

Socialist

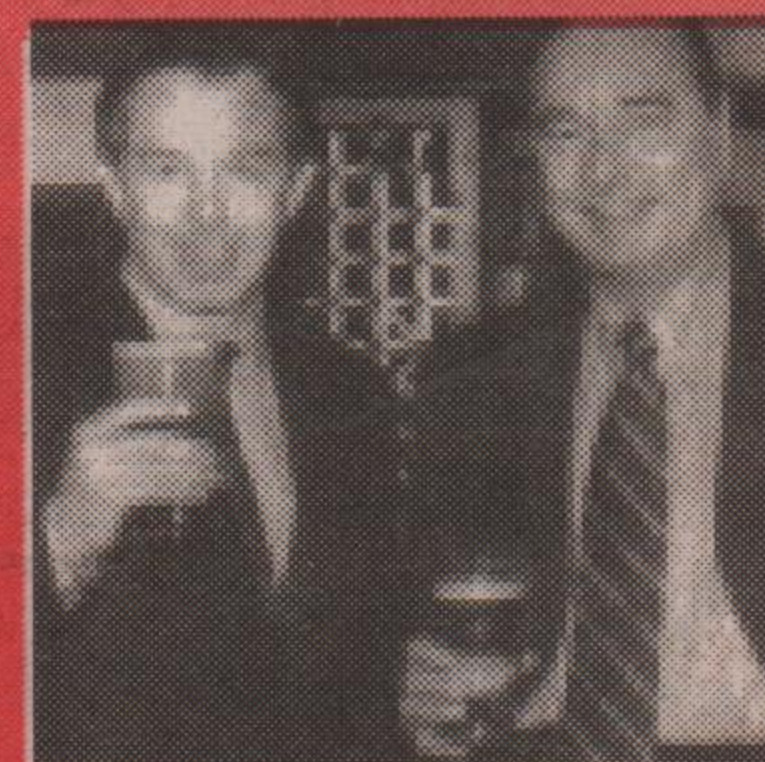
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OUTLOOK

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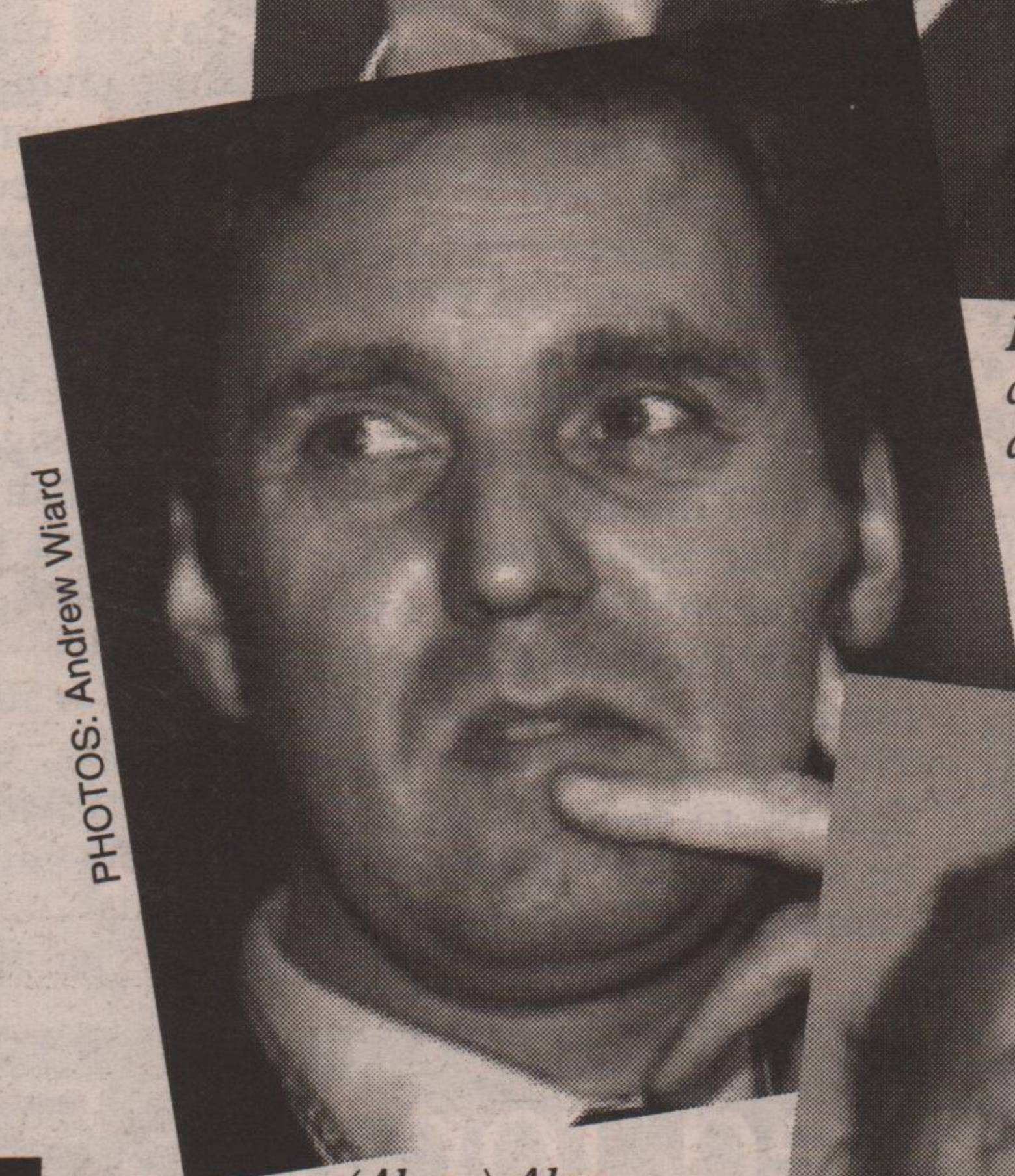
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Air traffic ...railways ... Tube... hospitals... schools, prisons ... Blair's team treads old Tory path, as

STOOGES FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR!



Prescott: caving in to rail bosses and privatising the Tube



PHOTOS: Andrew Ward

(Above) Alan Milburn, zealot for PFI in NHS and funnelling millions to private hospitals. (Right) Blunkett, PFI in schools and privatising education services



The final days before the end of Parliament saw a mad dash by ministers to ram through their Bill for the privatisation of Air Traffic Control services.

They did so in the teeth of opposition from their own back-benchers, air traffic control unions, and public opinion - effectively ignoring the views of anyone who does not have a cash incentive to support the sell-off.

They are flogging off a key service rather than invest in its future, regardless of the safety and other implications, despite the fiasco of rail privatisation still dominating the headlines.

Blair's team are not just weak: they are bitterly hostile to the public sector and those who work in it. That's why, like Thatcher before them, their answer to almost

any question is privatisation.

This winter will see the nonsense of millions being siphoned out of the NHS to pay for treatment in private hospitals, which in turn poach vital staff from the NHS!

A handful of back-benchers have been brave enough to resist. But the unions and the whole labour movement must step up the fight against Blair's privateers.



Campaigners from the Campaign for State Education (CASE) and teaching unions marched through Leeds on Nov 18 in opposition to the privatisation of education services

Victory over Private Finance Initiative:

No passaran to Pimlico!

A Teacher

On November 27 Pimlico School Governors voted (for the second time) to reject a Private Finance Initiative scheme to rebuild the school.

The proposal would have meant giving 23 per cent of the site to a property developer for luxury housing as well as giving them control of the new building.

It's but a short step from there to have businesses like Nord Anglia, who are already getting their hands on education in Westminster, provide the teachers as well.

Victory for the anti-privatisation forces, an unlikely alliance of teachers and ancillary workers, parents and local residents (Tory to a woman!) came at the end of 5-year long battle against Westminster City Council and its backers in the government. Home Secretary Jack Straw was an enthusiastic PFI'er, but in October was replaced as a governor by a parent who opposed the sell-off.

The building is structurally sound, but suffers from a lack of maintenance dating back to 1991 and the break up of the Inner London Education Authority. Westminster City Council prides itself on its low Community Charge and its lack of support for local schools was highlighted in a recent Ofsted inspection.

Westminster was one of the

earliest and most enthusiastic of the privatisers, starting with the infamous cemetery sale in the mid 1980s and the sale of council houses and the policy of shipping out homeless families designed to systematically exclude Labour voters from what was then a Tory marginal. This gerrymandering led to the then leader Shirley Porter being sued for £30 million by the District Auditor.

It came as only a small surprise that Labour councillors, some of whom had tenaciously fought the Tories on privatisation and sleaze, should back the PFI scheme, which is in effect a big step towards the privatisation of Pimlico School. Their main role appeared to be whipping the Tories in for key votes.

The long battle took its toll even among NUT members, some of whom adopted a "there is no alternative" position.

Nonetheless, the determined opposition of parents together with UNISON and NUT members, had the strength to resist the massive pressure exerted by the Council and the government (Labour & Tory) in trying to force PFI through.

Neither the Council nor the government will easily agree to alternative ideas for funding refurbishment of Pimlico School - if only because to allow Pimlico to be made an exception would damage the privatisation

project even more.

If there has been a weakness in this long campaign it has been the absence of a link with other campaigns against privatisation in the NHS, the railways and the underground, as well as the galloping privatisation of education in other London boroughs such as Hackney.

Still, a victory is a victory: and campaigners against PFI can take heart from the determined lead from Pimlico School.

Fightback against Bradford cuts

Thousands of council workers are preparing to fight plans by Bradford Council to privatise services.

More than 1,000 people packed into a meeting in St George's Hall on 23 November and were urged by unions to fight a strong, united battle to stop the "lunatic" plans.

The council, led by an alliance of Tories and Liberal Democrats, is proposing to hand over a wide range of its activities including education, housing and building maintenance services.

It is also proposing to sell off

old people's homes and start commissioning services from the "not for profit" sector - whilst slashing the budget.

All of this will be paid for by cutting the number of staff who actually deliver the services, and putting up charges such as council house rents.

Meanwhile the salaries of top bosses will go up. Mohammed Taj of the TGWU summed up the arguments against privatisation in one word: "Railtrack".

Ian Murch, branch secretary of the NUT, warned if the council hived services off to external organisations more than 7,000 people would no

longer be employed by the local authority, threatening job security and conditions.

The meeting, made up predominantly of council workers, heard calls to go out and make common cause with the users of services as well as between unions.

The organisers, unprepared for the scale of attendance, came without a clear plan for the campaign. However, encouraged by it, they did put forward a next step. It was agreed to call a mass lobby of the next full council meeting at Bradford City Hall on 12 December from 3.00 onwards.

RMT Conference crisis - but left moves forward

Greg Tucker

A CONSTITUTIONAL crisis has erupted in the RMT after Reg Hopkins, the union's Blairite President, walked out of a special national conference of the union, closing it down before any debate had taken place.

Hopkins objected to a proposal by the left-dominated Standing Orders Committee. They put before the conference an item dealing with the right-wing Executive overturning an earlier conference deci-

sion to rebalot in a disputed Executive election.

Rather than face a challenge to his chairing, Hopkins stormed out, closing down the conference. Acting in the absence of Jimmy Knapp, Assistant General Secretary, Vernon Hince, then withdrew all admin staff, making it impossible to continue.

Despite this, three quarters of the conference delegates stayed behind to meet informally - agreeing a motion of censure on both Hopkins and

Hince, to be circulated to all RMT Branches.

A battle is now on to reconvene the meeting, which also has to deal with a number of Rule change proposals which would open up the democracy of the union.

Following this debacle the right has threatened to move against those calling for a recall conference - but their plans have now been thrown into disarray with the results of internal national elections. President Hopkins has been thrown out by the membership, to be replaced in the New Year by the left's candidate, Phil Boston, a former Executive member.

Boston had stood on a clear platform opposing Labour's transport policies and for the liberating of the union's political fund to be used to support campaigns and candidates who actually agree with the RMT's policies of renationalisation of the railways.

At the same time the left on the Executive has been strengthened by the election of Alex Gordon to represent the South West. A leading train crew activist, Gordon has been central to the campaign for industrial action to defend the safety role of Guards on trains as well as leading the campaign to liberate the political fund.

His victory will be important as RMT train crews are preparing to ballot for a national strike in the New Year.

The background to all this is that Jimmy Knapp is seriously ill. While all RMT members would wish him well, in his absence there is no one else who can effectively put a lid on the mounting anger of rail-workers at the government's abject failure to deal with the railway crisis and its effects on passengers and staff.

For rail staff working under worse conditions, facing the righteous indignation of the travelling public the cause of the crisis is clear - privatisation.

But Labour has refused to even countenance taking any part of the railway back - despite the huge increase in subsidy the privatisation has led to. Prescott could have bought Railtrack outright three times over with the subsidy he has given them in the last few years.

So expect interesting times ahead.

GLLP: eclipse of London Labour left

Susan Moore

November 11 was not a good day for the London labour movement.

Convenor of London UNISON, Geoff Martin was beaten by Blairite Chris Robbins for the Chair of the London Labour Party by 39.9% to 60.1%.

More significant in some ways than the actual outcome was the breakdown of the votes; Martin won the majority of trade union votes (56.4%) but was soundly trounced in the Constituency section, polling only 23%.

This occurrence comes only months after Labour

Party Conference in which the government's defeat over pensions was only possible because of the trade union vote - the majority of constituencies represented at conference supported the government despite the insult of last year's 50p rise.

This is a major turn round from the relationship of forces throughout the whole previous period, where when the left made advances it was on the basis of majorities in the CLPs and where the unions were much more likely to support the leadership. It is a graphic demonstration of the changes that the Blair "reforms" have

wrought on the base of the Labour Party.

Apart from the vote for Chair, other aspects of the conference were more positive for the left - again mainly thanks to the trade unions.

The platform wanted to prevent any voting on resolutions - except as a straw poll in workshops - but the unions were able to force three emergency resolutions onto the agenda.

There were two resolutions opposing PPP on the tube, one of which supported the bond option while the other, from the RMT, called for LUL to be "retained as a unified, integrated, wholly public owned railway."

Both were passed with large majorities - though fewer voted for the bond option. An emergency resolution from the CWU against threatened job losses in British Telecom was also agreed.

The workshop on organisation passed a resolution supporting Livingstone's readmission to the party, which had successfully been kept off the conference floor.

Other elections for the GLLP board saw some good left candidates elected - particularly in the trace union section again.

But November 11 will mainly be remembered for the defeat of the left in the London CLPs.

Way cleared for MSF-AEEU merger

Terry Conway

Another step was taken on the road to creating a new right-wing, pro-partnership union at a special conference of the white collar union MSF on November 11, which voted to proceed to a membership ballot for merger with the scab engineering and electricians' union AEEU.

No count was taken, despite being called for, but the platform got its way by around 60-40.

The Lyons' leadership of MSF has manoeuvred constantly to bring about this

outcome since being defeated at Annual Conference in Harrogate. Having failed to get the free hand they wanted to proceed with the merger they ignored conference decisions and held a membership poll on their proposals.

This was a completely rigged exercise where endless amounts of members' money was used to put the leadership's case, and not one word was allowed from those who tried to explain the history - and present - of the AEEU's sweetheart deals with management on occasion after occasion,

and their consistently right wing role in the TUC.

Opponents of the merger consistently won the arguments but not the decisions. This situation is not only a result of the right wing control of the apparatus but of the fact that sections of the so-called left, essentially some of those from a Stalinist background, supported the platform. Without this disgraceful performance, Lyons' project could possibly have been stopped in its tracks.

The conclusion that has been drawn from this by many activists is that while

we will fight as hard as possible to defeat the merger in the full membership ballot we expect early in the New Year, we also need to reorganise the left.

For too long national left meetings have been organised on an undemocratic basis and too little attention has been paid to organising in the workplace and amongst shop stewards.

The right cannot be defeated by aping their methods. Partnership can only be broken by militant action on the ground not through manoeuvres in committees.

Prescott's real crime: against the climate

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott's attempt to blame French negotiator Dominique Voynet for the failure of the world climate talks at the Hague last month might well have been sexist, but his own role was definitely criminal.

The real story of what happened at the Hague was that Prescott's task was to try to stitch up a deal acceptable to the American ruling class – a deal which could in all probability have led to the destruction of the planet.

As we have been told many times over recent weeks the US is the world's largest producer of green house gases – 24% of the whole globe's outpourings of the deadly emissions that, among many other events, have been linked to the destructive weather conditions we have been suffering in Britain in recent weeks.

If the effects of those storms have been devastating for those whose homes have been flooded here, how much worse is it for the hundreds and thousands of people in far poorer parts of the globe who have been subjected to extreme weather for far more extensive periods?

In the face of all this, the deal done at Kyoto itself was completely inadequate, a tinkering at the edges. Kyoto promised a 5% reduction on 1990 levels – while scientists agree that a reduction of between 60-80% is what is needed.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the UN's own body of experts, has said that "potentially tens of millions of people" – including in some instances the whole of some island populations – will be displaced by rising sea levels over the next 65 years.

American society is the car society par excellence, but contrary to popular myth the reasons for this have rather more to do with the power structures of industry and government than the supposed greed of American workers.

In large parts of this huge continent it is impossible for people to move about – to work, to shop or to socialise – without driving.

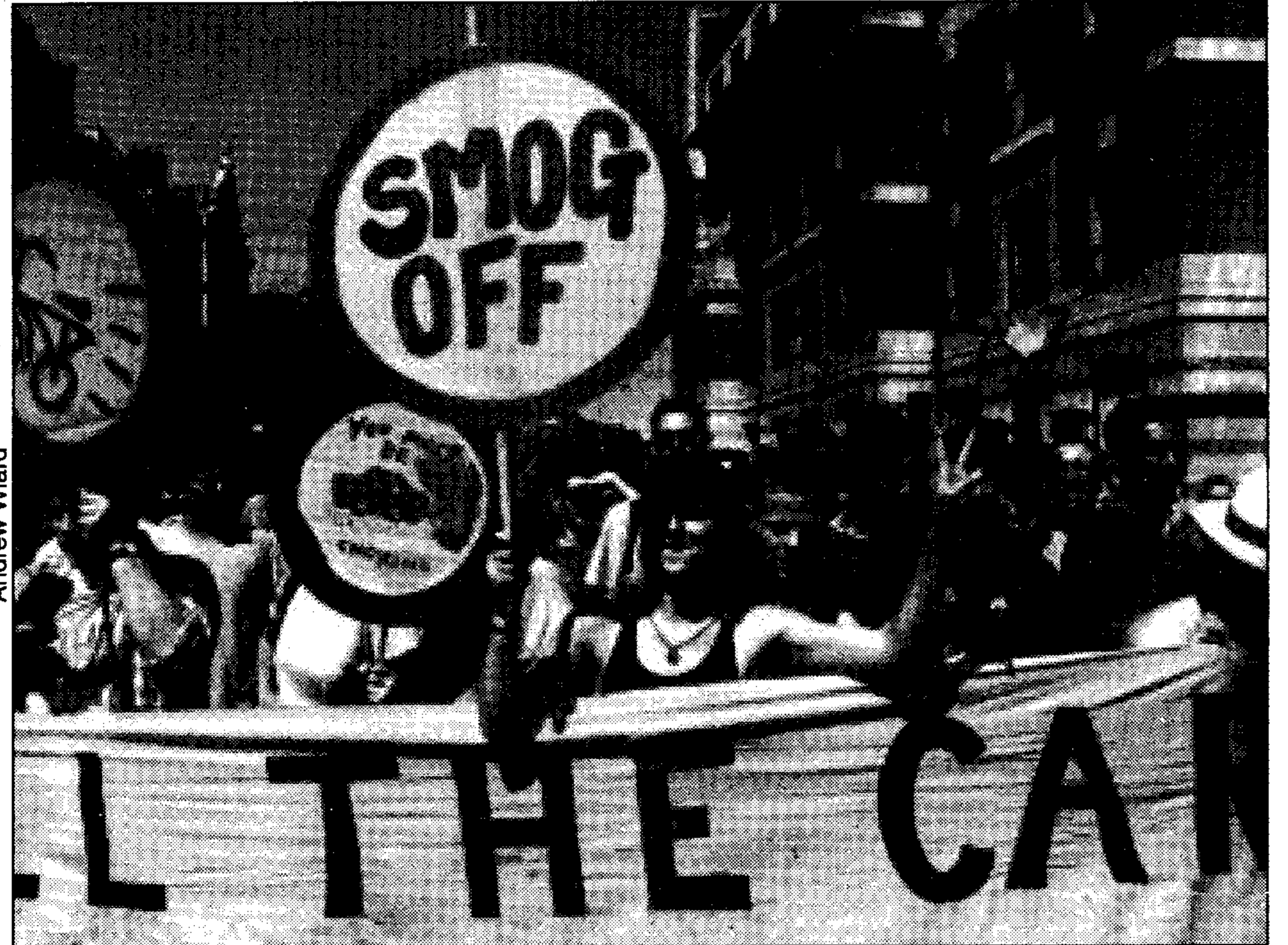
Public transport is even less available or reliable in the USA than it has been in Britain in recent months! And many people who have jobs have to travel huge distances to get to them. But the steep rise in emissions in the US since Kyoto is a product of industrial consumption, not individual consumers.

More than that, the motor industry, and even more importantly the oil industry are key backbones of the American economy – and therefore closely tied into the US political elite. Blair's crawling to the captains of these industries has nothing on his American counterparts.

Despite all this, it would seem on the surface that the American bosses would have as much to lose as anyone else from the devastation of the planet. How can they make the profits on which their existence depends if their actions lead to the destruction of their markets through death and disease?

What can possibly be the rationale for their cynical proposals that carbon credits be sold without limit (or indeed for any trading of credits which the majority of governments seemed prepared to agree)?

What can be the logic for proposing that ancient mixed forests be destroyed and replaced with fast growing single species plantations – which will lead to the faster ero-



Labour's half-baked transport strategy is another contribution to increased pollution

sion of precious top soil and therefore less fertile soil as well as more "natural" disasters? All of this to allow them to increase emissions from 1990 levels by up to 9%!!

The problem is that to ask these questions is to make one rather large miscalculation. For one of the fundamental characteristics of this rotten capitalist system is that it is incapable of long term planning – even when to fail to do this fatally destroys not only its own basis but the very continuation

of human existence. For them creating a market from environmental destruction is more "sane" than saving the planet.

That is why we need to build mass protests against this criminal irresponsibility before the Bonn summit next May – and also why we need to persuade those in the environmental movement who think they share a common interest with the profiteers in seeking to save the planet that they are fatally misguided.

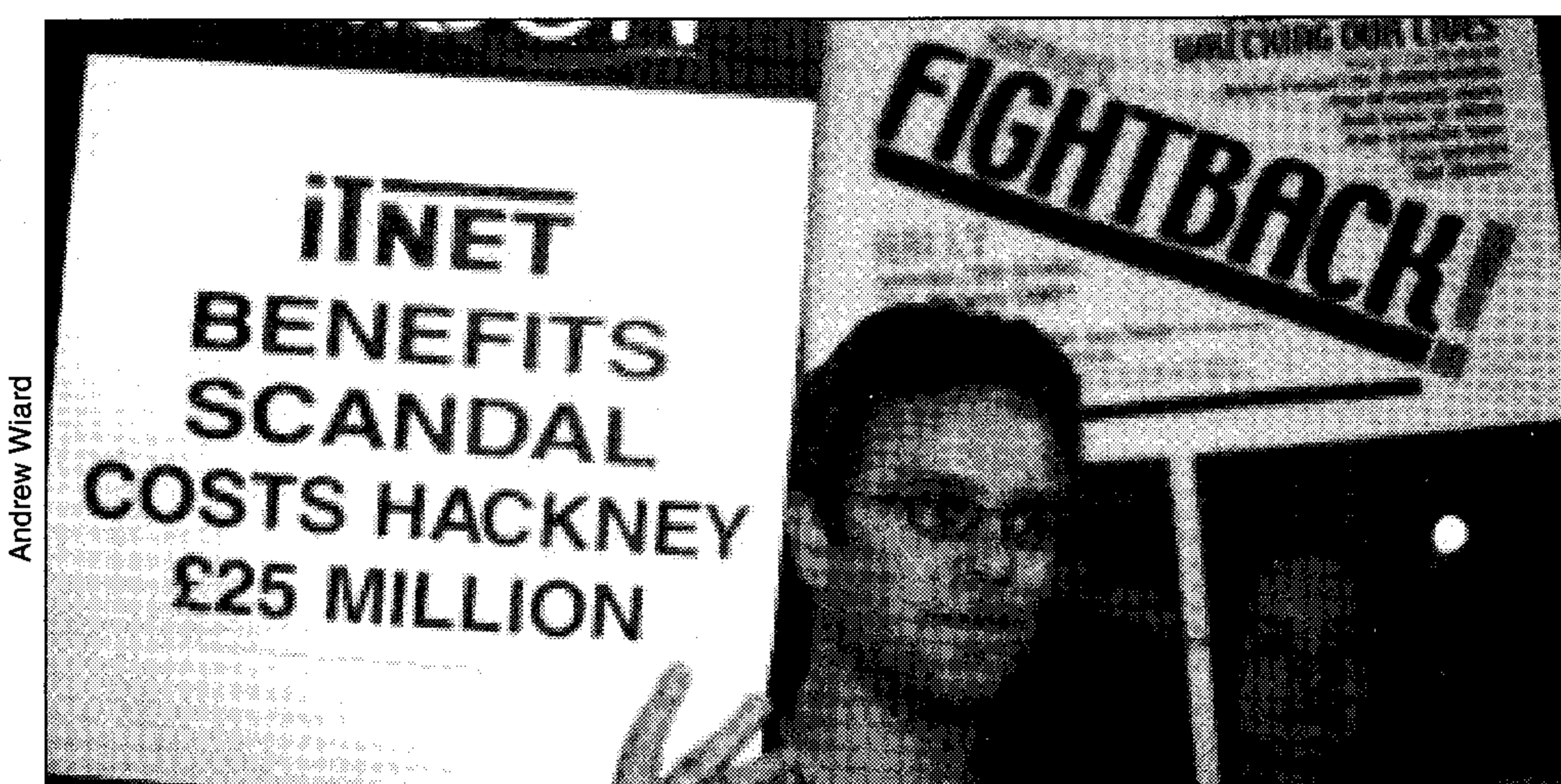
Hackney fights back!

The scenes in the London Borough of Hackney where a Labour-Tory coalition is implementing huge cuts and major privatisations over recent weeks have been somewhat reminiscent of the mid-80s where fighting cuts in jobs and services in local government was a regular part of most activists' political diet.

And hearing reports from campaigns in West Yorkshire – albeit focused mainly against privatisation – it's not just in London that the fight back is sharpening up.

Hackney council has slashed £750,000 off its housing budget, £630,000 from the money for nurseries in the borough and is pushing through privatisation of the refuse service from which it had previously retreated. At the same time, despite promises made during the recent Hackney Wick by-election, it has refused to sack ITNet, the private company that runs the council's housing benefits service. ITNet's incompetence has led to thousands of residents being in rent arrears of more than £25 million in unpaid benefits.

But at the same time many things have changed since that previous round of battles –



which is why in many places town hall steps have not been the constant site of demonstrations though cuts and attacks on conditions have been relentless in the intervening years.

Last time round there was opposition inside most Council chambers and the demonstrations outside were led by an alliance of the labour left and council trade unions. This time there are few critical voices amongst Labour councillors – and none in Hackney. To give her her due, local Labour MP Dianne Abbot has been vociferous in her opposition to the

Council's cuts in Hackney, taking a particularly prominent stand in support of the successful occupation of two of the borough's nurseries which were summarily closed by the boroughs Labour-Tory coalition.

Council trade unions took a fair battering through the defeat of the rate-capping struggle and the constant round of cuts that followed. It is to the credit of its current leadership; especially branch secretary John Page than Hackney UNISON is playing such a pivotal role in today's struggle to

defend conditions and services. The UNISON branch is balloting for strike action against the cuts and is confident that they will be successful.

Chief Executive of Hackney Council, the hated Max Caller has said that he is not surprised that the Trade Unions are calling for industrial action but is disappointed "particularly as they chose to do this prior to the consultation we are currently engaging in with staff. Strike action is not going to resolve our financial difficulties and will certainly do little to improve our efficiency or ser-

vices to our residents." John Page has responded: "It is a bit rich that Max Caller complains that we initiated a ballot for Strike action in advance of consultation. At the time that the ballot was initiated, the council had already decided to cut terms and conditions, to remove the voluntary severance scheme and the timescales for implementation demonstrated they had no plans to meaningfully consult with us.

The decision to hold a ballot has already forced management to the Negotiating table. A resounding Yes vote and solid strike action in defence of our terms and conditions can break the cycle of crisis and cuts. Our campaign continues to gather momentum"

Many previous anti-cuts campaigns saw the formation of umbrella organisations under the rubric "Fightback" – and today's campaign in Hackney has done the same.

Common to both incarnations are the council trade unions and community organisations. Sadly the Labour left is now represented by only a small number of individuals. On the other hand the left outside the Labour Party, which in the

previous period often abstained from these mobilisations are today at their centre.

The Hackney Socialist Alliance (HSA) has been particularly crucial to each mobilisation against the administration making its presence felt through banners and leaflets while marching in unity with anyone prepared to fight the devastation of the borough these proposals represent. Through this united front approach HAS is going from strength to strength – recruiting 41 new members on the November 25 demonstration of 500.

Also noticeable has been the presence, particularly on the November 6 protest outside the town hall of anarchists and libertarians who led the dancing in the rain that gave that evening particular energy.

George Monbiot's address on November 29 illustrated that the anti-capitalist movement has brought new layers into action, which previously were dismissive of local government.

Strike action is likely to commence on December 18, which will be the next major focus for the campaign

■ Contact Hackney Fightback on 07979 823 597 www.hackneyfightback.org

Francois Vercammen

A superpower in search of a leadership

Nervousness reigns in the highest spheres of the EU as the Nice summit approaches. The setback of the Danish referendum, rejecting involvement in the single currency, followed a series of failures.

- These include
- The fall in value of the Euro and the inability of Wim Duisenberg and his cronies at the European Central Bank (ECB) to develop a coherent policy;
 - The absence of a coordinated reaction from the EU to the fuel crisis;
 - And the fiasco of the "anti-fascist" intervention in Austria, cynically utilised to inaugurate "the birth of the political Europe".

All of these are symptomatic of deeper problems: once again the development of the EU is getting bogged down.

The "benefits" of the Portuguese presidency from January-June 2000 (full employment through the new economy) have rapidly evaporated.

They were not enough to develop a united Community spirit within the EU, sufficient to enable the interests of the national states to be subordinated.

Public opinion is proving a disappointment to the social-democrats, shattering their dreams. At a time when the economic conjuncture is bullish, and many governments are making concessions, workers in a number of countries, instead of thanking their generous rulers for their promises, have moved into action to recoup their losses.

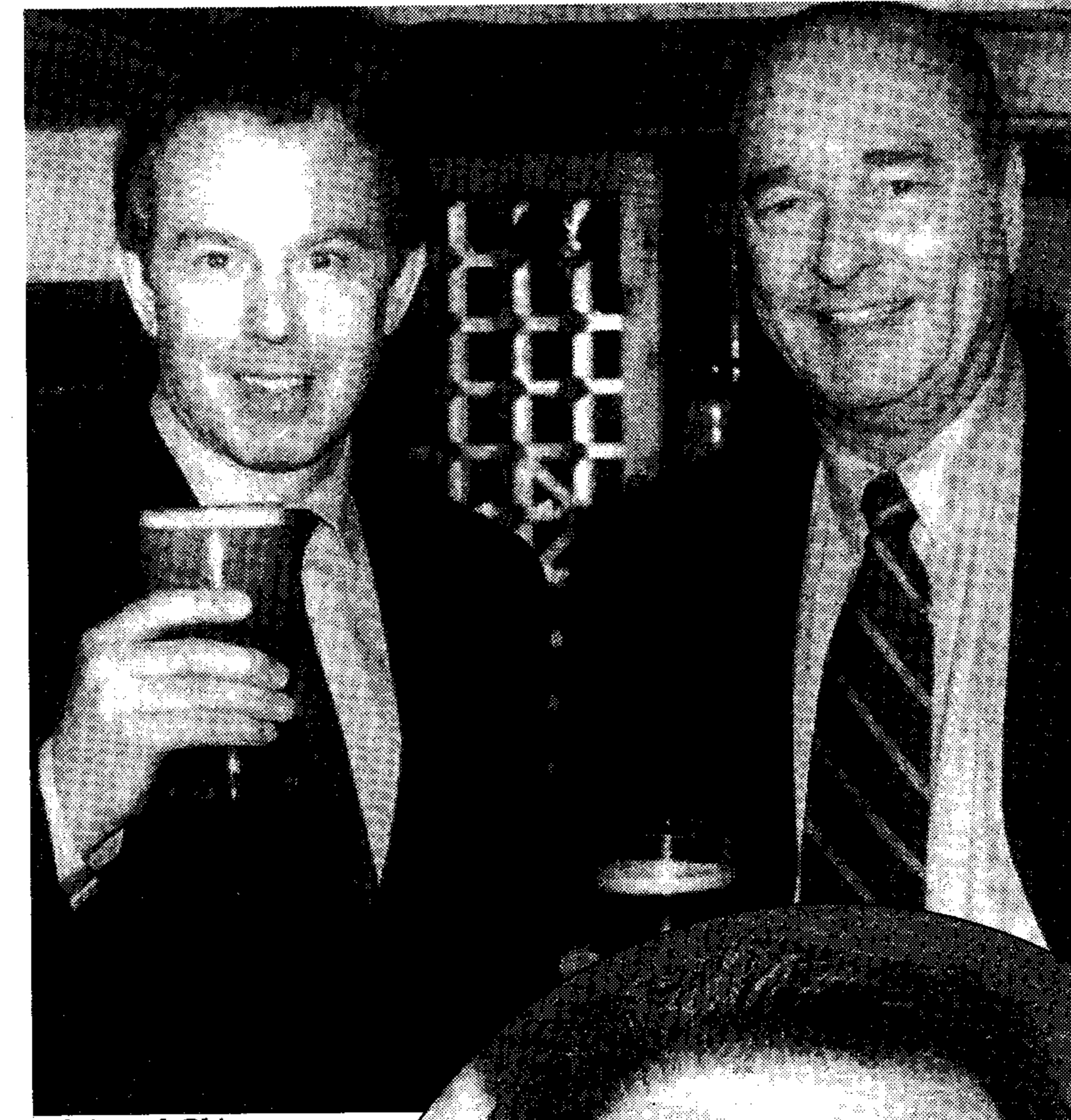
The Danish 'no' vote has not unleashed a tempest, either on the financial markets or in the chancelleries of Europe. The former had largely anticipated the event, while the EU governments have adopted a low profile.

Yet each EU government and political leader has had to deal with the fact that the referendum shows that half the population of a member country has been able to resist an enormous ideological bombardment over several months, with huge resources behind it.

The Danish vote also brings to mind the enormous rate of abstention during the last European elections, and the setback the results inflicted on social democracy, the principal architect of the Amsterdam treaty.

The EU enjoys a very weak legitimacy in all the member countries (except the poorest countries and regions, which receive, for the moment, the manna of subsidies).

Against this background, the EU governments are confronted with a series of major problems: how to become a European power, by sup-



Blair and Chirac agree on how to tackle a pint, while Commission President Prodi (inset) hangs on to powers

plementing the single currency with a European army and the political-economic unification of the continent.

It is in this framework that institutional reform is posed, to control the economic and social upheavals intrinsic to the "enlarged and powerful" EU, which will affect the relationship of forces between member states, but also external relations - projecting the presence of the EU on the world stage and its rivalry with the US.

The Nice Summit will have to deal with sizeable problems, which



go

well beyond the formal agenda:

- The official agenda is confined to the issues left-over from Amsterdam in June 1997, notably the size of the Commission, the weighting of member states' votes in the Council of Ministers, and issue of qualified majority voting or national veto on different types of issues.

- There is also the supplementary point of "strengthened cooperation", enabling some member countries to advance together on particular topics.

- Closely linked to these questions is the role of the Higher Representative of Common Foreign and Security Policy, the post held today by Javier Solana. Solana is already Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, which has entrusted him with setting up a proper Executive, but he must also embody the imperialist capacities of the EU and represent its states, particularly the most powerful.

This is crucial in terms of the relative weight of the Council and the Commission - which is why

Commission President Romano Prodi amongst others prefers to see this function remain with the Commission.

Their concerns are further strengthened by the fact that the idea of a 'Higher Representative of Economic Policy' is also being put forward, a single figure to mediate with the ECB.

Solana's new role is linked to the establishment of a "European army", which is in turn linked the idea of a European police force and "European prosecution office". What is at stake here is "internal security" and the maintenance of order, in the framework of a new wave of immigrant labour.

Although a European army is not formally on the agenda, the Summit will register a verdict on the progress on the ground (in relation to Kosovo in particular) and draw the organisational conclusions.

The situation of the European Central Bank is absurd and untenable. Here we have a sovereign (and totally opaque) institution that manages "a currency without a state" based on the sole and exclusive criterion of price levels (zero inflation!).

In no other country in the world does such a situation exist - not even in the United States, which is supposedly the model. In good capitalist logic, monetary policy is an instrument of economic policy.

However in the EU, the Bank has a "dialogue" with the 11 finance ministers but then makes all the decisions regardless! Economic coordination in the EU is limited to the broad guidelines of economic policies following the "stability pact", which serves in practice solely to dragoon the labour movement.

This incoherence now seriously annoys big capital. Formally this point does not figure on the agenda. But it is there under the surface, in fact at the heart of the executive apparatus, which is still to be built.

The oft-proclaimed enlargement of the EU is likely to begin. A new postponement could provoke a gigantic moral and political crisis in the countries waiting to come in, such as Poland and Hungary - and explosive social crises, which could have a boomerang effect in the EU.

But even if enlargement happens without major conflicts, this "new EU" would be so heterogeneous that the main founders would be affected. It is not number of members which is so important, but the extent of economic and social differences

The Charter of Fundamental

rights which will be debated at Nice is an emasculated attempt to give a certain protection to citizens of the European state under construction: but it actually involves a step backwards on social policy.

It will give a 'European' stamp of legal support to national governments which try to dismantle the gains of a century of workers' struggles.

However, indirectly, and involuntarily, it raises the problem of the incorporation of this Charter in the Treaties, and, thus, the problem of a European Constitution.

Faced with this historic problem, a consequence of capitalist globalisation, the informal summit at Biarritz presented a derisory spectacle. Everything turned around squabbles about posts (who and how many) in the Commission or the Council of Ministers.

Behind this there are two basic questions which are never explicitly addressed. What sort of Europe, federation or confederation? What institutions are needed to create a real political leadership?

Debates around Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) are certainly not very exhilarating but behind them lie bigger issues. Abandoning majority rule is not simply a question of functional efficiency in the face of enlargement.

In abolishing the right to veto in favour of (qualified) majority vote, one enters a regime of supranationality, of abandonment of national sovereignty since a country in the minority is obliged to implement the decision. And this is proposed for the Council of Ministers - the real decision-making power.

One cannot imagine that the big three (Germany, Great Britain, France) or any one of them could end up in a minority on any essential question. That would immediately lead to a great crisis.

So the weighting of votes has to be organised in a way that assures the numerical preponderance of this trio inside the Council, using demography and GDP as the supposed justification. What is suggested is that the countries of the trio, which now have 10 votes each, will have 30, as would Italy, Spain would have 27, and so on.

This would have a knock on effect on the composition of the Commission where the weighting is defined differently. The big countries (the trio plus Spain and Italy) each have two commissioners, the other countries only one. What if the EU enlarges to 20 or more? They say it would be impractical for every member country to have a commissioner. They suggest a smaller Commission, say 10 or 12 commissioners, would be more coherent and efficient. This would mean countries taking turns to have a commissioner.

But the problem is that a Commission without the big countries would be weakened in its dealing with the Council of Ministers.

Chirac's solution is that each country would be represented in the Commission, but a sort of Presidency of the Commission would be set up, composed of the biggest countries.

In this scenario, it becomes possible to extend qualified majority voting. The countries of the trio would abandon entire areas of their national sovereignty in exchange for a new supranationality shared between them.

What is at stake here is giving a legal, institutional basis to the mechanism that already exists, which is the real motor of the EU: the bilateral (exceptionally trilateral) preparation of the summits by



Blair with German Chancellor Schroeder

France, Germany and Great Britain. Between the summits there would be consultation on important political positions. This mechanism would be thus incorporated into the Treaties.

Thus, an enormous step would have been taken: a real political leadership would be created in tune with the EU's ambition of becoming a super-power without being a supranational state (as Blair and Chirac say - though Schroeder is more discreet on this subject).

In this scenario (which Chirac tried to impose on the smaller countries at Biarritz), the centre of gravity would move towards the Council of Ministers. The EU would head towards a confederation, abandoning the federalist perspective, which implies a continuous and maximum transfer of the prerogatives of the states towards the supranational level.

A confederation is distinguished, by definition, from a federation or a unitary State, by the narrow number of supranational prerogatives: currency, defence, law and order, questions of citizenship.

Greater "strengthened cooperation" will open this possibility, creating a more advanced and more coherent centre of gravity, to which the other states would be tied in on the basis of a more limited commitment.

This is already the case for monetary union (Britain, Sweden and Denmark aren't part of it), for the Schengen treaty, and for the setting up of the "Eurocorps".

One can imagine that some Eastern countries will join the EU without participating in monetary union (without applying the Maastricht criteria and the stability pact, and without being present in the ECB).

The contradiction between the institutional deepening of the EU and its enlargement is a false problem, artificially puffed up by the tactical needs of countries playing the game of the balance of power and by superficial journalists.

In reality, there is substantial agreement between the trio (and others like Italy) on this perspective. Even if this agreement is shot through with contradictions, these are secondary.

What obscures these basic dynamics is the difficulty the British government has in joining the monetary union. Blair has to make rhetorical concessions to public opinion. But Blair (and big British and foreign capital) is in favour of membership.

The European army under construction is an initiative by Britain (with France), on the basis of their common engagement in the Balkans and their common irritation with the US. If this question is resolved, the other problem, that of the political management of the ECB, could be tackled.

The EU and its vanguard - the three key imperialist countries - have the perspective of creating a political leadership in tune with their European, indeed global ambitions. It is impossible to over-stress the threat that this carries for democracy and for the gains of the working class.

A different Europe is needed: social, democratic, egalitarian, and generous.

For that it is necessary to do everything possible to stop this machine. There is only one way: the mobilisation of the labour movement and progressive public opinion around one idea:

■ Stop right there!

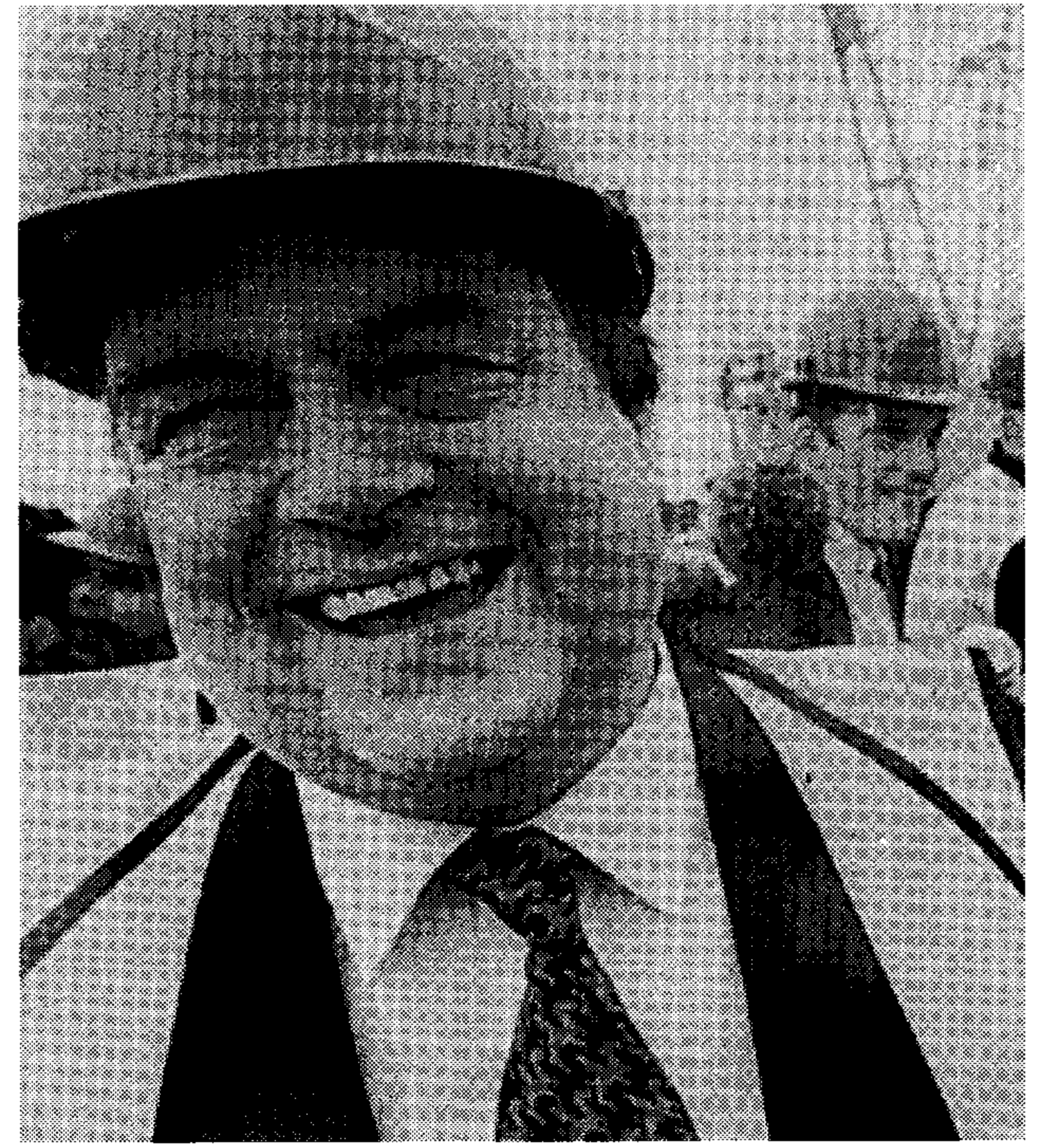
■ Break down the closed doors of an omnipotent European Council!

■ The right to speak and make decisions must lie with the peoples of Europe!

■ They must determine, through public debate, through a decision of their elected representatives, the fundamental bases on which they wish to live together: from the Pole to Gibraltar, and from the Atlantic to the Urals!



Railtrack boss Gerald Corbett seeks a safe way to travel by rail before being shunted into the sidings. (Right) Prescott: with two jag, why should he worry?



Meltdown on the railways

Steve Metcalfe

"WHY - and I am being blunt here - do we have to give these people (Railtrack and their agents) a penny compensation before we can take them back under state control?"

This was the straightforward question fired at RMT sponsored MP Gwyneth Dunwoody at a meeting of the railway Engineering and Infrastructure National Committee called on 26 October 2000 under RMT Assistant General Secretary Bob Crow.

The answer was that the 'Labour' government's hands are tied by European Law.

None of the thirty-odd delegates, union representatives from all railway infrastructure companies' in Britain were happy at this answer. Neither was the MP, for that matter, for Dunwoody is one of the better of the RMT's sponsored MPs.

It is plain for all to see that the government is now floundering in the face of a 'meltdown' situation on the British transport system, not just railways, after decades of neglect and virtually deliberate sabotage, plus a lemming-like rush to put most meaningful transport on to the roads, which was begun mainly in the Tory-dominated 1950s.

The terrible rail crashes of the last two years were merely the outward signs of this impending meltdown, culminating with the Hatfield disaster on the East Coast Main Line.

No amount of slick PR, however long Railtrack and their greedy backers planned it before Hatfield as a response to any more disasters, should be allowed to get them off the hook this time.

Apparently, this time John Prescott and Gus MacDonald (transport chiefs for Labour) did not support Railtrack boss Gerald Corbett's desperate attempt to retrieve his position. However, we must not forget that the aim of many recent rail disaster victims may be to have the whole of senior Railtrack management eventually answer to corporate manslaughter proceedings. Corbett's resignation

may therefore have been a way of avoiding, not accepting, responsibility.

The situation on the railways is now so bad that guards were recently only blocked from striking over safety by sleight of hand - using still extant anti-trade union laws.

Signallers, too, are discontented with their decaying pay and conditions - they are direct Railtrack employees - while they face the music in many railway safety incidents more and more regularly, usually through no fault of their own.

Infrastructure engineers have especially sorry tales to tell from the sharp end, particularly in track maintenance.

For example

■ Apprentices not even given written contracts to which they are entitled, and being used as cheap labour

■ Trees falling on lines in gales. This could not have happened once because full time vegetation-cutting gangs existed before privatisation.

■ Decreasing regularity of eye patrols, even thought weight and frequency of rail traffic has increased

■ Abuse of railflow ultrasonic gangs. A *News of the World* exclusive on 29 October revealed that management has been discouraging reporting of faults detected because of cost-effective considerations. The Hatfield crash was caused by a microscopic crack shearing, apparently, on a curve.

Railtrack bosses have admitted they don't know even basic safety factors - like the fact that neglect of wet beds can be extremely dangerous.

Local safety reps are repeatedly not being summoned to do statutory three monthly safety walkabouts, in defiance of the Health and Safety at Work Act. Instead safety reps have been targeted for victimisation and sackings in all

Since privatisation, 6,000 former British rail infrastructure workers have been made redundant. No wonder they can't maintain the network!

rail sectors since privatisation (1994-1996) was effected. So much for safety being "paramount".

We have only scratched the surface here.

The whole problem at root is systemic, based entirely on the shoddy way the old BR was nationalised in 1947 and then finished off by Tory privatisation, planned under Thatcher and effected by Major, and since then almost criminally continued by New Labour - Blair, Mandelson and the other cuckoos in the nest of the workers' movement.

The ongoing three-tier Cullen Inquiry will eventually make some recommendations on its findings, we are told. However, recommendations are not binding on anyone, as the Hidden Inquiry into the Clapton rail disaster of 1989 showed us.

Access points

I believe it was recommended that access points to trackside should be constructed every 400 metres (¼ mile) adjacent to the railway lines, so that in any emergency the services can get in and out efficiently. This is far from being the case even 12 years after Clapham, despite the fact that casualties at Clapham were aggravated by lack of easy access to the crash site.

The key overall factor today is the failure of the Labour government to grasp the nettle of the general transport chaos existing now in Britain. The road haulage, farming and fuel-price mess of September to November have merely highlighted the issues.

Britain is the most road-dependent country in Europe, a result of the get rich quick free for all followed since the 1950s, led by Beeching, Marples et al. This has allowed some of the most unsavoury, unaccountable organisations free rein, from the big international oil combines (Shell, Exxon, Texaco etc) through the car

manufacturers (Ford, GM, BMW etc) to the likes of the road haulage lobby and all the opportunists (including, recently, fascist groups) who have jumped on the fuel crisis bandwagon of late.

"Après moi le Deluge", ("After me the flood") was the philosophy of the 18th century French king Louis XV, father of the doomed Louis XVI, executed in 1792 by Republican revolutionaries. What with the increasingly obvious effects of global warming arising mainly from unbridled 'dirty capitalism' in Europe and North America, this could be literally the slogan of the current free marketeers, typified by such cowboys as the right wing dominated road lobby of recent infancy.

The answer always was and remains socialism. But socialism must recognise the positivists' mistakes made by many of the pioneers of our movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These must be seriously re-examined in the light of recent developments. The teachers, as Lenin said, must be ready to teach themselves. This is the way forward for the socialist movement.

We cannot condemn small road hauliers and small farmers for fighting to defend their livelihoods, even if only to defend those whose jobs depend on the wages they earn from them.

However, we can cook the Tories' goose and confound all the other reactionary forces who tried to exploit the recent fuel crisis with their road blockades for their own evil purposes.

The state must take over the bulk of road transport, all railways and road companies, plus the farming system, and form an integrated, rationally organised basic infrastructure in Britain. We must form a clean, just, efficient society with guaranteed employment and security for all.

This must be underpinned by a viable, democratic system of control by workers' committees in all these industries and services. There is no other fair way out of the impasse this government of Blair and Co have led us all into.

Private enterprise, through privatisation, has aimed to fragment and then pulverise piecemeal the organised working class. Our task is to turn the tables on our enemies and defeat them as totally as they intended to defeat us, our class, the working class.

The stone age did not end for lack of stones nor the bronze and iron ages for lack of bronze and iron. Why then should the petroleum based capitalist society not be ended even without a lack of this misused substance, oil? And why should it not "end" at the hands of a united, socialist working class movement?

Socialist Outlook Socialist Alliances page 6

Socialists must say no to Leeds purge of SWP



Alan Thornett, (the International Socialist Group)

The Leeds Left Alliance (LLA) is a coalition of socialist groups in Leeds. It was formed in 1981 and has since become a major force in the city's politics. The LLA is made up of the Socialist Party (SP), the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), the Communist Party (CP), and the Labour Party (LP). The LLA has been successful in winning seats on the Leeds City Council and in the Leeds City Council. The LLA has also been successful in winning seats on the Leeds City Council. The LLA has also been successful in winning seats on the Leeds City Council.

Our stand against exclusions: SO 39

Exclusions: no way to build socialist unity against New Labour!

Why Leeds Left Alliance were right to exclude SWP

Many independent socialists in Lewisham can clearly understand why the overwhelming majority of the long-standing members of the Leeds Left Alliance have felt it necessary to defend their organisation. The SWP has a long and ruthless history of dealing with dissent and opposition within its own organisation - exclusion and expulsion.

I am sure now that the LLA has defined its boundaries and space it will play a full and active role in working with other socialists with clearly defined political profiles and different origins both in Leeds and the SA framework.

The recent rapid development of the SA is to be welcomed, but only if that growth is built on partnership and trust and assists in broadening the political forces involved with the SA. Our experience in Lewisham with many comrades joining our Alliance from the SWP has been far removed from this.

SWP members have turned up at meetings in some force and have sought through sheer weight of numbers to take control, repeatedly refusing to accept a cooperative, consensual and partnership approach.

Our GLA campaign in support of Ian Page was in reality two campaigns. The SP and independents working in harmony to support Ian, the SWP and those on the ultra revolutionary left doing their own thing, distributing their own literature, often duplicating areas already delivered. Consequently we failed to maximise the socialist vote in Lewisham and Greenwich.

The same pattern has repeated itself in the recent Pepsys by-election.

The moves towards centralisation arising out of Coventry, made it more difficult to win forces to the SA project. The Green Socialist Network at its AGM narrowly voted against affiliation. The reluctance of the Preston socialist councillors to describe themselves as SA councillors suggests this also.

Clearly the SWP in Leeds, despite proposals of a compromise put forward by the LLA executive and SP were intent on taking control of the LLA. In Hull the SWP were willing to agree a compromise where the balance of forces were more equal.

The struggles in Leeds and Lewisham are clearly reflective of two very different approaches to building the SA and what we want to see the SA become.

The majority of those who have been working to build the SA for some time want to build a broad federal structure, hopefully becoming a broad inclusive socialist party along the lines of the Scottish Socialist Party. And those who are seeking to build a centralised and directed political organisation which can become a larger united revolutionary Leninist party.

The SSP approach has a realistic prospect of success - uniting many of those breaking from Labour and becoming involved in struggles to defend services. An enlarged SWP will simply be an enlarged SWP, bigger but still on the same politics.

The ISG appears clearly drawn to playing a minor role in a united revolutionary party, rather than leading role in a broad socialist party which can be at the centre of left politics.

Nick Long - Lewisham

Alan Thornett and Dave Packer

Nick Long's letter (left) raises a number of issues which are central to the current debate around the building of the Socialist Alliances.

In particular it focuses attention on their political character, and the need for people from diverse parts of the left to work together within them if they are to be developed into an effective socialist alternative to Blairism.

It is unfortunate, however, that Nick Long has decided to defend the disgraceful witch hunt against the SWP in Leeds. The Leeds Left Alliance (LLA) has denied members of the SWP the right to be full members of the LLA and have debarred them from standing for office within the Alliance (SO39).

Nick Long euphemistically describes this anti-democratic outrage as "defining the political boundaries" of the LLA. Blair and Mandelson want to "define the political boundaries" of the LP by drumming out the left. Such an action by Milbank would rightly be condemned by the whole of left.

Democracy is not an optional extra for the Socialist Alliances, to be discarded when there are a few scores to settle or a few revolutionary socialists to be nobbled. It is an integral part of the Alliances or they are nothing.

You can't fight the right-wing with the bureaucratic methods of the right-wing. An SLP mark II would go nowhere.

Nick Long invokes his experiences in the Lewisham Socialist Alliance to justify his defence of the indefensible in Leeds.

Yes, the Lewisham Alliance is a divided Alliance, and this has led to divided cam-

paigns. But his description of the roots of those divisions are to say the least highly controversial with all the political organisations involved other than the Socialist Party (SP).

Nor is it true to say that all the independents in the Lewisham alliance share his view. The picture he paints of the SP and the independents working in harmony whilst the rest simply doing their own thing is a rather grotesque caricature from all accounts.

As welcome as the recent victory of Sam Dias in the Pepsys by-election is, and it is very welcome indeed, the fact is that the Socialist Party imposed her as a candidate on the Lewisham Socialist Alliance.

At the meeting to adopt a candidate she flatly refused, as a member of the SP, to stand as anything other than as a candidate of the SP - i.e. under the SP's election rubric of Socialist Alternative/Ian Page team.

How does that promote harmony? What happened to local democracy? Or any kind of democracy?

Unfortunately it reflects a long and dishonourable tradition on the far-left in Britain - that democracy is a very good thing as long as it does not interfere with 'our patch'. For socialists there is a higher principle than simply being in the best position to get votes in a local election.

And this is not the only place where the SP have imposed a candidate - or presented an ultimatum as to who it would be, which amounts to the same thing.

At a recent Socialist Alliance public meeting in Walthamstow the SP speaker Simon Donovan announced from the platform that he would be standing in Leyton whatever anyone else said, and the Socialist Alliance would simply have to decide

whether to support him or not.

It is not surprising that there are divisions in the Lewisham Alliance under these conditions. It was a credit to the others in the Alliance, organisations and individuals, that they decided to support the SP candidacy, even though they had been given no say in deciding the candidate.

This all flows from the unilateral declaration of the SP (in The Socialist) that they would stand eighteen of their own candidates in predetermined constituencies. This is irrespective of the views of any local SA group in those areas, either now or in the future if one is launched.

This is not the way to build any kind of alliance - even a federal one. It is another practice borrowed from Blairism. Nick Long does not refer to these impositions or give his view on them.

Nor does Nick Long make the case for his assertion that the SWP was attempting to take over the Leeds Left Alliance.

This is because no such case exists. But in any case, if a judgement is to be made about the conduct of the SWP in the Alliances, it needs to be made on the basis of their general practice.

In our experience they have not attempted to take over alliances, even in places where they have the numbers to do so.

On the contrary in most places (though not all) they have been careful to involve independents and other organisations, and have sought to be in a minority, often a small minority.

They know that a successful SA intervention will build their organisation, of course, because of the resources, both human and material, that they will bring to it on the ground. But there is nothing wrong with that.

The whole left will grow if we are successful in building the alliances to their potential in the present period. Nick Long should realise that without organisations like the SWP involved (and the SP as well) there will be no credible general electoral intervention, certainly not one which could meet current requirements. The rest of the left, those organised and those independent, are not strong enough to do it.

Like the SP and the LLA, Nick Long talks about "the moves towards centralisation" arising out of the Coventry conference at the end of September which adopted a protocol for the general election campaign. As the ISG has argued previously (SO38), this is a gross misrepresentation of what took place at Coventry, and it is being systematically promoted by the SP.

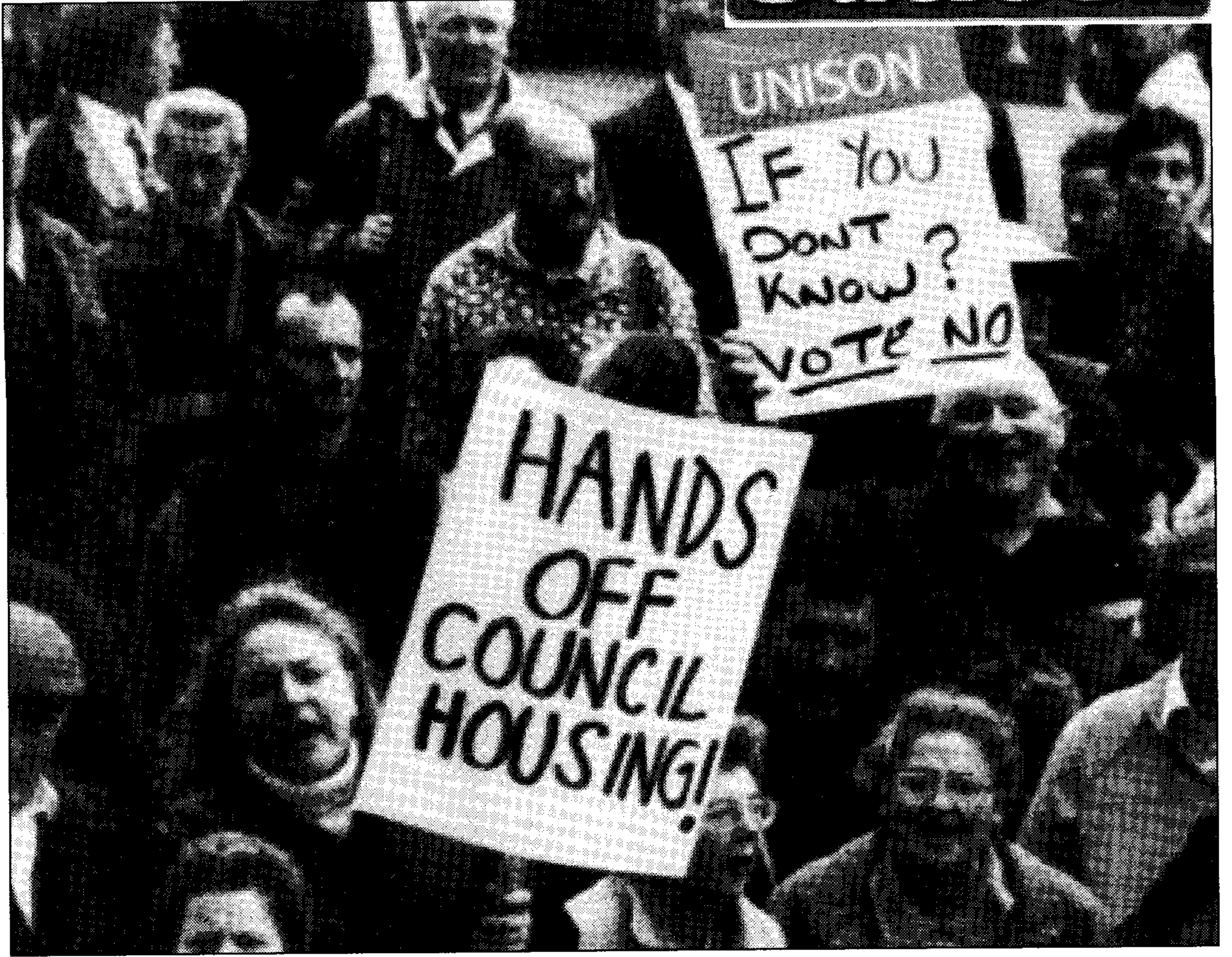
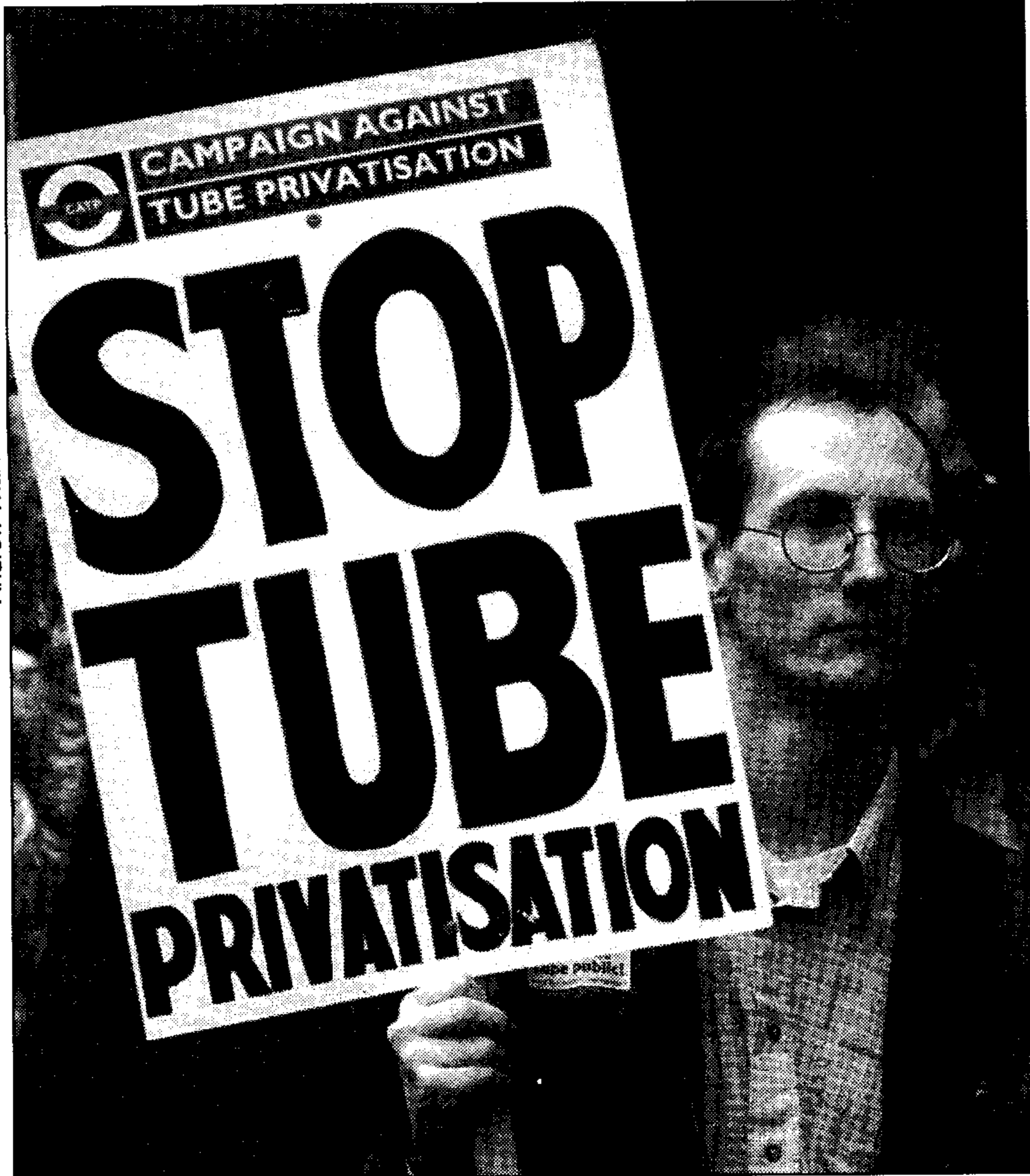
In fact Coventry produced an extremely federal election protocol, which put no restrictions on local alliances.

They are free to stand under a different name to the Socialist Alliances whilst being a part of the Socialist Alliances if they want to. They can have their own local profile and local demands and the candidates can make clear their political affiliations.

This has been made clear to the LLA repeatedly by the officers of the Socialist Alliance nationally, in case there is any problem of interpretation.

In fact the Coventry protocol creates a far less centralised structure than the Leeds Left Alliance has itself, if the way its executive was able to act against the SWP was an indication of its powers.

And, by the way, the Green Socialist Network AGM actually voted for affiliation to the Socialist Alliances, not



Labour's privatisation offensive, on the tube, in the NHS and a new round of sales of council housing, all demand a united response from the left

against as Nick Long claims. It was only after a nasty sectarian attack on the SWP by Mike Davis of the LLA and then a successful appeal for the vote to be retaken, that it narrowly changed its mind. This, however, is not the real debate. The real objection the LLA executive majority had with the SWP was not organisational or constitutional but directly political.

In the statement sent out with the ballot paper for the postal vote their main objection to the SWP was that the SWP are an organised party with an elected leadership, and – worse than that – it has a revolutionary perspective rather than a reformist one. This was absolutely explicit. The same point comes through in Nick Long's letter, although not so clearly. He refers to the "ultra revolutionary left" and "those who are seeking to build a centralised and directed political organisation which can become a larger united revolutionary Leninist party".

He counterposes these to comrades (such as himself) who want to build "a broad federal structure".

But what about the SP? Doesn't he realise that the SP is itself a centralised and directed political organisation?

The ISG, he writes, "appears to be clearly drawn to playing a minor role in a united revolutionary party, rather than a leading role in a broad socialist party which can be at the centre of left politics".

The ISG has published its views on this a number of times (e.g. SO34). Yes, since we are a revolutionary organisation, we do want to build a new united revolutionary party. However, there is more to it than that.

In the present situation the existing divisions on the left are not only damaging to the cause of socialism, but to the pressing need to organise a fight-back against the capitalist offensive and its main political representatives in

Britain today – Tony Blair and the Labour government. Without a broad based, nationally co-ordinated Socialist Alliance we don't believe a socialist voice will be heard in this general election – or an alternative to Blairism built.

This would be a defeat for the working class in Britain – and therefore for us as revolutionary socialists.

It is for this reason that we advocate building today the broadest possible, inclusive alliance – not a revolutionary party. This is not a unanimous view in the SA, but we and others (including the SWP) are opposed to imposing a revolutionary programme on the SA, or constructing a new "united revolutionary party" artificially.

We do not know in advance how the SA will develop in the future, but we do not believe that any decisions about its future should be made until it has drawn to it a much wider range of independent forces. Nor should any decisions be made without a full and democratic discussion.

In our view there is no parliamentary road to socialism,

so therefore we do not advocate one.

And we believe that this implies a particular type of party – one that is organised along Leninist lines to carry through revolutionary change. Consequently we are not for a recreated "old Labour".

The political conditions do not exist in Britain today, however, in which the diverse left which is breaking from Blairism can be drawn together into a new revolutionary party. There may, in the medium term, be the basis for bringing together some of the existing revolutionary organisations into a bigger and more effective organisation, still working within a broad alliance, but that is a different issue.

We therefore seek to build a broad and inclusive alternative to Blairism, which can contain the revolutionary organisations along with sections of the ex-Labour left, the trade union left along with environmental activists and anti-capitalist campaigners.

The best format for this at the present time is undoubtedly the Socialist Alliances.

Beyond that we think there is the possibility of creating, in England, a new broad party of the left on the lines of the SSP in Scotland, as the next stage of development.

We have argued on numerous occasions that such a new workers' party must, as a first principle, be federal, inclusive and democratic. The SLP was politically dead from the time that Scargill rejected federalism, refused membership to the SP and others, and said that individuals could only join the SLP if they resigned from any other organisation they might be a member of first.

Nick Long seems to think that the SSP is more federal than the Socialist Alliances. This is not true. The Socialist Alliances are a loose network of groups seeking to develop an organising structure to facilitate common action and common campaigning based on an agreed platform.

The SSP is a political party with an extensive programme and a democratic inclusive structure, and of necessity much more centralised than the Socialist Alliances. It started as the Scottish Socialist Alliance and developed into the SSP by tightening up its struc-

tures and extending its programme and policies.

Neither the SAs or the SSP are revolutionary organisations, of course – nor should they be. They are coalitions between revolutionaries and those who do not regard themselves as revolutionaries, at least at the present time.

They are united front frameworks in which a broad spectrum of the left can build the best possible political alternative to Blairism in today's conditions.

New Labour is busily ramming through its attacks, including:

- the privatisation of Air Traffic Control against the wishes of the bulk of the population,
- the privatisation of the London Underground against the vast majority of Londoners,

- refusing even to contemplate the re-nationalisation of the railways, despite a big majority of people supporting (even demanding) it.

More and more people are looking for an alternative.

This was clearly reflected in the results of the recent round of by-election results.

We have, today, a unique

opportunity to build such an alternative against Blairism with signs that the bulk of the far-left organisations are prepared to abandon past histories of sectarian practice in favour of building the Socialist Alliances.

We must not allow a knee jerk reaction to the SWP to get in the way of this. Most people who have been active on the left for some time will have had bad experiences with the SWP (and with the SP/Militant as well by the way). And bad experiences are still happening in some areas of work.

But it is easy to sit back and say "don't trust the SWP". This can be a self-fulfilling prophesy. The significance of the SWP is not so much how much they haven't changed but how much they have. The level of collaboration which is now taking place between the bulk of the far left within the alliances is unique and the SWP are a central part of it.

Nick Long should appreciate that the best way to combat the inherent sectarianism of the SWP, indeed the whole of the British left, is to build the Socialist Alliances in the most inclusive democratic and effective way possible.

Election successes boost Alliances

Terry Conway

There is no doubt that the Socialist Alliance Liaison Committee meeting in Birmingham on December 2 was buoyed up by the excellent election results socialist candidates have gained since the Coventry conference in September.

On November 23, the Scottish Socialist Party took over 7% in both the Holyrood and Westminster by-elections for Glasgow Anniesland – coming fourth in the former seat. The SSP has established itself as the fifth party in Scottish politics – a remarkable achievement in such a short time.

On the same day, the newly formed Lancashire Socialist Alliance polled 5.6% to save its deposit in Preston, while in the south London borough of Lewisham, Socialist Alternative candidate Sam Dias, backed by the Socialist Alliance, took the seat.

The meeting also heard of the myriad of political campaigns that local alliances, new and established are building and contributing to in their areas. Time and again anti-privatisation battles are featuring as top priority – with the fight against council house sell-offs taking particular prominence.

Also common to many localities were the number of defections from Labour to the Alliances, including a whole number of councillors, and a noticeable influx of SLP and ex-SLP members as well.

Such positive reports generally set the tone for the meeting, though there were difficult moments. Members of the Socialist Party argued that the election would be fought mainly in the localities, while most others wanted to strengthen the national intervention.

Dave Church from Walsall Democratic Labour Party put forward

very strong case in this regard. He explained that he was always in favour of decentralisation – but that this could only work in practice if you have a strong centre.

The SWP, who had strongly argued the need for more of a national profile, proposed a resolution to set up an Executive Committee, responsible to the Liaison Committee, to assist the Officers in making this a reality.

Comrades from the Socialist Party argued that this resolution should not be taken because it was a repeat of a resolution defeated by the Coventry conference. Others argued that this was not the case because the Executive would be accountable to the Liaison Committee whereas the body proposed at Coventry would have reported only to full members meetings.

Amendments were proposed and

agreed to the SWP resolution to ensure that the Liaison Committee meets regularly in the run up to the General Election and to clarify that local alliances can add to the national manifesto as they see fit. While the Socialist Party continued to oppose the amended resolution they accepted its passage with relatively good grace.

The meeting also agreed that the debate on our manifesto would be initiated immediately by the circulation of the document from the West Midlands Euro-Election campaign, often referred to as the 80-20 document. This is to prepare for the next full national conference of the Alliance, which will now take place in early March.

This national meeting was a positive step forward for the Alliances nationally, which marked another step towards a successful General Election campaign

Justice for Roger Sylvester

Veronica Fagan

On November 20, the Crown Prosecution Service announced that no police officer involved in the death of Roger Sylvester is to face criminal charges. An inquest sitting with a jury will now be held early next year.

This is the latest in a long series of blows dealt by the establishment to the Sylvester family since Roger's death in January 1999.

Several hundred activists answered the call of the family to picket Tottenham police station to demand justice for Roger. The lively and noisy picket was addressed not only by members of the Sylvester family, but also by Myrna Simpson, mother of Joy Gardener, and Kwesi Menson, brother of Michael Menson.

Campaigners from Harringey Socialist Alliance, including White Hart Lane by-election candidate Gary McFarlane had a high profile.

Commenting on the CPS decision Sheila Sylvester, mother of Roger, said:

"This shocking decision comes as no surprise to my family. We have continually voiced our dissatisfaction with the investigation process, which we believe, was based on selective information. The only public investigation will now be the inquest.

"At the inquest officers will once again be able to remain

silent, as the Coroner will tell them they do not have to give answers that may incriminate themselves.

"It is nearly two years since my beloved son met his death while being restrained by police officers, and I am no closer to finding out the truth about how he died. There is something shameful about a system where when people die in custody their custodians never give a proper account of what they did, and the system is not geared towards making anyone properly accountable."

On 11 January 1999, Roger Sylvester, a 30 year old black man, was restrained outside his home by eight police officers, from Tottenham Police Station. He sustained numerous injuries and was later in a coma on a life support system. Seven days later, Roger was dead.

On the night of 11 January sometime after 9.30pm police arrived outside Roger's house as a result of a 999 call. Two officers attended initially and found him naked in his front garden. Within minutes another six officers had arrived and in total eight officers brought Roger Sylvester to the ground, handcuffed and restrained him.

Roger had suffered from mental health problems in the past, but for the last two years had been well. He was purportedly detained under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act.



Sheila Sylvester (inset) lays a wreath outside Tottenham police station

Police officers told his family that he was restrained 'for his own safety'. They also said that he had not been violent or aggressive towards police or anybody else.

Despite the fact they said that Roger was not aggressive to them they also said they had to restrain him to bring him to the hospital. He was handcuffed, physically restrained and placed in the van, his body limp according to at least one witness.

He was taken to St Ann's hospital and carried to a designated room where he was restrained on the floor by up to six police officers for some 20 minutes before being seen by a doctor. While the doctor left the room to get some medication and while still under restraint, Roger went limp and collapsed.

The officers, with the assistance of medical staff, tried to resuscitate him but he had sustained numerous injuries and remained in a coma at the Whittington hospital, effectively dead until his life support machine was switched off seven days later.

The case was initially referred to the Met's own Complaints Investigation Bureau (CIB.) a decision approved by the Police Complaints Authority (PCA). The conduct of the CIB is the subject of a complaint from Roger's family over the many fundamental flaws in this investigation.

The family is still waiting for the Metropolitan Police Service and Police Complaints Authority decision on whether to take disciplinary action on any of the complaints made against the CIB. Following the family's complaint about the Metropolitan Police's investigation, the Police Complaints Authority agreed the appointment of neighbouring Essex Police to conduct the investigation.

Its terms of reference were 'to investigate the circumstances leading up to, during and following the detention of Roger Sylvester on 11 January 1999 culminating in his death on 19 January 1999 and any matters arising.' They would also investigate the complaint made by the family about the conduct of the initial investigating officer.

cer.

The investigation took ten months. It was the first investigation to take place following the publication of the Macpherson inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence, in which greater liaison and openness with families was encouraged.

There were regular but unsatisfactory meetings during the course of the investigation with Essex Police, the PCA and family members, their solicitor and INQUEST. However the family, their lawyers and INQUEST found these meetings unsatisfactory: they felt like a public relations exercise and the information being supplied was minimal, often partial.

It became clear that the police preferred instead to spend hundreds of person hours investigating Roger's personal life rather than the circumstances of his death.

Sheila Sylvester commented: "The investigation has not centred on the behaviour of the eight officers who laid hands on my son that fateful night. Their actions were not investigated with the thoroughness and rigour that would have been the case had they been civilians. This is unjust. Instead Essex Police chose to investigate Roger, the victim, in an attempt to blame him for his own death."

The Police Complaints Authority, being satisfied with the conduct of the Essex investigation, issued an 'interim statement' on 21 October 1999 and the files were passed to the Crown Prosecution Service who took until November this year to decide ... that no action would be taken.

Copies of the file also went to the Coroner and the Metropolitan Police Commissioner. Neither the family nor their lawyers will see all of the Investigating officer's final completed report, as it is covered by public interest immunity.

Despite a Home Office circular last year recommending release of at least part of an investigating officer's report to bereaved families, this seems unlikely to happen.

An inquest with a jury will

be held in the New Year into Roger's death at which the family have no automatic right to representation - though with the support of INQUEST they will be fighting for exceptional legal aid. At an inquest, police officers can also refuse to answer any question that might incriminate them.

In the recent inquest into the death of Christopher Alder at Hull police station, for example, police officers exercised the same right of silence to avoid giving a full account of what happened.

The officers involved in Roger's death were removed from operational duties, but have never been suspended. This is yet another insult to the Sylvester family and to Roger's memory.

The Lawrence Inquiry report noted in relation to deaths in custody "We are clear that this issue is outside our terms of reference, but we cannot fail to record the depth of feelings expressed. There is a need to address the perceptions and concerns

of the minority ethnic communities in this regard.

"Such an issue if not addressed helps only to damage the relationship between police and public, and in its wake there is an atmosphere which hinders the investigation of racist incidents and crime."

The Justice for Roger Sylvester Campaign demands:

- Police officers involved in custody deaths are suspended until investigations are completed.

- Officers responsible for deaths should face criminal charges even if retired or otherwise.

- All deaths in custody should be investigated independently.

- Police Complaints Authority (PCA) to be replaced by a body independent of the police.

- Police forces are made accountable to the communities they serve.

- Legal aid and full disclosure should be made available to the relatives of the victim(s).

- Where an unlawful killing verdict is returned, a prosecution should follow automatically.

-
- **Close**
- **Harmondsworth**
- **Detention Centre!**
- **Picket on Sat 16 Dec**
- **12.00 to 1.45**
- *Doing the time - committed no crime*
- **The Government keeps 90 refugees locked up without a charge or trial in**
- **Harmondsworth Detention Centre. Next door to it they are building an even bigger**
- **Detention Centre. Due to open in the**
- **Spring, this will hold 550 asylum seekers**
- **including families.**
- **Support the refugees,**
- **Close the Detention Centres!**
- **Protest against Harmondsworth detention centre**
- **Colnbrook By Pass (A4 North of Heathrow)**
- **Take U3 bus from Heathrow or 81 bus from the stop opposite Hounslow West tube**
- **Bring banners. Also if possible collect donations of £2 phone cards which we will pass on to detainees**
- *Called by the Close Down Harmondsworth Campaign*
-

Asylum voucher review:

Don't let them get away with it!

At both the national Policy Forum in July and at October's Labour Party Conference, the Blair leadership's response to criticism of the outrageous voucher scheme for asylum seekers was to offer a "review" of the discredited system.

Sadly rather than responding that no review was needed and that the system should be scrapped forthwith, Bill Morris of the TGWU remitted his motion on this basis.

Since then no public statement has been made either by the Labour Party leadership or the government on vouchers. But tucked away in the pages of Hansard, campaigners have just found that the review was launched on October 26. Submissions have to be made by December 22.

While the form provided asks people to restrict themselves to the questions asked, the final one ("Do you have any other comments on the voucher scheme?") obviously gives scope for all the points activists need to make.

As the government has said that it is inviting representations from "all relevant stakeholders and interested parties", it is vital that all anti-racist campaigners respond. This is even more important given the fact that all submissions will be published afterwards.

For further information contact the Campaign to defend Asylum Seekers. BCM Box 4289, London WC1N 3XX. 07958 478 628

Child abuse: blame it on the (bourgeois) family

Jane Kelly

The moral panic this summer over naming paedophiles, initiated by the News of the World, has calmed down, and a somewhat more reasoned debate is taking place. But still the real issues underlying abuse and neglect – the relations of power within the nuclear family, the hierarchy between children and parents, girls and boys, women and men – are ignored.

The ruling class simply can not accept that the family, the basic unit of capitalist society, is a place of oppression, violence and abuse.

While around 40 investigations are ongoing into sexual abuse in children's homes, going back to the 1960s and 1970s, the idea that such abuse is also part of family life for many children, is unthinkable.

Ever since the Cleveland affair, when large numbers of children were identified as suffering from sexual abuse within the family, the powers that be have tried to refute the information, ridiculing medical and social work professionals who have uncovered it, denying its existence.

In November this year the NSPCC published their report *Child Maltreatment in the United Kingdom: A study of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect*. It was widely reported in the broadsheet press and media.

At the same time *Newsnight* on 23 November investigated the long term, systematic abuse within and around one family, while *Panorama* on 26 November looked at the probably wrongful conviction of a care worker for sexual abuse of boys in a children's home.

The complexity and difficulty of these issues is at last being aired – albeit mainly within sections of the 'quality' media.

The *Panorama* programme exposed the fatal flaws of a police investigation which, after allegations of sexual abuse in a children's home in the late 1970s to the early 1980s, trawled for further evidence by interviewing large numbers of ex-residents of the home, working alongside solicitors who made clear the likely compensation available for victims resulting from a conviction.

While making it clear that sexual abusers should be prosecuted and victims compensated, the programme argued that the two should not be mixed together. Although two care workers had admitted sexual abuse and were imprisoned, the third man, still in prison for crimes which he refutes, seems to be the victim himself of unscrupulous allegations by men seeking compensation.

Perhaps more shocking was the *Newsnight* investigation. Focussing on one family, it followed up allegations by a young woman about sexual abuse perpetrated by her stepfather on herself and her two sisters. All three were abused by him from a young age. Worse, they were also subjected to sexual and physical abuse by other men for money.

When one of the sisters inevitably became disturbed, running away from home, attacking one of her sister's abusers, she was put into a children's home, where further abuse took place. Despite complaints to the police at the time and since, little was ever done.

Even now, police seem reluctant to investigate the stepfather, who admitted the sexual abuse – though that is not what he called it.

This case also focussed on the complexity of abusive sexual relations within the family. One of the sisters had taken over her dead mother's place, including in her stepfather's bed, and seemed genuinely sympathetic towards him, even as she argued she was doing it, 'to save him abusing others', including his grandchildren.

Although the programme was somewhat unscrupulous, using hidden cameras to film the stepfather describing his behaviour, recording his sexualised and misogynist references to young girls, it brought home in a



graphic and emotive way the terrible effects of such an upbringing, whose experiences can never be forgotten.

The issue of how children can be equipped to reject such sexual behaviour, or to report it if forced to participate, has also been raised. The importance of children being comfortable with their bodies, of recognising sexual abuse, and being able to reject it or tell others about it has been emphasised, as well as the need for sex education so that children can tell the difference between harmless play among peers and non-consenting sexual activities between older people and children.

The NSPCC Report however, points out that it is not always easy to differentiate between these two types of behaviour, especially between siblings. 'Sexual relations with and between children and young people are hard to define in relation to abuse.' (Quoted in *The Observer*, 19 Nov)

While the BBC programmes focussed on singular examples, the NSPCC Report was based on interviews with nearly 3,000 people between the ages of 18 and 24, asking them if they had experienced either sexual abuse or physical neglect when they were under 16 years old.

In fact the resulting figures for sexual abuse within the family are not as high as might have been expected. But the reporting, even in the 'quality' press, concentrated on the 4 per cent who reported sexual abuse, of whom "43 per cent said it had been committed by a brother or stepbrother, compared with 19 per cent who named their stepfather, and 14 per cent who named their father."

This apparently unexpected result – that stepbrothers and brothers represented by far and away the highest number of abusers – has "turned on its head the widespread belief that adult males are the most likely abusers." (*The Observer* 19 Nov)

The other part of the NSPCC Report was given hardly any press coverage. This is hardly surprising, as the figure of 6 per cent

of young adults reporting serious neglect during childhood is in some ways more startling, and especially as the neglect was blamed almost exclusively on mothers.

Furthermore as the synopsis published by the NSPCC on its website argues:

"The study underlines the link between child neglect and social disadvantage. Respondents in semi or unskilled employment were ten times more likely to have experienced serious absence of care in childhood than were respondents who were in professional jobs and almost twice as likely as those in higher education."

While sexual abuse and violence against women within the family do not respect class differences, neglect is much more often the result of dire poverty and deprivation.

The tragic and apparently motiveless murder of 10 year old Damilola Taylor in Peckham at the end of November, reveals the end result of neglected and desensitised children and teenagers, brought up on run down estates, excluded from school, with no state resources dedicated to their upbringing other than policing.

Local social services are unable to support any children but those in immediate danger of sexual and physical abuse; there are no youth clubs in the area; many young people are banned from using the local leisure centre; and the culture of drugs provides not only a way of blurring the harsh realities of life but also a way of making money.

Discussion of the NSPCC Report has made much of the high incidence of sibling abuse, but we should not be surprised by this. Nor does it shift the debate away from the family.

Rather, it underlines the fact that every member of a nuclear family is touched by its oppressive and hierarchical nature. In the 1970s socialist feminists identified the family as the key site of women's oppression. They also recognised that children too are oppressed by the relations within the family.

Developing ideas from Friederich Engels'

The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, first published in 1884, socialist feminists analysed the bourgeois 'nuclear family' as the primary social unit most appropriate for the development of capitalism.

It was able to fulfil a number of functions simultaneously. It enabled the cheap reproduction of a future labour force, the servicing of the present labour force, again on the cheap, and the place where ideology could be reproduced, including the enforcing of a heterosexual norm. All of these functions of course relied on the cheap or free labour of women.

The introduction of the 'family wage', supported equally by the ruling class and the male-dominated trade union leadership in the late 19th century, encouraged the adoption of the nuclear family by the working class, to avoid the social breakdown predicted by Engels.

It led to women's paid work outside the home being subordinated to that of the adult male members of the family. But this too suited the ruling class. It meant that women along with young adults, could be part of the reserve army of labour, brought into and expelled from the workforce according to the 'demands' of the economy, at the same time threatening wages by being used as a cheap source of labour.

More generally the family was analysed as a microcosm of capitalist society as a whole. Not only reproducing the heterosexual norm, but also competitive individualism, hierarchy and unequal relations of power.

Giving male adults a power denied them in society at large, power over women and children, the nuclear family reproduces in its most intimate relations the worst aspects of social relations under capitalism.

While women and children are subject to often violent and damaging sexual abuse and neglect, within this system of oppression women also become capable of violence, abuse and neglect of children. The myth of the 'dysfunctional' family is just that, a myth. The bourgeois nuclear family is in itself dysfunctional.

Much of this socialist feminist analysis has been on the back burner of feminist understanding over the fast decade or so, having been overtaken by the seductive relativism of postmodern misunderstandings. But it is essential that we grapple with these ideas again if we are to understand what is happening to and within the family, as well as to society more generally.

While such an analysis suggests little can be fundamentally altered without larger changes in society as a whole, this should not stop us from putting demands today for the amelioration of conditions within and between families.

We should be demanding a huge increase in money for social services and other local government undertakings such as youth clubs; money should be made available for community projects dedicated to children and teenagers.

One such project locally, Kids Company, successfully run by a psychotherapist, is threatened with closure, and the coordinator has been forced to raise money from charity, despite helping 200 or so local children.

We should defend sex education in schools against those who would leave our children in ignorance; we should support women's organisations which have fought for rape in marriage to be made a crime, and for those who have defended women who have killed abusive partners.

Harriet Harman, Blairite Labour MP for Camberwell and Peckham, suggested she didn't know what to do to change the situation in the area. If that's the case she should resign, and we can elect the Socialist Alliance candidate, John Mulrenan, a UNISON activist, who knows very well how to respond to the demands of the local people for local and national government money for the area.

For a workers' party in the USA!

The Ralph Nader candidature in the US Presidential Elections together with the wider questions it raises, have become contentious issues on the left. In the last issue we printed an article which argued that socialists should give critical support to Ralph Nader. Here **DAVE PACKER** presents an alternative view.

FOR MANY on the left in Britain it seemed common sense to support Ralph Nader in the American Presidential elections. He presented himself as a radical left alternative to the two party stitch-up which has traditionally given the American working class the choice between a Republican tweedle dum and a Democrat tweedle dee.

There is no mass workers' party in America, so to many socialists Nader appeared to be the next best thing, even a chance to open up a new political space. In my view these arguments are wrong because they do not start from the perspective of class.

Clearly, the Nader campaign was radical, but it was also populist rather than socialist. It acted as a pole of attraction to the left, and its rallies were huge with several drawing numbers ranging from 6,000-12,000 people.

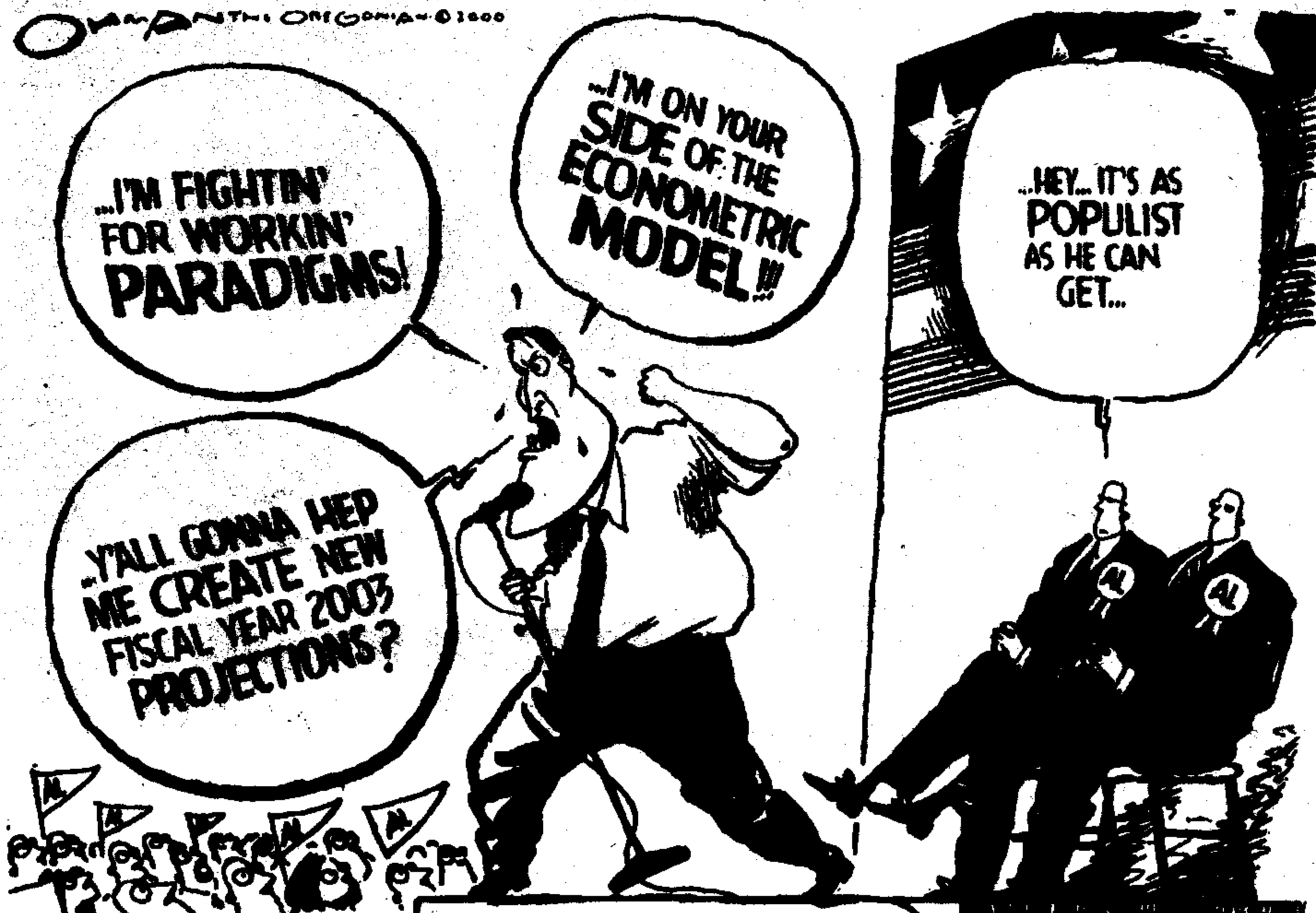
The largest was in New York City's Madison Square Garden where major movie stars like Susan Sarandon, Michael Moore and the TV talk show host and millionaire Phil Donahue were present.

Nader often took up feminist, anti-racist, and environmentalist themes. Attacks on multi-national corporations were given a major emphasis. In the context of U.S. politics, there was no doubt that millions saw him as an alternative to the "two-party" system. Many of those who voted for him did so to protest against the fact that there was virtually no difference between Bush and Gore.

They did this in spite of incredible pressure from the pro-Gore liberal establishment including the National Organisation for Women and the NAACP as well as the Nation Magazine.

So what's the problem, some may ask? Putting all the liberal attacks aside, as well as Nader's radical sounding rhetoric, the underlying political thrust of his campaign and politics, which Nader came back to time and again, was the reform of the Democratic Party and of capitalism.

Even on BBC's Newsnight



programme he concluded the interview with a threat to the Democrats that a new, youthful political current will come into being if the Democrats failed to return to their radical pro-worker, pro-farmer roots.

His programme was not anti-capitalist, nor is Nader for the creation of a new workers' party in America. As so often with his campaigns in the past, it was mainly designed to put political pressure on the Democrats, who are the second (liberal) party of American capitalism.

The American Democrats are equivalent to European Liberal parties and not to European social democracy, whose parties are based on the workers' movement. Nader's campaign was partly successful in its aims, because it did oblige Gore to lean towards a more populist, with rhetoric outlining a progressive social agenda.

Nader's main appeal was his "anti-corporate" stance, and his apparent defence of all those who are victims of capitalist globalisation. But he repeatedly stated that his approach to defending American workers was based on closing foreign plants, on banning foreign workers, and on making foreign corporations adopt "play fair" like the U.S. corporations.

U.S. corporations, in Nader's view, "play fair" because they pay decent wages, as opposed to foreign corporations who don't. He is particularly hostile to China's growing economy. His anti-corporate stance is therefore not anti-capitalist; it is a defence of small capital against corporate multinationals. He stands for private property, the market and 'fair' competition (within America).

Nor is he any kind of socialist, or aspiring to build a working class party in America; he was standing as the official candidate of a Green Party. This is consis-

tent with his politics. This party, the larger and more right wing of the two US Green parties, can be characterised in Marxist terms as a petty-bourgeois party, with a bourgeois reformist/populist programme.

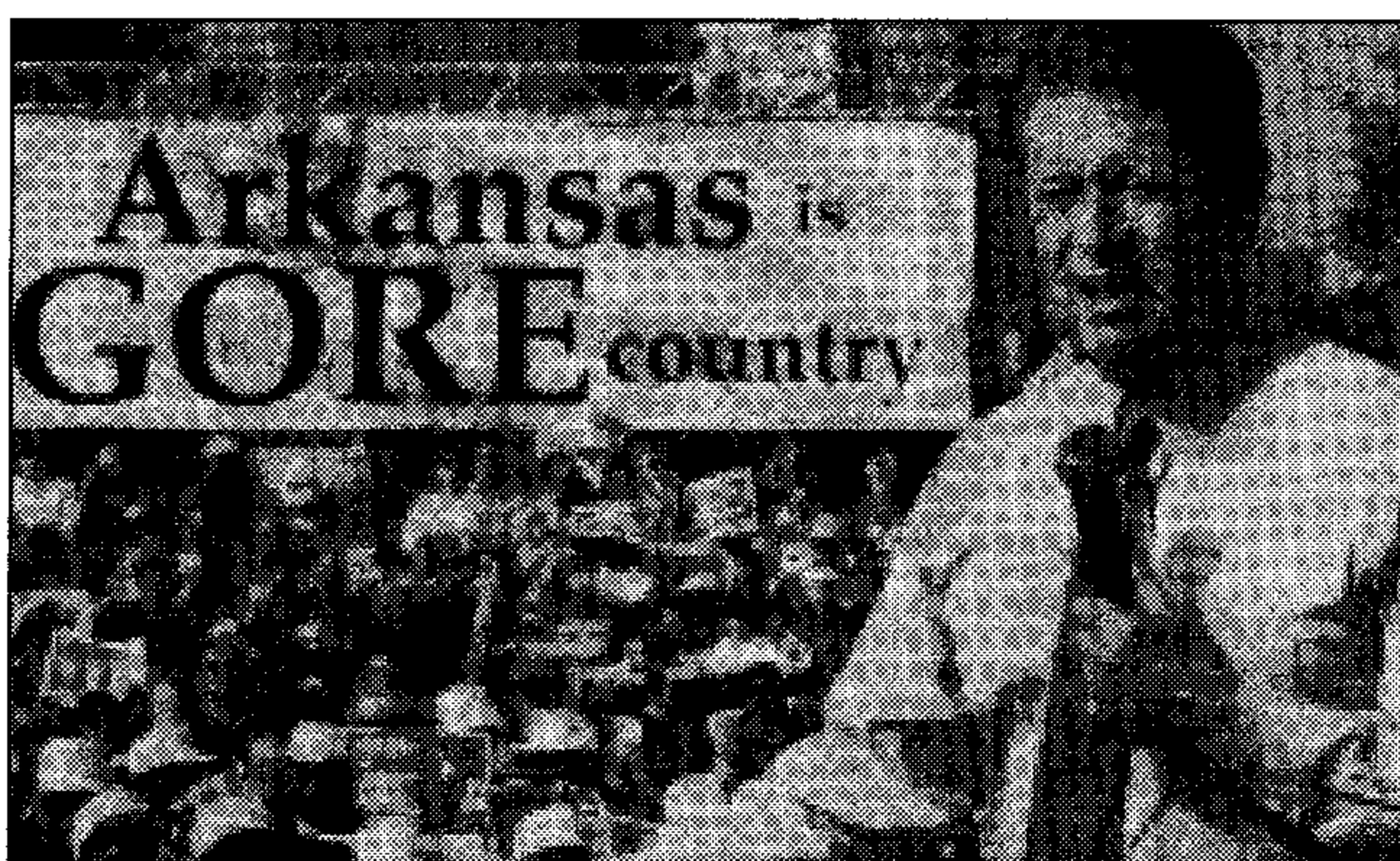
One of the biggest issues facing the American working class is the need for class independence expressed politically in terms of an independent working class party, free of the bourgeois Democrats.

There have been many failed attempts to create a mass Labour Party in the USA. Small Marxist organisations have existed since the

appendages to the Democratic Party.

An example, is the current US "Labour Party" initiative which was established in 1996 at the behest of activists in a number of unions who were determined to fight for working-class independence from the Democrats. It has the support of numerous local branches.

However, in the absence of a big movement from below it has been taken over by, or is under pressure from the union bureaucracy who may occasionally make left sounding noises, but do not want a decisive break with the Democrats.



US workers faced a Hobson's choice, with two reactionary candidates

19th century, but no large workers' party capable of challenging the two main bourgeois parties has been built since 1912, when the Socialist Party in won nearly a million votes in the Presidential Election.

As Darren Williams explained in the last issue of Socialist Outlook, this Party was smashed by the state for its opposition to the First World War.

Most attempts to create a new mass workers' party have failed because they emanated from forces, usually bureaucratic in character, from inside the Democratic Party. This has sometimes taken the form of an internal struggle, but only rarely has it been based on a class struggle movement within the working class itself. No real drive to establish an independent working class party existed, and most attempts remained

It now has the support of nine unions at national level, none of which - typically - wanted to stand against Al Gore.

It is therefore understandable in this context that many trade unionists, US Labour Party activists, forces from the broad anti-capitalist vanguard have turned to Ralph Nader's candidature. But his campaign is a cul de sac.

Nader, a veteran consumer rights campaigner with an anti-corporate rhetoric, got 2.5 percent of the national vote and is clearly a radical pole of attraction. But as we have said his anti-corporate stance is not anti-capitalist.

He has rightly dismissed accusations of "splitting" the left or progressive vote and letting in George W. Bush, pointing to the dominance of a two party system which



Nader: made no attempt to build trade union base

allowed no real choice, despite some differences in rhetoric between the two candidates.

On the other hand during the last two weeks of the campaign he called for his people in California to stop advertising because he didn't want to threaten the Democrats there.

The pro-Democratic Party sections of the capitalist press attacked Nader like mad for drawing votes from Al Gore. Taking advantage of this, the Bush campaign, on the other hand, actually redid Nader's TV advertisements and broadcast them in order to take votes away from Gore.

However, it was Gore's failure to fully mobilise the Democrat's traditional working class vote, and disillusionment with Clinton's "dead centre" capitalist politics, which resulted in the dead heat, not Nader's campaign.

Ultimately, the basic idea behind Nader's campaign was pressuring the Democrats. The trade union bureaucracy in particular used Nader in this way.

For his part, Nader did not look to the organisations of the working class, i.e., the unions, as the bases of his support. However he was prepared to join them in protectionist campaigns, rallies and press conferences, and in this regard he fronted for the reactionary Teamsters union bureaucracy, led by Jimmy Hoffa Jr., and for the United Auto Workers bureaucrats.

What then was the class base of the Nader campaign if it was not the workers movement?

It was mainly the Green movements, the environmental-anti-WTO layers, a few disillusioned Democrats, mainly middle class radicals, as well as small groups like the ISO, Solidarity and the Socialist Alternative group, (the first associated with the British SWP and the latter the Socialist Party).

These groups all supported Nader because of his left-sounding programme, arguing that he somehow represented the 'spirit of Seattle.'

For Marxists the programme, although important (Nader's programme was a bourgeois reformist programme) is not in itself decisive: the class base of such a candidature is equally important.

There was no working class

base to Nader's campaign in any organised sense. He was in reality a free-floating reformist, not bound to any program, class or group, the labour movement or even the Greens.

Of course it would have been necessary for socialists to support and identify with many of the political issues and sentiments raised, especially by the youth who were drawn to him. In Britain, for example, we should also argue that the Socialist Alliances need a Green dimension to its programme. It would have been pure sectarianism to denounce the environmental issues raised by the Greens and by Nader, as it would in this country in relation to the Green Party, but that is nor the same as supporting them politically.

Neither of the American organisations associated with the Fourth International were sectarian in this regard. Socialist Action called for a vote for workers candidate put forward by the American SWP (no relation to the British SWP!).

In the last issue of Socialist Outlook, Darren Williams, like the British SWP and the SP, also seems to think that Nader represents 'the spirit of Seattle' and the anti-globalisation movement, despite the fact that he represents the right wing of this movement, not its left anti-capitalist wing.

Darren concludes that Nader "helps to create the conditions for the construction of a genuine working-class socialist party in the future."

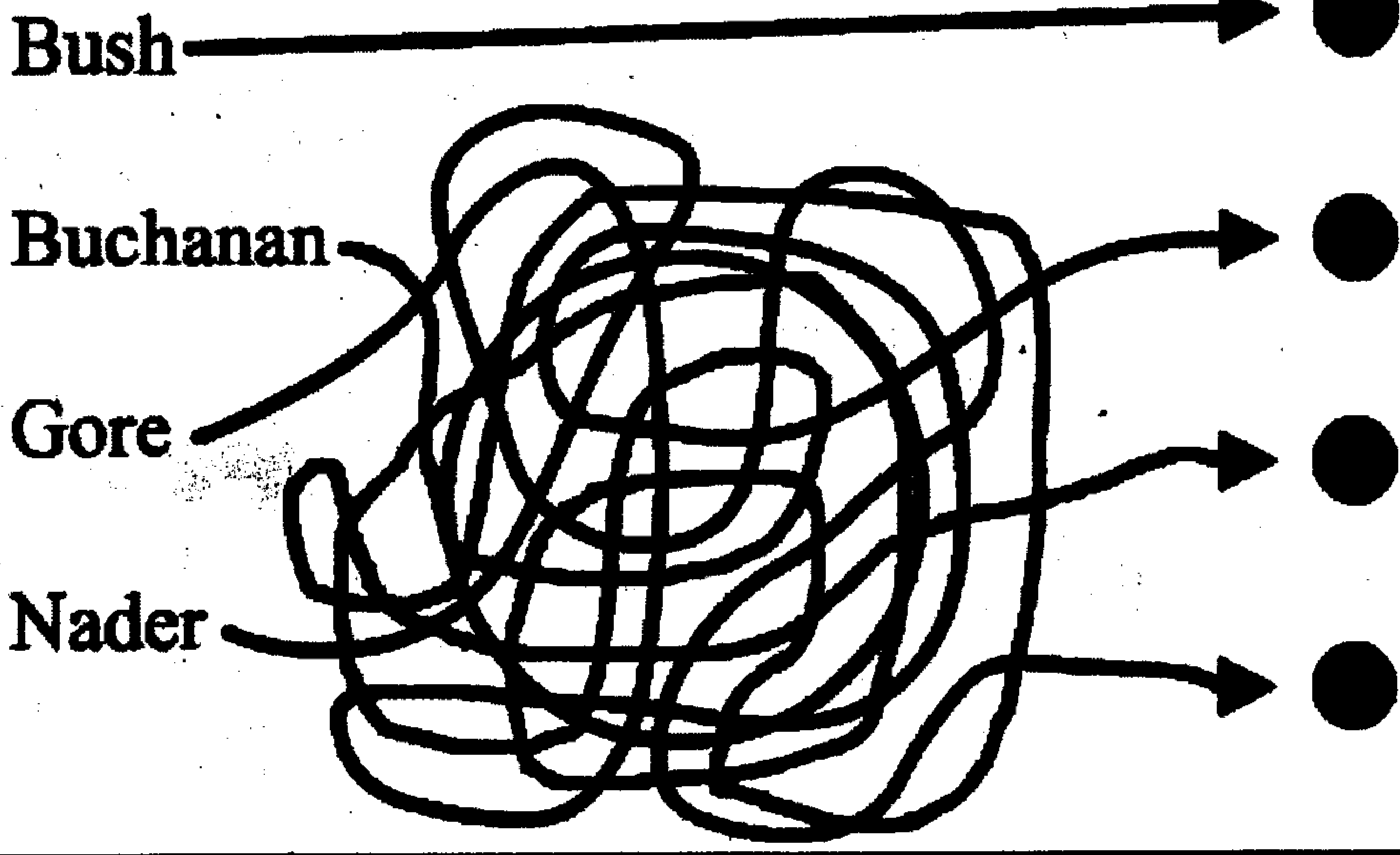
How this is to be done is not explained. "A vote for Nader is a political Molotov that we need to throw into a corrupt and bankrupt system filled with its dirty money," he writes. The vote for Nader is not this, but it may represent a new left which could fall into the hands of the Green Party, rather than build a workers party.

Nader's campaign did not clarify the fundamental issue of class independence: nor did it organise the working class independently of the bourgeoisie.

He has created the conditions for a bigger Green Party with the support of some trade unions. This may well result in a roadblock on the way to the creation of an independent workers party - a Socialist Labour Party of America.

Official Florida Presidential Ballot

Follow the arrow and Punch the appropriate dot.



Stop Ilisu Dam!

American election: two-party carve-up exposed:

Lessons from the chaos

John Lister

AS WE GO to press, we still cannot say for certain who has been elected President of the world's most powerful country.

Legal wrangles over the shambolic and corrupt election process in Florida have continued unabated throughout November.

Meanwhile the shaky credibility of election results in other states was underlined by the late recount in Oregon, which at the end of November installed a Democrat in place of the Republican senator who had been declared elected.

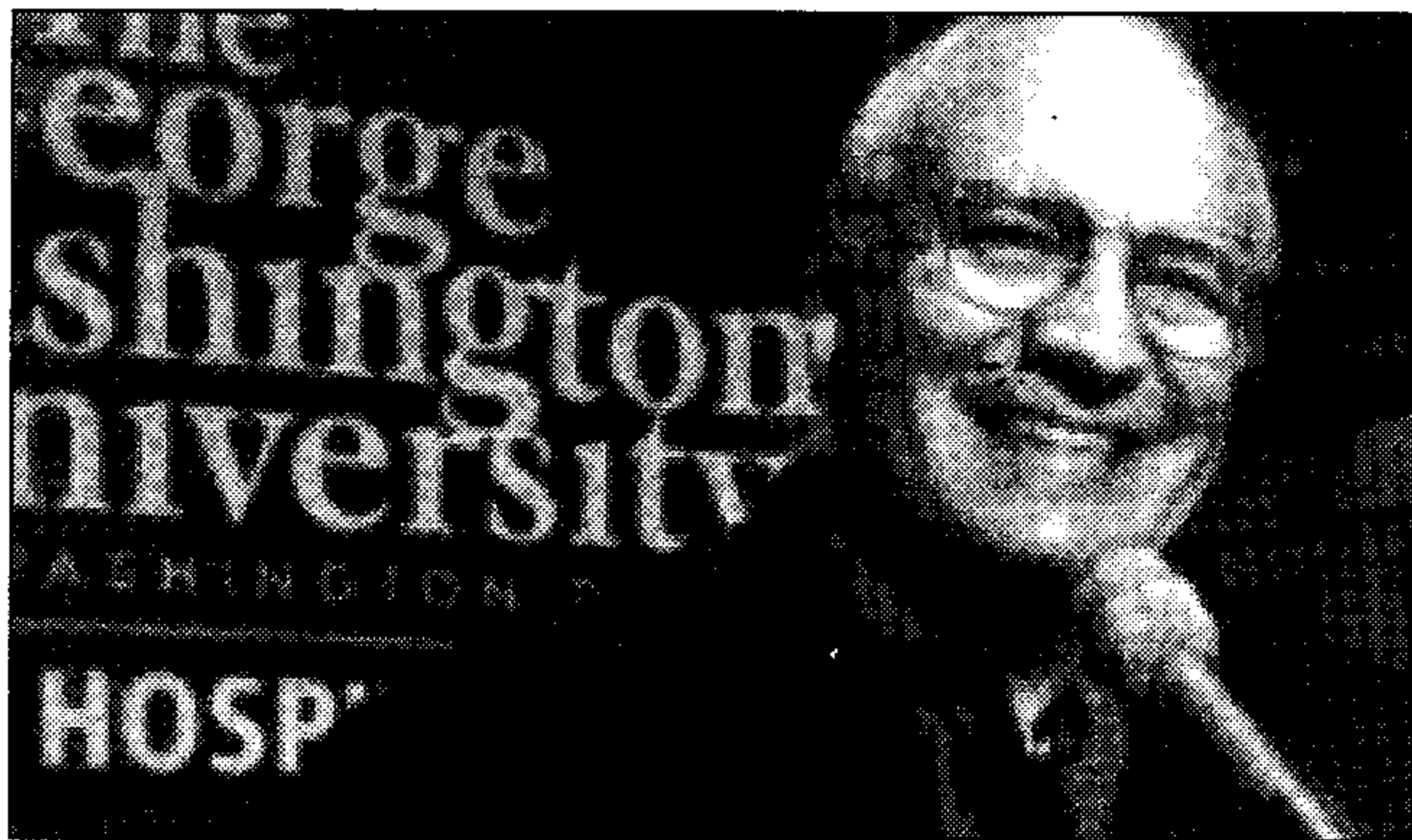
This now leaves the 100-member senate split down the middle between the two rival capitalist parties.

Evidence is still emerging to show just how many thousand Florida votes have not been counted in the haste to declare Bush the winner.

But with party patronage and bias such a brazen feature of US public appointments, it is almost impossible to find a trustworthy scrutineer to produce an objective result.

Florida's shamelessly partisan Republican Secretary of State Katherine Harris, herself a co-chair of George Dubya's campaign in the state, possibly over-played her hand in trying to hurry through a decision that her man had won.

But the state's Attorney General and key Florida judges are Democrats, equally determined to see Al Gore pick up the few hundred extra votes he needs to



Cheney: not so much running mate as running Bush's administration

tip the balance of the whole election.

It is clear that hundreds of thousands of votes (especially those of any smaller rival parties) are routinely ignored and not counted in elections across the USA - yet another result of the corrupt two-party system.

Hundreds of thousands of postal votes drift in days or weeks after the elections, and appear to be largely discounted. Only when the contest between the two major parties runs close - as it has this year, with Gore narrowly ahead on the popular vote across the US, but likely to lose the Electoral College on the most minuscule of margins - does the spotlight focus on the embarrassing local details.

The system works consistently to exclude parties representing the working class and the oppressed, not least by dragooning the minority of Americans who do turn out to vote into choosing their "lesser evil" candidate from the "big two".

Comedian Bill Maher was not far off the popular view when he summed up the situation: "Neither Bush nor Gore has been elected presi-

dent. I know that's a great feeling, but it can't last forever."

The satirical newspaper The Onion talks of the Serbian government sending 30,000 peacekeepers to the US, and reports newly-elected Serb President Kostunica saying "We must do all we can to support free elections in America and allow democracy to gain a foothold there."

But for the two main parties, which have spent a staggering \$3 billion on the presidential and congressional elections, and another \$1 billion ensuring they keep their monopoly control over the state-level elections, the situation is no laughing matter. The stakes are too high.

The far right, the gun lobby, the pharmaceutical and private medical industry and the oil companies are among the sinister forces that have invested unprecedented sums in securing the election of George Dubya ("a real-life Forrest Gump").

They plainly intend to use him as the front-man for a hard-line government driv-

ing through even more deregulation and privatisation than was contemplated by Reagan or Bush Senior.

Bush is not even choosing his own staff, as the first moves are made to pull together a "transitional" administration even while the courts deliberate the election result. Instead, between hospital visits to check on his dicky heart, Dick Cheney, defence secretary under George's father, is the "running mate" setting up the new team that they expect will run the White House. Bush is hundreds of miles away, on his Texas ranch.

Old cronies of the Bush Presidency are being wheeled out into position for a second bite of the cherry, and there will be hefty favours to repay to some of the big donors that helped create George Dubya's election machine.

One billionaire with high hopes is Richard Rainwater, a founder of the giant Columbia/HCA healthcare corporation, a former business partner of George W and contributor to his campaign for Texas governor. Rainwater has been keen to press Bush to pursue his proposal to privatise state mental hospitals.

Oil and tobacco firms hope that the Clinton administration's limited measures to restrain their freedom to pollute and damage health will be rolled back under Bush, while drug companies have made no secret of their opposition to Gore's proposals to limit prescription costs, and will see the new regime as a hard-line defender of private

medicine.

The military will also be well represented, with former General Colin Powell likely to be Secretary of State if Bush's costly teams of lawyers prevail in the ongoing court wrangles.

Under this pressure it is small wonder that the bulk of Gore's support has come from those who saw themselves most at risk from these policies - women, black people, Hispanics, Jews and the poor (earning \$30,000 or less).

By contrast, Bush's vote has centred on the rich and well-to-do (\$75,000 a year plus), men, whites and protestants. Bigots largely turned out for Bush, while the unions and black churches mobilised for Gore.

But Gore's huge credibility problem among his core voters rests on their experience of the last eight years of Clinton government, which have led to a continual erosion of welfare rights and real wages, without delivering the oft-promised and much vaunted health care reforms which so many desperately need.

As a party equally based on the political needs of big capital and US imperialism, and seeking only at election time to court the support of union leaders and progressive movements, the Democrats have again robbed themselves of what should be a natural majority, and created the electoral bind.

Many of the millions of disaffected who have again refused to cast a vote in these elections effectively voted with their feet, refusing to give Gore a mandate, but finding themselves with no plausible candidate to support instead.

The current saga will soon run to a conclusion, but the paradox of the world's most advanced economy boasting the least developed political system - and the most politically backward labour movement - means that whoever wins, he will be the best president money could buy.

The best conclusion would be that this latest exposure of the bankrupt system will trigger the long-delayed political awakening of the US trade unions, and the launch of a serious labour party, independent of the Democrats.

But don't hold your breath!

The WCD report claims that dams are climate friendly and the Ilisu dam has every year by the report. Speeches... The report recommends that rivers and livelihoods must be sustained in any dam project. At least nine dams have been constructed or reached the feasibility stage on the Turkish Tigris without any assessment of their cumulative impact. There is no environmental assessment for Ilisu which meets international standards. The WCD recommends that rivers must be shared for peace, development and security. The planned Ilisu dam threatens to disrupt the flow of the Tigris to Iraq and Syria. Turkey refuses to consult these countries on the impacts of the dams. The Ilisu project violates all the strategic priorities of the WCD. Balfour Beatty has indicated it will pull out without government support. Let's make sure they don't get it! Ilisu Dam Campaign, kulkondon@gn.apc.org Phone 020 7250 1315

HIV - the scourge of Africa

Charlie van Gelderen

The HIV epidemic raging across Africa is a tragedy of epic proportions, one that is altering the region's demographic future. It is reducing life expectancy, raising mortality, lowering fertility, creating an excess of men over women, leaving millions of orphans in its wake.

The second millennium began with 24 million Africans infected with the virus. In the absence of a medical miracle, nearly all will die before 2010. Each day 6000 Africans die from the virus; each day an additional 1100 are infected.

In Botswana, 36 per cent of the adult population is HIV positive; in Zimbabwe and Swaziland, 25 per cent, Lesotho, 24 per cent, and South Africa, Namibia and Zambia, 20 per cent.

In none of these countries has the spread of the virus been checked.

Life expectancy, a sentinel indicator of economic progress, is falling precipitously. In Zimbabwe, without AIDS, life expectancy in 2010 would be 70 years but with AIDS is expected to fall below 35 years. In Botswana, in the same period, life expectancy is projected to fall from 66 years to 33; for South Africa, it will fall from 68 years to 48 and for Zambia, from 60 to 30.

The reason for this drastic

demographic picture is because, in contrast to most infectious diseases, which take their heaviest toll among the elderly and the very young, HIV takes its greatest toll among young adults.

In the absence of a low cost cure, infection leads to death. The time from infection until death for adults in Africa is 7 to 10 years.

This means that Botswana can expect to lose the 36 per cent of its population that is HIV positive within this decade, plus the additional numbers who will be infected within the next year or two. The HIV toll, plus the normal death rate, means that close to half the adults in Botswana today will be dead by 2010.

But it is not only adults who are dying from AIDS in Africa. Infants of mothers who are HIV positive have a 30 to 60 per cent chance of being born with the virus. Their life expectancy is typically less than two years. Many more infants acquire the virus through breast feeding. Few of them will reach school age.

There is also some evidence that the virus reduces fertility. By the time the symptoms of AIDS appear, women are 70 per cent less likely to be pregnant than those who are not infected.

Females are infected at an earlier age than males because they have sexual

intercourse with older men who are more likely to be HIV-positive. The female infection rate is also higher than that of males.

Among 15-19 year olds, five times as many females as males are infected. Because they are infected so early in life, many women will die before completing their reproductive years, further reducing births.

No one knows how much the HIV epidemic will reduce fertility, but one thing is known: the wholesale death of young adults in Africa is creating millions of orphans.

By 2010, Africa is expected to have 40 million orphans. Even Africa's highly resilient extended family system will be unable to cope with this



Denying the obvious: South African president Mbeki

staggering catastrophe.

As this epidemic is claiming more females than men, Africa faces a unique shortage of women.

It is estimated that men will outnumber females by 11 to 9, leaving many males destined to bachelorhood or forced to migrate to other countries in search of a wife.

Although the AIDS epidemic may claim more lives

than WWII, it is not being given the priority it deserves, either within the countries affected or the international community.

Only two countries in Africa have seriously tried to tackle the problem. In Uganda, one of the earliest countries hit by the epidemic, the infected share of the adult population has dropped from 14 per cent in

the early 1990s to 8 per cent today.

Zambia has mobilised the health, education and agricultural sectors, and church groups, to halt the spread of the virus. As a result, the infected share of young women in some cities has dropped by nearly half since 1993.

Africa has had its share and more than its share of poverty, TB and malaria for centuries. All these have taken their toll. But never have people been decimated like this.

President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, amid public outrage, maintains that poverty, not HIV, is the root cause of the growing AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa. "The world's biggest killer and the greatest cause of ill health and suffering across the globe, including South Africa, is extreme poverty. As I listened and heard the whole story about our own country, it seemed to me that we could not blame everything on a single virus."

There is, of course, more than a grain of truth in this, but Mbeki has used this argument to refuse to take steps to bring affordable help for AIDS sufferers. This cannot be justified. (Based on material in *Daily Labour News* from South Africa)

Scandal-ridden Shell goes back into Ogoniland

Shell Oil's complicity in the hanging of 9 Ogoni leaders, Ken Saro Wiwa and others is an issue that Ogoni people in Nigeria will neither forget nor forgive. Shell employed the services of a solicitor, O C J Okocha, to hold brief on its behalf at the kangaroo court proceedings which eventually murdered the Ogoni leaders.

But this is certainly not the only crime this multinational has committed against the Ogoni people. CHARLIE van GELDEREN explains:

Shell's environmental record remains the poorest in the Niger delta of Nigeria. According to the World-Wide Fund for Nature, Shell's flares of waste gases in Nigeria are the single largest cause of global warming in the region.

Shell applies racist double standards in its approach, carrying out oil exploration in Ogoniland and causing malicious damage to the environment there, while adopting different environmental practices in Europe and the US.

Shell continues to owe the Ogoni people oil royalties and mining rents for 40 years, amounting to about \$6 billion and another \$4 billion for environmental devastation.

Shell refuses to bury its oil pipelines in Ogoniland. These dangerous pipelines, which criss-cross farms, streams and village paths defy health and safety standards, and pose a great risk especially to Ogoni



Andrew Ward

children.

The corporation refuses to clean its oil spills in Ogoniland. This has degraded farmlands, rivers and streams, thereby depriving the Ogoni people of their source of livelihood, resulting in endemic poverty, malnutrition and starvation.

Shell has profited immensely from the estimated \$100 billion of oil taken from Ogoniland. But while their results for the third quarter of 2000 are estimated to be £2.2 billion, Shell has managed to circumvent the judicial system in Nigeria by refusing to pay the court compensation order of \$40 million for the Ejaama Ebubu 1970 oil spill.

Shell sponsored genocide in Ogoniland between 1993-1996

by providing income and weapons to the Nigerian military leaders, Paul Okuntimu, Dauda Koma and others, who declared war on the Ogonis, resulting in the killing of over 2000 Ogonis, innumerable maiming, raping, looting and the general destruction of Ogoni villages.

Shell refuses to implement the recommendations made by the United Nations fact-finding mission to Ogoniland after making environmental impact assessment of the company's exploration activities there.

According to Mosop (the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People) "Shell is a corporate liar. It continuously uses high profile spin doctors and public relations machinery

to mislead the public about its attitude to environmental issues. Its much publicised business policies on environment, health and safety and good community relations are not adopted in either Ogoniland or the Niger Delta."

Shell still refuses to meet with the Ogonis and address the problems it has caused in their land. Rather it is forcing itself on the Ogonis, thereby violating their rights to contribute to and participate on issues concerning their own welfare.

Shell encourages bribery and corruption in Ogoniland. Shell was declared persona non-grata in Ogoniland by all Ogonis on Ogoni Day 4 January 1993. This remains the verdict of Ogonis on Shell.



Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers Christmas Cards & Postcards

The CDAS has produced Christmas cards as well as a postcard to be sent to Jack Straw, asking him, in the "season of good will", to show some - and drop the voucher scheme!

Cards are 50p each, £4 for 10 or £7.50 for 20.

Please note that the cards are in full colour, not black and white!

Contact CDAS: BCM Box 4289, London WC1N 3XX.

07958 478 628 or e-mail

info@defend-asylum.org web site www.defend-asylum.org

Serbia: is there new life after Milosevic?

Shelia Malone and Alan Thornett interviewed Serbian activist DRAGOMIR OLUJIC on his recent visit to Britain organised by Workers Aid for Kosova.

Dragomir is a member of the Independent Union of Journalists of Serbia. He was an active participant in the 1968 student demos against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, and one of the founders of the Free University, the main opposition organisation in Tito's Yugoslavia. He was arrested 20 times and spent two years in gaol. In the late 1970s he argued for the establishment of independent trade unions. In 1988 he was one of the founders of 'Self-Management', the first independent non state newspaper in Yugoslavia.

As one of the first members of the Union for Yugoslavia's Democratic Initiative he campaigned against the break-up of Yugoslavia, and against nationalism and the war policy of Milosevic's regime. Over the last ten years he has been active in many anti-war anti nationalist and civic groups in Serbia.

Q: Can you say something about the new Kostunica government?

A: You can characterise the situation in Serbia now in two ways. One view is that the worst is past, the other that the worst is yet to come! Why? Because Milosevic destroyed the former Yugoslavia, bringing about a catastrophic situation there - he was responsible for the death of 250,000 people, the destruction of 500,000 homes and the creation of 32 million refugees. In Serbia itself, there are now 700,000 refugees. The Serbian economy is working at only 15 per cent of its capacity. Unemployment stands at 50 per cent.

Q: How do refugees survive in Serbia?

A: Refugees in Serbia are not allowed to work. They can only work illegally. They don't have any rights. At first there was a lot of humanitarian aid from the international community, but nowadays there's nothing, and refugees just live in extreme poverty. If they have relatives they rely on them for help, but many have none.

So the new government is faced with enormous tasks, to get the economy back on its feet, to return Serbia to the world, and the world to Serbia. That's very difficult work. For example, \$6 billion is needed to renew the economy, and Yugoslavia doesn't have it, and no one is going to give it to us.

Also, Serbia is now both different and the same. The new government and its policies are no different from the previous one. It did not criticise the policies of Milosevic before, when in opposition, especially his nationalism. They used to say they were more nationalist than Milosevic, and that they would better defend the interests of Serbia, including Kostunica, who is a hard-line right-wing nationalist. In method, he is opportunist and soft, but ideologically hard-line, harder than Milosevic.

In my opinion, only the people have changed in Serbia, not the politics, not

the regime. For example, during Milosevic's time, there were two pictures of Serbia - one given by the Milosevic state media, the other by the alternative independent media. Today, there's only one image - everyone speaks well of the new government and of Kostunica.

In one research study, it was found that from 5 October (when Kostunica came to power) to 5 November there was only one article critical of him published in all the media. (In Yugoslavia there are 200 radio stations, 5 daily papers, plus 150 magazines, weeklies etc).

But there are two very important changes in Serbia: Firstly, the atmosphere is open and friendly and people are discussing and talking freely. Second - and this is decisive - for the first time the working class has come on to the political scene.

The workers as citizens defend the new government, but at the same time, as workers they are spontaneously occupying their factories, seeking to take them back into their own hands. This is still going on today, although not as much as previously.

So the Kostunica government has the support of the workers only as citizens. They voted for it, but as workers they have their own demands. The other problem, regarding this activity of occupations and self management, is that the independent unions also do not relate to the workers as a class.

Q Are they actually against the occupations?

A: Some are: the nationalist, chauvinist unions are against. As to the others, their leaderships are against, the rank and file support them. I think that this question of workers' rights and the expression of the real interests of the workers will be the main problem of the future for government.

There is a further problem. The coalition that won in the elections is a coalition of 18 parties, ranging from the left to the far right. The left parties in Yugoslavia are a



Kostunica: a new face at the top, but what else has changed?

bit stronger, especially among the youth. The youth are the future.

Q So what do they unite around, other than simply getting rid of Milosevic?

A: They are united only against Milosevic. People in Yugoslavia voted against but not for anything.

Q How long can this coalition survive?

A: Not long. There's a problem among ordinary people now. There's no electricity. Every day at 8 o'clock, they turn it off for 8 hours. Also, the prices of basics such as bread, milk, and meat have risen by 200-300 per cent. Wages have fallen by 50 per cent.

And people connect this with the new government. This means that there is a danger that Milosevic will be returned at the next elections. Especially since the power in the Republics is stronger than the central, federal power, and Milosevic and his party are dominant in the Serbian Republic. And the other Republic of Montenegro does not respect the federal government. This is the other problem which presents danger for the future.

Q: How can Milosevic come back? Wouldn't he be murdered?

A: If the new government cannot stabilise the situation, it increases the possibility of Milosevic's return. Because there is no real choice for Yugoslavs - just Milosevic or another. There's no alternative programme being put forward.

Q: Does the new government have control of all aspects of the army, police and secret service?

A: There have been no changes as regards police,

the secret service or the military. The same people are still at the head and in control.

Q: Who pays them? The government?

A: No one really knows - it's all secret! In Serbia there's money for the army, police, secret service etc, then there's 'other money' which we don't know about! Milosevic has money abroad in Cyprus, Greece and Switzerland.

Q Can we go back to the beginning, about Serb nationalism, the point you made about Milosevic destroying Yugoslavia ... does the new government also have aspirations towards a greater Serbia?

A: Kostunica doesn't talk about Greater Serbia, but nevertheless he supports the policy, and supported it during Milosevic's government.

For the new government it is not a problem that Milosevic waged the wars, the problem is that he didn't win them. They know that Greater Serbia is not possible now. No one supports it. So they don't talk about it.

Q But this means they will do everything possible to ensure Kosova and Montenegro remain part of the Federation and don't get independence?

A: The policy of the new government, like that of Milosevic, especially in relation to Kosova, is that the Kosovar Albanians don't have any rights. But they won't really do anything about the issue, so they keep silent, just saying that Kosova is part of Yugoslavia, and that's the position of the UN. But in reality, Kosova is a protectorate of the international community.

Q: Do you think Kosova and Montenegro should be independent, if the majority of people want this?

A: Together with a lot of people in Yugoslavia, I think that Kosova has a right to self-determination, and the left parties in the coalition support this! And also Montenegro. But there is not a strong wish for it in Montenegro, as there is in Kosova.

For me and for the workers movement in Yugoslavia, it is very important to defend the right of the Albanians to self-determination.

For example, the lead mine in Trepca in Kosova: three times the miners have demonstrated demanding from the international community firstly, to have their jobs back, secondly, their mine back. Many enterprises in Serbia still use products from Trepca. If the mine is returned to the Trepca miners, it would help us in our struggle to have our mines and factories returned to us.

One reason why I've come to Britain is to seek support for this struggle.

In Yugoslavia there are a lot of illusions still about privatisation - they don't have a lot of either knowledge or experience about it, and we need this, which you already have.

The leadership of the unions is for privatisation, but the rank and file workers are not.

Also, we need help to renew the links between the unions in Serbia and the unions in Kosova and the former republics. At the beginning of the 1990s we had those ties, but the NATO bombing destroyed them. It had taken us 5 years to build up these links. Now we don't want to wait another 5 years to build them up again. With your help we can do it quicker.

Praful Bidwai

They came from near the uranium mines of Jaduguda and the nuclear test site at Pokharan. They represented the Adivasis (aboriginal people) of the Narmada Valley, the industrial workers of Mumbai, the fisherfolk of Tamil Nadu, and the peasants of West Bengal. They came from schools and colleges, from art studios and science laboratories, from community health organisations and right-to know campaigns. From the semi-desert of Baluchistan, the lush-green south of Sri Lanka, the paddy-growing plains of Bangladesh.

They were feminists and social activists, trade unionists and small farmers, writers and journalists, physicians and engineers, teachers and students, environmentalists and people's science activists, Gandhians and post-modernists, human-rights campaigners and social scientists, artists and film-makers, musicians and theatre people, even former generals and admirals. They also came from Japan and England, Holland and Malaysia, America and Australasia, South Africa and France.

They came with hundreds of banners signed by thousands, and with scores of posters and paper-crane buntings. They spoke Oriya and Rajasthani, Sindhi and Telugu, Chhattisgarhi and Gujarati, Punjabi and Tamil, English and French....

The 600-plus delegates to India's first-ever National Convention for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace held in New Delhi comprised the most varied gathering of peace activists ever assembled in India. It was, as former Chief of Naval Staff L. Ramdas put it, "a veritable peace-fest... and an altogether exciting historic landmark".

The Convention was the culmination of a one-year-long process of meetings and consultations involving nearly 120 groups and organisations, as well as individual peace activists, in more than 10 Indian cities. It was also the beginning of a new phase in India's broad-based Rainbow Coalition-type movement for nuclear weapons abolition.

The Convention offered Indian peace activists the first national-level opportunity to debate a range of theoretical and practical issues, exchange experiences, and achieve a degree of clarity on aims and methods. It established India's first-ever Coalition for



Conflicts such as that over Kashmir are dangerous enough without the threat of nuclear weapons being used by either side

National Convention for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace, November 11-13, 2000

A landmark in popular resistance

Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP), a network with a 50-member Coordination Committee.

The Coalition gives India's peace movement an organised national presence and profile. This fills a major void. Since the 1998 nuclear tests, there have been sustained—and growing—protests in more than 40 cities

against weapons of mass destruction and India's nuclear policy volte face. These tended to be discrete, and unconnected to a structure with a national (and international) presence, profile and perspective.

Matters changed with networking among different groups early in 2000 and the holding of three preparatory meetings, interspersed with an intense and very robust email debate on the Convention's concept, function, programme, organisation, composition, finance and logistics.

Three-quarters of the Convention's delegates came from outside Delhi. They all paid for their own travel and on an average spent a week in preparing for and attending the Convention.

There were 50 delegates from Pakistan (down from 60 owing to visa problems), 15 from the rest of South Asia, and about 20 from Australasia, Northeast and Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe and America. They included campaigners such as Bruce Kent and Jeremy Corbyn (MP) from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), representatives of the Abolition-2000 network, and Japanese activists, besides the Pakistan Peace Coalition.

The Programme of the Convention, spread over three days, was divided into five Plenaries, 22 Working Group sessions in four broad categories, and cultural events culminating in "Celebration of Peace", with live music, theatre and poetry recital, in Central Delhi.

The flow of the Convention's deliberations led from an analysis of recent international and national developments; discussions on how to construct a strong moral, legal, politi-

cal and security-based case against nuclear weapons and their impact; understanding the experience of peace movements regionally and globally; and developing strategies and campaign tools for an abolition movement in South Asia.

The deliberations ended with the adoption of an Action Plan and an Interim Charter, and the election of a Coordination Committee.

The Action Plan includes a number of specific programmes and campaigns, including:

- regional disarmament conventions and sectoral meetings of professionals,
- advocacy and lobbying of political parties,
- "twinning" of 10 anti-nuclear weapons schools and colleges in India and Pakistan,
- institutionalising a "Nuclear Disarmament and Peace Week" from August 4 to 10 every year,
- and setting up a national federation of radiation victims, besides enhancing the South Asian peace movement's presence in international peace forums.

The Inaugural Plenary set the tone and broad agenda of the Convention. The speakers included novelist Arundhati Roy, former Admiral L. Ramdas, energy scientist A.K.N. Reddy, Narmada Bachao Andolan leader Medha Patkar and M.B. Naqvi and Karamat Ali (both from Pakistan Peace Coalition), besides Praful Bidwai, who introduced the Convention's rationale. The two chairs who read a few of the 30-plus solidarity messages received from peace networks and organisations and one government (New Zealand).

The principal thrust of the speeches was on the immorality of nuclear weapons, the fallacy of nuclear deterrence, the crucial importance of comprehensive or human security, and need to build the broadest possible social coalition for peace.

Following the Plenary, the first set of Working Groups dealt with "The Case against Nuclear Weapons. The discussions were initiated wherever possible by mixed teams from India, Pakistan and elsewhere, and encouraged full participation from all present in Indian languages (with informal interpretation) as well as English.

The Groups stressed the deterioration in South Asian security caused by nuclearisation, the further hardening of India's (Pakistan's) nuclear postures since 1998, and the growing danger of a new arms race from US anti-ballistic missile programmes. Differences between participants remained sharp on the issue of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, although there was better appreciation of divergent positions.

There was complete unanimity that there must be no further nuclear tests, no acquisition of fissile material and no research on nuclear weapons. (See the attached tentative Charter.)

The second category of Working Groups dealt with "The Impact of Nuclear Weapons on the People". These Groups generated a potent critique of the ideology of nuclearism

Resolution on Nuclear Missile Defence and Theatre Missile Defence of the USA

This National Convention for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace condemns unequivocally the proposal of the US Government to deploy so-called National Missile Defence (NMD) and Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) systems.

While this programme may be currently on hold under the Clinton administration, it is more than likely that the next administration under the pressure of defence contractors will actually deploy Nuclear Missile Defence and Theatre Missile Defence systems.

The promotion of the Nuclear Missile Defence and the Theatre Missile Defence in the US political arena has all the hallmarks of the manner in which the US nuclear programme has been expanded, refined and sharpened.

Fraudulent tests (or improperly designed ones) are used to argue that the technology for this exists and can be developed and deployed. International treaties like the Anti Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty are sought to be circumvented or undermined or rejected.

New bogus threats, like the danger of rogue weapons in the hands of so-called 'rogue states' are created to justify the pro-

grammes. Objective opinion concurs that even against 'nuclear' terrorist threats, NMD and TMD make little sense.

The very discussion of the proposals for the NMD and the TMD in the US has evoked strong reactions from other Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) and any pursuit of these programmes will only harden the nuclear doctrine, strategies and postures of the other NWS.

The pursuit of the NMD and the TMD will be a serious blow to the cause of global nuclear disarmament. This conference considers it a crucial task of the global anti-nuclear weapons movement to mobilize vigorously against these programmes.

This conference calls on the Government of India to resolutely and forcefully record the opposition of the Indian people to the NMD and the TMD in all international fora.

13/11/2000
New Delhi

Organising Committee,
National Convention for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace,
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and its contribution to virulent nationalism, communalism, and male-supremacism, with an emphasis on nuclearisation's onerous economic and social costs and harmful impact on health, food security, employment and education.

The mainstream media's role in promoting chauvinistic nationalism and in legitimising nuclearism through unbalanced news and comment came in for widespread criticism—itsself validated by the appallingly poor media coverage the Convention received.

Surprisingly, the issue of link between nuclear power and nuclear weapons, and of the viability and desirability of nuclear power generation, which was widely expected to generate heated debate, produced a remarkably sober discussion, with even the staunchest proponents of nuclear power conceding that in their existing designs and operational practices, most nuclear installations are far from safe or economical.

They did not contest AKN Reddy's computation of the high cost of nuclear electricity, or his support for cheaper alternatives. There was a dispute over the inevitability of the power-weapons nexus. But there was unanimity that there must be no compromise on health, safety standards or transparency.

Physicist M.V. Ramana made a significant presentation on the effects of nuclear explosions and accidents, building upon his earlier work, Bombing Bombay.

November 12 opened with a Plenary and heard a series of presentations on the activities and concerns of delegates representing different regions, sectors and constituencies which discussed the movement's progress in different parts of India, in South Asia and the world. Of particular importance were reports from the states, the semi-urban areas of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu, besides campaigns in major cities like Calcutta and Bangalore.

This Plenary was the main forum at which the international delegates spoke about their activities in national movements and in international coalitions like Abolition-2000 (a network over 2000 peace groups), New Agenda Coalition (comprised of Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden), the Middle Powers Initiative, the World Court Project (which led to the legal verdict against nuclear weapons in 1996), and the Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone Network, etc.

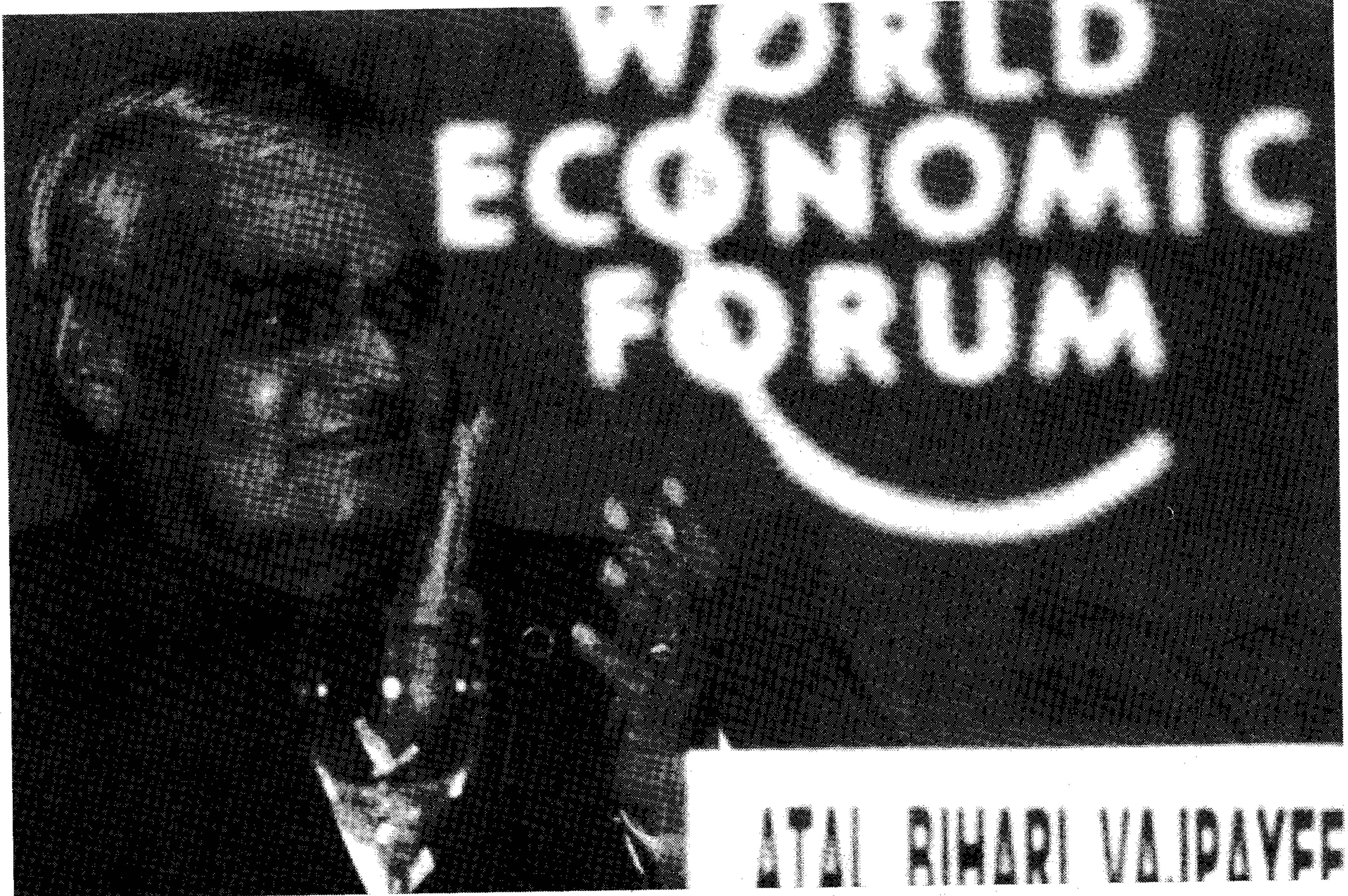
Speakers outlined the opportunities available to peace activists to lobby international disarmament forums. They emphasised the significance of the growing South Asian peace movement for abolition efforts worldwide, and more important, for the global peace movement.

Some said the centre of gravity of the global movement is shifting to South Asia. Some others argued that the South Asian abolition campaign has already become an indispensable input into the international movement, one which would rejuvenate it, and help it get out of the state of decline into which it has drifted in many NATO and former Warsaw Pact countries after the Cold War ended.

Following the Plenary was the third set of Working Groups, on building a "Movement in India against nuclear weapons: sectoral and statewise strategies". Simultaneous with these, there was a special Session on the "Campaign for Safety and Environmental Aspects of Nuclear Power and Uranium Mining", chaired by Dhirendra Sharma and Ghanashyam Biruli, the grassroots activists from Jaduguda uranium mines.

The eight Working Groups focused upon specific sectors. Their deliberations produced specific proposals on how to put nuclear disarmament on the agenda of youth, NGOs, medical and scientific associations, trade unions, the women's movement, etc, by underscoring the practical impact of nuclearisation on their priorities, as well as on the larger society and politics. Of particular relevance was the Working Group on sensitising the Media to non-conventional notions of security.

This was followed by the screening of an award-winning documentary by Shri Prakash



Under pressure to listen to a wide anti-nuclear movement: Indian premier Vajpayee

(Jharkhand), "The Buddha Weeps at Jaduguda", which depicts the havoc wreaked upon the health of uranium miners and their families by patently unsafe practices and avoidable exposure to radioactivity and other toxins.

The fourth (and final) session of the Working Groups was devoted to the nitty-gritty of developing "Networking, methods, forms — campaign experience: methodologies and campaign materials for different constituencies".

These sessions focused on educational material and cultural products, and discussions on Networking and Resource-Sharing and Advocacy. Another Working Group produced a draft "Plan of Action" to be presented to the Final Plenary.

The Evening Plenary of November 12 heard reports from the Working Groups, besides watching an educational slide-show by Chennai-based scientists, simplifying complex facts of nuclear physics, on how the Bomb works, and what makes it an illegitimate weapon of mass destruction.

The Closing Plenary on November 13 discussed the Plan of Action, adopted a (tentative) Charter for Nuclear Disarmament for Peace and, most important, established a Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and choose its Coordination Committee.

There were more than 30 interventions and many amendments to the Draft Charter, itself subjected to an intense debate over six months. Some speakers questioned the Draft statement of India's nuclear policy after the first Pokharan test of 1974. Several underlined the importance of broadening the concept of peace.

Many speakers noted the uneven development of the movement in different regions, and underlined the need to strengthen it especially in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala, the Northeastern states, etc and to address special constituencies like environmentalists, educationists, political leaders, and Dalits.

However, so numerous were the Charter amendments, both substantive and stylistic, that the chair felt they could not be all incorporated into a document to be adopted that morning. The Plenary broadly accepted that it adopt a one-page summary of the thrust of the Charter, leaving the final document to the Coordination Committee. This summary was accepted (and later released to the press).

The Plenary adopted a plan of action and resolved to work on a clearing house of infor-

mation and campaign material, on advocacy and lobbying, besides implementing the specific campaigns outlined in programme.

The Plenary established a Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP) based on the principles contained in the Draft Charter and Plan of Action. Finally, the Plenary voted for a 50-member Coordination Committee. This Committee will have a Secretariat of 12 members, no more than five of whom will be from Delhi.

Forty members were proposed by the Nominations Committee (formed in the first Plenary, which had received over 90 names).

Interim charter for nuclear disarmament and peace

This National Convention for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace resolutely opposes nuclear weapons in India, South Asia and globally. Nuclear weapons are evil and immoral. They divert resources from real needs, promote insecurity, are genocidal, undermine democracy, endanger the environment and future generations.

This Convention unequivocally condemns India's entry into the Nuclear Weapons Club in 1998 which represents a betrayal of its own past positions.

This Convention resolves to bring together largest members of groups, organizations and individuals on a common platform with the following Agenda. To carry forward this Agenda we constitute ourselves into a National Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace.

India:

To halt and roll back India's nuclear weapons-related preparations and activity we demand the following measures to be implemented immediately:

- No assembly of nuclear weapons, no induction and deployment of nuclear weapons. No acquisition and development of nuclear weapon-specific delivery systems.

- Advanced research into nuclear weapons to be halted. No to explosive testing, sub-critical tests, or production or acquisition of weapons-usable fissile material tritium.

- Complete transparency and independent monitoring of governmental activity in this regard and full public accountability on nuclear development and energy matters.

It selected the 40 on the basis of their contribution to the movement, as well as regional, gender and sectoral balance. The other 10 members will be co-opted later.

The Closing Plenary ended with a vote of thanks to the participants, chairs and speakers, the numerous institutions which helped, the artistes and musicians who performed, and not least, the 50-plus volunteers who looked after the practical arrangements.

The final item on the Convention agenda was the five hour-long Public Event at Mandi House, in which 12 different ensembles/troupes performed.

- Proper compensation and reparation to all victims and their families for damages to health and local environment by activities related to all aspects (from uranium mining to reactor operation to waste disposal) of the nuclear fuel cycle. Priority must be given to remedial measures for all environmental damage.

Other Nuclear Capable and Nuclear Weapons States

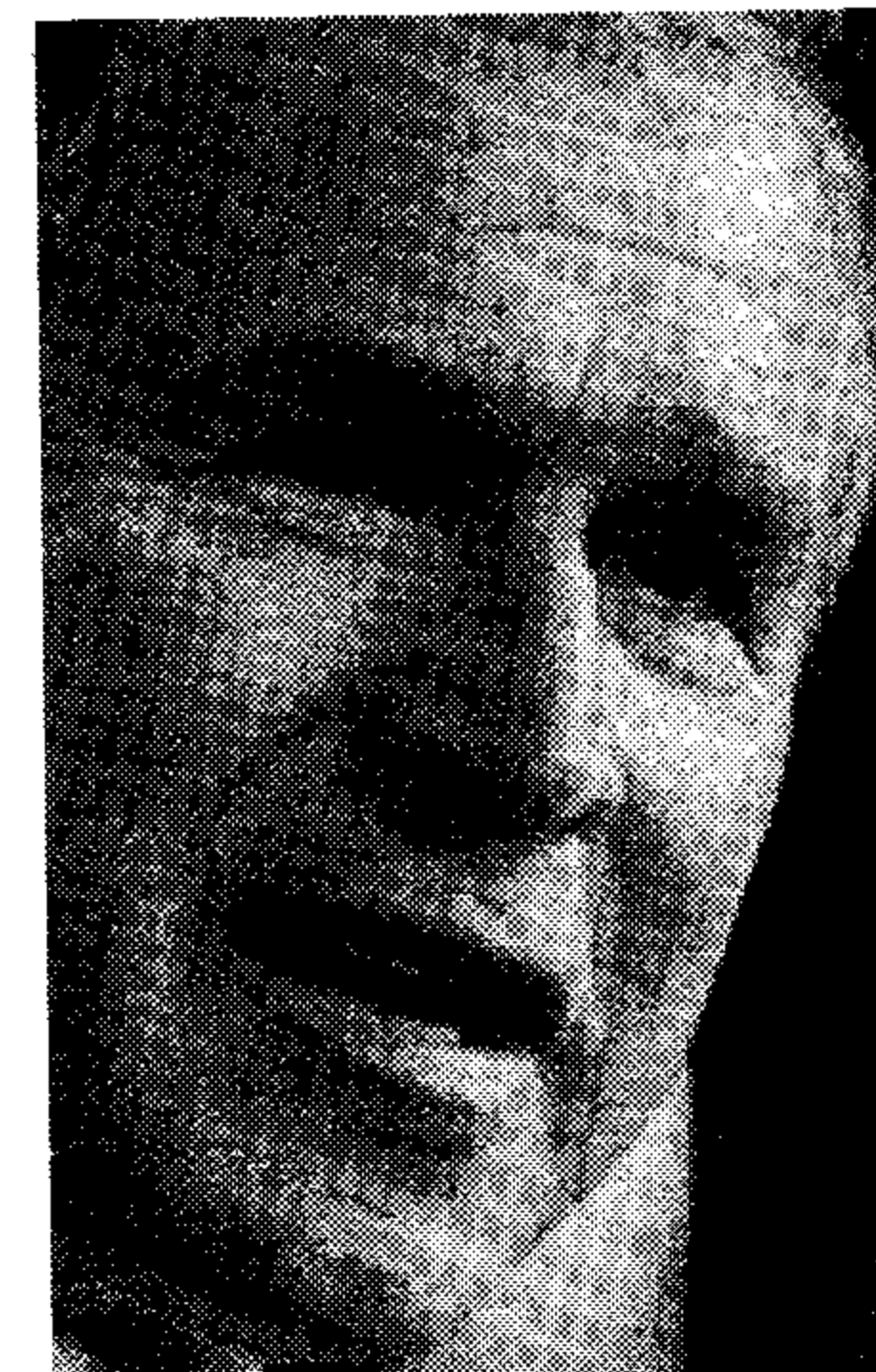
- We demand similar immediate measures of nuclear restraint and roll back from Pakistan. Given the tensions and potential for war in West Asia, we demand complete dismantling of Israel's nuclear weapons regime.

- All the N-5 or Nuclear Weapons States (USA, Russia, Britain, France and China,) must immediately de-alert their nuclear weapons systems, make a pledge of No First Use and stop all research into advanced nuclear weapons. No to all efforts to construct an anti-ballistic missile system or missile shield.

- We demand the rapid, systematic and continuous reduction by the N-5 of their nuclear weapons down to zero level through unilateral, bilateral and multilateral commitments and pacts.

WE DEMAND that the Indian Government go back to being among the pacesetters in matters of global nuclear disarmament.

WE WANT a nuclear weapons free world and we support all genuine efforts in pursuit of this goal. In this effort we commit ourselves to the global nuclear disarmament movement and will strive to strengthen international solidarity in this endeavour.



Likely President George "Dubya" could launch new round of nuclear tension

BLOODY SUNDAY: history lessons for the Education Minister ... and others

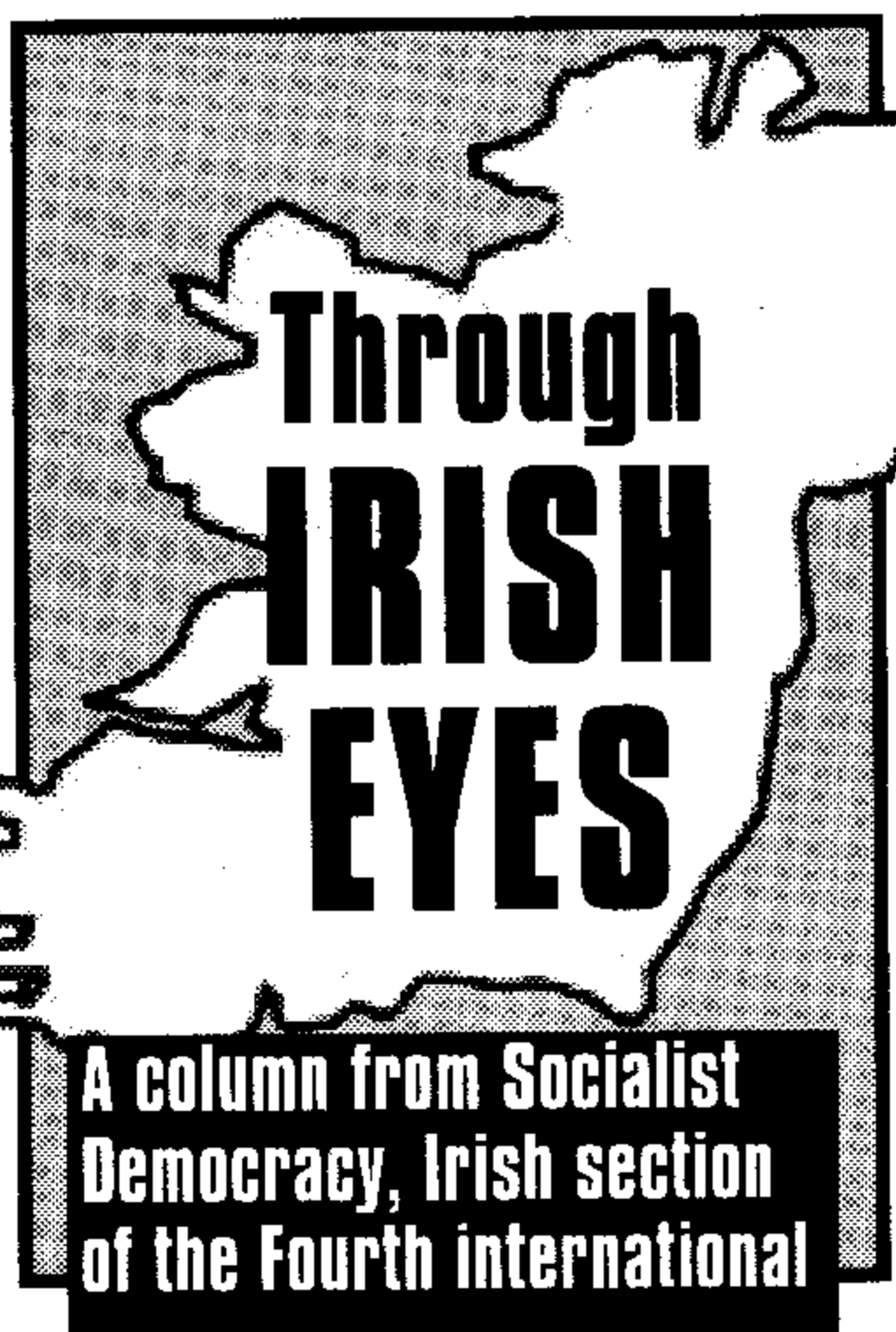
David Coen

On Sunday January 30, 1972 British paratroops shot dead 13 unarmed demonstrators on the streets of the Bogside in Derry. 13 more were injured, one of whom died later. Seven of those who died were teenagers. Five had been shot in the back.

The Derry Coroner, Major Hubert O' Neill, not inclined to nationalist sympathies, reported: "It strikes me that the army ran amok that day and they shot without thinking of what they were doing. There were shooting innocent people.

"These people may have been taking part in an illegal parade that was banned, but I don't think that justifies the firing of live rounds indiscriminately. I say it without reservation it was sheer unadulterated murder."

The official report produced by Lord Widgery, a High Court Judge, claimed, without any evidence, that the army had been fired upon, or that some of the victims had been using nail bombs. Every year since 1972 the Bloody Sunday demonstrations in Derry and in Britain has sought to draw attention to what happened, focusing not just on the shooting of peaceful demon-



strators protesting against internment without trial and for civil rights, but on its political significance.

In 1998 a new inquiry under Lord Saville was set up as part of the 'peace process'. The families of those who died are determined to overturn the lies of the Widgery Report and to exonerate their relatives. Till now the Saville inquiry has given plenty of opportunity to the British government to pour out a series of justifications for the action of the Paras, some of which are farcical.

To anyone watching the Israelis' use of live rounds against Palestinian stone throwers, what happened on Blood Sunday is so clear as to

require no further inquiries. It was another massacre by British troops in a long line of atrocities in British colonies from Aden to India.

The main objective of the British government is to prevent the Inquiry showing the degree of political direction for the massacre, which came from Ted Heath's Tory government.

The British army had been sent back on to the streets of the North in 1969, supposedly to keep the peace between two warring religions; in fact the British (Labour) government sent in the Army because the RUC (and the Unionists) were losing control. Peaceful demonstrations would be put down by armed force. In fact, the British Army had planned Bloody Sunday, down to adapting their standard issue rifles to take smaller bullets suitable for use against crowds.

Seeing peaceful demonstrators shot off the streets, many joined the IRA. British propaganda and myopia on the Left portray the struggle in Ireland as a romantic throwback, an out of date nationalism which has no place in the modern world. The truth is that before Bloody Sunday most nationalists genuinely believed that

they could achieve Civil Rights within the Six County State.

After the shootings two things were clear:

- no reform was possible - the sectarian Six-County State had to be dismantled;
- behind the hated Unionist paramilitaries of the RUC, which had repeatedly attacked (and been driven out of) nationalist areas, stood the might of the British state, which was determined to use whatever force was required to keep the Six County State in place.

The supreme irony of the "peace process" is that the Derry IRA man, who, the British farcically claim, fired an alleged shot that triggered Bloody Sunday, is now the Minister for Education at Stormont.

The question to Martin McGuinness and all others who support the "peace process" is: what has changed since 1972? The answer: nothing.

The sectarianism, which gave rise to the Civil Rights marches, is simply institutionalised by the Stormont Agreement. The name of the RUC is changed, but not much else.

Nationalists and Unionists pursue separate development



Decades of protests have demanded justice since Bloody Sunday

in separate territories governed by their own leaders.

On the one side, the Unionists yearn for the certainties of Britain and the Empire; on the other, Nationalists are dominated by a Sinn Fein totally in hock to the fake republicanism of Dublin and Irish America. Corruption, graft and sectarianism - in Connolly's words, another "carnival of reaction" - will be the inevitable outcome.

Those British supporters of the 'peace process' who believe it will create the possibility of working class unity are deluding themselves.

The Saville Inquiry is but another step in the pacification of Ireland. In the unlikely event of it revealing British Government complicity in the massacre, some in the Republican Movement will see that as supporting their view that the sectarian state could not be broken, and the only alternative is to participate in running it.

The mass of nationalist people, like the Palestinians, will surely take a very different view.

The danger is that next time the gunfire at the demonstrations will come not from the British but from other nationalists.

Republican writers – tactical retreat hides new threat

The campaign defending members of the Republican writers group in Belfast from physical intimidation by the Republican movement has entered a period of difficulty. This is in part due to initial success.

The unjustified nature of the killing of real IRA member Joe O'Connor and the clumsy and brutal nature of the intimidation of the writers who investigated the killing provoked a backlash amongst republican supporters.

Unfortunately the leadership have faced many backlashes in the progress of the peace process, and have learnt that - in the absence of any political opposition - dealing with their unhappy supporters is simply a matter of making tactical retreats while refusing to budge on the main issue.

This is the case today. Initial attacks led to a wave of anger in republican areas of Belfast and a series of letters of support for the writers - Tommy Gorman and Tony McIntyre.

Prominent sympathisers in Dublin expressed opposition to the attacks. Socialist Party Dail member Joe Higgins was contacted and the Irish Socialist Workers Party expressed strong opposition to the witch hunt.

Gerry Adams faced sharp questioning in the USA following pickets of his tour by the mother of the dead RIRA volunteer. In the face of the criticism, Adams announced that he would support an enquiry into the death. It looked like a republican retreat.

Worrying

However a closer look revealed a more worrying picture. Adams' support for an enquiry was conditional on his judging that Mrs O'Connor was not under the influence of other organisations like the real IRA: this was in practice a diplomatic way of refusing the demand.

The physical attacks have died down, but this is because Tony McIntyre and his pregnant partner have been forced from their home. A new slander cam-

paign has been launched.

Essentially the republicans argue anonymously in a series of letters that their attacks are based on the writers naming the gunmen who killed Joe O'Connor rather than on their political opposition. It has been demonstrated conclusively that the RWG members did not have those names.

Now the republicans allege a complicated smear in which some of the writers are linked to a website, with the bulletin board on the site containing information (not posted by the writers) speculating about the identity of a rumoured British mole called "steak knife". The physical threat to the writers still exists. If the level of protest dies down the level of threat is likely to increase sharply.

Socialists and civil libertarians should contact the republican movement directly, and inform the RWG website that they have done so.

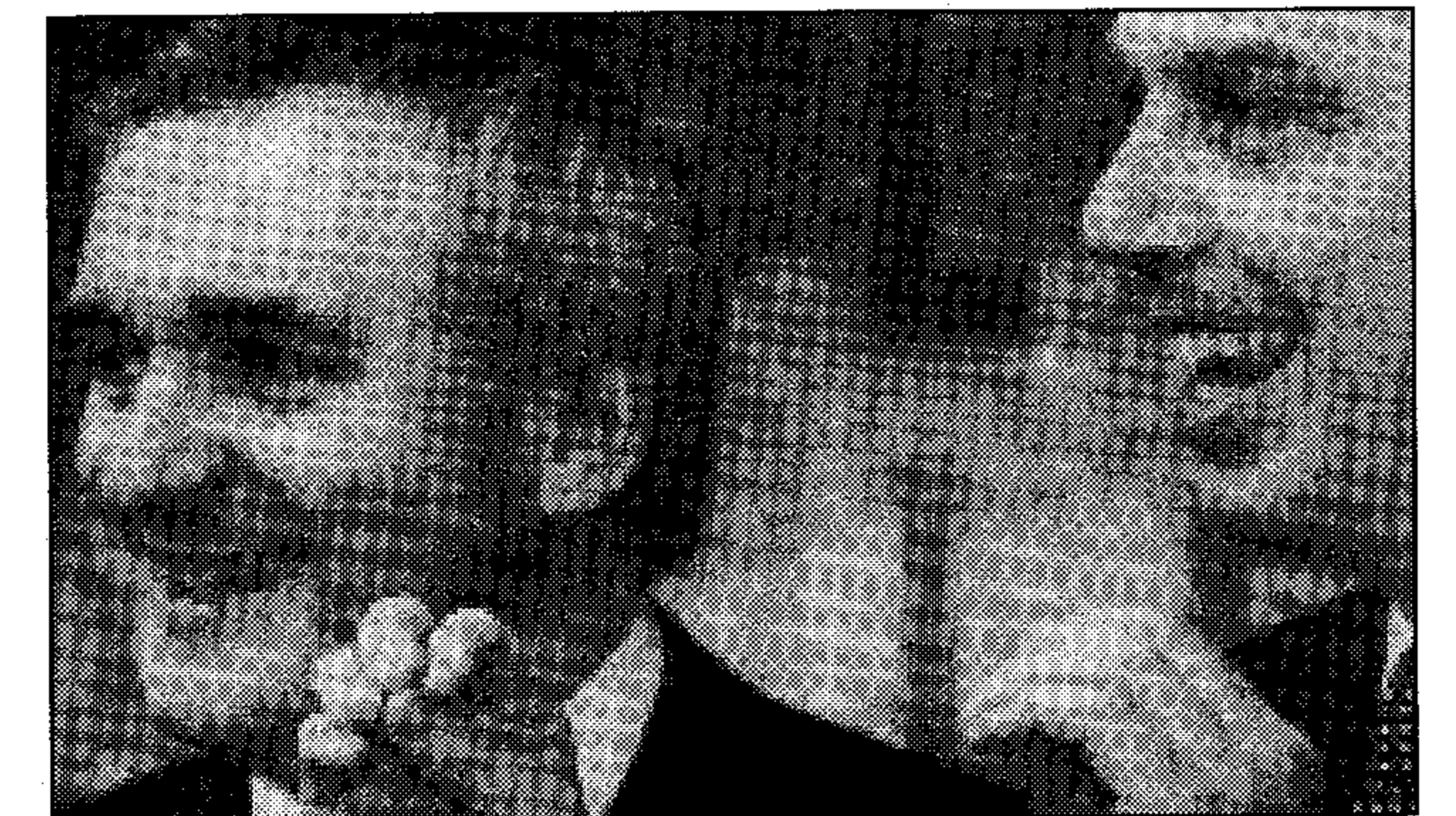
IRWG at <http://rwg.phoblacht.net/>

Charged ... with fighting racism

Eleven anti-racist activists from Dublin are being charged in relation to a protest against state racism which took place at the Taoiseach's constituency office on March 28.

On that day a short sit-in took place at the office. The action was taken as, at that time, the cabinet was meeting to discuss a number of draconian measures to be introduced against asylum seekers. These included:

- * The introduction of detention camps
 - * The introduction of accommodation on prison ships (also called 'floats')
 - * Forcible fingerprinting of asylum seekers
 - * An expansion of the compulsory dispersal system
- The anti-racist groups involved took the decision to highlight these injustices in a direct but entirely peaceful manner. Occupations have been used many times in



Bertie Ahern is no more keen than Blair to welcome asylum seekers

the past to draw attention to unjust actions by governments in Ireland.

All eleven activists were arrested and two women were later strip-searched in Fitzgibbon Street Garda Station.

The activists have now been charged under the 1994 Public Order Act, with refusing to obey the direction of a Garda.

The maximum sentence is individual fines of £500 and/or a six month sentence. The cases are being

heard in the Dublin District Court on December 12 and 15 2000.

We believe that racism is the real crime, fighting it is not a crime. We are calling for the charges to be dropped.

* Send a message of support to the activists facing trial to: Residents Against Racism, c/o Comhlamh, 10 Upper Camden St., Dublin 2

E-mail messages of support to: dublin_11@hotmail.com



Andrew Ward

How they are best remembered: RUC under fire from nationalists for protecting Orange marchers' "right" to march down the Garvaghy Road.

RUC – Back to the future?

John North

If there is one thing that has stood as a touchstone for the corrupt sectarian British colony in the North of Ireland, it is the local police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC).

The present troubles began with the RUC attacking demonstrations, murdering Catholic civilians and leading sectarian pogroms into Catholic areas.

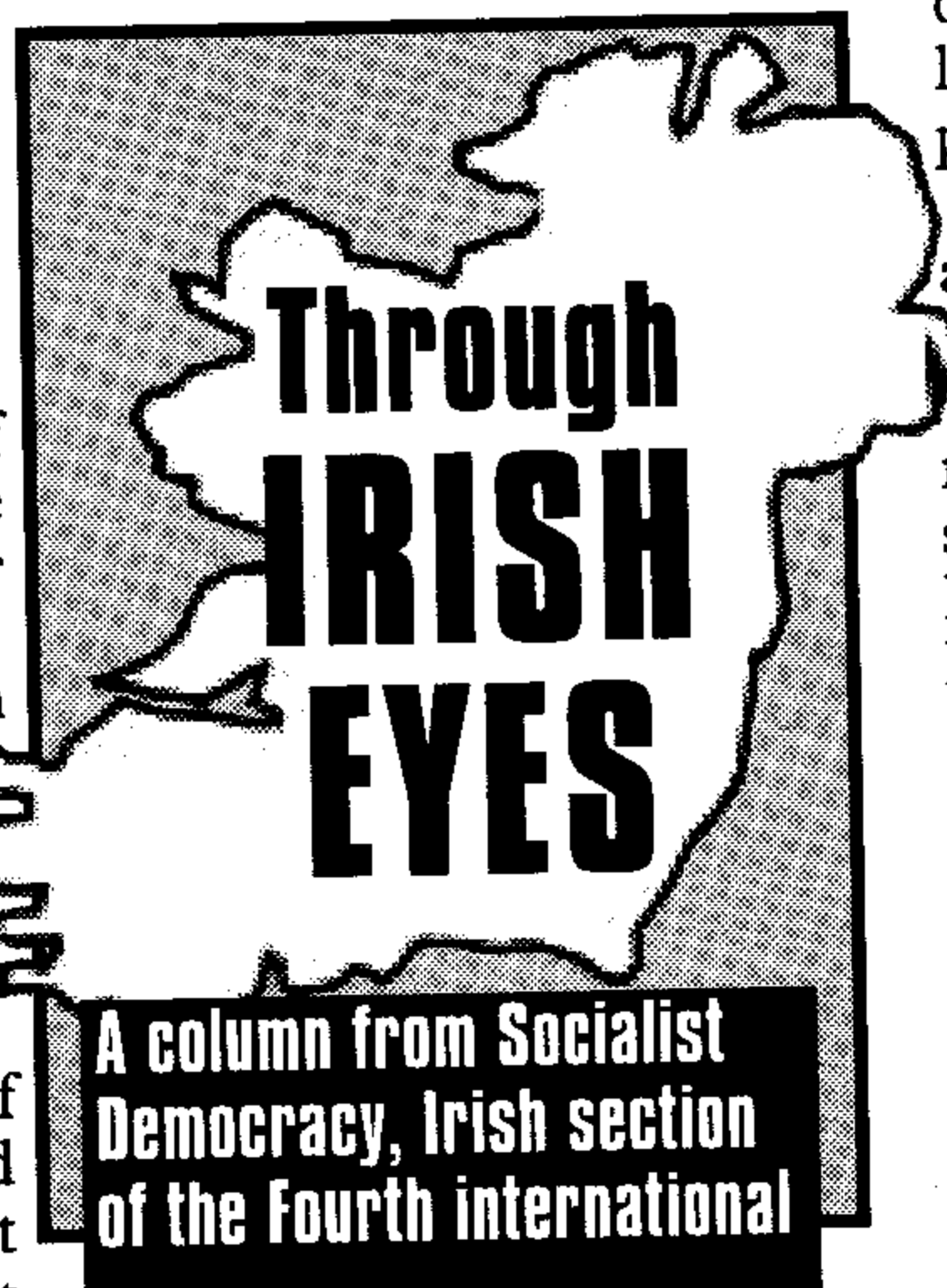
Later, when the leaders of the infamous riot squad had been promoted to the most senior posts in the RUC, it spearheaded murder, torture, internment, shoot-to-kill and involvement in the loyalist campaign of random sectarian murder.

Recent allegations involved the murder of Human Rights lawyers Pat Finucane and Rosemary Nelson. The RUC watched indifferently as Robert Hamill was beaten to death in the centre of Portadown.

Attempts to investigate the force came to nothing. Manchester police chief John Stalker who tried to probe RUC conduct was himself investigated, and evidence for the Stephens enquiry disappeared in a mystery fire.

Now, following November's vote in the British parliament, the RUC has gone. Its name has been changed to the Northern Ireland Police Service.

That's it. Very little else has changed and the RUC remains essentially the RUC.



If the RUC were the touchstone for the corruption of the northern Irish statelet, then the Patten report was seen as the touchstone for reform. It promised to modernise, democratise and desectarianise the RUC.

However the RUC were not to be disbanded. The issues were to be viewed as issues of perception, culture and identity rather than democratic rights. The solution was to be viewed as finding a balance rather than righting wrongs.

The outcome was an offensive, where the nationalist working class were to support the RUC now, but any major changes were to be aspirations for thirty years hence.

Acceptance of Patten rested on acceptance of the Good Friday Agreement. If the Northern colony was to become a democracy and sectarianism was to wither

on the vine then it would no longer need a sectarian police force.

If, as Socialist Democracy argued, the Good Friday Agreement was simply an imperialist offensive to restabilise the sectarian statelet, then in practice the RUC would remain the RUC.

It had become clearer earlier in the process that democratisation did not mean an end to emergency powers and the strong state. Emergency legislation restricting democratic rights was to be incorporated into common law, and the non-injury Diplock courts were to be retained.

This was largely ignored by the republicans. Their focus, and the focus of the 'nationalist family', was on democracy in the sense of local control of the force and independent oversight to restrain its tendency towards sectarian murder and pogrom.

It is this democratisation that has been removed and, unkindest cut of all for the republicans, removed by the British state rather than as a result of unionist pressure. The British government, as the current Bloody Sunday enquiry shows, have never forgotten that the role of their forces in Ireland is coercion and that the role of the law is to protect their forces and obscure that reality.

To understand the process occurring now in the aftermath of the Police Bill we need to recognise the relationship between British and

Irish capital.

Irish capital recognises Britain's authority and negotiates within the boundaries of British interest. Once they have reached the limits of negotiation, the Irish capitalists must join immediately with the British in enforcing the deal and ensuring that there is no working class backlash that could threaten their own position.

Nationalist family

It is now that the "nationalist family", the secret political weapon of unity with Irish capital with which Sinn Fein was to face down the British, comes into its own. The end point of Patten will be nationalist acceptance of the RUC.

The "Castle Catholics" who support unionism have already spoken out*. The Catholic church has said that support would be "premature" – which means that open support is just around the corner.

The Dublin Government has made it clear that they support the amended Patten proposals. The SDLP say that lobbying the British on the implementation package is the way forward – but of course that means supporting the package.

Catholic Bishop Sean Brady set out the policy of nationalist Ireland most clearly at a religious service in County Louth on November 26.

In his view Patten was progress. So also was the Police Bill. Progress had been achieved by negotia-

tion. Involvement in implementation was required to secure further negotiation. Successful negotiation required confidence and stability ... and the road to confidence and stability was the surrender or destruction of IRA weaponry.

The SDLP face a difficulty. Westminster elections loom. Settling for the RUC with a new name is highly unpopular even with their own members. The British government stands ready to help them out.

Earlier in the process, when Trimble was in difficulty just before the mass vote on the Good Friday agreement, Tony Blair issued a "letter of comfort" assuring the unionists that their sectarian privilege would remain. Now a similar document, assuring SDLP supporters that Patten is alive, is to be released. There really is very little doubt which way the SDLP will jump.

Strategy

Sinn Fein's strategy stands in terminal decline. They promised that the new administration in the North would be transitional, with equal weight given to "two traditions".

Their ministers administer a British statelet, forced to fly the union flag from their ministries. They said they would hold power. They can't even hold cross-border meetings without the permission of David Trimble.

Now Patten, such as it was, turns out to be a dud. Their friend Bill Clinton is coming and the pressure is on for them to take another 'risk for peace' by moderating their opposition to the Police Bill. They are also expected to surrender or publicly destroy weapons.

Even then the unionist right may bring down Trimble and force the suspension of the executive.

Sinn Fein could break from the Good Friday agreement and from the 'nationalist family' to stand against this rotten deal. To do so would

mean confessing that their strategy is in ruins and leave the SDLP in government.

There is still room for Sinn Fein in an alliance with Irish capital, but there is no room for any hint of republicanism. The reaction of the nationalists to the Police Bill demonstrates once again that there is not the slightest vestige of democracy in their programme and therefore there is no possibility of meeting the needs and aspirations of the working-class republican base.

Gerry Adams has already indicated a shift in the party's direction by toning down initial absolute dismissals of the bill and shifting attention to army bases in South Armagh. The British have long held these bases back as a sweetener and would be likely to make some move to distract the republican base from further retreats.

The Good Friday agreement and the Police Bill arising from it face no real challenge – yet for all this the support of the republican base is gradually disintegrating. The agreement contains within itself no genuine democratic reform and thus guarantees that a section of the nationalist working class will continue in opposition.

The nationalist support for the police now emerging means that this working-class layer will have to break from capitalism to be effective.

* (Amongst these is Maurice Hayes. For years he was beyond the pale as the only top catholic civil servant in the Stormont regime. He was appointed to the Patten commission and used his position to urge immediate Catholic recruitment to the RUC.)

We get some feeling for the Sinn Fein shift to the right when we hear that Bairbre de Bruin, Sinn Fein health minister, appointed Hayes to head an enquiry into health provision in the province).

Whose state is it anyway?

The Captive State: The corporate takeover of Britain, by George Monbiot, (Macmillan £12.99) Reviewed by Terry Conway

George Monbiot's *Captive State* is a well-written, accessible weapon in the battle against neo-liberalism and deserves to be read by every activist who can get their hands on it.

From the graphic picture it paints of the interests behind the genetic modification of food to the clear description it sets out of the process behind the Private Finance Initiative in the Health Service and the increasing incursion of business into University research, it is packed full of information and arguments that we all need at our finger tips.

Monbiot puts forward his case in a number of different ways; through telling stories about how the neo-liberal policies he is criticising affect the lives of particular individuals, through presenting factual information about the (often hidden processes) involved and the amount of (our) money being squandered on making the rich richer and also

through direct political polemic.

Through these changing foci Monbiot certainly kept my interest in a way that one approach would have been less likely to.

Despite its strengths however, Monbiot's book has a central flaw. In seeking to demonstrate what is new about globalisation and the way in which today the relentless search for profit dominates every aspect of our lives, Monbiot downplays the extent to which every phase of capitalist development has occurred on the basis of the exploitation and emiseration of working class people.

Moreover, if you think that this analytical problem has no practical consequences, you obviously didn't see Monbiot on Question Time on November 2.

Talking about the fuel protests, he made a welcome move away from his previous call for car plants to be shut down to demand that the massive profits of the oil companies should be taxed. This was a welcome shift, perhaps in response to the vigorous debate at the Brighton S26 conference.

On the other hand, while he did defend direct action at a limited level, Monbiot

also argued that governments should not be dictated to.

Indeed at this point you could have thought he was speaking for Blair himself, so much did it follow the New Labour line. But where, you may ask, does this fit in with his position on corporations and the state?

Look again at the title of the book. There seems to be an implication that nation states were created initially to serve the interests of everyone who lived within them, but that now under globalisation they have been "taken over" by big business.

This idealistic notion of the past class basis of states leads to the sort of political errors shown in the Question Time debate.

As Chris Harman rightly shows in his article in the autumn issue of *International Socialism*, 'Anti-capitalism, Theory and Practice', this flaw is not Monbiot's alone – but one which he shares with most non-Marxist left critics of globalisation, such as Naomi Klein.

Harman stresses that the right-wing ideologues of neo-liberalism seek to paint a picture of today's world, which sees things from the



Seattle demonstrators face to face with the armed bodies of men that protect the (US) capitalist state

point of view of finance and trading capital and therefore ignores the reality of production and exploitation.

Such a view is also a useful tool for the trade union bureaucracies and compliant governments who support these policies but can sell them under a new cover – that the processes that have led to globalisation are inevitable and cannot be challenged either by governments, workers or any other force on the planet.

Harman is also correct to criticise the fact that many of these opponents of globalisation also swallow the myth promoted by the right-wing ideologues that the nation state is powerless today in the face of uncontrollable processes.

As he says "Firms like Boeing, Monsanto, Microsoft, Texaco and General Motors would not be where they are if they did not have long-standing ties with the American state in general and the US military in particular" (IS88, p24)

While of course Monbiot,

Klein and their co-thinkers support – and by their writing promote – protests against globalisation, the weakness of their analysis can lead to an idea that the solution is to return to a golden age of non-exploitative capitalism!

This of course fits neatly into some of the ideas of forces in and around Green Parties that small is beautiful and that production and science are intrinsically bad. By ignoring the questions of in whose interest and under whose control production or research takes place, they fall into a reactionary trap.

On the other hand Harman himself in his polemic with Monbiot and his co-thinkers plays down the significance of globalisation as a specific phase of capitalist development.

He focuses on the similarities between exploitation today with that a century ago. But there are specific aspects of today's world which are important for revolutionaries and other campaigners to understand: for example the increased role of speculation, which was a

key aspect of the Asian financial crisis.

Ironically in the same issue of *International Socialism*, Paul McGarr in his article "Why Green is Red" develops a much more sophisticated argument.

McGarr traces aspects of environmental destruction through different phases of class society, demonstrating time and again that destruction of the planet is intrinsic to the relentless search for profit.

At the same time he also explains why the dangers we face today with global warming, GMOs, etc. are much greater than in previous phases.

In the context that the movement against globalisation is by far the most dynamic edge of the fight against the capitalist system today, it is certainly vital that the left engages with its ideas – and criticises its weaknesses both in terms of theory and practice.

But to do this effectively we have to relate to the new questions, the changes in today's world that motivate this phase of struggle.

Sniping from the Left

By Charlie van Gelderen



Blame it on granddad

Giving the Herbert Morrison Lecture at Westminster, last month, Peter Mandelson, Morrison's grandson, asked: "Why was it that, after a great Labour government, that achieved so much in its first term, failed to meet the challenge of renewal and allowed its huge majority to melt away and be followed by 13 years of Tory rule? And how can we be sure to avoid the same fate?"

It is rather ironic that it should be Peter Mandelson who raises this question, because his grandfather was principally to blame.

The post-war Labour Government introduced a big programme of radical measures – nationalising the railways and road transport, the coal industry, steel, and, above all, created a National Health Service, which was the envy of the world.

But the Attlee government failed to take the next step – workers' democratic control in the newly nationalised sectors.

"No," said Morrison, the task now was "to consolidate". Permanent revolution was not for him.

Capitalist style management would continue in the nationalised sectors, often the same people who were in control under private ownership. Workers' control would have given a fresh enthusiasm. There is no need to look further for an explanation to the question raised by Mandelson.

But it's pretty clear he has not learned the key lesson of that period – that the choice is between permanent revolution or a return to unbridled capitalism.

Diagnosis

Tony Blair underlined this diagnosis when, speaking at the NHS conference in Brighton on November 10th he admitted underinvesting in the NHS during his three years in power.

Why? Because of his decision to stick to Tory spending measures.

He said he would "stand or fall by that decision". But he won't be the only one to fall. This decision has left the NHS seriously short of funds which

has resulted in a shortage of doctors, nurse, etc and such a shortage of beds that the NHS now has to rely on private health facilities to cope with the demand. And winter is still to come with its added pressure on NHS sources.

Then there is also the decision to force pensioners to open bank accounts instead of collecting their pensions from post offices. This will not only increase the already swollen profits of the bankers, it is also another step toward the privatisation of the Post Office

Make bosses shell out

After an absence of seven years, Shell is returning to Ogoniland, Nigeria, despite growing opposition from the Ogonis. Ken Sara-Wiwa, the Ogoni leader, was executed five years ago by the then Nigerian government, acting for Shell.

There were no tears shed for the Ogoni people in the Shell board room in October, when a record annual profit of £2 billion was announced.

This column is not demanding

a reduction in fuel tax because we recognise the harm caused to the environment by the excessive use of fossil fuels. But it is sheer hypocrisy on the part of the government to use this as an argument against reducing fuel prices.

All the oil megacompanies have announced record profits which can be taxed without imposing great hardships on the directors and shareholders.

But, of course, this will mean a break with the policy of sticking to Tory spending measures and not imposing new taxes on the rich. That will never do!

Beggaring belief

Tony Blair has joined Jack Straw in a call to people not to give money to beggars. This is New Labour in all its nakedness.

What has happened to the inclusive society Blair and his cronies were boasting about not all that long ago? A group of distinguished academics has argued that tougher policing of begging through the Vagrancy Act, 1893, will compound social exclusiveness and could

lead the beggars into crime.

Begging is caused by capitalism, or some other form of exploitative society.

People don't become beggars out of choice. Research has consistently shown that they do not resort to begging unless they are desperate.

The answer is definitely not more institutionalisation. Most of the people now begging in the streets have had more than their fill of institutions.

To add begging to the crime list, will do nothing to reduce it. We don't need any new offences.

As John O'Farrell pointed out in the Guardian, "... None of the reporting on ... crime figures made any reference to City fraud or big business tax evasion. ... there are no interviews with old ladies saying how they are afraid to go out lest they should be offered some tips for insider trading."

"Where are the big yellow signs in the City of London saying: 'Appeal for Witnesses – Fraud? Did you see anyone skimming the remainders fund, selling currency forward and then buying it spot fixed overnight?'"

Obituary

Caroline Benn

Socialist Outlook sends its deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Caroline Benn who died last month. Caroline was a dedicated and energetic fighter for socialism and equality, her contribution will be greatly missed by the many who were inspired by what she said and did.

Geoff Sheridan

Socialist Outlook sends its deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Geoff Sheridan who died of cancer on September 23 this year. Particular condolences go to Sam and Pat Masters and to Jackie Maxim.

Geoff was a brilliant campaigning journalist who worked on the International Marxist Group's paper *Socialist Challenge* in the 1970s, where his green pen became a legend.

He demanded the highest standards of professional journalism from those he worked with, rightly arguing that correct ideas are not enough to make a convincing argument.

Before working for *Socialist Challenge* he had written both for the tabloids and the *Guardian* - including its Women's page - covering a number of key stories from the controversy around educational methods at Islington's William Tyndale school, to the racism of British Leyland boss, Sir Richard Dobson.

Many of Geoff's articles made their point through giving a voice to ordinary people - often a more effective means of convincing readers than straightforward political argument.

Geoff went on to edit *Free Press*, the journal Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom and was a founder member of the Campaign against Racism in the media, for which he wrote a pamphlet "It Ain't Half Racist, Mum".

In 1981 he joined the editorial board of the Labour Party's magazine *New Socialist* as its business manager.

From 1987 until his death he worked in business planning for Hackney council.

Geoff had a real talent for making friends and an unusual commitment to those friendships - those many people whose lives were touched by his warmth very sorely miss him.

British and French Telecom: unions confront market forces

Pete Cooper

In January 1998 the European Commission removed all restrictions to competition in the EU telecommunications market. This was the starting gun in the multinationals' race for the gigantic anticipated profits in the convergent third generation of internet and mobile technologies, broadband ADSL transmission, bringing video quality via the traditional fixed copper telephone network.

The onrush of unbridled competition and massive restructuring of the industry is completely overturning the cosy world of management-union relations in the formerly nationalised monopolies such as BT and France Telecom.

But left union responses to the challenges thrown up by these developments are significantly different in the two companies. The Broad Left led CWU has adopted a traditional short term defensive trade union approach. It has failed to develop any long-term strategy, which could begin to challenge the neo-liberal offensive.

The far left-led union SUD union in France Telecom by contrast is attempting to develop a strategy which can both meet the immediate situation and decisively contribute to the reorganisation of the French trade union movement to confront the challenge.

BT is in a worse competitive and financial situation than France Telecom. This is primarily a result of its earlier privatisation and introduction of competition from the likes of Vodaphone in mobile, and Freeserve in internet provision.

To deal with its collapse in market share and profitability, BT is planning its conversion into a holding company and its operational divisions into subsidiaries quoted on the stock market, with the very real possibility of their total dis-

posal.

Derecognition

The consequences for the workforce are different and worse contracts in each of the new subsidiaries, and the possibility of eventual union derecognition in some or all of them. The CWU's response, unchallenged by the dominant Broad Left NEC majority was to welcome the plan as the lesser of two evils - the greater evil being total takeover of BT by a predatory anti-union multinational. In reality the BT plan actually increases the possibility of its wholesale break-up and its attendant consequences for the unions.

Faced with this situation the Broad Left at a specially convened meeting correctly identified the preservation of a unified contract as the key immediate objective, while attempting to prevent BT's breakup, and calling for the renationalisation of the telecom industry.

As several speakers pointed out, however, all experience shows that unions have had no success in preventing this type of financial operation. Once subsidiarisation is in place the maintenance of common pay and conditions in different divisions faced with different market conditions will be next to impossible. Renationalisation remains at best a distant prospect in the current balance of forces.

But what is striking and depressing is the absence of any strategic discussion in the BL about how to challenge in social partnership in action, and the necessary reorganisation of the trade union movement to challenge its rightward gallop. Mobilisation around either industrial or broader issues is also virtually absent from its discussions.

Across the channel France Telecom is in a much "healthier" market and financial situation than BT. It is still only partially (46%) privatised and has been protected for longer against competition by the French state, although that



position too is being rapidly eroded, albeit from a higher starting position.

France Telecom is still making foreign acquisitions (it has recently bought Orange, has a quarter share in NTL the British cable operator, and is currently seeking to buy Freeserve), while BT is having to sell its foreign holdings to preserve its domestic position.

Nevertheless FT is faced with a similar prospect to that of BT in no more than two years. It is adopting a similar strategy of subsidiarisation.

Left-led

The far left led union SUD-PTT, now the majority union in France Telecom is also discussing its responses. For them the issue is preservation of the civil service status of the majority of FT staff, which could be threatened by the further government sell-off of its holding.

But the essential difference of approach between that of SUD and the Broad Left led CWU is on issues of strategy and mobilisation. Although SUD is a "breakaway" union in an already fragmented trade union scene, it is serious in attempting to address the issue of the reunification of the French trade union movement on an anti neo-liberal basis.

It has played a central role in developing the "Group of 10" unions autonomous from the main increasingly partnership oriented trade union confederations. It is in serious discussion with the FSU the

main autonomous teachers' union about creating a new trade union confederation.

The creation of such a confederation would enable real social and political pressure to bear to halt and reverse the drift toward adaptation to neo-liberalism of the Communist Party-led CGT Trade Union Confederation. If successful, the strategy of Sud could have major implications, not only for the French trade union movement, but for the whole of Europe, including Britain.

This strategy is accompanied by the continuous mobilisation by Sud militants on a whole series of issues. Sud (in common with much of the French trade union movement it must be said) will be mobilising several thousand for the Nice demonstrations.

It has provided the organisational backbone for the mobilisations of the unemployment movement, and those of the sans papiers (undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers).

Strategy

It is time for the left in Britain - though in a far more difficult climate it is true - to begin to address these issues of strategy.

We have to discuss how we can use our weight through developments such as the Socialist Alliances to seriously challenge the dominance of the TUC's craven social partnership approach, which is leading the British trade union movement deeper and deeper into the mire of a race to the bottom.

**What kind of Unions do we need?
Solidarity Annual Meeting
with Christophe Aguiton (SUD)
JANUARY 13, 1pm-5pm
ULU, Malet St, London
WC1 (Euston tube)**

Socialism on the web

Socialist Outlook web site: www.labournet.org.uk/so
International Socialist Group: www.3bh.org.uk/ISG

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 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

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 part in the forms of oppression make an es-

The working class is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed. The working class and its allies must uncompromisingly

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.

Socialist Outlook

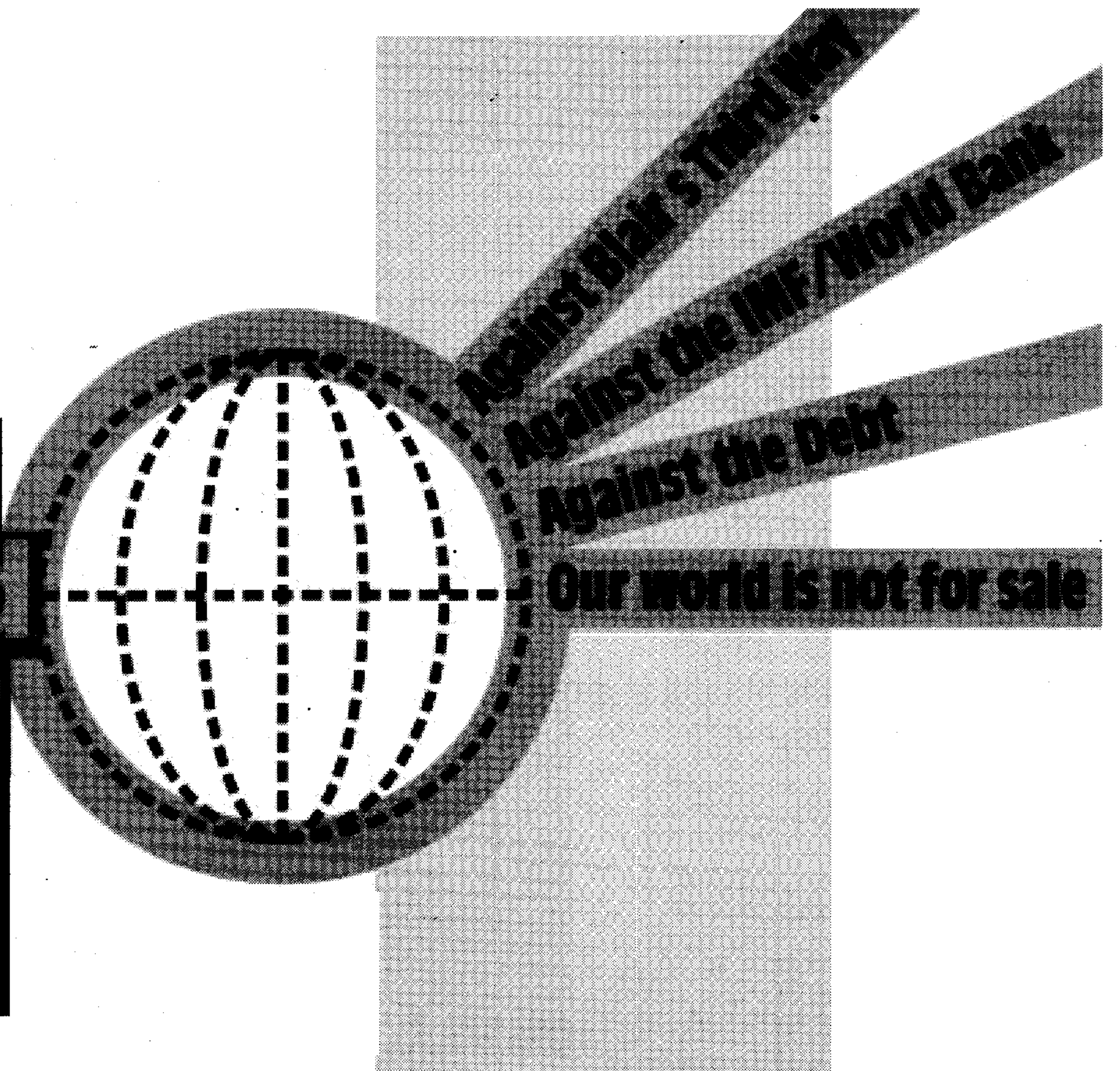
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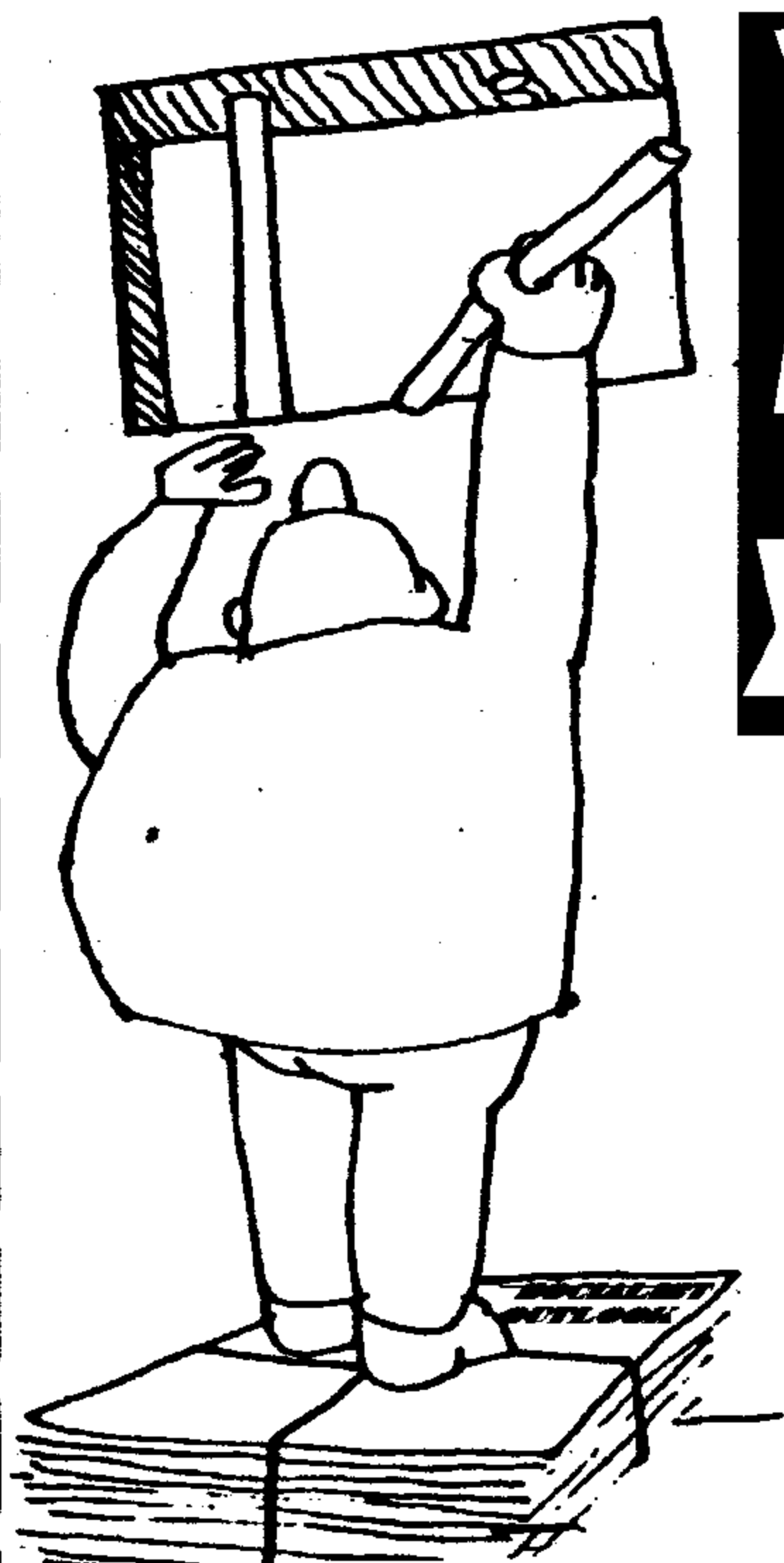
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