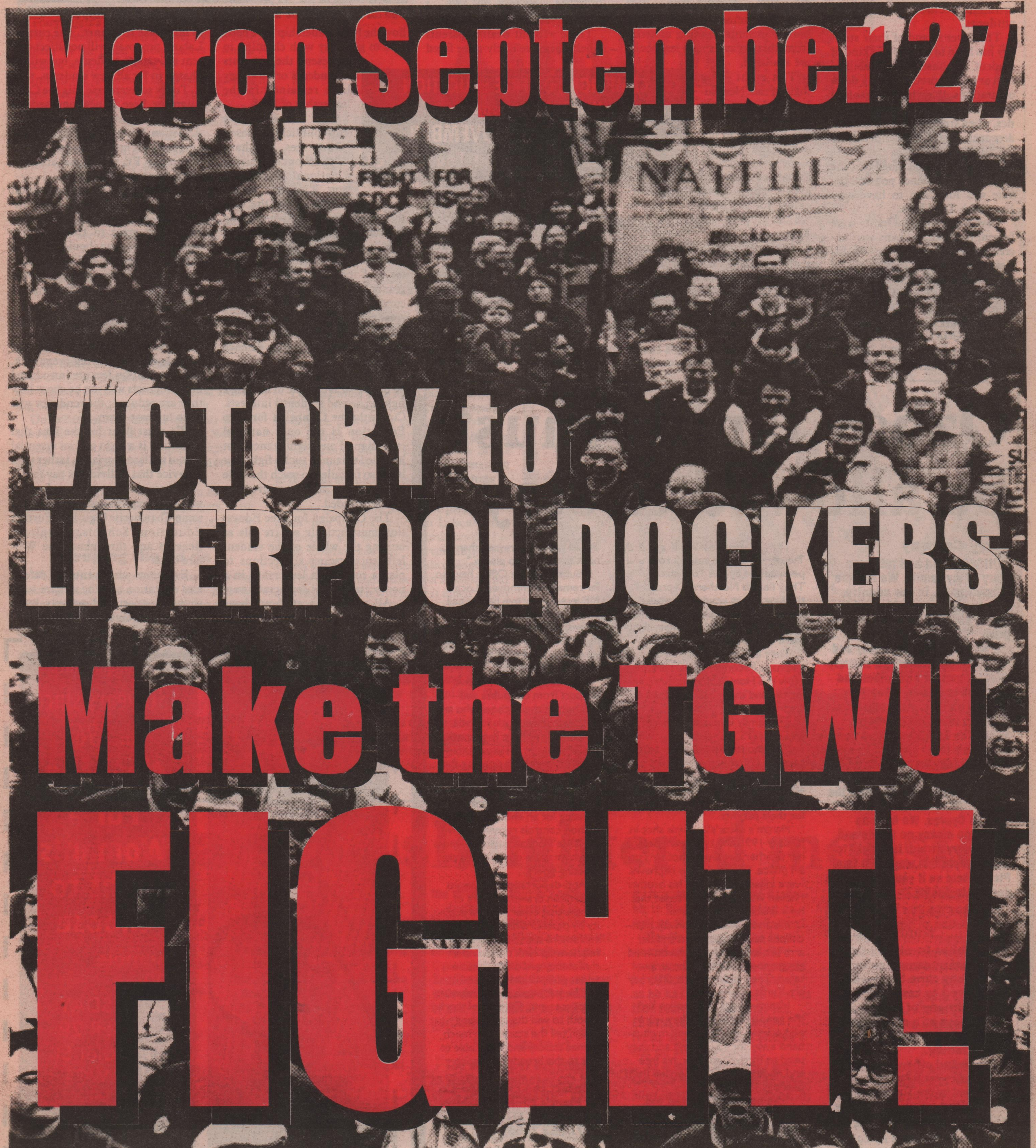


NS 9

Socialist OUTLOOK

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March September 27



VICTORY to LIVERPOOL DOCKERS

Make the TGWU

FIGHT!

Defend student grants – fight tuition fees

Simon Deville

THE WHOLE strategy of the National Union of Students' leadership over the last few years has been based on being 'realistic' in terms of what students can expect: i.e. to accept any whatever attacks the government decides to launch on students.

The other strand of their strategy has been to oppose any kind of student demonstration, mobilisation or occupation. The only demonstrations they have organised have been essentially wrecking tactics, when students have organised demonstrations independently of the NUS leadership.

NUS leadership argued that the only way to influence political debate was for them to have cosy chats with Tory MPs.

Levels of Student Grants were frozen, then cut, as loans were increased in the early 1990s – by this time the Labour leadership of NUS had abandoned even token demonstrations against cuts in education.

Arguments that NUS needed to be 'realistic' to have any influence, have meant that NUS has been so influential in defending the inter-

ests of students that most are forced to try to live on incomes far below benefit levels. Many students find they are expected to live on a combined income of grant and loan that doesn't even cover their rent.

As funding has lagged far behind the increase in student numbers, it is often not possible to borrow essential reading material from libraries as less and less books are available.

The right wing logic of the 'New Solutions' grouping who control NUS has led them to opposing the idea that students have a right to education. Instead they have called for a 'Graduate Tax', in which students get individual bills.

Apparently, graduates are supposed to all gain high paid jobs and are therefore in a better position to pay for their education. Whilst this may be true for NUS leaders, many of whom find high paid jobs as Labour Party bureaucrats or MPs, many working class graduates leave to return to the dole or shitty,

low paid casualised jobs.

The Labour government has gone even further than the Tories or the Dearing commission would have dared over the funding of education. Labour's proposals are to abolish grants altogether and replace them entirely with loans – on top of which students are expected to pay £1,000 towards fees.

Those without wealthy parents to help them are likely to be faced

CAMPAIGN FOR FREE EDUCATION
National Demonstration
Wednesday 26 NOVEMBER
12 noon, ULU, Malet Street, London WC1

with the option of going to university and ending up £12,000 in debt at the end of their course, with little prospect of finding one of these mythical high paid jobs.

Bizarrely, the Labour leadership, Dearing and New Solutions have all tried to sell their own variant of making individual students pay for their education as promoting access to Higher Education.

It is difficult to see precisely



The rot began with the introduction of loans – with NUS support!

how the NUS leadership have been able to get away with claiming to represent the interests of students or how they have remained in the leadership of NUS.

New Solutions have now publicly opposed tuition fees, and have talked about organising a national demonstration. This will be extremely difficult given the role they have played in undermining and de-mobilising opposition to attacks on students.

Their acceptance of a graduate tax and the abolition of student grants has paved the way for the current proposals. Whatever their reasons for opposing fees, the NUS leadership should not be trusted in any way to lead a fight in defence of students.

Clearly, a new leadership must be built that is capable of leading a fight to defend students' interests. Currently the Campaign for Free Education is the only national campaign of any significance that has tried to launch such a fight, but it has so far failed to reach the wide layers of the student movement that are needed.

The Campaign for Free Education must actively see its role as uniting the whole of the student left, encouraging all sections to play a role in its leadership in a non-sectarian and democratic way.

All attacks on students have been phased in, in a way designed

to minimise resistance. The current Labour proposals will not affect current university students, but will be phased in for all new students.

To try to overcome this the Campaign for Free Education needs to achieve active involvement and participation by those affected by the proposals – it must focus on organising in the FE sector and amongst secondary school students.

In order to buy off any opposition to their plans, Labour have announced new funding for Higher Education prior to Labour Party conference. No one should be fooled that such proposals will be any more than a one-off that can be clawed back once they have got new policies through.

No way back

If grants are abolished there will be little chance to bring them back, and once tuition fees are introduced new proposals will not be about how they are reduced: the tendency will be to increase them.

We must fight for the idea that education is a right and an essential part of welfare provision, rather than a service that individuals pay for.

If these changes are introduced it will be a step towards bringing the same Thatcherite logic into Further Education, Schools, Hospitals, Benefits and throughout the Welfare state.

Everyone who wants to defend free education and the welfare state should support and actively build the demonstration on 26 November.

Ozbay family must be allowed to stay

Terry Conway

"THIS IS a sad and inhuman story of my family. We are the Ozbay family. In our country, Turkey, we were subjected to abuse and fled to Northern Cyprus."

"We are a Kurdish family and in Cyprus the police and soldiers beat my mother and father and put them in prison. When they took my mother, my brother was who only nine was crying too much. The Turkish soldiers beat him on his legs."

"We finally managed to escape to England. We have been here for three years and now the Home Office want to send us back to Cyprus. We have no house, no money no friends and we are very afraid. Is it right to treat people this way? Is it fair? Please help us if you can, we are desperate people."

Ali Ozbay, 15 year old
Kurdish refugee

I have been involved in anti-deportation campaigning for a very long time but I was still moved to tears hearing the testimony of three young boys at a recent public meeting in support of the Ozbay family.

They talked of how they and their family were tortured, beaten and abused by the Turkish police. It was clear that remembering these outrages was and is a painful process.

The Ozbays are Alevi Kurds from Turkey who were subject to brutal persecution by the Turkish regime. They fled to Northern Cyprus thinking things would be better there. Unfortunately the area is under Turkish control and their nightmare continued.

They fled to London 3 years ago and have become settled here. Now the Home Office is threatening to send them back to Northern Cyprus.

The family is Huseyin, Hanim, Ali and Vedi (15 year-old twins) and Semih who is twelve. When they came to London none of them spoke any English but now the boys are confident enough to talk about their case in public and to translate for their parents.

Hanim's sister's son was shot in January 1995 and two years before her brother's son was shot by Turkish police. Hussein's two nephews were killed in 1992 and his brother Hassan was so badly tortured that he is unable to use his arm.

His sister was beaten with truncheons several years ago and her arm broken. The arm then turned gangrenous and had to be amputated. Their only crime is that they are Kurds.

Hanim stated "The police and the gendarmerie in Turkey were persecuting us. They took my husband away for 15-20 days and they used to throw him back, his face and his feet would be swollen from beatings."

"I've been tortured a lot too. The same torture went on in Cyprus. The police would come and take my husband away all the time. I

would rather kill myself than go back to those two places."

But the Home Office have so far remained unmoved. Local MP Jeremy Corbyn hit the nail on the head when he said that he wished Jack Straw had heard the boys speak - even he could surely not have gone on arguing that this is all an act.

The campaign has massive support from the pupils and teachers at their school who are very worried about what will happen if they have to go back to Cyprus.

The campaign is opening the eyes of many young people to the brutal realities of British immigration rules. Calls at the meeting for an end to all immigration controls received warm applause from an audience, most of whom were not at all regular meeting-goers.

Anti-deportation campaigns have often drawn in layers of people that other political activity by passes. While their involvement stems from their relationship with those under threat they are often open to wider political debate.

The left needs to put more resources into this area of work – both to win the campaigns which tell the story of so much human misery and to be able to talk to this broader audience.

Contact the campaign c/o
St Mary's Church, Ashley
Rd, London N19 3AD, Tel
0171 263 2380



Torchlight March
30 years since
the 1967
Abortion Act
**For a
Woman's
right to
choose**

Assemble
6.00pm
WEDNESDAY
OCTOBER 29
ULU, Malet St
London WC1

March to a rally at
Conway Hall, Red Lion
Square, Holborn

TUC goes quietly as Labour leads off servile bureaucrats

Brighton not rocked

THIS YEAR'S Trade Union Congress in Brighton saw few sparks of life. This is no surprise to anyone. The TUC leadership have for years been arguing that the membership shouldn't rock the boat but put all their energy into the election of a Labour government.

Tony Blair's project of a New Labour party has been made much easier by the 'new realism' of the trade union leaders - which preceded it by many years.

Indeed the last time TUC was an exciting event was during the miners' strike - it is only really when there is one dominating and controversial issue that it seems possible to inject some life into the ritual of debate.

Now of course with Labour in office the union bureaucrats are somewhat unhappy that they are being offered so few crumbs from the master's table.

There will be moves on union recognition in the spring - but not strong enough ones as far as they are concerned. The TUC's own document 'Rights at Work' was however brought out with little discussion at the base of the movement.

While in some regards it is stronger than the proposals from the Labour leadership, it is by no means a full frontal challenge either to the bosses or to Blair's "Millbank Tendency".

The trade union bureaucrats will keep their complaints against Labour's proposals low key and confined to cosy chats at Downing Street - if they are invited back.

On other issues such as the anti-union laws their voices are already muted. Not surprising when the rubric under which Congress was organised was 'Partners for Progress'.

The key "partners" they have in mind are not the government but the employers. With such a viewpoint, the lack of fight is only to be expected.

Keeping the lid on

Whether - with a public sector pay freeze looming, cuts in the welfare state and the bosses squeezing every last drop out of their workforce - they can keep a lid on the anger of their members remains to be seen.

There is however little point in Baker's Union leader Joe Marino complaining that the left is weak and disorganised at Congress. Is he not part of this left?

With the balance of forces as it is in the trade unions today an intervention based mainly on an orientation to the Congress and the bureaucracy would be even more empty than in the days when the left's electoral machine - mainly dominated by the Stalinists -



It takes two to tango. TUC prattle about "Partnership" ignores the vicious anti-union offensive by major "partner" firms like BA

was stronger.

The task must be to build the Trade Union Left Alliance as well as particular campaigns in defence of workers taking industrial action, against the anti-union laws, and on broader issues such as fighting cuts in the health service. Only on real foundations such as this can an intervention into Congress be seriously built.

Many trade union leaders are preparing to ditch their unions' policy on Labour Party democracy and vote at the forthcoming Labour Conference for 'Partnership into Power', and the associated rule changes.

This is short sighted even in terms of their own interests, as it will make it much harder for them to have any influence on party policy in the future.

Blair has already demonstrated very clearly that they are certainly not at the top of his list of confidantes, but the habits born of a lifetime cooking up deals may lead to a majority giving away the mechanisms for a stronger voice.

Every last nerve needs to be strained to ensure that the rule changes are not carried - and that anyone who votes for them against the policy of their organisation is brought to account.



British Airways staff defied management threats to take strike action

No tears for slaughtered monster

THE UNITED Kingdom is no more. All socialists, wherever they live or come from, should celebrate the death blow dealt by the Scottish and Welsh people to this imperialist monster.

The union has been responsible for death and destruction both across the globe and nearer to home. Now there is a chance to build something different

Scotland's double victory was a foregone conclusion. Not even the distraction of the royal funeral worried confident activists. For Wales a nail-biting agony was yet to come before a majority for the Assembly was

finally secured.

The difference was not surprising for a number of reasons. National consciousness was already higher in Scotland than in Wales - but this should have meant more was done to ensure a positive outcome in Wales. In fact the reverse was true.

Scotland was offered a Parliament with teeth - even if only milk teeth - while the Welsh Assembly has far fewer powers. It cannot make laws no raise taxes.

An opinion poll not long before the referendum showed that a comfortable majority of people in Wales would have voted for an Assembly with compara-

ble powers to that in Scotland.

Further the campaign in Scotland started long before the election of a Labour government on May 1. The formation of the Constitutional Convention in Scotland ensured that there was wide debate about the principle of self-government as well as its particular form.

Near defeat

The absence of this process in Wales strengthened the hand of the No campaigners - apathy and lack of information came close to losing the vote.

It is now vital to ensure there is no back-sliding on the part of the Labour leadership. A major-

ity is a majority and the Assembly in Wales must proceed as well as the Scottish Parliament.

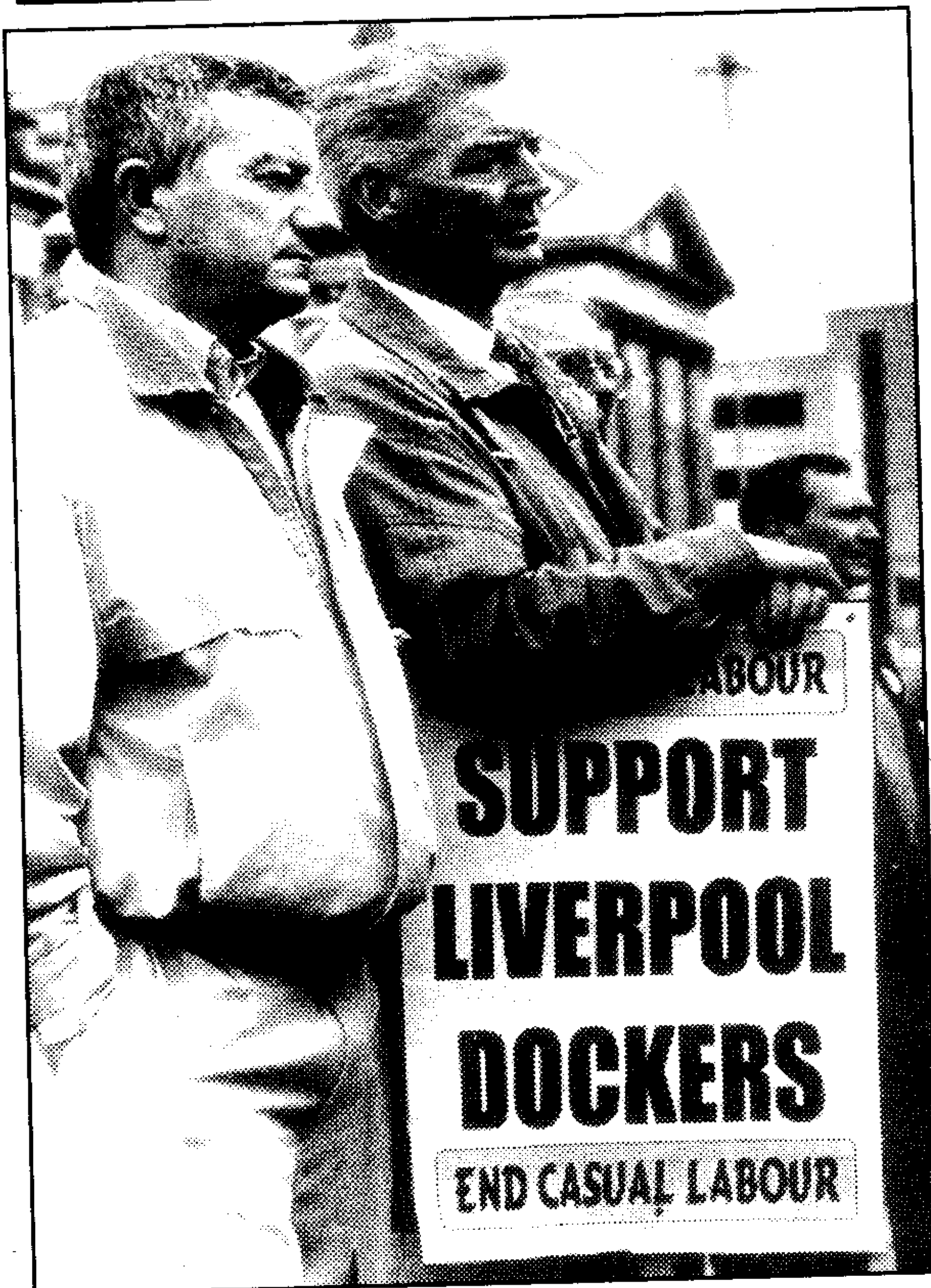
The No campaign has been wound up and the rebel MPs have conceded defeat. It would be difficult for Blair to retreat as he has staked a good deal on the results. His plans for the English regions rest on the results in Scotland and Wales. But we must be vigilant.

As Marxists we favour the election of Constituent Assemblies for Scotland and Wales. By this we mean elected bodies that define their own powers both legislative and economic and are not subject to veto from Westminster. What has been

won so far clearly falls far short of that, and will any event not be established by ballot alone but through the struggles of the Welsh and Scottish workers.

Nevertheless we celebrate the victories of the Yes campaigns as a stepping stone in that struggle. The votes in the referenda were a symptom of the relative decline of the imperialist state.

The existence of these bodies have the potential to further deepen the political crisis of the British state and act as a rallying point for struggles. We will campaign and organise to try to ensure that they do fulfill that role.



Liverpool dockers: "We fought for decades for those conditions, and we won't settle for anything less"

GLEN VORIS from Socialist Outlook spoke to JIMMY NOLAN (Chair of Merseyside Port Shop Stewards Committee), shop stewards BILLY JENKINS, HERBIE HOLYHEAD and to TERRY TIGHE shop steward and international coordinator in the run up to the massive demonstration planned to mark the beginning of the third year of the Liverpool Dockers strike.



the TUC Conference last week that "we need a flexible workforce".

However, the Liverpool Dockers are calling upon this government to use its major shareholding (14 per cent) in the Mersey Docks to reinstate the dockers.

We are also demanding a call for a public enquiry into the millions of pounds worth of government and European money that has been ploughed into the Mersey Docks over the last 30 years, where we've seen 3 decades of public finance and private

CPSA/PTC: Say no to a Bureaucratic Business-Union

Darren Williams
(Branch Secretary,
CPSA ONS Newport -
personal capacity)

The long saga of merger between the two biggest civil service unions, CPSA and PTC, has entered what may be its final chapter.

On Saturday, 13 September, both unions held special delegate conferences which were the last chance for branch activists to debate the proposed merger before an all-members' ballot.

Instead of the wide-ranging debate which could have been had about the future of civil service trade unionism, the proceedings were relegated to, at best, symbolic importance by the insistence of the two National Executive Committees (NECs) that each conference debate only one motion, proposed by themselves.

CPSA's motion was the more absurd of the two: "This conference supports the concept of a democratically based merger with the PTC."

Given the thoroughly undemocratic nature of the proposed rule-book, and his consistent disregard for union democracy, this shows either a grotesque sense of humour, or a total detachment from reality, on the part of General Secretary Barry Reamsbottom.

Although the amalgamation of the two unions could, potentially, create a formidable fighting force in the civil service, capable of organising all-out strike action in defence of jobs, pay and conditions, the proposals currently on offer suggest a very different scenario.

The proposed rule-book for the new union (to be called PCS), represents an attempt by the right-wing groupings currently running the two unions to institutionalise their autocratic style of leadership. Among the proposals are that national conferences and NEC elections should be held not annually, as at present, but biennially; and that only one of the senior full-time officials should be subject to election.

Furthermore, conference's status as the union's governing body is to be downgraded, with the NEC making more frequent use of all-members' ballots to validate their

decisions. Judging by past experience, these exercises would be a parody of democracy, with members voting in isolation, on the basis of one-sided information from the NEC, without having had any discussion at branch level.

All of this is in outright defiance of conference policy. Motions passed at both unions' 1996 conferences spelt out a detailed list of democratic safeguards, intended to provide the framework of the new constitution.

Instead of negotiating for merger on this basis, and bringing the results to conference for agreement, the NECs drew up a rule-book on their own terms and suddenly presented it to members for an unnecessary and meaningless postal ballot in January.

The misleading information given to members helped to ensure that the vote went the NECs' way, and they then used this 'mandate' to brush aside the inevitable censure motions passed at the 1997 conferences.

The CPSA leadership even carried out a second, equally meaningless, ballot in July, to give them further ammunition for the special conference.

Activists at both conferences voted overwhelmingly against the NECs' motions, but they have nevertheless pressed ahead with the final, legally obligatory members' ballot, without changing one word of their proposed rule-book.

The Left in both unions now face a real challenge: to counter the NECs' propaganda and deliver a 'no' vote. To do this, they will need to convince many sceptical members that the left-right political divisions over the constitution are relevant to the battles to improve their pay and conditions, and safeguard their jobs.

In the longer term, they need to prove the point by practical example, providing the fighting leadership that civil service trade unionists need to reverse the attacks inflicted upon them over the last eighteen years.

SO: You are now coming up to the second anniversary of the dispute. How are the dockers responding?

JN: We have the same resilience as we did two years ago - even though it has been very difficult.

All 500 dockers have stayed with the dispute except two that died, one of them died on the picket line of a heart attack.

This shows the tremendous determination that we have to win our full reinstatement. We only received £50 per week on average through donations to the strike fund and this has put an enormous strain on us and our families.

BJ: The men and women have developed politically especially about international politics.

We get the strength to continue because of the international solidarity - we must repay the commitment of workers who have supported us by continuing the dispute until we win.

SO: What level of support have you received from your union, the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) during the dispute?

JN: To put it bluntly, zero. However, at the TGWU Biennial Conference in July, 9 motions were put forward to support us.

The Executive issued their own statement on the need "to preserve the fabric of the union and operate within the constraints of the law" and put this to the vote without debating the 9 motions.

There was a clear show of hands voting it down. Many delegates refused to sit down and demanded a

card vote. The chair lost control of the conference for several minutes and then decided to call for a card vote the next morning.

The next day the Executive lost the vote by 283 to 182. The 9 motions were then debated and were all passed. The TGWU leadership are now committed to support our dispute. It was a tremendous victory. We are now waiting for the Executive to meet with us and to discuss the swift conclusion of the dispute.

BJ: The TGWU leadership have been a disgrace to trade unionism. They haven't even set up a strike fund for us in the union - we've had to set up our own.

What we need is concrete support. The TGWU should be using its sponsored Labour MPs to raise the issue of our dispute in parliament to resolve it. They haven't even helped us to build the international support, we've had to do it all ourselves.

SO: Has the election of the Labour government in May helped in any way?

JN: No. In fact they have probably hindered us with false promises.

The North West Regional Labour Party said they would organise a meeting of all the local Labour MPs to meet us - some time in the New Year - so they're not really serious. There were rumours that John Prescott was going to meet us over a month ago, but we have heard nothing.

SO: What type of demands should the movement put on the Labour government to support your dispute and to protect trade unions?

HH: It's very difficult, as Blair made it quite clear at

abuse.

The most important issue for trade unions in Britain is to demand the repeal of all the anti-union laws that shackle the unions. We have the most repressive and restrictive anti-union laws in the western world - this is why we've had great difficulty in gaining solidarity action in this country.

SO: The Liverpool Dockers brought about the formation of the first international dockers shop stewards movement. How has this progressed and why is internationalism so important?

HH: The finance given to us by touring various countries has been a big boost - without that, it would have been very difficult to continue the dispute for so long.

We've found that in all the ports we have visited we've found similar problems of casualisation and privatisation. Our dispute has brought dockers together internationally. We can now discuss the problems we face and how we can fight together against the multinational companies. The problems are global and as there are 6 major port companies they need to be confronted internationally as no one country can win alone.

SO: On September 8 the 3rd International Dockers Day of Action took place in support of the Liverpool Dockers. What level of support have you gained and is it having an effect on the Mersey Dock and Harbour Company?

TT: The International Day of Action exceeded all expectations and proved that Liverpool has become a symbol of all dockers who are determined to resist the threats of casual labour, mass sackings, and the deregulation of our industry.

The port of Liverpool is stagnating as there are now 24 per cent less ships

sailing into the port than there were 2 years ago.

The international support has been tremendous. Ports in over 30 countries took part in actions ranging from 24 hour strikes to boycotting ships who deal with the Port of Liverpool.

The countries include Canada, East and West Coast of America, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, India, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal and Italy.

Other countries where there are no ports held demonstrations outside British Consuls and demanded that the new Labour government should successfully resolve the dispute. Many of the ports are continuing to boycott shipping lines who use the Port of Liverpool on a regular basis.

SO: Women on the Waterfront have been an important development. What role have they played and how have they helped the dispute?

HH: The Women on the Waterfront (WOW) have supported us in many ways. They daily attend and take an active role in picketing the port.

They regularly go on delegation work to raise finance, presently they are touring in Denmark. Their moral support has strengthened the resolve of their sacked husbands. This has greatly eased tensions in the families and so far after 2 years not one family has broken up.

Recently, Colonel Gadaffi presented the WOW with the Humane Merit Award – the same award presented to Nelson Mandela 5 years ago. They received \$50,000 which has been put into the strike fund. The WOW form an integral element of our struggle.

SO: Finally, after 2 years in struggle, are you any closer today than you were 2 years ago to gaining full reinstatement?

No. We are still presently continuing to pressurise and hope there are going to be more talks with the MDHC. We have rejected offers of reinstatement of 60 dockers and bigger payoffs for the rest.

What we want is a full reinstatement of all the sacked dockers on the same pay and conditions with trade union recognition – nothing less. We have fought for decades for these conditions and we won't accept anything less.

It is up to us to fight for future generations and for our dignity as human beings. **Victory to the Liverpool Dockers!**

Lend your support!

MESSAGES of support/correspondence financial donations should be sent to: Bro. Jim Davies, 19 Scorton Road, Liverpool L6 4AS. Please make cheques payable to "Merseyside Shop Stewards Appeal Fund".

Two years of Liverpool dockers fight for principle

Greg Tucker

Two years after they were dismissed for refusing to cross a picket line, Liverpool dockers continue their fight for reinstatement. A successful International Day of Action has again caused millions of pounds of losses for shipping companies around the world.

Despite all forecasts, the Dockers have stood firm. Every Friday, their mass meeting votes to continue the action. Ballots have rejected offers of "redundancy" money, though increasing numbers of dockers are losing their homes as mortgage companies foreclose.

In partnership with Women of the Waterfront, their organisation of pickets, marches and speaking tours have served as a beacon for a movement often too ready to accept defeat.

The dockers' support for others in struggle such as the Magnet and Hillingdon workers and for campaigns such as the EuroMarch has put the trade union official leaderships to shame.

Despite continued financial support from workers in Britain, the two key players able to settle this dispute refuse to move.

The trade union leaderships continue to cry that they cannot take any action which might break the law, and the Labour government refuses to use its influence as a major shareholder of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company (MDHC).

International Solidarity

Despite frequent obstruction from the ITF (International Transport Workers Federation) an impressive international dockers movement has been built.

On September 8, the Maritime Union of Australia defied government threats to bring troops on to the waterfront in the event of any strike, with all major ports stopping.

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union shut every port on the West Coast of North America. The Danish port of Arhus shut for 24 hours and in Copenhagen, dockers walked out of their canteen after hearing Micky and Sylvia Tighe describe the Liverpool struggle.

Dockers at the Swedish ports of Gothenburg, Stockholm, Malmo, and Helsingborg stopped all shipping to and from Liverpool and Sheerness. There was also action elsewhere in Europe, and in South Africa, India and Japan.

Liverpool has become a symbol for all dockers determined to resist the threats of casual labour, mass sackings, and the deregulation of their industry.

Despite massaged profit returns it is clear that these actions are seri-



ously affecting the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company.

That they have been able to maintain their stance is down to a series of behind the scenes arrangements in which the major shareholder, the British government, must be implicated.

Under the Tories this was hardly a surprise, but after four months of a Labour government the dockers are entitled to ask why something has not been done.

T&G must be forced to act

The failure of the TGWU and TUC leaderships to openly back the dockers is significant. At the TUC the dockers were denied a stall or even passes to enable them to get onto the conference floor to lobby for support. The TUC hid behind the excuse that the TGWU would not officially ask for such facilities. Bill Morris refused to ask, saying "we are constrained by law".

The TGWU has given the dockers money – though far less than would have been made available in an officially recognised dispute. Instead it has tried to promote a settlement as an "honest broker".

Their latest project has been to arrange for a study of proposals for a labour supply company. Confidence in the study on the part of the dockers was not high – given that the company employed to do the investigation was heavily implicated as agents for the Mersey Docks in the undervaluing of Medway dockers' shares.

The overturning of the Executive statement at the TGWU Bien-

paign inside the union for a recall Delegate Conference in order to have the strike made official and stop the crossing of picket lines by union members driving lorries and tugboats.

All goods coming through Liverpool must be boycotted. To fight for this there needs to be a meeting of all supporters of the dockers' stand inside the union.

Bill Morris claims he cannot "jeopardise the fabric of the Union in the interests of one section of its members." He must be forced to realise that his inaction is an even bigger threat to the future of the union than any potential intervention from the sequestrators.

Labour could solve the dispute tomorrow

There are direct links between MDHC and the new government. Even after the reduction to 14 per cent of the government's shareholding as a result of the purchase of the Medway Ports, the government's interest still represents a 'golden' share, giving special powers.

The new Labour government should have made justice for the sacked workers a priority. All we have seen are vague promises from Prescott of a meeting some time in the future.

Only 2 out of 560 Labour Party Conference resolutions (Edinburgh East and City of Chester) call for government action to settle the dockers' dispute. But this is no reason not to target Conference, or not to build a serious campaign to place the government in the spotlight.

The trade union movement, and the TGWU in particular, have spent many millions getting Labour elected. Rank and file activists, Labour Party members or not, should organise to make demands for action from their union's sponsored MPs.

Above all, after 2 years, whatever the tactical problems, the dockers' resolve to fight on to victory is an inspiration to the whole movement. Raising funds has now to be linked with a vigorous industrial and political campaign to force the Mersey Docks and the government to settle.

As the dockers themselves have said, "The financial generosity of people has been extraordinary. But the big thing we need is solidarity action."

**SUNDAY
OCT 12
March for
Unity**

Organised by Southall Monitoring Group Unity. Assemble 1p.m. Dominion Road, Southall.

Scotland's Parliament wins popular backing

Power for the Workers ?

Gordon Morgan

SEPTEMBER 11, 1997 – a significant date in the struggle to liberate our beloved Scottish homeland from the Saxon yoke.

Certainly Wallace's victory at Stirling Bridge in 1297 is so remembered. The victorious referendum of 1979 which paves the way for a new Scottish Parliament has a less certain future.

We have been here before. In 1979 not only had we a Yes vote in the referendum, we actually had an Act of Parliament signed by the Queen which specified the powers of the Scottish Parliament and a timetable to set it up. This time round there is only a White Paper. As we are wont to say "there's mony a slip twixt cup and lip".

Despite the referendum being a cowardly invention of Blair and Mandelson which was rightly castigated by all parties in Scotland, the actual result has been positive.

In 1979 51.6 per cent voted for a parliament – in 1997 74.3 per cent voted yes. In 1979 there was no possibility of powers to vary income tax – in 1997 64 per cent voted in favour of such powers.

In 1979 the parliament was denied due to a wrecking clause demanding 40 per cent of the electorate (not people voting) support the parliament, only 32.8 per cent voted in favour. In 1997 there was no such requirement.

However, even with an out of date electoral register which effectively disenfranchised around 10 per cent of the electorate, 44.4 per cent of those on the register voted for a Parliament.

At least a third more Scots have shown they favour a Parliament in 1997 than in 1979. In part this reflects the bitterness of the denial of a Parliament in '79.

Since '79 the Scots have been politically oppressed within the UK.



Thatcher's backing was final kiss of death for No campaigners

The democratic deficit which has existed since at least 1712 began once more to look like active contempt towards the Scots in the 1980s.

The depth of anger over Thatcher's decision to introduce the Poll Tax in Scotland one year earlier than England cannot be overestimated.

Perhaps the single most stupid event during the Referendum was the No campaign's decision to bring Thatcher to Scotland 2 days before the vote. This served to remind people why they wanted to make their own laws rather than have them imposed from Westminster.

In 1979 the SNP whilst in the end calling for a Yes vote, didn't campaign for the Assembly. What was on offer in 1979 was Devolution, a clearly subordinate body to Westminster. What is described in the White Paper is a more substantial body – a Scottish Parliament.

At least 550,000 SNP voters voted Yes in 1997.

Labour also was split in '79 – Brian Wilson now a Scottish Office minister led the No campaign. Whilst many in Scottish Labour remain unionists, they realise a substantial part of the Party would switch to SNP if Labour didn't deliver on its promises for a Parliament. Labour this time was united behind the Yes campaign – doubters reluctantly accepted that this was the best defence of the union.

So Labour claim the Parliament will at the one time extend democracy, devolve power and defend the union while the SNP hail it as a major step on the road to independence for Scotland.

These conflicting views were subdued during the campaign – when all parties within the Yes campaign were being careful not to give negative images. Immediately the results were in ritual denunciations of SNP by Labour, led by

Brian Wilson, began as normal.

Most commentators post-referendum believe the Parliament will inevitably become the focus for politics in Scotland, that 'rising stars' will target Edinburgh rather than Westminster, inevitably powers will move to the Scottish Parliament at the expense of Westminster ... that in effect the SNP are right.

Already evidence points to the correctness of this analysis. Donald Dewar is openly tipped as Scottish Premier, many other MPs have declared their preference for Edinburgh -- the jockeying for seats is on and will intensify.

The end of the United Kingdom is in sight – brought about by Blair, the most centralist politician we have seen.

What then are the Powers promised to the Parliament ?

Like the Welsh Parliament, the Scottish Parliament will have power over the colonial office budget (read Scottish Office and Welsh Office). In Scotland's case this amounts to £14,000,000,000 per annum. This is 5 times the budget of the ex-Strathclyde Council. Unlike the Welsh Parliament, or Councils (even a Parish Council to which Blair likened its sovereign powers) – the Scottish Parliament will be a legislative body. It can make law.

● The health service will be controlled from Edinburgh – it could abolish private medicine, remove competition, properly fund the service.

● The Scottish Parliament will have total control over Education. They could end student loans and properly fund grants. Independent and grant aided schools could be abolished and overall provision extended.

● In terms of Local Government everything will be under Scottish control other than borrowing consent. It could reorganise, add powers, free most fiscal constraints -- grant local tax powers, facilitate new housing, repair the cuts in services.

● Edinburgh will have important powers in respect of economic Development and the environment. It controls enterprise Companies, trade, tourism, most transport, water and sewerage. This could lead to – dependent of course on political will – taxes on car use, restriction of pollution, the take over of companies.

We could see an alteration in business rates, changes incentives for investment/export and the regulation of planning to make business accountable.

● In the legal sphere there will be control over the police, courts and prisons as well as most criminal law. This could lead to a change in sentencing policy; a reduction in sentences, decriminalising of some offenses, the release of prisoners and an emphasis on rehabilitation and integration with social goals.

● With regard to food, forestry and fishing the Scottish Parliament will have control subject to the Common Agricultural Policy. They could improve food safety, protect small farmers and start to regulate agribusiness.

● Edinburgh can alter income tax by 3p in the pound. It can also control business rate and change local taxes, create new taxes, abolish some others.

These are a flavour for the powers which could be exercised by the Parliament – they clearly could have significant beneficial effects for Scottish people if the parliament acts in the peoples interest. This depends on the programme and policies of the parties. The Scottish Socialist Alliance (SSA) has an extensive range of policies which it will advocate the Parliament should adopt and which it will demand other parties implement.

The UK and Blair have not reneged all power. The Bill has still to be published and restrictions could be made to restrict for example the likelihood of those from left groups being elected. Furthermore, the drafting of powers may proscribe Acts seen as attacking business. In the main this is done through reserved powers retained by Westminster.

Westminster intends to retain control over Foreign Policy; so called National Defence – i.e. troops will be available to suppress restless natives including Scots. UK fiscal economic and monetary policy, company law, social security policy and many others which will be added will remain under the control of London.

Conflicts

Although anything not listed in the Bill will be deemed to be in the powers of the Scottish Parliament, there will be many conflicting issues. Some of these are already clear.

The White Paper proposes an electoral scheme based on Parliamentary and European boundaries. If these change the number of members in Edinburgh would reduce.

Other than for the first election this formula must be changed to ensure an adequate number of representatives is maintained. If UK income tax were reduced, the grant to the Scottish parliament would fall more than proportionately. Demand for greater fiscal autonomy will grow.

The major conflict will relate to Europe. Essentially Blair wishes to join the single currency and argue for UK Financial and business interests in Europe. Having corporate control of the state and leaving local issues to the Scots may free his hand.

Scots opposition to the European Union is high and can only grow. The SNP whilst supporting the EU is demanding "a place at the table".

They will not be satisfied with some minor third party influence on regional policy. Meanwhile the Scottish Socialist Alliance and other socialists will demand the Scottish Parliament take the powers to oppose the Bosses' Europe – particularly during the coming slump and austerity round.

September 11 was only the start, the fight for liberation – of humanity including the Scots – will intensify for the foreseeable future.

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For details of all the motions and for Steering Committee contact: WSN, c/o Camden People's Centre, 183 Queen's Crescent, London NW5 4DS.

Wales: it's Yes by a Whisker!

by Our Welsh Correspondent

ON SEPTEMBER 11 the Scottish people voted, calmly and overwhelmingly, for a Scottish Parliament with significant legislative and tax-varying powers.

Thus ended nearly 300 years of British constitutional history. On September 18 the Welsh people, with a great deal more trepidation, narrowly voted for a Welsh Assembly.

This heralds the greatest change in the governance of Wales since its annexation to England in the 16th century. The British state will never be the same again.

The decisive results in Scotland can not be questioned. Support for a Scottish Parliament is clearly the settled will of the Scottish people.

The Welsh result is far more contradictory and, taken superficially, would seem to beg more questions than it answers. A more detailed analysis shows some extremely important patterns in voting and consequently consciousness.

The Welsh result is, in some ways, the most remarkable of the two, given that the 1979 Welsh referendum was lost by such a large margin. Only 20 per cent of those who voted were in favour at that time, compared to 52 per cent in Scotland.

It was only the artificial barrier that 40 per cent of the electorate had to vote Yes which prevented Scottish devolution from proceeding then.

It is clear from the voting pat-

terns that support for an Assembly is very uneven in Wales. It is concentrated in the working class areas which suffered most under 18 years of Tory rule.

Contrary to the claims of *No* campaigners, it is not simply linguistically based, since predominantly English speaking valleys and areas contributed as much to the victory as did Welsh speaking areas.

Indeed, Welsh speaking Ynys Môn (Anglesey) only narrowly voted in favour.

Working Class Vote

Large majorities in favour were delivered in Labour's working class heartlands. Neath and Port Talbot voted 2 to 1 in favour, Rhondda by a majority of 15,000 and Caerffili by a majority of 6,000. The final result, which narrowly clinched victory, came from Carmarthen.

This includes important working class areas like Llanelli, the Gwendraeth Valley, Ammanford and Carmarthen town itself. It registered a vote of 65 per cent in favour, based on a comparatively high turn-out, allowing the Yes vote to scrape home by a majority of 6,721.

It is also striking that in every one of the areas in which rebel Labour MP's campaigned for a *No* vote, or cast doubts on the proposals, the vote was overwhelmingly in favour. This is a firm rebuttal for Allan Rogers in the Rhondda, Llew Smith in Blaenau Gwent, Ray Powell in Ogmore and Alan Williams in Swansea, along with doubters like Denzil Davies in

Just saved his bacon: Ron Davies narrowly missed defeat



Llanelli and Ted Rowlands in Merthyr.

Two areas with large working class populations which did register significant votes against were Cardiff and Newport. This reflects the much lower level of Welsh national consciousness in these areas and, in Cardiff at least, a strong feeling that a Welsh Assembly would be a bloated version of the increasingly unpopular Cardiff labour council.

'No' Campaign

The role of Llew Smith in the *No* campaign is particularly problematic, since his appalling stand on this question has done a great deal to discredit the Labour left.

He is the only Campaign Group MP in Wales and his stance has allowed opponents to lump together all his positions as: "old-style state centralist socialism".

This could have particularly damaging consequences for any effort to build a campaign against the next European Inter-Governmental Conference, to be held in Cardiff next year.

There are currently huge illusions within both the Wales Labour Party and Plaid Cymru about the prospects for Wales in a Maas-

tricht Europe. Llew's stand on the Assembly will make it all the easier for people to dismiss his arguments against EMU as emanating simply from a London-centred, British nationalist perspective.

There are already calls for his deselection, with the most likely replacement being a pro-Assembly Blairite.

It is also instructive to examine the motivation of other key figures in the *No* campaign. Two Labour Party members from the Rhondda, Carys Pugh and Betty Bowen, achieved national prominence by being the first to launch a *No* campaign.

Carys Pugh excelled herself with rabid comments about Peter Hain's South African background and the suggestion that he should return there.

Betty Bowen was a little more measured but revealed a great deal with her comment that: "I was born Welsh, I'm a Rhondda girl through and through, but I'm still a British subject". That word "subject" - it says it all.

Such a sentiment brings to mind Lenin's comments that: "Nobody is to be blamed for being born a slave; but a slave ... who justifies and eulogises his slavery ...

arouses a legitimate feeling of indignation, contempt, and loathing."

Despite the closeness of the result, the vote on September 18 is a massive step forward for the people and the politics of Wales. The creation of an Assembly gives socialists an exciting opportunity to reinvigorate and enliven political life in Wales.

It will give us an elected body which can be both a forum for debate and a focus for demands and campaigns.

Activists in Cardiff West CLP have proposed a number of key points for debate on the nature of the Assembly. Based on their experience during campaigning, they have called for an Assembly which:

- * Abolishes the vast majority of the quangos. Those that remain, such as the Welsh Development Agency and the Welsh Tourist Board, must be under tight democratic control.

- * Dismantles the huge bureaucracy created by the Tories in the Health Service and opposes further hospital closures.

- * Ensures that women are equally represented in the Assembly and that black people are fairly represented.

- * Ensures that members of the Assembly do not enjoy any special privileges, while cuts are being made in other areas. Assembly members should be paid the average wage of a skilled worker in Wales.

Useful

These positions form a useful contribution to the public debate which must now develop, a debate which was so conspicuously absent before the vote.

Strenuous attempts were made to stifle any disagreement, in an effort to maintain a facade of party unity. That false unity very predictably collapsed in the weeks before the vote, with extremely damaging consequences for the *Yes* campaign.

We very nearly paid the price on September the 18, when defeat could so easily have been snatched from the jaws of victory. A thorough discussion of both the Assembly proposals and the conduct of the campaign is now essential in the Welsh labour movement - and beyond.

Yes to a London Assembly with real powers: No to a presidential Mayor

Veronica Fagan

EIGHTY per cent of Londoners agree that London needs a strategic authority.

The abolition of the GLC was deeply resented by the great majority of residents of the English capital. So it is a very good thing that Labour intends to introduce regional government to London once again.

Nick Raynsford, Minister for London has made it clear that the government's motivation is different - how best to market London to big business.

This is what lies behind the particular proposals which will be put to a vote next May - unless there is a massive campaign in the next month to get something better on offer. The window of opportunity is short as the consultation period on the proposals ends on October 24.

The most discussed of the pro-

posals so far is that London should have an directly-elected Mayor rather than a Leader chosen from the existing representatives. Such a beauty contest has already seen suggestions that the 'choice' might include Richard Branson and Lord Archer...

But it is far worse than that. The proposed Mayor will not be a figurehead in the way that local Mayors are in this country, but by far the most powerful person in the whole set-up.

Small assembly

There will be a small Assembly with representatives covering large areas - probably equivalent to the existing Euro-constituencies.

The Mayor will have most of the power. He or she will have responsibility for drawing up the budget which the representatives can then question. There is no suggestion however that they can put forward

alternatives or even substantial amendments. Some "authority" this!

The Assembly will have some influence in the areas of policing, fire and civil defence, transport, economic development, arts and leisure and planning, many of which are currently run through quangos.

While the mechanism in each of these areas will be slightly different they will be run through bodies separate from the Assembly itself. In the case of the police authority the members will be selected by the Mayor alone from members of the Assembly.

The lack of democracy in these proposals is breath taking - the Assembly has little power and the Mayor a great deal.

The Labour front bench have made it clear that there will be no more money for the Authority. Its funding will come from other bodies that are currently doing the

work. Without revenue-raising powers of any clout, there will be no chance of following in the best traditions of the old GLC.

That is of course precisely what Blair is so keen to avoid - a power centre that could put forward a different way of doing things to his own.

Beginning

Debate in trade unions and Labour parties in London is only just beginning - but the consultation period ends soon. The Regional Executive of the Greater London Labour Party, followed by some rather nebulous consultation with CLPs, gave the bureaucracy the wrong answer - so now the full time officials have hastily called a special Conference of GLLP on October 12. It is not clear that this is intended to discuss alternative points of view - but it must demand the right to.

It is positive that the Greater London Association of Trades Councils has submitted a useful critique of the government's proposals to the consultation and is now planning a 'People's London' campaign.

If this is to be effective in demanding a real choice in the may referendum and finding a way to prevent a strategic authority that will almost be worse than the status quo its support needs to be broadened.

The debate needs to be stepped up. Send your comments or those of your union or Labour Party by October 24 to:

The London Debate, Government office for London, 10th Floor, Riverwalk House, 157-161 Millbank, London SW1P 4RR

Euromarch campaign still on the road!

Terry Conway

A RECALL conference on September 20 brought together the majority of marchers from the British leg of this summer's Euromarch, together with a layer of their supporters.

As well as discussing the year's successes – in particular remembering the emotional meeting of marchers from across Europe in Amsterdam the day before the mass demonstration – it laid plans for the future.

Activity will continue on two main fronts. On the one hand the battle against unemployment will be a key priority: on the other key tasks in relation to European-wide campaigning will be posed over the next months.

With the introduction of 'Welfare to Work', an aspect of this task has become more difficult, as there are more illusions in this project than the hated Job Seekers Allowance and Project Work.

It will be difficult to get massive support at this stage until the real nature of this scheme becomes clear. However this makes it all the more important that the work starts now and a campaign is well in place when people do start to realise what is going on.

The links with disputes will clearly continue as evidenced by the presence of strikers from Liverpool docks and Magnet at the conference, both of whom received warm applause when they spoke of the



current stage of their disputes.

Discussion also took place on the need to broaden our emphasis on job insecurity – taking up the fight against the ever-growing introduction of short-term contracts for example. Several speakers referred to how Blair is attempting to teach over European leaders the importance of having a 'flexible', i.e. insecure, workforce.

Some discussion took place on strengthening the involvement of women in the campaign. In advance of the march itself some of the women involved met and discussed this issue. No-one had quite understood at that stage the logistics of keeping the march on the road for four long weeks.

In the end many of the good ideas

fell by the wayside. Given that it is harder for women – especially those with childcare responsibilities – to go on the road for long periods of time, it is not really surprising that more men than women actually marched.

Certainly there were many women involved behind the scenes who didn't take that step. However given that women are at the sharp end of all these attacks it is necessary to find ways of stepping up involvement over the months to come.

Less debate took place around the need to relate to the demands of black people. Hopefully it will be possible to link up with campaigners in Southall, who plan to work on many of the same issues and focus

on the way they affect the black community. The rights of asylum seekers were taken up in the march slogans – this needs to be built on.

The meeting agreed to be involved in a series of activities round the single currency. Parliament will need to endorse the Amsterdam treaty – the timetable is not known but will become clear in the Queen's speech. A lobby will be called.

Action will be taken to try to bring together the different campaigns on the question of the single currency to ensure an internationalist 'no' campaign when the referendum is called.

Probably the most important focus for mass action will be around the Cardiff summit in June next

year. Plans are at a fairly early stage not least because of the Welsh referendum campaign.

It seems clear that the scale of mobilisation in Amsterdam cannot be repeated, but a major demonstration with delegations from Europe does look feasible.

The meeting elected an interim steering committee and agreed to a recall meeting by December. Other decisions on structure were deferred until that time.

Some from the Welfare State Network (WSN) Steering Committee expressed concern that the meeting would set up a rival to this project and argued that it should organise under the WSN umbrella.

The majority did not agree with this suggestion but thought the two projects could be complimentary. It was agreed that there should be discussions with the WSN Steering Committee.

The Euromarch brought together people from a wide diversity of backgrounds and political views who were able to work together and cooperate to build a very successful march and campaign.

Maintaining the spirit that sustained that project is not always easy.

Anger against the blight of unemployment and cuts and a vision of international solidarity is the message that can not only continue to bind existing campaigners together but allow us to reach out to broader forces.

Which way will Labour jump on single currency conundrum?

Alan Thornett

MAKE your mind up time is approaching for Tony Blair and the Labour leadership over European Monetary Union (EMU).

Since the election Labour has continued to sit on the fence parroting their pre-election blurb: 'we will take a decision on EMU at the time and in line with Britain's economic interest.'

This has always had more to do with electoral tactics than either the political realities of European integration or the logic of Labour's stance on Europe – which is full support for the EU and for further

integration.

Joining EMU is a political decision and it is not rational politics to be in favour of the EU and further integration but to equivocate on entry into the first round of EMU.

Britain could pay a heavy price for staying outside the powerful Ecu zone which will be established once the first round of the single currency goes ahead.

There is little doubt that the Single Currency will go ahead as planned on January 1 1999. Key European governments which have been struggling to meet the convergence criteria as laid out in the Maastricht Treaty are now ex-

pected to qualify on time for the first round.

The most important of these is Germany, whose latest projection is that it will meet the 3 per cent of GDP criteria in time for the first round. This has been achieved by a combination of economic upturn and by excluding the health service debt from the public sector borrowing requirement – on the basis that most of it is privately incurred.

Italy, one of the weakest potential members of the first round, also expects to comply – after imposing a specific tax designed to reduce government debt.

Italy is now close to the 3 per

cent and expects to reach it by the end of the year. The current prospect is that at least half a dozen other countries, including France, will meet the Maastricht criteria – creating a situation where up to eight member states could qualify for the first round.

Britain will have to decide whether to apply by the end of this year. The final list for the first round will be decided at a meeting of governments, presided over by the British presidency.

In a move which pushes the whole project forward, European finance ministers have now decided to lock together the exchange rates of those countries who go into the first round, from that meeting in May 1998 – seven months in advance of EMU. From that point onwards EMU will effectively be in place.

The recent call by Gordon Brown for a national debate on the single currency is the clearest sign yet that the policy from the election is under serious review.

Such a debate however will give the best opportunity for the left to put forward an internationalist opposition to this single currency. It is an opportunity that should be seized with both hands.

Labour, like the Tories, have been doing the things necessary for the single currency ever since they came to office – keeping public spending down, with all its consequences. In addition they have effectively privatised the Bank of England, which is a partial step towards the requirements of EMU – an independent central bank to run

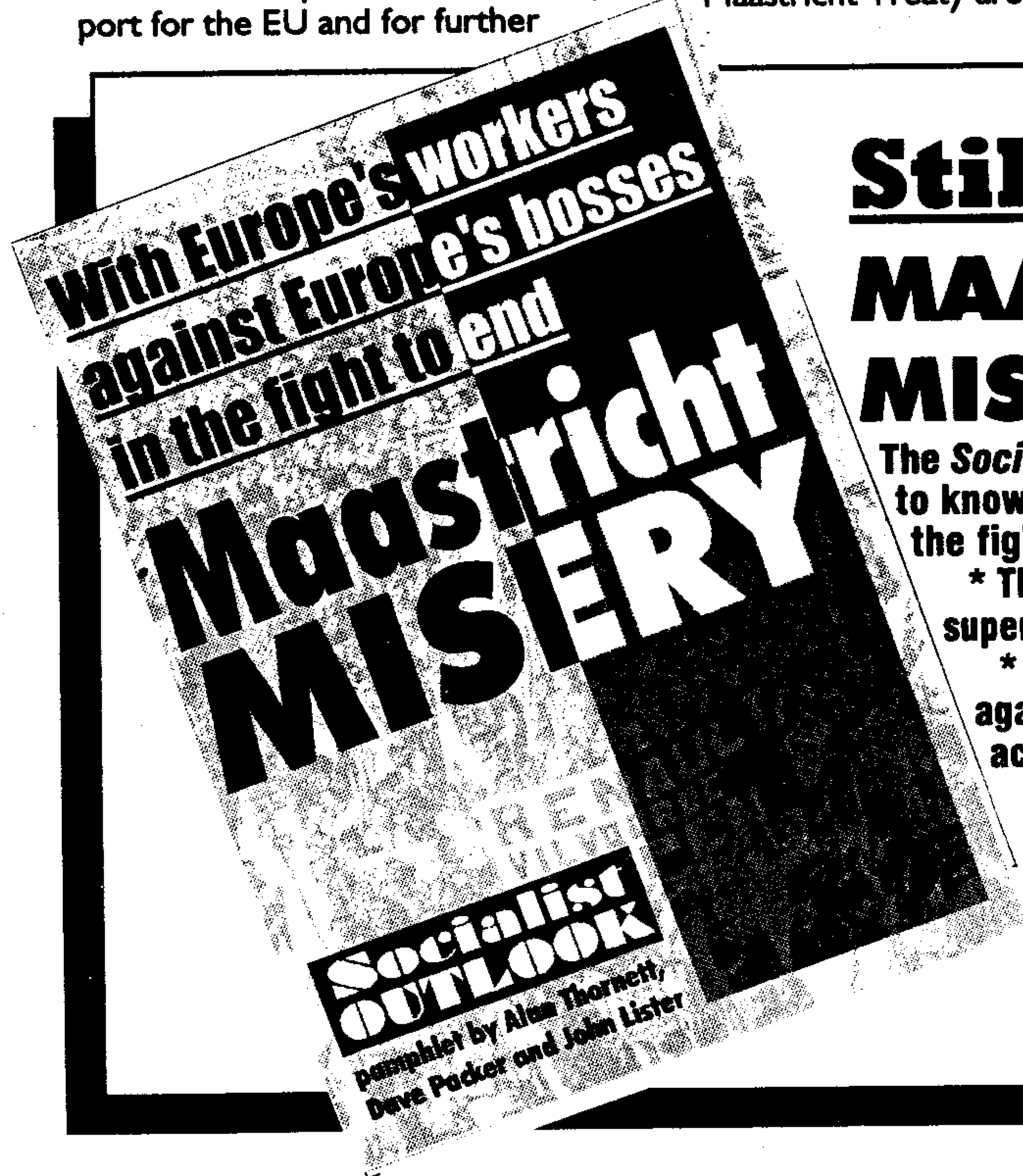


the system.

Whether Blair will opt for the first round is difficult to say, but the pressure from business not to be sidelined is already very strong. His main problem is his commitment to a referendum. To go into the first round would require a referendum before May 98 – and it may be difficult to do that and to win it.

There is talk of Britain having a special arrangement – not joining the first round but being allowed to join soon afterwards. That is also difficult, since it would require a decision in principle to join, and that in itself – if Blair is to keep to election promises – would need a referendum before June 98.

The message for those opposed to the single currency, however, is clear enough. Blair will take Britain in, at one point or another – and it may well be into the first round. This means we have to be ready to mount the most effective 'No' campaign possible as soon as a referendum becomes imminent.



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Blair's "New Britain" is to be run by the old bosses, demanding ever more "flexibility" from an increasingly insecure workforce.



Fight on after Brighton to beat back Blair

Nell Murray

WHATEVER the outcome on the proposed rule changes at Labour Party conference, the implications of Blair's project for the party will not go away.

If the proposals are defeated he will no doubt try again next year. If they are passed it is likely that he will try to build on this victory.

He may put forward further proposals to curtail the accountability of the government to the movement, possibly severing the union-party link completely and moving towards state funding of parties to reward him from the need to raise money from the unions.

Blair is absolutely committed to making Labour the main party of British capitalism in the place of the Tories. This demands the ties to the unions as the basic organisations of the working class are loosened as much as possible, if not completely broken. The current tameness of the unions is no protection against this assault.

The precise mechanisms he will use are not known, but the project is clear.

What we have seen so far of the Labour government is but a foretaste. The victories on the Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly (even with limited powers) are to be welcomed, as is the restoration of trade union rights at GCHQ (albeit with a no-strike clause).

But the overall picture is clear. There will be pay restraint for the public sector, no change to the anti-union laws and no reprieve on funding of the NHS or local council services.

An 'ethical foreign policy' will mean at best only cosmetic change, furtherance of the 'peace process' is intended to end the fight for Irish self-determination.

'Welfare to Work' type schemes mean replacing current workers with government-funded ones at lower rates. There will be no let-up on unemployment or the squeeze on benefits. We will be faced with

rapid moves to a single European currency that has at its centre a stability pact perpetuating the limits on state spending. All this with glossy phrases about 'partnership', 'fairness', 'flexibility' and a 'New Britain'.

As long as the Labour Party has ties with the unions it will not replace the Tories for Britain's bosses as the most reliable party of British capitalism, although they might prefer it at particular times like the last election.

Not safe enough

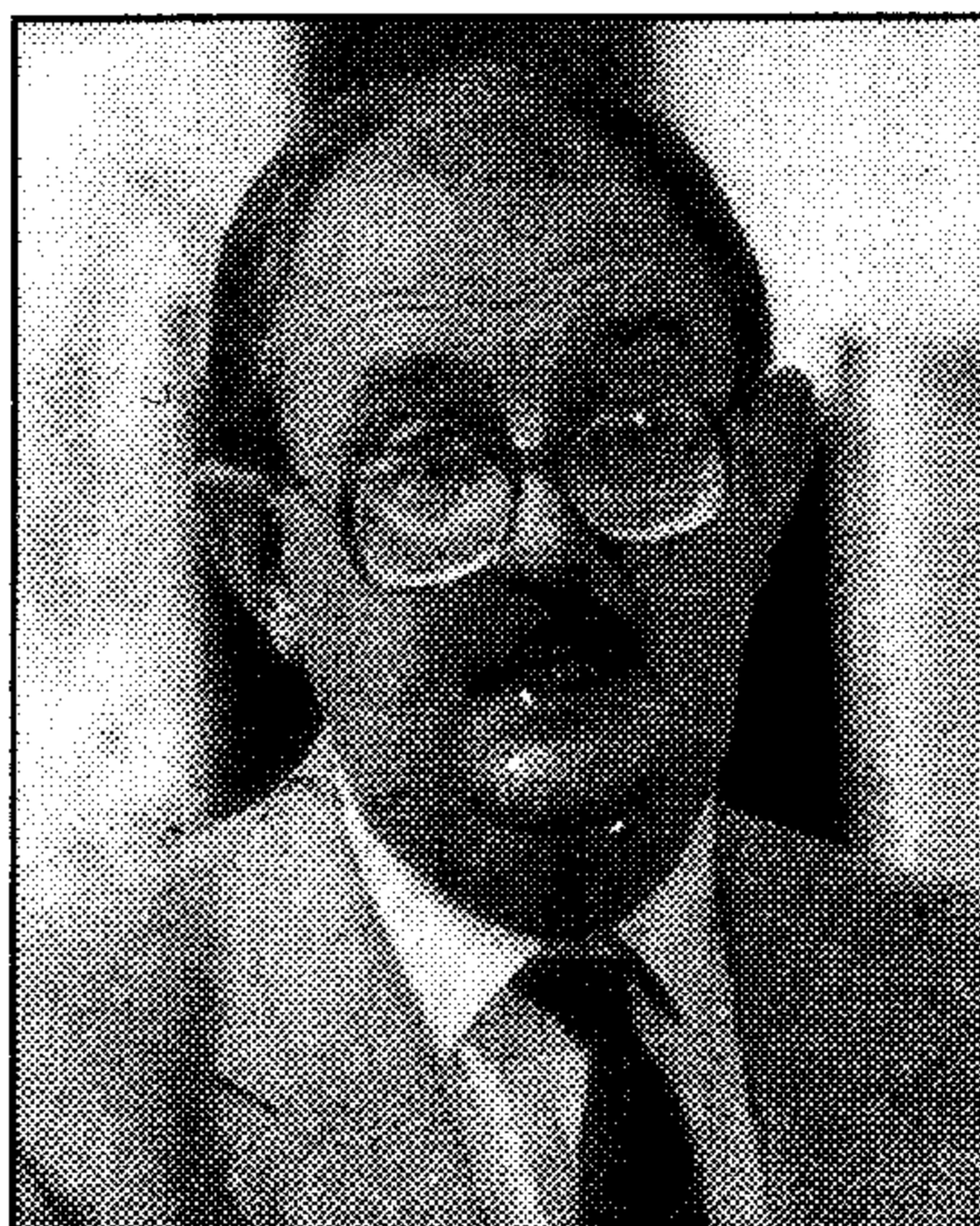
Both Blair and the bosses recognise that the Labour Party is not a completely safe pair of hands for capitalism as long as there is the risk of working class discontent being reflected through its structures and calling a Labour government to account.

Since its formation the Labour Party has lived a contradiction - while being organisationally independent of the bosses' parties (both Tory and Liberal/Liberal Democrat) it has not been politically independent, pursuing capitalist policies, even if under the cover of the old Clause IV and claims to socialism.

Even so, the fact that the British working class had its 'own' party was positive in comparison to those countries like the U.S. where the choice is between two explicitly capitalist parties.

Blair now wants to resolve that contradiction by scraping the input that the organised working class has into the Party.

The trade unions have also always had an ambivalent approach to the Labour Party. While it was the unions that decided to found the Labour Party, this was based on an extension of the 'negotiation within capitalism' ideology of the unions. Union leaders have done their best to ensure that the aspirations of their rank and file are re-



Union chiefs like Edmonds are Blair's "Partners" without power

flected as little as possible in the policy of the party, and been more than happy most of the time to leave policy-making to the Party leadership.

Only on rare occasions, such as during the last years of the Callaghan government and for a few years afterwards, has this not been true. Despite the odd groan, the union leaderships have fully assisted Kinnock, Smith and now Blair in overturning democratic and policy changes that went against the interests of the ruling class. That they were often ignoring their own union's policy made little difference.

Those same union leaders have, of course, constantly sold their

Blair's attitude is shown more by his insistence on 'flexibility' and his lecture to the TUC than the limited concessions on offer.

members out on the industrial front too. The rightward drift in the Labour Party and unions over recent years have fed off each other. The TUC has its own 'modernisation' programme in parallel with Blair's.

Too often the Left has seen the fight for union democracy and accountability and to turn them into combative organisations separate from the fight in the Labour Party.

Many CLP activists have seen the unions as something they can-

not influence in Labour Party debates, relying on the good will of Left (or not so left) General Secretaries. When things go wrong they have often railed against "the unions" rather than recognise that tensions exist within them and the need to organise against the bureaucracy.

The flip side of this is a syndicalism that concentrates on disputes and ignores 'politics', which equally lets the bureaucrats off the hook for what they are doing in our name.

Most General Secretaries have done their utmost to minimise opposition to the 'Partnership in Power' rule changes. Some in unions whose conferences opposed the changes outright are still working to get their delegations to endorse them. This is the scale of the problem we face.

They reason that the Labour government is going to offer something on union recognition and a minimum wage, so they shouldn't antagonise Blair by opposing the rule changes.

But Blair's attitude is shown more by his insistence on 'flexibility' and his lecture to the TUC than the extremely limited concessions on offer.

Moreover, the adoption of 'Partnership in Power' will make it very difficult for the unions to influence Party policy in the future, making it a very short-sighted deal.

Thus any strategy for working class representation has to address not only what is happening to the Labour Party, but also the way in which the major unions are tied into the same basic social democratic politics.

The union leaderships must be called to account for the road the Labour Party has gone down. They are just as responsible for it as Blair.

Counter attack

The counter-attack that needs to be launched against pro-capitalist policies in the labour movement has to be across both the Labour

Party and Trade Unions, but also beyond.

It must encompass the disputes that

both bureaucracies are committed to selling out or undermining and the campaigns that they ignore or pay lip service to, such as around rare and defence of the welfare state and the environment. The fight within the structures of the labour movement has to link up with these if it is to have any chance of success in pushing back the bureaucrats' offensive.

For the moment, whether or not

Blair wins in Brighton, the fight is to force Labour to recognise and carry out working class interests.

For this reason *Socialist Outlook* supported the September 13 conference called by the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups and attended by 150 people that discussed not only opposition to 'Partnership in Power', but also the tasks of the Left after Brighton.

Unlike some, we do not think the adoption of the rule changes would just be a 'swing of the pendulum' which could easily swing back. These changes are more fundamental than that.

Nor should the Left write off the unions, either in terms of opposition to the rule changes (where the battle will continue within union delegations right up to the vote at Party conference) or in terms of a future link up.

That is why the presence of union representatives on the platform on the 13th was important (even though some cried off for good or bad reasons). The recall conference on November 1 has to be built among both CLP and trade union activists.

While the proposed changes are far-reaching, their adoption would not represent Armageddon in the sense that the Left should immediately give up all thought of work in the Party. A long fight lies ahead, not as 'business as usual', but to step up the battle for working class independence.

That fight is initially in the Labour Party, around basic working class demands. But there may come a point, in the not-too-distant future, when the Left has to declare that there is little future to the fight in the Labour Party, whether or not it has changed its fundamental class character, and address the question of building an alternative 'Party of Labour'.

The extent to which forces are built up now, across the labour movement, to fight the bureaucracy, will determine the success of such a decision should it have to be taken.

The fate of the SLP shows that to be successful such a new party must have organised forces on the ground in advance of leaving the Labour Party.

It will also have to be integrated into the fightback that occurs in the class against the Labour government if it is to reflect a more generalised discontent than simply that of the currently organised Left.

Hard on the weak, soft on the rich, full of soundbites and fury ...

Harry Sloan looks at the record of the first four months of Blair government.

"WHERE does a gorilla sit in the cinema?"
"Anywhere he bloody wants!"
The same could have been true of the new government.

Backed by the biggest Parliamentary majority since the 1930s, riding high on the good will of millions who celebrated the demise of the Tories, and able to ignore the absurd antics of a broken and demoralised Tory opposition and its inept new leader, Tony Blair's Labour team could have done anything they wanted.

The harsh fact is that they wanted to continue with Tory economics, Tory cash limits, Tory anti-union laws, Tory foreign policy, Tory tactics on law and order, and Tory attacks on the welfare state - all of them dressed up in the hypocritical and pointless gobble-dyook of "modernisation".

They wanted to bring unelected millionaire union-busters like BP's Lord Simon into the government, even as they push through plans to keep the unions even further from any real control or influence on the party they have financed with affiliation fees.

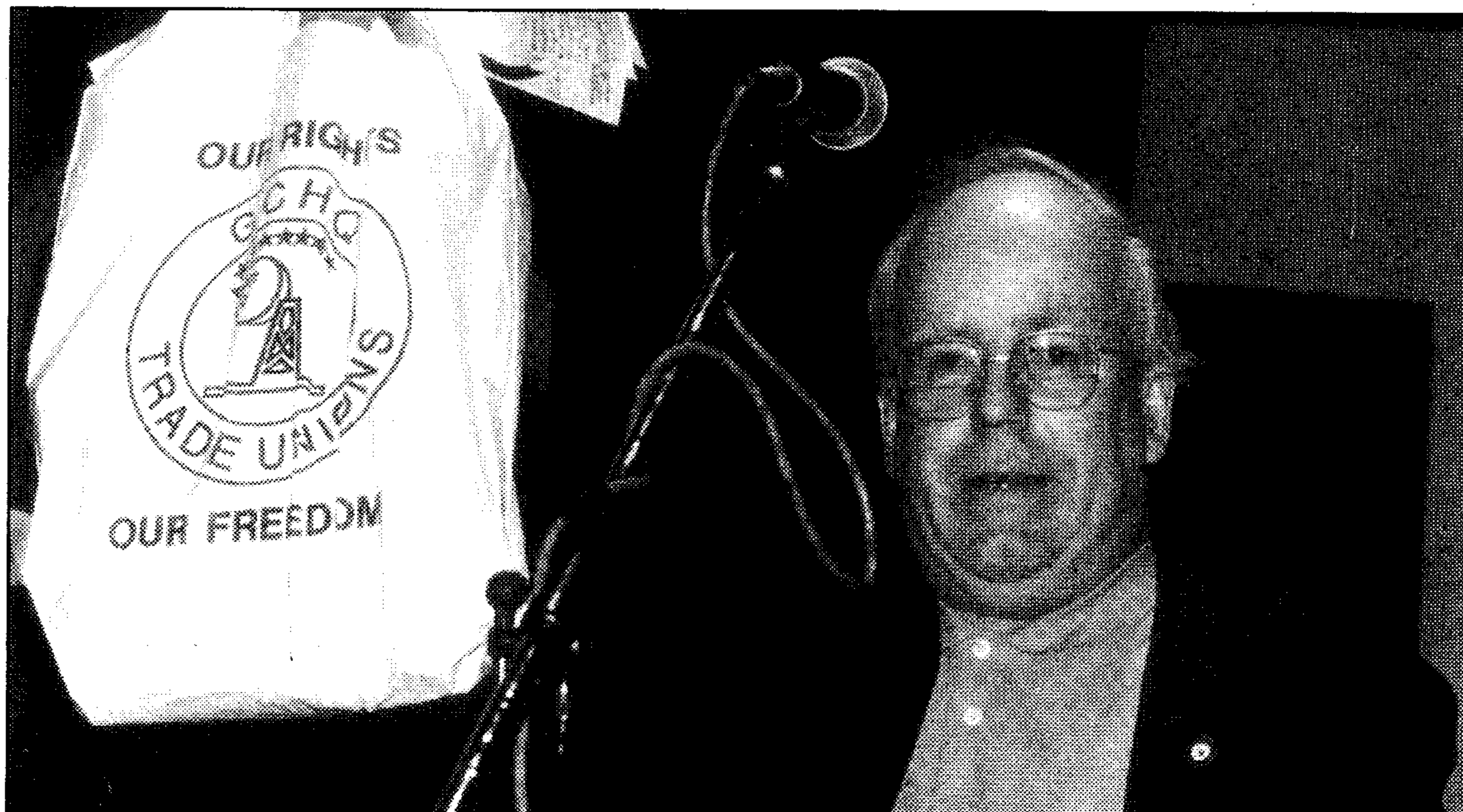
The only promises and policies to have been cast aside since May 1 are those which hinted at any radical attempt to undermine the Thatcher/Major legacy of privatisation, free market economics and skid row public services.

Of course there have been a few scraps of reforms thrown to the union bureaucrats to gag any potential opposition. But these concessions have merely shown how much more could have been done so easily by Labour.

The long-standing battle for union rights at GCHQ was ended at a stroke by the intervention of Foreign Secretary Robin Cook. But there is no sign of intervention on the Liverpool dockers' fight or other long-running disputes, despite the influence ministers could have.

There are vague promises of a White Paper on union recognition, but Employment Minister Andrew Smith has failed even to write a let-

New Labour, new let-down



GCHQ workers saw swift government action: no such luck for the Liverpool dockers after 2 years of struggle

ter of support to journalists in his constituency fighting derecognition at the *Oxford Mail*. Those who argue workers haven't got a prayer of extending union rights under Tony Blair were offered little consolation at the TUC by the appearance of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The government made a big deal out of signing the European Social Chapter, but its puny provisions will take years to affect British workers. Promised action on a minimum wage has been shelved while a London Business School academic chairs a review.

There are so many examples of retreats on key policy commit-

ments it is hard to sum them up. New Labour in government appears to have no memory of its stance in opposition.

Perhaps one of the most craven episodes was when Transport Minister Glenda Jackson, confronted by an independent report showing post-privatisation rail services in Britain to be far and away the most expensive in the world, attempted to denigrate the report and defend the Tory system of "regulation" which is pumping millions in state subsidies straight into the profits of train operators. Six months earlier, as a shadow minister she would have been arguing the opposite point of view.

Another swift about-face came from Glenda's boss, Environment and Transport Secretary John Prescott. He ignored all-party representations and glibly discarded Labour's pledge to end the universal "capping" of council tax, when he opted to impose additional cuts of over £6 million on council services Oxfordshire, one of only three counties to appeal for the right to raise more in tax.

Robin Cook came forward with a high-falutin pronouncement on a new, moral foreign policy, only to turn tail and endorse continued arms shipments to the brutal Indonesian regime. Labour's complicity with the continued massive arms trade is leading the new government to echo the grisly record of previous Labour governments:

many will recall David Owen standing firm as almost the last international supporter of the Shah of Iran.

But when it comes to dropping recent policy commitments and promises, it is hard for any department to beat Health Secretary Frank Dobson and his lily-livered bunch of ministers.

Within days of his appointment, junior minister Alan Milburn had ditched Labour's pledge to save Edgware Hospital's Accident & Emergency unit. Shortly afterwards he and Dobson effectively rubber-stamped the rundown and closure of acute services at Guy's

Hospital. But these policies were just a taster of the retreats and reverses to come. Since then:

- Dobson has summarily ditched the detailed (if confused) policy spelled out last December by Labour's Health spokesperson Chris Smith to replace the Tory "internal market" system, and specifically to replace the controversial system of GP Fundholders. Now Dobson argues there are "good points" about fundholding.
- It is clear that the bureaucratic nonsense of the "purchaser provider split" is here to stay, but NHS managers have been baffled

by the latest government guidance (which says that contracts should be negotiated for three years instead of annually, but then admits that prices will have to be renegotiated every 12 months!). Few health bosses now expect real changes in the promised White Paper. As one summed it up "The internal market is still there ... but it is in sheep's clothing."

- Without scrapping the NHS market system, Labour's pledge to save £100m from bureaucracy and invest this in cutting waiting lists is an empty phrase. And without putting any additional money into health authority budgets *this* year, Gordon Brown's budget announcement of an "extra" £1.2 billion for the NHS from April is also largely meaningless: latest estimates are that health authorities and Trusts will have piled up deficits of at least £700 million by then, heralding even bigger cuts to come.

- Also gone without trace is Labour's promise of a Royal Commission on care of the frail elderly, a service which has been effectively privatised by the Tories, with increasingly disastrous consequences.

- Dobson in June pledged to scrap the hated system of local pay bargaining which divides the 1-million-strong NHS workforce - but promptly toned down and apparently withdrew the commitment only weeks later.

- Labour ministers have backed a 52-page Department of Health document claiming that nurses' pay has risen 164% since 1984, and that therefore yet another year of below inflation pay awards would "not imply a real pay cut".

- Labour ministers in August triumphantly published figures to show the horrendous increase in hospital waiting lists created by years of Tory underfunding - while they know that Gordon Brown has ruled out spending the extra money needed to tackle the problem, and health ministers freely admit that queues for treatment are likely to grow much longer in the months to come.

- As this article is written, the blood testing and processing centre in Liverpool is closing despite a giant campaign to save it and an independent report to Dobson stating that the rationale behind the National Blood Authority's decision

The only promises and policies to have been cast aside since May 1 are those which hinted at any radical attempt to undermine the Thatcher/Major legacy of privatisation, free market economics and skid row public services.



to move the service to Manchester "remains unproven".

Amid this catalogue of timid failures and retreats, health ministers have also been at the forefront of a right wing counter-offensive, promoting the idea of the Private Finance Initiative, allowing profit-seeking companies to build and manage hospitals for the NHS.

Alan Milburn outlined plans for the first 14 PFI-build hospitals, and insisted that the Labour government will underwrite these 30-year deals – even as his press release admitted that nobody yet knows how much these buildings and support services will cost the NHS Trusts, which will lease them from city-backed consortia.

But there is strong competition among ministers to be leader of the right wing pack.

"Mad" Frankie Field at Social Security is honing his reactionary plans to savage the state pension and remodel the welfare state along the lines perfected by the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile.

But Education Secretary David Blunkett – to the delight of the Tory press – has led the charge of the Right Brigade, driving a vital wedge into the welfare state with his determination to impose £1,000 a year tuition fees on university students, claiming with cynical incoherence to be "widening opportunities" for higher education.

Hand in hand with Tory darling Chris Woodhead of OFSTED, Schools Minister Stephen Byers has joined the offensive aimed at scapegoating teachers and underfunded schools in deprived areas.

The nonsense of Tory nursery vouchers may have been scrapped, but there is still insufficient cash to finance nursery places for all, let alone the promised reduction in school class sizes, while school budgets face more cuts to come next year.

Not wishing to be outdone on the reactionary front, Home Secretary Jack Straw stepped straight into the warm driving seat of Michael Howard's "lock 'em up" bandwagon, and put his foot on the



Sooner than tax big business or the rich, Blunkett prefers to charge the students, using the ludicrous claim that it will "expand opportunity"

accelerator. Prison building is now one of the few areas of growing state spending, making it much easier for young people to get into jail than university, and unruly youth not yet in the slammer could soon be facing a New Labour curfew, under orders to stay home after 9pm.

For local government, there seems little real change to come. Out goes the Tory phrase "Compulsory Competitive Tendering" – but in comes Labour's requirement to show "best value" in the purchasing of services, with few people able to tell the difference in practice.

Out goes "universal capping" – but the cap stays put. Labour has also set its face against "excessive council tax rises", without defining the limits. Gordon Brown's limited promise of a phased release of housing capital receipts has yet to take any tangible form, and many councils are projecting fresh cuts in capital and revenue spending and front-line services next year.

There are already signs that some of the biggest changes will be

a new Blairite purge of left wing councillors in advance of next May's elections.

The "welfare to work" proposals are also likely to rebound on local councils which become involved, together with the voluntary sector, in creating pretend "jobs" for up to 250,000 under-25s.

Labour seems happiest over-

Maybe not: but the key issue is the direction in which Labour is travelling.

All of the "unthinkable" thoughts which have been acted upon or leaked to the media are policies which undermine the welfare state, victimise the most oppressed and deprived, and leave intact the wealth and power of the

the 1970s brought steadily falling living standards, the Winter of Discontent ... and Margaret Thatcher.

We have seen Labour attempt, as so often before, to rope in the union bureaucrats – and succeed in silencing much of what passes for the "left" among the top union bosses – notably GMB boss Edmonds, TGWU chief Morris and UNISON's spineless Bickerstaffe.

But while the union leaders bite their lips, their members are facing a new wave of attacks on public services and on their rights and living standards.

It's not yet clear how long the dead weight of bureaucracy will combine with naivete, demoralisation and apathy at rank and file level to keep the lid on any build-up of resistance.

But it seems not unlikely that as a new round of cuts takes shape and grabs headlines through the winter, before its first anniversary New Labour could be facing its old enemy – the working class and its demands.

Labour seems happiest overturning elected bodies – while the stooges running Tory quangos and the profiteers mopping up in privatised utilities remain largely immune from government interference.

turning elected bodies – sending "hit squads" in to override elected school governing bodies or council Education Committees – while the stooges running Tory quangos and the profiteers mopping up in privatised utilities remain largely immune from government interference.

It's only been four months, say Labour's apologists. They took over an awful mess. Nobody can work miracles.

highest-paid elite.

Ruled out as utterly unthinkable has been any return to progressive taxation to fund decent public services.

In these four months, for all the hyped rhetoric about "modernising" we have seen all the hallmarks of an old-style, right-wing Labour government, the type of government which under Wilson in the 1960s gave us the Seafarers' Strike and anti-union laws, and which in

Some of the issues, some of the answers

Nell Murray looks at the Brighton agenda

Although the dominant issue at Labour Party conference will be 'Partnership in Power' and the accompanying rule changes, there are also important issues of Party policy being raised.

Resolutions in support of the Liverpool dockers and opposing arms sales to Indonesia are referred to elsewhere in Socialist Outlook. Other resolutions raise important matters in relation to trade union rights, the economy, the welfare state and Party democracy.

The composite resolutions – the ones actually discussed – are only drawn up on the eve of conference, and every attempt is made by the bureaucracy to 'persuade' organisations to drop contentious wording. Even so, the resolutions and amendments give an indication of the concerns of the movement.

On every issue there are those who simply congratulate the Labour government on whatever it has done so far, but there are also those who want more. While there are few resolutions which are outrightly critical, many go beyond what Blair has any intention of doing.

Thus resolutions on the NHS call on the government to discard the

private finance initiative, not to introduce new charges, such as for GP home visits, to stop all further hospital closures, to return to free eye and dental check-ups, and to abolish the internal market. One resolution calls on the government to "incorporate the NHS within the prison service"! They probably mean extend the NHS into the prison service, but maybe they think it is the only way the NHS will get more money since the prisons budget is without limit.

Given the government's stress on education, this issue does not attract as many sycophantic resolutions as might be expected. Most are critical (on tuition fees, on the public naming of 'failing' schools) or demand a lot more, such as a maximum class size of 30 in all schools, ending selection procedures, grant-maintained status and city technology colleges, and a real increase in public funding.

Housing is an area the government has not yet addressed, so maybe organisations feel freer to express their concerns.

There are several calls for the full release of receipts from council house sales, for a programme of building affordable decent housing, for the retention of Direct Labour Organisations and for Housing Associations to be brought under local authority control.



No resolution opposes the JSA

Many resolutions on transport call for unified transport planning, which the front bench will probably support with warm words but little real intention, but those which are more specific will meet opposition, such as calls for the amalgamation of rail franchises into a single rail operator, the renationalisation of Railtrack or even the whole system, and the re-regulation of buses.

Praise for 'stakeholding' is prominent among resolutions on the economy, with very few remotely challenging this concept or going beyond vague good intentions. The

National Union of Mineworkers does however demand that all industries and services privatised by the Tories are taken back into public ownership.

There are several calls for the restoration of the link between state pension and earnings and an increase in pensions, for the reinstatement of Housing Benefit to 16-18 year-olds and full benefits for all under-25-year-olds, for scrapping the planned cuts in lone parent benefit and for a more progressive system of taxation.

There is, however, no challenge to 'Welfare to work', 'Project work' or the Jobseekers Allowance. One resolution calls for the restoration of the right to claim social security benefits to asylum seekers.

Many resolutions address the issue of rights at work, welcoming the lifting of the ban on unions at GCHQ and calling for a uniform national minimum wage (although a marked reluctance to put forward either a formula or a figure), with calls for the right of unions to recruit and organise, the protection against discrimination for union activity and equal rights from day one of employment.

However, only one really gets to the heart of the matter in challenging support for the Tory anti-union laws.

An end to the detention of

asylum seekers is called for in several resolutions on anti-racism, although they call for a review of the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act rather than its repeal. There are calls for the Party to affiliate to the National Assembly Against Racism.

Calls for an extension of local democracy include the abolition of Compulsory Competitive Tendering, support for a London-wide authority (but also a directly elected mayor) and regional devolution. Many urge the extension of the commitment to proportional representation for the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament to be extended quickly to elections to the House of Commons, although some welcome the joint commission with the Liberals.

Apart from one which calls for an independent enquiry into 'Bloody Sunday', all of the resolutions on Northern Ireland simply welcome the progress in the "peace process", heaping praise on Mo Mowlam and George Mitchell.

On Europe, none of the resolutions advocates outright opposition to the single currency on the basis of the Maastricht convergence criteria, although there are calls for delay and for the inclusion of high levels of em-

Economics swamp ethics in drive for arms sales

Profits before principles

ROBIN COOK'S supposed commitment to an "ethical foreign policy" has not jumped the first hurdle as the government has refused to cancel arms sales agreed by the Tories even to the barbaric Indonesian regime - despite its involvement in a genocidal occupation of East Timor.

There is clear evidence that this war is carried out with the use of British weaponry. The Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) is certainly not taking this decision lying down. Support has already been gained from a wider layer of MPs than those traditionally thought to be on the left - and the protest at the Farnborough arms fair was the biggest yet.

Pete Firmin for Socialist Outlook interviewed Will McMahon, joint coordinator of the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT).

SO: What has happened on the sale of Hawk aircraft since Labour came to Power?

CAAT: The government said it was committed to an 'ethical foreign policy' - it would not supply weaponry for internal repression or external aggression.

This was taken by many to mean that regimes doing these things would not be sold arms. This belief was further heightened when Labour called a meeting with Non-Governmental Organisations to elaborate on their stance in the summer.

However, CAAT, the lead organisation on the arms trade was not invited. It was the only organisation with a significant base not invited. Cook asked the NGO forum for critical support in implementing government policy.

He didn't say what the policy would be on the sale of Hawks. The next morning the front page of the *Financial Times* announced that the government would continue the policy of supplying Hawks to Indonesia.

SO: What is CAAT's assessment of the 'Ethical Arms Policy'?



CAAT: Our view is that if you can't stop arming Indonesia, who will you stop arming? Two other countries with repressive regimes are of immediate concern.

Britain appears to be pursuing arms sales to Turkey, a market previously dominated by the U.S. and Germany. Additionally contacts with China are increasing at a time when the European Union may lift its political arms embargo. CAAT is looking at these closely.

CAAT's view on Britain offering Human Rights training to the Indonesian government is that it is both patronising and intentionally naive. The idea that Indonesia does not understand International Human Rights law or its practice is wrong. They understand but are not interested. It is a fig leaf.

SO: Cook met with CAAT after the NGO forum. What did he have to say?

CAAT: He gave us the impression that the decision to continue the supply of Hawks was a Cabinet one.

In the usual phrase 'there was a frank exchange of views'. The governments arguments are twofold:

firstly that there were some 20,000 extant arms licences when it took office, and secondly that it would have to pay compensation to the arms companies if it revoked licences. However, only a handful of the licences are controversial.

The decision of the Conservatives to issue licences for sales to Indonesia conveyed a message of Britain's support for the Suharto regime. The Labour government's decision not to revoke the licences has sent a similar message, notwithstanding Cook's discussions on human rights.

CAAT's legal advice is that the government would not be liable to pay compensation. We understand the government's own advice was less conclusive, but if it really wanted to put human rights at the centre of its foreign policy it should have been prepared to fight any compensation claim through the courts.

SO: What has happened since?

CAAT: Since then it has been reported that the Labour government intends to supply Indonesia with military equipment to ensure its control of its claimed oil fields in the South China Sea.

It is in the air that Indonesia may be ordering more Hawks. If this happens it will be a crunch moment for Labour's 'ethical foreign policy', because they will no longer be able to hide behind the argument that these are existing contracts.

Since the continued supply of Hawks was announced CAAT has been mainly focusing on resolutions to Labour Party conference. We have submitted amendments to a resolution welcoming the ethical foreign policy calling for the

revocation of the licences and an embargo on military training and arms sales to Indonesia. The bulk of the resolutions on the issue follow CAAT's line.

An Early Day Motion in parliament calling for revocation of the licence got the support of about 130 Labour MPs. The issue has never come to the floor of the House of Commons and there has been no discussion in the Parliamentary Labour Party.

SO: Tell us about the protest at the Farnborough Royal Navy and British Army Exhibition?

CATT: This was the largest ever anti-arms fair protest in Britain. Over 1,000 blockaded the 3 gates.

Hundreds turned out from the Kurdish community who are particularly concerned about Britain selling significant quantities of arms to Turkey.

In particular, Vickers is currently negotiating for a £3 billion Main Battle Tank deal. There were over 80 arrests and many have been charged, mainly with obstruction. The local Tory MP made outrageous comments in the press about the presence of Kurds on the protest.

Despite the fact that there was essentially a news blackout due to the death of Diana, CAAT won the media battle against the Ministry of Defence over Farnborough - coverage focused on the protest rather than the usual celebration of new arms deals.

SO: What has been CAAT's involvement in the landmines campaign?

CAAT: CAAT was one of the organisations which created the UK anti-land mines move-

ment. Our principal concern is that the government destroy existing stocks of land mines. It refuses to do so on the grounds that 'the military might need them for war!' The issue of landmines has significantly raised the profile of the arms trade as an issue - we have noticed an increased awareness of the arms trade in the last year and aim to use that to build the movement against the arms trade.

People should understand it was a much easier job to mobilise people against the nuclear threat, because most people were afraid the bomb was going to be dropped on them. CAAT is trying to encourage people to adopt an internationalist perspective. The landmines campaign has helped significantly in this respect. The Left in particular has a key role to play in this.

SO: Has CAAT done work on the issue of job losses in the arms industry?

CAAT: I spoke at a fringe meeting at the TUC and we are working hard on building union contacts within British Aerospace. We take the argument about job losses seriously.

SO: How do you see CAAT's task in relation to the Labour government?

CAAT: Labour's love-in with the heads of multinational corporations is reflected in the fact that Lord Hollick, previously a non-executive director of British Aerospace, is now Special Adviser to Margaret Beckett at the Department of Trade and Industry.

The DTI issues the arms licences, which should give people some sense of the scale of the task we face. However, we also know that the majority of Labour's grassroots members support the CAAT position. One of our key jobs is to get them to speak up.

**CAMPAIGN
AGAINST
ARMS
TRADE**

CAAT at Labour Party Conference

TUESDAY 30th September, 1p.m. in the Sussex Suite at the Old Ship Hotel. Foreign Office Minister Derek Fatchett MP will be discussing 'Indonesia, Arms Exports and Ethical Foreign Policy' with Ann Clwyd MP.

INSIDE COWLEY

Trade union struggles in the British car industry in the 1970s.

This sequel by ALAN THORNETT to his book *From Militancy to Marxism* is a unique account of trade union activity in the British Leyland car plants in the 1970s. Its analysis of the conflict between rank and file and union bureaucrats under the last Labour government raises the question: Who opened the door to Thatcher's onslaught? **This 430-page, illustrated volume is due for publication in November at £11.95.**

Pre publication offer: just £7.95, plus £2 post and packing.

Make cheques to Alan Thornett and send to 14, Colyton Rd, London SE22 ONE

Unhappy anniversaries

Roland Rance charts the bloody legacy of Zionism from its inception a century ago.

A HUNDRED years ago, in August 1897, 200 Jewish dignitaries gathered in Basle, at the invitation of the Viennese journalist and would-be playwright Theodor Herzl, for the first Zionist Congress.

This meeting adopted the plan put forward by Herzl two years earlier, in his essay 'The Jewish State', for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, and created the Zionist bodies dedicated towards this end.

Herzl had already outlined the major characteristics of the conflict between the Zionist movement and the Palestinian people, which has continued for the past century: expulsion of the Palestinians ("We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border") and alliance with imperialism ("We should form a part of a wall of defence for Europe, an outpost of civilisation against barbarism").

The centenary of the Zionist movement is only one of the critical anniversaries being marked this year in Palestine. November marks the eightieth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, in which the British government promised "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people"

As British Foreign Secretary Balfour noted: "in Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country. . . The four great powers are committed to Zionism".

November also marks the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations partition resolution of 1947. Following the collapse of the British mandate after World War Two, and the transfer of Zionist allegiance from British to US imperialism, the UN voted to carve up Palestine into several small entities, which would form separate Jewish and Arab states.

This decision ignored the fact that Palestinians were a large majority of the population, and even in the area allocated for the Jewish state more than half the population was non-Jewish. In the area allocated for the Arab state, only 1 per cent of the population was Jewish.

In the subsequent war, the new state of Israel expanded far beyond the borders determined by the UN, and expelled about 800,000 Palestinians from their homes and land.

Refugee camps

Fifty years on, these people and their descendants still live in refugee camps, the slums and the shanty towns of the Middle East. In the Israeli state, discriminatory laws were used to steal the land of Palestinian refugees.

Twenty years later, in June 1967, Israel again attacked the Arab states, occupying the remainder of Palestine, the Sinai Peninsula and the Syrian Golan Heights. Tens of thousands of Palestinians were once more forced to flee. Others remained in the towns, villages and refugee camps of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and in East Jerusalem, which was illegally annexed to the state of Israel.

For the past thirty years, the residents of the Occupied Territories



have lived under harsh military law, while their land has been taken over for exclusive Jewish settlement. Hundreds of thousands of Israeli settlers now live in the Occupied Territories; over half of the land area is now officially set aside for exclusively Jewish use.

A system of social, economic, political and legal separation between Jews and non-Jews has been implemented in the areas occupied by Israel in 1967. In effect, Israel has introduced apartheid in these areas. Israeli settlements - in reality, towns with populations of tens of thousands - occupy most of the hill-tops, dominating the Palestinian towns and villages in the valleys. The theft of Palestinian land has turned many peasants into wage labour dependent on the Israeli economy.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation, which was established in the early 1960s by the Arab states, had some successful confrontations with the Israeli army, particularly after it was taken over by Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement in 1965. Notably, the battle of Karameh in 1969 demonstrated that Israel was now faced with a new and potentially more threatening foe.

With its slogan of "Revolution until victory", and its support for guerrilla movements around the world, the PLO offered leadership to the dispersed Palestinian people. Within a short period, it had become the almost unchallenged leader of the Palestinian struggle.

From the early 1970s, under pressure from its left components, the PLO amended its original nationalist charter and began to call for the establishment in Palestine of a democratic secular state. This call, which replaced the original demand for the establishment of an Arab state in the whole of Palestine, had the potential of attracting support from Israeli revolutionaries.

And indeed some of them did respond positively. Small groups of Israeli activists began to meet clandestinely with Palestinians; some even attempted to establish an Israeli section of the PLO. For twenty years, all such meetings - even open political or academic discussions - were illegal, and many Israelis served prison sentences for "contact with a forbidden group".

The PLO was strongly based in the refugee camps of Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, where it established and ran education, health and welfare projects as well as organising the political and military struggle against Israel.

However, its radical rhetoric, and the aggressive response of Israel to PLO bases in neighbouring states, brought the organisation into conflict with the governments of Jordan in 1970, and Lebanon in 1982.

Government in exile

Thousands of Palestinian activists were eventually removed to Tunisia, several hundreds of miles from Palestine, from where the PLO increasingly acted as a state and government in exile, rather than as a revolutionary liberation movement.

Following the Lebanon war, a reassessment inside the PLO of its military and political strategy ultimately led to a civil war in the camps in Lebanon. The debate, however, was posed in mistaken terms. The PLO leadership posed a "political" strategy, which was in effect an appeal to the UN and world governments to put pressure on Israel to make concessions towards the PLO.

The dissidents opposed this with a "military" strategy based on an incorrect assessment of the lessons of the Lebanon war, and an attempt to build up a Palestinian regular army to confront the Israeli army. Nei-

ther side put forward a strategy of mass struggle, whether political or military, which alone would be able to challenge Israeli hegemony.

A strategy of mass struggle did, however, develop in the Occupied Territories, where the Palestinians had been building up independent national bodies despite the restrictions imposed by Israeli rule. After 1967, there were several waves of rebellion, notably in 1982 before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

By far the most important of these was the Intifada, which started in December 1987 and for a while seemed to threaten the continuation of Zionist rule in the whole of Palestine. The Intifada was conducted and led by Palestinians under Israeli rule. Although it proclaimed allegiance to the PLO, it was not (despite the claims of the Israeli government) controlled from Tunisia. Indeed, the slogan of the Palestinian youth confronting the Israeli army was not "We support the PLO", but "We are the PLO".

The Intifada established the Unified National Leadership, which brought together representatives of all the political currents in the Occupied Territories.

The Intifada challenged more than Israel's continued rule in the Occupied Territories. It offered a model for struggle elsewhere in the Arab world, and it posed an alternative leadership for the Palestinian struggle. The PLO in exile attempted to assert its authority over the mass popular uprising, but was severely weakened by its support for Iraq during the Gulf War.

This triple challenge, to Israel, the Arab regimes and the PLO leadership, created in effect a common interest between all three, which was eventually to lead to the 1991 Madrid conference and the 1993 Oslo agreement.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak

Rabin, the cynical pragmatist, understood that Israel's continued domination over the whole of Palestine would be better assured through a client Palestinian authority than through direct rule.

Despite Rabin's assassination by a right-wing religious Zionist, and the return to power of a Likud government under Binyamin Netanyahu, this remains the guiding principle of Israeli policy in the Occupied Territories.

Symbolic "rule"

Israeli troops have been withdrawn from most towns, though the army has drawn up contingency plans for their re-occupation. A symbolic Palestinian 'rule' has been established over these towns - which cover less than 3 per cent of the area of the Occupied Territories.

The Palestinian authority indeed governs without courts and civil rights; over a dozen Palestinians have been tortured to death in Arafat's prisons, strike leaders have been arrested, freedom of publication restricted (with the books of Palestinian academic Edward Said being banned). These enclaves are separated by Israeli settlements and roads, creating a patchwork reminiscent of South Africa's Bantustan policy.

Most Palestinians are denied entry into Israel. Their place in the Israeli economy has been taken by hundreds of thousands of foreign workers brought in from Romania, Taiwan, Thailand and other impoverished countries. Land theft and house demolitions continue on a huge scale, in order to enable the expansion of Israeli settlements.

Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the Islamic movements are able to recruit suicide bombers to attack Israeli civilian targets. Even some Israelis understand this. After the last such attack in Jerusalem, the mother of a four-year-old victim blamed the Israeli government for her daughter's death. This is unprecedented in Israeli politics, and shows the deepening divisions in society.

New war?

While the government seems to be preparing for war - with Syria, with Hizbollah in Lebanon, or in the West Bank and Gaza - it can no longer count on the unquestioning support of the majority of its own population. Such a war, if it does come, will be extremely bloody, with huge civilian casualties on both sides. However, despite the growing urgency, any left critique and programme is sadly lacking.

In both Israeli and Palestinian society, the revolutionary groups are dormant, split, ineffective, and in despair. The peace movement still persists with its demand for "Two states for two peoples", although the developing situation renders this demand even more unrealistic than before.

Only a perspective which opposes the carve-up of Palestine, the partition of the Palestinian people and the separation of the peoples of Palestine can offer a way out of the current spiral of violence. The balance of forces means that the battle for socialism seems a long and arduous task - but one which must be waged if the whole region is not to descend into barbarism.

Bubbles bursting in SE Asia

SOUTH-EAST Asian currencies have been under attack from speculators in recent months. Sony Melencio explains.

ON JULY 11, the halls of currency trading in the Philippines reverberated with a mild shock brought about by unusually intense selling of the peso and buying of US dollars.

The next day, newspapers reported this as the de facto devaluation of the peso, or its depreciation against the dollar, which soared from the official rate of P26 to the dollar to P32.

The government then announced official devaluation: it ordered the Central Bank (BSP) to allow the "floatation" of the peso. It removed the previous system of "defending" the peso through state intervention on financial markets.

This capped a series of shock waves which had sent Asian financial markets spinning since the April devaluation of the Thai baht. This had had a knock-on effect on other south east Asian currencies, including the Indonesian rupiah, the Philippine peso, and even the Singapore dollar.

In May, as an aftermath of the Thai devaluation, selling of Philippine pesos to buy dollars became more intense, and threatened to deplete the dollar reserves of the Central Bank. To protect the peso, the banks increased their overnight lending rates by nearly 100 per cent. By increasing the interest paid to currency traders holding pesos, the Central Bank hoped to encourage them to hold rather than sell pesos.

For a while this seemed to work. From May 22 to June 19, the exchange rate stabilised, and the overnight lending rate was gradually reduced to 12.75 per cent. The collapse of the peso was avoided because the Central Bank had enough dollar reserves to absorb the "peso glut".

President Fidel Ramos boasted of a "robust" Philippine currency and promised that he would never allow a currency devaluation, as the Thai government had. He would recant a few weeks later.

Between June 27 and July 2, the market was again besieged by "peso dumping". The overnight lending rates shot up to 24 per cent. Peso-dollar trading became more feverish. The volume of currency exchange leapt from \$100-150 million/day to \$400-600 million/day and overnight lending rates to 30-32 per cent in the days preceding the July 11 devaluation.

Many local capitalists, including those from the country's top 100 firms, demanded the interest rate be cut to manageable levels. They said expansion was being jeopardised by soaring interest rates which made it unprofitable to borrow.

The banking sector said devaluation would bring stability. Exporters argued it would cheapen their products and make them competitive internationally. Investors in the domestic market argued that their products would profit, because devaluation would push up the prices of imports.

This was a nightmare for President Ramos. Devaluation was like an axe falling towards the heads of the consumers. Ramos' posturing about the country's "economic growth" would fizzle out and might jeopardise his party's chances for the 1998 elections.

The government finally buckled to pressures from capitalist circles. Whatever the economic effect for consumers, Ramos knew that he had to secure the support of his main financial backers.

A few days before July 11, the government liberalised the terms on which six major financial institutions could bid for U.S. bonds and other financial instruments. On July 11, the financial speculators outbid themselves in frenzied trading. Billions of pesos were dumped into the market to acquire these new dollars. Windfall profits were made.

Speculators who had acquired dollars before July 11, at an exchange rate of P26.40, were able to sell them on July 12 for P30-P32. Ten percent profit, overnight!

The six 'universal banks' are known around the globe. They are Citibank, JP Morgan, Solomon Brothers, Merrill Lynch, ING Barrings, and Morgan Stanley. They are awash with paper money, and trade in trillions of dollars and other currencies all over the world. These are just six of the giant financial corporations preying on the South East Asian market.

Short term

Together with 14 other international banks and financial institutions in the Philippines, the six "universal banks" do a huge amount of short-term lending to banks and industrial companies. Rather than being used for industrial expansion, these "portfolio investment" funds circulate mostly in the financial market, and are used predominantly for speculation.

This is the kind of capital that has primarily boosted so-called "economic growth" in the Philippines. Without this inflow of speculative cash - and the millions of dollars that are sent home every year by more than five million overseas Filipino workers - Asia's "sick man" could never have appeared to recover in recent years.

The economic strategy of the present Philippine government strongly revolves around procurement of the precious dollar - even if it means attracting the financial vultures to prey on the Philippine economy.

Portfolio investments represent trillions of dollars that cannot find a use in the advanced capitalist countries. Their owners are on a constant look-out for profitable investments that bring in fast profits.

Portfolio investments represent trillions of dollars that cannot find a use in the advanced capitalist countries. Their owners are on a constant look-out for profitable investments that bring in fast profits.

What entices them to "invest" in the Philippines (and Southeast Asian markets in general) are the higher interest rates in the region. In normal times, Philippine Interbank (base) interest rates average 12-15 per cent compared to 5-7 per cent in advanced capitalist countries.

This means US dollars earn more if they are invested in local currencies and financial instruments (through the purchase of Philippine treasury bills and shares in Philippine companies) rather than in low-interest US bonds, the main alternative. Foreign financial investors are assured a higher return than they can get at home.

In order to attract financial investment, a



Carrying the can: the economic havoc caused by speculators will hit the poorest workers and peasants

Third World economy has to assure investors a "risk-free" deal through a stable exchange rate. This guarantee that the "principle" they sink into the economy can easily be converted into dollars, which they can transfer out of the country whenever they want. If it is in the interest of financial managers that the exchange rate in the Philippines remains stable, why did they resort to conspiracy to bring down the value of the peso?

To understand, we must look at the operation of the financial markets. This "industry" is inherently speculative. Competition is rife because of the presence of surplus money-capital in big institutions where everyone tries to corner the surplus capital in the shortest possible deals.

One of the major operations on these markets is speculation on exchange rates. Just like any commercial capitalist, financial speculators try to make profits by buying a currency cheap in order to sell it dear. In the case of the Philippines, they started to buy dollars when the rate was P26 to the dollar. They then dumped more pesos in the trading market to raise the dollar value.

The finance managers do this in a conspiratorial way through agreements among themselves to fix a "trading spread" (usually a manageable 1-1.5% movement of the exchange rate). But on occasions the trading gets out of hand because of stiff competition, or when bigger financial institutions start to attack the trading market by heating up the competition in the trading floor, and the sys-

tem gets out of hand.

To solve this crisis, the Philippine government's response was to whip up another crisis. It officially devalued the peso, purportedly to stop the speculation and to recoup the dwindling foreign currency reserves.

Unfortunately, this "textbook solution" is only applicable to stronger economies: fully industrialised countries or those which have a strong export-orientation. The Philippines remains dependent on imports, and lacks export products which are competitive in the international marketplace.

And in any case currency stabilisation after depreciation usually lasts for only six months. The post-devaluation "economic boom" impelled by the export industry usually occurs a year after depreciation.

If the Philippine exchange rate does not stabilise in the next few months, and if foreign currency reserves continue to be depleted,

some economists will consider this as evidence that the financial vultures are preparing to ship out their money back to their base country, or to some other more profitable ventures outside the Philippines.

In any case, before the Philippine economy recovers, there will be a crisis for the low-income groups. Inflation is likely to rise from 4.6 per cent to at least 6.1 per cent by the end of the year. Prices of basic commodities like food, electricity and transport have already increased.

Although the price of crude oil has fallen 30 per cent in the international market, where trade is in US dollars, vultures in the Philippine petrol industry are demanding a further increase in fuel prices from 50 to 75 centavos per litre. And because the government recently deregulated the trade in oil products, there seems no way of stopping them.

Losers

It is not only the poor who are the losers in the peso devaluation. Capitalist importers, and most Philippine businesses, stand to lose. While the devaluation will be profitable for some exporters, those corporations which have incurred dollar debts in their operations and exporters who use imported components will lose out.

The main winners from devaluation, apart from the international financial firms, are the transnational corporations (TNCs) which trade mainly between their own subsidiaries in different countries.

The government will also see its revenue increase, as price increases mean an increase in sales tax. But this will be wiped out by the higher cost of repayment of foreign loans. This explains why President Ramos is again begging the International Monetary Fund to extend its "exit program" in the Philippines.

The Philippine economy is held hostage by a number of international financial institutions. International finance capital is roaming around the globe in search of the quick buck. It attacks weaker currencies of smaller countries to reap huge profits.

It first shook the economy of Mexico, then Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, and now Indonesia. This is one facet of "globalisation" that quite clearly stifles economic growth. And the Southeast Asian countries have been hit particularly hard.

The "economic miracle" in a number of Southeast Asian countries is starting to burst. It was always a bubble. The economic collapse experienced by Thailand in particular has proved once more the destructive role of finance-capital. According to Marx, this "pure money-capital" plays a role as the "slaughterer" of industrial capital.

French struggle fires German left

Europe hinges on Germany. Economic difficulties hamper the CDU/CSU Christian Democrat coalition's deficit-cutting targets. After two years of struggles in France, many German workers feel more confident of struggle. Our reporter DUNCAN CHAPPEL met NICK and CHRISTIAN, from the Fourth International's Revolutionary Socialist League, RSB, in their Munich branch office.

"THERE IS a new period here after the struggles in France" starts Nick, one of the editors of the RSB magazine *Avanti*. "It's really reflected in some of the factories. We had a demonstration recently where one of the banners read 'we must speak French with our bosses'. It is that sentiment which has come out repeatedly in recent years, saying that we have to fight."

Christian, from the RSB's political secretariat, adds that one of the first signs was at last year's May Day demonstration organised by the social democratic union federation, the DGB.

"The leader was attacked, with the crowd shouting out 'no pact with Capital!' One of the radical student federations called a demonstration against social cuts in Bonn. The DGB gave it support in order to take it over and exclude all signs of the real struggle. The mood was very militant and the DGB was forced to promise a general strike. There was a strong vanguard, though not so much in Bavaria. Here, many advanced workers did not see the

need for a general strike." The economic policies of the coalition members, especially outgoing finance minister Theo Waigel, look set to repeat the experiences of last year.

"Next time things can be different," hopes Christian. "Those protests were not co-ordinated. There were no forces on the left to draw them together. Now there is the chance that we can use the network built up by the European marches to centralise the struggles."

German revolutionaries face the challenge of a rotten party, the SPD, which is based on the trade union bureaucrats. The German wing of Britain's Socialist Workers Party helps build the SPD, while another group, linked to the Socialist Party in England and Wales, is reassessing this approach.

Christian continues: "Most workers see the SPD as their political party. When the miners were in struggle they wanted to attack the CSU and the parliament building. Rudolph Scharping, then SPD leader, was able to calm the workers. Miners listen to him, and there is a difference between the way he is seen, as a so-called workers' leader, and the other capitalist politicians."

While the struggles of the French workers have inspired Germany's working class, France's new, rightward-moving, Socialist Party (PS) government has had an impact in the discussions around choosing between the SPD's candidates for Chancellor:

"One candidate looks to the PS and the other to Blair's Labour party" adds Nick. "Gerhard Schröder, who is the premier of the state of Lower Saxony, wants to be the new Tony Blair, while Oskar Lafontaine, currently the party leader, looks to SP leader Lionel Jospin's model. The whole discussion depends on the state of the class struggle.



"The best people in the SPD support Lafontaine. We said a victory for Lafontaine had to be turned into a fight for open borders, to start the fight against unemployment and so on. The first job is to build up support for these sorts of demands, and for a programme of actions, on the left. Elections come second."

In the general elections the RSB will campaign for the former Communist party, the PDS. Christian points out "we vote for the PDS, not the SPD, to help build up the movements against social cuts. It is a working class vote.

"The PDS is a social democratic

party without links to the unions, but most of its members see themselves as committed socialists and supporters of the class struggle. Because of this, we say that you must vote for this party. By voting for the PDS you show to Capital that you want a social alternative."

The RSB is able to work closely with the whole left, including former Stalinists. The RSB office where we met is in the Bavarian PDS headquarters, housed in a new office block in central Munich.

"There are lots of good Communists close to our programme," chips in Nick. "The main task is to develop marxist theory broadly. It's not our job to win over established Communist groups wholesale, but to develop joint work with those comrades and to win youth to our politics.

"We have had long-term collaboration: fighting racism and fascism, mobilising against the Munich economic summit a few years ago, and recently for the European marches. When we meet in this way you can not identify people's approaches with narrow party lines.

"Our relations are good, especially in Munich. We have learnt a lot from them. There should be no prejudices. Since German reunification the discussions on the left have gotten bigger and bigger."

There is a lot of work for the future. The RSB was founded three years ago by Trotskyists with different histories and experiences: some from the United Socialist Party, others from the East German group which founded *Avanti*, and a smaller group called the Spartacus League.

"Our main goal, including our students and school students, has to be building up strong trade union work," says Christian.

"The question is how. For example, not all workers are in unions. Now we are approaching young workers where they study or though

our campaigns. We are building up a framework of people to boost our trade union work in the future.

"We recently had a 10,000 strong DGB march against cuts. We were able to do a lot there. However we have to look at where we can do politics, not just make propaganda. If we had a public meeting about our trade union work it might attract fewer trade unionists than might come along normally."

Starting almost from scratch, the RSB can learn from the experiences of comrades like Christian who were active Fourth Internationalists in the 1970s.

"One lesson was that we must build up our trade union work alongside our youth work. It is impossible to fully develop committed activists if they are kept aside from the struggles in the unions. We make sure our campaigning, like against fascism, takes us into the factories.

"It would still be central to our work even if we only had ten comrades, and the RSB leadership is committed to that approach."

He also points out some of the difficulties. "It is not possible to polarise: like saying either we build up routine work in workplaces or we do campaigns. We are developing perspectives for our comrades in the factories. At the same time our campaigns draw in young people. Our youth will go into the factories, not everyone, but our youth discuss how we will build up our forces in the unions."

"It is clear that we need to build up a working class-based organisation", sums up Nick. "Even good anti-fascist work requires an orientation towards the working class with a social alternative. We've seen the openings. Last autumn we had big mobilisations - 350,000 workers - in defence of full sick pay. We've had strikes at Daimler-Benz, by miners and amongst building workers. It is the start of a new cycle."

Celebrate landmark victory for women's rights in Britain

30 years of legal abortion

Marian Brain

ON October 27 1967 legislation was passed that made abortion legal under certain circumstances in this country.

As we celebrate these years we take this opportunity to look at the individuals, mainly women, and the social forces at work that made it possible to change the law.

Stella Browne was one of the earliest campaigners for abortion to be seen as a right and not just an operation that could be performed for the sake of a woman's health. Stella made the first call for the law to be changed.

In *The Malthusian* in March 1915 she put forward a number of reasons for this liberalisation. She argued that as there was no totally reliable method of contraception available, women should be able to

control their fertility. The education of young people in sexual matters was only just beginning and it was unfair to penalise ignorance. She stated that abortions were happening and that they were in the hands of untrained and unskilled individuals and often permanently injured the women.

Stella argued that prejudice against abortion was not due to medical science but was based on Christian canon law which stated that at the time of conception there was a right of baptism. She said that thinking people would wonder why embryonic life alone should be considered sacred. She referred to the war and suggested that the world should be made fit for children to be raised.

In 'Some Problems of Sex', written in 1916 she argued that the essential point of birth control was to



establish the right of women not to have children.

Justice McCardie had also become convinced that the 1861 Abortion Act was out of touch with the realities of life and on November 30 1931, he publicly attacked the law.

Two women came before him and pleaded guilty to aborting themselves. He could have sent them to prison for life, instead he just bound them over. In his summing up he said 'I express the view clearly that in my opinion the law in regard to illegal operations should be substantially amended. It is out of keeping with the conditions that prevail in the world around us'.

His attitudes were to have an impact on some doctors who then began a debate in the British Medical Association for there to be a change

in the law.

In 1934, the Annual Conference of Co-operative Women became the first organised body to call for abortion to be legalised. Out of 1,360 delegates to the Annual Meeting there were only twenty dissidents to the following resolution:

"In view of the persistently high maternal death rate and the evils arising from illegal practice of abortion, this Congress calls upon the Government to revise the abortion laws of 1861 by bringing them into harmony with modern conditions and ideas, thereby making of abortion a legal operation that can be carried out under the same conditions as any other surgical operation. It further asks that women now suffering from imprisonment for breaking these antiquated laws be amnestied."

Euphoric

Stella Browne was euphoric about the success of the resolution and the rejection of the amendment that wanted to delete the call for amnesty for women in prison. In 1935 Labour Party women also supported the cause of changing the laws in relation to abortion.

In 1936, Stella Browne, Janet Chance and Alice Jenkins were amongst those who formed the Abortion Law Reform Association. Shortly after they were joined by Dora Russell, who together with Bertram, had formed the Workers Birth Control Group. Some of its members were hesitant about sup-

porting abortion but Dora with others did. Without of the work of ALRA the 1967 Act would never have become law.

The anniversary of the passing of the act is a time of rejoicing, but the Abortion Act was passed just before the rebirth of the women's movement and it has serious limitations, notably that it allows doctors, not women to make the choice.

It has without a doubt, changed the lives of many women. The ability to have a safe legal abortions, and to be able to control ones fertility is something that it is worth fighting for.

The battles that we have fought to defend this abortion act have been many, and there have been some set backs on the way. However the Act is still there, and we cannot underestimate the role of the National Abortion Campaign, and the tens of thousands of women and men who have been prepared over the years to take to the streets to defend the Act.

There is still much to do, so that it is women who decide when, if and how they will have children. We must step up the argument that it should not take the signature of two doctors for women to have an abortion.

We need to campaign for legislation that really does give women choice. At the same time we have to oppose the cuts in the health service which hit abortion provision particularly hard.

Grief for Diana – a sign of the times

Rod Marshall

NEVER have so many flowers been sold in a single week. Never have so many cuddly toys spent cold nights out in London. And rarely has there been such a national and international reaction to a single death. So just what can explain this bizarre reaction to the death of Diana Spencer?

Before you turn the page in expectation of a stereotypical lefty rant about how royalty deserve a sticky end (how many more to go?), I should point out that when I awoke early on Sunday August 31 to the news of Diana's death I was genuinely shocked and saddened.

Yes, you read it correctly, saddened.

To explain why I felt this way and why thousands of others went much further (no I *didn't* go to the funeral or queue to sign a remembrance book) it is worth examining just what Diana was, and equally importantly what she represented.

Such an examination may also serve as a partial antidote to the Saint Diana iconography that is rapidly being established.

Of course, Diana was a member of the Royal Family and the mother of the heir to the throne of the British monarchy. However it was precisely her estrangement from this hierarchy that appears to have caught the public mood.

When her brother spoke at the funeral of her not needing a royal title his words were greeted by a spontaneous outburst of applause (at a Royal funeral of all places).

The criticism of the Queen by the quietly thronging masses outside the palaces was also testament to the fact that the Royal Family was being harshly judged for shunning Diana – there was even muted talk about blame for her death.

At the same time Diana's oft quoted work for 'good causes' (leprosy, AIDS, land mines, sick children) fits perfectly with the Blairite spirit of 1997. It explains why, although his words were carefully prepared, Blair's emotions may actually have been spontaneous.

It also now seems that Diana had accepted an offer from Blair to be a roving ambassador for the British government. All of this speaks volumes for both parties in this arrangement.



Carving out a new role for herself after making the break from the Windsors: but not many people really knew Diana

The politics are those of "doing good deeds", of personal morality, a hand of friendship and so on. A substantial helping of Christian ethics is of course a vital ingredient in New Labour's programme of sound bites.

It is also the very definition of the saintly Mother Teresa whose passing was (thankfully) almost forgotten in Britain in the wake of Diana's demise.

So we were faced, in the aftermath of Diana's death with a hefty dose of Christian morality at a time of continually falling church attendances, and apparent grief for a royal at time of unprecedented unpopularity for the royal family.

These ironies may pale into significance alongside the popular notion of Diana as a victim and a martyr. Careful remembrance of the last few years will reveal that the Princess had become a shrewd ma-

nipulator of the popular press and had single-handedly elevated herself to the position of the 'princess of the people' in comparison to the evil mother in law who spurned her.

Now I don't intend to indulge in speculation about the trouble and strife in the Windsor household: but it is also obvious that Diana was badly treated by the notoriously odious Liz and Phil, not to mention the spiteful 'Queen Mother', and yes, her husband cheated on her.

This must have been painful. But thousands go through this and are unable to rise from their grief in the way that Diana was able to – the fact that she was mother of a potential future king and a member of the aristocracy in her own right had a lot to do with this.

While thousands of women struggle for independence from partners who have mistreated them, Diana's independence was given to her on a plate. In fact her displeasure was at being forced out of the official ranks of royalty – she wanted to be Queen and was clearly aware of her popularity amongst large sections of the public.

So what of this popularity? It is clear that Diana appeared to be a face of humanity amongst the harsh realities of a dog-eat-dog capitalism. Yet she never moved from extending the hand of friendship to any critique of the system that builds and sells land mines and weapons of mass destruction all over the world. The system that allows people to die of illnesses when cures exist that are over-

priced for a fast buck.

No doubt Diana's crusade against land mines will save lives and socialists should support this initiative.

But Diana, just a few days before her death, denied being involved in 'politics' after she had allegedly criticised the Tories.

So her much vaunted liberal leanings certainly had their limits, and this is hardly surprising given her social position. Yet in an incredibly illiberal British establishment Diana must have been a step too far. But for capitalism she was a friendly face just like Tony Blair and the star of the funeral, Elton John.

The involvement of Elton John in this saga is also telling. As an out gay man who has struggled to come to terms with his sexuality, Diana must have been provided perfect sanctitude.

Acceptance amongst the highest reaches of the establishment. Diana's supposed advocacy for gay rights (support for AIDS sufferers is not the same thing) therefore fits with the great strides that are being made to incorporate a gay sexuality into modern day capitalism.

In this way it is possible to see Diana as a perfect part player for a new generation of capitalist leaders – the generation of Blair, Branson and Bill Clinton.

Underneath the sentiment the persecution of lesbians and gay men continues, just as women's oppression is hardly helped in reality by the graceful leap from the clutches of her family that Diana so skillfully managed.

You may be thinking that all this simply misses the point that thousands of people – many of them not royalists or capitalists – mourned the death of Diana or that in the first few hours of Sunday August 31 I did, too.

But the image of Diana was a pungent opiate against the dour grind of Monday to Friday. A omnipotent figure (and it is always surprising when such figures are suddenly cut down) who appeared to be persecuted and who fought back with a vengeance.

She appeared to support progressive causes that were ignored by other royals and by the Tories. Who better to identify with than a former bulimia sufferer who had conquered her pain and asserted her independence?

Just as people cry when characters die in soap operas, then people cried when Diana died. As many have commented, we did not know Diana, not in person – but this really isn't the point.

If we project our pain and get some relief, then just as we know our pain we know the pain of the person onto whom we project our pain. We "know" Diana to the extent that we know ourselves.

And there is precisely the problem. In this TV culture it is easier when tired and emotional to look to the actions of others rather than to our own actions – this what analysts have traditionally called a defensive reaction.

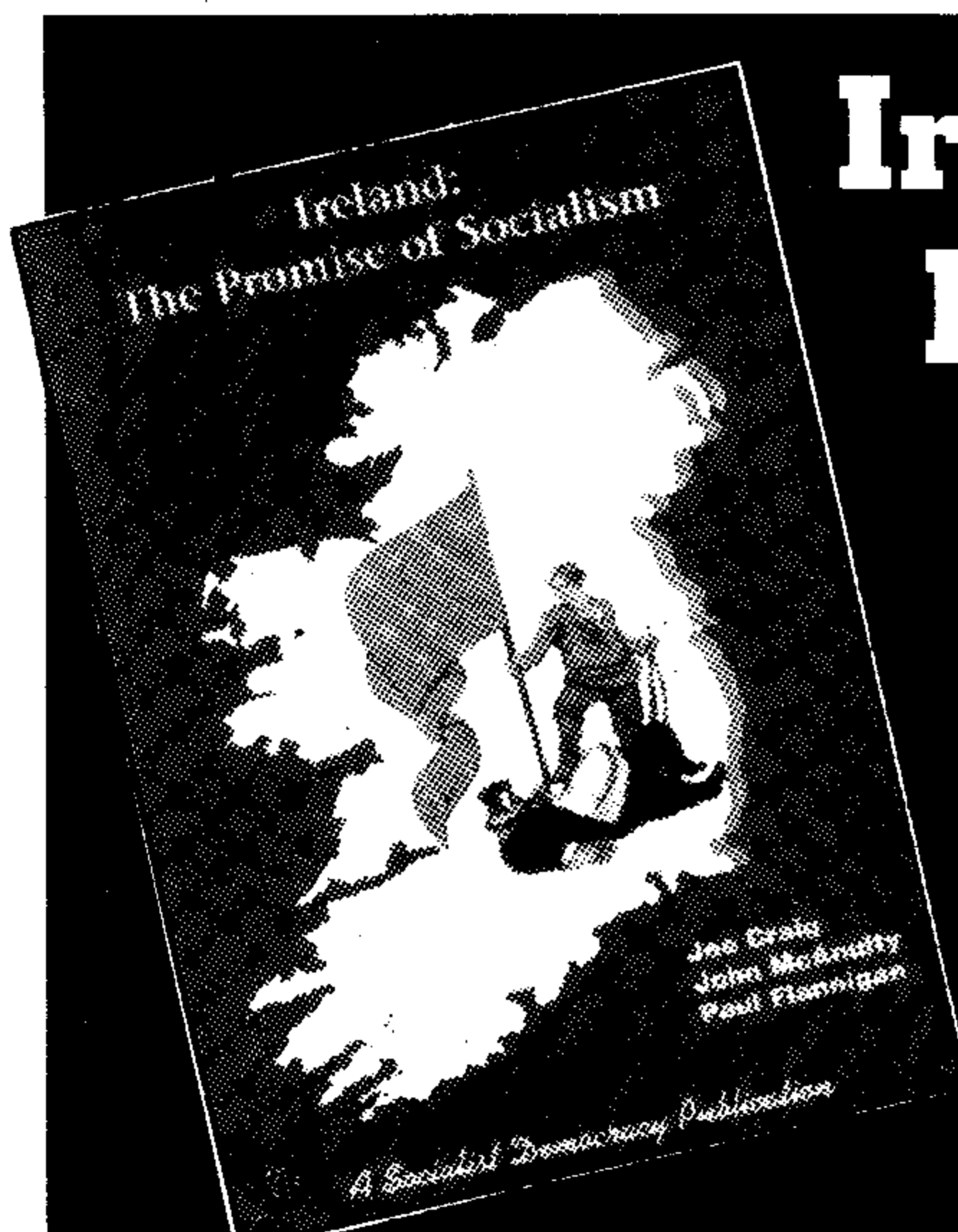
So the reaction to Diana's death may partly reflect a change in the balance of power in the British monarchy. It may help to usher in a new age of royalty to fit with the project of a new capitalism and a new world order.

These are the battles amongst the ruling class for control, and it is clear that the old establishment has suffered enormously both through Diana's life and death. Should we rejoice at such a change? Well rejoicing would overlook the fact that these are not our battles.

Should we continue to cry over this death? No for this is not our life, this is not our pain and while we would love the capitalists to be our friends the harsh truth remains that capital only values you for your labour power and kills thousands of people a day in its selfish quest for greater profits.

I cried briefly for Diana – as any loss of a life is regrettable. While tears may be more appropriately shed for the thousands who starve or suffer across the world, the lesson of Diana's death is another more momentous challenge. Tears are not good enough, they do not change the reality that makes us sad.

There is no escape, whatever the TV may tell you: but what there is an opportunity to actively work to rid the world of those people who perpetrate violence and pain on millions of other people every day. That fight – for a socialist future for humanity wasn't and never could be the fight of a royal princess – but it can and it should be our fight.



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The legacy of Olufela Anikulapo-kuti and Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan

Talkin' Loud and Sayin' Something

by Siddharta

THE DEMISE in August of two singers, Nigerian Olufela Anikulapo-Kuti aged 58 and Indian Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan aged 48 is a staggering loss to music and beyond.

They were schooled in the classical and finer arts but also innovators in contemporary styles, as much influenced as influential in the crossover between western and non-western melodies.

Fela Kuti had been described as the second funkier man alive – James Brown denying him the top honour. Hailing from Abeokuta, (north of Lagos) in south western Nigeria, his parents were important influences. His mother was a prominent anti-colonial activist and recipient of the Lenin Peace Prize and his father a churchman, and founder of the first teachers union.

He won a scholarship to study medicine in England but when in London enrolled instead at the Trinity College of Music. He could already play piano but took to the trumpet inspired by Miles Davis, Charlie Parker and others in the United States.

Back in Nigeria he was looking for a sound that fitted and stumbled on the same sort of funky jazzy recipe as the gospel-soul influenced James Brown, which Fela dubbed *Afro-Beat*. His ability to bridge the gap between the pidgin English speaking masses and the more intellectual and politically conscious was cemented by a visit to the U.S. in 1969.

Here the Latin-Cuban-African and Jazz elements and melodies were finally fused with an empowering message that added to the potency of the music.

This reflected his exposure to radical groups and ideas such as the Black Panther Party and works such as Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

From his 1969 Los Angeles sessions album, an ou-take "Viva Nigeria" has the following lyric: "War is not the answer/War has never been the answer/and it will never be the answer/one nation indivisible/long live Africa/Viva Nigeria".

His increased politicisation coupled with his growing popularity brought him into conflict with Ni-

geria's repressive military regimes. Branding the dictators as liars, and denouncing them as unpatriotic contributed to the frequency of beatings, raids and imprisonment.

One of his periods of imprisonment was in the Alagbon Close jail nicknamed the 'Kalakuta' (from an alternative spelling for the dark hole of Calcutta).

On his release he named the compound enclosing his residence and club "The Kalakuta Republic", declaring it independent of state authority and interference.

He also became a campaigner for the healing and meditative powers of marijuana, which he had been introduced to in the U.S. and which he and the other members of his republic liberally and openly consumed. This was to provide the justification for numerous police raids which were thinly disguised opportunities for harassment and intimidation. In one of those raids his mother was thrown from a window and subsequently died.

His spell in jail between 1984 and 1986 led to him being adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience. One brother, Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti, is a leading human rights activist and presently serving a fifteen year prison sentence on trumped up charges imposed by the Sani Abacha dictatorship.

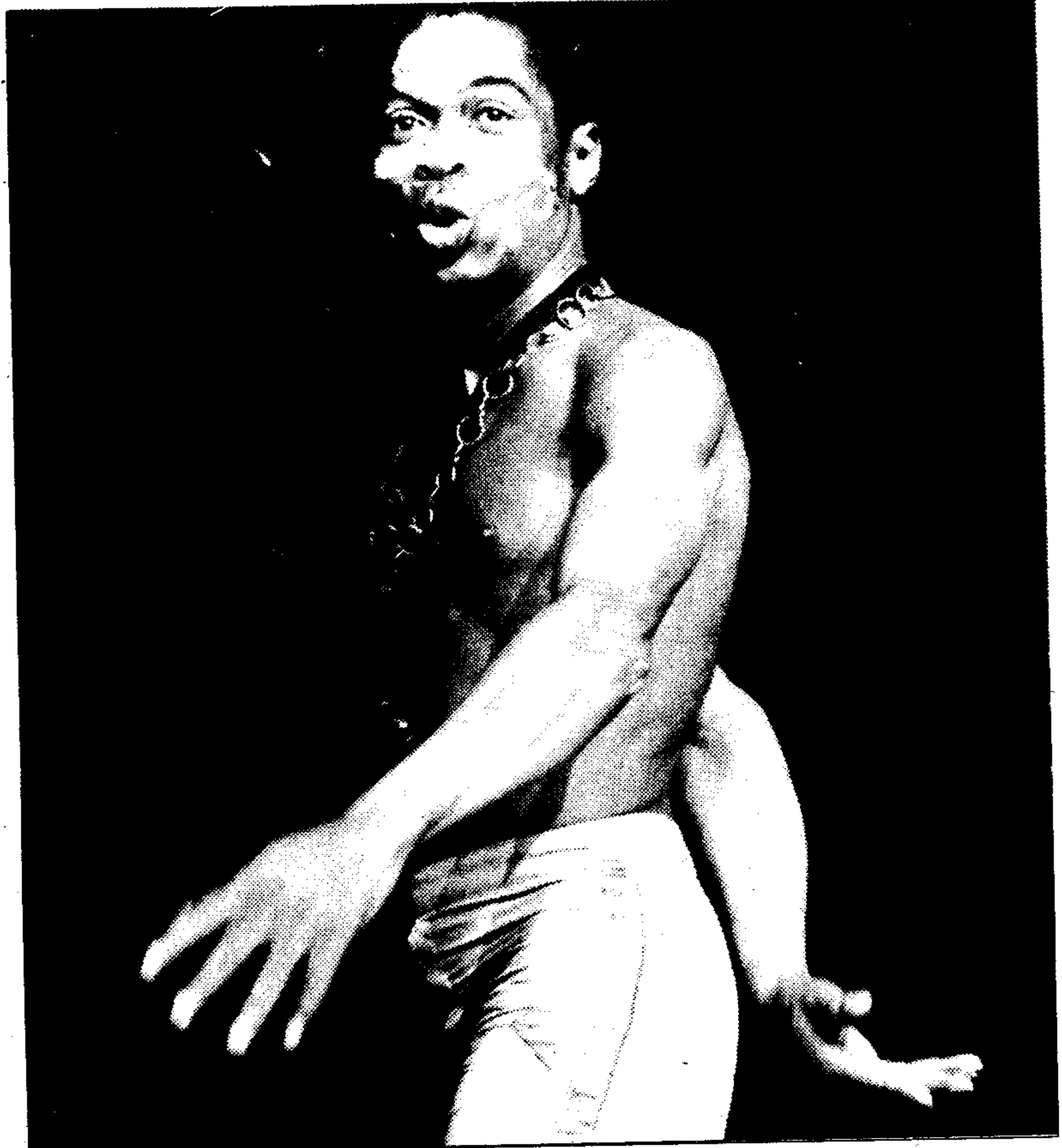
In musical terms, his pioneering of *Afro-beat* involving a fusion of the Latin and Jazz idioms with African music encompassing both traditional and modern influences was unique and hugely successful.

Afro-beat provided an alternative to the highlife sound that was over-running north west Africa and the *juju* and later *fuji* styles dominating Nigeria.

The spontaneity of compositions – often coming together live

on stage – added to the spectacle of a large band with semi-clad singers and dancers, making his stage shows unmissable.

When he was diagnosed as having AIDS, he continued touring but recording became more sporadic and eventually he died of heart failure brought on by AIDS related complications. True to the name he had given himself (*Anikulapo* – he who holds death in his pocket), he stuck firm to his avoidance of western medicines, refusing any to his final days trusting only the spirit world which now preoccupied him more than poli-



Olufela Anikulapo-Kuti

through a highly emotionally charged voice what Indians and Pakistanis had failed to achieve any semblance of – unity! Born into a family of excellent singers, Nusrat ascended to the highest heights and early on was awarded the honorific *Ustad* (Master).

He took the *Qawwali* music based on Sufi Muslim spirituality and classical Punjabi verse to the world as Ravi Shankar had brought Indian classical music before him. The intensity and the poetry of his performances extended

maker, and its longing to return. These songs of praise appealed to all Muslims, while his interpretations of bhajans held Hindus in awe too.

Lyrics such as 'The Hindus call you Ram, the Muslims call you Allah, they are speaking of one and the same' from Allah Hoo, Allah Hoo stressed his themes of togetherness. The motif of love entwined with that of faith and the Sufi disdain for rules and rituals and their mean minded veneration infuriated fundamentalist Islamic tradi-

tions. The ecstasy and abandon Nusrat evoked in his audience would have them dancing joyously even at staid venues like London's Albert Hall where Muslim, Hindu and Sikh flocked to hear him.

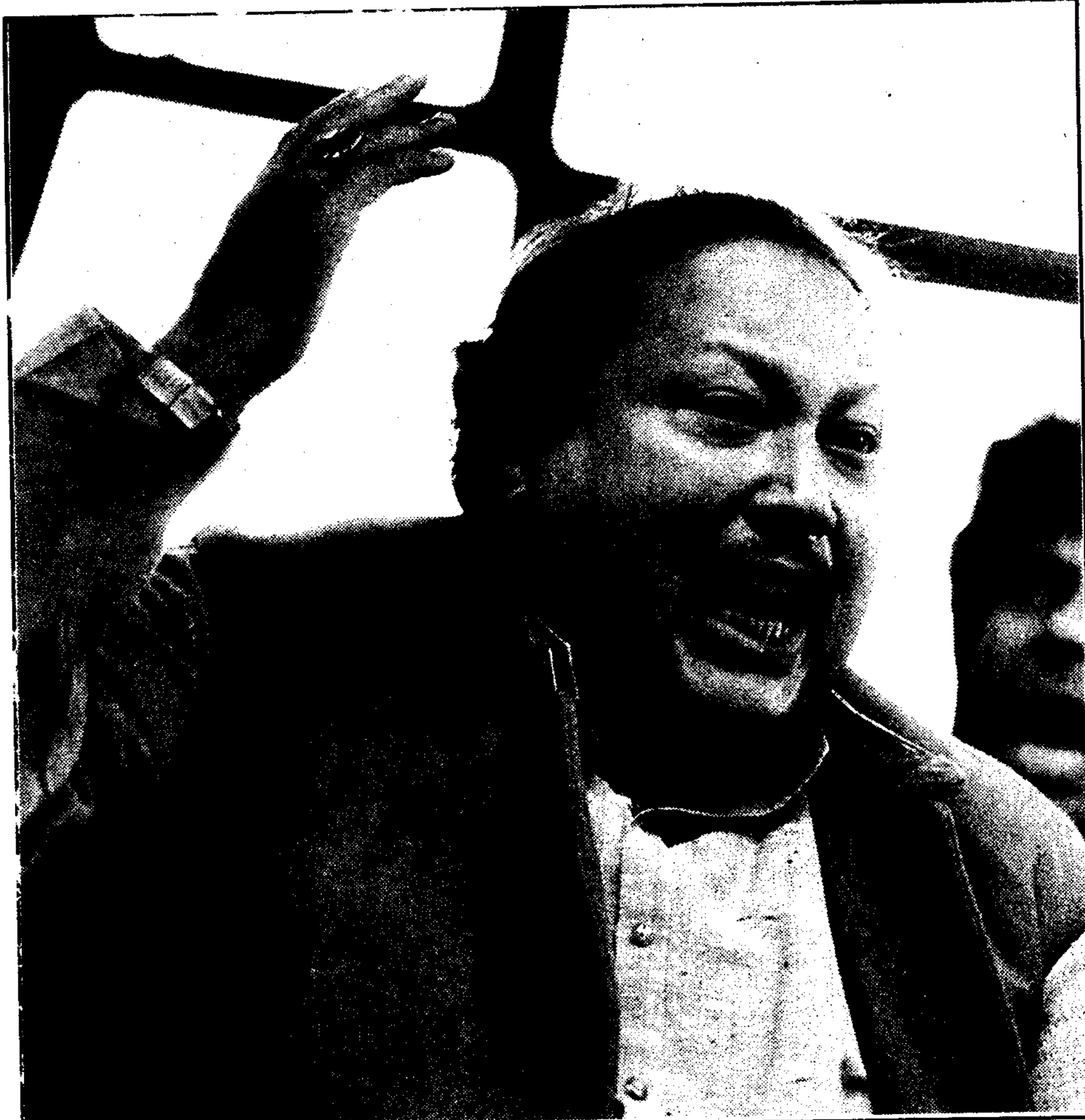
His music also fared well at the hands of remixers who added Latin, bhangra and hip-hop effects to his tracks in efforts to modernise the sound. He proved the versatility of his sound through collaborations with renowned western musicians like Peter Gabriel and on film scores for *Natural Born Killers* and *Bandid Queen*, and translated his talents for the Bollywood (Indian commercial cinema) audience through work on film soundtracks without compromising his integrity.

Having wholeheartedly embraced his musical calling, Nusrat had ballooned in weight by his late 30's and fought a losing battle from then on.

The resultant pressure on his body, and his prolific and intense emotional performances both live and in the studio must ultimately have contributed to his death of renal failure.

He was of an age with the post-colonial Indian sub-continent, a product of its previously combined culture and heritage; striving to reconnect links torn asunder.

These passings serve to highlight the immense significance of such social and culturally influential entertainers who were "Talkin' Loud and Sayin' Something".



Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

tics and even music.

Fela Kuti's demise was followed barely two weeks later by the unexpected and untimely death of *Ustad* Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

Here was an artist at the peak of his creativity accomplishing

to bhajans – Hindu songs of religious praise. *Qawwali* literally means "devotional songs aimed at bringing the individual closer to God".

This corresponds to the Sufi notion of the exile of the soul from its

These passings serve to highlight the immense significance of such social and culturally influential entertainers

Reloading the magazines

WITH socialist ideology under relentless attack, BOB WOOD checks out some of the more theoretical journals of the left.

Capital and Class 63 continues the excellent practice of taking an in-depth look at some current problems, along with more theoretical articles.

In the latest issue Gerald Strange presents a review of both Labour Party and trade union responses to the controversy over European economic and monetary union and even manages to do so without mentioning the Euromarch! Nevertheless it

is very informative.

Guglielmo Carchedi investigates EMU from an explicitly Marxist perspective.

He concludes that the European working class is beginning to understand that it is being asked to pay the cost of European economic integration, as shown by recent strikes in France, Germany, Spain and Greece.

Other contributions look at neoliberalism in Australia, child labour in Britain, and the response of Canadian automobile workers to lean production.

There is also an extensive review section: sectarians will delight in David Harvie's demolition of Lindsey German's SWP pamphlet on class,

while others will grieve that one of the largest organisations on the British left has so signally failed to develop theoretically over the last twenty years.

£6 from CSE, 25 Horsell Road, London N5 1XL. A year's subscription (3 issues) is £18, or £8 if a student or unwaged, and includes membership of the Conference of Socialist Economists.

In **New Left Review 224** Tom Nairn examines the relationship of Scotland and England and concludes that the dynamic unleashed by a Scottish Parliament may well

result in an independent Scotland in Europe.

Mike Marquess surveys the current sorry state of the Labour Party, including the *Labour into Power* proposals (now to be presented to conference as *Partnership in Power*).

Nevertheless he believes that as long as the trade unions remain affiliated and the bulk of the working class votes Labour, it would be premature for socialists to abandon Labour. There is also a fascinating account by Janet Afary of the struggles of women in Islamic regimes.

Of particular interest to *Socialist Outlook* readers is a discussion by Norman Geras of Ernest Mandel's writings on the Holocaust.

Annual subscription £25 (6 issues), £18 if a student, from RF Group, 92 High Street, Berkhamstead, Herts HP4 2BL.

Critique 28/29 is a special issue devoted entirely to the life and politics of Victor Serge.

It includes personal reminiscence, discussion of his novels and his political activity, with a look at his relations with the Fourth International. A year's subscription costs £10 (12 issues). Write to Bob Arnot, Department of Economics, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow G4 0BA

Mother Teresa, poverty's superstar, dies in private hospital

Saint or Sinner?

B. Skanthakumar

MOTHER TERESA loved the poor. She loved the poor so much that she never asked how they became poor nor challenged the causes of their poverty.

She received millions of pounds in their name to make their condition more bearable – not to seek to eradicate it.

Mother Teresa cared for the dying and destitute in her homes. She never asked whether they ought to have been in hospital instead. The curable and the incurable were all the same to her, and only the fortunate received painkillers.

Mother Teresa had great compassion. In 1984 in Bhopal, the leak of MIC gas at the Union Carbide plant caused two and a half thousand deaths, tens of thousands of blindings and left hundreds of thousands with breathing difficulties. The 'angel of mercy' was soon on the scene (she enjoyed free air and rail travel within India), her first words to the survivors and their families were "Forgive, Forgive, Forgive".

Mother Teresa was above politics. She was so apolitical that she never enquired where donations came from, or the character of those who gave. The Duvaliers in Haiti, Robert Maxwell in Britain, the Hoxha regime in Albania were all beneficiaries of her benedictions.

Why was this Christian missionary tolerated and even encouraged by the Indian government and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) led administration in West Bengal where her Order is based? The answer is simple.

She confirmed the perception that nothing could be done to remove the scourge of poverty, the epidemic of ill-health and malnutrition, the malady of hopelessness and helplessness – only the symptoms could be managed.

In fact it was the fault of the poor – their *karma* – actions in their past lives which contributed

to their present fate. Her doctrine was one which induces fatalism and apathy among its adherents.

Her world view resonated with medieval notions exalting suffering and pain as redeeming past sins and leading the tortuous path to Heaven.

Why was Mother Teresa propelled into superstardom in the West and her words and deeds placed beyond reproach even by the liberal-left?

In his excoriating polemic *The Missionary Position*, Christopher Hitchens argues that the rich world likes to believe that "someone, somewhere is doing something for the Third World. The great white hope meets the great black hole; the mission to the heathen blends with the comforting myth of Florence Nightingale".

If Rudyard Kipling's poem *The White Man's Burden* spoke about the 'civilising responsibility' of colonialism to its "new caught, sullen peoples/ Half-devil and Half-child" – then remember that the missionaries followed the flag and were intimately bound up in that enterprise.

The Vatican recognised the value of the publicity Mother Teresa generated, and the present Pontiff, John Paul II, saw her as an apostle for his own fundamentalist views on reproductive rights and same-sex sexuality.

In 1979 when Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, she used that platform to announce that "abortion is the worst evil, and the greatest enemy of peace".

The tragedy of 250,000 women dying each year from 'back-street' abortions and the denial of the right of women to control their own bodies apparently pale in significance and devil's work: contraception and abortion.

This was her message to the Bangladeshi women who became pregnant in consequence of the mass rapes perpetrated by the Pakistani army.

Meanwhile her San Francisco

franchise for gay men with AIDS mirrors the spartan monastic regime of her outlets elsewhere; with Christian teaching substituting for painkillers.

Mother Teresa herself has pronounced AIDS as "just retribution for improper sexual conduct" says Hitchens, which is not dissimilar to the Vatican's own view.

Her much-praised homes in India are run with nineteenth century ideas and instruments. Prayer and Christian comfort are available in generous doses when medication, hospitalisation and surgical intervention would save more lives.

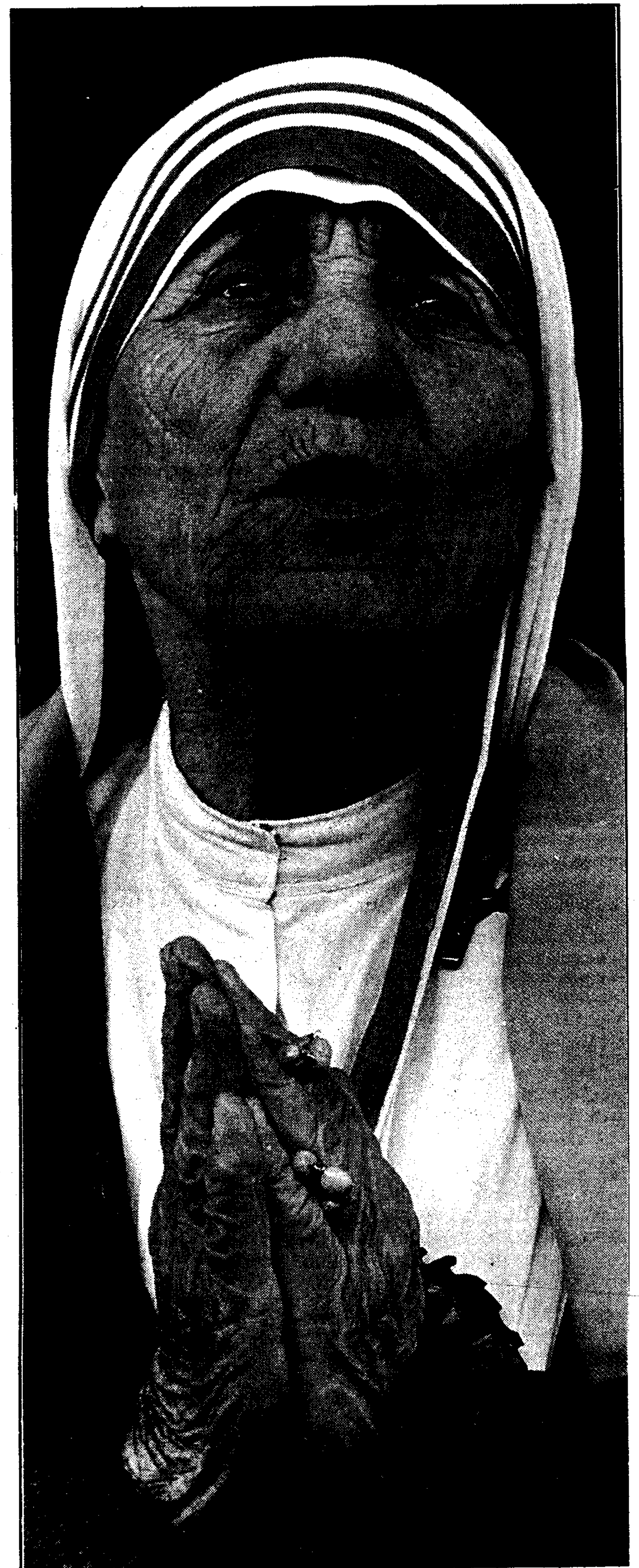
A former lay worker at one of her Bombay homes told *The Guardian* that in his many years of experience, "there are cases where there are only two possible descriptions: criminal neglect and criminal assault".

Yet Mother Teresa herself died in a private hospital, with a personal physician and a team of specialists by her bed-side and round the clock care. Whenever she fell ill on one of her excursions abroad she was immediately booked into a private hospital. The best and most expensive care apparently did no harm to her soul but was off-limits to the poor.

She founded her own transnational, *the Missionaries of Charity*, operating more than 500 branches in over 100 countries and with a staff of 4,000 nuns and 40,000 lay workers.

As Christopher Hitchens notes, she was serving the "sponsor and the donor, and not the needs of the downtrodden. Helpless infants, abandoned derelicts, lepers and the terminally ill are the raw material for demonstrations of compassion".

Mother Teresa represented the odious belief that the poor are objects for charity and not subjects of their own liberation. She never sought to address the causes of poverty and oppression – because she believed it to be part of the natural order.



Socialist OUTLOOK

Where we stand

IN THE NINETIES millions of women and men have taken part in mobilisations against the evils of capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorships. This reflects the fact that humanity faces widening dangers. Ecological, military, social and economic devastation faces millions of people.

Many more people recognise the barbaric nature of capitalism. In a situation where the inability of the social democratic and communist parties to provide socialist solutions is becoming clearer the task of creating new leaderships remains ahead.

Socialist Outlook is written and sold by socialists committed to this struggle. We are the British supporters of the world-wide marxist organisation, the Fourth International. We stand for the revolutionary transformation of society and a pluralist, socialist democracy world wide.

The overall goal which we pursue is the emancipation of all human beings from every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation and violence. Socialism must be under the control of ordinary people, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist, ecologist, anti-militarist and internationalist. It must abolish wage slavery and national oppression.

The working class is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed. The working class and its allies must uncompromisingly fight against capitalism and for a clear programme of action in order gradually to acquire the experience and consciousness needed to defeat capitalism at the decisive moment of crisis.

The movements of women, lesbians and gay men and black people to fight their particular forms of oppression make an essential contribution to the struggle for a different society. They are organised around the principle "None so fit to break the chains as those who wear them".

The whole working class needs to fully commit itself to these struggles. Furthermore we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these organisations which respects their legitimate autonomy.

By simultaneously building revolutionary organisations in each country and a revolutionary International we aim to guide and encompass the global interests of the workers and oppressed. By building a united struggle against exploitation and oppression we aim to ensure the survival of the human race.

WHAT'S ON

Bring your diary up to date!

SEPTEMBER

Friday 26 - Monday 29.

Welfare State Network March to Lobby Labour Party Conference.

Fri 26
Hand in Copy of Emergency Plan to Downing Street.

Sat 27
March Begins with Rally At Labour Party Hq, South London, March to Croydon for Rally and Social.

Sun 28
Crawley to Gatwick Airport. Evening Social in Hove.

Mon 29
March From Hove to Brighton to Lobby Labour Party Conference (12 Noon, Conference Centre).
For More Information Ring 0171 639 5068.

Saturday 27
Demonstration in Support of the Liverpool Dockers, Marking the Second Anniversary of Their Struggle for Reinstatement. Assemble 12.30 Myrtle Parade Liverpool for March to St. George's Hall.

Sunday 28
Lobby of Labour Party Conference Called by University College London Hospitals UNISON Branch. Assemble 3p.m.

Monday 29 - Friday 3 October
Labour Party Conference, Brighton.

October

Wednesday 1
Day of Action on 2nd Anniversary of Hillingdon Hospital Workers' Strike. Mass Picket 7a.m. At Hospital. March Assemblies 11a.m. From Colham Green, Colham Rd by Hospital (U4 From Uxbridge Tube), Leaves 12 Noon to Go Past Hospital to Rally 1p.m. Uxbridge Civic Centre.

Thursday 9
London Socialist Outlook Public Meeting: What kind of Party does the working class need? Speakers: Socialist Outlook, Ian Driver (SLP member), Socialist Party (invited) and Labour Left Briefing (invited). 8p.m. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Sunday 12
March for Unity Through Southall. Organised by Southall Monitoring Group Unity. Assemble 1p.m. Dominion Road, Southall for March to Southall Park.

Saturday 18
Welfare State Network AGM, 11.15am-5p.m. Speakers include Tony Benn. South Camden Community School, Charrington St., London NW1.

Sat 18/Sun 19
South Asia and the Diaspora 50 Years After the End of British Colonialism; SOAS, Malet St. Organised by the South Asia Solidarity Group. Further Details 0171 354 8744 Or 0171 713 7907

Sat 18
Hands Off Cuba National Demonstration. 12 noon at Speaker's Corner, Hyde Park. March via U.S. Em-

bassy to Trafalgar Square for rally.

Weds 29
Torchlit Procession to Commemorate 30 Years of Abortion Reform, Called by NUS Women's Campaign. Assemble 6p.m. University of London Union, Malet St., London WC1, Rally 7.30p.m. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square.

November

Sat 1
Recall conference hosted by the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups and others to discuss the way forward after Labour Party conference.

Thursday 6
London Socialist Outlook public meeting 'Socialism and Women's Liberation'. 8p.m. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Sat 8
National Assembly Against Racism Conference

Saturday 15
Trade Unions Under New Labour. Conference Organised by Trade Union Lefts Alliance. 11a.m.-4p.m., University of London Union, Malet St., London WC1

DECEMBER

Saturday 6
Network of Socialist Campaign Groups Annual General Meeting, Leeds.

Saturday 6
Campaign for A Fighting Democratic UNISON Conference.

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Defend Labour Democracy!

Throw out Blair's one-way "partnership" fraud

TONY BLAIR hopes to get his proposals on restructuring the Labour Party through Brighton conference. He will try a mixture of post-election euphoria, sops to the unions and straight intimidation.

'Partnership in Power' would make the Labour government unaccountable to the wider movement. It would be almost impossible for unions or CLPs to get critical motions to Labour Party conference.

The NEC would effectively be replaced by a new body, the Joint Policy Committee with an in-built

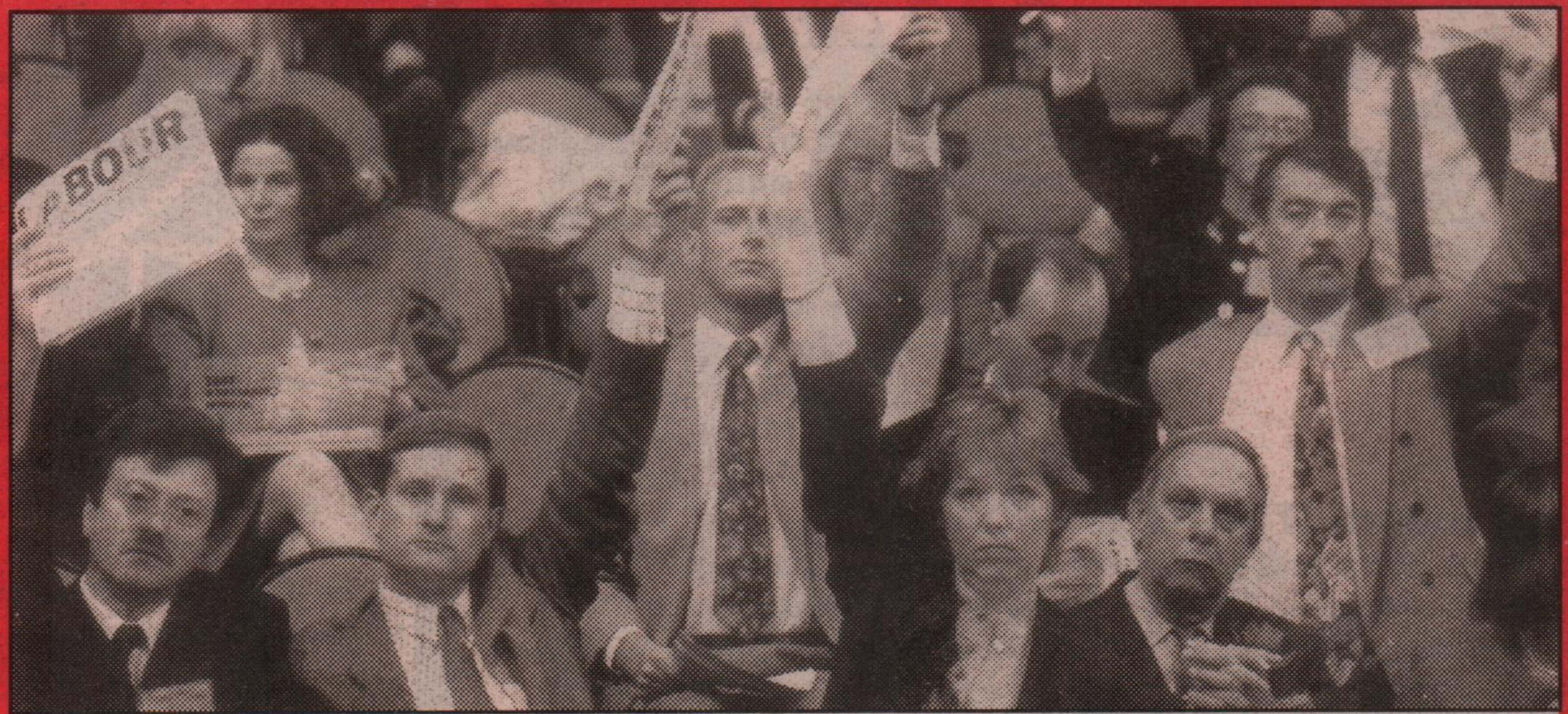
majority for the Cabinet. Left MPs would be kept off the rump NEC.

Most policy discussion would be hived off to the National Policy Forum. This is an unrepresentative, unaccountable body on which unions would have only 17 per cent of delegates – as against 50 per cent at Party conference.

This outright attack on democracy and the unions input into policy-making is designed to prevent the Labour government being reined in by the movement.



So where ARE all these progressive employers? Lucas Aerospace strikers at the sharp end



Unions have been offered no favours – and should not make it easier for New Labour to attack them!

Tony Blair knows that his popularity won't last. He wants to remove the channels of protest in advance.

Some on the Left (or not so Left) will push for a year's delay on the proposals. They will not improve with age and should be thrown out

now.

Confusion and intimidation need to be faced down. Possible concessions to the unions on the minimum wage and union recognition should not be traded for the right to influence policy in the future.