not take up seats (if elected) on to the NEC. The next day Heron, nearly in tears, announced that they would!

After the walkouts there was little real focus to the conference. It was a routinist crawl through a long agenda of resolutions. All of these went the way of the leadership or were remitted back to the new NEC.

Scargill used the block vote to determine every issue and to impose his slate for the new NEC. Without the block vote, one of the left candidates would have been elected, with another in place if any resignation during the term of the NEC occurred. The top table did everything they could to pretend that everything is fine with the Party.

In fact many members, unorganised by the left, tore up their cards as they left on the Saturday evening. The left held a joint meeting of 57 delegates which passed a motion condemning the stitch up of the conference (see box).

Subsequently most of the left has resigned, either as individuals or as a block around the Socialist Perspectives grouping (see previous page). The SLP is consolidating itself as a Stalinist Party.

Isolation

Whilst the SLP at its inception had the potential to become a force on the left its leadership has cut itself off from that possibility. Rather than conduct a prolonged dogfight with Scargill and the Stalinists it is time to lead a split from it and from its sectarian isolation.

Socialist Perspectives is contacting SLP members to urge them to leave and participate in the debate on the politics and perspectives of forming a new organisation outside the SLP – with the question of regroupment and joint activity of the left high on the agenda.

Having played a small role within the SLP, *Workers Action* has been invited to participate in the debate on the politics and programme of the new grouping together with other forces.

Workers Action is arguing for a labour movement orientation and for revolutionary socialist politics and principles to be adopted.

Message to SLP members

Agreed statement of 57 congress delegates and observers

The SLP congress has been seen to be a complete travesty of democracy. In the absence of a membership report, news leaked out from those recording the votes that one organisation had a block of 3,000 votes, a majority of over two thirds of those to be cast.

This meant that debate was meaningless. This one organisation was ensured that its point of view would prevail, regardless of the view of the majority of delegates. A clear example of this was the vote to dissolve the black sections.

The congress has been denied the right to ratify the constitution or propose an alternative.

The congress was presented with a complaints/disciplinary procedure only when delegates arrived. Delegates did not have the chance to properly read it and yet were expected to vote in what is an act of faith in the NEC.

The method of the leadership is a sectarian and profoundly undemocratic one. It is taking the organisation down the road of becoming a political sect dominated by the general secretary, in a way parallel with Blair and New Labour.

The tragedy of this is that the 'honeymoon' period of the government is beginning to crack. If the SLP developed as a forum for unifying all those who are opposed to the political direction of the government, and an organiser of struggle against it, it could quickly develop into a party of some tens of thousands.

Fifty seven delegates and observers present at the congress on Saturday December 13 convey to the membership of the SLP our complete opposition to the actions of the leadership which is destroying the possibility of the SLP growing and becoming a real alternative to New Labour.



Eye of the storm: another investment bank – this time in Hong Kong goes under, while Japanese banks reveal that they are sitting on up to £350 billion in bad debts

Marxism reveals roots of the Asian capitalist crisis

Andy Kilmster

EACH WEEK another of the formerly 'miracle' economies of East and South East Asia slips further into crisis.

This week it is the turn of Indonesia as the failing Suharto regime desperately bargains with the IMF and its international creditors. Last week it was Hong Kong as the stock market tumbled following the collapse of the Peregrine investment brokers.

International capitalists are frantically trying to predict where the next disaster will occur. Yet they have been singularly unable to explain why the crisis emerged in the first place, or what it means for the world economy in the future. How can a region which was seen as the most dynamic sector of capitalist growth now have become its biggest problem area?

The basis of an answer to these questions lies in the analysis of capitalist crisis developed by Karl Marx over a century ago. There were of course important differences between the capitalism of Marx's time and ours.

But the essence of the system remains unchanged and we can use Marx's approach to study the causes and outcomes of the Asian crisis. In particular, three main aspects of Marx's account of crisis are relevant to what is happening today.

Marx saw one of the fundamental causes of capitalist crises as lying in the contradiction between the social nature of production in a modern industrialised economy and the isolated decision making arising from private ownership of property.

Crisis occur because, while production is social in the sense that what happens in each individual factory, company or office affects

thousands of other people working elsewhere through innumerable links, the decisions about this production are taken by individual capitalists or groups of employers, separated from society as a whole.

What is rational for one capitalist, seeking to gain profit for their own company in isolation, can if repeated by all company owners, be disastrous for the capitalist class as a whole.

So, in Asia it appeared sensible for individual companies to borrow heavily and invest in speculative ventures and property projects in order to stay ahead of the competition. But the result of this behaviour being generalised is a glut of property and a mountain of bad debts which threaten the stability of the system as a whole.

Contradiction

The contradiction between social production and individual ownership is fundamental to capitalism. Many writers over the last decade, including a number who used to be seen as on the Left, argued that the Asian economies had been able to overcome this contradiction and develop a new and superior form of capitalism.

They argued that the networks of collaboration and influence in economies like Japan and South Korea between the state and business, the financial sector and industry and between industrial companies had socialised economic decision making. They claimed that these economies were based on a structure of trust and stability which would mean that crises were a thing of the past.

The events of the last year show the hollowness of this claim.

In reality, the networks of influ-

ence between the state and business have been an avenue for corruption. The close relationships between banks and companies have led to the build up of risky debt. The links between industrial companies have increased the vulnerability of the whole system to defaults in any part.

The call now is for a movement back towards the free market model of US capitalism. Yet this will not remove the contradictions but only change their form.

The second element of Marx's analysis of crises which is relevant to Asia today is his account of financial crisis. Marx focused on the role of the banks and the rate of interest, but his analysis is just as relevant to the stock market.

As capitalist economies boom credit is drawn into more and more speculative and risky investments, which in turn need a greater and greater supply of finance to keep going. At some point the supply of credit dries up, and due to the build up of speculative debt, one default can trigger off a reaction which feeds through the rest of the system leading to a slump.

In East Asia this has happened in two ways. Firstly, domestic finance has been withdrawn through the selling of shares.

Devaluation

Shareholders have lost confidence in the future profitability of companies. As they sell and the value of shares falls it becomes more difficult for companies to raise further funds. This can then limit further investment.

More seriously, though, the fall in the share price does not just affect future investment. It also represents a *devaluing* of the capital that

has previously been invested in companies, either by their owners or by outside investors.

That capital had been invested in the hope of future profits which now appear unlikely to be realised. Those who invested that money have seen a large part of their capital wiped out.

In economies like those in East Asia, with a high level of interlocking shareholdings between companies, this effect can seriously undermine the system. It is also bound to lead to attempts by the employers and state in these countries to recoup their investments by squeezing more profits out of the working class.

The other way in which financial crisis has exhibited itself in Asia is through the withdrawal of international funds. This has caused a collapse in currency values.

Debts

While on its own this might help exports and production in the future the problem is the build up of foreign debt in the past. The collapsing currency makes it almost impossible for countries like Indonesia and South Korea to repay their debts.

Again, what is individually rational for an international capitalist, namely to withdraw their money from the region before problems arise, threatens the stability of the system when everyone tries to do it.

The final aspect of Marx's theory of crisis which is relevant to the Asian example relates to the outcome of the crisis. For Marx the results of crises were never predetermined.

If the working class is weak, a crisis can perform a positive function

for capital. Weaker companies are eliminated through bankruptcy and consequently the average rate of profit is raised. Investment and growth eventually restart on a new and more profitable basis. This is what the IMF and the international banks and investors are trying to engineer in the region.

If the working class is stronger however a crisis may be resolved in a way which, at least temporarily, weakens the position of the employers and lays the basis for future gains for workers. Up until now the organised working class has been relatively weak in most Asian countries, with the important exception of South Korea.

But past experience shows that in conditions of acute crisis this situation can change very rapidly, as new organisations are formed and existing ones recapture old traditions of struggle.

This is particularly relevant in Indonesia as the succession to Suharto and the future of his regime become more urgent issues.

Marxism can illuminate the causes, mechanisms and possible outcomes of the Asian crises in a way that conventional economics has failed to do. In doing so it becomes ever more clearer that there is no such thing as "Asian capitalism".

The Asian economies remain simply capitalist economies in crisis, no different in essence from similar societies elsewhere. As the impact of the crisis in Asia makes itself felt throughout the world economy, the chances are that the problems of the region will not be remain limited there, and the same ideas of Marx will continue to be useful for analysing a world in crisis – as they have been in the past.

Small change from polls in South Korea

Terry Lawless

THE ELECTION to the Korean presidency of long time bourgeois dissident Kim Dae-jung is no victory for democracy. It is however a defeat for the ruling camp and its policy of regional divide-and-rule.

Dae-jung, previously a popular candidate in the 1970 presidential elections against the repressive President Park (1961-1979), is from the Cholla provinces in the South west of the country. Under Park's rule there had emerged a strategic pole of military, political and economic power whose centre of gravity was the Taegu/North Kyongsang provinces (TK) in the South East. He followed a conscious policy of excluding those from the west and rewarding those from his own area, the TK provinces.

For the first time in fifty years the presidential nominee of the party in power failed to win. The election results underline the extent to which regional antagonism is still relevant today, with Dae-jung doing markedly better in the Cholla provinces and considerably worse in TK.

Some of the continuing police-state practices are likely to be curtailed and some but not all political prisoners released. Overall, however, this victory does not herald major progressive change. Dae-jung is a very corrupt man – as much a product of Korean bourgeois politics as he is its supposed nemesis.

Kim Dae-jung has vowed to follow the conditions laid down by the IMF which ensure that he has very limited room for manoeuvre. His basic goal is to pay back the Fund as soon as possible and resume an independent Korean economic policy. The chances of being able to do this in the two years he has set himself seem virtually non-existent.

Courting right

Kim Dae-jung has spent a good deal of time since his return to politics courting the right wing. He has taken his distance from the student movement, praised the achievements of President Park, and even addressed a gathering of geriatric anti-communists – something he would have once found distasteful.

Last year, he sat firmly on the fence during the biggest General Strike in Korean history, fearing that any support he might show for the workers would damage his presidential chances. He made it clear before the presidential vote that he would support the release of mass murderers and TK generals Chun and Rho in the name of 'national reconciliation'.

President Kim had become a liability to the ruling camp between the January's General Strike and November's IMF bailout. Kim had tried to rule in the manner of an incorruptible Confucian sage, but a whole series of money scandals and the mounting tide of corporate bankruptcies robbed him of these claims. He had neither broken with



Supporters or defeated candidate Lee Hui-chang.

the political corruption of the past or created a bright future of global competitiveness.

The conviction and imprisonment of his second son, Kim Young-chul, on bribery charges following the bankruptcy of the Hanbo business group summed up Kim's limitations. The fate of Hanbo was an early warning of the much wider problems that the chaebols were soon to encounter.

Kim Young-sam's New Korea Party was the result of an unholy alliance in 1990 which brought together his Pusan-based organisation with that of the TK forces of Rho and Chun. Formerly known as the Democratic Liberal Party, it was not actually renamed until late 1995 after the arrest of Chun and Rho.

The renaming was part of the attempted "settling accounts with history" which led to the trials of Chun and Rho on charges of mutiny and massacre. There was a large element of opportunism involved since Kim Young-sam used them to stamp his authority against their supporters - the TK forces.

Retrospectively it also ought to be seen as a genuine, limited attempt to rewrite the bourgeois rules of the game to rule out the violent overthrow of the constitutional order by the Army. The verdict however did not rule out the violent suppression of pro-democracy movements in the future.

The Washington Post suggested recently that Dae-jung will have to preside over a National Assembly majority hostile to his interests, but this results from the mistaken application of western party political norms to Korea.

Labour candidate Kwon Young-gil suggested in a recent interview with the Korean language progressive monthly, *Mal*, that organisations like the Grand National Party should not be honoured with the title "party". They lack the most elementary of programmes; and never out last the defeat, defection or imprisonment of a leading personality.

This explains why figures seemingly from the right and left of the Korean political spectrum can unite with a minimum of ideological fuss.

Even though Kwon Young-gil's 'People's Victory 21' said that it was building for the future and did not expect its candidate to win, it must have been disappointed with the election result. Overall, Kwon Young-gil took 1.2 per cent of the vote to finish fourth in the field of seven. The campaign suffered from lack of money and the monopoly of media attention given to the three bourgeois candidates.

Falling unionisation

The concentration of Korean union membership in large and heavy industrial concerns did not help. The overall union rate in Korea has fallen from a high of 18 per cent in 1987 to 12.6 per cent today.

There are restrictions on teachers and civil servants forming unions. There are also still legal restrictions on union officials' electioneering activity. At least two union leaders were arrested for supporting Kwon in front of their memberships.

The election was cynically timed for final exams week. This may have limited the student vote to

some extent, even though polling day itself was a national holiday.

The biggest problem, however, is undoubtedly the lack of awareness of the difference between a bourgeois dissident and a labour candidate. The majority of progressive students undoubtedly voted for Kim Dae-jung in order not to "waste" their vote. Political education must be a priority for the new labour party.

The whole economic strategy pursued by this so-called Asian tiger is in chaos. Average income has been halved in a matter of months. The stock market has collapsed.

In 1996, the total market value of the listed stocks came to 117.37 trillion won (US \$139 million), at an exchange rate of 844.2 won/dollar. On Christmas Eve 1997, it stood at 66.35 trillion won (US \$33.9 billion), at an exchange rate of 1,964.80 won/dollar. This is less than that of ING of the Netherlands, the world's seventieth largest corporation, whose combined stocks total \$34.7 billion.

Korea has been bailed out three times: in 1969 (by the IMF), in 1983 (by Japan) and in 1997 (by the IMF and thirteen countries at the time of writing).

This indicates a fundamental structural problem. The economic strategies on which the chaebols are based leaves them highly exposed the steep drop in the price of a given commodity as well as the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

When Hanbo failed in January 1997, its debts amounted to sixteen times its net capital worth. When it crashed, the reverberations were felt across the entire economy.

Debts

Each of the failed chaebols has gone under with incredibly large debts. Hanbo was unusual only in offering a textbook illustration of political corruption and economic miscalculation. Halla, one of the top twenty, had debts amounting to twenty times its assets when it crashed in November.

The long economic boom of the East Asian region appears to have entered a period of development with an undertone of stagnation, with levels of profit falling below 5 per cent for the first time in twenty-five years.

The region is in crisis because of what Marx called the tendency of the rate of profit to fall with the generalisation across the region of a given level of technological infrastructure. South Korea recently celebrated the sale of its ten millionth automobile, for example.

The breaking up of the chaebols will probably now occur under the auspices of foreign capital and without democratisation. The lack of democratic control will facilitate foreign take-overs under the worst possible terms for Korean workers.

The first major step taken by the Korean government was the ending of rules under which a whole range of Japanese goods, including cars and electronic goods, were pre-

vented from entering the domestic market.

Because Park slavishly imitated the Japanese industrial portfolio, a whole range of industries may now be sitting ducks for Japanese corporate sharpshooters. By the end of next year, the ceiling on foreign ownership of domestic firms, raised to 55 per cent on December 30, will be eliminated entirely.

Japanese ownership of Korean industry would recreate a potentially explosive dynamic, with the re-emergence of intertwined class and national grievances. The Japanese bourgeoisie would have to proceed cautiously, with nominal control remaining with Korean bosses.

What of the possible fightback by the unions? The battle, if it comes, will be in the heavy industries, a repeat of the general strike of December 1996-January 1997. This time, it will be the IMF that will be pressing the unions, not the Korean bourgeoisie.

New labour law

In order to carry out the financial reform promised to the IMF, the government will have to rewrite the labour law. It is expected to try to do this in January or February. The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions has promised an all-out general strike should this happen.

Two issues are likely to be central to any mass mobilisation. The first is the provision regarding redundancies in the case of mergers and acquisitions. As a result of last year's general strike, no mass lay off can occur before the year 2000. The government must overturn this if the Korean economy is to become respectable for foreign investment.

Then there is the legal stipulation that workers must be compensated before other creditors are paid off in the case of bankruptcy. This is crucial since Korea has no unemployment scheme in the case of lay-offs.

The state-sanctioned union organisation, the Federation of Korean Trade Unions, is more friendly to the IMF. Its leader, Park In-sang, suggested in a recent meeting with Dae-jung that he write to the IMF and other Western donors pledging his organisation's willingness to observe the terms of the bailout agreement.

These are pretty bleak times in Korea, but Koreans have not lost either their rich sense of humour or their rebellious spirit.

There is a joke doing the rounds in Korea about the meaning of the letters "IMF". We are told these letters actually stand for the words: "I'M F-ired". The student movement has recently improved upon this little piece of mordant wit. What does IMF stand for? I'M F-ighting back.

* A longer version of this article will appear in *International Viewpoint*.

New Labour meets old Partition and old Sectarianism

Why Adams has been left empty-handed

David Coen

ANYONE who doubts the effects of terrorism on the British Government has only to look at the Mo Mowlem's pathetic scurry into the Maze Prison to see the leaders of the loyalist death squads of the UDA/UFF and the LVF.

The LVF has been killing Catholics all year but it was only when the UFF joined in that Mowlem rushed to placate them. Now the "peace" talks can continue but the Taigs have had a good lesson: drop the mild demands for reform or you'll be massacred.

Which, by some fluke of history is what Bloody Sunday in January 1972 was about, except that time the lesson to the uppity Taigs was dishd out by the British Army. Their demands, an end to discrimination in housing, an end to internment without trial and one person, one vote, could not be conceded by the Unionist regime at Stormont.

This was not only because the Unionists were bigots (which many were) but because the Six County statelet itself had been built on sectarianism and the smallest concessions could cause the whole rotten structure to collapse.

Both of these events show the true nature of Unionism. Unionism and its working class variant, Loyalism, is an alliance between the British ruling class, the Unionist bourgeoisie in Northern Ireland and a substantial part of the working class organised in the Orange Order.

The "democratic" rights of the Unionists are neither democratic nor right. Partition was imposed by the British in 1921 under the threat of "immediate and terrible war" against the democratic wish of the majority of people in Ireland. Sectarianism is the tool used by the Unionists to divide the working class.

Every attempt at reform comes up against the same threat of a sectarian bloodbath. In case you think this an outrageous slander on "new" Labour, consider therecent ramblings of John Lloyd, Deputy Editor of the mouth piece of New Labour, *The New Statesman*.

Lloyd has recently been very publicly welcomed by the *Daily Telegraph* to "Friends of the Union" meetings. This unsavoury mixture of Tories, Unionists and their media supporters, has one merit. It is open about its aims - no deal whatsoever with Irish Nationalists.

"Take on the IRA"

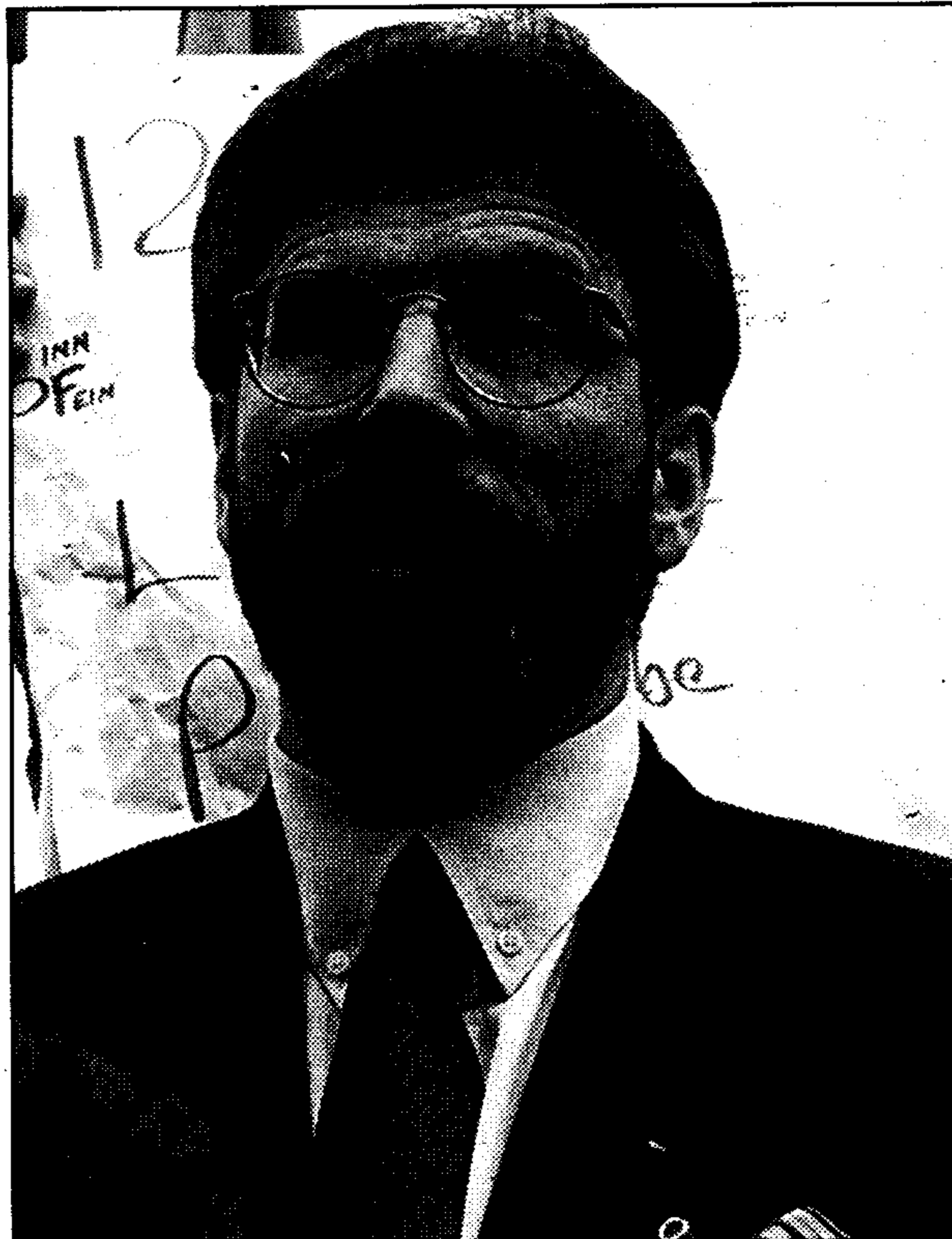
Lloyd is in favour of doing a deal with Gerry Adams, though nothing can be conceded which endangers the Union. If Adams doesn't deal, then "Adams and the IRA must be taken on".

According to Lloyd the Nationalist position cannot be justified (on democratic grounds), Partition (in 1921) saved Ireland from civil war (!) and the South's "claim" to the North is (wait for it) "likely to be worthless if tested in international law".

So Britain's claim to the North of Ireland in the 1920 Government of Ireland Act is perfectly all right, then? I only mention this ignorant bovine rumbling because of what it shows about the direction of Labour's policy on Ireland.

Blair is a unionist: we know because he's told us. He wants to underpin the British State using, among other things, devolution. The settlement on offer to the Republicans, since at least 1994, is a newer model of the old Stormont Government abolished in 1972 after Bloody Sunday.

No British withdrawal, no self determina-



Nothing to sell to nationalists: Gerry Adams



Still fighting for justice and democracy: young marchers mark Bloody Sunday

tion, no Irish unity, though there may be a few cross-border committees dealing with tourism and spending EU money.

If there's no threat to the Union, as there clearly isn't, why the "Friends of the Union", why the refusal by a significant part of the Unionists to take part in the "peace" talks which are designed to put the stamp on these proposals?

Why the murderous sectarian campaign of the late and unlamented Billy Wright and his Loyalist Volunteers? The main reason, correctly seen by loyalists and "Friends of the Union" alike, is that the Six County State cannot be reformed. The most minor concession exposes its undemocratic core.

It was imposed by force against the wishes of the majority in Ireland, and it can only be kept in place by sectarian gerrymandering and corruption which was the hallmark of the Stormont regime.

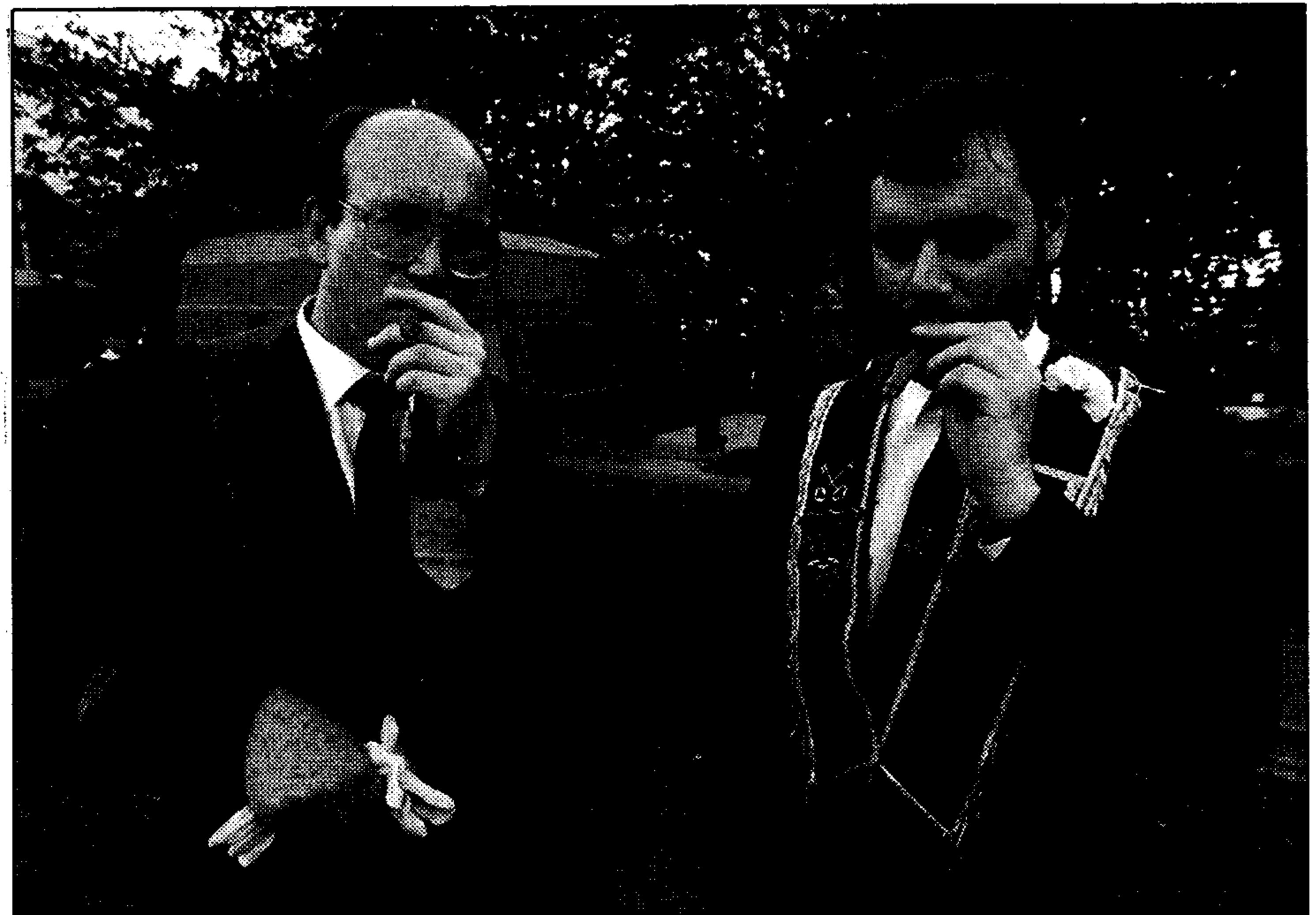
Even after 25 year of direct rule, Catholics are still nearly two and a half times more likely to be unemployed as their Protestant neighbours. Any reforms, however minor, could bring the whole undemocratic structure crashing down. This is what lies behind the ongoing complaints and threats by Unionists about the "concessions" which Blair and Mowlem have apparently made to the Nationalists.

The truth is that, apart from transferring some prisoners to Ireland and setting up a parades commission, the British have given nothing to Adams to sell to the base of the Republican movement.

In order to keep the Unionists in the talks Blair's Framework Document even takes back some of the meagre gestures already made. The tensions in the Republican movement are straining to breaking point.

There is undoubtedly within the British security apparatus, as there is in Dublin, a significant element which, in John Lloyd's words, wants to "take on the IRA". These elements, (correctly) seeing that there can be no compromise between the British ruling class and Irish Republicans, are represented politically by "Friends of the Union".

If the "peace" talks collapse following a Unionist walkout (and, remember it was the Unionist veto which prevented a broadly



No concessions from Loyalists: Blair may hate unions, but they know he is a unionist

similar deal being done in 1974), or because of a sectarian murder campaign by loyalists angry at "concessions" to Nationalists, it is easy to see a slide back into a bloody war between the Loyalists and the British on one side and Republicans on the other.

The Socialist Party and Workers Liberty (among others) see the British presence in Ireland as at least preventing the civil war which would, they believe, follow British withdrawal.

Treating the Unionists in the Six Counties as a democratic majority leads them to portray the Nationalists' struggle as anti-democratic - and also dovetails neatly with the justification used by the British ruling class for its continuing presence in Ireland and for calling the IRA terrorists.

We have been here before. Militant (as they were, then) based neutral on the Malvinas War, on the basis that Argentina was a military dictatorship, a thin enough fig-leaf to cover their refusal to break from the British ruling class's definition of "democracy". Their stance, should there be a renewed outbreak of war in Ireland, is easy enough to pre-

dict: support for the British State against the "undemocratic" republicans.

Objectively, this would be to take the side of the British state as it pursues a genocidal war against Irish Republicans - the ultimate response of all British governments to anyone who, threatens its interests, but fought, of course, in the name of "peace" and "democracy".

Which brings us back to "terrorism". The Loyalist paramilitaries are the only true terrorists in Ireland in the sense that they kill nationalists indiscriminately in order to cow them into submission.

The important point is not whether the British also use these methods - they undoubtedly do, directly and indirectly - but the fact that their political aims are identical to those of the Loyalists, as Lloyd's outburst shows.

Many on the left in Britain refuse to support withdrawal on the basis that it would lead to a bloodbath: such an outcome is much more likely to follow from Britain's desire to remain in its oldest colony.

Teamsters leader falls to trumped-up charges US bosses stoke up witch-hunt

WHILE BILL Clinton struggles to zip up the burgeoning scandal in the White House, an increasingly vicious political witch-hunt is brewing as the courts and the right wing press gang up to purge the US unions of any hint of class struggle leadership.

The first victim of this so far has been Teamsters union President Ron Carey, the militant candidate promoted by Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU). After he had led 185,000 strikers during last year's inspirational battle with United Parcel Service (UPS), corporate America's eighth largest financial giant, Carey's election in 1996 was ruled invalid, and he has been barred by the courts from running for reelection against the old guard candidate Jimmy Hoffa Jr — all on the basis of trumped-up charges of financial irregularities. But it is increasingly clear that the US bosses hope to move on from Carey to attack the new-style leadership that has brought signs of life to the US equivalent of the TUC, the AFL-CIO.

A vigorous campaign in Carey's defence has been joined by American co-thinkers of the Fourth International.

FROM the point of view of the US employers, Ron Carey, who led the Teamster's recent victorious strike against the giant UPS corporation, has been too effective as a working class leader for their taste; they don't want his example to take root and spread. That is the fundamental reason behind the various "legal" moves against him — not any alleged concern over "corruption." (In fact, big business thrives on such things.)

Left wing journalist Alexander Cockburn has warned about the mounting "Witch Hunt" against the labour movement:

"A witch hunt advances methodically. Start with Carey, an indubitable reformer, who with no real war chest had to fight for reelection against James Hoffa Jr., a man well freighted with criminal associates and bulging with cash. Harass Carey, and ignore Hoffa, who raised \$2 million in unaccountable funds.



"Now harass the [AFL-CIO] leaders whose project Carey is vital. Now probe anyone trying to build a combative, ... even radical labour movement. Get them on the run. Get them in front of a grand jury. Get everyone frightened and persuaded that trying to build a radical, combative labour movement is against the law..." (Nation magazine, November 17)

The employers are furious over the defeat of UPS, brought about by the Carey leadership's mobilisation of the union rank and file and winning of public support for full-time jobs with good pay, good pension plans, and other needs felt by working people.

Four days after the UPS victory, the election officer appointed by the judge overseeing the Teamsters under the 1989 "consent decree," annulled Carey's election.

At his televised press conference the night of the UPS settlement, Carey spoke as a voice for millions of American workers troubled and frightened by the loss of decent jobs. He had the audacity to declare that the economy should be run a different way!

The mouthpieces for the giant corporations answer with an intensified attack on labour. Class struggle leader Carey is now ruled ineligible to run again for the Teamsters presidency — by a former federal judge and current corporate lawyer, Kenneth Conboy.

New York Times columnist William Safire, the former speech writer for "Tricky Dick" Nixon, is leading the corporate counterattack by accusing the new leadership of the AFL-CIO of "money laundering" and "corruption."

Several different vehicles of ruling class policy are working in tandem in the present intensifying campaign against the unions.

As a leader of a UPS Teamsters local in New York for decades, Carey established a record of honesty, incorruptibility, and determination to fight for his members that was highly unusual in the extremely bureaucratized, Mob-connected Teamsters union before 1991.

Even the government's "Independent Review Board" — which was imposed on the Teamsters as a result of the 1989 consent decree — cleared Carey in 1995 of all sorts of fabricated charges of Mob connections and corruption, charges brought by Carey's old guard opponents, the great granddaddies of Mob connection and corruption.

Carey's mistake was to uncritically accept and place his trust in the Democrat-connected consultants and fund-raisers recommended to him by other unionists. (William Hamilton, formerly with public sector union AFSCME, a man who had many Democratic Party connections, became political affairs director for the Teamsters.

themselves. But U.S. Attorney White, spurred on by the Safires of the press, encouraged them to "rat" on Carey.

The important fact is that, despite his mistake in trusting consultants and fund-raisers, Carey demonstrated beyond any question his ability as a genuine working-class leader in standing up against the employers.

Rank-and-file Teamsters, and all workers, need the kind of leadership Carey can provide. The Teamster ranks deserve the chance to vote for him again. They should have the right to choose whomever they wish from within their union to lead their organisation.

Union members' right to choose their leaders is a fundamental part of the freedom of association that must not be infringed on by government. Government control of unions is a hallmark of fascism and Stalinism.

The "Labor Subcommittee" of the U.S. House of Representatives, headed by Michigan Republican Peter Hoekstra (a recipient, according to Alexander Cockburn, of the maximum legal campaign contribution from none other than UPS — and of who knows how many other less publicly recorded emoluments for his services to the corporations).

Safire announced that Hoekstra was going to go after AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Richard Trumka and President John Sweeney in hearings beginning in December.

Thus we see an entire web of government bodies, court officials, review boards, election officers, auditors, supervisory personnel, congressional investigators (armed with their own investigative legal teams), and the media mouthpieces who publicise, interpret, and play up the preferred angle for all these operatives and their operations.

Gerald McEntee of the public employees' union AFSCME, and Andy Stern, head of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), have both also been targeted in this broad campaign. In

The Wall Street Journal of December 5 has suggested that the government is now "investigating many previously unquestioned areas of the union's finances," including organising funds.

As the Teamsters gear up for the fight against the big freight corporations, with the nationwide Master Freight Agreement expiring March 31, the government may try to hog-tie the union by challenging the way it uses its funds to fight the bosses.

It was Hamilton's associates, Jere Nash, Martin Davis, and Michael Ansara who apparently refunneled Teamster money contributed to pro-Democrat campaigns to pay for mailings and other services of their own for the Carey campaign. They didn't forget their own profit in these shady dealings.)

These hustlers, probably well aware of Carey's honesty and record of integrity, kept their operations to

1995, the votes of Carey, McEntee and Stern were crucial to putting the Sweeney, Trumka, Chavez-Thompson team in office in the AFL-CIO, replacing the do-nothing heirs of George Meany and Lane Kirkland.

Safire makes clear that the purpose of this whole campaign is to get the AFL-CIO back under the kind of docile leadership it had before, the kind acceptable and amenable

No return to Old-style corruption

By a TDU member

CERTAIN Republican members of Congress and editors at the Wall Street Journal find it hard to conceal their glee as they announce that corruption is alive and well in the Teamsters. Pardon me, but they must have forgotten what real union corruption is like.

Older Teamsters who've been around since the 1970s know corruption.

They remember when former president Jackie Presser rammed through a sweetheart national contract with trucking companies in spite of a 63 percent vote by drivers and dock workers to reject.

They remember Teamster retirees with thirty years of service being denied pensions on the basis of technicalities. They remember Teamster goons assaulting workers from the United States, then intimidating workers into joining locals so that corrupt locals could collect kickbacks from growers in return for "labour peace."

In the last few years, though, [under Ron Carey] Teamsters have had a taste of something different: a union that goes head to head with giant UPS to win benefits for both full-time and part-time workers.

A union that joins forces with other progressive unions to get a moribund labour movement back into the business of organising and political action. A union whose officers cut their own salaries and terminate their own lucrative supplementary pension plans.

But no matter which candidate captures the general presidency, today's rank-and-file Teamsters have seen too much to go willingly back to the bad old days."

to the profit-hungry "free market" employing class, which for two decades and more has been waging its "one-sided class war" against American workers.

One obvious conclusion from the whole present situation is that labour needs its own independent political vehicle, a labour party based on the unions. Labour cannot leave the political arena to the fat cats, unchallenged. Victories gained on the economic front, on the picket line and at the bargaining table, can be snatched away on the political front, by the employer-controlled web of government institutions that we have seen put into operation against the Teamsters — and potentially against the AFL-CIO as a whole.

We need to demand that the government back off. "Hands off the unions!"

Will the union leaders see their way clear to fight back as needed against the august power of the law and government? If they don't, their own fates, and the best interests of their members, will be seriously endangered.

* The above article has been adapted from articles in the US Bulletin in Defence of Marxism.

Students lead German fight for welfare

Sasha Kimpel in Berlin

AFTER YEARS of depoliticisation of school students in Germany and the depressing outcome of the student struggles in 1993 and 1995-96, we have the broadest and deepest movement in ten years.

This has taken place against a background of cuts and plans to make university education more elitist and more tailored to the requirements of business.

Two thirds of German students have to work. Only 15 per cent still get some financial help from the state. 900,000 student places are officially financed. Budget cuts in recent years have led to worse study conditions, with larger cuts still to come.

The aim of reforms proposed by the government is deregulation, in the guise of efficiency and autonomy. Access to university will be more difficult. A limitation on student numbers and the introduction of selection procedures, together with tuition fees of about 1000 Deutschmarks a semester (£720 a year).

Another aim is to attract private capital in return for more direct influence on research and course content. The "lean university" is to be ruled by managers, with less possibility for the students to influence their education.

A division of students into groups, one of which gets a basic, non-scientific education, and another which "can" do science, is planned.

The result would be a deteriora-

tion of the standard of education and an elitist conception of university as being for the socially privileged students, with far fewer working class students than even at present. Germany is doing what other European countries have already done – this is the overall direction of EU education policy.

The latest wave of protests started with an occupation by new students in the little university town of Giessen, angry that they could not participate in an overcrowded class with 600 students. They occupied the student council building to protest against the miserable conditions in which more and more students in Germany have to study and live.

Over the next few weeks more universities also went on strike. At the beginning of December there were about 170. Week by week the movement grew and became stronger.

The main demands were:

- * The right to free education for everyone

- * An end to the cuts and money for a better university

- * Democratisation of the universities

- * Scrap the new High School Bill which includes student fees

Other issues included immigrant students, women students and language courses.

During the strike lots of working groups on different subjects, both education issues and also wider social issues, were formed. Local, regional and two national demonstrations were organised, attracting between 5,000 and 11,000

people.

At the start, most students thought that the main thing was to appeal to the public, the government or the bosses and just to explain that they are doing the wrong thing. Such illusions were increasingly dispelled, even when the government kept claiming solidarity with the students and said that their reforms would make everything better.

Activists were increasingly politicised and radicalised. The national demo on December 18 in Bonn showed that the mood in the movement was getting more political and angry about the general political situation in Germany, and looking for political alternatives to the government's economic policies and theories on education.

The argument for the need to have a common movement with workers, the unemployed and excluded against cuts and neoliberal policies (attacks on democratic and social rights and making the education system more elitist) gained ground.

In many cities the gymnasium school students joined student strikes and mobilisations.

Trade unions officially supported the students; some even mobilised on a very small scale for demos.

In parliament only the PDS expressed passive support for the movement. All the other parties have national or regional responsibility for implementing government education policy.

The movement itself had no democratically elected leadership

in universities, cities and on a national level. Discussion of organisational tasks often took precedence over the political discussion of how to go forward and what to do.

A national meeting of self proclaimed leaders of the strike failed to formulate common demands or to agree the next steps for the movement and how to implement these.

After nearly 6 weeks of protest by students and pupils, the movement collapsed – at its political peak. The activists were exhausted. They realised that it would be a long term fight, and the lack of support beyond the student movement led to demoralisation.

The level of organisation of the strike was inconsistent. A lot of universities supported the strike but were unable to carry it out throughout all their sites. Students also came under pressure to complete and pass semesters (and gain credits towards degrees).

Even when there was no betrayal



of the protest by "leaders", there were missed opportunities, as the fighting leadership lacked a clear orientation.

What now?

The movement was an encouraging sign that young people are no longer accepting the deterioration of their social situation and prospects. There are clear signs of a repoliticisation with the search for alternatives and the willingness to organise.

None of the major demands were fulfilled, but further mobilisation is possible in 1998, though on a new basis. Revolutionaries should be in the forefront.

International Youth Camp

Join the fight for genuine liberation!



EACH YEAR hundreds of young militants from across Europe and beyond gather for the Fourth International Youth Summer Camp.

The camp offers a unique opportunity to meet socialists from other countries united in their commitment to create a better world, to discuss the similarities and differences of our struggles, to better equip ourselves for future struggles and equally as important – to have fun.

The camp lasts for a week, and this year's camp will take place near the West coast of Denmark.

The theme of this year's camp is to reclaim freedom. The ruling class never tire of promoting their ideas of "freedom" – the free market, free democracy and so on. Against this we are committed to winning real freedom – freedom from exploitation, sexual freedom, freedom from oppression and freedom to live our lives as we choose.

Capitalist freedom simply means the freedom for the rich and powerful to exploit and oppress the majority of the world population.

Our freedom can only be won through collective struggle and solidarity.

Throughout the week we will combine these ideas on a number of levels, from the content of discussions, workshops and forums, through to the very organisation of the camp itself. We see lesbian and gay liberation, feminism and black liberation as central aspects of the struggle for socialism and liberation. We will integrate aspects of all of these into the whole of the week, organising discussions on how young militants are fighting oppression across the continent, and how we can work together.

Another important aspect of the camp is ecology. The free market plays an extremely destructive role on the environment. In order for us to have any kind of future an ecological approach must be incorporated into a system of collective planning.

The development of a capitalist EU threatens to drive back the struggle for liberation, with the destruction of welfare rights and a concerted offensive from the ruling

* Fourth International Youth Summer Camp, Denmark, 25 - 31 July.
* For more details contact Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

class. We aim to develop our understanding of how to deal with the banks, the multi-nationals and the various governments in the context of the increasing integration of capitalist Europe.

Overall we will discuss our perspectives for bringing about revolutionary change in society, how we can link up across national boundaries, across different social movements, the trade unions and the labour movement and create a dynamic mass movement that can create the kind of society we want.

1998 also marks the 60th anniversary of the Fourth International and so marks an ideal time for us to celebrate the history and traditions of our organisation at this year's camp.

Whilst we are all working hard to make this an interesting and useful political camp, we will also make sure there is plenty of time to enjoy the social and cultural aspects of the camp, with a socialist cabaret, exhibitions, numerous sporting activities and parties throughout the week.

Join us in building the biggest and best delegation from Britain yet, and help us to create a socialist world, free from exploitation and oppression.

Your food is their business – now it's time to

Stop them poisoning us!

Roland Rance

THE GOVERNMENT'S decision to establish a Food Standards Agency has been widely welcomed, even before its remit has been revealed; scarcely a day goes by without another scandal or scare about food.

But it will have to do more than police butchers and take-aways if it is to ensure that our food is fit to eat. Under a profit-based system of food production and distribution, considerations of safety, nutrition and palatability take second place to the balance sheet.

The FSA is likely to take responsibility for hygiene at point of sale. This has been the source of many of the cases of food poisoning in recent years.

The e-coli epidemic in Scotland last year, in which over 20 people died, resulted from careless handling of meat. Nor are vegetarians necessarily safe; a similar epidemic in Japan was apparently spread by infected radish sprouts.

Cases of e-coli, salmonella and campylobacter poisoning have increased by hundreds of percent over the past 15 years, while overall food poisoning in England and Wales has more than quadrupled over the same period.

Trading standards

This has happened at a time when local government budgets have been slashed and 'red tape' repealed, leading to a drop in the size and authority of trading standards departments. At the same time, changing life styles have led to less home cooking, and more eating out, take-aways and microwave use, all of which increase the chance of bacteria multiplying.

The FSA will probably oversee abattoirs, whose appalling state is a further casualty of deregulation. 845 of the total of 919 have been officially found to fall far below acceptable standards of hygiene. In addition to bacteria, this is believed to have contributed to the spread of BSE from cattle to humans.

Despite hygiene regulations insisting on the complete separation of brain and other suspect offal from the meat, reports regularly refer to the contamination of carcasses by such offal.

Although many scientists believe that such contamination, following on from the



Choose your poison: mass production and the lust for profit have led to ever greater adulteration of food

feeding of dead sheep to naturally herbivorous cattle, is the source of human BSE, others, noting the similarity between the symptoms of BSE and of Gulf War syndrome, have pointed the finger at overuse of organophosphates in modern agriculture.

The widespread use of fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides has meant that countless chemicals have been introduced to our food.

As yet, little official research has been carried out into the possible cumulative effects of these. However, many researchers believe that they are implicated in the mushrooming of environmental diseases, such as asthma, as well as in disorders of the immune system and other 'new' diseases such as AIDS and ME.

These chemicals, which are supposed to control weeds and parasites, and to improve yield, in fact produce crops which require more and more chemical treatment, while breeding chemical-resistant weeds and parasites.

The much-vaunted 'green revolution' of the 1960s and 70s, which was supposedly going to eliminate famine in Third World countries, in fact increased hunger and poverty. It tied these economies ever

more closely into western patterns and control, and depleted the quality of the soil.

Since only the wealthier peasants could afford the non-indigenous crops and the necessary chemicals, this process also accelerated the impoverishment of millions of poorer peasants, while increasing the profits of the chemical industry.

Another issue that the FSA is unlikely to look at is the massive use of antibiotics and hormones in farming. It is increasingly clear that anti-

biotic residues in meat and dairy produce are encouraging the development of resistant strains of disease.

More virulent forms of, for instance, tuberculosis, resistant to almost all current antibiotics, threaten new epidemics, sweeping through populations left with little means to combat them. Cattle are also treated with hormones in order

to boost milk production; these hormones, which enter the human food chain, have been known to disrupt human hormone systems.

Additives

These artificial additions to the food chain are not made in order to improve the quality or nutritive value of the food, nor even to produce a higher yield. Despite all the myths, there is not a world shortage of food; the central inequality is of distribution.

Agribusiness is denaturing our food, poisoning us, starving millions, and making us pay handsomely for the privilege. These are the issues that the FSA will not be addressing.

The most graphic and obscene example of this is the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, which pays farmers to 'set aside' land, ie not to produce food, in order to reduce the so-called 'butter mountain', 'wine lake' and other bizarre features.

Meanwhile, western economies import vast amounts of grain from third world countries in order to produce meat – effectively forcing some states to rely on exporting cash crops rather than producing for local consumption. This claim was one of the many allegations against McDonald's upheld in the recent 'McLibel' trial.

This is also the reality behind genetic engineering. The main purpose of the current gene transfer proposals is to develop crops which can absorb ever higher quantities of herbicide without themselves being killed.

Multinational chemical companies, such as Monsanto, will provide genetically modified seed to farmers who will be obliged to dose the crops with weedkillers from the same companies.

Farmers will not be permitted to take seed from one year's crop to grow the next year, but will have to buy more from the company. Thus, as with the 'green revolution', farmers will be forced into reliance on

the chemical industry. Poorer farmers will go bankrupt, and the industrialisation of agriculture will increase – to the detriment of nutrition and health.

Hazards

Although it is true that human intervention over millennia has selected and modified crops and animals, such genetic modification poses several major health hazards. It could lead to the creation of new toxins and allergens. It could further mean the development of herbicide-resistant weeds, the spread of diseases from one species to another, the loss of biodiversity, and many other dangers.

However, it will not be compulsory to identify genetically modified foodstuffs. Not only will this prevent individuals choosing to avoid the products it will also prevent scientists and doctors proving any negative effects.

A survey by the Consumers Association established that over 90 per cent of consumers want genetically modified foodstuffs to be clearly labelled. But such labelling, giving consumers choice, would hit profits.

The McLibel trial last year showed the extent to which food companies can determine our diet, to the detriment of nutrition, third world economies, and their own workers. Workers in fast food chains suffer some of the worst working conditions; cases have been recorded of trainees receiving far less than £1 per hour.

Booker McConnell has been accused of turning huge areas in South America from productive arable land into vast cattle ranches. For many years, activists have boycotted Nestlé products, since the company has been one of the worst offenders against the World Health Organisation's International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. These practices are inevitable in a capitalist economy, based on profit rather than nutrition or need.

Silent left

Unfortunately, many on the left have failed to take up these issues unless they directly affect workers' rights, such as in the dispute at JJ Foods in 1996. But questions of taste and nutritional value, third world exploitation and the perversion of science for multinational profit, are vital issues for the working class.

Agribusiness is denaturing our food, poisoning us, starving millions, and making us pay handsomely for the privilege. These are the issues that the FSA will not be addressing.

While we can and must join with environmentalists, even with churches and liberals, in campaigning around some of these issues, we must not lose sight of the central point: only through the fight for a socialist society will we be able to create a system for the production, distribution and preparation based on need rather than on profit.

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**Socialist
OUTLOOK**
Edited by Alan Thornett,
Dave Peddie and John Lester

FORTY YEARS on from the Treaty of Rome, it is timely to assess whether the Europe of the single currency is a simple evolution from that born out of the cold war?

As the European Union prepares for the single currency next year – its biggest step yet towards a European super state – Alan Thornett looks back at the origins and evolution of EU and the various stages in its development.

He argues that there have been two distinct periods in the process of European integration. The first was from the founding of the Iron and Steel Community in 1950 to the Single European Act of 1985, and from that point to the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties of today.

THE EUROPEAN Union today is the result of a process of European integration which has gone through several distinct stages of development.

This process was a product of first of cold war politics and then of world economic developments in the 1980s and 1990s – principally increasing competition between the main world power blocks of Japan, the USA and Europe itself.

Several factors shaped the thinking of key European governments in the immediate post war years. France, in particular, wanted to enmesh a weakened and divided Germany into any post-war European set-up in order to avoid another war.

West Germany was willing to follow that path if for no other reason than that its post-war leadership wanted to demonstrate a break with the past. They also perceived this as the best prospect for reunification on offer at that time.

At the same time, the USA wanted a bulwark in Europe against the East, particularly after Stalin developed the bomb and Churchill launched the cold war. An integrated Europe, with West Germany as part of it, was the best solution.

These factors created a powerful pressure towards some form of European integration which would supplement NATO, which had been formed in 1947 as a military alliance.

There were serious divisions from the outset – divisions which are still reverberating today – particularly in the British Tory Party. De Gaulle saw European integration as a means of countering US domination, not increasing it, and was suspicious of Britain's links with the US. He had already rejected NATO on that basis, and was developing an independent military capability. It was a potentially dangerous division, but for the USA at that time the needs of the cold war were paramount.

It was against this background that the first building blocks of European integration were put into place. The Iron and Steel Community was formed in 1951, then the Treaty of Rome, which formed the much wider Common Market, or European Economic Community (EEC), was signed in 1957.

The EEC was principally an economic block, a common customs union. Britain did not initially join, and in 1962 De Gaulle vetoed Britain's application, seeing Britain as potentially a Trojan Horse for the US.

In 1978 French and German pressure created the European Monetary System (EMS) as a counter to the destabilising effects of the collapse of the Bretton Woods arrangements, which had linked the dollar to gold after the war. It was, in effect, an early step towards a single European currency, although of course it was not presented as such at the time.

French A-bomb

By the end of the 1970s France, still outside of NATO, had developed its own military capability and now had the bomb. It had



Early days on the road to the super state: in 1957 six countries came together in Rome to sign the document which set up the EEC and EURATOM.

Euro drive towards a super state



It's not super for us! Euromarchers in Amsterdam last summer.

avoided, for the time being, the domination of either West Germany or the USA. Britain had now joined the EEC which diluted the weight of Germany for a time.

By the 1980s, however, the attempt to contain West Germany by institutionalisation was increasingly at odds with the strength of the German economy and the Deutschmark, which by then was the strongest currency within the EEC.

Cold war

The US meanwhile was becoming less enthusiastic as it saw the EEC as a potential rival power block in newly developing world economic conditions, but it remained the best option given the continuation of the cold war.

By now the EEC was becoming more than a customs union. Substantial supranational structures were already in place. There was an elected European parliament – though with limited powers.

There was also the Council of Ministers, the real power house of the whole thing; a European Commission, with its own President and with extensive executive powers; a High Court with jurisdiction within the member states; and the power to levy financial contributions on the member states. The structures of a superstate were evolving.

This evolving structure was driven by the changes taking place in the world as a whole. Europe now had to fight its corner with Japan and the USA in an increasingly global market. It had to do this under conditions of international recession.

The Single European Act of 1985, signed by the Thatcher government, was a further response to these developments. It was the biggest development since the Treaty of Rome towards deeper levels of integration, and changed the project from predominantly economic to predominantly a political one.

It developed the structures of the EEC by introducing qualified majority voting within the Council of Ministers.

The next major step was the Maastricht Treaty, signed on January 1 1994. The name of the project even changed from the EEC to the European Union.

Single currency

Maastricht set out the biggest steps yet towards the structures of a super state – a single European currency. This would be controlled by a European central bank and accompanied by the development of common social, defence and foreign policy.

By this time Germany was poised to establish continental hegemony. Not only did she have the strongest economy and currency but unification gave her a population of over 80 million.

The collapse of the USSR also altered political relationships within the EU. The possession of the bomb by France and Britain no longer gave them diplomatic weight against Germany as a non-nuclear power.

Many of the Eastern European ex-Stalinist countries, along with ex-Soviet republics, were beginning to clamour for entry in order to complete the process of capitalist restora-

tion in the most painless way. This could potentially double the number of states within the EU and create huge structural problems.

The immediate and central issue, however, was EMU. This will take fiscal policy away from the member states and hand it over to the central bank. It is tied to stringent criteria for entry – the convergence criteria and the stability pact – which are precipitating huge attacks on the welfare system right across the continent.

Without exchange rates fluctuation, only wage cuts and job losses can act as regulators. With already 20 million unemployed in the EU, this would further institutionalise unemployment in Europe and create huge depressed regions.

The EU of the late 1990s, with its 15 member states, represents the biggest single unit in the world economy. It has a combined GNP of about US \$6 trillion against \$5 trillion for the USA and \$3 trillion for Japan. It has a total population of about that of the US and Japan combined.

The EU at its present stage of development, prior to the full implementation of the logic of the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties, is a common market with important features of a super state.

The battle of the power blocks is therefore still not a battle of equals. The USA and Japan have political advantages which the EU cannot match. It is the resolution of this problem which lies behind the project of the 1980s and 1990s to transform the Common Market of the 1960s and 1970s into the super state of the next century.

The aim is not a replication of the USA or of any existing capitalist state. This will be a new type of state structure – which will not replicate all the functions of the nation state, but will be a state structure just the same.

Welfare

Europe has a problem in competing with America and the Pacific rim, because of the high level of welfare here. Cutting this is the strategic objective of the convergence criteria and the Stability Pact. This coincides with a worldwide neo-liberal offensive which is attacking welfare – even in areas where there is very little provision.

The advent of the single currency, more than any other individual factor, is posing a challenge to the post war consensus across Europe. That consensus was committed to welfare provision and at least the ideal of full employment as a guarantee of social peace.

Now this is being ripped up before our eyes – and the most of the traditional leaderships of the working class are responding by calling for further integration.

New leaderships will be forged through mobilisations such as the struggle of the Renault workers and the magnificent actions of the unemployed in France.

The European marches have played their part in beginning to pose an alternative – a truly social and internationalist Europe. The massive mobilisation in Amsterdam last June in particular was inspirational.

Under the British Presidency, we must work to ensure that the demonstration in Cardiff in June 1998 will also be one to be remembered.

Straw's drug policy goes up in smoke

Mark Jansen

THOSE OF US who use recreational drugs may often have to deal with reactionary prejudices and misconceptions about what is termed "drugs". This can be particularly difficult when dealing with parents or relatives who have been convinced by media scare stories about drugs.

Imagine how much worse this would be if one of your parents was actually leading an anti-drugs crusade. Or to take this a stage further, how much worse this could be if your father was a right wing Home Secretary who continually lectured people on the evils of drugs, youth crime and on "bad parenting".

For William Straw, this Christmas and New year must have been an absolute nightmare, being hounded by the media over a minuscule piece of hash (less than 2 grams) in addition to having to cope with having Jack (hang 'em and flog 'em) Straw as a father.

One's immediate reaction to all this might be to chill out with a couple of spliffs, but this would be pretty much ruled out for William Straw.

Whilst all the media hysteria over this might be quite amusing for many, it does highlight the bizarre way that drugs are debated, it also throws ridicule on Jack Straw's 'blame the parents' position.

All societies have used some or other form of recreational drugs.

Some drugs may be more or less harmful than others. Many drugs can be used in a relatively harmless manner but could also create a physical or psychological dependence if used habitually. But the use of the all-encompassing term "drugs" cannot really encourage an informed debate.

The term "drugs" is used to mean almost exclusively those substances that are banned by the state. By far the most widespread drugs, and the two that cause the most number of deaths are tobacco and alcohol.

Capitalist Investment

Both the tobacco and alcohol industries are enormous capitalist concerns which bring in vast revenues to the companies and to the government. The legal drug companies and the government have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.

The massive increase in the use of such drugs as cannabis and ecstasy over the last decade have already hit the profits of the drinks industry and they must be deeply concerned to stop this trend. With cannabis in particular there has been an enormous growth (excuse the pun) in the home-grown industry. It is now within the reach of many people to grow their own high quality plants at home. This would obviously be of concern to the government and of legal drug compa-

nies.

Though many other illegal drugs may be more harmful than cannabis, one of the main dangers arise precisely because of their illegality. Since drugs are produced illegally there can be no quality control. Many chemicals are mixed in to create larger profits for black market companies, and people often do themselves harm by taking substances believing it to be something else.

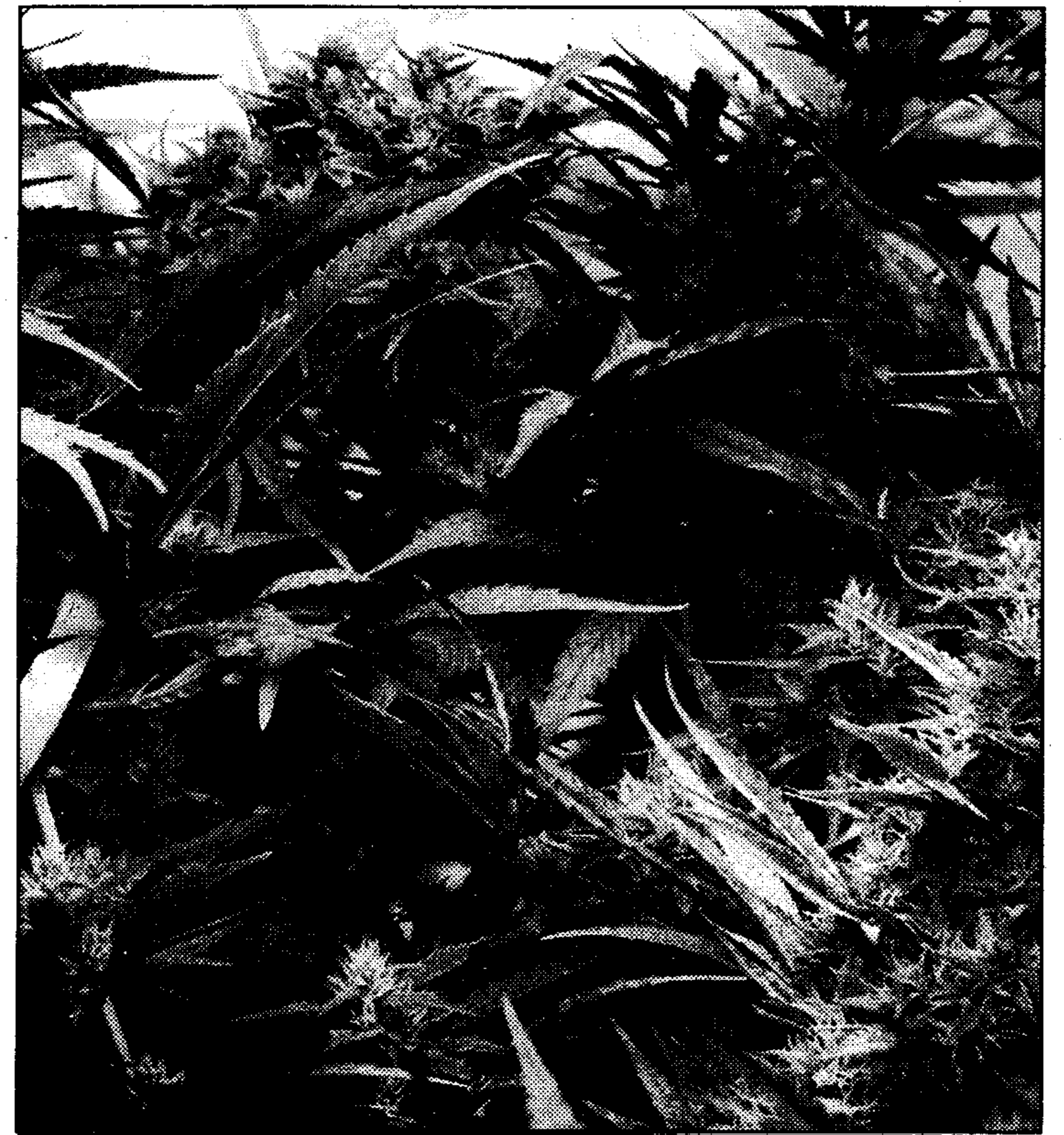
Alternatively drug users become so used to a drug being "cut" that they can overdose on an unusually pure sample.

A big danger with illegal drugs is the lack of accurate information explaining how to use drugs in the safest way. This problem is made much worse since nearly by government campaigns which are based on knowingly spreading misinformation about drugs.

Most people quickly see through the image that as soon as you take "drugs" you will become a mad junkie. It would be nearly impossible for any young person in Britain not to have experienced drugs themselves or to know friends who have used drugs.

Crass propaganda

Such experience would convince anyone that the junkie stereotype is at best not entirely true. The crass anti-drug propaganda can only encourage people to ignore any infor-



Home grown high: a cannabis crop is more fun than a cabbage patch

mation they receive about the harmful effects of drugs.

The CIA made cult classic film *Reefer Madness* was produced over sixty years ago, but no governments have learned from the failings of such propaganda, because they have no interest in learning.

The left as a whole has been rather confused on the issue of recreational drugs ranging from complete libertarian positions to the puritan view that drugs are "a diversion from the class struggle".

The state has often used drugs to pacify the population and disorganise resistance, such as the CIA's involvement in introducing crack and cocaine to US ghettos or the import of cheap alcohol into the town-

ships of apartheid South Africa.

At certain points of heightened struggle socialists might argue for a ban on drug use within the movement.

But at the moment we should argue for accurate information on the dangers and benefits of any particular drug to be widely available, for education programmes to deal with specific problems of drug dependency, and for strict quality control of all drugs.

This could only be achieved through the decriminalisation of all drugs which in turn would mean a fight with the tobacco and alcohol companies.

1998: 60 years of Internationalism

1998 marks the sixtieth anniversary of the Fourth International, the organisation founded by Leon Trotsky after Lenin's Third International had been irrevocably destroyed by Stalin.

The Fourth International is resolutely internationalist and fights for socialist revolution and in defence of the working class and oppressed where ever it has supporters.

The Fourth International has a strong anti-imperialist record; it was central to mobilisations against the Vietnam war both in America and across Europe.

More recently it opposed the Gulf war and the war against Bosnia.

The Fourth International supports the right of women and other oppressed groups to autonomy in the fight for their liberation. We have been deeply involved in fighting for women's abortion and other fertility rights.

We were key participants in last year's European marches and in the Amsterdam march that followed. We intend to continue to organise against unemployment, cuts and social exclusion and be

part of the networks and mobilisations of resistance that are growing against the Europe of the bosses.

Socialist Outlook supporters are



FI founder Leon Trotsky

proud to be part of the Fourth International, and are committed to raising money here in Britain over the next months to support its campaigning and educational priorities. That is why we are asking every reader to seriously consider making a donation, whether large or small to this appeal which will run until the end of March.

*** Make cheques payable to Outlook International and send to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU**

Vital resources for women class fighters

AS WELL AS its direct campaigning, the educational work of the Fourth International (FI) is critical for its militants and others we work with. The International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE) in Amsterdam is closely linked to the FI and provides very important resources.

These include the maintenance of an enormous library of Marxist and progressive texts in a number of languages, the publication of the *Notebooks for Study and Research* and the regular organisation of seminars and schools for participants from all over the world.

The majority of participants are usually from the third world and their participation is only possible because of the financial contributions of those in the richer parts of the globe.

Here we print a report by Tatu Godinho on the highly successful month long Women's school that took place last summer - an event that we intend to repeat this year if funding and resources can be secured. So write that cheque!

Third Women's School Breaks Records

"THE IIRE's one-month Women's School in July 1997, the third session of this kind turned out to be our best-attended session ever. In fact we have never had to turn so many candidates away, not only for lack of money but simply for lack of room.

After a gap of four years the success of this seminar, both in attendance and in its development, makes clear the need to continue with a specific programme on feminism and women's struggles.

The seminar was attended by 28 women from 16 countries all over the world. The group of seven Latin Americans represented Uruguay, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico and Puerto Rico. There were two women from the USA and a young participant from Quebec.

A substantial group of ten Europeans was composed of women from Holland, Denmark, Switzerland, Portugal, the Basque country and Spain.

The international bloc was completed by South Africa, the Philippines, India and Jordan.

A very important aspect of the group was the presence of young women: nearly half of the partici-

pants were under 30.

The programme of the seminar included debates on a broad range of themes on the social, economic and political situation of women, and current theoretical discussions of feminism from a Marxist point of view.

The discussion on the new trends in the international economy showed the need to develop studies on the role of women's work today, the effects of neo-liberalism on women in the labour market, and also how cuts in welfare services put a heavy burden on women's shoulders, particularly restricting their job perspectives.

Fighting oppression

A rich aspect of this international seminar was how it brought together women activists from different parts of the world engaged in the feminist movement, trade-union work, political parties as well as NGOs, for all of whom the struggle against women's oppression is not just an intellectual commitment but their everyday political engagement.

In this atmosphere the section on "Marxism and feminism", followed by lectures on contemporary polemics about "modernity", was an important moment of reflection on the new challenges the left has to face today...."

Socialist OUTLOOK

Where we stand

In the nineties, millions of women and men have taken part in mobilisations against the evils of capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorships.

This reflects the fact that humanity face widening dangers. Ecological, military, social and economic devastation faces millions of people.

Many more people recognise the barbaric nature of capitalism. In a situation where the inability of the social democratic and communist parties to provide socialist solutions is becoming clearer, the task of creating new leaderships remains ahead.

Socialist Outlook is written and sold by socialists committed to this struggle. We are the British supporters of the world-wide marxist organisation, the Fourth International. We stand for the revolutionary transformation of society and a pluralist, socialist democracy world wide.

The overall goal which we pursue is the emancipation of all human beings from every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation and violence. Socialism must be under the control of ordinary people, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist ecologist, anti-militarist and internationalist. It must abolish wage slavery and national oppression.

The working class is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed. The working class and its allies must uncompromisingly fight against capitalism and for a clear programme of action in order to gradually acquire the experience and consciousness needed to defeat capitalism at the decisive moment of crisis.

The movements of women, lesbians and gay men and black people to fight their particular forms of oppression make an essential contribution to the struggle for a different society. They are organised around the principle "None so fit to break the chains as those who wear them".

The whole working class needs to fully commit itself to these struggles. Furthermore we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these Organisations which respects their legitimate autonomy.

By simultaneously building revolutionary organisations in each country and a revolutionary International we aim to guide and encompass the global interests of the workers and oppressed. By building a united struggle against exploitation and oppression we aim to ensure the survival of the human race.

Told you so!

So "Blair's New Labour Government is mounting such a vicious attack on the so-called 'dependency culture' it even makes Maggie see a bit of a liberal" (SO, December 1997).

It was perfectly predictable before the election that this would happen. Whatever else Blair did, he did not pretend that he or his government would serve any kind of class struggle, other than the implicit struggle to defend wealth and privilege.



The question now is, why did *Socialist Outlook* call on people to vote for Blair and Co, if this is the result?

Steve Kaczynski



Send us your letters on any topic, to PO Bx 1109, London N4 2UU. Letters over 400 words may have to be edited for length.

Chaos in the markets: how far can it go?

In the November 5 article "Chaos in the Markets?" Andy Kilmister states that:

"The reason why the 1987 stock market crash and the fall in shares in Japan in the 1990s led to recession was largely the mass of bad debts held by the banking system at the time.

"This factor is not nearly so prevalent now, and outside specific countries a collapse in the financial markets is not so likely to lead to a general capitalist crisis on its own".

In the light of the collapse of Yamaichi securities, which had a secret off-balance sheet debt of £1.2 billion, this is questionable.

If a major company like Yamaichi securities (Japan's fourth largest broker) can hide a massive debt, then the prevalence of international corporate debt is uncer-



tain. This is a potential crisis, the dimensions of which many not have been fully appreciated.

Chaotic events such as booms and busts will inevitably occur under capitalism.

When huge corporations collapse, the capitalist class loses confidence in the stock market and this can trigger a domino effect.

Major international crises can quickly develop.

Duncan Cryer, Bristol

WHAT'S ON

January

SAT 31

Foundations for Freedom' Conference called by the Welfare State Network on how the attacks on the welfare state affect women, and building the fightback. 12 noon, University of London Union, Malet St, WC1

February

THURSDAY 5

All London Socialist Alliance Public Meeting, 7.30p.m., Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn.

FRIDAY 6

Mass picket in support of the Liverpool dockers

SAT 7

Fourth Birmingham Community Conference, 'Europe, EMU and the Welfare State'. 11a.m. Trade Union Club, Pershore St.

Liverpool dockers support conference, 12 noon, TGWU offices, Liverpool.

WEDNESDAY 11

Unity Conference called by the Campaign for Free Education, 12.5p.m., Oxford Brookes University Students Union.

WEDNESDAY 11

Birmingham Socialist Outlook public meeting with Alan Thornett on *Inside Cowley*.

7.30p.m., Trade Union Club, Pershore St.

FRIDAY 13

Demonstration against the privatisation of London Underground, called by the RMT. Assemble 2p.m. Department of the Environment, Bressenden Place, Victoria (2 minutes from Victoria Station).

THURSDAY 19

London Socialist Outlook public meeting "Has the 'peace process' collapsed?", with a speaker from Socialist Democracy, Irish section of the Fourth International. 8p.m., Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn.

WEDNESDAY 25

Lobby House of Commons against student tuition fees. 2p.m. St. Stephens gate.

March

SATURDAY 14

Conference: "A Rescue Plan for the NHS", called by Welfare State Network, speakers include Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn. ULU, Malet St London WC1. Details 0171-639-5068.

SATURDAY 28

'Reclaim Our Rights' Conference to launch a campaign for the repeal of the anti-union laws. 11a.m.-4p.m. London, venue to be announced.

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* You can send us letters or articles by e-mail:

Outlook @gn.apc.org. Deadline for our March issue is Wednesday February 25.

* Look up our web page. You can find us at:

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Unite to beat back student fees!

Dave Pardoe

THE NEW Labour government shows no sign of backing down from their plans to scrap the student maintenance grant and introduce tuition fees – despite mounting opposition from students, parents and teaching unions.

These vicious measures were briefly considered by the Tories but rejected because they were considered too radical even for them!! They will effectively reverse the gains made by the working class for free education for all regardless of the ability to pay.

David Blunkett himself benefited from free education and went from a Sheffield council estate to university to cabinet minister. Now he and his cronies are pulling up the ladder behind them – closing off this route for future generations of young workers.

In universities, colleges and schools right across the country there has been widespread anger and disgust that a Labour government should seek to reverse the principle of free education.

The national demonstration on November 26 called by the Campaign for Free Education showed the possibility of further action in opposition to Blunkett's plans. Despite the disgraceful failure of the NUS leadership to support it, a sizeable protest took place.

Unfortunately Douglas Trainer and the NUS leadership prefer the timid strategy of writing to MPs, newspapers, and so on, rather than mobilising the membership for effective



action.

The so called "Week Of Action" called by NUS earlier last November quickly became a farcical "week of Inaction" as NUS rejected democratic mass actions by students such as demonstrations and occupations.

Action has successfully been organised by the Campaign for Free Education, Stop the Fees Campaign and Save Free Education. Without the support of the NUS leadership however it has not proved possible to organise mass student mobilisations of the kind that are needed to stop Blunkett's plans.

Socialist Outlook believes that only through bringing together all those who have been involved in these various campaigns led by different forces on the far left will it be

possible to pose a serious alternative to the rotten leadership of Trainer and his ilk.

Although there are differences between the different groups these are not great enough to justify separate campaigns. There is strength in unity and unity is desperately needed in the struggle to come. Without this we let not only Trainer off the hook but David Blunkett too.

This is why we wholeheartedly support the call from the Campaign for Free Education for a unity conference on February 11. We are also glad that it appears that both the Stop the Fees Campaign and Save Free Education intend to turn up.

This should be built on in every single college – including the many where no particular

left group is organised – to build the maximum attendance at the event.

What is needed at the Conference is agreement on a common programme of action that can capitalise on the head of steam that was built up last term and that can link into the increasing unease at Blair's other attacks on the Welfare State. This must include planning the broadest possible lobby of Parliament on

February 25.

The proposals come into force next academic year and therefore affect those students now in FE Colleges and school sixth forms.

The campaign must step up activities to organise activity among these youth as well as current University students. Links should also be forged with education workers and with union activists in NATFHE, AUT and NUT as well as with other workers who will be affected by Blunkett's anti-education plans.

We can learn lessons from other student struggles around the world such as in Germany where tens of thousands have taken to the streets in defence of education rights (see p19).

The task now for activists is to build on the anger in the colleges and widen the struggle. The lobby of Parliament and Unity Conference in February provide exiting opportunities to do this.

Trade union and Labour Party activists should get the issue discussed in their branches, and pass resolutions in support of Free Education as a right for all workers and in solidarity with the student struggle.

*** WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 11**

Unity Conference called by the Campaign for Free Education, 12-5p.m., Oxford Brookes University Students Union.

*** WEDNESDAY 25 FEBRUARY**

Lobby of the House of Commons against student tuition fees. 2p.m. St. Stephens Gate.