

# Socialist

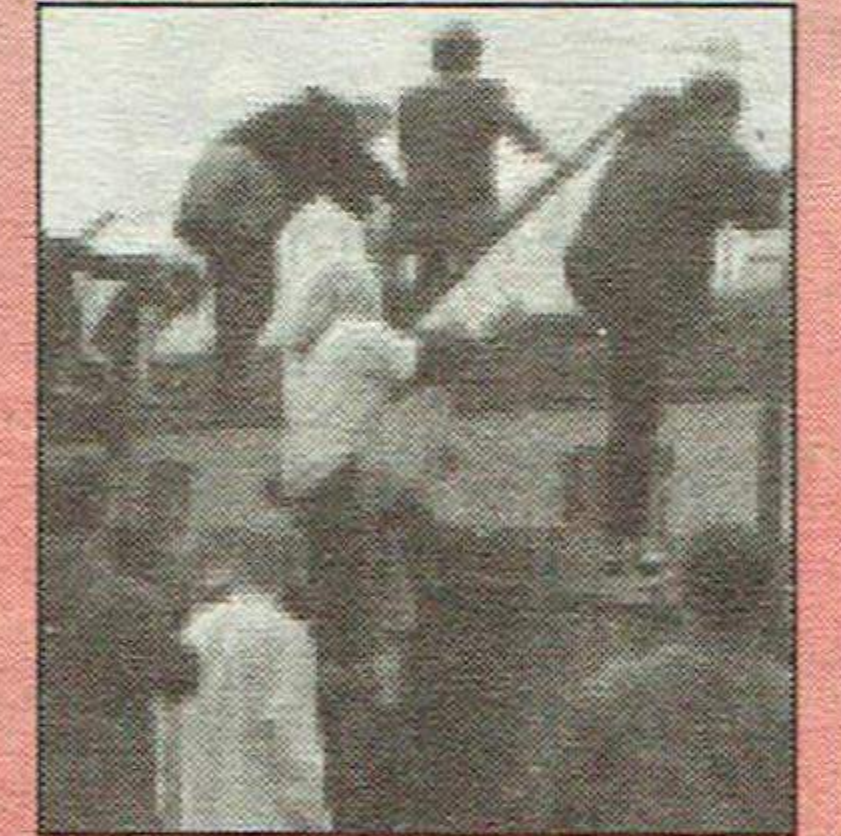
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# OUTLOOK

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Stalingrad O'Neill

## As Labour buys into more rip-off schemes

# FIGHT TO STOP PRIVATISATION

NEW LABOUR is outstripping the Tories as the party of privatisation – and working people are paying a heavy price.

It's not just the old-fashioned sell-offs which are doing the damage, but the injection of private capital and private management into existing public services – from the London Tube, to education, and increasingly the National Health Service.

The much-vaunted new NHS Plan involves a massive extension of the Tory-inspired Private Finance Initiative (PFI), through which hospitals and clinics are designed, built, maintained and serviced by profit-seeking private consortia – and leased back to NHS Trusts at a massive annual fee.

38 hospital schemes are now in the PFI pipeline, with an estimated total cost of £3.8 billion: Labour wants to boost this to £7 billion by 2010. Ministers claim these schemes offer value for money, but the only two PFI hospitals that have so far opened – in

Carlisle and Dartford – represent a dire catalogue of planning foul-ups, shoddy construction and management ineptitude.

PFI not only inflates the cost of hospital building, it slashes the numbers of beds to treat patients, even while the government's Beds Enquiry calls for extra beds in the system.

PFI also brings a new onslaught on the jobs, pay and conditions of support staff, who are hived off to private contract firms. In Carlisle this has meant many domestics facing 12-hour shifts, compulsory weekend working or permanent nights. NHS staff switched to private employers also face the loss of their relatively generous NHS pension rights.

Hospital workers have recognised the danger, and begun fighting back. At London's University College Hospital, strikes by UNISON forced a ground-breaking deal which gives staff a veto over changes to their working conditions. Alan Milburn was even

forced to step in to demand more beds be included in the £422m new hospital.

Last year, ministers ruled that future PFI schemes can focus exclusively on buildings, and not include the privatisation of support services: but there are no signs that the PFI consortia will agree to such a restriction on their profits.

As we go to press, 600 health workers at Dudley Hospitals Trust are now in their third spell of official strike action opposing their transfer to private contractors as part of a PFI scheme.

It's been a long time coming, but a real fight against Labour's privatisation offensive seems to have begun.

The Dudley strikers have correctly refused to sacrifice their conditions on the altar of private profit. The entire workers' movement must rally round to ensure that this brave stand succeeds, and profiteers think twice before bidding for PFI deals.

# SNP leadership change Salmond wriggles off the hook

## Gordon Morgan

In July, Alex Salmond resigned as leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP). This was totally unexpected and shocked most activists within his party.

There has been a great deal of speculation as to the reasons behind his move – especially as he will retain his Scottish Parliament seat and has not ruled out acting as an SNP spokesperson.

Labour has suggested that he acted so as not to be associated with a defeat for the SNP at the forthcoming General Election, however, with the SNP higher in polls than in the run up to the last election, this is implausible.

Some in SNP have speculated that Salmond hoped to remove the charge that SNP is a one man band – and that perhaps he intends to return to the leadership in future. This may be a plausible explanation.

Salmond himself argues that he has achieved his goal of leading the SNP to its strongest position ever and he felt that others should take up the reins. But this appears to be an after-the-fact justification.

The truth may be that having led the party for over 10 years and been in a leadership role for 20 years, Salmond had seemed less adept than before and was showing signs of strain. Perhaps he has genuinely decided to spend more time with his family.

Salmond's resignation has precipitated contests for both Leader and Deputy leader of the SNP. The elections will take place by a vote of delegates at the SNP conference at the end of September.

## Redefine

In theory this should offer the SNP a chance to redefine itself in the run up to the General elections and begin to effectively challenge Labour. Instead even SNP activists have found the election amongst the lowest of low key events.

None of the candidates has made much of an impact out-with the SNP or even within it. However, the contest is highlighting some of the policies which divide the SNP and the vote will clarify the main planks of SNP strategy for the General Election.

## Candidates

The candidates to replace Salmond as party leader are John Swinney and Alex Neil. Swinney is currently the Deputy leader and clearly supports the continuance of Salmond's policies of "gradualist" winning of independence.

Alex Neil is an SNP MSP but long associated with Jim Sillars. He has long defined himself as on the "Fundie" or fundamentalist wing of the Party – seeing the Scottish Parliament as an obstacle to independence.

In the leadership contest, both candidates reject such

characterisations. Both claim to be gradualists, both claim to be left of centre.

Running for Deputy leader, Roseanna Cunningham is currently SNP Justice Spokesperson and firmly part of the existing leadership.

Kenny MacAskill who is the Party's Transport and Environmental spokesperson is part of the Fundie wing and does little to deny it. He has however, endorsed Swinney for leader. A third candidate Peter Kearney is also standing.

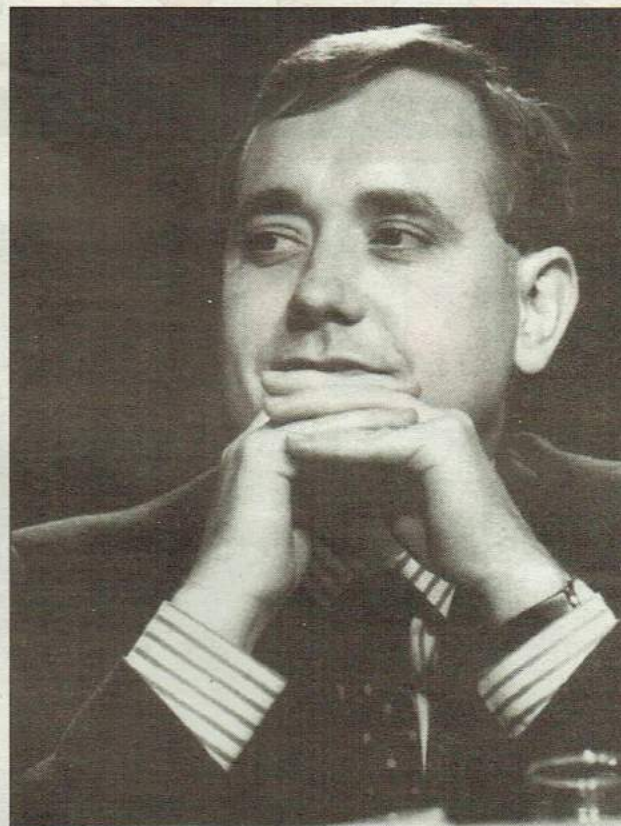
Swinney is strong favourite for leader, however, Alec Neil has run a more effective campaign. It would be very surprising if Roseanna Cunningham were not elected Deputy.

## Policies

The contest has forced the candidates to state that they will concentrate on extending the powers of the Scottish parliament. The profile of independence for Scotland has been raised, Salmond was severely criticised for ranking this almost last of the SNP's demands at the Scottish Elections.

Alex Neil has questioned the SNP policy of Independence in Europe. If the break from London is achieved, he asks, why give fiscal authority to Brussels?

Interestingly on this Alex parallels the Scottish Socialist Party criticisms of the SNP. The fact that this seems a recent conversion



What made Salmond jump?

and Jim Sillars is backing the 'Save the Pound' campaigns makes one wonder what has brought about Alex's change of mind.

Neil has focussed on the need to attack Labour – for conning the working class. He is particularly sharp on breaking the trade union leaders from blind adherence to Labour.

He would continue to position the SNP in support of workers defending their jobs and backing action even against the Government.

Swinney sees the need to consolidate the present position, but sharpen attacks on Labour. He has clearly stated his opposition to PPP, PFI and to Compulsory Competitive Tendering.

This is the firmest statement yet from the leadership on this issue and interestingly he backs it with a commitment to proper funding for Local Authorities and justifies his promoting the 'Penny on income tax' campaign at the Scottish Elections.

Alex Neil,

whilst also opposing PFI, has criticised the Penny Tax position – which is odd given his claims to favour Social Redistribution.

Both candidates claim to favour extending trade union rights, and enhancing the national minimum wage.

## Left of Labour

Roseanna Cunningham argues that the SNP must consistently place itself to the left of Labour and so win support from trade unions.

She is critical of the Quango state which allows ministers to distance themselves from policy disasters – such as Sam Galbraith's survival despite the absolute fiasco over Scottish exam results this summer.

She has also highlighted the SNP's, and her own, continued opposition to nuclear weapons and nuclear power.

Kenny Macaskill shares most of Roseanna's positions, and highlights the need to construct a clear set

of policies on housing, health and education, which will attract trade union members from Labour. He highlights the need to campaign to promote trade union membership.

## The outcome

Alex Neil has clearly won the television debates and won over significant sections of the membership by portraying himself as the more left candidate more focused on attacking Labour.

He has however, both in the past a recently antagonised most of the SNP leadership. It is unlikely he will win.

Roseanna Cunningham has raised her profile and should win, though Kenny Macaskill will likely be part of the leadership. Alex Salmond intends to concentrate on arguing the economic case for Independence.

## SNP Profile

The election statements will have been circulated to all party members and overall they will present an SNP profile to the left of Labour.

This is interesting, since over the past few years there has been a significant shift to the right in the SNP. Unless these statements are mere words, the incoming leadership will have committed itself to consistently be to the left of Labour.

Perhaps the growth of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) has made the SNP aware that it can lose votes to its Left as well as take votes from Labour.

Perhaps their desire to become the truly National Party of Scotland is genuinely making them look for radical policies for improve the lot of the poor and working classes.

In any event even left rhetoric will keep the terrain of political debate in Scotland significantly to the left of England.

In this the SSP will benefit as the only professed socialist party in Scotland.

# AEEU – A cancer at the heart of Labour movement

## Susan Moore

As the Trade Union Congress meets in Glasgow, the Trade Union magazine Solidarity is launching the petition we print here to step up the campaign that many activists have been involved in different ways against scab unionism – particularly epitomised by the AEEU under the leadership of Tony Blair's dear friend, Sir Ken Jackson.

The single union agreement signed by the AEEU at the Western Wail, reached over the heads of the existing print unions was the focus of a long campaign which eventually forced the AEEU to back down.

Now however they are up to their old tricks in an even more blatant way. A Joint Venture Company has been set up to rebuild the West Coast mainline railway by Balfour Beatty (of Illisu Dam fame) and GTRM. Instead of recognising the RMT, as both companies do for existing rail infrastructure maintenance contracts, they have signed a single union deal with the

## AEEU.

Balfour Beatty argue that the project constitutes "a greenfield construction site" while GTRM claims that the AEEU is a more "progressive" union than the RMT – more progressive in the interests of business that is!!

Not only has the AEEU connived to derecognise the existing rail unions but has accepted conditions way below the existing standards

- A basic wage of £4.80 per hour
- An additional 50p per hour is paid into a 'retention fund' to be paid out every six months – should you still be with the company
- No entitlement to join a company pension fund
- No continuity of employment if you transfer over from a rail company
- A subsistence allowance of £20 per night for working away from home
- Compulsory overtime of up to 8 hours per week if the company requests.

Meanwhile in the North Sea, the AEEU, together with the GMB has signed a 'partnership agreement with the Offshore Contractors Association and a single union deal with the United Kingdom Drilling Contract Association.

These deals have clearly been engineered – both by the employers and Jackson – to prevent the workers taking advantage of the balloting regulations under the new Employment Act to choose their own union.

Of course it is true that other unions engage in shabby practices of single union deals – selling themselves to the employers as compliant

We need to campaign to expose all such deals and build fighting alternatives to these so called leaders. A sharp campaign against the AEEU can be an important weapon in such a fight.

## Petition

**It's the right of Workers to choose their union, not the employers. The AEEU must abandon its 'sweetheart deals' or be expelled from the TUC.**

The undersigned trade union members believe that the method of the AEEU in signing single union agreements over the heads of existing unions, and without the agreement of a workforce, constitutes a threat to the labour movement.

The single union deals signed with the Joint Venture Company on the West Coast Main Line railway, and with employers in the North Sea, deny workers the right to choose the union which they want to represent them. In the case of the North Sea Oil Industry the employers have used the AEEU to deny workers the right to ballot under the new legislation.

These methods are a fundamental challenge to the trade union and democratic rights of workers. It is the employers who chose the AEEU, not the workers. Moreover, in the case of the J-VC on the railway, they have agreed, on behalf of a workforce who are not their members, on wages and conditions which are worse than in the rest of the railway infrastructure sector.

In this case the AEEU is acting as an agent of the bosses to help them drive up the exploitation of the workforce. Employers are using the AEEU to keep out genuinely independent unions, which represent the interests of their members.

We believe that it is time to call a halt to the anti-union activities of the AEEU. Its leaders should be presented with an ultimatum: either withdraw from agreements which have been reached with companies over the heads of the workforce, and existing unions, and give a commitment to abandon these methods, or else it should be expelled from the TUC.

Please PRINT

Name .....

Position held .....

Union .....

Address .....

Return to: SOLIDARITY, 333 Welcombe Avenue, Park North. Swindon SN3 2PF.

# Brown's spending spree misses key targets

It seems more or less certain that new Labour's conference in Brighton will be the last before the General Election.

After all, this summer's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) has been planned since Day 1 of Blair's government as the carrot to counteract the many sticks with which Labour's heartland voters have been beaten.

Coverage in the media failed to mention the fact that the CSR only returns Labour to the levels of public spending, as a proportion of GDP, that it inherited from the Tories. After so many years of attacks from Blair and his predecessors, that thought probably won't occur to many Labour supporters either.

There is reason to be positive about the real increase in education spending of 5%, the doubling of investment in public transport and the substantial increase in NHS spending (though as we point out elsewhere, this will be more than a little tainted by the fact that so much of this money will go to the private sector through PFI).

But within the review itself, there were two problem areas.

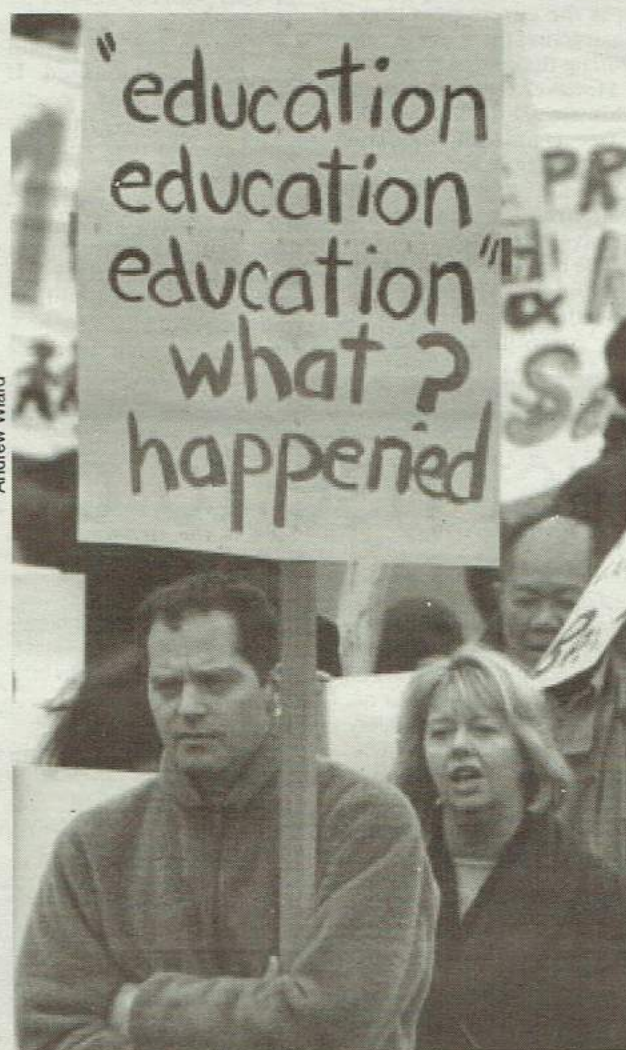
Firstly there has still been no move on pensions – moving even Blair's own father-in-law Tony Booth to openly support the demands of the National Pensioners' Convention for a return to index linking. While there is still the possibility – and certainly the money – for Gordon Brown to right this wrong in his November budget, there is no certainty this will happen.

Amendments to the pensions section of new Labour's economic policy document were ruled out of order at the July meeting of the Policy Forum. Activists were told there would be a statement to conference on this issue. Clearly it is important that the left stand with pensioners' campaigners to exert maximum pressure on this vital issue.

Secondly on the question of housing the mass sell off of council houses will proceed apace – without even the previous sham of consultative ballots. On this basis local councils will be 'allowed' to build new social housing. This outrageous deepening of the attacks on social housing has not merited much comment so far, either in the press generally or from much of the left. Clearly if we are to



Stalingrad O'Neill



Andrew Ward

defeat these reactionary proposals, there must be an

effort to step up the campaigns in defence of council housing.

It is not clear however whether even the more positive aspects of the CSR will be sufficient to stem the disillusion amongst many of Labour's core voters. While new money has been pledged, it comes after many hard years of squeeze and cuts, and will take time to work through. Concrete improvements may well not materialise before a probable spring election.

Blair can draw little comfort from the fact that much of new Labour's improved showing in the opinion polls is due to the dire performance of their Tory opponents.

It may well be reassuring that William Haig continues to be unable to make an impact: but it seems clear that the Millbank mafia were hoping for a stronger response to the CSR itself.

However this is unlikely to distract them from their overall direction of pursuing the neo-liberal agenda whatever the electoral cost.

At the Brighton conference itself, the key issue other than pensions will be the fight around privatisation. At the July Policy forum an amendment from the

Grassroots Alliance opposing the privatisation of the tube fell only three votes short of the support it needed to go to conference as a minority position – because the UNISON and TGWU delegations failed to vote for it.

Last year there were fireworks over reference back on PFI, and there are plans not only to repeat similar tactics but to ensure there is a contemporary resolution on the issue.

Lobbying of union delegations will be key to ensure that any debate takes place, since it is the unions which pretty much determine what is dealt with under this limited section of the agenda.

Debates on Party democracy may be rather more muted than some might have expected, following the National Executive Committee meeting in July which failed to force through some of the more extreme proposals.

The actual abolition of General Management Committee (GMCs) was not recommended – and it seems clear that this must have been because the consultation around the '21st Century Party' proposals resulted in a majority of responses opposing such a move.

At the same time the previous attacks on party democracy have neutered the structures to such an extent that the leadership is safely able to ignore what dissent there is.

While the political challenge on the Brighton conference floor should be supported by the left inside and outside the party, there is a wider challenge for us all between now and the General Election.

We have to build a fighting opposition to roll back Blair's neo-liberal attacks – whether this be on the picket lines at Dudley or across Scotland, or through campaigns in defence of council houses or asylum seekers.

## Nice demo to follow Prague

### Pete Cooper

The European Trade Union Confederation – to which the British TUC is affiliated – has requested the French Trade Unions to organise a demonstration in Nice, France on December 6.

That is when the European heads of State will hold a summit meeting at the end of the 6 month French Presidency of the European Union.

The summit is expected to agree on a "Charter of Fundamental Rights" which is intended to be the basis of a European supranational

"Constitution".

Although a constitution might seem a step forwards for British citizens, and it is full of the usual fine rhetoric about individual rights, it marks a step backwards for many European countries.

Many of these incorporated social rights such as the right to work, and to housing in their post-World War Two Constitutions. The proposed Charter which will override national Constitutions, merely refers to the "right to social assistance and to housing benefit."

There are certainly no additional rights incorporated beyond those already "enjoyed" by citizens of EU member states.

French trade union and anti-unemployment organisations including AC! and the European Marches against Unemployment will be mobilising for Nice.

This follows the huge success of their 100,000 mobilisation in July in defence of French peasant militant Jose Bove in the remote French town of Millau.

Socialist Outlook readers

may be forgiven for having missed the ETUC call up to now and they can rest assured that it will go unmentioned in the televised proceedings of TUC Congress.

But ETUC support means anti-capitalist and socialist campaigners who want to mobilise against the EU's neo-liberal anti-social policies will be able to motivate official support in the trade unions.

Let's make sure that our response to the sickening attacks on the strength of the French working class

that the tabloids have been full of recently is to build a serious mobilisation from Britain.

Unlike Norman Tebbit, we don't believe that French worker's need a dose of Thatcherism, but rather than our organisations could benefit from a little of their militancy.

If Millau and Prague are anything to go by Nice will be huge!

For further information contact : Nice 2000 c/o PO Box 1109 or outlook@gn.apc.org

# Spread the fight to win Dudley strike

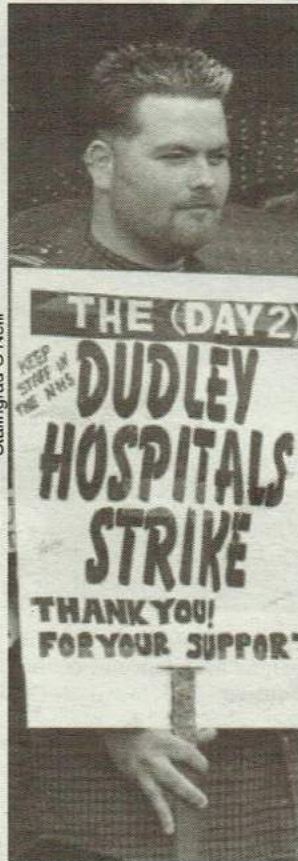
**Bob Whitehead**

As we go to press, 600 ancillary workers from the Dudley Group of Hospitals are engaged in a third round of strike action in protest at the decision to remove their employment from the NHS to one of the five contractors in the consortium Summit Healthcare.

At their mass meeting on August 17 they voted to escalate to a seven-day strike, rejecting calls for indefinite action at that stage. At the demonstration through Dudley Town Centre on August 19, it was announced that UNISON had approved the escalation.

The strike so far is solid and confidence is growing. It has strong local support as demonstrated by the difficulty in actually talking while on the picket line above the din of honked car horns. Large numbers of donations and messages of support are arriving. Wherever strikers representatives go to ask for support they are well received.

The reasons for the action couldn't be clearer. The Trust have said that 170 full time jobs will go and the already low paid workers will then face further attacks on their



Third time lucky in Dudley?

wages and conditions to satisfy private employers and their shareholders.

The PFI-funded scheme also involves the closure of

one of the Dudley group of hospitals and the loss of in-patient services at two others. Overall there will be a loss of 70 beds.

In 1995-6 the Dudley NHS Defence campaign raised over 30,000 names on a petition against the Trust's plans, which of course made no impression on health managers.

Even though the government changed the rules in June 1999 on PFI to allow workers to stay in the NHS for new projects, the Dudley Trust has refused a request from UNISON to do just that.

## Government

This led to the current round of industrial action. The Trust is now saying that it is the government that is instructing them not to renegotiate the contract.

However the strike leadership are confident of victory. They claim that the Trust would like a way out, and they are calling for Alan Milburn to step in and resolve it.

The best conditions for victory lie with escalation of the dispute, so that the Trust and the government blink first. That means that indefinite action will be needed if the

current 7-day action does not bring the bosses to heel. Full strike pay for these low paid workers will be essential.

All UNISON organised workplaces in the region and could be asked to hold meetings to hear Dudley strikers' representatives and collect much needed money.

A £1,000 donation has just been received from Finnish trade unionists, and money and greetings have already arrived from as far afield as Australia, showing that the strikers could go a lot wider in their appeal.

Other UNISON members might also look again at the possibility of taking action over their own disputes.

A consultant has already spoken out publicly against the Trust despite pressure on him not to do so. The strikers have pledged to defend him if he is victimised. If clinical staff were to get involved in the action, it would be a further welcome escalation.

But UNISON leaders must also be told to break with their twin-track strategy of talking tough on attacks on public services combined while attacking the very people in the union who are leading the fightback.



Lyons: produced expense claims for pizza deliveries and morning doughnuts!

## MSF members can't afford to keep Lyons!

**Terry Conway**

MSF, one of Britain's largest unions, is in deep crisis on a number of different fronts:

Earlier this summer, General Secretary Roger Lyons had his scandalous expenses claims exposed in the press when the case of a former employee of the union, Marcia Solomon, came before an Employment Tribunal.

The Tribunal heard that union members were paying for various items ranging from daily papers, and a radio in Lyon's home, to multiple tickets to travel to meetings and countless meals in restaurants.

Anger at these revelations has been widespread with more than half the union's the

Regional Councils adopting resolutions calling for Lyons' resignation or for a new, independent inquiry into the allegations.

This is not the only issue of concern for the leadership which did not get the blank cheque it wanted in relation to the proposed merger with the AEEU at the Annual Conference in Harrogate. It is trying to wriggle out of the situation by organising a consultative ballot of the membership in advance of the recall conference it was forced to call against its will.

The AEEU have not changed the proposed basis of the merger since the Harrogate conference set conditions for the process continuing. But given the completely undemocratic way the so called 'debate' within the union has been conducted - that is with those opposing the merger given no opportunity to put our arguments across - General Secretary Lyons and his cronies hope that a successful ballot will pressurise delegates at the November 11 recall conference into accepting the merger regardless.

There are also strong rumours that the union's finances are in serious difficulties with an overdraft of around £9,000,000. Accountants HW Fisher & Co have been brought in and have been asked to identify cuts in expenditure. The word is that they will propose £3 million per annum savings some time over the next month or two. Cuts of this magnitude can only mean substantial redundancies.

The leadership is also conducting a vicious witch-hunt against left wing activists, especially in London. Their intentions were revealed by the cruel treatment of Sarah McDonald, elected as London Region secretary this year after her predecessor Hugh McGrillen was suspended. She has been banned from office for 3 years. Four cases remain outstanding, but it is clear from McDonald's treatment that the leadership has no intention of treading lightly.

The question of the merger remains the central issue for MSF activists - the plan to create a new union that will be completely supine in the face of New Labour's attacks must be our priority. Of course the other issues are important not only in themselves but for what they reveal about the incompetence and reactionary nature of the Lyon's clique.

# UNISON left must rise to challenge

**Fred Leplat, CFDU Treasurer, in a personal capacity**

Barely five years old, UNISON is now at a critical moment in its brief life with leadership torn between supporting the New Labour government and the need to deliver a reprieve to its members from the government's continuing attacks on public services. The leadership is paralysed, not knowing how to get out of this contradiction.

UNISON's leadership has not planned any national campaigns on key issues such as privatisation or the living wage. Branches are left isolated to face the employers' attacks, and pay rises continue to be well

below the going rate. It is not surprising in this situation that members, and activists, are disaffected. Participation in NEC and the General Secretary elections is as low as 25%. Some seats on the National Executive and at least half the service group executives seats are uncontested or vacant.

Of course, public sector unions have taken a battering over the last 20 years as anti-union laws and privatisation have shackled members' ability and confidence to fight back. Yet there has been no attempt by UNISON's leadership to reverse this situation - except through the failed method of direct talks with New Labour. The halt in the decline of membership is

taking place despite the actions of the leadership.

In this context, it is not surprising that there is a strong and vibrant left which is continuously able to muster a third of the votes at conference, obtained nearly 40% of the votes in the recent General Secretary election, and organised fringe meetings at conference with up to 400 delegates (a third of the conference). At conference, the leadership attacked the left precisely because of its real weight in the union.

This strength is unfortunately not reflected on the NEC where there are only half-a-dozen supporters of the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting UNISON (CFDU).

CFDU is a broad left that

includes members of the Socialist Party, Socialist Outlook and Labour Briefing. At the moment the Socialist Workers Party is outside but has recently indicated it favours a single united left.

The left in UNISON urgently needs re-organise in order to turn the disaffection of activists towards a strategy to defend jobs and services, to defeat the witch hunt and defend lay-member democracy.

The decision of the SWP to work with the CFDU in a new and broader left is therefore welcome. A united left will have a greater impact than the sum of its parts.

The various components of the left have much more in common than separates them so a united left is a real possibility. Yet for years,

the SWP stated that the time was not right for a united left, and approached other forces with hostility. This has unfortunately created bitterness and suspicion amongst left activists about the SWP's new policy towards a united left in the union.

This can only be overcome by working together on the key issues facing members in the union, and through agreeing slates for regional and national elections. There also needs to be an agreement in advance on the organisational framework for the new broad left. There need to be safeguards so that it cannot become the property of a single political organisation.

But the most important task for a new left will be to reach out beyond those who are already organised to those members, activists and stewards who are disillusioned with the existing leadership and hostile to new Labour's direction. If the new broader and united left is simply an amalgamation of the existing left currents, it will not have realised its full potential.

## Bromley attacks union and service users Defend Glenn Kelly!

The London Borough of Bromley is attempting to remove the Night Care Service to some of the most vulnerable residents in sheltered housing, and it has suspended the UNISON Branch Secretary, Glenn Kelly, who was campaigning against this cut.

The UNISON branch has a long standing policy of supporting joint campaigns between service users and those who work in facilities

threatened by cuts. The residents and their families clearly understand the potentially disastrous consequences of the wholesale scrapping of the night care service and are extremely frightened and concerned.

It was they who asked Glenn to visit them to discuss how they could best protect this vital service. In attempting to ban the Branch Secretary from hav-

ing any further contact with residents, it is Bromley Council who is trying to manipulate them and continue to frighten them.

A packed branch meeting on Monday August 14 agreed to trigger a ballot of members for all-out strike action if disciplinary action is initiated against Glenn Kelly and if the cut in the Night care Service is not dropped.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Send messages of support to Glenn at Bromley Unison, fax 020 8313 4885.
- Send letters of protest to the Bromley Chief Personnel Officer, Sandra Campbell, Fax 8313 4241 and to the Bromley Chair of Social Services, Fax 020 8313 4241.
- Support demonstrations and lobbies in support of the service and in opposition to disciplinary actions against Glenn Kelly. Phone Bromley Unison for details on 020 8313 4465.
- Publicise a boycott of social services posts in the Bromley Council.

**CFDU national conference Saturday 14 October, ULU, Malet Street, WC1 London**  
Details c/o Glenn Kelly, 37 Linale House, Murray Grove, N1 7QH, London.



Police racism again under the spotlight: demonstrators march through Telford demanding justice for the McGowan family

## Inquest finds police responsible for unlawful killing Justice for Christopher Alder!

### Susan Moore

Last month after seven weeks of evidence the jury at the inquest into the death of Christopher Alder in the custody of Hull Police returned a verdict of Unlawful Killing.

Christopher Alder, was a 37 year old black man and a former paratrooper. He died on 1st April 1998 after being arrested and taken to Queen's Gardens Police Station, Hull. He had been taken to hospital following a fight outside a night club during which he had been

hit in the mouth and fallen to the floor.

He was confused and uncooperative at the hospital.

On arrival at the police station evidence was heard that he was found motionless in the police van. The video then showed him being dragged into the police station custody suite and placed face down on the floor. Officers were heard to speculate that he was faking illness

From video evidence shown to the jury it was demonstrated that he died after being left unconscious face down on the floor of the custody Suite for 11 minutes. His trousers were around his knees, he had been doubly incontinent and blood and vomit formed a pool around him.

### Campaign

Christopher's family and INQUEST, the organisation which campaigns against deaths in custody, thanked the jury for returning what they believed to be a just verdict in this case.

Helen Shaw, Co-Director of INQUEST said: "This inquest was the first where there was video evidence shown of a young man dying on the floor of the custody suite of a police station.

"We call on the Home Secretary to watch this shocking video, and to institute a public inquiry into Deaths in Custody to ensure that such an appalling incidents never happen again"

This is another unlawful killing verdict on a death in police custody, the sixth such verdict in the last decade. Five of those were black, the sixth, Richard O'Brien was Irish. So who says British justice isn't racist?

## Haringey in revolt against racist Roche

### Terry Conway

A demonstration has been called by the North London Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers to march to Home Office Minister and Hornsey and Wood Green MP Barbara Roche's surgery in Haringey on 7 October 2000.

The campaign is getting a lot of enthusiastic response in the area including amongst the Kurdish community

Haringey has a proud tradition of welcoming asylum seekers. Over many years, refugees have made an immeasurable contribution to the borough.

But in her capacity as an MP and Home Office minister, Barbara Roche has trampled on this tradition.

She has kept quiet while the *Evening Standard*, the *Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and other newspapers have spread appalling racist lies about refugees;

She has championed the voucher scheme, which condemns refugees to poverty and makes them targets for discrimination and violence;

She has backed the government's policy of "dispersal", condemned by the Audit Commission for dumping asylum seekers in distant towns with no support;

She treats refugees like criminals and throws them into "detention centres";

She has pledged to deport over 40,000 refugees in the next two years.

She has tried to introduce a £10,000 "bond" for Asian visitors to this country.

She has even hired a private plane to forcefully deport a local Ghanaian refugee and part her from her sick son.

In calling for the march, the Committee says:

"We invite all anti-racist organisations, refugee groups, trade unions, human rights campaigns, religious and community groups and individuals to back this demonstration and mobilise to make it a massive show of disgust at the government's policies."

For more information or to make a donation call:

Emine Ibrahim on 0777 334 4579

North London committee to defend asylum seekers  
**Demonstration**  
**Barbara Roche: Stop Your Racist Scapegoating Of Refugees!**  
**Saturday 7 October Assemble 11am Manor House**

## Join the Civil Rights Caravan

### Susan Moore

STARTING mid-September 2000, the Civil Rights Caravan will begin traveling throughout England for one month in solidarity with asylum-seekers, migrants and victims of racist attacks and murders.

The 'Caravan movement' started in Germany in 1998 as a form of resistance organised by refugees, migrants and their supporters to raise awareness and fight anti-asylum measures.

The idea of the organising a Civil Rights Caravan in England came from discussions at a meeting following the National Civil Rights Movement (NCRM) and the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (CARF) 'Behind Closed Doors' conference The Caravan, a form of grassroots resistance, is demanding:

● Full rights for asylum-seekers, undocumented

workers, migrants, and victims of racist attacks

● The right to asylum and an end to detention, deportation, vouchers and dispersal

● An end to racism and racist violence

The Caravan will bring together black families, asylum-seekers and those working to defend their rights.

### Link up

The Caravan will link up with a series of events being planned across the country, such as protests at Campsfield Detention Centre in Oxford on 17 September, the demonstration for asylum rights in Newcastle on September 30 and the national demonstration against racism in London on 14 October.

But the Caravan will also travel to areas which have been more difficult for anti-racists, where the far right have attempted to capitalise on the racist backlash

whipped up by the media such as Margate and Dover.

### Civil Rights Caravan Route

15-16 September: Coventry, Birmingham, Leicester

17 September: Oxford

22-24 September: Dover, Margate, Brighton

Sept 29-01 October: Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Liverpool

06-07 October: Exeter, Plymouth

08 October: Bristol

14 October: London

While the project already has wide support, further sponsorships are welcome and in particular donations (cheques payable to 'CARF' and post to BM BOX 8784, London WC1N 3XX )

For more information contact: CaravanforCivilRights @ncadc.demon.co.uk

## TUC toys scheme

THE TUC has called on people to donate toys, which refugees are banned from buying under the voucher system.

This gives a useful opportunity to raise the issues of the backlash against asylum seekers in union branches that might not have been so keen to discuss this - as well as a practical way of working to alleviate some of the distress caused by the voucher scheme.

### Local collection centres:

Scotland: Scottish Refugee Council, 5th Floor, 94 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 6QA. Phone 0141 248 9799

Northern Ireland: NIACRO,

Suite 103, Mcavoy House, 17a Ormeau Avenue, Belfast BT2 4HD. Phone 02890 312 052

North West: Refugee Action, 24-26 Lever Street, Manchester M1 1DZ. Phone 0161 2331200.

Liverpool Law Centre, 34 Princes Road, Liverpool L8 1TH. Phone 0151 702 6300.

East Midlands: Refugee Action, Melbourne Centre, Melbourne Road, Leicester LE2 0GU. Phone 0116 261 4830

West Midlands: Offices FJ&N, 2F Business Centre, China Court Building, Ladywell Walk, Birmingham B5 4RX. Phone 0121 622 1515

South West: British Red Cross, Ermon House, Butts Road, Heavitree, Exeter EX2 5BD. Phone 01392 274 874

Bristol: C/O 38 College Green, Bristol, BS1 5SP. Phone 01178 903 7885

South Central: 133a High Street, Southampton SO14 2BR. Phone 02380 248 130

Wales: Welsh Refugee Council, Unit 8, Williams Court, Trade Street, Cardiff CF10 5DQ. Phone 02920 666 240

Tyneside: Refugee Service, 19 The Bigg Market, Newcastle NE1 1UN. Phone 0191 222 0406

Teesside: Tees Valley Office, 308 Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough TS1 3QX.

Phone 01642 217 447.

Yorkshire and Humberside: 1st Floor, Wade House, The Merrion Centre, Leeds LS2 8NG. Phone 0113 244 9404

Eastern: Unit 1, Observation Court, Princes Street, Ipswich IP1 1RR. Phone 01473 288688

London: 240-250 Ferndale Road, Brixton, London SW9 8BB. Phone 020 7346 6770

Dover: Migrant Helpline Room 65, No 1 Control Building, Eastern Docks, Dover CT16 1JD. Phone 020 7346 6770.

Heathrow: 1st Floor, Queens Building, Heathrow Airport, Hounslow TW6 1DL. Phone 020 8759



Stalingrad O'Neill

July 15: protestors climb the fence around Harmondsworth detention centre in solidarity with asylum-seeking detainees.

## Court vindicates fight by Campsfield Nine

On Friday September 1, John Quaquah, one of the Campsfield Nine acquitted of riot in Campsfield Immigrant Detention Centre in August 1997, won his second judicial review against the Home Office.

Mr Quaquah was imprisoned for ten months while the case of the Campsfield Nine came to trial. After two weeks of cross-examination of the Immigration Service and Group 4 staff, the prosecution

admitted that they could not ask a jury to convict on such 'unreliable' evidence and all nine were acquitted.

As a result, Mr Quaquah is suing Group 4 and the Home Office for malicious Prosecution and applied for leave to stay in Britain while he pursues his claim for compensation.

But the Home Office refused to admit defeat and attempted to deport Mr

Quaquah to Ghana, which would have prevented his case coming to court. This decision was quashed in judicial review proceedings last year.

But still the Home Office refused to make a new decision until threatened with another judicial review. Then they refused leave without any explanation or reasons. It is this refusal that was quashed by the High Court on September 1.

The judge commented that the decision to refuse leave

was 'surprising' and that in the circumstances the Home Office needed to provide 'powerful countervailing reasons' for not giving Mr Quaquah leave to be in Britain to pursue his civil claim.

Without leave, Mr Quaquah is without vouchers and is not permitted to work to support himself.

Mr Quaquah's solicitor, Mark Scott, said: 'I hope that the Secretary of State will take account of this judgment and grant leave to Mr

Quaquah without any further delay.'

Suke Wolton, from the Campsfield Nine Defence Campaign, said: 'The Home Office has a vendetta against the Campsfield Nine and is taking it out on Mr Quaquah.'

The Campsfield Nine should be able to pursue their claim for compensation for what happened to them. The Home Office should not be allowed to deport their critics rather than face them in court.'

## Blair and Haig – door knockers for the BNP

In a local by-election in the North End ward of Bexley in south-east London, Colin Smith, the BNP came second, with 26.2% of the vote, pushing the Conservatives into third place and the Lib.Dems. into fourth. (Labour won with 44.4%).

Smith's election propaganda echoed the stuff peddled by Blair and Haig -: bogus immigrants; North end a "dumping ground for undeserving immigrant scroungers; illegal immigrants milking the benefits system" and so on.

The Tory election literature was almost indistinguishable from that of the openly racist BNP - "For bogus asylum seekers - Britain is the biggest soft touch in the world." Bexley is an urban deprived area with an above average rate of unemployment, rich ground for unscrupulous demagogues to prey on people's fears.

The local Labour MP, Nigel Beard, taking his cue from Blair and Straw, commented: "I have to take into account that this is an area with a long tradition of English patriotism. There is a deep feeling of identification with the country's

tradition and history which is perfectly acceptable and valid. I walk into the pubs and people shout 'when are you going to do some thing for the English?'"

Question for Mr. Beard: Do you equate English tradition with racism and are all English white?

This is the tradition of the days of Empire, when Britain ruled over the 'lesser breeds. This is not the language we expect from Labour MP's in the 21st century!

New Labour's election pledges promised a multi-racial society. Racially aggravated crimes have risen 11000 between April and September of last year alone. The language used by Blair, Straw and MP's like Nigel Beard, can only add grist to the mill of the BNP's open racism, despite the recommendations of the Lawrence inquiry.

Blair is also trying to compete with the BNP and the Tories. In one of the leaked memos from Downing Street, Blair complains that the public does not see him as patriotic. As Dr. Johnson said in 1775, "patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel."



### Conference September 15-17 Ruskin College, Oxford

European governments are increasingly using detention as a way of criminalising, marginalising and deporting refugees and other migrants. Immigration detention promotes racism. Immigration detention has removed the presumption of freedom as detainees have to prove their case for freedom. Their loss is ours.

Detention centres are multiplying, but so is resistance. This is the third European conference against immigration detention organised by the growing network of campaigns against them. Places should be booked as soon as possible as they are limited and certainly by August 14th

Ring +44 (0) 1865 558145  
ConfAgstImmDetn@aol.com

## PCS leadership: Left must stand

### Darren Williams

The Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) is facing a crucial election for the post of general secretary later this year.

In a recent ballot, members of the civil service union have voted overwhelmingly that the contest should take place, thereby changing the rules laid down when PCS was created in 1998.

These stated that the general secretaries of CPSA and PTC – Barry Reamsbottom and John Sheldon – would jointly run the merged union without facing a re-election battle, because each would be within five years of retirement when the election was due. Sheldon is to leave office this year, but Reamsbottom has another four years to go before he collects his gold watch.

Since its creation, PCS has been led by two right-wing groups – the Moderates and Membership First – which previously ran its predecessor unions CPSA and PTC, respectively.

Although there are no substantial political differences between the two, they have recently fallen out as the autocratic Reamsbottom and his Moderate cronies have become increasingly intolerant to Membership First.

Panicking at the prospect of a Reamsbottom-run union after Sheldon's retirement, Membership First worked with opposition factions to ensure that conference voted for an early general secretary's election, and that this was then confirmed by a membership ballot.

In return for its co-operation, the union's main socialist group, Left Unity, which holds the balance of power on the NEC, was able to win Membership First's support for a democratisation of union

elections and a campaign to restore national pay bargaining.

Reamsbottom is pursuing a legal challenge to the election, but the political factions are preparing for an election on the basis that this will be unsuccessful.

Membership First are running Hugh Lanning, currently Assistant General Secretary, and there is currently an effort to persuade the left to support him against Reamsbottom, on the grounds that a separate left challenger will split the anti-Reamsbottom vote.

This line is supported, unsurprisingly, by the Stalinist-led 'Unity' group – but also by the Socialist Party and others within Left Unity. At the Left Unity conference in Manchester on 9 September, they will urge the organisation to stand aside in favour of Lanning on the basis that he is the only one who can defeat the incumbent and that he would at least respect the democracy of the union.

This approach fails to acknowledge that Lanning offers no alternative direction for the union: he and his faction do not want to restore annual conferences and NEC elections, or to give power back to the branches.

They are not willing to lead a real challenge to government policy on privatisation, performance-related pay and the anti-union laws. They represent the same, failed policies of 'social partnership', which have sacrificed civil service jobs, pay and conditions over the last twenty years, but with a kindlier, more 'inclusive' face.

A real political alternative is essential in this election to convince members that there is another way, and to prepare for a real fight in defence of



Blast from the past? It's vital to challenge government

Stalingrad O'Neill



Stalingrad O'Neill

## Train safety: Prescott veers off the rails

### Steve Metcalfe

Far from being resolved, the transport problem in the British Isles lurches from bad to worse. Absolute responsibility for this lies at the doorstep of the government. New Labour has abdicated any loyalty to those millions who voted for it in cringing cowardice before the vested interests of the international oil, road and car manufacturing combines.

After the Ladbroke Grove disaster, the government had the chance to claw back everything we lost under the Tories. Instead, Prescott played for time to protect privatisation, not its victims.

This is precisely what has happened. 'Public-private partnership' survives. Only massive Labour Party members' and working class anger has deflected Blair and co from proceeding where Major's gang left off. This anger was reflected in massive votes for Ken Livingstone as London Mayor and for Left and green candidates in the new Assembly.

Among rail workers generally, anger is in many areas almost incandescent in its intensity.

Here, almost verbatim, is what a signal worker recently told me. Judge for yourself from this:

"They (outside agency maintenance contractors) come swanning into your box, whip out a wallet full of 'authorisation' cards in your face after boasting that they're on £25 an hour, and then have the bloody nerve to ask you where they're supposed to stick their sodding detonators for a protection job they were supposed to have been on a planning

meeting to find out about days or weeks before. I tell them to ring their PICOP (Person in Charge of Possession)." Amongst other advice, no doubt!

There are usually more eye-watering choice expressions from such front line regular workers these days. The fact that signallers are often only on £6 or £7 an hour under the pernicious rip-off merchants who now run Railtrack adds insult to injury.

The safety situation has not improved. According to senior Railtrack managers, there have been "a dozen" recent near misses and "SPADS" (Signals passed at Danger) which could have ended up in collisions or derailments as bad or worse than Ladbroke Grove, Paddington or Clapham.

Average hours worked by train crews, signallers and track maintenance staff on remain among the highest in Britain and indeed across Europe.

The sheer ignorance of senior Railtrack managers is breathtaking. Manager Chris Leah admitted to the Cullen Inquiry into rail safety that he only found out how dangerous a "wet spot" or "wetbed" could become 2 years ago, having been on railways for over 30 years! Privateers on the railways should be found guilty of institutional ignorance. They admitted to Cullen also that they were stressing performance to the almost total eclipse of "safety" situations.

Health and safety representatives are particularly targeted for victimisation and sacking by various train operation and track mainte-

nance companies. The latest prominent victim, after many others including Joe Morrison in Scotland and Steve Headley and Company Councillor Bill Ashcroft, is London train driver Sarah Friday.

I myself recently represented one such rep, David Watham, a ganger at Carnforth accused of absconding himself from duty even though he was following management guidelines.

On leaving his successful appeal against management's "final warning", (a punishment not even on the disciplinary lists!), Dave was immediately sent off for an eyesight and hearing test for allegedly failing to acknowledge passing trains.

This crude ploy also failed, but it shows what even senior reps have to put up with today.

The right wing and careerist elements within the various privatised railway company union structures, be they RMT, ASLEF or TSSA compound the problem. In many cases of victimisation, there have been too many suggestions of 'crocodile tears', if there have been tears at all.

The TSSA are the worst, with 'Tosser' being the usual derogatory term used by many rail workers to refer to that weak kneed outfit. TSSA is a virtual 'scab union' today, recently abjured by the TUC, along with ASLEF for unscrupulously poaching RMT members.

I reckon the only way forward for railway trade unionists is to amalgamate on an industry-wide basis, in an industrial union which

will dispense with craft sectionalisation.

In the early parts of the last century, this cause was prominent on the railways. The old NUR, apart from leading the fight for a Labour Party, was also a strong advocate of industrial unionism and a powerful educational force for thousands of Marxists and socialists. The spirit of resistance of that era can and must be revived.

The next period will place railways even more in the public spotlight, with the compromising of the car-petroleum-roads combines in the eyes of the population. Thousands and millions of people are sick of the death and suffering caused by the car; the accidents, pollution and loss of amenities over the past decades.

We socialists should develop this to its logical conclusions, which cannot but end up in our favour given political backbone in the months and years ahead. Get out there and fight!

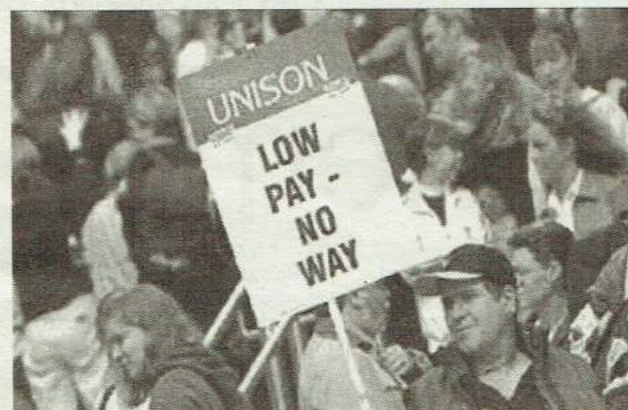
No other industry lends itself to workers' control more than the rail industry, except maybe farming. This desire for full control of the industry we already run (despite everything) should be encouraged and developed.

The railways should be renationalised, but not on the basis it was done in 1947.

The old shareholders who continued to rake off millions from the old BR must be told to get out this time. Absolutely no compensation should go to the likes of Tarmac, Balfour-Beatty, AMEC, Virgin and Stagecoach et al.

If this leads to a showdown with Blair, Prescott and MacDonald as well as the rotten British establishments generally, then so be it. Blow them politically right out of the window if necessary! Long live working class socialism, free of all parasites and hoodwinkers.

● Steve Metcalfe, (writing here in a personal capacity) is CoCouncil GTRM (RMT), Branch 0854 Chair, and Area Secretary (ASC) (IMC2000/ GTRM Health and Safety)



## Scottish UNISON walks out on pay

70,000 local government workers across Scotland gave overwhelming support to a one-day strike over pay called by UNISON on August 29.

Union leaders reported thousands of membership applications as they threatened to step up the fight after the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities refused to increase its pitiful 2.5 percent pay offer. UNISON has demanded 5 percent.

Further action is likely to include another 1-day stoppage coupled with selective strikes by key groups of workers.

# NHS Plan: more money for NHS – and more for PFI



**Harry Sloan**

**T**he government's ambitious multi-billion pound NHS Plan, announced at the end of July, is a vital attempt by New Labour to stem the tide of disaffection and demoralisation among its core supporters.

Opinion polls indicated that – three years after Blair was elected proclaiming that Britain had “ten days to save the NHS” – anger at the continued decline in health services was a central issue in the minds of the thousands of Labour voters who have failed to turn out in recent local and European elections.

Gordon Brown had to deliver big bucks if the government was even to appear as serious about tackling the chronic underfunding of the most popular and universal of the public services.

A big increase in NHS spending could also wrong-foot the Tories and leave them with little more to say than call for more people to take up private medical insurance.

Brown duly came up with mega-bucks for the NHS in his March Budget, pledging the largest and fastest increase in spending in the history of the NHS.

**B**ut little of the new money has yet been released into the system, and the lion's share of the first year's cash injection was held back for four months while Health Secretary Alan Milburn went through the motions of drawing up a “Plan”, much of which could easily have been sketched out on the back of a fag packet within days of Labour taking office.

The added complexity of the Plan, above and beyond the basic decision to increase funding, beds and staff stems from New Labour's ideological determination to step up the level of the private sector's involvement in what



*Falling short: the Plan has insufficient acute beds, and intermediate beds in private nursing homes*

will remain a tax-funded service.

Those Labour supporters who warmed to Tony Blair's robust old-Labour sounding rejection of private insurance and charges for treatment will be less than enchanted to discover that the NHS Plan will leave the service dependent on renting a massive £7 billion worth of hospitals, clinics and health centres from the private sector, and buying an increasing amount of care from private sector nursing homes and private hospitals.

But the Plan is very much a curate's egg, in which good parts and sound proposals sit alongside irrelevancies, an extravagant expansion of the range of quangos, a refusal to extend any genuine democratic control, and a drive towards privatisation.

Unions and campaigners have correctly welcomed the Plan's headline-grabbing pledges for:

- 7,000 extra beds in hospitals and intermediate care
- 7,500 more consultants
- 20,000 more nurses
- 6,500 more therapists
- 2,000 more GPs
- A maximum wait of 48 hours for a GP appointment by 2004, and by 2005 a maximum 3 months wait for an outpatient appointment and six months for a hospital admission.

## Charges: one step forward, two steps back

The government's belated decision to scrap means-tested charges for nursing care in nursing homes (all of which are privately owned) represents a step forward.

But leaving “social care” subject to charges puts crucial decisions in the hands of private, profit-seeking institutions.

As pensioners' leader Jack Jones said: “Residential and nursing homes will find themselves in the ridiculous position of having to start the meter running every time someone wants help to change their shoes or comb their hair.”

Worse, the proposal to establish new “Care Trusts” taking charge of care spanning health and social services means that for the first time since 1948 NHS bodies will be required to levy charges for care, eroding a fundamental principle of care being provided free at point of use and funded from taxation.

● An end to charges for nursing care for elderly patients in nursing homes

● 335 extra mental health crisis response teams

● There is extra money to clean up our hospitals after standards have been driven down by 15 years of competitive tendering, and a priority to supplying better food.

**M**any of these commitments echo demands raised for years by health workers and campaigners, who have consistently pointed to the underfunding of the NHS as the key cause of long delays in treatment.

They will, however, be impatient to see these changes delivered swiftly, after years of empty promises – including Gordon Brown's stupid and self-defeating smoke and mirrors claim of an “extra £21 billion for health” back in 1997.

But ... there are four fundamental problems in the Plan which will raise doubts among many campaigners and health workers on whether it can achieve the bold objectives it sets out.

The first problem is that the big increase in funding may have come too late. The cash came after three years of the Labour government: three years in which Gordon Brown has hidden behind lying rhetoric while holding NHS spending to the impossibly tight limits set by the Tories, creating a massive squeeze on services and running up deficits in Trusts and health authorities.

The remainder of the extra £2 billion allocated to the NHS budget this year has been held up at national level, pending the publication of the NHS.

Meanwhile half the first year has gone by: and many Trusts and health authorities are already bracing themselves for a new winter crisis – realising that in many cases it is already too late to expand services to avert embarrassing shortages of beds and staff.

The second problem has similar roots: the long term squeeze on pay, the pressure on front-line staff and the public perception of the decline of the NHS have undermined the morale of NHS staff – and made it more difficult to recruit and retain the skilled workers required to deliver an expanded and improved service.

The recruitment problems are most acute in the big cities and “boom” areas where soaring property prices make it increasingly difficult for NHS staff to find an affordable place to live.

But with a large section of the existing NHS nursing and professional staff due to retire in the next few years, there are real problems of staffing hospitals and community services.

It is even harder to ensure that the promised expansion of Intensive Therapy Unit beds and other specialist services can be delivered.

But short-sighted limits on NHS pay, lagging far behind the private sector, also make it harder to recruit vital support staff, whose efforts keep hospitals running.

The third big problem is that the planned expansion of “acute” (short-stay) hospital beds – with an extra 2,000 promised by 2004 – is too little to compensate for the massive extent of the bed closures forced through by 21 years of Tory cash limits.

Indeed the “extra” beds promised in the Plan could easily be wiped out by the hefty reductions in front-line beds which are being imposed through PFI hospital schemes, despite the government's own Beds Review and clear evidence of the pressure on beds and the rising proportion of emergency medical admissions.

**N**one of the plans to divert a growing number of these medical admissions into “intermediate” care or support them with primary care has so far been proven to work, especially in parts of the country where nursing home places are scarce and levels of chronic ill-health are high among older people.

If the government gets this wrong, then the entire plan for reducing the waiting list will be thrown into chaos as front-line beds are swamped by emergencies during peak periods and elective treatment is cancelled.

The fourth problem is that the government's plans to expand the NHS also revolve around a major role for the private sector, which is expected to:

- Finance, build and run the large majority of the 100 new hospitals planned by 2010, and help finance 500 new primary care centres
- Provide a growing number of “intermediate” beds in nursing homes
- Provide additional facilities and services to treat NHS patients in private hospitals

## Will anyone fight to save tame “watchdog” CHCs?

Tucked away towards the end of the NHS Plan is a proposal to sweep away the network of Community Health Councils, which have had statutory powers to act as the “patient's advocate” since 1974.

The NHS Plan proposes give the CHCs' statutory right to halt major planned changes in local services and refer contested plans to the Secretary of State to new “all-party scrutiny committees of elected local authorities”.

But few councillors have taken any real interest in NHS policy issues over the last 30 years, and most Labour councillors are now firmly controlled from Millbank.

Health authorities will also be required to “establish an independent local advisory forum chosen from residents of the area”: this hand-picked, unelected assembly seems unlikely to offer any improvement on the current CHCs.

A new Patient Advocacy and Liaison Service (PALS) will also be set up in each Trust, with an office in the main reception areas of each hospital, to “act as an independent facilitator” to handle patient complaints and problems.

But the danger of the new PALS being sucked into acting as PR for the Trusts must be as great or even greater than the pressures on most CHCs to cosy up to local health bosses.

There have already been a desultory attempt to launch a campaign in defence of CHCs: at face value, there is a good case against the new proposals.

But few CHCs have any stomach for a fight: most have studiously avoided any campaigning activity or contact with health workers, trade unions, or campaigners.

This leaves the few good CHCs a soft target for Milburn and his fellow control freaks.

■ Continue to provide support services including cleaning and catering, both through PFI consortia and through contracts with NHS Trusts.

This growing involvement of private, profit-seeking firms in the delivery of NHS services carries substantial dangers.

PFI represents a high-cost, low-value means of financing new hospitals, costing more for fewer beds, and siphoning millions from the revenue budgets of NHS Trusts over the next 30 years.

**W**ith only two PFI hospitals having so far (recently) opened, the pressures these developments will put on the system have yet to be fully tested. The early indications are not good.

The private nursing home sector, which is expected to provide many of the promised “intermediate” beds, has for decades failed to invest in facilities in London and other key areas of the country, creating huge problems in the discharge of frail elderly patients from hospital.

Since the late 1980s the NHS has largely abdicated from any responsibility to provide long-term care for the elderly: it is not clear whether this can be reversed by the NHS Plan.

The government's response to the deplorable standards of hospital cleaning since much of it was privatised in the mid 1980s is not to bring the services in-house, but to hand over even more money to the same profiteering companies to clean up the mess they have made.

These four key problems seem certain to dominate the scene as ministers struggle to push through their Plan, hoping against hope for another mild winter, and that they have not left it too late to win back public confidence in time for the next Election.



# Loyalist backlash no threat to British deal



The British establishment in the Northern Ireland has tried to pass off the current loyalist war as simply a battle by thugs over drugs and turf. Drugs and turf are indeed major inducements for each side, the loyalists are indeed thugs, but it is quite clear that the driving force behind the feud is a deep-seated sectarian resentment amongst the majority of loyalists directed at the Good Friday agreement. We should not draw from this the conclusion that the Good Friday agreement is about to fall. In fact the evidence is that the British have constructed well and the fundamentals of the agreement are secure. The opposition of loyalist reaction is fragmented and diffuse because the agreement itself is so reactionary and contains within itself a restructuring of sectarianism.

The right-wing opposition to the Good Friday agreement was seen at its most threatening in the period immediately before and immediately after the reestablishment of the local Stormont executive. David Trimble narrowly survived a number of cliffhanger votes within the unionist party and then an even more humiliating leadership challenge.

At local selection meetings anti-agreement candidates consistently defeated those supported by Trimble. It seemed evident that support within the unionist party was under the 50% mark.

When Democratic Unionist Party support was included, opponents of the agreement had a substantial majority within the unionist population and a number of capable leaders, all apparently vying to smash the agreement.

This voided the agreement in principle, as it legally depended on majority support of each community, and in any case seemed likely to bring it crashing down in practice.

In the run-up to the annual triumphalist Orange demonstrations the orange order rejected any compromise, and the anti-Trimble unionists united behind former Orange leader Martin Smyth. The DUP vowed to bring down the new Stormont executive and the largest right-wing paramilitary groupings, the UDA, moved towards alliance with the ultra-sectarian UVF. Collapse seemed on the cards.

Drumcree changed all that. The Orangemen snatched defeat from the jaws of victory by rejecting a deal, carefully crafted by the British, that would have allowed a march. A reading of the parades commission's determination on the Drumcree parade makes this crystal clear.

The commission, an unelected quango set up to provide a legal gloss to government strategy while absolving the sectarian RUC of responsibility, is unambiguous in supporting an orange march. The only conditions are that the Orangemen agree to speak to the commission itself and refrain from riot, while in the long run they would have to "engage with" the residents of the Garvahy Road.

It was a battle on the narrowest of grounds. The only issue was the issue of pure sectarian privilege.



Andrew Ward

Defending sectarian privilege

Not if the Orangemen would march, but whether they had the sectarian privilege to march when and where they liked without any conditions. Even then there was wide support among unionism for this unconditional privilege.

All the unionist oppositionists had to do was unite in support of the Orange order to mount a very significant challenge to the whole agreement. But when the test came the agreement represented such a massive gain for reaction that no one could bring themselves to break from it.

Policy was to improve the agreement - the official unionist goal being to save the RUC from even the superficial reforms of the Patton report and the DUP to force Sinn Fein out of the executive and replace the Official Unionists as the majority party. The right-wing threat to smash the agreement had evaporated into thin air.

## Paramilitary rivalry

The Unionist rivalry is replicated in the paramilitary organisations.

The UVF has historically been the more ideological organisation, uniting far-right sectarians and outright fascists with a lore of class envy of their bourgeois and petty-bourgeois allies within unionism. They have been able to link this to 'community politics' and build a small political front - the Progressive Unionist Party (the name indicates that even the death squads have a sense of humour).

On this slim base and a willingness to accept a new dispensation that would copperfasten their sectarian privilege while allocating limited sectarian crumbs to Catholics, they were able to make electoral gains and tap into the grant culture of community funds available to all those willing to join in the pacification process.

The larger UDA was built from an association of criminal gangs pulled together by the British.

A supine press reported that Secretary of State Mandelson had condemned Johnny Adair and his group. Only one reporter, Ed Moloney, remembered that the Shankill death squad that Adair became leader of had been set up and run directly by the

British agent Brian Nelson.

Lacking any real ideology they express the raw sectarian hatred at the base of loyalism and the rejection of even the appearance of concession to Catholics.

Their political base is much weaker and the "Ulster Democratic Party" (yet more humour from the death squads) were unable to obtain seats in the Assembly. They began to consolidate drugs and prostitution rackets and to link up with the UVF and other dissidents to squeeze the UVF share of the markets.

Drumcree was followed by the "war of the flags" where each group marked out its own territory, then a series of sectarian attacks on Catholics began, justified by attacks on Protestant homes that were almost certainly staged by the UDA themselves. Finally there was Adair's festival of Protestant "culture" where a frenzy of sectarian hatred ended with open war.

## "Brains not brawn"

A sign of the demobilisation and depoliticisation of the struggle is given by a number of republican commentators offering sympathy to the UVF (the socialist supporters are more circumspect). David Irvine, PUP spokesperson, spelt out the political difference when he said "Brains not brawn" - that is that sectarian privilege can be defended more easily by political means. To rub the point home the UVF staged their own Shankill demonstration in commemoration of one of their

own sectarian killers.

If the real nature of the UVF and PUP remains invisible to some then so too does the enormous power the British have.

The British set up the terror groups and directly controlled "C" company for much of its history. The British release Adair.

They provide money for "community environmental cleanup" which involves the sectarians painting everything that moves with sectarian daubs of Red, White and Blue. The paint is also used to draw a mural commemorating the worst sectarian massacres.

Finally, following nationalist outrage, it is removed, but no one notices that the British provided the paint and no one thinks to remind them that there is weak anti-sectarian legislation that is never employed.

Mandelson returns Adair to prison and warns all the released prisoners, republican and loyalist to be on their best behaviour.

While no one will weep over Adair, it turns out that the main republican "victory" of prisoner release is rather like a reverse form of internment - the powers of the British secretary are more or less absolute and are given a quasi-judicial gloss by a commission appointed by him.

Claims by the republican leadership of demilitarization by the British evaporate as the troops flood on to the streets.

The war is likely to drag on and

Support is building day by day across Britain for the demonstration against the IMF and the World Bank in Prague at the end of the month.

Over 1000 people from Italy and more than 700 from Norway are planning to descend on Prague. From Britain, Jubilee 2000 are mobilising for the September 24 demonstration and organising (relatively) cheap transport, while other activists are planning to get across Europe in a myriad of different ways.

While some are planning to be in Prague for the whole gamut of events leading up to the weekend as well as the main actions on 24 and 26, others are focusing on the final protest on September 26.

Meanwhile the counter-conference organised for Brighton on September 24 is also attracting a good deal of interest. An impressive panel of speakers will address many key aspects of the neo-liberal offensive from the destruction of the environment to attacks on refugees, from the arms trade to the debt crisis which is devastating so many of the poorer countries on the planet. Workshops will allow campaigners to share experiences of resistance. The conference will end with a protest march to the new Labour conference taking place down the road.

Our world is not for sale

Organised by the Brighton 2000  
Mobilising Committee  
PO Box 25689, London E8 2XR  
Phone: 020 8981 9241  
brighton2000committee@hotmail.com

BRIGHTON  
September 24 Hove Town Hall

S24  
COUNTER  
CONFERENCE

Against Blair's Third Way  
Against the IMF/World Bank

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Speakers include

Susan George	War on Want
George Monbiot	Jubilee 2000
Tony Benn MP	Campaign Against the Arms Trade
Rob Newman	UK Civil Rights
Jean Lambert MEP	Caravan
Mark Thomas	Defend Council Housing
Greg Palast	Undercurrents
Paul Foot	Foundation
Jeremy Corbyn MP	
Lindsey German	

# WTO rallies bosses to cause of globalisation

John Lister

**T**he arrogance of the top leaders of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is undiluted by the collapse of what should have been its landmark Seattle conference last December.

Far from having adapted or retreated in any way in response to public pressure, the WTO is relentlessly pressing ahead as the living global embodiment of the logic and values of the Thatcherite free market.

This is clear from an August speech by WTO Director General Mike Moore to a "business lunch", convened in New Zealand by the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce.

In it Moore sets out explicitly to praise and defend globalisation, which he insists is "a process, not a policy".

It seems to have escaped his notice that accelerating this "process" is also one of the key policies of the world's most powerful imperialist country, the USA, and of almost all leading capitalist governments – including that of the Reverend T. Blair.

Moore's starting point is to brush aside any serious consideration of the growing gulf between rich and poor on a global scale, and to assert that:

"Globalisation is generally a force for good. The last 20 years have seen a dramatic rise in living standards for many countries across the world."

Well, maybe not so many. A little later, Moore feels obliged to acknowledge in his own speech that this is a misleading statement. Despite the fact that according to Mr Moore "more has been done to address poverty in the past 50 years than in the previous 500 years", the numbers in poverty are growing.

The global machinery for creating and deepening poverty is dramatically more powerful and effective than the feeble attempts of politicians to limit the damage:

"It is true that in general living standards in poor countries are not catching up with rich ones."

His own figures make the point even more dramatically: he cries a few crocodile tears over the "tragedy" that a quarter of the world's population – 1.2 billion people – eke out an existence on less than one dollar a day.

Another 1.6 billion receive between \$1 and \$2 per day. These two groups of desperately poor people represent almost two thirds of the world's population. They are not benefiting from globalisation.

Indeed globalisation could be seen as compounding their problem. It is enriching the wealthiest few in the key capitalist countries – while confining the poorest billions to grinding poverty and at best a subordinate role in supplying cheap labour and even cheaper raw materials for low-cost production elsewhere.

But Mr Moore will have none of it:

"Let us be clear. Trade and openness is not the problem for these poor countries. Rather it is too little trade and not enough openness."

Capitalism, it is true, has largely passed by many of the "developing" countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, injecting little if any investment, and leaving them little if anything to offer in trade other than cash crops and what mineral wealth they may have.

But this doesn't mean capitalism has been prepared to allow these countries any degree of real political autonomy.

**I**mperialist strategies – to preserve overall control and ensure the security of any loans or investment that have been forthcoming – have meant that in many cases western "democracies" have installed, sponsored, and armed the most vicious and corrupt dictatorships and squalid stooge regimes to keep control of the poorest countries.

But Mr Moore slides over this. The problem, according to him, is that the population in these countries just doesn't know how to run a proper government:

"Sometimes [the problem] is also a lack of good governance or democratic structures."

This statement sounds odd enough as it is, until we realise that among the governments praised by Mr Moore for living up to the WTO's doctrines is China, notorious for its brutal repression of democratic and trade union rights, and for the massive corruption of its vast bureaucracy.

Mr Moore is careful to avoid mentioning these aspects of China because

China is joining the WTO, and in his view:

"The liberalisation that joining the WTO requires will give another big boost to Chinese living standards."

Of course the elite of the Chinese bureaucracy will pick up more millions in kickbacks and share options. But what most pleases Mr Moore's big business backers in the USA and other imperialist countries is the mouthwatering prospect of a big boost to western banks and investors as more Chinese industries and services are privatised and opened up to foreign capital.

US and other manufacturers are also convinced they will increasingly be able to rely upon the guns and dictatorial rule of the Chinese People's Army to crush trade unions and sustain low-wage production of goods in Chinese-based factories at a fraction of the wage bill they would pay in the west.

**T**he negative impact that the liberalisation of the Chinese economy has already had in driving up levels of pollution and environmental degradation in Chinese cities is conveniently forgotten in Mr Moore's enthusiasm for the fact that a few million more Chinese workers will be able to save up their pay to buy Coca Cola, Nike trainers and Big Macs.



Voicing their dissatisfaction with Mr Moore's barren arguments

Mr Moore sees globalisation and the economy exclusively from the side of the consumer, excluding any real assessment of its impact on workers. He tells the New Zealand fat cats that:

"It is not just Wall Street traders, management gurus and international civil servants who gain from globalisation. ..." [though even Moore doesn't try to deny that all of these gain quite a lot! JL]



The big Seattle protests have been followed by more action, including this demo in Thailand

"...It is also everyone with a pension who enjoys a more comfortable retirement because their savings are more fruitfully invested abroad, as well as everyone abroad who benefits from that investment."

This is an explicitly imperialist view, presuming that the living standards of people in the most advanced economies can be enhanced at the expense of the increased exploitation of workers and resources overseas.

We have already seen that investment is unevenly distributed, and that while the local bureaucracy and ruling class may benefit from investment, workers are often the victims, losing jobs, facing speed-up or suffering the pollution and hazards of production on the cheap.

But Mr Moore waxes lyrical about the contribution of globalisation to the diet of poor people:

"It is poor people everywhere who can buy cheaper food and clothes produced abroad."

Of course the only way these goods can be made cheaper is by holding down the pay and conditions of workers or by restricting the prices paid to peasant farmers. This system benefits the

Moore refers to

■ Indian computer programmers, who have been used to undercut the pay rates of computer professionals in the USA and western countries,

■ Bangladeshi seamstresses "who make clothes for Europeans" – apparently oblivious of the sweatshop conditions and prevalence of child labour.

■ And "Mexican farm hands who pick fruit in California" – with no references to the brutal exploitation of these workers or the attempts of the USA to keep out Mexican immigrants.

**P**redictably Mr Moore makes no suggestion that the free movement of capital and goods across borders should be linked to a free movement of working people.

As he moves into the final part of his speech he is obliged to admit that

"Of course in the short term some people do lose from globalisation. As trade barriers fall, foreign competition forces domestic firms to specialise in what they do best, rather than making goods which are more efficiently produced elsewhere."

This of course slides round the point that the capital investment for the "most efficient" possible production is in the hands of the bankers and bosses in the advanced capitalist countries.

He grudgingly concedes that the plight of unskilled workers who "lose their jobs and take time to find another one" should not be forgotten. "But their hardship ... should be eased with welfare benefits and job retraining, not by putting a halt to liberalisation."

Here Mr Moore clearly loses touch with reality. His speech has already stressed the links between the aims and objectives of the WTO, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

He must know as well as anyone that the "liberalisation" model of the WB and IMF consists in persuading governments everywhere to slash their levels of spending on welfare benefits and education.

In Ecuador, for example,

the World Bank this year approved a Country Assistance Strategy which involved a drastic reduction in spending on education, and cutting health spending to half the level of spending in 1995.

The squeeze can even hit advanced economies: a recent IMF report on Canada called for a further reduction in the numbers of unemployed receiving benefits (numbers have already been slashed from 80% of unemployed in 1990 to less than 33% in 2000).

"We uphold the rule of the law," says Mr Moore. "The alternative is the law of the jungle, where might makes right and the little guy doesn't get a look in."

These fine, misleading words come from front man who knows he has the full political and economic clout of the USA behind him, running an outfit which masquerades as impartial while imposing "rules" which benefit the wealthy few and entrench their power.

**T**he WTO "rules" so far have only been implemented to the detriment of "little guys", such as the Caribbean banana producers, and a few developing countries which have sought to impose limited environmental controls on major corporations.

The more comprehensive "rules" which Moore and others tried to force through in Seattle would tip the scales even more drastically in favour of the US, handing huge increased powers to the WTO to act "impartially" on behalf of Washington and western capital.

Mr Moore may have wowed his well-fed audience in New Zealand, but within the workers' movement only those who share Tony Blair's cock-eyed notion of a "partnership" between workers and capital are likely to be deceived.

With even the former cold war trade union confederation the ICFTU raising increasingly bitter complaints at the impact of globalisation and the policies of liberalisation [see facing page], it is time for socialists to rally around an alternative policy of international solidarity.

# Union broadside against IMF and globalism

**John Lister**

SO BLATANT has the bosses' global offensive become that even the lynchpin of anti-communist trade unionism in the post-war period, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) has felt obliged to join the criticism of the "poverty reduction" policies of the IMF and World Bank.

An ICFTU statement to the Prague meeting of the global bankers on September 26-28 warns that:

"Never since the international financial institutions were created has the contrast been so striking between the growing wealth and prosperity enjoyed by a few and the increasing poverty experienced by a vastly greater number."

Far from the optimism of the WTO's Mike Moore, the ICFTU argues that "the number of those living in absolute poverty is increasing," and that:

"While the profit rates of many large multinational

companies are at unprecedented levels, as are the incomes of the managers of those firms, the real wages for ordinary workers have been stagnant or declining in many countries in the world."

The ICFTU does not accept that this is any inevitable development: it is the outcome of deliberate policies, and the IMF in particular "must assume their share of responsibility for this situation of growing misery, inequality and uncertainty in a world of ever-increasing wealth."

But the ICFTU remains a reformist body, seeking to reform rather than overthrow the capitalist system. Its statement veers into the realm of fantasy with its demand that "the IMF and the World Bank must make major and concrete steps towards reversing the growing polarisation of wealth ... if they wish to preserve their credibility in combating poverty..."

Of course these bodies were

set up precisely to consolidate the control and power of the imperialist powers which bankroll them and control their agenda and activities. They have no scope to reverse this role, no matter how the global union bosses may plead with them to do so.

The ICFTU draws attention to the fact that the big losers from globalisation include the majority of countries of central and eastern Europe, which "have yet to see the light at the end of the tunnel of transition to market economies."

"Except for a small minority of holders of large assets who have benefited from the privatisation of former public enterprises, most citizens in these countries have not seen an improvement in their welfare ... while most social indicators, including average life expectancy, have deteriorated significantly."

Life is no better for "the majority of countries of Asia, Africa and the Americas", which "find their economies

in situations of stagnation if not outright recession, with growing poverty and unemployment."

The problem is that many of the countries have got into this position by implementing the IMF/World Bank guidelines.

The ICFTU quotes the example of Argentina, which over the last ten years has "privatised every public service capable of generating a profit, including the postal system; has substantially decreased social expenditures; has dismantled most tariff and non-tariff trade barriers and has 'dollarised' the national currency, thus renouncing any autonomous monetary policy," but which now faces soaring unemployment and falling real wages.

Poverty reduction programmes proposed by the IMF/WB revolve around draconian austerity measures and privatisation as part of "structural adjustment" packages.

Even more annoying from the ICFTU's point of view is



Ecuador has suffered a vicious World Bank austerity package

the blatantly anti-union stance of the IMF and World Bank, and their indifference to social welfare, equality issues and workers' conditions and living standards, making it hard for the ICFTU to be seen to collaborate in such a one-sided "partnership".

After detailing the extent to which the IMF/WB can be seen to be clearly lined up with the forces of global capital against the working class, the ICFTU concludes by demanding they change course and "assume the necessary leadership" to propose a newly regulated international financial system.

Among the points to be included in these regulatory measures, the ICFTU

embraces the call for "The establishment of a currency transactions tax to reduce speculative currency flows and to raise resources for the support of poverty alleviation".

The fact that such a basically right wing and collaborationist union confederation has been driven into such a political stance is a mark of the extent to which globalisation is polarising forces around the world.

The call for the IMF and WB to implement a "Tobin Tax" on speculation shows that the logic of neo-liberalism and globalisation is unacceptable to anyone who wishes to defend, or be seen to defend, the interests of the poor and oppressed.

# South African car workers confront global offensive

**Ron Quilombo**

1,382 WORKERS fired by Volkswagen in Uitenhage, South Africa in February are still fighting for their jobs. The second round of arbitration hearings ended on 11 August but arbitration will not start again until November.

"This is deliberate," says one worker, "it greatly favours the bosses. We have no income and are under great stress. Two comrades have already fallen ill and died."

Indeed the story of the VW workers goes something like John Steinbeck's book *In Dubious Battle*. From day one of their struggle they faced all kinds of pressures, the best known of which was President Mbeki denunciation the workers in his State of the Nation address to parliament as 'selfish, anti-social elements'.

Other forms have been harder to bear. Siphon Nqirana died after being discharged from hospital although he was still sick. His medical aid had expired because he was 'not employed'. The comrade was 35 years old.

There's also a concerted effort on the part of creditors to unduly pressurise workers. Several repossessions of furniture have taken place as well as attempts to repossess houses. VW's capacity to do this kind of thing in Uitenhage is almost infinite. The bulk of the town's economy turns around the company.

The state also did their part. The postponement of the case by the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) is an



Denouncing strikers: Mbeki

attack on the workers. So is the state's refusal to pay the workers their unemployment benefits and provident funds. The police have raided the worker's office looking for 'stolen goods'. And at the mass meetings and marches, the army and police have taken a threatening stance recalling the Apartheid days.

Another kind of pressure was present from the start. The top politicians and officials of the Cosatu-affiliated Numsa insist the whole problem was caused by 'irresponsible far left elements'. They point to the fact that the workers have joined the unaffiliated Oil, Chemical, General and Allied Workers Union (Ocgawu).

Ocgawu's general secretary Abraham Agulhas and some other officials belong to the far left Workers International

Vanguard League (WIVL).

## Workers control of production

"Even our friends don't understand many things about our struggle. That is why our enemies can confuse things," says dismissed shop steward Mxolisi Fellum.

He then speaks softly, slowly, with a thoughtful expression on his face. "I think the real reason the bosses dismissed all of us is because they fear workers control of production."

Workers control of production?

"Yes. The conflict started in 1998. VW (SA) won a contract to produce Polo's for sale in England. This contract entailed bad changes in the pace and conditions of our work. The bosses handpicked the shop stewards with whom they negotiated. This is where the split started."

The 13 (shop stewards who were dismissed from Numsa) were those who spoke for the workers to have a say in the production of these cars. The bosses want no challenge to their control of production and that's why they want to choose our leaders for us."

Comrade Fellum scoffs at the idea that the conflict had nothing to do with the company, as

they claim. "The whole thing is about the company corrupting certain union officials to help them worsen conditions of employment. Yes, it is an intra-union conflict. But the bosses induced and took sides in it."

## "Our ideals are running on an empty tank"

The struggle has been very difficult from the start. Now with all the postponements it has become a battle for survival. "Money has run out," says dismissed worker Zimasile Boyi, "and our ideals are running on an empty tank."

Despite all the difficulties, when you visit the workers you are struck not by despair but by their fighting spirit.

One incident illustrates this. A delegation went to Germany to ask for support among VW workers there. Apparently a top official of IG Metal, the German union, said to one of the delegates:

"Listen I want to make it clear I am the president of this union. I expect to be treated like a president and then there will be no problem." The delegate answered: "Listen I also want to make something clear. I am a human being. I expect to be treated like a human being and then there will be no problem."

The money might have run out but the tank is not empty!

## "Like in 1985"

The worker leaders are indeed very conscious of the fact that they are in the vanguard of continuing the same

fight for human dignity that fueled the struggle against Apartheid.

Wilfus Ndandani, chairman of the Uitenhage Crisis Committee formed by the workers, says bitterly:

"We are expendable, created by the Apartheid and dismissed by VW." He describes the cause of the problem as globalisation, which is "modernising poverty". "For the residents of Langa (township in Uitenhage)," he says, "the struggle has just begun. We want to claim our place in the sun... and that means fighting the corporate predators who want to keep us in poverty."

This idea pervades the place. "This is not what we overthrew Apartheid for. A luta Continua. The struggle continues. Against corporate predators! Against globalisation!"

No wonder the state and the bosses acted so ruthlessly. This was a direct attack against the government's neo-liberal orientation.

With the living experience of mobilising against Apartheid present in Uitenhage, this attack was bound to be dangerous. Hence the attempt by the government/bosses alliance to retreat after intimidation failed. They offered the workers their jobs back if they would leave Ocgawu, rejoin Numsa and go back to work on the company's terms.

But the workers answered with more protest actions. During these marches and sit-ins the similarity in scenes and spirit between these actions and those of the 1980's is obvious. The workers are con-

sciously making the connection all the time. "If they don't listen we'll make it like in 1985".

This is no surprise, given the role South Africa's workers have played in getting rid of Apartheid. And Uitenhage with its concentration of car workers was in the forefront of the struggle. This was the only town to achieve 100% unionisation.

So Mr. Mbeki, did these workers suddenly lose their brains to become puppets in the hands of 'ultra leftists'? Or are they perhaps still in the vanguard of the struggle?

## "In the vanguard"

In Cape Town some far-left groups have come together with Ocgawu to form the Uitenhage Support Committee. The idea is to rally the rest of the working class behind the VW vanguard. The committee has had moderate success in organising solidarity actions and raising funds. They are continuing their activity.

This committee was initiated by the Socialist League who recognised the importance of the VW struggle. Faizel Brown, Socialist League secretary, says: "On the left you get groups proclaiming themselves the 'vanguard of the workers'. They are the vanguard only in their own heads. The real vanguard of the workers now is the Volkswagen workers."

They have breached the neo-liberal stranglehold enforced by the ANC-led tripartite alliance. They have proved that neo-liberalism will not be broken by some self-proclaimed, propagandist 'vanguard'. It will be broken by the struggle of the workers to fulfill their human needs.

For those who want to overthrow neo-liberalism and fight for socialism the immediate task is clear. It is to do everything in your power to help the VW workers win."

# Where is Sri Lanka going?

**Sri Lanka is heading for a General Election on October 10. The People's Alliance government of Prime Minister Chandrika faces a weakening of its position, probably resulting in a hung parliament.**

**Not only has opposition to the government's austerity programme increased, but one of the parties in the People's Alliance has jumped ship.**

**A hung parliament would weaken the ability of the Chandrika government to pursue its war against the Tamil people as well as making it more difficult to push through its neo-liberal agenda of privatisation and deregulation.**

**Vallipuum Thirunavukkarasu, editor of the Tamil paper of the Nawa Samasamaja Party (NSSP, Sri Lanka section of the Fourth International) looks at the way the situation is unfolding.**

Chandrika's government is on the horns of a dilemma - which of course is one of its own making. There is a monumental gulf between what she pledged in the run up to the 1994 election and what has materialised on the ground today.

Economic growth has plummeted from 6% in 1994 to 3.7% in 1999 with further decline and the concomitant fall in living standards very much on the horizon. The price rises of many vital services: water, gas, diesel fuel, kerosene oil, electricity, telecommunications, represent ominous trends.

Matters are made still worse by the recently announced 4% de facto devaluation of the rupee. The rupee has been losing value almost daily for several years now by its being floated against a basket of some 20 currencies. The cumulative devaluation against the US dollar between 1994 and 2000 is 65%.

On the Tamil national question, Chandrika has failed miserably "to concede the rights of the Tamils and honourably withdraw the armed forces from the North East" as she declared at a mammoth meeting in Nugegoda on the eve of

the 1994 General Election.

The People's Alliance election manifesto pledged that the new government would convene a Constituent Assembly to enact a new constitution which would incorporate a solution to the Tamil national question based on extensive devolution of powers.

Now a beleaguered President Chandrika is engaged in a sham dialogue with the United National Party (UNP), the main opposition party, supposedly to resolve the Tamil national question. By and large this is a grand pretence.

Chandrika had initiated talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) soon after she came into power, but these inevitably failed because there were no political proposals on the table. The lack of seriousness with which the government took the process was shown by the low-key delegation they sent to the talks - consisting only of officials.

As time went on, the government and the LTTE gradually began trading accusations and the hitherto deeply held mutual mistrust came to the fore. Thus, the cessation of hostilities agreement that had been reached on January 8 1995



Chandrika: gambling on defeat of Tamil Tigers

ended on April 19 1995 with the attacks launched by the LTTE on the ships in the Trincomalee harbour.

The Chandrika government then embarked on its so-called "war for peace" in July 1995, and then commenced what is dubbed as "Eelam war III" - yet with no package for a political solution being presented by the government.

Then on August 3 1995, for the first time the government came up with a package for establishing regional councils, thus designating Sri Lanka as a 'Union of Regions' as against the present unitary nature of the state.

The package was generally welcomed as a good move that could lead to a positive outcome.

However there was a backlash against the proposals from the Sinhala-chauvinist militarist lobby and the government considerably diluted the package in response.

The net result was that even

Tamil parties like the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), which have been consistently supportive of the government, could no longer back it

The government has clearly banked on defeating the LTTE militarily. Thus the war has become ever more intensive, leaving a further trail of death and destruction, mass arrests and detention, rape, murder and population displacement.

There is scant delivery of day to day essentials, particularly of food and medicine, for the Tamil people in the areas controlled by the government. Death due to starvation is rife in parts of the country controlled by the LTTE, especially the Vanni sector. Thousands of Sinhala soldiers from poor peasant families have had to perish in this genocidal war.

The government celebrated the recapture of Jaffna from LTTE control in December 1995 with pomp and pageantry, but over time has had to face a number of serious military reverses, culminating in the fall of the sprawling 12,000-strong military complex at Elephant Pass.

Chandrika felt intensely nervous that the LTTE would also overrun the biggest Northern military base at Palaly. Feverishly considering the dismal prospect of withdrawing the 35,000-strong garrison there, she frantically sought and received highly sophisticated military hardware from Pakistan and Israel including kfir bombers.

Thus the military budget of Rs.52 billion (US\$700 million) for 2000 has ballooned up to Rs. 79 billion (US\$1053 million). And what goes on now is desperate and indiscriminate air strikes, killing hundreds of civilians in the Jaffna and Chavakachcheri areas during recent weeks.

India has declined to offer any military support but pledged humanitarian assistance and mediation if both sides accept its role.

Norway - which had already been endeavouring to play a role on this question - paused for a while with the serious turn in the military situation and the concerns expressed by India. Norway seems content to play an auxiliary co-ordinating

role with its spokesman Eric Solhaim shuttling between Colombo and New Delhi.

The United States has also urged that a solution based and maximum devolution with a recent visit by Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering. A Palestine-type half-baked solution could well be on their agenda.

Draconian laws have meanwhile been promulgated, and a tight censorship clamped down and papers such as the *Sunday Leader*, *Irida Peramuna* (Sinhala) and *Udayam* (Tamil) have been banned.

Now, under cover of the war 'to save the country' the infamous defence levy has been upped from the original 1% to 6.5% and attempts are being made to rob the workers of 2 days' pay.

Gas for cooking which was Rs. 250 per 13kg unit in 1995 has almost doubled in price today with the latest steep increase of Rs. 105 in May.

With the monopoly it enjoys, Shell is playing hell, and President Chandrika has defended it to the hilt. The price of diesel fuel has once again been upped by 5% sending the cost of living further up. To cap it all, the Central Bank then announced the de facto devaluation of the rupee by 4%, spelling further misery to wage-earning, working masses.

Consequently, there is a resurgence and intensification of working class struggles not only against the rising cost of living, and against privatisation but also against the war.

Recent joint and separate campaigns launched by the Janata Vimukthi Terramuna Party (JVP), NSSP, Muslim United Liberation Front (MULF), Lake House workers, Sampath Bank Workers and others are gaining momentum. The Lanka Samasamaja Party (LSSP) and the CP are inextricably intertwined with the People's Alliance government despite all its anti working class policies.

The JVP, which has been committed to common campaigns is lately involved more and more in their own independent campaigns particularly against privatisation.

The need of the hour is a strong left front. Thus the NSSP and the New Left Front have a very big role to play to mobilise the progressive, democratic opposition forces especially in the face of the war mongering, racist Sinhala Urumaya working overtime to raise its ugly head.

# George W. Bush's 'mantle of Lincoln'

## Mumia Abu-Jamal

**"Slavery is a blight on our history, and racism is still with us. ... The party of Lincoln has not always worn the mantle of Lincoln."**

Gov. George W. Bush, Texas. (excerpt from NAACP speech, July 10)

With the pleas of half a dozen brave protestors shouting about the "legal lynching" of the late Texas death row inmate Gary Graham (Shaka Sankofa) ringing in the Baltimore air, the nation's Republican presidential candidate appeared before the NAACP national convention in an attempt to demonstrate the ways of a "compassionate conservative."

In his 20-minute speech that invoked the names of NAACP founder W.E.B. DuBois, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln, and other historical figures,

Governor Bush demonstrated, if not great oratorical ability, that indispensable political skill of talking without saying much of anything.

For who but the dimmest among us doesn't know that slavery was a blight on our history, or that "Lincoln's party has not always worn Lincoln's mantle?"

Bush, speaking before a predominantly Black group, did not mention "affirmative action," the "confederate flag," "Amadou Diallo," "Gary Graham," nor the "death penalty." He did refer to "school choice," a code for public tax support for vouchers. The national membership gave Bush polite and tepid applause.

Despite an invitation issued in opening remarks by NAACP President Kweisi Mfume, Governor Bush did not define the often-touted term, "compassionate conservative."

One wonders, however, what is it? A "reasonable racist?" A "friendly fascist?" A "dotting despot?" It appears a "compassionate conservative" is a conservative who smiles while saying "no."

With regard to the "mantle of Lincoln" and the "party of Lincoln," it appears that neither the mantle nor the party of Lincoln were what we've come to think of as Lincoln. Consider the insights of historian James McPherson, who, in his book

*The Negro's Civil War* (1965/1991), notes the idea of the Republican Party as anti-slavery and Lincoln as the supporter of equal rights were seen as nonsense at the time:

"The Republican party, nominally anti-slavery, was officially opposed only to the extension of slavery into the new territories. No major political party proposed to take action against slavery where it already existed."

"During the campaign, Democrats charged that if the Republicans won the election, they would abolish slavery and grant civil equality to Negroes. 'That is not so,' rejoined Horace Greeley, an influential Republican spokesman. 'Never on earth did the Republican Party propose to abolish slavery.... Its object with respect to slavery is simply, nakedly, avowedly, its restriction to the existing states.' Lincoln himself had repeat-

edly voiced his opposition to equal rights for free Negroes." [pp.3-4]

"The 'party of Lincoln?' 'Compassionate conservative?'"

The brilliant Frederick Douglass, although a Republican "field hand" (his own words), bitterly attacked President Lincoln during the height of the Civil War: "I come now to the policy of President Lincoln in reference to slavery. ... I do not hesitate to say, that whatever may have been his intentions, the action of President Lincoln has been calculated in a marked and decided way to shield and protect it from the very blows which its horrible crimes have loudly and persistently invited... He has steadily refused to proclaim...complete emancipation to all the slaves of rebels who should make their way into the lines of our army."

"He has repeatedly interfered with and arrested the anti-slavery policy of some of his most earnest and reliable generals." (McPherson, p.47)

Frederick Douglass was speaking in 1862, several years before the war ended. While he was a Republican (as were many Blacks of that period) he was not reluctant to strongly criticize a Republican President—in wartime! Can African-Americans today do any less?

Both major American political parties exist to serve corporate interests, above all else, not the interests of workers, or the poor, or the oppressed. Instead of the sickening sycophancy that today passes for Black support of political parties that don't support Black interests, we should learn from the bold, outspoken Douglass. Criticize! Viable, radical and revolutionary parties should also be organized and energized to provide real, meaningful alternatives.



Mumia Abu-Jamal

# Communist Party purges a left critic

IN THE CONTEXT of the other political developments described elsewhere on these pages, the response of the South African Communist Party (SACP) to the deepening neo-liberal offensive of the ANC government under Mbeki's leadership is obviously important.

Last month the SACP carried out the expulsion of Dale McKinley, author of *The ANC and the Liberation Struggle: A Critical Political Biography* (1997), on essentially political grounds.

The charges on which McKinley was thrown out all relate to public criticisms he has made in various publications (in South Africa and internationally) of the trajectory of the government, in particular in relation to the trade unions.

One ridiculous aspect of the frame up is that McKinley is accused of failing to argue his point of view within the CP itself – the implication being that he has hidden his politics.

But it is clear that the positions in the various articles cited are completely in line with the theses in his book; which McKinley himself explains as follows: "its main argument was that the petty bourgeois politics informing the strategy and tactics of the ANC leadership had, throughout the ANC's history, consistently resulted in the undermining of the possibilities of a genuine and lasting 'transfer of power to the people'."

Commenting on his expulsion, McKinley stated: "The reversion to crude suppression of dissent, masked as an internal organisational issue of discipline is a very sad and negative development for the 'movement' and for progressives in SA more generally."

"I will, of course, continue to fight for the socialism I have always believed in, and will do so through other structures and struggles taking place here and in the region."

"If the SACP leadership can no longer tolerate critical communists, then critical communists will forge ahead in spite of this discredited and increasingly hypocritical 'communist leadership.'"

## Defence

In his defence, McKinley has argued "According to the SACP Constitution, the SACP ... will work to end the system of capitalist exploitation in South Africa and to establish a socialist society based on the common ownership of, participation in, and control by the producers of the key means of production"

Furthermore, the SACP will work "to organise, educate and lead the working class in the struggle for socialism. (and) for working class hegemony over society, in particular the ownership and control of the economy and the achievement of one united state of people's power"...

"These 'guiding principles' have informed my own under-

standing and informed the practical activities that I have undertaken since joining the organisation..."

"It is my contention that these charges represent a misplaced and dangerous attempt to discourage and/or silence legitimate socialist debate and critique, whether as applied within the SACP or in the public domain...."

"At a time when the forces of the working class are faced with the most concerted and expansive attack from the political and economic representatives of capitalism, it is simply incomprehensible why the SACP leadership would launch a crudely crafted attack on an SACP member and leader for offering open and honest critical contributions that seek to take forward and strengthen working class struggle."

"...The last several years of the South African transition have seen a whole range of new challenges and conditions confronting both the working class and the main political organisation claiming to represent the aspirations and interests of that working class, the SACP."

"Many of the challenges that have confronted the SACP have stemmed directly from the fact that its Alliance partner, the ANC, has gradually but systematically embraced a deracialised capitalism."

"The fact that this has been a focal point of much debate and opposition both within and outside the Alliance, does not take away from its reality."

"It is this reality, alongside the concomitant political and organisational principles underlying the very basis for the SACP's existence, that has made it both strategically and tactically necessary for SACP members to actively and vigorously struggle for an anti-capitalist, and explicitly socialist, counter-hegemony."

## Lessons

"It is no mistake that the main watchwords of all active and dedicated revolutionaries in the contemporary period have been that if we do not learn the lessons of history, we are condemned to repeat them."

"The tragic consequences of the bureaucratic and politically opportunistic stifling of open and honest critique and debate within communist parties throughout the 20th century are there for all of us to see and learn from."

"There are too many strategic and theoretical challenges to confront, too many working class struggles to wage and too many opportunities for mass-based, anti-capitalist mobilisation to grasp for organised revolutionaries to repeat the devastating mistakes of the past."

"As that wonderful revolutionary saying goes - 'class consciousness is knowing what side of the fence you're on, class analysis is figuring out who is there with you'. The SACP has to have both."



Union struggles were key to victory over apartheid; but now ANC opposes strikes and seeks to maintain "non-racial" capitalism

# South Africa's tragic leap to right

## Charlie van Gelderen

JOHN SAUL, whose Toronto-based *South African Report*, played a big role in keeping the world informed about South African affairs in the days of apartheid, has just left South Africa after a term teaching sociology in the University of the Witwatersrand. He has come away bitterly disillusioned.

As someone close to the movement for liberation, he was fully aware of the tensions within it; about what might happen after the overthrow of apartheid "The (stalinist) theories of 'colonialism of a special type' and the 'two-stage revolution' seemed to signal as much," he writes.

He quotes from an article by the current president, Thabo Mbeki, in the *Canadian Journal of African Studies*:

"The ANC is not a socialist party. It has never pretended to be one, it has never said it was, and is not trying to be. It will not become one by decree or for the purpose of pleasing its 'left' critics."

Mbeki stressed that the ANC represented the "notion of both an all-class common front and determined mobilisation of the black proletariat and peasantry."

Despite growing scepticism about the revolutionary vocation of the ANC leadership, supporters like John Saul thought that enough energy had been released from below, not least from the burgeoning trade union movement, that radical and even socialist outcomes were quite likely.

## Balance sheet

Saul's conclusion, his balance sheet on the 'South African Revolution' is that "a tragedy is being enacted in South Africa, as such a metaphor for our times as Rwanda and Yugoslavia... For, in the teeth of high expectations arising from a successful struggle against a malignant apartheid state, a very high percentage of the population – among them the most desperately poor in the world – are being sacrificed on the altar of the neo-

liberal logic of global capitalism..."

"There is absolutely no reason to assume that the majority of people in South Africa will find their lives improved by the policies that are being adopted in their name by the present ANC government..."

"Is it the fact that ... capitalism is everywhere hegemonic and socialism, as a world historic alternative, has been more or less obliterated, which explains this outcome?"

He refers to the grim epigram of the Polish-American theorist, Adam Przeworski: Capitalism is irrational; socialism is unfeasible; in the real world people starve – the conclusions we have reached are not encouraging.

"Capitalism is irrational? How else can you explain a situation in South Africa (but it is also true on a global scale) where the vast majority of the people are desperate in their poverty for a wide range in the simplest goods and services on the one hand and a very large percentage of people (most often the same people) are equally desperate for jobs, on the other. Why can't those two central pieces to the South African puzzle simply be put together?"

"Why must they be joined so in directly and inefficiently through the circuits of global capital and the process of generating surplus value (profits) for the few with the power to dictate terms and guarantee their massive cut of the action?"

There is no need, John Saul, contends, to be reminded of these facts – not in a world where the share of the world's income of the richest 20% of the world's population has risen to 85%, whilst the share of the poorest 20% has declined to 1.4%

## Wider gap

In South Africa itself the already vast gap between rich and poor has continued to widen since 1994.

"True, a few more blacks have joined the whites at the top of the table. But is there really much consolation to be found in that? ... such outcomes are - there is no other word for it, irra-

tional.... In the 'real world' of South Africa people do starve."

Paul Sal and Colin Leys recently produced a survey of the capitalist prospect in Africa, in which they concluded that the result for Africa is relegation to the margins of global economy, with no visible prospect for continental development along capitalist lines... Africa's development and the dynamics of global capitalism are no longer convergent, if they ever were.

But what of South Africa itself? Because of its size, the sociologist, Manuel Castells, sees more room for manoeuvre within global capitalism than is the case elsewhere on the continent.

## Abyss

But he concludes that unless South Africa can avoid being pushed aside from the harsh competition in the global economy, it will, like its ravaged neighbours, fall into "the abyss of exclusion." That is the real problem for South Africa.

Colin Bundy, Vice-President of Wits University acknowledged some years ago that to hold out the prospect of a socialist transformation in South Africa, required a 'leap of faith.' But, he continued,

"To imagine that a milder-mannered capitalist order can secure a decent future for the majority of South Africans – or that deracialising bourgeois rule will meet the aspirations of exploited and oppressed people – now that really requires a leap of faith."

"What about socialism then?" asks Saul. "In principle it makes a lot of sense, surely: From each according to their means, to each according to their needs."

"Unfeasible?... not very long ago there were alternatives to neo-liberalism proposed in South Africa. ... Nelson Mandela's celebrated call for nationalisations on the very day he was released from prison in 1990 (soon retracted in the name of accelerated privatisation).

"Recall, for example, growth through re-distribution, a modestly radical proposal once used in ANC cir-

cles to suggest a possible first step towards challenging capital and prioritising the needs of the vast mass of the population within the productive process."

The present Governor of the Reserve Bank, Tito Mboweni, in 1992, stated:

"The ANC believes that a strategy of 'growth through redistribution' will be the appropriate path for the South Africa economy. In our growth path, accumulation depends on the prior redistribution of resources. Major changes will have to take place in existing power relations as a necessary condition for this new growth path."

Even in 1994, Mandela said "We are convinced that left to their own devices the South African business community will not rise to the challenge facing us.... We envisage occasions when it will be necessary to intervene where growth and development require such interventions."

Today, all this is forgotten. "Black empowerment" now means the creation of a black capitalist class, a black bourgeoisie.

## Capitalist

"Ours," says President Mbeki, "is a capitalist society: the objective is the deracialisation of the ownership of productive property."

That, he says "is the key to the struggle against racism in our country ... our lives are not made easier by those who seek to deny that poverty in our country continues to carry racial hues; who argue that wealth and income disparities among black people themselves are as wide as the disparities between black and white. Simply put, the rich are rich whether they are black or white. The poor are poor whether they are black or white..."

For those former liberation fighters who now sit on the boards of the big corporations, this is the best of all possible worlds.

As Saul puts it: "Where once they asked 'what can capital do for us?' They now ask 'what can we do for capital?'"

# Milosevic digs in for a long stay

**Geoff Ryan**

Just over a year after NATO's bombing campaign inflicted massive damage on Serbia's infrastructure and placed Kosova under NATO control, Slobodan Milosevic looks set to hold on to power.

A number of developments have more or less guaranteed that Milosevic will win the presidential and local elections due in Yugoslavia in September, and probably the parliamentary elections in the autumn as well.

Firstly the Milosevic-dominated Yugoslav Parliament changed the Constitution, allowing him to stand for a further two terms as Yugoslav President.

As this is a directly elected post, Milosevic would use any electoral victory to strengthen his position.

Parliament also downgraded the position of Montenegro within the federation, leading to threats by the pro-western government of President Milo Djukanovic to boycott the polls.

But any boycott would only play into Milosevic's hands, making it easier for pro-Milosevic parties to take control of the 50 seats Montenegro holds in the Yugoslav parliament.

## Kosova votes

Milosevic also expects to benefit from the reshuffling of electoral districts in Serbia to allow Serbs in Kosova the right to vote in two districts in Serbia proper.

Polling in Montenegro will take place in army camps or in municipalities controlled

by the pro-Milosevic Socialist People's Party. As elections earlier this year in Montenegro made clear, there is still considerable support for Milosevic.

He can, therefore, expect his supporters to mobilise for the elections whether or not the Montenegrin government goes ahead with its boycott.

Although a meeting has recently taken place between Montenegrin prime minister, Filip Vujanovic and Predrag Bulatovic, a Milosevic ally, to try to come to some agreement about the September 24 elections, relations between the two sides remain strained.

## Arrests

In fact Milosevic has also made use of the arrests of foreigners in the border regions of Montenegro to whip up nationalist sentiments in Serbia and, at the same time, continue to apply pressure on the Montenegrin government.

Two Canadians and two British police officers attached to the police force in Kosova have been arrested and face charges of spying.

An Asian police officer and his Albanian interpreter have also been arrested in the last few days.

Four Dutchmen have recently been sentenced to 30 days detention, pending further investigations into allegations that they were planning to murder Milosevic or Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic.

Karadzic was recently ordered by a New York court

to pay \$745 million to a group of Croat and Muslim women raped and tortured under his rule.

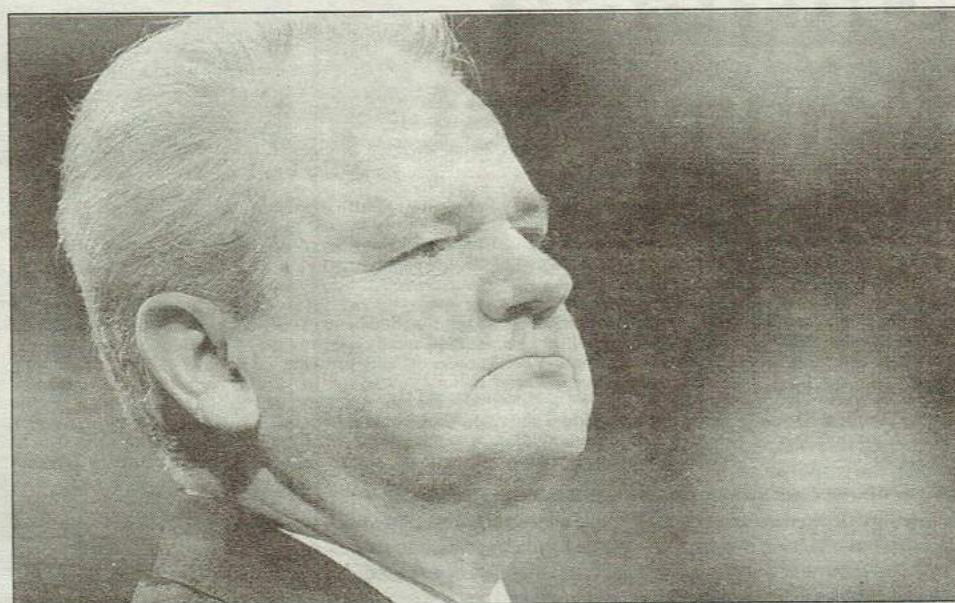
The readiness of a US court to hear charges against Karadzic is in stark contrast to the refusal of the US government to countenance any international tribunal ever having any jurisdiction over US military personnel or politicians accused of war crimes.

While the western media have made much of the arrests of British, Canadian and Dutch citizens, it has been virtually silent over the ordeal of two Slovenes who were arrested in August by the Yugoslav army in the coastal town of Ulcinj on suspicion of trespassing and photographing in a restricted zone.

Milos Glisovic received a three-month suspended prison sentence though his wife, Natasa Zorz, was found not guilty. The pair have since been released.

Whether or not any of those arrested were actually plotting to kill Milosevic or Karadzic we do not know. Given that Milosevic and Karadzic are extremely well protected, such free-lance efforts seem highly unlikely.

On the other hand it is not totally impossible that some of them were involved in some form of spying or sabotage. It is, at the very least, somewhat strange, that eight people from NATO countries, as well as an Asian policeman working with KFOR, should all have erroneously entered Yugoslav territory.



Did I hear someone criticising me? Milosevic has intensified the clampdown

The United States, for one, would certainly not take kindly to people illegally entering its territory 'by mistake'.

Whatever those arrested may or may not have been up to, the arrests have ensured that Milosevic's probably paranoid fantasies have found an echo among large parts of the Serbian people.

Given the massive destruction caused by NATO – and the potential future damage likely as a result of the large number of unexploded bombs that NATO has recently admitted to – this is hardly surprising.

## Exaggerations

Further admissions by NATO that it massively exaggerated the number of Albanians killed by Serb forces will also work to Milosevic's advantage.

The arrests also show the level of activity of the federal army along the Montenegrin borders, activity which may well increase if, as expected, Milosevic wins the Presidential election.

Whether this will lead to war with Montenegro is not clear and, as usual, reaction from the west is contradictory. While NATO has made a few threatening noises, in

response to appeals from President Djukanovic, the US State Department has also made it plain that it does not support any moves to Montenegrin independence.

As usual the various forces of the Serbian opposition have also helped Milosevic. The coalition headed by the Democratic Party of Zoran Djindjic is running Vojislav Kostunica for President, while Vuk Draskovic's Serbian Renewal Movement is backing Vojislav Mihailovic, mayor of Belgrade. This split will be carried over into the local elections.

Kostunica is a hard line Serbian nationalist who, before the NATO bombing campaign was pictured in Kosova brandishing a Kalashnikov rifle.

He has since denounced NATO's role in Kosova and refused to meet officials from NATO countries.

Nevertheless this has not prevented him being endorsed by the west. That, of course is hardly surprising, given that the main imperialist powers had no problems in supporting Biljana Plavsic, author of racist genetic theories of Serbian supremacy, for

President of the Serb entity in Bosnia.

## Media

Milosevic has also continued to clamp down on the media in Serbia. In July Miroslav Filipovic, a journalist who documented atrocities by Serbian forces in Kosova, was convicted by a military court of espionage and spreading false information and sentenced to seven years imprisonment.

This month another journalist Zoran Lukovic, who used to work for *Dnevni Telegraph* before it was closed by the government, was sent to Padinska Skela prison, about 18 miles east of Belgrade.

Lukovic was sentenced last March following a suit by Health Minister Milovan Bojic over an article about the killing of a doctor in Belgrade in front of Bojic's home. Bojic sued Lukovic saying that the article implied he was behind the killing.

Lukovic was a close associate of Slavko Curuvija, owner and editor of *Dnevni Telegraph*, who was killed in Belgrade in spring 1999 – after he criticized Milosevic and his wife Mirjana Markovic.

# Sniping from the Left

By Charlie van Gelderen



## How ethical can you get?

This column does not usually take much interest in the so-called honours list, drawn up by the Prime Minister. We are, however, making an exception in the case of the recent millennium list.

The Right Honourable Tony Blair has seized the opportunity to give a boost to New Labour's much vaunted ethical foreign policy. The list is noticeable for the number of weapon suppliers and manufacturers who have been awarded with these ludicrous bawbles.

Appointed as Commander of the (non-existent) British Empire (CBE) is Brian Taylor,

former chief executive of Wardle Storeys Plc – manufacturers of parachutes and Army inflatables; OBEs go to Phillip Lee, former managing director of British Aerospace Royal Ordnance – suppliers of guns to Indonesia – and Ann Minto, Personnel Director of arms industry supplier, Smiths Industries.

Probably as a tribute to those members of Blair's government for whom Aldermarston meant CND, Michael Rover, production Manager of the Aldermarston atomic weapons establishment, gets an OBE.

This by no means concludes the list, but this is probably enough to assure our readers that the arms trade is safe in the hands of New Labour.



Blair's line is not drumming up much support from Labour's core

## New Labour's cash problem

New Labour has a problem. Some of its wealthier supporters are no longer forking out as they used to. Shortage of funds is nothing new for Labour. In the 1930s and 40s there were very few multi-millionaires ready with their six or seven figure cheques to supplement the old Labour Party's coffers. How did it manage?

Of course, the biggest contributions came from the Trade Unions and the Co-operatives who were closely bonded with the Labour Party politically, and, unlike today, had some say in framing the party's policies. But this was supplemented by thousands of

activists, up-and-down the country, who went from house to house, week after week, collecting subs from members and donations from supporters. Enthusiasts of the Clarion Cycling Club went to the villages, leaflets in their satchels to spread the message.

Blair's predicament is that his millionaire friends have deserted him and he has deserted the enthusiastic activists.

## Who are the criminals?

At Question Time, the Prime Minister boasted that there are more people in prison under New Labour than under the Tories and that crime was on the increase.

It costs £16,000 a year to send a boy to Eton; £25,000 to send someone to prison for what, former Tory Minister Douglas Hurd denounced as "an expensive way of making bad people worse."

Yet Jack Straw boasts – yes, he actually boasts – that thousands have been imprisoned since the election.

He also said that one-in-three people in England have some criminal record. This last remark is based on a false statistic. A recent survey showed that one-in-three in the poorest section of the population has, at one time or another been involved in unlawful acts.

To eliminate the causes of crime, as promised in New Labour's election manifesto, you have to eliminate poverty. This can not be done while we have capitalism.

There is the real criminal – capitalism. The number of children living in poverty in Britain, increased three-fold between 1979 and 1996, when the Tories were in power. The situation has not improved under New Labour. Recent Unicef figures show Britain fourteenth in the poverty league tables. This country, one of the richest in the world, has more households which subsist on half the country's median earnings than countries such as Turkey,

Poland and Hungary.

Poverty is the main cause of crime – except, of course, in the higher echelons of criminal activity – insider speculation on the Stock Exchange; tax frauds; pilfering employees pension funds and so on, and, of course, the biggest crime of all and the real root of the matter – the exploitation of labour, the drive for more and more profits squeezed out of the workers!

## Hungry for change

The annual nosh-up of the G8 in Okinawa, did not do much for the world's most deprived people. The wining and dining cost over £500 million. That would be enough to provide schooling for 12 million children.

In millions of villages in Africa and other parts of the so-called developing world, they are crying out for the most elementary needs – food, water, sanitation etc. This could all be paid for by relieving these countries of their debts to the World Bank, the IMF and commercial banks. What were they promised? Computers, link-ups with the net! What a boon in drought stricken Ethiopia or in villages with no electricity, no water, not enough to feed their families!

**Green Bans, Red Union, Environmental activism and the New South Wales Builders Labourers' Federation**  
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Meredith and Verity Burgmann  
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Reviewed by  
**DAVE BANGS**

# Unions in defence of the environment

**T**he working class is at its most powerful in its role as producers, as creators of the products and services capitalism sells. Its power to withdraw or modify its labour – by strikes, occupations, work-ins and so on – can bring capitalism to a halt.

At present we are bottoming out of a period of severe defeat for our class in which strike action is at an all-time low, and workers have little confidence to fight for more than catch-up pay rises, or minor hours and conditions ameliorations, at best.

Most of the burden of confronting capitalism's onslaught on the environment has been borne by direct actionists organised on the basis of single issue campaigns or residential communities. It was local residents and militant defenders of nature who blocked the bulldozers at Twyford Down and Manchester Airport, not organised labour. And when push came to shove, construction workers, protected behind a screen of police, did the dirty work of destruction.

It is easy, therefore, to understand those Green Party – and even anarchist – activists who pick up the old tune of "the death of class" and look to other social elements as agents of green change – parts of the underclass, or the middle class, counter-culturalists, or small capitalist.

Easy to understand, maybe, but high time we challenged this dead-end nonsense. Imagine what it would have been like if construction workers themselves had blacked all work on Sizewell, the North Birmingham Relief Road and the M11... and if these construction workers had then demanded that development resources should instead be put into hospitals, affordable housing and sustainable transport initiatives!

## The Builders Labourers' Federation

**B**ut this is precisely what happened in New South Wales, Australia, at the beginning of the 1970s, when the Builders Labourers' Federation, one of Australia's oldest unions, used all its industrial muscle to halt the destruction of virgin bush, green spaces, historic districts and houses, and working class communities. It did this even though such action was against its own immediate economic interest, and in the face of a blizzard of class prejudice and opposition from aggrieved trade union bigwigs.

Acting on the basis of a core belief in "the social responsibility of labour", this trade union took up the cudgels for the environment in the middle of a spectacular development boom which saw parts of Sydney transformed by skyscrapers, expressways, plazas and luxury housing, where previously low-income working class communities lived. Millions of dollars of foreign investment flowed



"All out! I don't like the cornice!" – a cartoonist parodies the building labourers' stance in defence of cultural heritage

into this business friendly state, with its lax development control.

## Labour's opportunity

**B**ut this boom put labourers' work at a premium and enabled an already strong union to massively muscle up. The union was fortunate, also, in having a leadership which had gone through a whole process of political differentiation (largely via the Communist Party of Australia), shedding its Stalinist heritage and embracing a politics of thoroughgoing openness, democracy and accountability.

Launching a militant onslaught on industry wage differentials, which it won, the leadership adopted an internal regime calculated to maximise rank and file power and union control. Labouring became a strict closed shop.

Limited tenure of office was introduced for all union officials, and job-site union autonomy encouraged. Officials' wages were tied to industry wages, and non-payment of officials during strikes was introduced.

Executive meetings were thrown open, and a culture of frequent stop-work meetings and open mass meetings was engendered. All organisational tasks were undertaken by labourers themselves, including all research and union publications.

This combination of militancy and democracy paid great dividends. Union membership rose by 136%, against 7% for other unions!! Wages and conditions improved steeply. Campaigns to "Civilise the Industry", attacking health and safety deficiencies, winning accident pay and major amenities improvements, were progressed.

The rank and file developed such militant tactics – including consistent sabotage of scab work, site occupations and work-ins, vetoes over dismissals and control over hiring and firing – that even the leadership had to race to adapt to

these confident assertions of class authority.

## Black Bans/Green Bans

**I**t is in this context that the union embraced ever-widening political agendas, trampling over ever more class, sexual and political boundaries. It is fitting that their first Green Ban (a name aptly chosen to transcend the old industrial term of "Black Ban") was on a piece of bushland in a posh middle class area.

The "middle class matrons" who had organised to stop the development of this ancient and lovely site "discovered this union of manual labourers was more sensitive to the natural beauty of Kelly's Bush than conservative politicians and newspaper editors and they were radicalised permanently by their experience."

These "upper-middle class morning tea matrons" were only the first of many middle and even ruling class conservationists who – eagerly or reluctantly – embraced the offered solidarity of this militant class struggle union.

As one of the "Battlers for Kelly's Bush" said: "why shouldn't the construction site worker be able to question the ethics of his helping to knock down a historic building or bulldoze some bushland?"

Later, the union was to fight on more convivial territory, opposing the trashing of working class districts by developers and the eviction of tenants. Some of these struggles – like the long and bloody fight to save Victoria Street from the predations of a vicious thug developer – reached epic proportions. Builders, labourers, residents and community squatters faced armed thugs beating up folk and trashing their property – kidnapping one activist and holding him blindfold in a car boot for days.

One well known activist was actually murdered, in a crime that has never been solved. The labourers' steadfastness won out, though, and brought this Van Hoogstraten-like

developer to his knees.

How many people who see the Sydney Opera House on postcards and stamps know of the union's successful fight to preserve part of its setting from a massive car park?

The union's Green Ban on the car park under the Botanic Gardens, which would have "interfered with the root system of splendid and ancient Moreton Bay Fig Trees and caused the loss of at least 3" threatened the official opening of the Opera House by the Queen!

Their strong nerve in holding to their ban – an expression of the "union's opposition in principle to any proposals for car parks that encroached on water, gardens or parkland" – resulted, in the end, in a rational solution being found to the problem.

## Altruism

**F**rom 1971 to 1975 the union's Green Bans halted projects worth \$5,000 million, taking a major dent out of capital's madcap mayhem in the state. High rise developments were banned, expressways were blocked, forest land and island nature reserves were defended, parks were saved from huge sports and leisure complexes, and individual historic buildings were saved.

Yet this altruism cost the builders' labourers in their purses – a price they were prepared to pay. By 1975, 3 out of 4 strike days in Australia were in New South Wales and nearly half of those were in the building industry! "In the short run the workers were denying themselves work. In the long run the workers were denying themselves work. In the long run, the workers could see that (Green Bans were) in the interests of the entire community".

And these bans were no top-down imposition. Jack Munday, the union's charismatic leader, "estimated that about half the union's members were actively interested in conservation and preservation".

## Widening agenda

**B**ut these bans were only the best known part of the 11,000 strong union's ever widening agenda. They vigorously campaigned on behalf of women entrants to the industry, breaking a century-old opposition to women working in the building industry.

Many of these women entrants later became leading union activists.

The union banned work at Macquarie University in support of a student expelled for his homosexuality. They later banned work again in support of students opposing the segregation of staff/student bar facilities.

They supported aboriginal land rights, aboriginal squatter communities and tenants, and aboriginal union activists. So vigorous was their solidarity that 38 aboriginal organisations supported the union in its later struggles against deregulation.

In 1971 union leaders were arrested for attempting to hacksaw down the aluminium goal posts during the Springbok Rugby Union tour from apartheid South Africa.

The union called for defiance of call-up to Vietnam and helped students build barricades to defend a draft sanctuary.

And – in a move that serves to frame even better our own jailer Jack Straw's inhumanity – the union banned all work on a \$1 million maximum security prison block, where prisoners would have been unable to see daylight, confined for 18 hours per day, with toilet bowls doubling for washing bowls. Their ban was betrayed by other unions, but their humanity was later vindicated, for the prison was closed down after a few years.

## Defeat

**I**t was not the employers who finally defeated the union, in 1974-5, but the union's own Federal leadership, which conspired with the employers to impose Federal Union control over the State Union, expel the leading militants (and thus bar them also from finding work as builders' labourers), end the bans and end the union's encroachment on employer prerogatives.

These union breakers were themselves "Maoists" or "Communists", speaking a rhetoric of workers' power, but repeating the wearisome tradition of bureaucratic betrayal and tyranny.

## Lessons

**B**ut this story should not end with some small lessons about the dirty dealings of union bureaucracies. This story is much bigger than that. What the NSW Builders Labourers' Federation proved was that the class power of the producers is our best weapon against the onslaught of capital on our environment, our quality of life, and on nature.

And they proved that this power could only be expressed through the deepest, most thoroughgoing democracy in our class organisations. Once realised, this democratic power acted as a dissolvent of all gender, ethnic, sectoral and class barriers. No bans were ever placed without the support of the workers or the communities affected.

The struggle to save our environment is linked tight to the struggle for democracy and control, and the struggle against capitalism. If we break these links, we break the possibilities of our own success.

All socialists and greens should read this book. It'll stir you from head to toe.

## SWP founder Tony Cliff

Strengths and  
theoretical  
weaknesses

Tony Cliff

Alan Thornett

**T**ony Cliff completed his autobiography *A World to Win, Life of a Revolutionary* just before he died on April 9 this year. It has been published posthumously.

The book is chiefly Cliff's account of the centre-piece of his life's work - the building of the Socialist Workers Party and its predecessor organisations in Britain.

These organisations were moulded and shaped by Cliff's energy, dedication, strengths, weaknesses, theories - and also his quirks. It also deals with the organisations of which he was a member in Palestine.

The book shows how Cliff's twin theories - state capitalism, (which rejected Trotsky's analysis of the class nature of the Stalinist states) and the permanent arms economy (which purported to explain the post war boom in the west) - are at the core of the organisations he built in Britain. This went alongside his rejection of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

It also reflects his particular brand of economism, socialism from below, and rank and fileism - the refusal to take positions in the unions above the rank and file level.

This tended towards seeing the trade union bureaucracy as an alien class rather than a bureaucratic layer of the working class - an idea which springs from the theory of state capitalism itself.

Cliff argues, unconvincingly, that his differences with Trotsky, particularly over the class nature of the Stalinist states, were not a break with Trotskyism as such but brought it into line with the main body of the Marxist tradition.

He recounts how he went over to the theory of state capitalism, which had already become a debate within the Fourth International, in the immediate post war years (1947/8) with his text *The Class Nature of Stalinist Russia*.

Cliff formed the Socialist Review Group (SRG) in 1950 after the Revolutionary Communist Party dissolved. The SRG was inside the Labour Party and had a loose and Luxemburgist structure, but its main reason for a separate existence from the FI



November 1976: the first big public sector revolt against Labour's IMF-inspired cuts

was the advancement of Cliff's theory of state capitalism.

The SRG existed for about 10 years as a small group of a few dozen people. It became the International Socialism group (IS) in 1962 with about 70 people.

According to Cliff, the membership of IS reached 200 by the mid-1960s after work in CND and the launching of the Young Socialists (YS) by the Labour Party, which it entered, even though it was squeezed by Gerry Healy's Socialist Labour League (SLL) which was overwhelming the biggest far left organisation at that time.

The IS also began work amongst students in 1967/8 with a group established at the LSE.

**T**he fact that Cliff founded the SRG and the IS on the basis of an analysis of the Stalinist states (and some tactical positions and assessments) rather than on a programme - made them rather a strange organisations.

The theory of state capitalism itself has programmatic implications, but, apart from in the Korean war, the SWP has managed to be on the right side against imperialism. This was the case by the time of Vietnam.

The IS began looking towards industry in the same period, first gaining a base at the ENV engineering plant in West London.

From that the IS launched, in 1966, the London Industrial Shop Stewards Defence Committee. This

was in the same period as those of us in Cowley, under the influence of the SLL, launched the Oxford Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions and the CP launched the Liaison Committee in Defence Trade Unions.

Cliff backed up his work in the shop stewards movement with two books, *Incomes Policy, Legislation and Shop Stewards* in 1966, and then in 1970 *The Employer Offensive: Productivity Deals and How to Fight Them*.

These books clearly played a significant part in building IS at this time, and Cliff frequently refers to them in *A World to Win*.

Cliff locates the major growth of the IS during the militant years of the Heath government of 1970-74. The IS made a "turn to industry" and set up rank and file organisations in different sections of industry, many with their own newspapers.

In 1972 they launched the

National Rank and File Movement, which held its first National Conference in 1974. According to an internal report (quoted by Cliff) this attracted an impressive 500 delegates from 270 trade union bodies.

**T**he National Rank and File Movement came to a shuddering halt just a few years later, however, as a direct result of Cliff's conversion to his famous (or infamous) 'downturn' theory.

In 1977 he declared that a major 'downturn in the class struggle' had been taking place for the last three years - since 1974. Moreover, the problem, he said, was located in the working class itself, in the form of a 'collapse of militancy'.

The downturn was partly the result, he argued, of what he called the bureaucratisation of the shop stewards movement. He pointed to the rise in the number of

full-time convenors, who were "a transmission belt between the bureaucracy and the rank and file".

As a full-time car industry convenor myself from 1967 to 1977, however, I saw the rise in full time convenors in that period both as a material gain of the militant struggles themselves, and as a challenge to the full time officials. That was certainly the way that many of the full time officials saw it.

Cliff's whole downturn theory was incomprehensible to many of us outside of the IS/SWP, and involved in the numerous strikes taking place.

Cliff defends his theory at length, however, in *A World to Win*, and since it (with the later upturn theory) has been such a major part of the politics of the SWP over the past 20 years it is worth looking at his arguments in detail.

There were certainly no half measures in what Cliff argued. The chapter dealing with the downturn is entitled "From Beautiful Spring to Freezing Winter" i.e. from the beautiful spring of the 1970-74 period to the freezing winter of the post 1974 period - including the years 1974-84. This freezing winter, he claims, went on for nearly 20 years until the early 1990s.

The period 1970-74 (or more precisely 1968-74) was special in terms of the level of class struggle. There were two successful national miners strikes in 1972 and 1974, the second of which brought down the government.

There was the opposition to Labour's anti-union package 'In Place of Strife'. There was widespread unofficial action in support of the Pentonville Five (who were jailed for picketing in defiance of the Industrial Relations Act) - and the occupation of Upper Clydeside Shipyards, along with numerous other factory occupations.

It is also true that important changes, political and economic, occurred in the mid-1970s which altered the framework of struggle. The

first was the end of the post war boom and the onset of the long recessionary wave across Europe as a whole.

The second was the election of the Labour government in 1974, and its relationship to the trade union leaders. The third was the increasing fight-back by the employers against the gains of the working class in the previous period.

All this made struggles increasingly defensive. But this was not a "crisis of the militancy" of the working class. That was invented by Tony Cliff.

**I**n fact high levels of militancy, with minor fluctuations, continued from the late 1960s until the defeat of the miners in 1985, despite the changes in political and economic conditions.

The figures speak for themselves. In the five (upturn) years between 1970 and 1974 a huge 70 million days were lost in strike action. But in the five (downturn) years from 1977 until 1981 another huge 65m days were lost .... hardly any different.

Was Cliff arguing that 65m days lost was a collapse of militancy of the working class? It beggars belief. If that period was a freezing winter, the 'upturn' of the 1990s was an ice age, since the days lost in the 5 years 1991-95 was just 2.6m - a tiny fraction of the 'downturn' period! And the second 5 years of the 1990s were even worse.

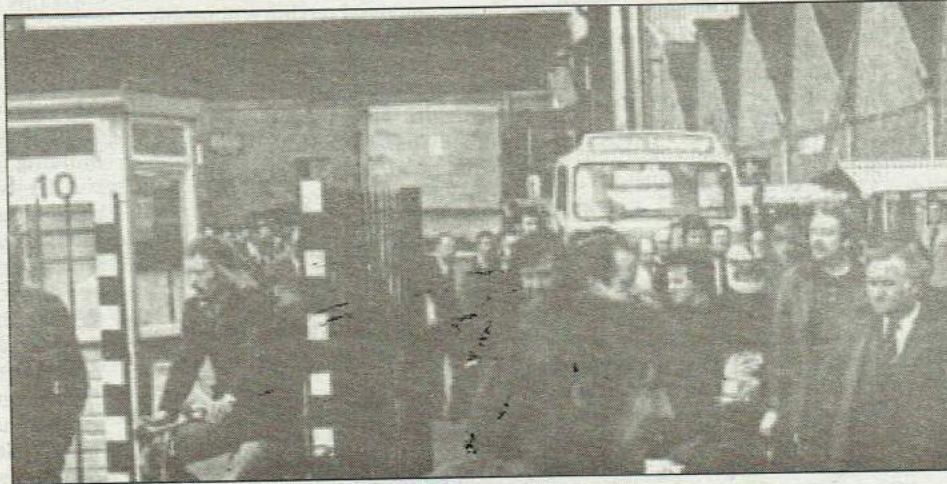
There was a drop in the level of strikes for two years in the 1970s, in 1975 and 1976. This was a result of the support of the TUC for Labour's initial stages of incomes policy and its 12 month rule (which outlawed pay claims with 12 months of the previous one).

As a result "only" 6 million days were lost in 1975 and 3.2m in 1976 against 14.7m in 1974.

But this went back up to 10m in 1977 and then a staggering 29m in 1979 - the highest since the general strike of 1926 and 6m more than the highest year in the 70-74 period.

There were numerous strikes against the later stages of Labour's incomes policy, the most important of which was the 13 week national fire fighters strike against Stage three.

The winter of discontent itself came out of confrontations with Labour's stage four 5% wages policy. It was led by a powerful tanker drivers' strike which broke the policy, and a massive lorry drivers' strike which paralysed large sections of industry, with strike committees issuing chits for the



Cowley car workers: militancy continued into 1980s, despite efforts of bureaucrats



movement of essential supplies.

There was spontaneous strike across all Ford plants which smashed through the incomes policy; there were hospital strikes (with miners coming out in support of nurses), there were strikes in local government including amongst refuse collectors.

Major strikes continued after the winter of discontent. There was a 15 week steel strike in 1980, strikes in engineering and cars in 1981 and 1982, and the printers strike in 1983. There was then the miners strike in 1984.

**T**he evidence Cliff advances for the downturn is, not surprisingly, weak in the extreme. The most unreal are the figures he quotes which he claims show a 'massive collapse of militancy' in the mining industry:

"There was a massive collapse of militancy thought the mining industry, as can be seen from the following figures: the number of days lost - over 10 million in 1972 and over 5 million in 1974 - collapsed to 52,000 in 1975, increasing to 70,000 in 1976, 88,000 in 1977 and 176,000 in 1978".

Is this a collapse of militancy? You can't compare two years when there were national strikes with four years when there were not. Even more outlandishly, this claims to prove that a section of workers who were to mount an astounding year-long strike six years later had lost their militancy!

In fact the political problem of the trade unions remained the same from the late 1960s until the defeat of the miners - strong trade union organisation and high levels of militancy but insufficient political development to challenge the trade union leaders in either their social democratic or Stalinist varieties.

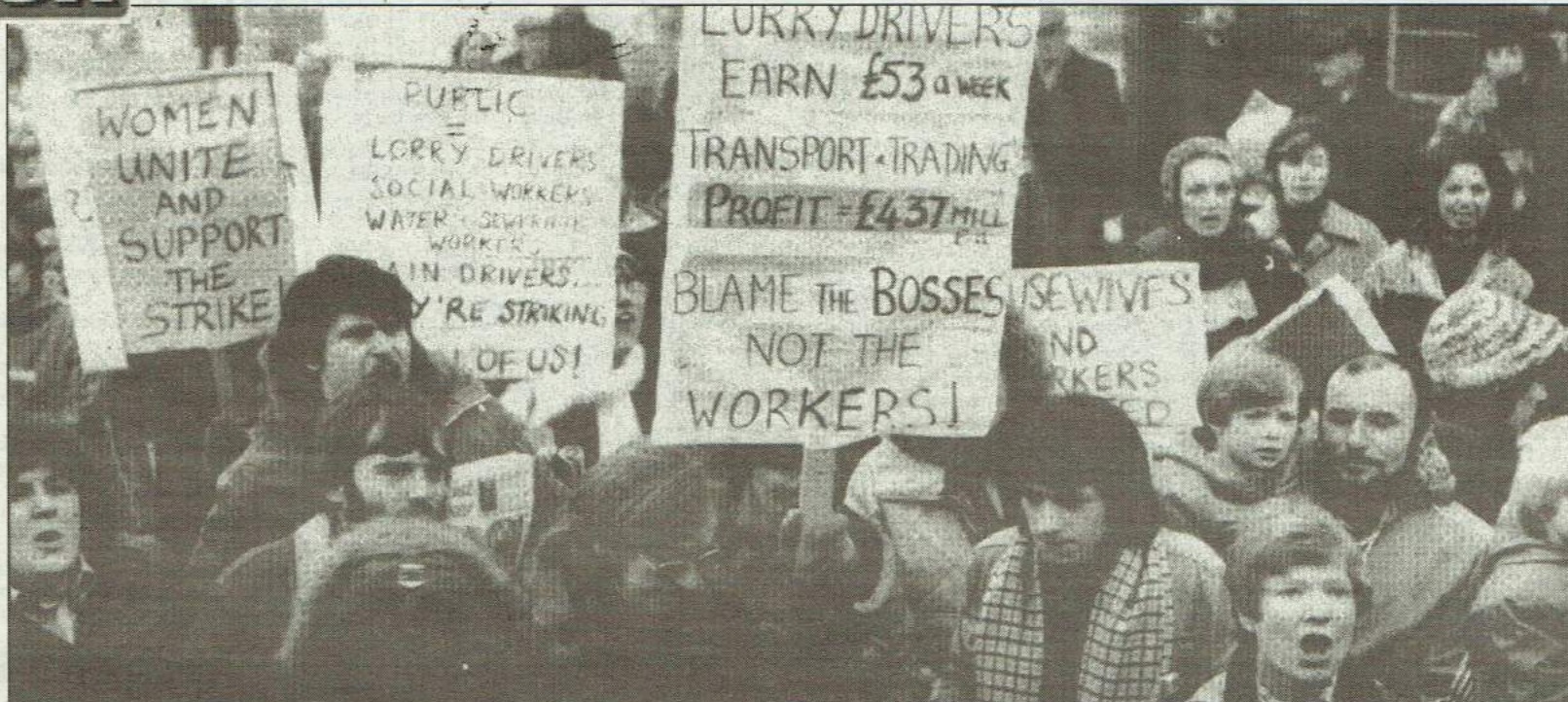
Cliff says that it was during the fire fighters strike in November 1977 that he realised there was a downturn.

**H**e points to a National Rank and File conference at that time, which he says was only 200 people and smaller than the previous conferences, which adopted a resolution calling for a day of strike action in support of the fire fighters. No one responded - and this proved definitively that the movement was in a downturn.

I attended that conference (and spoke at it) and I remember it as bigger than 200. But as I recall, there was not a direct call for solidarity strikes with the fire fighters, as such, but a general call for solidarity.

Be that as it may, the idea that the fire fighters' isolation could be broken by a call for unofficial solidarity strikes from a conference of a few hundred delegates organised mainly by one far-left current was optimistic.

Examples of unofficial solidarity action by one section of workers in support of others engaged in sectional struggles are extremely rare. Unofficial solidarity action was difficult even over issues affecting the whole move-



Militancy rose to new levels during 1978-79 "winter of discontent", reaching layers such as lorry drivers - and women, who mobilised this Liverpool support march

ment.

Cliff completely ignores the trade union leaders, who were fighting to keep to the 12 month rule and the then 10% limit intact. The TUC General Council voted to urge the fire fighters to accept the policy and return to work.

Leaders of a million authority workers and a million NHS workers accepted the 12 month rule, defying pressure from their members to break it. Tanker drivers, power workers, and others were holding back for the same reason. It was the political fight to break that log-jam which was the key to breaking the fire fighters' isolation.

The SWP's rank and file saw the trade union bureaucracy as irrelevant, and was therefore unable to combat them.

**S**ome of this still survives. In the trade union session of Marxism 2000, the main speaker said that it was almost irrelevant who was the general secretary of a union since everyone (more or less) does the same once they are in that position - so forget about them and organise at the base!

The battle, by Cliff, to convince the IS/SWP of the downturn was eventually formalised at the 1982 SWP conference. The IS/SWP lost ground, particularly in industry, during the protracted internal battle over the downturn.

But what counteracted the damage was the launching of the Anti Nazi League (ANL) in 1977-8 as a response to a sharp rise in the activities of the far right. It was controlled by the SWP, but was hugely successful and the SWP recruited heavily from it.

By the time of the miners strike, in 1984, the approach of the SWP was dominated by the downturn theory and its attitude was one of deep pessimism. This almost led to an attitude that it was impossible to win the strike.

So the defeat was nothing to do with the TUC who had accepted the Tory anti-union laws or the trade union leaders who had left the miners isolated! The problem in the SWP's view remained the "lack of militancy" in the working class itself. In a

World to Win Cliff puts it this way:

"In 1994 the miners strike broke out and they fought bravely for a whole year. Alas, the long period of downturn, of declining militancy, led to the final defeat of the strike".

**T**he SWP stayed outside of the miners support groups until very late, arguing that the strike could be won by mass picketing (of which there was no shortage) rather than breaking the isolation of the miners though other sections coming out on their own claims and opening a second front - something which involved taking on the trade union leaders and the TUC.

Cliff eventually declared the end of the long downturn in 1989. By this time the level of the class struggle was a pale shadow of that which existed when he declared it. The situation, according to him, was now 'neither upturn or downturn'. This has remained the analysis of the SWP during the 1990s and to date.

True, the second half of the

1990s saw a major rise in the level of class struggle across Europe, triggered by the mass strikes and demonstrations in France at the end of 1995.

These led to series of mass strikes and general strikes right across the EU against the Maastricht criteria. On a world scale, a fight-back was also beginning against the effects of globalisation and the neo-liberal offensive.

But Britain remained isolated from all this. By the mid-1990s the level of strikes had plunged to the lowest since records began in the late 19th century. The employers have been able to do almost anything they have wanted, usually without resistance.

This was not an upturn or even the absence of a downturn, it was a disastrous situation. The only victory was against the poll tax in the early 1990s, which was outside of the unions and did not have a long term effect - other than the removal of Thatcher.

The political consequences of the low levels of trade union struggles in Britain in the 1990s were the develop-

ment of social partnership in the unions and Blairism in the Labour Party. Blair is a new type of Labour leader with a project of turning Labour into a straight capitalist party and championing the neoliberal agenda.

Blair's advance shifted the political situation to the right and the left (far left and social democratic left) shrank dramatically - although unevenly.

The SWP's refusal to accept the realities facing the working class remains a huge illogicality in its political analysis. It means it has no rational analysis of the depth of the defeat of the miners, and doesn't understand the decline of the shop stewards movement or the reality facing activists in the workplace today.

At the trade union session of Marxism this year, the message was that everything was on the up. One more heave by the socialists and everything can be achieved.

Small advances, which are happening of course, were seized upon and used to paint a completely unreal picture.

On the other hand some of the crudest rank and fileism has gone, with the SWP taking elected positions in some unions over recent years.

**D**espite this unreality, the SWP has been the major exception to the rule as far as the shrinkage of the left is concerned.

One factor was the way the SWP was able to use its relative size, material resources, and insularity, to protect itself from the cold blast of politics outside. The upturn theory itself undoubtedly played a positive, if completely unreal, role in this process.

The other factor was the collapse of the USSR and the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe. Cliff presented it as a massive vindication of his theory of 'State Capitalism'.

This gave the SWP members confidence at a time when the Communist Parties went into free fall in many countries including Britain, and sections of the far left, drew deeply pessimistic conclusions.

Yet Trotsky characterised Stalinism as a counter revolutionary force on a world scale. Trotskyists argued that

whilst control of societies by the working class had been destroyed in Eastern Europe, the mode of production had not been changed.

In fact it is this analysis of Trotsky's which was confirmed so convincingly by the collapse of the USSR, not the theory of state capitalism. You did not have to be a state capitalist to be undefeated by the fall of the Wall.

Demoralisation grew not amongst those with a Trotskyist analysis, but for those who saw Stalinism as playing a progressive, role and supporting an "anti-imperialist camp".

**T**he SWP remains a highly significant organisation on the British far left.

Since the mid-1990s - following the collapse of the Communist Party, the sharp decline of the Militant/Socialist Party, and the general decline of the left - it has emerged as by far the biggest revolutionary socialist organisation in Britain, and amongst the biggest in the world.

Now, after years of placing its own interests first, it has taken a dramatic turn towards working with the rest of the left in the Socialist Alliances and in some campaigns.

It is beginning to end its isolationism in the unions, and in Scotland discussing unity with the Scottish Socialist Party. All this has opened up the possibility of forging a new broad political alternative to Blairism initially in the form of the Socialist Alliances.

Interestingly there is no mention of the Socialist Alliances in 'A World to Win,' or any reference to the united front - a theme developed by the SWP this year.

The last event mentioned by Cliff is last year's lobby of Labour Party conference, and the SWP did not make a major turn towards the London Socialist Alliance until a few months later.

By all accounts, however, Cliff was fully behind that development and became enthusiast for the LSA as it developed. The SWP leadership faces a major challenge in maintaining and developing the new course it has taken and carrying this through to the construction of a new broadly based left



Thatcher's government changed the landscape of class struggle

## MATT MERRIGAN

### - a political assessment

D R O'Connor  
Lysaght

**M**attew Merrigan died on 15 June. Although just 79, he had seemed in good health, recovered from the death of his beloved wife, Rose, and looking forward to resuming work for his class.

Small, physically, he was a giant of the left. He struggled consistently against capitalism and the vast and compromising careerist morass in his movement. Nor did he lose sight of the international working class wood for the Irish political trees. He was an international socialist:

"In spite of the damage of Stalinist reaction to the theory and practice of Socialism, the objective economic circumstances that put Socialism on the world agenda 150 years ago are still there, only more so. The underdeveloped countries in the world are now in the neo-imperialist grip of the developed world and their people stagger under the burden of foreign debt interest."

On the other hand, though he denounced the dogma of armed struggle, he recognised the need for Irish unity:

"The minimum required is: for the Labour Government to declare its intention to work for Irish unity with the Irish Government and all the parties in Ireland and to disengage from Ireland at the beginning of the process."

As TGWU District Secretary in the twenty-six county Republic, he performed his role in a manner often opposed to the actions of his opposite numbers in other unions. Unlike them, his socialist beliefs prevented him seeing the way forward as being through national wage agreements

supervised by the capitalist state:

"Economic and social consensus is not possible in a society riven by property and class differences."

These insights remained those of an individual. Although the needs and common interests of industrial union work enabled him to recruit around himself a group of radical officials from disparate backgrounds, uniting them in opposition to state pay controls, he could never build lasting unity on a broader socialist front.

The reasons for this lay in his early life. He was born at Dolphin's Barn in June 1921 and grew up like most working class boys at this time, losing his father and, later, a brother to TB and leaving school at 14. From 1936, he was employed by Savoy-Rowntree's confectionery works at Inichcore Road. Almost immediately, he was on strike for union recognition. The Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union won, and he remained a member.

Further radicalisation was not immediate. Though active in the union, he was irked by its inefficient and arbitrary procedures. Then, in 1941, there came the government's wartime Wages Standstill Order, followed by the Trade Union Act, aimed at limiting workers' right to organise.

**T**he Dublin Trades Council and the Irish Labour Party organised a Council of Action to oppose these measures. Mattie was active in his support for the council and was brought into the influence of the Labour Party, which he joined in the spring of 1942.

Partly because of the intensified class struggle and partly for want of competition, the Labour Party was as radical as it had been

since the civil war. The Catholic bishops and the national teachers had recently revealed the limits of this militancy by persuading the leadership to remove the aim of the Workers' Republic from its constitution, but the party remained a threat to the establishment. In August 1942, Mattie Merrigan's first participation in a bourgeois election ended triumphantly with Labour becoming the largest party on Dublin Corporation: a feat it has never repeated.

Almost immediately, a decline began. The leadership of the Irish TGWU feared that its hegemony in the Labour Party would be swamped and rigged the Dublin convention to select candidates in the general election. When this was revealed, it got Labour to expel the whistleblower and started to denounce Communist influence in the party.

**T**hose Communist Party members doing deep entry work reacted by seeking to weaken the Trotskyists - who were congregated in several branches - by invoking the rule limiting members to branches in their localities.

Mattie Merrigan was one of the Trotskyists. He recognised that they would have to organise more effectively and, though correctly sceptical about the possibilities of expansion, he helped form the Revolutionary Socialist Party in 1944, becoming secretary of the Dublin branch. Almost immediately, it was hit by the wash from a dispute in the Fourth International (FI).

Was the Soviet Union a degenerated workers' state carrying possibilities of renewing its local socialist potential, as Trotsky had insisted, or was it a new

form of society - 'bureaucratic collectivism' - distinct from both capitalism and socialism?

In Ireland, the new party split. Mattie and the party chairman, Bob Armstrong, supported the bureaucratic collectivist analysis, while the national secretary, John Byrne, upheld the old line. Their party survived until the FI World Congress, in 1948, recognised it as the official Irish section. Then it collapsed.

Armstrong went to London, and other supporters of the bureaucratic collectivist line abandoned the revolution, leaving Mattie as the line's sole advocate in Ireland, facing John Byrne. During the fifties, the two of them worked together on the Dublin Trades Council and in the Labour Party, but they were never able to sink their differences enough to form a revolutionary nucleus.

For himself, Mattie saw the movement being built pragmatically and feared forming what he believed would be just another sect. For a whole period, Trotskyism in Ireland meant recruitment for class struggle in Britain. At last, in the late sixties, the real thing had to be reborn. We were unable to rely on the experience of Merrigan and Byrne to help us.

Still, the increasing radicalisation, worldwide and in Ireland stimulated them, too. However, their answer was to build towers of socialist babel within (the Liaison Committee of the Left) and outside (Socialist Labour) the Labour Party.

These bodies might not have been the failures that they were had Mattie, in particular, been willing to give a programmatic lead. He seems to have feared that, by doing this, he would have reduced himself to the level of the sectarians. As a result, he remained politically more isolated than any sectarian.

He had a lot to give his fellow workers. He gave them a lot. Perhaps it is ungrateful to say he might have given more. It happens to be true.

## Hundreds rally to honour Joe Flexer

Barry Weisleder, editor, Socialist Action, Toronto

Over 400 people, some travelling hundreds of miles on a hot summer holiday weekend, gathered to celebrate the life of our departed comrade Joseph Flexer.

Joe passed away on July 31 at Toronto General Hospital when his new heart failed him, six years after receiving a transplant. He was 67.

The meeting to celebrate his life was held on August 5, nearly filling the main auditorium of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

The gathering was organised by Joe's family and friends and by Socialist Action, of which Joe was a central leader and Editorial Board member.

For decades Joe was a dedicated activist in the Canadian Auto Workers' Union, a leader in his plant and in CAW Local 112. He was a respected national figure in the CAW, at the Toronto and York Region Labour Council, and across the workers' movement

which he so loved, from Palestine to North America. He was a founder and federal Co-Chair of the NDP

## Socialist Action

Fourth International



Socialist Caucus.

Joe's son Dani told the Toronto Star that Joe "became a communist and a mechanic at about the same time, at about (age) 15". His ideas took him from his native Brooklyn, New York to the Middle East where he joined an Israeli Kibbutz in the 1950s.

His principles compelled him to break with Zionism, and to champion the fight for Palestinian self-determination. In Israel, Joe was, unhappily a soldier, and most happily, a labour militant and communist.

In the mid-1960s, Joe returned to North America, lived in Winnipeg and briefly in Montreal, and became an important figure in the movement against the war in Vietnam and on the socialist left. Joe settled in Toronto in the early 1970s.

**Founder member**

Joe was among those who helped to found the Revolutionary Marxist Group in 1973, which in turn joined forces with the League for Socialist Action and the GMR, a Quebec Trotskyist group, to launch the Revolutionary Workers' League in 1977. But he left the section of the Fourth International in the early 1980s, as the RWL succumbed to sectarian policies and practices.

In the Fall of 1995 just a year after his heart transplant in 1994, Joe decided it was "party building time". He asked to join Socialist Action, and immediately became a member of the editorial board of our newspaper.

He knew his time was limited, and he wanted to make the most of it politically. He took special pleasure in helping to found the NDP Socialist Caucus. He was proud of the leading role he played in the writing of the Manifesto for A Socialist Canada, and in being a federal co-chair of the Socialist Caucus.

At the recent ONDP Convention in Hamilton, Joe ran for party vice-president as part of an SC slate of candidates, and he got over 21% of the votes - a good start in an ongoing struggle to save the only mass labour-based party in North America from neo-liberalism, we believe.

Joe Flexer walked on countless picket lines, spoke at countless rallies and demonstrations, and touched countless lives. He was a revolutionary communist to the core, an unparalleled internationalist and a remarkable worker militant and trade unionist. He was the epitome of Antonio Gramsci's idea of the 'organic intellectual of the working class'.

## Where we stand

AS A NEW CENTURY BEGINS, the battles of the last century remain to be won. Millions of women and men are taking 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

# Socialist Outlook

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.

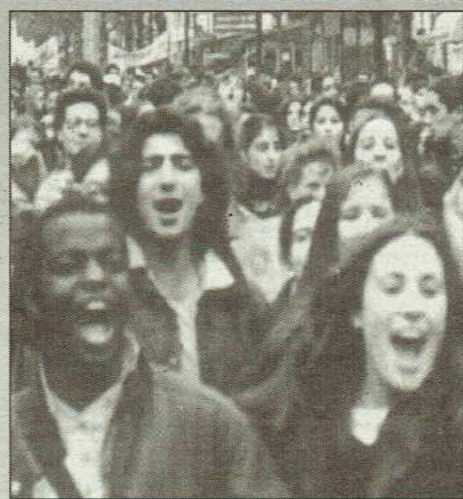
The working class is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed. The working class and its allies must uncompromisingly fight against capitalism and for a clear programme of action in order to

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 - an alliance which respects their legitimate autonomy.

By building simultaneously 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.

If you think this is worth fighting for, and you like what you read in *Socialist Outlook*, why not join us? Drop a line to us at **PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU**, and we'll be in touch.

**Jack Russell**

The dreadful pogroms against "paedophiles" on the Paulsgrove Estate, Portsmouth, and elsewhere, inspired by the *News of the World*, throw into sharp relief the way in which sections of the ruling class can utilise people's sexual misery and oppression to reinforce authoritarian messages of repression and violence.

We are used to the way in which racism is used to create divisions amongst working class people, but we have, perhaps, forgotten the power that sexual oppression has to do the same.

Despite all the breakthroughs against prejudice and homophobia achieved by the gay movement and despite all the successes of decades of campaigning for sexual openness and freedom, the reality is that millions of people live lives of sexual misery, damaged by childhood trauma, by lack of choice, by oppressive sexual partners (overwhelmingly men), and psychosexual repression.

These hidden miseries are reproduced by the powerlessness of children and the ongoing oppression of women; by the inequalities of power and wealth which split our world along the lines of gender, class and age.

It is no coincidence that the majority of the Paulsgrove and other protestors were working class women, living with less and less collective safety for their children - or for themselves.

Whilst sexual abuse of children occurs across all classes, better-off people can buy security for their children behind tall garden hedges and with expensive child care, and can buy treatments for sexual damage. And they can buy, too, the smart lawyers, and use their social status, to evade the law when those amongst them are accused of sexual crime.

**Damaged language**

It remains true that, despite the great breakthroughs in public consciousness of child abuse, and the new readiness to pursue perpetrators, huge swathes of abuse must remain undetected, protected by the fear, loyalty, and shame of family members.

But there is another truth, too. Many thousands of ordinary people - paedophiles - exist who have never committed crimes against children, who control their damaged impulses, and live lives of fear and self-loathing, unable to access therapeutic resources, despairing of the possibilities of a normal life, yet determined to repress their own deviant sexuality and stop the cycle of sexual damage.

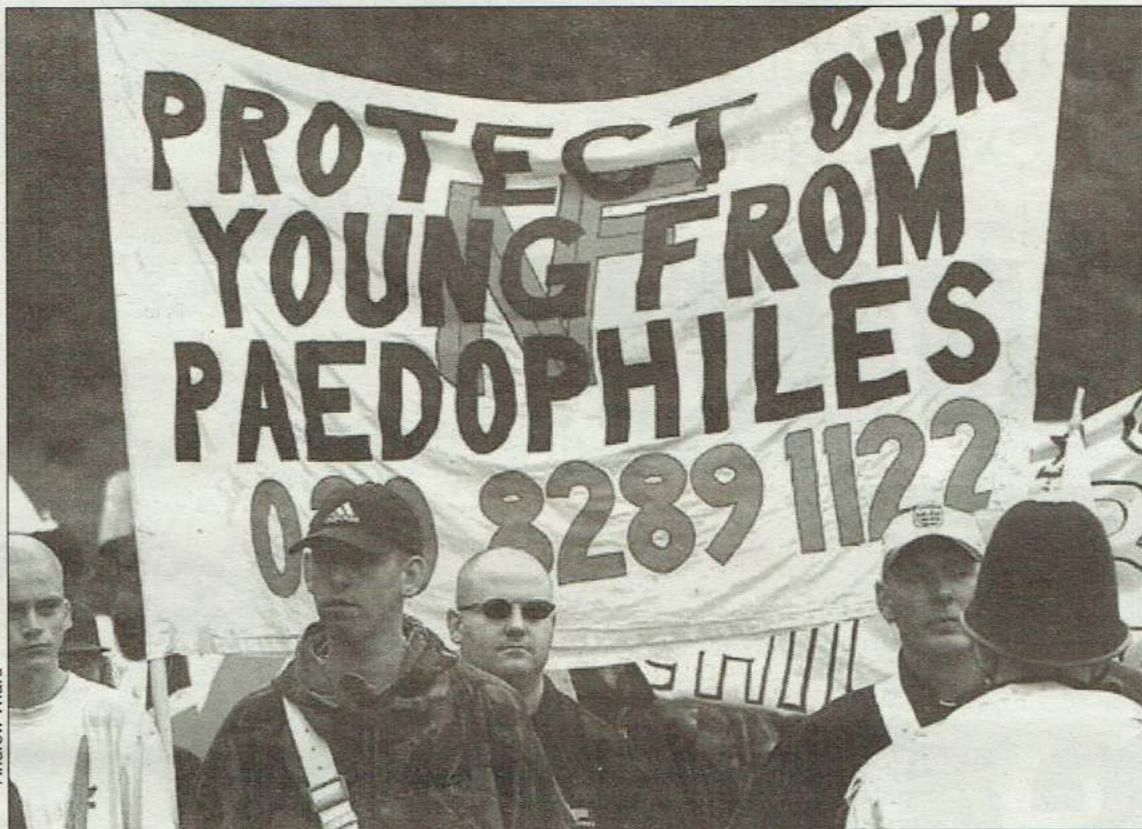
Our language - even of most of us on the left - is itself damaged. It is not "paedophiles", per se, who commit crimes against children; it is "sexual abusers".

Yet the collective paranoia, which races through our society, means that only the voices of the ignorant or bigoted pundit, or the lynch mob - and, occasionally the despised abuser - are heard, never the voice of the innocent adult who bears in quiet horror the damaged sexuality of paedophilia.

**Cure is possible**

But the evidence is clear. Paedophilia is curable. Psychotherapies exist which can give to these folk a normal adult sexuality. Clinics and therapies do exist (not just those run for offenders) which give life and hope to those living in deep despair.

# Pogroms in Portsmouth



Who will protect the powerless and vulnerable from cynical, fascist propaganda?

It is in this light that we must judge the appalling brutality of the *News of the World* campaign - with its ghastly quote by top policeman Commander John O'Connor: "in all my long career I have never known a paedophile to give up his compulsive lust and be cured"...

Yet the sole NHS clinic treating, psychoanalytically, paedophiles was threatened with closure a few years ago by funding cuts! And no widespread NHS facilities to deal with sexual dysfunction exist in the community. NHS psychotherapeutic services are restricted to minimalist counselling, with punishing waiting lists, whilst core social work and probation services are slashed back and treatment programmes for offenders are squeezed.

**Murdoch: abusive and malignant**

The *News of the World's* bizarre and crazy notion of a police solution to the problem of child sexual abuse tramples on the demand to build real, universal mental health services to address the problems of sexual damage in both child and adult.

Such demands would have no place in a press that turns women into sex objects; that feeds on people's seedy prurience and sexual repression; that turns sex into a lousy and pitiful voyeurism, whilst counter-posing the demand to release the remaining Kray brother to the release of child sex abusers.

This press will not stop there. The papers which abused the striking miners and immigrants will always be searching for new vic-

**Human possibility**

Two views of humanity are at war here. One is the malignant view that humans are incapable of changing their deficiencies, or rectifying the problems of their personalities. It sees at least some humans as inherently corrupt and evil.

This view demonises and victimises "paedophiles", as the scapegoats for all the anger and disappointment we collectively feel at the oppression we have suffered at the hands of parents, husbands, teachers, and others. paedophiles are "targetted for destruction" (in the co-counselling term), just as, in other circumstances, blacks, gypsies, homosexuals, witches, or criminals have been. In place of hope, mutual support and care it puts collective paranoia and fear. This is the seed-bed of fascism.

The other view, which as socialists we embrace, is that human beings are inherently good, social and benign towards each other. People can change their conduct, eliminate their patterned distresses, and, with collective support, can self-correct, learn and grow. Such change is often difficult, but very often society's ideological messages about our own worthlessness, badness, or weakness - as women, as working class people, or as "perverts" - are the main block to our ability to effect personal change.

Even with present levels of detection, 1 in 130 men have convictions against a child by the age of 40, and more than 100,000 men

with such convictions exist in public society. The public recognition of this huge scale of sexual abuse can be either a motor for a great public demand for real therapeutic provision, or - if "Antimatter" and other fascists have their way - a vehicle for the rolling back of the gains of the movement for sexual freedom of the last 40 years.

The slogans written over Union Jacks, the references to The Maze, the burnings, the nightmare calls to castrate, hang, kill, lynch, would all have been familiar to Jews facing up to the Mosley fascist pogroms of the 1930's. We must not go there again.

**The Left's confusion**

Some of the contributions of the left (for instance, in *The Socialist*) have been excellent, but the left shares in much of the confusion and backwardness of the broader public.

The idea that paedophiles are incurable is widespread. I have heard the view expressed by a revolutionary marxist - who is also a gay man - that "paedophiles are not oppressed".

Leaving aside the distinction between paedophilia and child sexual abuse, it is still extraordinary that a socialist should not be able to contemplate that one can be both oppressed and oppressor simultaneously.

Every child abuser was themselves abused as a child. Non-abusing paedophiles - and many abusers - carry on a terrifying and lonely struggle every day against their own impulses and against the fear of discovery.

Every paedophile who avoids the abuse of children (including indirectly via pornography) is a hero. Society needs such heroism.

I have heard the view that "we should help the children, not the adults". Yet it is the adults who must break the cycle of abuse. As socialists we view all human life as worthwhile. It is in our collective interest to help all criminal abusers. Even with existing minimal programmes, the statistics speak for themselves.

Only 1 in 5 offenders re-offend. Even though some re-offending must go undetected, it still means that the majority find the strength to control their desires, or even to change their sexual orientation.

We can hope, at least, that the confusion of the libertarian position of the 1970's is now dealt with. The argument that sex with children was permissible and that children could give meaningful consent - and even benefit from such contact - was always a crazy one, ignoring the power inequalities involved, and blind to the lifelong damage such conduct caused. There has been much progress since then.

**End the cycle of despair!**

Again and again we hear, from pundits, academics, and from many confused socialists, the broken-backed statement that "this is a complicated question", or "there's no easy answers". Yet, whilst the struggle might be long and the issue full of pain (for the whole matter of sexuality is fraught with distress at the level of society) the principles we must counterpose to the Portsmouth Pogrom are simple:

- No abuse of children, whether direct or indirect (i.e. via pornography/photos/film) is acceptable under any circumstances. The deficiencies in detection and apprehension of abusers must be addressed.
  - There must be no victimisation of sex abusers or paedophiles. They are oppressed, too. All paedophiles were themselves abused.
  - The victimisation of paedophiles perpetuates the cycle of despair and abuse. It does not challenge it.
  - We need a huge, qualitative increase in curative facilities, not just for abusers, but for all those with this sexual orientation, and other sexual dysfunctions.
  - There must be a qualitative increase in the whole range of mental health services, particularly psychosexual services, as well as social services, probation and other support services.
- Never again must the mothers of Paulsgrove be left to despair and isolation.

# Socialist

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# OUTLOOK

● Brighton Sept 24 ● Prague Sept 22-26

Unite against IMF, World Bank and capitalist exploitation

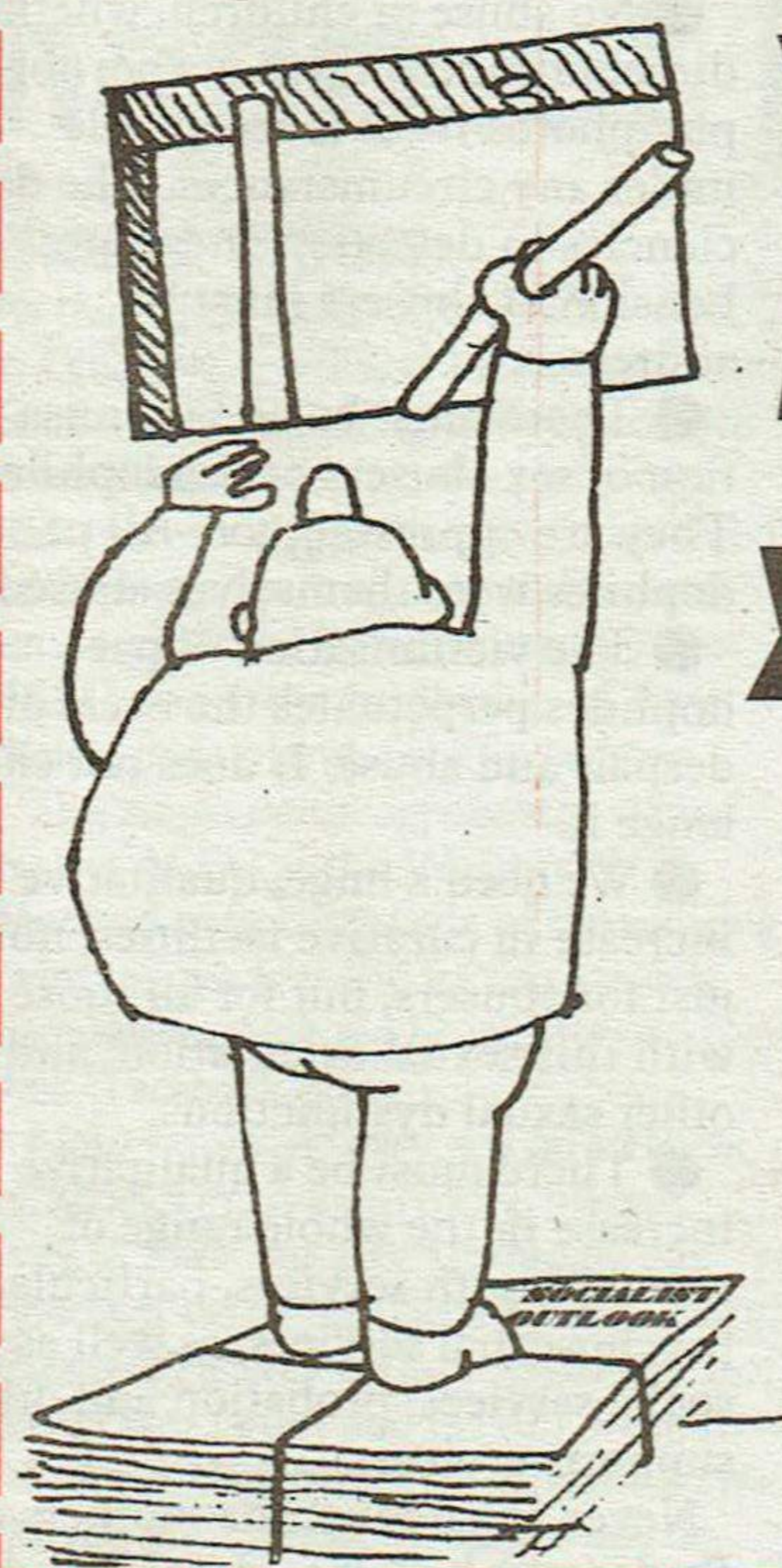
## Our world is NOT for SALE!

SEE INSIDE pages 10 and 11

IN SEATTLE last December the explosion of protests outside the World Trade Organisation conference hit the world's headlines. Since then, increased numbers of protestors have dogged the movements of the global institutions of capitalism.

In July, demonstrators challenged the arrogance and self-indulgence of the world's richest nations, as displayed in the extravagant £500m G8 summit in Okinawa.

In September the focus will be the joint meeting in Prague of the IMF and World Bank – those notorious architects of "structural reforms" imposing cuts in health and welfare spending on the world's poorest countries. As well as mobilisations in Prague itself, British socialists can join a counter-summit to be held in Brighton on September 24. The common goal is to challenge and expose the ruthless logic and exploitation of capitalism, and strengthen the fight for a socialist, internationalist alternative.



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