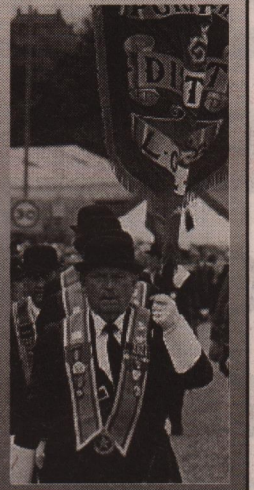
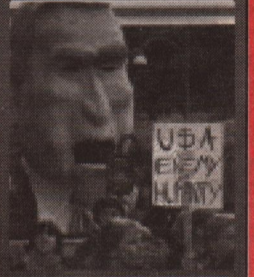


NS 47

INSIDE



IRELAND
after
Weston
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3 pages of
coverage



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Socialist

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OUTLOOK



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RMT Conference calls time on right wing policies

Greg Tucker

DELEGATES at the RMT national conference have scored a decisive blow against the right wing Executive's witch-hunt against left activists. At the same time they have voted to serve warning to the Labour Party - support RMT policy (on rail renationalisation) or you could lose the union's support both financial and political.

As detailed in last month's Socialist Outlook, the right on the RMT Executive was proposing to bar from office Pat Sikorski and two other left activists - their crime, trying to defend union democracy.

To add to this attack one right wing Branch brought an emergency resolution to the RMT conference calling for the (left) President to resign over his role in trying to sort out this witch-hunt.

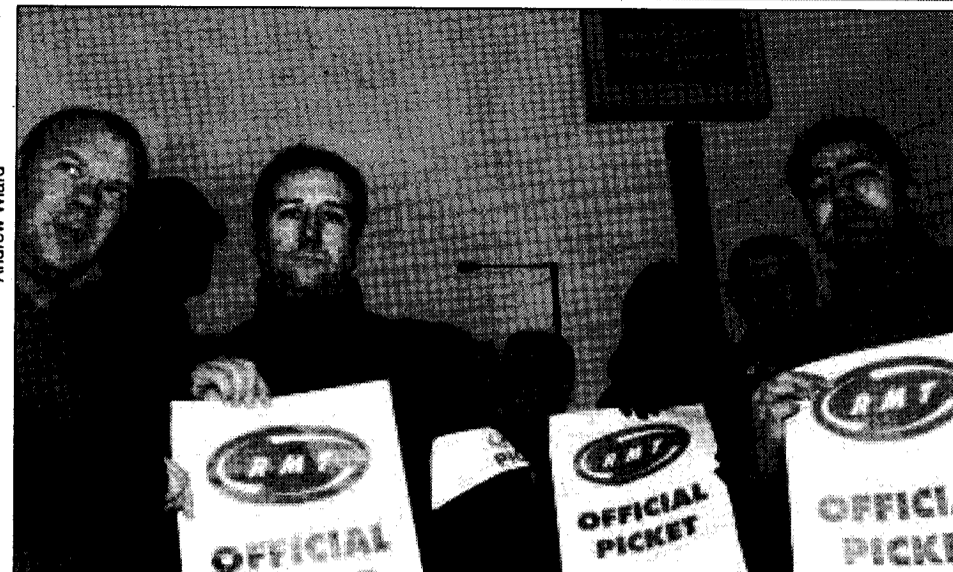
But after a days debate during which Pat and the others under attack were able to answer the charges against them, the conference overwhelmingly threw out the Executive proposals.

The emergency resolution backfired on the right - its near unanimous dismissal effectively giving an endorsement to everything the President had been forced to do to defend union democracy.

Turning to the Labour Party the RMT followed the line of other union conferences this year in critically examining its relation with Blairism.

With only four votes against it declared, "it cannot and will not continue to support a Labour government that has deserted its working class roots...unless these disastrous policies are changed, we will no longer support them politically or financially."

The right were reduced to arguing in another resolution that however bad Labour might be it was the only party that could represent the aspirations of the



Andrew Wiliard

membership. Even this was too much for delegates.

The conference went on to express its complete opposition to the TUC's "Social Partnership" policies and also to call for a campaign against the effects of the WTO general agreement on trade services.

The conference came at a time of success in the union's campaign to protect the safety role of the guard on trains with the majority of train operating companies reaching agreement with the union in the face of successful strike ballots.

The RMT is now looking to work with ASLEF in a campaign to reintroduce the guard on Driver Only services.

However this success is only partial - one company, C2C is still in dispute with guards now on their third day of action, whilst another, Midland Main Line, successfully gained an injunction to halt their strike.

The terms of the injunction were based on a handful of RMT members not receiving ballot papers in the ballot. Taken with the court decision on the RMT ballot on

LUL earlier this year it is clear that the obligations on unions to provide details of who is being balloted and to keep perfect membership records is now more rigorous under Labour's anti-union laws than it was under the Tories.

The RMT remains committed to the repeal of all anti-union laws - it is now a matter of urgency that all unions join the campaign to see off our legal shackles - defying the law as LUL workers and others have done this year, if necessary.

UNISON conference fires warning shots at New Labour

Fred Leplat

UNISON's annual conference held between the 18 and 22 June sent a warning broadside to the government: no more privatisations. In a rare display of unity between all delegates and the NEC, the conference condemned New Labour for its continuing programme of privatisation of public services including PFI, and of the rise of racism fanned by scape-goating of asylum seekers.

The agreement between delegates and the NEC, including the new general secretary David Prentis, was expressed in the form of voting through motions which obviously condemned privatisation, but which also committed the union to organising a national demonstration against PFI, a lobby of Parliament, and back official strikes against the effects of PFI and privatisation.

This goes much further than the NEC had been prepared to support in the past,

and goes some way towards the left's view than only a national campaign including industrial action can have a chance of defeating the national attacks from the government.

The scene to adopting this motion on the Wednesday was set on the day before when Stephen Byers, Minister for Transport and Local Government, was widely and repeatedly heckled by delegates. This unprecedented reception for a minister at a UNISON con-

ference was sparked off by his insistence that he would pursue the government's agenda for "change"; in public services and pretending that this was not privatisation.

The widespread disillusion with New Labour by UNISON members was also the reason backed overwhelmingly by 478,088 to 386,226 the notorious motion 131 titled "The Labour Government: What do we get for our money?"

This motion noted that members are questioning why UNISON is handing over £1.4m a year to the Labour Party while at the same time it is attacking public services and members' jobs and conditions, and that electors are voting for independent candidates that are opposed to attacks on public services.

The motion went on to state that UNISON was therefore not using its funds to pursue UNISON's policies.

The motion committed the NEC to consult with branches and regions in order to prepare a report to next year's conference on the future of UNISON's political funds.

By adopting this motion, UNISON will not be disaffiliating from Labour. But it is a serious warning shot.

Coming closely on a similar vote at the FBU conference, this indicates that union members are no longer as loyal to Labour as in the

past, and are prepared to stop "feeding the hands that bites them". This is the first step towards a political break from Labour, which the Socialist Alliance and Scottish Socialist Party represent.

Conference unanimously voted through a motion condemning the recent rise of racism, calling for the repeal of "all racist immigration controls and asylum laws", develop a relationship with the Anti-Nazi League and the

union, and committing the union to take a high campaign against the General Agreement on Trade in Services. A set-back for union democracy was the failure for a third year running to adopt internal union disciplinary procedures which would be democratic.

Unfortunately, a rule change making suspension from membership easier was adopted.

The surprising degree of opposition by UNISON's general secretary and the NEC to New Labour's privatisation of public services has been sparked by the extent and the severity of these plans. If unchallenged, New Labour's privatisations in its second term will devastate public services like the Tories devastated the nationalised industries in the 1980s.

This places the public sector union leaderships with a stark choice: either make some sort of a stand against these plans, or risk either seeing their unions devastated or being overwhelmed by the union members who want a fight.

The large number of unofficial strikes in the Post Office as it prepares for privatisation and the beginnings of a political break with Labour are straws in the wind that indicate that changes are beginning to take place.

The newly launched "United Left" in UNISON has a great challenge ahead: to organise activists across the union for a fight to make sure that the conference decisions for a national campaign against privatisation are carried through rapidly and effectively.



Caught in the middle: Dave Prentis

Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, and to initiate a demonstration in Manchester this autumn against racism in preparation of a campaign against the BNP in the run-up to next year's council elections.

Dave Prentis moved the resolution and correctly placed the responsibility for the rise of racism in the context of the virulent scape-goating of asylum seekers by all the main parties.

UNISON conference also carried motions to campaign during a referendum against joining the EU monetary

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The second term as farce...



Andrew Wiarad

Liverpool firefighters fighting the imposition of external managers are the first to stage a week-long strike since June 7.

Those who fail to learn the lessons of history, warned Karl Marx, are doomed to repeat them. Millions of Labour voters fell into precisely this category when they turned out again in June to give Tony Blair a second chance to deliver reforms which has spent years explaining he does not support.

If Blair's first term can now be seen as political tragedy, the second is already coming back as farce, with ministers and MPs brazenly stuffing their own pockets with massive pay increases, waging war on public services, the disabled and civil liberties, and acting more arrogantly than ever.

Roy Hattersley, from the safety of the House of Lords, really did speak for wide sections of Labour supporters when he described his desperate hope prior to June 7 that – against all the odds – a second term Blair government would be closer to Labour's traditional politics than the first.

And his loud groan of frustration, as soon as Blair and his team made it clear that they were determined to implement every right wing pledge in their 2001 manifesto, will have been echoed across much of the country.

Of course Hattersley has been left stranded by the party's rapid move to the right. His politics have not changed: he is just as opposed to socialists and the left as he was when he helped Neil Kinnock drive through the witch-hunt against Militant in the late 1980s, paving the way for the subsequent Blair offensive against Clause 4.

But his offer to lead a crusade to win back the Labour Party for social democracy is not just a way of increasing his already lavish earn-

ings from journalism: it is part of an unravelling of the Labour bureaucracy.

This is driven by the tensions of a second term in which the party is in office with another unprecedented majority, but people recognise that its traditional policies, which still hold the loyal support of millions of working class voters, are even further than ever from being implemented.

Hattersley is not the only one uttering dire threats and hoping that Blair's team will take notice and concede before they are called to take any action.

Just weeks after Labour secured its first-ever second term with a massive majority, union leaders have been queuing up to demonstrate their independence from Millbank and their commitment to public services.

Before the election, we had the historic vote of the Fire Brigades Union to democratise its Political Fund. This started from the increasingly popular view that union funds should not support a party that attacks the union, but went on to argue that funding should be given "to support candidates and organisations whose policies are supportive of the policies and principles of this Union".

UNISON, too, announced that it had lopped £250,000 from its election contribution to New Labour, not least because of ministers' determination to press ahead with the controversial Private Finance Initiative in the NHS and local government.

Since the election, there has been even more debate. UNISON's conference decision to mount a year-long "review" of its links with Labour was followed by

TGWU leader Bill Morris floating the idea of working with the Lib Dems to challenge government policy, and even GMB chief John Edmonds proposed to cut contributions to the Labour party – to fund campaigns in defence of public services. The rail union RMT voted down a right wing motion which proclaimed continued loyalty to Labour.

Indications that none of these threats is likely to force a change of line from ministers included the decision to remove two high-profile Commons committee chairs for the "crime" of outspoken criticism of the government.

One of them, Gwyneth Dunwoody, has (as chair of the Transport committee) been a consistent thorn in the side of ministers, who have not only refused to renationalise the railways but are intent upon bulldozing through more privatisation – of air traffic control and the London tube.

But her willingness to speak out against her removal underlines another common feature of this post-election unravelling process: the resistance to Blair's control freakery and reactionary policies has not been led by the Labour left, which has in the main maintained the low profile it has adopted since 1997, but by the exasperated and slighted traditionalists, by "old Labour".

The most powerful speeches in winning the vote for a review of the Labour link at UNISON conference came not from the usual suspects on the hard left, but from Labour Party members furious at

the way the union's funds have been used to bolster policies which attack its members.

So far to the right has Blair's team now travelled, that almost anyone committed to the party's traditional reformist policies will be to their left. But this does not mean they are all now ready to break from the Party and join the Socialist Alliance. Before many of these people make a break, more lessons have to be learned – the hard way.

Socialists should therefore support their demands, and work wherever possible with Labour Party members to build broad campaigns at local and national level – on such issues as defence of comprehensive education, opposition to student fees, opposition to privatisation and PFI, and opposition to New Labour's attacks on asylum seekers, civil liberties and disabled people.

This year's lobby of Labour Party conference, centred on opposition to privatisation and PFI, should be seen as a chance to link up with trade unionists and Labour Party members who share the widespread revulsion at these New Labour policies.

We should support every fight against Blairism, while building the broadest possible base for the Socialist Alliance as an alternative for those who conclude that they cannot win.

While we fight for maximum debate in the unions on the Political Funds and the politics of

New Labour, our immediate aim is *not* disaffiliation from the Labour Party – because at present there is no alternative party which could plausibly bid for national-level union affiliations.

The danger is that under these conditions a disaffiliation from Labour would lead to a depoliticisation of the unions.

Our aim is to raise *more* political discussion in the unions, and in particular to spell out clear political criteria for use of political funds, to ensure the unions are not tied hand and foot to financing a party which increasingly sees itself as a party of big business and global capital.

The objective must be to follow the FBU example, and establish the right for every union to fund parties and candidates whose policies are in line with the needs and aspirations of union members.

This is very different from the objectives of Hattersley and the union bosses, who clearly want to put themselves at the head of the resistance in order to limit its political development.

By contrast, socialists will support the widest possible resistance to Blair, in the knowledge that the more people become engaged in active struggle, the quicker they will learn the hard lessons that enable them to break from Labour and embrace a socialist alternative.

This second term may already be a farce: but it's no laughing matter. The sooner the debate gets serious in the labour movement the sooner the real fightback can begin.

Privatisation ... less popular than Poll Tax!

Tony Blair's "keynote" speech on "reforming" the public services through greater involvement of private companies on July 16 had been seen as spelling out the extent of the new government's commitment to press forward on all fronts with the highly unpopular "public-private partnerships", private financing of schools and hospitals and private sector management of public services.

The Royal Free – which contains the biggest private wing of any London hospital – seemed a logical choice for such a speech, in which Blair was expected to go further than his ministers in throwing down the gauntlet to public sector union leaders.

But in the event the lengthy speech merely reiterated poli-

cies already spelled out during and since the election. New Labour, Blair declared, would:

- Step up the programme of building hospitals and primary care facilities (and move towards financing social services, imaging and laboratory equipment) with private capital through PFI – regardless of the accumulation of evidence that the result is fewer, high-cost, low-quality, unreliable buildings for the NHS, while city fat cats pocket the difference.

- Step up the purchase of waiting list treatment from private sector hospitals which cannot find enough paying customers to fill their beds – despite the fact that this will drain more staff and resources from the most pressurised NHS hospitals to bolster the profits of the parasitic private

sector.

- Bring in the private sector to run new "stand alone" surgical units to deliver waiting list operations – leaving unclear whether the clinical and support staff would be employed by the NHS or the private sector.

- Press ahead with the hugely unpopular PPP scheme which will dismember and part-privatise the London tube – leaving passengers and taxpayers to pick up the tab for pumping profits into participating companies.

- Step up the involvement of private capital in the building and refurbishment of schools, turning education like the NHS from landlord to tenant and squeezing profits out of an already under-funded service.

- Bring in more private sec-

tor management to run "failing" schools and LEAs, again profiting from the historic lack of resources and deprivation, and transforming education from a public service into a business and a corporate income stream.

Of course Blair is formally right when he says that these big strides down the road stop short of a fully privatised system: rather they are novel ways of milking profits from public services. Schooling and health care will still be largely funded from taxation, and free at point of use.

But we should remember the bits of these services that have already been largely squeezed out of free provision – such as university education, where students no longer receive grants but instead run up mas-

sive debts and pay fees, and long-term care of the elderly, which has largely been hived off to private sector nursing homes and is still subject to means-tested charges.

If these body blows can be struck, more services could go the same way in later phases of what Blair insists is a 10-year programme of "reform".

Inferior

All of the evidence so far is that far from representing any solution to the problem, all these measures that chip away at popular public services deliver an inferior service at greater cost than the system they replace.

A Mori poll just days before Blair's big speech found only 11% of voters believe that bringing in the private sector

will improve any of the public services – making New Labour's policy even less popular than Thatcher's hated Poll Tax – which never dipped below 23% support.

The public sector union leaders – after largely kow-towing to New Labour since 1997 – have so far plucked up enough courage to defy Blair's new offensive for a month.

If they want to retain public support and the support of their members, they must continue to press this line.

They should back the anti-privatisation lobby of Labour Party conference in Brighton this year, and build active campaigns against every futile and costly plan to siphon cash from the public purse into the wallets of private shareholders.

Alliance must act now to build on election gains

Terry Conway

The Socialist Alliance emerged from the General Election campaign a stronger and more dynamic organisation than before.

In fact, the campaign itself really created the Alliance as a national organisation, creating local branches of the Alliance in many areas where they didn't previously exist, and winning many new members.

Now the key challenge is to build on those successes, to ensure the Socialist Alliance can establish itself as a key player in the battles against the neo-liberal policies of this new Labour government both at a local and national level.

The Socialist Alliance can build on the success of this year's debates on democratising the political fund in a number of unions, both by consolidating the gains that have been made and widening them to other unions, as well as by developing the wider fight back against privatisation.

The many people who have come into the Alliance dur-

ing the election campaign must quickly be made to feel that this is an organisation which offers them a political home, a place for both discussion and activity and one whose priorities they can shape.

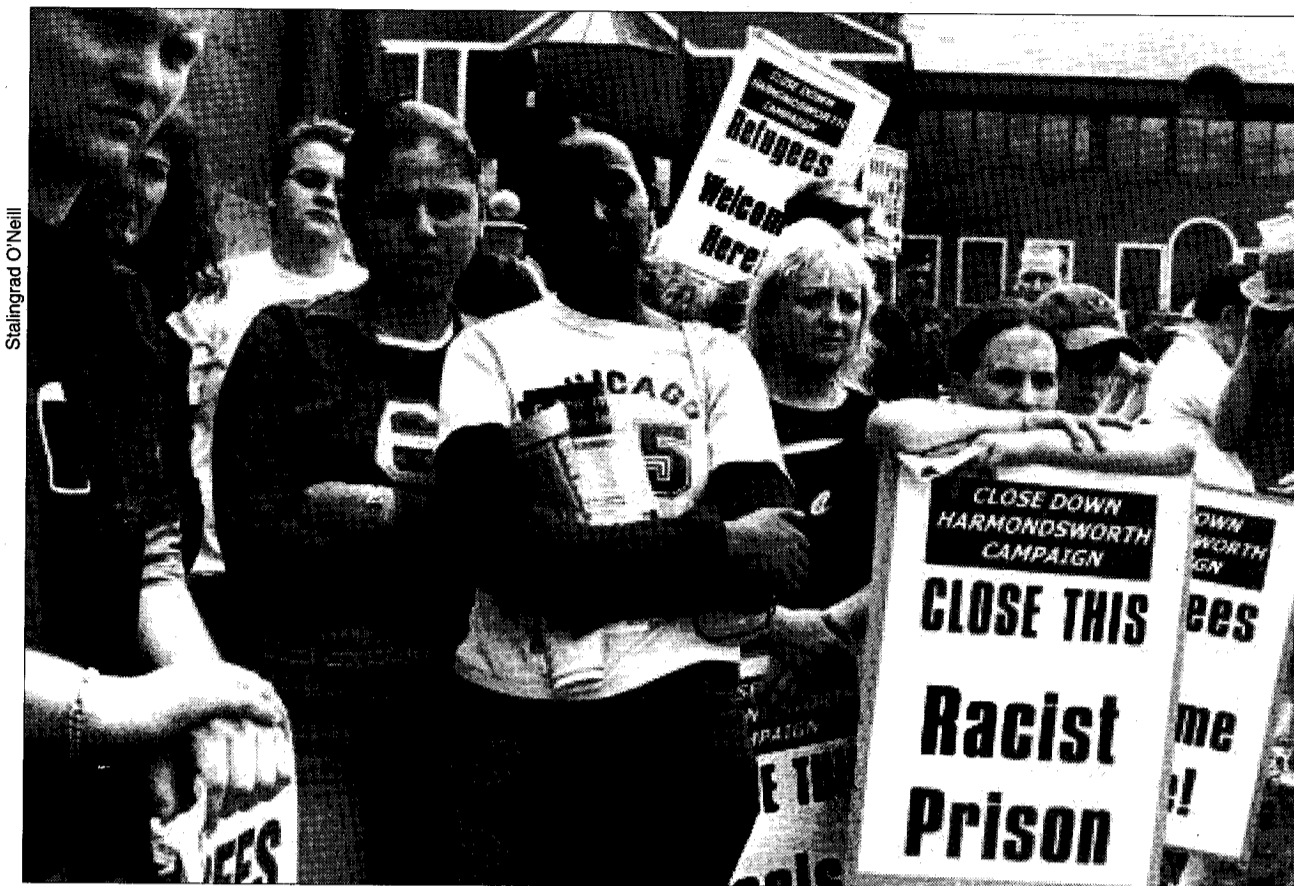
The Alliance must also continue to work in a way that reaches out to the increasing numbers of people who will become disillusioned with New Labour as the attacks of the second term take shape – both by trying to win them to the Alliance itself, but at the same time finding ways of working with those who are not ready to make the leap.

But in order to carry out these tasks, the Socialist Alliance to develop the right structures.

It has outgrown its current structures both politically and organisationally. This is why there is going to be a national conference towards the end of the year which can deal with these questions.

A number of issues need to be addressed.

The current membership system which is somewhat



250 people supported a picket on June 30 outside the newly-expanded Harmondsworth detention centre, originally planned to co-incide with the centre's opening. This has in fact been delayed due to building works taking longer than expected (well you can't plan anything with private contractors you know). Further action will take place when a new date is known.

To find out more contact the Close Down Harmondsworth Campaign at 10 Endsleigh Rd, Southall, Middx UB2 5QL To join the campaign send a cheque made out to Slough Trades Council for £5/£2 with name address and e-mail to the same address.

chaotic, needs to be simplified. At the minute some people are members of local alliances but not national members, while others have joined nationally and may not know what's going on in their area.

There should be a unified structure so that people join once and have the rights and responsibilities at both local and national level. This new structure should also be used to go back to those people that we have made contact with either nationally or locally, but not actually signed up and formally recruit them.

Local Socialist Alliances should see themselves, and act, as branches of the national organisation.

There needs to be a strengthened leadership, which has the authority to lead the organisation and involves the different political currents both explicit and implicit within the Alliance.

Such a body needs to be able to react quickly to political events as they unfold, to ensure that the Alliance is involved in the heart of opposition to government attacks. It needs to build the organisation nationally and resource and encourage its local units.

Discussions need to take place about the best way of achieving such a leadership team – as there are a number of different approaches that could be followed.

The Alliance also needs to develop some sort of regular publication that can promote the organisation's campaigns and report on successes in different areas etc.

This is particularly important for those members who are not members of any other left organisation. It should be produced in a way that would allow it to be used on stalls, at demonstrations or meetings to sell to those who are coming across the Alliance for the first time – therefore needing to be something very different from the current members' bulletin.

In order to take these steps it will be important to maintain the national office set up during the election cam-

campaign and find the material resources to employ staff.

These are some of the issues that the Socialist Alliance needs to explore in the run up to the conference later in the year.

Unfortunately, as Alan Thornett explains below, the first step will have to be to defeat the Coventry and Warwickshire resolution promoted by the Socialist Party, which seeks to delay these vital moves.

Then hopefully it will be possible to concentrate on developing the sort of effective national organisation that can build on the success of the election campaign and be a key part of building a fighting opposition to the neo-liberal offensive.

Call time on Socialist Party sectarianism

Alan Thornett

The Socialist Alliance was strengthened considerably by the Election campaign. Now plans have been quickly laid to build on this with through a conference in November which will consider proposals to restructure the organisation in a more effective way.

Such new structures need to take into account the way the Alliance developed in the course of the election and the big expansion of its membership.

In the immediate post-election period, it seemed that the Socialist Party was in agreement with this and was moving towards a more constructive attitude. This was in positive contrast with the way they had operated during the election itself.

Where Socialist Party members were candidates for the Alliance, the broader banner was really a formality. They ran the campaigns themselves and didn't

Socialist Alliance national chair Dave Nellist: few of his fellow Socialist Party members followed his line of positive engagement in the Alliance campaign



involve the broader forces in the Alliance or use much of the general material produced by the Alliance.

But after the election, leading SP representatives were saying that they were now in favour of consolidating the Alliance with a new and more integrated structure.

The Socialist of June 9 carried a positive report of the Socialist Alliance election campaign and concluded by

saying that the Socialist Party would be putting forward proposals in the Alliance to build on what has been achieved.

This has not happened, however – apparently because the Peter Taaffe wing which is sceptical about the Alliance has won out over the more positive and constructive wing represented by Dave Nellist.

In recent weeks the SP has reverted to type with

destructive interventions into some areas – most notably Walthamstow and Hackney. More generally it has started to oppose the further consolidation of the Alliance.

Instead it argues for an Alliance which would be even looser than the current format based on arrangements between the affiliated organisations, and would completely fail to include the expanded number of individual members who joined during the election.

At Marxism 2001 the SP distributed a bizarre leaflet which both accused the SWP of being reluctant to move the Socialist Alliance towards becoming a party (which is fair comment) but at the same time accused it of wanting to over-centralise the Alliance – i.e. make it too much like a party!

This shows that the SP call for the formation of a new party is pure propaganda. It makes calls for a party but at the same time puts every practical obstacle in the way

of the Alliance actually becoming a party.

In the end this call for a new party becomes a cover for a sectarian operation inside the Alliance simply seeking some advantage for itself. The SPs call for a new party is in reality an obstacle to a new party.

The main tool the SP have now developed to block strengthening and developing the structures of the Alliance takes is a resolution they have pushed through the Coventry and Warwickshire Socialist Alliance.

This argues that the forthcoming conference should simply be a starting point of the discussion rather than taking any decisions on new structures. This is argued on the basis that "more time is needed to build trust between the different organisations within the Alliance".

But the main problem with building trust rests with the SP itself. Until it decides to come fully into the Alliance

and build it, there will be a problem of trust between it and most of the rest of those in the Alliance.

It is very important to keep the SP in the Alliance, but it is also important not to be held to ransom by them.

The Alliance which has emerged from the election campaign is not the same organisation as it was at the beginning of the campaign. Many individual activists joined up both at a local level and nationally during the course of the campaign and who are disadvantaged by the existing structure.

The Socialist Party cannot be allowed to put their own narrow sectarian interests before the need for the Alliance.

These are to build on the gains of the election campaign by becoming a effective national organisation which can continue to fight against the neo-liberal policies of new Labour and win new support through doing so.

Bradford pays the price for poverty and segregation

Dave Miles

A WEEK after the riot there are many boarded-up shop windows in the centre of Bradford. However there are only a few more than there were a week before the riot.

The city centre has looked increasingly run-down over the past few years. This is symptomatic of its economic malaise, which has fed the frustrations of both Asian and white working class youth.

This is a contrast with Leeds, Bradford's bigger neighbour. Chapeltown in Leeds was the site of riots in 1980 when African-Caribbean youth clashed with the police.

West Yorkshire has lost much of its textile industry, along with engineering and other older industries. However Leeds has found a replacement in governmental institutions, commercial legal firms, financial services and the like.

Chapeltown is not prosperous, and many other areas of Leeds are pockets of poverty. However the city overall is an economically buoyant.

Bradford has found few sig-

nificant replacements for old industries. Poverty is more widespread, and with the collapse or export of industries the trade union movement has become much weaker.

Large swathes of the city's housing are ageing and in disrepair, much of it dating back to the 19th century. Having been an educational pioneer, Bradford also has many nineteenth-century schools, often with playgrounds full of temporary buildings.

"Self-segregation is driven by fear of others, the need for safety from harassment and violent crime and the belief that it is the only way to promote, retain and protect faith and cultural identity and affiliation."

The Ouseley Report ('Community Pride not prejudice - Making Diversity Work in Bradford') p16

Bradford also has a black ethnic minority with a greater weight in the city's population. The Pakistani Asian community is a growing part of the city. Although some have prospered economically, as entrepreneurs, it also includes many of the poorest workers in the city, some of them dependent on

taxi driving, home working and other precarious employments, living in ageing privately owned housing stock.

Meanwhile the poorest of the white working class are often concentrated on outlying housing estates like Ravenscliffe, also lacking decent opportunities to work. Much of the housing is still council-owned, and more modern, but nevertheless decrepit and in need of refurbishment.

One of the problems between white and black is physical segregation. As Asians have moved from the areas in which they originally concentrated, their new white neighbours have also moved. This well-recognised phenomenon is known as white flight.

This is less the behaviour

of poor working-class whites, who whether they like it or not cannot afford to move, than of middle-class whites. This means, for example, but many of the teachers in inner-city schools largely made up of ethnic minority children themselves live in white neighbourhoods many miles away.

Many of those who live in Bradford's suburbs and satellite towns do not work in the Bradford district at all. They commute to Leeds, or even to Manchester. Accordingly they have little connection with the city.

The continuing problems were recognised by the local authority before the recent riot. They led to the establishment of a "Bradford Race Review" chaired by Herman Ouseley. The panel's report was coincidentally delivered in the week after the riot.

The report's focus is on ignorance and "self-segregation". It proposes measures to audit and ensure equal

treatment in institutions and work places. It also calls for citizenship education to overcome ignorance.

Belaguered

However if the roots of antagonism live in poverty and powerlessness, such measures will not address them. The way forward for the left in Bradford and for beleaguered working-class communities is better expressed in the perspective that the Socialist Alliance was advancing at Saturday's rally:

"We believe that neo-Nazis represent a special and immediate threat to the democratic rights, and even the lives, of those who disagree with them, particularly

members of black ethnic minorities. We believe we need to respond by building unity across the ethnic divisions in the city.

"This means getting together to fight privatisation of council services and the threat to 14,000 jobs - we demand a decent level of services and facilities in all areas.

"It includes defending and improving council housing, protecting public education and demanding from government measures and resources to fight growing poverty and inequality.

"And it also means standing up for the right of communities to defend themselves against attack by racists."

Anti-fascists under attack after police screw up

By Dave Miles

SOON AFTER the general election, the National Front announced their intention to march in Bradford on 7th July. Following calls from the Anti-Nazi League and Bradford Trades Council, hundreds of demonstrators turned out to make plain that the fascists were not welcome.

The NF had picked Bradford probably because their rivals the British National Party had scored one of their better election results in the Bradford North constituency.

Following calls from Bradford Council and the police, the NF March and any counter marches were banned. After warnings from the police that they "couldn't guarantee the safety of members of the public" the finale of the Bradford Festival, due to take place in Centenary Square in the centre of the city, was also cancelled.

However, given the danger that the Nazis might still turn up, the counter-mobilisations went ahead. Up to 1000 anti-fascists gathered in Centenary Square.

Speakers at the rally included Terry Rooney, MP for Bradford North. He voiced the need to send a clear message to the

"useless parasites" of the far-right. Other speakers included Marsha Singh MP, Ian Greenwood (former Bradford council leader and leader of the Labour group) and anti-racist campaigners, including ANL activist and former Socialist Alliance candidate Ateeq Siddique.

Demonstrators remained peacefully in the Square for several hours. Several individual right wingers came out to bait the crowd before being bundled away by the police.

Police plan

Ahead of the event, the police boasted of having a 'well-developed plan with contingencies for everything'. On the ground their activities appeared to be sometimes heavy-handed, inconsistent and indecisive.

In particular they turned some fascists away at the train station but a group was allowed to congregate in a pub near to the rally. Although reportedly there were police near at hand, this group were able to attack young Asian men passing in the street.

When word reached the square that a couple of people had been seriously beaten, hundreds of the demonstrators

rushed to deal with the situation. The police commanders, caught on the hop, deployed mounted police and riot squads and drove some people into the road despite passing traffic.

There followed a couple of hours during which police and crowds of youths manoeuvred around each other with occasional outbreaks of more sustained violence. Meanwhile some bemused shoppers and workers found themselves trapped in the city centre because the police wouldn't let them out.

Later on the police decided to drive people out of the city centre towards Manningham. The more bitter and sustained conflict seen on the front pages of newspapers and the television news followed.

It was plain that the Asian and white youths on the demonstration in the city centre knew why they were there. It was to block and if necessary confront the fascists.

Conflict with the police followed because the police had allowed fascist attacks to take place while keeping the anti-fascists in their place.

What the demonstration lacked was figures and organisations who held the authority to exercise control over how

the youth expressed their anti-fascist impulses. Clearly MPs, labour movement dignitaries and community leaders did not exercise much sway, and neither did the ANL or the TUC.

The Asian youth did not bring their own banners, newspapers and leaflets. They did not appear to be politically debating amongst themselves or with the white left.

Self-organised

In the 1970s and 80s in Bradford and other northern cities, self-organisation of Asian youth was built out of the necessity of organising to deal with the fascist threat. The consequences of this riot may mean that this lesson is has to be learned again.

This lack of organisation may well have allowed some of the most alarming events of the day, as large numbers of other youth joined the riot as it was driven into Manningham. In particular Manningham Ward Labour Club (in reality an apolitical working-men's club) was firebombed, and the exits blocked with burning cars to trap those inside.

These excesses have also fed a backlash against anti-fascism. Marsha Singh, for example called for a ban on ANL rallies

- presumably to prevent him from turning up himself.

They also provide an excuse for those who never really accepted that white racism is a serious problem to say that the problem is the conduct of Muslims or Asians.

The situation may also provide opportunities for the fascists. However attacks on Asian owned businesses in

other parts of the city show that frustration and anger is ready to boil over in the white working class, undermining the attempt to blame oppressed ethnic minorities.

For the left the challenge is to inject new politics into the intense period of discussion and argument in Bradford. A beginning has been made at a meeting called by the Bradford TUC.

The effects of privatisation, growing inequality and neo-liberalism on the working class in Bradford were denounced by speakers including Labour MP Terry Rooney.



News round-up by Gordon Morgan

Save Govanhill Pool!

For four months the Victorian Swimming Pool in Govanhill has been occupied by the local community to prevent the council closing it. A 24 by 7 occupation supported by a continuous external picket with braziers and chairs and food and fuel donated by local residents and shops, has prevented Glasgow Council from effecting closure.

Govanhill is in an area with the worst health record in Britain. The local pool provides swimming clubs for youth, private swimming for women including many Muslim women, the only public bathing for the homeless, steam rooms etc. The Council without consultation decided to close the pool without providing viable alternatives.

Govanhill considers itself a

working class community under attack from the council. A proposed motorway will isolate the area, the local hospital is under threat as is the local college.

The community decided to fight back and has organised occupations of other leisure centres, disruption with egg attacks of council meetings, marches, 20,000 signature petitions of Scottish Parliament. As well as the occupation and public activity, a strategy group has prepared alternative plans for the Council including drop in health centre as well as bathing. These have been used to challenge the Councils local plans and pose alternatives, legal challenges and approaches to Europe over misuse of grants. Above all the



Socialists and campaigners plunge into the struggle, but Glasgow council seems to be seriously out of its depth

community is united in fighting the closure.

Meetings have been held with other campaigns fighting service cut backs and a broad coordinating group to defend the South Side of Glasgow has been set up uniting the Victoria Hospital, Langside College, M74 Motorway, Housing Stock Transfer and Govanhill Pool campaign.

To mark 101 days of occupation a march and rally was held supported by local MPs and

some MSPs. The campaign has already succeeded in splitting Labour MSPs and MPs from the local Labour administration and local councillors are feeling the pressure of public anger. This is the highest point of public resistance to the anti working people strategy of Glasgow Council. Save our Pool.

The campaign has its own web site at <http://crowd.to/saveourpool>

Socialists fight for free school meals

When I went to school and college there were no tuition fees, all students got grants and all pupils got free meals at schools and indeed free milk at school breaks. Under Thatcher milk was removed, charging for meals introduced and grants cut then removed. Under Blair fees were introduced.

The Scottish Parliament has "deferred" fees and discussed reintroducing grants for students. Till now free meals were off the agenda,

yet arguably their abolition has done most harm to our youth.

Although meals are free to children of families on benefit, there is a stigma attached to this. Up to 1/3 of entitled children do not take up their entitlement. The results are poor nutrition and malnourishment. Glasgow Sick Kids Hospital sees 20% with signs of malnutrition.

Most schools now have privatised caterers punting fizzy

drinks, chips and burgers, the duty of care principle may apply to schools but not their contracts.

In an attempt to reverse this trend, Tommy Sheridan and the SSP have introduced a bill in the Scottish Parliament to abolish the means test in schools and provide a daily free nutritious meal to every child in Scotland who attends a state school.

This bill has the backing of 11 other MSPs including the

Green MSP Robin Harper, Independent Dennis Canavan, Labour's John McAllion and several SNP MSPs - no Tories.

Whilst the executive seem certain to oppose the Bill, through parliament we will be able to demonstrate the social and financial costs of poor health and poor nutrition and show that this measure is a vital step in reversing Scotland's record of the worst health statistics in Europe.

Stop housing stock transfer!

The Scottish Parliament has passed a new Housing Bill after a year and a half of evidence taking and deliberation.

Although there are some positive aspects of the bill, overall it is an attack on Council Housing and contrary to its stated intentions is likely to increase homelessness.

The Bill will replace existing tenancy types in social housing with a single secured tenure. For Council tenants this is a weaker form of security which may lead to more evictions.

The Bill retains the right to buy for Council Tenants and extends these rights to Housing Associations. This is likely to lead to shortages of lettable housing in better areas, higher rents and ghettoising of the poor.

Finally the Bill retains the right to transfer property from Councils to Housing Associations, now requiring a ballot of tenants. It is this last provision which is being used by the executive to attempt to

force the removal of housing from Council control.

Tommy Sheridan on behalf of the SSP moved 44 detailed amendments to the Bill.

Although many received the support of SNP and some LP MSPs, most were defeated. In the end only Tommy voted against the Bill as a whole.

In Glasgow the passage of the Bill has been taken as a green light to proceed to transfer the councils 90,000 houses from the council to a Housing Association which to all intents and purposes will be controlled by private lenders.

At the start of the process of considering the transfer, Glasgow's council leaders gave assurances of 6 months consultation once the business plan was published.

It now appears at most the bare minimum period of consultation will be given and it is unclear the business figures will be made available. All the Council's independent consultants' reservations appear to be



about to be swept aside by ministerial dictat.

The new Housing minister Jackie Baillie wants a positive ballot by November. The Council seems to have scheduled the decision to proceed to ballot in August.

Throughout the past year, tenants and unions have been campaigning against the proposals.

Houses require investment, but the money the executive appears to be about to commit to the private sector could achieve the same result cheaper, quicker and without an outstanding debt of £1,600 million after 10 years - pro-

vided the same money was invested through the Council. The only way the proposed scheme is viable is through a massive rent hike and Glasgow already has the highest council rents in Scotland.

At present we believe a majority of tenants oppose the transfer but they are being told their houses will not be improved unless the scheme goes ahead. To counter this Glasgow UNISON has been producing information packs and tenants opposed to the transfer have been holding meetings. With the Council about to step up their campaign, an increase in activity against the transfer is now planned.

The STUC is formally opposed to transfer and is seeking to build a broad movement of opposition. Unison has a £50,000 fund to fight the proposals, but it is important that other affected unions contribute similar amounts.

If Glasgow tenants vote against this will force the Scottish executive to completely change their plans for Housing in Scotland and for PFI generally.

Joint demo to legalise cannabis

On July 28 the Scottish Legalise Cannabis Demonstration will be held in Glasgow. This demo, which last year attracted over 2,000 to an event and smoke in at George Square (no arrests) is being backed and built by the Scottish Socialist Party for the third year running.

Legalisation of dope was one of the 7 main slogans used by the SSP during the election campaign, and certainly the one which attracted most attention, particularly from the young.

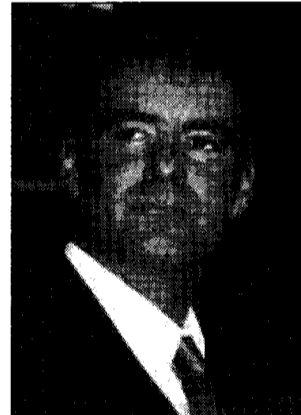
The slogan was usually presented by megaphone as "Don't criminalise 2 million of our youth - legalise cannabis!" (though the 2m figure may be an underestimate).

The position in favour of legalisation and for the prescription of heroin by doctors was arrived at after long discussion in the SSP and SSA. Heroin kills over 100 a year in Glasgow alone. The prisons are full of addicts, and sharing needles is rife, helping to spread the AIDS virus.

Police rarely catch major dealers, and randomly round up youth to keep convictions up. Kevin Williamson, an early member of the SSP, formed Scotland Against Drug Hypocrisy in response to the main parties' campaign "Scotland Against Drugs" (SAD).

This campaign showed (in similar terms to the *Guardian* more recently) that drug policy wasn't working, and like prohibition was channelling profits to major criminals.

At a debate at the SSP summer school 2 years ago the chief inspector in charge of drug policy for Strathclyde seemed to agree with our analysis.



Tommy Sheridan

Since that time drugs and particular cannabis legalisation has been a prominent feature of SSP campaigning.

This has led to Tommy Sheridan being denounced as Working class Zero by the *Daily Record* - leading a circulation drive around its "Shop a Dealer" campaign - and ritual denunciation by members of the Scottish Executive who do know better.

Recently the tide has turned. The Scottish Executive has effectively demoted the "Just Say No" campaign to redirect funds towards harm reduction.

Most of the police and agencies involved now say the "War on Drugs" is lost, and a new approach must be found.

We are left with the only thing standing against a policy change is Labour politicians' hypocrisy and pride.

The SSP policy and campaigns have shown an alternative on drugs which will end the criminalisation of our young, allow effective treatment of addicts, and the significant waste of police, courts and health expenditure and also is electorally popular.

Back the Legalise Cannabis demo!

Socialists challenge hypocrisy on drug policy

Harry Sloan

NOW that the votes are safely counted, it seems that all kinds of politicians – for whom the very mention of the issue was anathema until June 8 – are keen to see a debate over the decriminalisation of cannabis.

Tory leadership hopefuls reveal their inner liberal leanings, Labour MPs allow themselves a rare mention of the real world, and even right wing Home Secretary David "Water Cannon" Blunkett calls for a relaxation of police efforts to enforce one of the most widely-flouted laws since the days of prohibition.

There is no doubt that a change of policy is urgently required: but in the run-up to the election, the Socialist Alliance in England and the Scottish Socialist Party were the most up-front advocates of legalising cannabis and decriminalising other drugs.

In Oxford East, Socialist Alliance candidate John Lister went up-front to break the taboo which had kept an issue of concern to millions of young voters shrouded in silence.

His press release, a week before the election threw down a challenge to the major parties to debate and defend their line of criminalising the use of cannabis and other widely-used recreational drugs.

"There was an instant response from the local paper, which published almost my whole press release, with supplementary comments, under the headline "I smoked pot – and enjoyed it," said John. "But none of the other candidates had the bottle to reply, or take up the issue."

Zero tolerance
While leading Tories – notably Ann Widdecombe – have in the last year flirted with the idea of a "zero tolerance" policy even for personal use of cannabis, New Labour has clung to unworkable legislation that is widely flouted every day. Surveys show that millions of young people and adults of all ages routinely make use of cannabis and other drugs, for which – because of the present repressive legislation – there is no legal source of supply.

"The point I made in the press release was very simple," says John Lister.

"As in many other towns and cities across Britain, thousands of students and other Oxford residents are liable to be branded as criminals for taking drugs which have been shown to be less harmful than tobacco and alcohol.

"So what is the point in both Labour and Tory politicians banging on about policies to reduce crime, when this one policy not only makes harmless people into criminals, but forces them to deal with real gangsters to obtain the drugs they want?"

"Everybody loses from this system – except the drug gangs. The huge profits being coined in by drug cartels hinge

on the fact that these supplies are illegal. This also inflates the prices charged for the drugs on the street, and forces some abusers of hard drugs into petty crime and prostitution to finance their habit.

"The fact that even cannabis is illegal makes it even more difficult to ensure that young people who may experiment with drugs get proper advice and warnings on the potential risks they are running. The rampant growth of drug use shows how ineffective prohibition has been.

"The argument for criminalising drugs has lost all serious credibility, but it is still upheld by politicians who are hopelessly out of touch with events in the real world. The danger is that without any discussion of this issue in the Election campaign, a vote for Labour or the Tories will be interpreted as a vote for another five years of hypocrisy – and another bonanza for the drug barons.

"The Socialist Alliance is for the decriminalisation of cannabis and all drugs. This is the best way to squeeze out the gangs, control prices, regulate quality – and even raise revenue to fund accessible health facilities for people with problems of chronic drug or alcohol abuse, by taxing sales of recreational drugs."

A similar policy has long been part of the platform of the Scottish Socialist Party, which campaigns for:

- Licensing the sale and production of cannabis for medical and personal use, to break the link between soft drugs and potentially lethal drugs such as heroin.

- Earmarking major resources to help addicts break their heroin addiction, including an expansion of detox, rehabilitation and counselling services staffed by trained drugs workers.

- Breaking the stranglehold of the criminal drug gangs by providing clean pharmaceutical heroin on prescription to those addicts who are not yet ready to come off the drug.

- A radical social programme to tackle the roots of hard drug abuse, including a huge expansion of cultural and sporting facilities at community level.

In Portugal, the Left Block, equivalent to the Socialist Alliance, with two MPs, has just succeeded in changing the law to decriminalise the use of cannabis.

It is clear that the terms of the argument are beginning to move, but it is also clear that the pressure for progressive reform has to come from the left.

If the momentum is lost, we can safely predict that the small window of enlightened debate on the issue among the establishment politicians will be open for only a short period, before it slams shut again in preparation for the next election.



Andrew Ward

New Labour puts boot into people with disabilities

Terry Conway

There can be no doubt that Blair's decision to make attacks on people with disabilities one of the first acts of his second term was not accidental.

Both inside and outside parliament, attacks on incapacity benefit resulted in outrage last time round. He wants to get the protests out of the way quickly.

But what is actually at stake here?

The regime currently faced

by people on incapacity benefit is already more draconian than people realise. The inequity in the current system is rife.

The all-work test, the result of Blair's first round of "reforms" means that people are treated in a demeaning and unfair way because the test itself ignores the reality that many illnesses and disabilities are not static.

People can be unable to move or do anything for themselves some of the time, and on

other occasions be much more mobile or independent. But "performance" is tested on one particular occasion.

People are examined not by their own doctors but by people specifically employed by the Department of Health and Social Security to carry out these tests.

Not only therefore is there a problem about them not knowing the people they are examining, but more importantly the concern of their

employers is not the wellbeing of the individuals involved, but the pressure to reduce spending by throwing them off benefits.

For many people this regime can result in short or even longer periods of no income. They are in Catch 22 situation. If you fail the all-work test and then appeal against this decision you are unlikely to get Job Seekers Allowance, because you are not looking for work.

What is proposed now seems essentially to be to apply these existing traps to greater numbers of people on a more regular basis.

These moves also need to be seen in the light of broader changes. The first term of New Labour saw a further tightening of the whole benefit system which has already increased the number of people living in complete social exclusion. There is an ideological assault here too.

The results of this will be human tragedies. Some people will be forced into insecure and badly paid jobs, but still others will end up outside society all together. Social exclusion will increase even further.

There are already signs that this fresh attack will be resisted as it was before. Socialists and the unions must lend their support to local and national campaigns to defend disabled people against this cynical onslaught.

The World Trade Organisation hits Brent

Privatisation – the unfriendly giant

Padraic Finn

If you know the Roald Dahl story, the Big Friendly Giant, you might remember that the BFG, before he sees the error of his ways, goes about after dark, reaching into bedrooms and snatching children to eat. Well, the World Trade Organisation came to Brent Town Hall on Monday July 9 and snatched away Willesden High School to give it to a giant multinational.

A Council Committee chaired by former member of the Socialist Education Association, Helga Gladbaum, decided to close the school and hand it over to be re-opened as a City Academy under the control of Sir Frank Lowe and his Octagon sports organisation owned by the huge Interpublic Corporation based in the USA.

When a Labour Councillor asked why all the wonderful things promised by Frank Lowe could not be provided without handing the school over to him, the Chair told him that could not be discussed. The decision to close Willesden High and to re-open as a City Academy had already been taken: the Committee was just a rubber stamp.

It also had to be unanimous. If they couldn't agree, the decision went to an Adjudicator appointed by the Secretary of State. But even before this happened, it was likely that the Minister would close the school anyway.

Faced with this "choice", the head and the Governors had no alternative but to go along with privatisation.

The school's fate had already been decided somewhere else: it was to be handed over to a private company whose main aim is profit. For all her procedures and consultations Councillor Gladbaum could not change a thing: Her responsibility was to give a veil of respectability to the machinations of global capitalism.

What a travesty of democracy. Is it any wonder people are cynical about politicians when this kind of farce is carried out in the name of democracy and social justice?

Everyone knows schools need more resources. It would be daft to turn down the offer of £2m from Frank Lowe if that is what he is offering. Why not make him a patron of the school?

But most of the money for rebuilding the school is coming from us, the taxpayers. If £8

million of our money is being put into the school why should we hand control of the school over to a multinational?

To ask the question is to answer it. The World Trade Organisation is seeking to open up government services to the private sector. It's a foolproof way of keeping profits high – have taxpayers subsidise private companies.

So, for example, Railtrack pays millions to its shareholders while pressing the Government for more cash to prop up the railways, which they've systematically asset-stripped since privatisation.

Privatisation in the NHS means fewer beds and worse conditions. It also means more charging for services and more hidden government debts, which will hang about the necks of our children and grandchildren for years into the future.

In Africa, forcing governments to privatise their health services, that is, to hand them



over to private companies who charge for health care, is called "revenue capture".

Exactly. The WTO is really the mouthpiece of big US corporations who want to get their hands on public funds to halt a slide in profits over the last 30 years.

Blair, Gladbaum and the privateers in New Labour are their willing accomplices.

In this story the giant never repents. It will go on stealing our health, education, transport and other services, not to mention our taxes, if we let it.

Local campaigners don't intend to give up on the battle to save Willesden High school, but the issues we are confronting are replicated time and again in battles against privatisation up and down the country – and indeed across the globe.

Sniping from the Left

By Charlie van Gelderen



A matter of safety

In his manoeuvres to privatise the London tube, John Prescott always stresses that safety is the priority! Who will he appoint to ensure this? Perhaps we can look at the newly-appointed Chairman of Railtrack, John Robinson!

Mr. Robinson and the rest of the newly-appointed Board members not only have no previous experience of railways, the Chairman, at least, has an unenviable record when it comes to safety.

He is chairman of the pharmaceutical manufacturers, Smith and Nephew. In July 1999, this firm was fined £10,625 by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in three sample cases where they had failed to fill in accident reports properly. A total of 27 incidents in a year had not been reported.

Mr Robinson is also chairman of RJB Mining – he seems to be a collector of well-paid chairmanships.

In 1998, the HSE informed parliament that "towards the end of 1997, some cases of under-reporting of accidents at RTJB Mining have come to light."

In 1999, the HSE prosecuted RJB Mining because managers had made miners drive electric trains when the level of flammable 'firedamp' gas made using these trains dangerous and illegal, and fined the company £62,000.

What better qualifications can there be for putting this man in charge of passenger-carrying trains?

Them golden handshakes

In the capitalist world, you don't have to make a success of the business you manage to increase your take home pay.

Take Marks & Spencer, once the gold medallist of the stock exchange. Sales in its chain of high street shops in Britain and overseas have dropped to catastrophic levels. Shares have crashed.

One would think that those in charge of the business during this period of down-turn would suffer. Not a bit of it. Guy McCracken, M&S's director of overseas operations, in charge of the loss-making European end of the business, closed down with the loss of more than 3000 jobs, is rewarded with a

bonus payment of £707,000.

This is on top of the £265,000 pay and other benefits he earned before he left the firm last September.

Other directors of the failing company picked up golden handshakes of £2.75million.

Marks & Spencer is not the only corporation where failure is rewarded. The share price of the privatised BT has dropped from £15 to £5.62. It has lost £1 billion on its corporate debt of £30billion in the past year.

As a reward for presiding over this, Sir Peter Bonfield, Chief Executive of Bt, is to receive a bonus of £481,000 – this is in addition to his salary of £820,000 and share options worth twice that.

development company Keepmoat to repair and renovate the Gipsyville Estate in the west of the city.

Far from producing the £8.3 million for the council from land sales as predicted, by 1997, the refurbishment scheme had to be given a cash injection of £1.6million.

This later had to be increased to £2.2 million. According to the last recorded submission to Company House, in 1999-2000, the joint venture company made a loss of £496,000. There is an excess of liabilities over assets of more than £855,000

Keepmoat's liability is limited. It has only £81 shares in the limited company. Theoretically, the council's liabilities are also limited. It has only £19 shares.

But someone has to pay the bills. In these joint public-private enterprises, a host of well-paid lawyers and accountants will always ensure that if there is a financial failure, it is not the shareholders who will be the losers.

Pay up for Blairite hand-raisers

The New Labour leadership is not going to be left behind while their friends in big business rake in the shekels. They too must be rewarded for their failures to reach their targets for the NHS, education, repealing all Thatcher's anti-union laws, linking pensions to earnings, 'ethical foreign policy, etc., etc.

One of the first acts of the post-2001 election cabinet was to up their salaries ... and how!

Tony Blair takes pay rise of £47,000, and most cabinet ministers will receive an increase from £99,793 (how can anyone be expected to live on such a pittance?) to £117,979.

That hardy son of toil, John Prescott will now be able to afford a third Jaguar.

How can any of these people have any idea how real people live – workers earning the minimum wage, pensioners getting £75 a week?

No wonder ministers can't remember how many houses they own, and no wonder they don't want to tax the rich!

Drug giant reneges on promise

Despite the epic victory against the drug corporations in the South African law courts last year, the victims of HIV / Aids are still

not getting the treatment they require.

The pharmaceutical giant Abbot, which announced in March that it had dropped the price of its AIDS drugs in Africa to zero, has still not made good on its promise.

This means that South African patients who started taking the medicine in the belief that it would drop in price, still do not know what relief they will get.

The Mbeki government has been reluctant to act in the wake of the court decision, and COSATU has threatened to use the strength of the trade unions to put pressure on the government.

Action against privatisation

While the trade union movement in the so-called developed world is quiescent, hoping they can wrest something from the social-democratic governments, in the 'under-developed' countries, from Bangladesh, Africa to Latin America, a renewed militancy is pumping vital blood into the veins of international labour.

Electricity workers in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh are succeeding in their campaign to halt privatisation of electricity services.

In Brazil, President Cardoso's plan to centralise state control over water supplies as a prelude to World Bank/IMF privatisation, has met with strong opposition.

A national coalition of unions, consumers, greens and local water organisations have succeeded in mobilising opposition to the plan.

The South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU), hosted a Southern African Solidarity Workshop against privatisation in Harare, Zimbabwe, in June, attended by trade unions from Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, Mozambique and South Africa.

SAMWU hosted the conference because nearly all research into privatisation in Africa is sponsored by the World Bank.

The privatisation of water and electricity in African countries increased in the last two years, and there have already been major privatisation failures during this period.

All Southern African municipal workers need a common programme to fight the privatisation of municipal services.

SAMWU has already formed an anti-water privatisation partnership with civil servants in Ghana.

The workshop also discussed a possible date for a Southern African day of action against privatisation.

In Zimbabwe, the powerful Congress of Trade Unions has called for a two-day national strike, which started on July 3 in protest against a 70% hike in fuel prices, and general mismanagement of the economy.

Solidarity with Palestinians

Boycott Israeli goods!

Roland Rance

THE GROWING revulsion at Israeli repression of Palestinian rights has led to the launch of a new boycott campaign against Israeli goods and leisure tourism, in response to demands from Palestinian activists.

At the launch meeting in the House of Commons, Labour MP Lynn Jones described a boycott as "a non-violent way to raise public awareness".

Israeli academic Dr Moshe Machover said: "People ask whether the Palestinian economy will be damaged by a boycott. Such worries do not apply in this case. The Palestinian economy has been throttled by Israel."

Other initial supporters of the call include MPs John Austin, Bill Etherington and Neil Gerrard; activists Tony Benn, Christine Blower, Ken Coates, Liz Davies, and Christine Shawcroft; writers and performers including Caryl Churchill, Harold Pinter, Michael Rosen, Leon Rosselson, Alexei Sayle, Emma Thompson and Benjamin Zephania; and dozens of others.

Socialist Outlook did not support an earlier campaign, which called for a boycott of Marks and Spencer. M&S does indeed sell Israeli-made goods, though no more than many other high street shops; there was a strong suspicion that it was targeted as Britain's best-known "Jewish-owned" company.

The new campaign, which targets the goods rather than the traders, overcomes this problem.

Israel's most famous export is citrus fruit, and it is planned to symbolise this with a "Blood Oranges" campaign. However, oranges are not the country's major export. In cash terms, Israel's most important exports are arms and diamonds.

Fruit & veg

Since these items are unlikely to be on the weekly shopping list of *Socialist Outlook* readers, it will not be difficult to avoid buying them. As well as oranges, agricultural exports include potatoes, avocados and fresh herbs.

Many organic vegetables come from the illegal Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and Jordan valley. These are labelled as "Israeli produce" and imported through EU preferential trade agreements with Israel. The European Commission has recently insisted that Israel cease such passing off, and

threatened that unless goods from the occupied territories are clearly identified and distinguished from Israeli produce, the entire trade agreement with Israel is at risk.

Health foods

Because of Jewish dietary laws, many meat substitutes produced in Israel and the occupied territories are also available in Britain. Indeed, wholefood and health food shops appear to stock a range of Israeli goods, and may be more open to persuasion than high street chains.

Israel also exports large quantities of flowers. Because these are not normally labelled with country of origin, it may be difficult to avoid buying them, but customers can always ask where flowers come from.

Other Israeli goods commonly available in Britain include plastic goods (tool boxes, for instance), clothes, electronic goods, and toys (especially children's musical instruments).

British business figures investing in Israel include former Tesco boss Shirley Porter, now a fugitive from British justice in her Tel-Aviv apartment, and former Ladbroke boss Cyril Stein, a major donor to the Gush Emunim settlers' movement. Former Haagen Dazs owner Ruben Mattus was a strong supporter of Israeli fascist leader Rabbi Meir Kahane.

Culture

At present, there is no call for a cultural and academic boycott of Israel, though some activists have suggested that Israeli academics attending conferences abroad be quizzed on their positions on Palestinian rights. There have also been objections to staging international conferences in Israel.

Soprano Emma Kirkby recently attracted headlines in Israel when she refused to perform there until the repression of Palestinians ceased, and novelist Nadime Gordimer refused to accept an Israeli literary award, likening Israel to the apartheid she had spent most of her life fighting.

The boycott campaign will continue, and will draw wide support. Further pressure can be expected on Israeli institutions and individuals to take a stand against the repression and in support of Palestinian rights.

Socialist Outlook urges readers to support this campaign, as part of our work in support of the Palestinian struggle for liberation.



Someone must be paying for all this!

The world's largest private prison operator, the Corrections Corporation of America, is in trouble. The Corporation imprisons 61,000 people in the US. Three years ago its share price was nearly \$45. Today they are worth less than \$1, a 98% drop.

In Alabama, the Talullah juvenile prison was recently re-taken by the state, following its failure as a privatised operation. But, while it is now once again run by the state, it is still owned by private operators.

No wonder the local newspaper describes it as "a rip-off, pure and simple".

That staunch defender of public-private partnership (PPP), John Prescott, MP for Hull East should look at what happened to the joint venture in 1995 between Hull City Council and a

Bring war criminal Sharon to justice!

Roland Rance

Within days of the screening of the Panorama documentary "The Accused", which demonstrated the direct responsibility of Israeli PM Ariel Sharon for the slaughter by Lebanese militia of several hundred Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps in September 1982, Tony Blair met Sharon in Downing Street, and expressed his "admiration" at Israel's "restraint" in suppressing the Palestinian Intifada.

The following day, a Belgian magistrate accepted the petition of 23 survivors of the massacre, and opened a criminal investigation into Sharon.

Unlike the contentious Hague indictment of Milosevic, this case is not an example of "victor's justice". It results from a petition of 23 survivors of the massacre, using a recent Belgian law which allows the prosecution in Belgium of any alleged war criminal, regardless of the location of the events and the nationality of the victims.

Sabra and Shatilla are two Palestinian refugee camps in the south of Beirut. In September 1982, in the course of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Israel's Phalange allies (named in honour of European fascists of the 1930s) carried out a savage massacre of several hundred Palestinian residents of the camps.

Several months later, an Israeli commission of enquiry found that then defence minister Sharon was "personally responsible" for the massacre, and he was forced to resign his post (though he remained a government minister). To this day, no-one has been prosecuted for the atrocity.

After the massacre, Sharon said of the Phalange: "Not for a moment did we imagine that they would do what they did. They had received harsh and clear warnings. Had we for one moment imagined that something like this would happen we would never have let them into the camp."

Most observers find this hard to believe. According to Ben Aloffs, a Dutch doctor working in Sabra at the time: "Everybody in Beirut knew what would happen if the Phalangists were allowed into the camps. In spite of this, Sharon gave the green light" (Guardian, 13 July 2001).

I visited Sabra and Shatilla just two weeks before the massacre, where I witnessed the residents' fear following the election of Phalange leader Bashir Gemayel as president of Lebanon. When, back

in London, I heard of Gemayel's assassination (apparently on Syrian orders), and of Sharon's decision to invade West Beirut and to send the Phalange into the camps, I knew and warned of the likely result. It is inconceivable that Sharon didn't know what would occur, and it must be assumed that he intended this outcome.

Although the subject of the Belgian investigation is Sharon's most notorious crime, his rôle in enabling or ordering the Beirut massacre, further claims are expected to be submitted to the magistrate.

Many of these relate to the invasion of Lebanon, conducted by Sharon, often behind the backs of prime minister Begin and other ministers. In the course of this war, several thousand civilians were killed, frequently by the use of weapons banned under international law.

These included cluster bombs, which scattered dozens of smaller bombs and mines, causing severe injury or death to anyone who went near them, and incendiary phosphorous bombs, designed as flares but used with devastating effect against civilians.

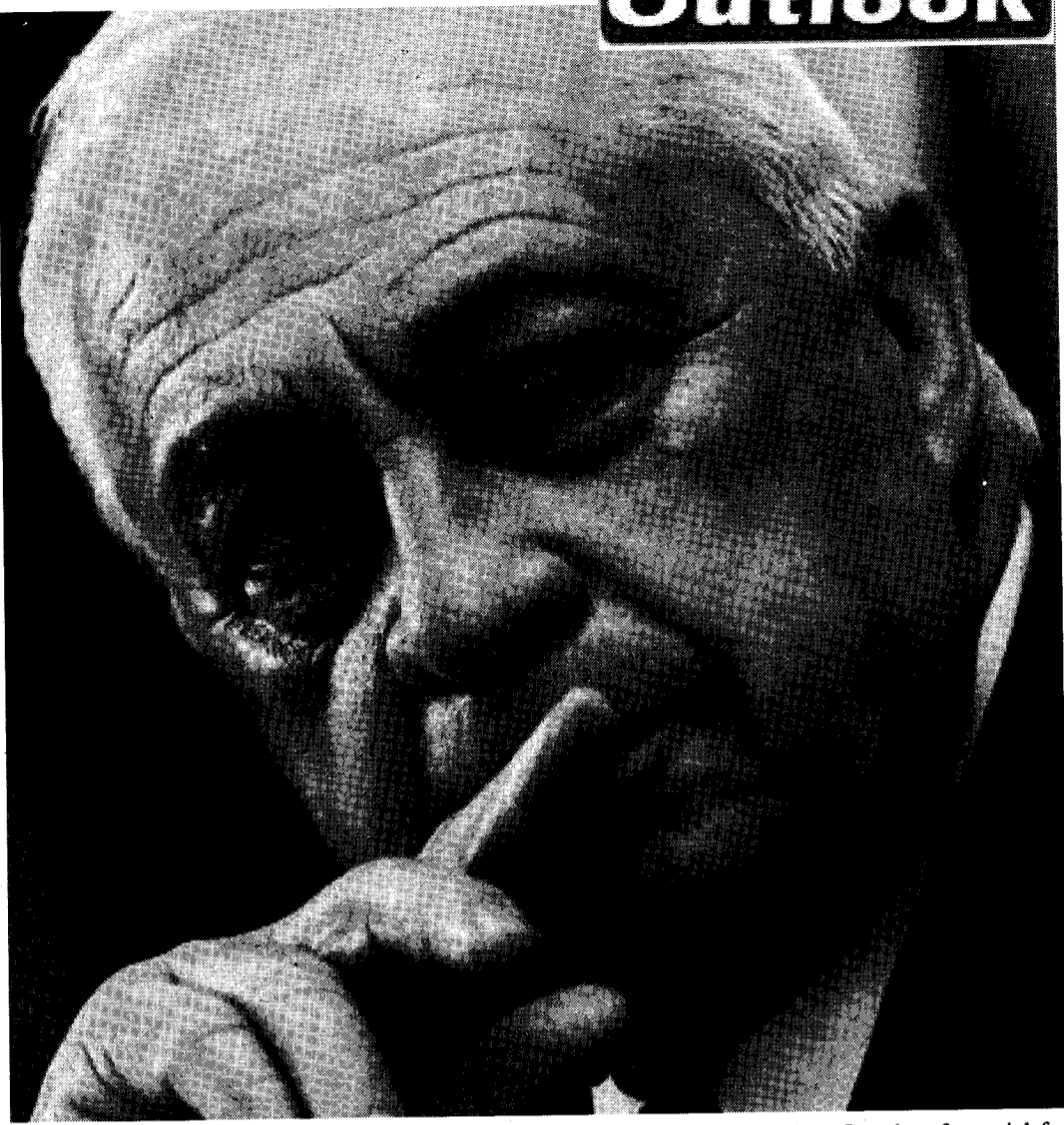
In his account of that war, *Pity the Nation*, Robert Fisk notes the experience of Dr Amal Shamaa at the Barbir Hospital: "I had to take the babies and put them in buckets of water to put out the flames", she said. "When I took them out half an hour later, they were still burning. Even in the mortuary, they smouldered for hours". Next morning, Amal Shamaa took the tiny corpses out of the mortuary for burial. To her horror, they again burst into flames". I was told of similar experiences at other hospitals.

The war was also characterised by the systematic shelling, at close range, of hospitals. During my stay in Beirut, I did not visit one hospital which had not been damaged. Frequently, shells had directly pierced the prominent red cross on the building.

All the evidence indicates that this was deliberate, not accidental, damage. As Fisk notes: "To call the gunfire indiscriminate was an understatement. It would also have been a lie. The Israeli bombardment of 4 August was, we realised later, discriminate. It targeted every civilian area, every institution, in west Beirut - hospitals, apartments, shops, newspaper offices, the prime minister's office and the parks.

"Incredibly, the Israeli shells also blew part of the roof off the city's synagogue in Wadi Abu Jamil where the remnants of Beirut's tiny Jewish community still lived". (When I visited, I found that an

Israeli shell had demolished the star of David on the synagogue's roof.



In describing Israel's, and Sharon's, behaviour as a war crime, what must be remembered is that not only the conduct, but the very purpose of the war, was directed at civilians.

It was quite explicitly a war of terrorism, designed to break the civilian infrastructure of the PLO, to turn the population of Lebanon against the Palestinian presence, and to intimidate the Palestinians in the occupied territories, who had initiated a mini uprising in the spring of 1982.

Sharon had planned the war from the moment he took office after the 1981 election, and for six months before the war began the Israeli press had been full of speculation and analysis about its goals and prospects.

Sharon's appointment as defence minister, like his whole career, had been controversial. Begin had expressed his fear that Sharon would "ring the prime minister's office with tanks" if not appointed. From the early years of the state, Sharon had a reputation as a thug and a hothead, ready to carry out the most brutal acts in suppressing the Palestinian struggle for liberation.

As head of the notorious Unit 101 of the Israeli army, Sharon conducted murderous cross-border raids during the 1950s. In August 1953, he led a raid on Gaza's al-Bureij refugee camp, in which about 50 Palestinian refugees were murdered while they slept.

In October of that year, he led an attack on the village of Qibya, where some 70 Palestinians were murdered when their home were dynamited; according to a UN report, "Bullet-ridden bodies near the doorways and multiple bullet hits on the doors of the demolished houses indicated that the inhabitants had been forced to remain inside until their homes were blown up over them".

Sharon's career continued in the same vein, through establishing the Israeli paratroops, 'pacifying' the Gaza Strip in the early years of the occupation, and sponsoring the settlers' movement. Although he has come to symbolise the aggressive

policies of the Israeli state, we must recognise that he is in fact in the mainstream of Israeli politics, not an isolated extremist.

Brought up in the traditions of the Zionist agricultural movement, he was originally a Labour supporter and first entered the Knesset as sole representative of a small 'peace' party. He was a close friend, and security adviser, to former prime minister Yitzhak Rabin.

It was his initiative which established the Likud as a fusion of various right wing and centre parties and Labour dissidents. Over the 53 years of Israel's existence, Sharon has emerged as the true representative of the Zionist state.

Nor, of course, is Sharon the only war criminal in a position of power in Israel. Foreign minister and former PM Shimon Peres was responsible, in April 1997, for the slaughter of over 100 Palestinian refugees sheltering at the UN base in Qana in southern Lebanon.

As director general of the defence ministry during the 1950s, he was responsible for the establishment of Israel's armaments industry and nuclear programme. In 1967, he was one of the team which ordered the attack on the US spyship Liberty, killing 34 American seamen.

And in 1986, he ordered the kidnapping of Mordechai Vanunu from Europe and his secret trans-

port back to Israel to face trial for treason, after Vanunu revealed to the *Sunday Times* the extent of Israel's nuclear arsenal.

In a related development, Danish MP Søren Sondergaard has called for the arrest of Israel's new ambassador to Denmark, Carmi Gillon. Gillon is a former head of the Shin Bet (Israeli Security Service).

In his memoirs he admits ordering the torture of at least 320 Palestinian detainees, and in a recent interview with the Danish media he has justified this, portraying his actions, and torture in Israel generally, as a defence of an open and democratic society against a "sea of piranhas".

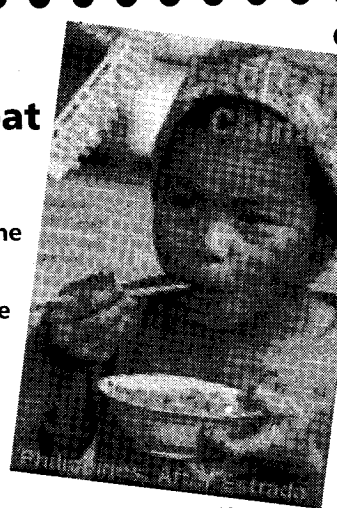
Such torture is a breach of the Geneva Convention, and Gillon is thus, by his own admission, a war criminal. The Israeli daily Ha'Aretz reports that, as a result of the controversy, it is now unlikely Gillon will take up his post.

These actions in Europe cannot, by themselves, bring about the liberation of Palestine and the Palestinians. However, by making life more difficult for Israeli thugs and murderers, and by focussing publicity on their crimes, they further weaken the legitimacy of the Zionist state.

Activists in Britain should support similar moves here, while opposing the pretensions of institutions like the Hague tribunal.

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Marxists and the new anti-capitalist movement

Salvatore Cannavo

A new phase

From Seattle onwards, the whole planet has been shaken by a mobilisation of a breadth seldom witnessed before. Not since the time of the fight against the war in Vietnam have there been so many meetings in such a short period of time, capable of influencing the international political framework.

Even if for the moment the movement involves only a consistent nucleus of vanguard forces, it is nevertheless likely to extend on a broader scale. Although it is a new phenomenon, the movement born at Seattle is the heir to the situation created on a world scale following the struggles and movements against neoliberalism which arose during the 1990s.

The most universal of these is perhaps the Zapatista uprising of January 1, 1994 which, starting from identity-based and specific demands – the rights of the indigenous peoples – began to speak a “global” language, putting world neoliberalism in the dock.

It is not by chance that the revolt of the EZLN coincided with the coming into force of

NAFTA, the free-trade zone uniting the United States, Mexico and Canada, which marks a significant stage in the economic integration between these countries. Zapatista leader Marcos speaks a language heard and understood everywhere in the world, proof of the affirmation of the new climate and the new political sensitivity.

A little later, in Europe, the impact of the great French movement of 1995, which pushed back the Juppé plan and opened the way to the victory of Jospin, was felt in Amsterdam in June 1997 with the first European March for a Social Europe, organised by the network of European Marches.

The following year in Birmingham, Jubilee 2000 – a campaign for the cancellation of the Third World debt, born in Great Britain between 1996 and 1997 and involving trade unions, NGOs, movements of women and refugees – succeeded in bringing more than 70,000 people to the annual G-7 meeting.

Between 1998 and 1999, ATTAC was created in France, and quickly became an instrument of participation and organisation of the world movement (with the birth of “sections” in dozens of countries, in particular Italy) while José Bové has set up Via

Campesina (created in 1993, but now able to organise nearly 60 million peasants on the world scale) which will play a decisive role in several struggles in the Southern hemisphere.

After Seattle

These diverse elements found in Seattle a symbolic element of fundamental identification. From this moment, there was a common cement (slogans and forms of mobilisation), a common definition of the movement (a pluralist movement composed of youth, trade unionists, ecologists, women, and activists), and a form of organisation of the movement (the internet, also on the international level) which were shared by all and considered effective.

Thus, it is not by chance that the movement has “migrated” throughout the world. The stages are symbolic: after Seattle (November



Gothenburg protestors “gagged” by police violence

1999) and Washington (April 2000), there was Millau (June 30, 2000, solidarity with José Bové), Melbourne (September 11, against the World Economic Forum), Prague (September 26, once more against the IMF), Seoul (October 10, against the Asia-Europe summit), Nice (December 6-7, against the European Union summit), Quebec (April 2001, against the launching of the FTAA), Gothenburg (June 2001, against the EU summit). This list includes only the “institutional” events, against the summits of institutions and bodies, and against existing or future international agreements.

Over the same period, dozens of other events, demonstrations, and struggles have taken place in all the corners of the world. Quoting from memory: the World Women’s March Against Violence and Poverty, the strikes and marches in Latin America, the various demonstrations on May Day (particularly combative in Great Britain with the role of movements like Reclaim the Streets and Globalise Resistance), the Zapatista march earlier this year, struggles against layoffs in France, the demonstrations in Japan against US bases, and others again.

The mobilisation in Genoa in July 2001 during the G-8 summit represents only the next stage of a more general and broader movement.

Of course, it is too early to say that we are on the eve of a new 1968 – and in any case analogies are never perfect. But the extent of the mobilisations, the heavy presence of young people, the ceaseless expansion of the

critique of neoliberalism, whether on the planetary level or with more depth in various sectors of society, indicate a possible cycle of more sustained struggles.

Above all, there is a possibility that the negative period opened by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, marked by the definitive collapse of Stalinism as an organised state form, with the defeat and disillusion of the left which followed, but also with the total victory of capitalism in its most aggressive form – is starting to unravel.

Admittedly, the defensive aspect of the current struggles, the aggressive nature of the neoliberal policies and the weakness of the anti-capitalist left do not allow us to consider the period of defeat as finished. But the situation is no longer what it was only ten years ago, when ideologists like Francis Fukuyama defined capitalism as ‘the best of all possible worlds’.

The financial crises of 1997 and 1998, the current stagnation in the United States and Japan, the contradictions facing Europe, and even the contradictory nature of Berlusconi’s victory in Italy – with a majority in parliament, but not in the country – show that the framework is extremely unstable and uncertain.

Meanwhile, a new generation, which does not carry the weight of the defeats of the past or the old ideological incrustations, and does not feel the influence of Stalinist “camp” politics, is asserting itself.

We witness a “return to politics” following a crisis of the left, in particular, the social democrats and Stalinists. Both have failed. Now they are unable to interpret the new struggles that exist, or to represent them, organise them, or offer them any hope. The new struggles need a politics which are not immediately perceived as old or archaic.

As might be expected, the global movement faces major contradictions. However, these contradictions do not prevent a linear development, an expansion on the international scale and a progressive widening to involve new sectors.

Despite the diversity, there are unquestionably some general characteristics: the movement’s attempt to define itself by rediscovering an internationalist tradition which seemed lost; a contradictory but real relationship with the old labour movement; and a generalised mistrust of all organised political forms, but linked to the desire for an overall alternative.

A global vision

The movement as it exists today denounces the damage wrought by neoliberalism on the international scale: but on the other hand many of its components are born out of specific instances or problems.

It is often about a “rough” anti-capitalism based on experience. In good part it is also the fruit of the presence of movements and a significant group of militant intellectuals.

People like Riccardo Petrella, Susan George, Walden Bello, Naomi Klein (whose book “No Logo” is already an international success), Pierre Bourdieu, Eduardo Galeano, Bernard Cassen, Michael Loewy, Samir Amin, Charles-Andre Udry, to name the most well known, are, and are perceived, as part of the movement. These people take an active part in the mass movement and play an essential role in the formation of consciousness.

This capacity to maintain an overall vision is demonstrated by the importance accorded to forums of discussion like Porto Alegre. In these forums, thousands of people can take the general pulse of the situation, develop a global vision of the state of the struggles, and discuss problems and paths to follow.

But there is also the stimulus to develop global alternative responses: participatory democracy, has been a fundamental contribution from Porto Alegre to the “people of Seattle”, which would not have become the symbol it is without the World Forum.

But the conferences also help us to find, after decades, a new internationalism, which is no longer in the name of solidarity with a people in struggle or a revolution in progress. Instead the unifying element, which allows the creation of true international structures – such as ATTAC, Via Campesina, and the Women’s March – and a radical anti-neoliberalism, is emerging from the current process of the internationalisation of capital.

The role of the trade unions

The workers’ and labour movement has accompanied the mobilisation since its symbolic birth at Seattle. The role of the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labour-Congress of Industrial Organisations), a trade-union federation with 13 million members and some sectors – like the Teamsters (lorry drivers) – able to bring the country to a halt, has been very significant.

This is the product of the internal turn marked by the election of Sweeney to the presidency in 1995, and the subsequent ability of the AFL-CIO – which remains very moderate and sometimes marked by nationalist protectionism – to grasp the importance of new forms of struggle in the workplace (as with the creation of Jobs with Justice, organising temporary workers, the unemployed, students).

This maturity is found especially in the trade unions of the American continent: the Brazilian CUT was heavily involved in Porto Alegre, while the ORIT (a regional organisation connected to the ICFTU internationally) gave its support to the Forum’s closing appeal.

On the European level, the situation is very different. There have been contacts between the various expressions of the social movement – like the demonstration in Amsterdam in June 1997, which led the European Confederation of Trade Unions (ECTU) to organise its own mobilisation in Luxembourg in November of that year. But one cannot compare these links with the links in America.

In Prague in September 2000 the mobilisation against the IMF and the World Bank saw a significant participation from northern Europe, Italy, Spain and Greece, but it was primarily composed of young people, with an almost total absence of trade-union forces.

The turning point was Nice, in December 2000, during the European summit. This time, at the initiative of the most radical component, in particular the French – SUD, ATTAC, the Euromarch Network, the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR), but also the Italian COBAS and European alternative trade unionism in general – a united demonstration took place there with the ECTU.

This unity was established despite the ECTU having slogans (support for the Charter of European Rights) contrary to those of the other demonstrators (and also contrary to the dominant feelings in its own contingents, as various newspapers and trade-union leaders have revealed).

Despite the contradictions, Nice has shown that the relationship between the traditional union movement and a movement of a new type, composed primarily of young people opposed to neoliberal globalisation, is possible. The support of the FIOM-CGIL (metalworkers’ federation of the Italian CGIL) for the Genoa demonstration in July against the

G-8 is very significant from this point of view.

The anti-political risk

Mistrust of political parties is another characteristic, although less marked, of the current movement. This mistrust has a healthy side – it's enough to look at the role of certain parties in the Anglo-Saxon world. And an understandable side, considering the damage caused by the social democratic parties and the disasters generated by Stalinism. On the other hand, sometimes it is unjustified and can lead to a generalised inward-looking approach.

The mistrust is obviously the product of a political climate since the historical defeat symbolised by the collapse of the Berlin Wall. From that moment, references to tradition, historical identity, origins ceased to exert fascination, attraction and interest – to be replaced by mistrust, or by stepping back.

It is clear that when the movement expresses itself on the political level it displays divergent orientations. On the international scale, for example, one can distinguish three broad political lines:

■ the first is definitely radical, with an anti-capitalist vision of globalisation;

■ another seeks above all a dialogue with the supranational institutions with the aim of reforming them;

■ and a third is a more protectionist current, which seeks to defend the powers of nation states as a counterweight to the excessive power of the multinationals.

These are closely related orientations, not yet reasons for division. They often echo the positions of specific parties and political movements.

It is obvious that the political line is neither homogeneous, nor definitive. Indeed, a more fundamental sentiment makes the movement very jealous in guarding its independence on the organisational and analytical level. This is good, provided that the relationship with the parties does not become a source of division and dissension. It is obvious that this depends to a large measure on how the parties behave.

The problem cannot be resolved with schemas inherited from the 20th century. Far more than in the past, the parties will have to become part of the movement as such, and build links as equal to equal with the other participants, while demonstrating at the same time their social and political usefulness.

Basically, the political parties will have to establish for themselves a legitimacy that, otherwise, nobody is disposed to recognise in advance. At the same time, they must demonstrate in the field of ideas and political programme that they can offer valid and decisive solutions to the problems of the movement.

Of course, we speak here of the parties of the anti-capitalist left. They may not be a great quantitative or qualitative force, but they must seize this moment to reestablish themselves in the medium term.

The movement needs this to happen, because it needs a radical and "visionary" response to go forward. The left also needs it, if the left itself is to emerge from its crisis and build a new project.

The opportunity of Genoa

At Genoa, we will see all this, and other things also. Let us speak initially about the Italian situation. The anti-globalisation movement came a little late to Italy, with the exception of some "pioneers" who sensed the new climate developing in Europe (the role of the COBAS in the Euro Marches), or youth organisations like the Young Communists or the Social Centers, which have created some international links and some local initiatives, and some NGOs which have always had links to world networks.

But the Italian "movement" has rooted itself and grown. The March 17 demonstration in Naples marked a significant stage in this process, while showing that the anti-globalisation struggle could bring together forces who are able to see the link between their own material conditions and a general vision of the world.

After the first international experiments –



Since Seattle every major capitalist summit has taken place under siege – with protestors encountering massive police mobilisation, as in Salzburg

Amsterdam and Cologne, but then Prague and Nice – Naples marked a turning point in terms of its breadth and mass participation.

This has also been the experience in the preparation for Genoa. Hundreds of social political and trade-union organisations will participate in the Genoa Social Forum.

Here is the essential basis for a project of opposition to the Berlusconi government.

Here also, there are inevitable divergences, even the same battles for political influence, with a similar range of views to that which exists on the international level – from the more "moderate" to the more radical.

Build the movement, build the party

The Communist Party of Refoundation (PRC), in particular through the Young Communists, has played an undeniable leading role during this new phase. From participation in the Forum at Porto Alegre to the material construction of initiatives on the ground, the PRC has known how to connect to a living reality, to support it with conviction, but also to maintain an intelligent dialogue with it, without prevarication or the old-fashioned fight for political control.

For the first time since its birth, the party is in a real relationship with a powerful mass movement and for the first time it has to face a new and delicate problem.

If it has avoided "partyist", and self-proclamatory behaviour, it has often fallen into the opposite error, by adapting to the positions and behaviour of the movement, or rather some of its sectors. It has become more difficult to maintain the necessary balance between the construction of the movement and the construction of the party, without thinking that one excludes the other.

The problem is not simple: but precisely because of that, it is a theme that has to be discussed seriously, without simplifications or exorcisms.

Certain "tasks" flow from the events of July, but also the post-Genoa period:

1) To work to widen the movement, to build it and consolidate it. The movement has already shown that it exists, it has shown its potential and stated its objectives. Now it must grow, strengthen itself, reach wider sectors of the population, of the workers' movement, vast layers of young people and so on.

To do this, there are certain essential conditions, including a guarantee of the pluralism of its components, and the legitimacy of various positions – but also a unity based on ensuring adequate space for discussion and mobilisation.

It is necessary to continue and to reinforce the experiment of the Genoa Social Forum, building Social Forums in the image of Porto Alegre, but on a national and local scale. The movement must go beyond structures for coordination, towards a form which can better stimulate participation.

2) To do that, it is fundamental to formulate a clear political agenda, a platform of struggle,



a declaration of intent. If we are entering a new phase, one of its components is that resistance is not enough any more.

The new generations demand solutions, ideas, realisable projects, which one can demonstrate and debate. The "ritualisation" of the counter-summits is likely to ossify a movement which has much more potential and scope for action.

Overall demands must concretise the process underway, going to the heart of the contradictions engendered by neoliberalism – the conflict between labour and capital, the exploitation of the Earth, the commodification and oppression of women, the imposition of "flexibility" on a whole generation, war and hunger, and so on.

3) The necessary link – between the global and the local, between daily questions (unemployment, wages, pensions, schools, information, culture and so on) and the global policies decided at international summits – becomes central.

The example of the sackings at Danone is significant: in this case, the precise relationship between the operations of a multinational and the impact of its decisions on the local level have been made clear to all.

4) The construction of a stable relationship between the workers' movement and the new forces in movement and their capacity to link up is every bit as decisive.

Once again, the case of Danone is an illustration: the dismissals by a profitable company were immediately perceived as a very serious injustice. The workers had recourse to a traditional and always effective weapon: the strike. But thousands of citizens resorted to the weapon of the boycott to show solidarity and to take part in a struggle they considered their own.

5) To give an anti-capitalist and radical face to the movement. The anti-globalisation movement is a "pluralist" movement which finds its common roots in opposition to neoliberalism, and this is good. It is a movement which is still on the ascendant and beginning to assert itself.

Nevertheless, inside it, various orientations

are already visible, with different objectives. It is thus useful and right that a class and anti-capitalist orientation continues, opposed to profit and exploitation, and aiming to revolutionise the relations of production.

Of course, this should not be approached in a sectarian, dogmatic, or doctrinaire way, but as part of the concrete construction of the movement, respecting its tempos and forms.

6) To construct base units of the movement does not mean to underestimate or ignore more concrete chances to form part of a more general international movement, if they appear. New structures on the world scale already express this need and this potential. ATTAC is one. Its imminent launch in Italy constitutes a very significant experiment.

Of course, building ATTAC cannot substitute for trade unionism in its traditional or newer forms; even less can it substitute for the party, which on the contrary should start again in this new context.

7) The active construction of the party represents a necessary and essential consequence of what we have affirmed up until now. The party is not a counterweight to the movement: nor is it a transitory structure which has to draw aside when the impetus of the movement accelerates. It is an essential place of collective development and planning of social intervention. It is what remains when the tide ebbs; the revolutionary party is a basic project on a longer scale.

Today the Party of Communist Refoundation aims to build itself through the struggles of workers and the fight against globalisation; this means it must respect these struggles and their base, but maintain a consciousness of its own contribution and the necessity for its own existence.

There are two areas where this approach will be applied: the redefinition of the concept of public interests and public services in opposition to the neoliberal absolutism of profit, but also, in the light of the failures of 20th century, in opposition to the experiments of the supposedly "actually existing socialist" Stalinist bureaucracy on the one hand, and social-democratic statism on the other.

Starting from the experiment of Porto Alegre, but going beyond it, a communist and revolutionary reading of participatory democracy – as an instrument of direct democracy, of rank and file participation – can play a fertile role in the process of Communist refoundation.

* Salvatore Cannavo is deputy director of *Liberazione* (daily newspaper) of the Communist Party of Refoundation), member of the editorial board of the monthly magazine *Bandiera Rossa*, and member of the leadership of ATTAC Italy. This article has been substantially edited for publication in *Socialist Outlook*.

In the last issue of *Socialist Outlook*, in our coverage of the anti-globalisation movement, we looked at the way that state repression was being stepped up against protestors with coverage on the shootings in Gothenburg and repression in Indonesia. In this issue we continue to develop this theme, with an eye witness report from Gothenburg, report on the ExxonMobil protests including the arrests in Aceh and the murder of protestors in Papua New Guinea.

The decision of the Swedish police to engage in mass arrests, raid and expel activists from two of the schools hired from the local authority, intern and expel travelling protestors, block off whole streets and areas with hundreds of ship containers and use horses, dogs, leather truncheons and firearms was a gross provocation, a denial of the right to demonstrate and a flagrant breach of the agreements and spirit of dialogue they had promised.

The writing had been pretty much on the wall in April, when police smashed an anti-EU march in Malmö, arresting many protestors including a Green Euro-MP. Nevertheless groups involved in the planning of Göteborg had attempted to reach agreement with the police and had accepted their offer of dialogue – they were to be bitterly disappointed.

I went to Göteborg with the ATTAC bus from Århus on Thursday evening and arrived at about 23.30. We were quite surprised not to be searched on arrival at the port, although I suspected we were being surveyed on the ferry – but maybe that's just paranoia.

In any case, we were to learn from our reception committee that the police were busy elsewhere. They were trapping and arresting 4-500 protestors in Hvitfeldska gymnasium – one of the headquarters of the protests, a place where many activists were to sleep, and the venue for many of the seminars and happenings for the next few days.

The police had started to use ship containers as road-blocks. There had also that evening been a highly successful demonstration against Bush – where 5,000 people or (10,000 buttocks) had mooned in protest! We took a tram to our accommodation, which was a school way out of town.

After a restful night on a hard classroom floor we awoke the next morning (Friday) for a meeting.

I personally take a dim view of holding meetings before morning coffee, but there was no bloody coffee at

Gothenburg: an orgy of cop violence



Vättnedalenskolan.

We headed for Götapladsen for the Anti-Capitalist demonstration. There were maybe 3,000 people in Götapladsen and about 1,500-2,000 of them joined us for a non-violent protest against the EU summit. Well that was the plan anyway.

THEN THE SHIT HIT THE FAN!

As we marched into Berzeliigatan it was obvious that we weren't going to get too footsore on this march, we could already see that the route was blocked with containers and police.

I had been told that the original plan was to hold hands around the EU summit, but it didn't look like the police were in a mood for that one.

We halted and stood chanting in the road, I was in about the 8th or 10th rank and behind the ATTAC Aalborg banner, so I couldn't see much of what was happening in the front, apart from a build-up of mounted police.

There was no attempt to break through, and no missiles were thrown. After about half an hour I saw a few police starting to clear demonstrators from a car park on our left. I tried to get people to link arms, other people tried to get people to sit down, but nothing much happened, just a lot of milling about – then the police attacked.

They came in from our left with dogs and truncheons and our organisation fell apart. I was facing a cop with

a snarling Schäferhund on one side and was being slowly strangled by a "comrade" who had her arm round my neck – it was starting to be a really shitty day!

On my left I could see the cops attacking the "Black Block" (autonoms), many of whom were masked, but who had agreed to respect non-violent principles for the day. Of course it doesn't take weeks of careful planning to provoke autonoms.

Attacking them with dogs and horses in normally quite enough and soon there was a hail of cobblestones and anything else throwable moving through the air.

Horses were charging up and down the road and emerging from side-roads. The demonstration had split into two or three bits by then and I was just concerned with trying to keep my bit of it together.

A group of autonoms launched a very spectacular and successful counterattack against the police and I briefly considered joining them on the good grounds that self-defence is politically legitimate and that by now I was extremely pissed-off. However as quickly as they had attacked they fell back and went off to trash shop windows on Avenyn, which was not so smart.

The 400-500 of us left in Berzeliigatan regrouped around the Rättvisepartiet's (Swedish CWI group) banner and slowly retired to Götapladsen.

Throughout the action I saw no arrests taking place, the police concentrated on

injuring demonstrators.

After a brief sit-down in Götapladsen we were allowed to march back to Schillerska gymnasium for a brief meeting. Other comrades were actually earlier forced to retreat down the main street which was pretty obviously a police plan to provoke the maximum destruction of property by enraged demonstrators.

POLICE PROVOCATION AT FRIT FORUM

A couple of hours later I was back at the Frit Forum (a space with tents, stalls and discussions) drinking a cup of coffee, when there was, all of a sudden a lot of noise outside the gate.

When I got there I saw a massive concentration of police arresting people at random. Apparently these people had simply been caught between two groups of police – some had been sitting in the park eating a sandwich.

There then followed a tense 1½ hour stand-off between those of us in Frit Forum and the cops. No attempt was made to break out and release the prisoners, just stand our ground – most of us believed the cops were out to smash Frit Forum.

Few of those arrested were charged, a few escaped by jumping into boats or swimming.

MASSIVE ANTI-EU DEMONSTRATION

Since ATTAC is not an anti-EU organisation we

decided not to have our banner on the anti-EU demonstration. We joined the various contingents of the march to our own political tastes (I marched with the SP). The demonstration was peaceful and had about 12-16,000 on it.

As I left Götapladsen after the rally I could see more ship containers in place and police massing. There was a "Reclaim Our Streets" party planned, but by then I wasn't feeling very party-minded and was frankly nervous about the wisdom of holding a street party in the middle of a war zone.

I decided to head back to Frit Forum for a couple of beers and something to eat. It was at this party that the shooting incident took place.

When I left Frit Forum I discovered that my tram wasn't running and was forced to make a big detour. I then ran into 3 young Danes from Roskilde who told me that the police had let some Nazis into the party and then "restored order" in the ensuing confusion.

One young man is still in hospital in a critical condition as a result of the police decision. I got a taxi back to the suburbs with the guys from Roskilde and when I turned up there was a meeting going on.

We were missing people, although they all turned up eventually – more luck than judgement! I slept very well that night and awoke at 7.00 for another meeting. We were discussing a press release before morning coffee!

THE GOTHENBURG ACTION INTERNATIONAL MARCH

This was very big, I've read 25,000 although I would've said a bit less. The ATTAC contingent from Scandinavia was massive, and the SAC (Swedish syndicalist union) probably had 2,000 members.

There was also a big contingent from Venstrepartiet. There were very few mainstream trade union flags from Sweden, I only counted three – LO had decided that it wasn't a part of their tradition to demonstrate in the streets!

There were however 10 or 12 trade union flags from both Norway and Denmark. In the Danish ATTAC contingent we chanted our defiance of the (absent) police and even sang "We shall overcome". I had to confess to my fellow demonstrators that I had two Joan Baez records.

We got a very friendly response from the locals who stood out in the rain watching us pass.

THE LESSONS OF GÖTEBERG – WHAT NEXT?

The orgy of police violence and provocation didn't turn a hair amongst the bastards inside the iron ring.

Indeed every social-democratic bureaucrat in Europe is competing to condemn us and attack the right to protest.

I have read that Genoa will be shut off completely – motorways, air traffic diverted to Torino, the lot! It will be extremely difficult to get in and register a peaceful protest.

I've even read that they're thinking of transferring the summit to a fleet of battleships in Genoa harbour. We need also to be aware that the EU summit circus comes to Denmark next year and begin a political fight for freedom of speech and to shame all those politicians who have attacked us.

I think there are three priorities we must look at now:

■ Exposing the police conspiracy against the peaceful protest in Göteborg. There were plenty of videos being shot, we must use these to show what really happened. There have already been demonstrations in København and Århus against the actions of the Swedish police.

■ Build ATTAC as a positive movement for a better world.

■ Fight Schengen – two Danes were deported from Sweden for graffiti offences! One was 15 when he transgressed

Finally we need to be better organised in København with stewarding, radios, non-violent direct action training. NVDA is not an easy option in the current climate.

This article is by a member of the SAP (Danish section of the Fourth International) who wishes to remain nameless "because he lives in Schengenland"!

Oil giant behind Bush challenge to Kyoto

Susan Moore

Thanks to the merger of Exxon and Mobil oil companies in 1999, ExxonMobil, trading in Britain as Esso, is now the largest corporation in the world.

ExxonMobil has close ties to US President Bush dating back to his days as a failed oil executive, and then as governor of Texas. Through campaign contributions of \$1.2m to his Presidential campaign and lobbying (over \$11 million in 1999), it has clearly bought influence over government.

Indeed Bush's energy policy reads as if it were written by ExxonMobil: build a new power plant every week for the next twenty years, with heavy emphasis on drilling in the Arctic Refuge – and build more oil refineries.

ExxonMobil consistently denies any responsibility for climate change, and openly funds climate sceptics. It has spent millions on advertising to discredit Kyoto.

While some other oil companies have taken tentative steps to invest in clean energy sources, it remains the recalcitrant dinosaur of the industry.

This powerful multinational has lobbied hard to ensure Congress agrees a drilling programme in the Arctic which will have a devastating effect on the environment.

They brush off the fact that these plans are completely opposed by the indigenous people of the area, the Gwich'in who rely on the Caribou herds which breed on the coastal plain.

ExxonMobil also openly advocates free trade agreements which have meant a growing gap between rich and poor, fewer environmental and human rights restrictions. What they are particularly interested in is that such agreements provide a global mechanism to push fossil fuels on the developing world.

Debt restructuring agreements by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have forced developing countries to cut social services and open up their resources. This has allowed multinational companies like ExxonMobil to access oil and gas reserves at rock

bottom prices

In the run up to the FTAA meetings in Quebec City in April, ExxonMobil ran major press advertisements supporting the FTAA.

ExxonMobil also has an appalling record in many areas where it operates for complicity with repressive regimes, exploitation of indigenous peoples and destruction of the environment.

In Aceh, Indonesia, human rights groups report that ExxonMobil provided earth moving equipment that was used to dig mass graves, equipped soldiers involved in atrocities, and allowed company facilities to be used

for torture and interrogation.

Its roads were used to bring victims to the mass graves. Twelve mass graves have been identified, with at least 2,000 Acehese torture victims buried in the area.

The company has spent around \$530,000 per month on security forces. Aceh has been the scene of long standing atrocities by the Indonesian military in its attempt to crush the independence movement.

Other issues in Aceh include land seizures with minimum compensation, fields flooded with liquid waste, and explosions which have destroyed villagers' homes.

homes.

ExxonMobil is part of an international consortium of oil companies lobbying the World Bank to finance an oil and gas pipeline from Chad to Cameroon, slashing through fragile rainforest and the traditional homelands of the Baka and Bakola peoples, indigenous communities of hunter-gatherers.



World-wide backing for Exxon boycott

The record of Exxon Mobil makes the company a fitting target for an international day of action which took place in around the globe on July 11.

Bianca Jagger issued the following statement, which received wide media coverage:

"Today, people throughout the world have joined together to sound the alarm bells against the world's largest company ExxonMobil (Esso)... People around the world must stand up and say no to Bush and to his entourage of oil barons and energy corporations.

"We must say no to ExxonMobil, the largest and

most profitable company in the world, whose executives believe that human survival is simply not economic.

"Texas, under Bush's regime, became the most polluted state in the union. Now he wants to extend those devastating policies to the rest of the US and to the world.

"...Climate change is the single biggest threat facing the earth today. The UN International Panel on Climate Change, the most comprehensive study, warns of the potential for large scale and irreversible climate changes including devastating droughts, floods, violent storms, in addition to the spread of cholera and malaria.

...if we wait until the catastrophic effects are staring our children's children in the face, it will be far too late to do anything meaningful about it. The time to act is now. We can all do something to stop global warming. Let's begin by boycotting ExxonMobil (Esso) products"

20 countries

Protests took place in over 20 countries, including throughout Britain where they were organised through a coalition that included Globalise Resistance, together

with the Green Party, Friends of the Earth and others.

While Jagger's statement focuses on Kyoto itself and doesn't really take up the way that human rights abuses and complicity with the military are also intrinsic to Exxon's operations, these issues were taken up by some of the protests including those in Germany and in some in the US itself.

Not surprisingly these issues were more of a focus in the countries directly affected, including Nigeria where action took place in Benin city.

The sharpest conflict however took place in Aceh, Indonesia, where a protest of

around 100 people organised by students was met with sharp police repression.

3 leading activists were arrested and while 2 have subsequently been released, as we go to press, one is still in detention. Kautsar, the chairperson of the Acehese Democratic Peoples Resistance Front, has been charged with subversion which can carry a penalty of up to life imprisonment.

Protest messages calling for the release of Kautsar can be faxed to: Komes Polisi Drs Ramli Darwis, Kapolda Aceh, Aceh Police Chairperson, Indonesia, 62-651-26689.

Papua New Guinea Rebellion against World Bank

Terry Conway

Papua New Guinea is caught in a deep economic crisis with seemingly no way out. The country currently has debts to the (IMF), World Bank and other multilateral institutions of US\$906 million. Annual debt servicing which stands at US\$211 million, is about 40% of the government's total budget.

As is the pattern in all dependent countries, the conditions on both existing loans and a further pending loan of US\$210 million from the IMF and World Bank

insist that the government carry through a harsh structural adjustment program. The Australian government has also made its \$300 million a year in aid contingent on compliance with this austerity plan.

The resulting government also looks familiar – a massive programme of privatisation including Post and Telecommunications, the state airline and the PNG Banking Corporation.

Protesting student leaders said that the sell-off program would result in 70% of state-owned assets being

transferred into the hands of, largely foreign, companies.

One issue that is not so familiar in the package is the plan to register land ownership – which is also clearly seen as a prelude to privatisation in a country where 90% of the land is communally owned. Though extremely unpopular, the opening up of the land to commercial ownership has long been a desire of the IMF and World Bank.

In response to all of this students began a protest on June 18, boycotting classes

and support from local settlement dwellers, demanding an end to privatisation program, an end to government attempts to land ownership claims, and the expulsion of World Bank and IMF representatives from the country. If Prime Minister Morauta was not willing to do that, they said, he should resign.

On June 21, several thousand students marched through Port Moresby from the university campus to Parliament House, closing schools and the public transport system. When the prime minister refused to receive their petition, they decided to camp outside his office and appeal for more public support.

Initially the government was very dismissive of the protests, but as they continued and grew in size, the pressure on Morauta increased.

By June 25, his tune had changed and he issued statements claiming that he had no plans to go for land registration.

That afternoon, flanked by half his cabinet ministers and a wall of police, Morauta received the petition from the crowd of 4000 protesters. He said he would carefully consider the stu-

dents' proposals and respond to them the next day.

The students decided to stay a further night and wait for his response. But late into the evening, when the crowd had dwindled to a few hundred, the riot police moved in. When the crowd refused to disperse they were brutally attacked, first with tear gas and batons and later with live bullets. At least one protestor was killed at this point.

The response to the death was angry and instantaneous. Early in the morning of June 26, the students marched on the local police station, where they were confronted by police. They were then joined by a peaceful march from the settlements.

The Trade unions issued a call for Morauta to step down. They also threatened to close ports, shut down the national flag carrier Air Niugini and disrupt power supplies.

According to eyewitness Moses Murray, it was at this point that police again stormed in, firing tear gas, then chasing the dispersing crowd, then using live ammunition.

"They were shooting at

Ilisu: danger Hewitt still might give a dam!

Veronica Fagan

From the coverage in the media, opponents of the Ilisu Dam project might well think that the long campaign to persuade the British government to drop support for this appalling project.

The Ilisu Dam will have a deeply detrimental effect on both the environment and on the mainly Kurdish people of the region who will be displaced to make way for yet more profit for the multinationals. But any idea that a sliver of "ethical" foreign policy has prevailed would be profoundly mistaken.

In fact New Labour, in the shape of

Patricia Hewitt, the new Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, has said that a decision will be taken on September 7 after a period of "consultation."

She gave no indication that there would be any debate in Parliament first, implying that the decision will lie with government ministers, who are much more likely to listen to their friends in the company involved, Balfour Beatty than to the protestors.

This attempt to side step a full parliamentary debate would go against the recommendations of two Parliamentary Select Committees. In May 2001, the Trade and

Industry Committee, together with the International Development Committee, demanded that the issues should be debated openly in the House of Commons.

There can be no doubt that the media spin is an attempt to confuse those who oppose this particular project of capitalist globalisation into a false sense of security.

We won't be taken in like this. The campaign against the Ilisu Dam will be producing detailed briefings responding to the most recent environmental report which the government has just received. The pressure must be kept up.

Tough lessons for Irish teachers



Irish nurses, like teachers, began with massive public support for their cause

Kevin Keating

There can be no doubt that the teachers' strike was one of those disputes, like the nurses' strike in 1999, that has significance way beyond the 16,000 members of the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI) involved in it.

While most trade union disputes are sectional with only an indirect bearing on other workers this dispute was, and still is, a political matter of interest to every worker in the country. Why is this?

Just like nurses they are front line workers in a service dear to the hearts of working class people, most of whom realised it was showing little improvement despite the Celtic Tiger. Properly paid and motivated teachers are clearly in the interests of all workers and teachers could count on this bedrock of sympathy from the start.

The teachers were explicitly against social partnership and had left the ICTU in order not to be bound by the new Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF).

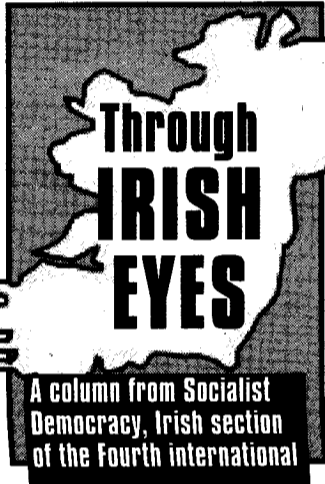
This leadership role in rejecting partnership earned them the vitriolic opposition of the government which promoted a vicious propaganda offensive culminating in them being called 'terrorists' by a reactionary parents' representative.

The government itself went as far as breaking the law by not paying teachers for their attendance at school while they refused to carry out purely voluntary and unpaid supervisory duties.

In particular they incurred the wrath of the trade union leadership. ICTU opposition to their demands was a factor common to the nurses' dispute, but the teachers had gone even further by rejecting the PPF and ICTU.

ASTI had lodged a large pay claim of 30% while most propaganda on the left advised large pay claims as the main means of breaking social partnership.

Their dispute was also under the control of the rank and file (a demand which would be top of much of the left's wish list in terms of workers winning their demands). The structures of the union were more democratic than most, and the



opposition had control of the 180 strong national executive. The full time officials had been reined in to support a strategy under the control of the rank and file.

In addition they had also decisively rejected benchmarking which had quite properly been understood as a means of destroying existing terms and conditions.

Few were fooled by Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) leader Joe O'Toole's reference to benchmarking as an 'ATM machine' where teachers could withdraw whatever pay increases they wanted.

Yet despite all this a second question becomes even more insistent. Why have the teachers lost so far?

Militancy, determination and rank and file control were clearly not enough. The majority of teachers across the three unions supported ASTI's demands and those in the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) voted with ASTI against the PPF and benchmarking.

A large number in INTO supported this stand and formed a clear majority across the three unions.

Yet despite this a reason why the strike failed was that the union hierarchy were able to divide teachers and with a vicious government offensive force teachers to retreat in the face of 'public opinion.' It would therefore be wrong to see the latter loss of support in the population at large as the key reason for defeat. This simply reflected the result of prior weaknesses.

While the government and union bosses built a coalition against ASTI, it in turn failed to build its own coalition in support of its demands.

Their strategy on exams amounted to teachers taking full responsibility for the disruption which would be an inevitable outcome of the dispute, however they fought it - a PR disaster but one which flowed from more fundamental failures.

The government was able to point out that ASTI was alone among the teacher unions in taking action, ignoring the fact that, as we have said, the majority of teachers supported ASTI's demands.

This happened because although ASTI reflected ordinary teachers concerns the TUI and INTO remained firmly under control of the union bureaucrats.

ASTI failed to go over the heads of these leaders to appeal to the rank and file. The rank and file in these unions was also unable to take the initiative and in fact trailed after manoeuvres of the leadership which actually undermined the strike.

This could be seen in the union leaders' emphasis on benchmarking, which became their key to breaking the strike by encouraging the two other teacher unions to go ahead with their submissions to the benchmarking body.

When the leaders of the TUI put forward a strike ballot in favour of bringing forward benchmarking this caused confusion even on the left. In fact both amounted to strike breaking in the midst of the ASTI action but this was not understood by many in the TUI and INTO.

This weakness allowed the leaders to disorient ASTI's supporters including the left brought up to believe that industrial action is the answer to every political question.

This failure fully to appreciate the character of benchmarking came to the fore again later in INTO when after the effort against it failed the left supported it being brought forward so they could get the money from it quicker!

In the final analysis the failure of the strike resulted from a lack of political consciousness. This is what lies behind ASTI's failure to understand just how far the government was prepared to go to defeat it.

This is what lies behind their failure to make benchmarking the central issue and to go over the heads of the leadership of the other teacher unions. It explains the action of militants in these unions supporting ASTI and then supporting strike action to bring benchmarking in faster.

Bertie Ahern ignored the 30% claim and emphasised that it could easily be dealt with under the PPF, that is under benchmarking.

Opposition to benchmarking therefore became central. Central because benchmarking means treating teachers as if they worked in the private sector. Since education is nothing without teachers this means treating education as if it was producing software or selling hamburgers.

Explaining that benchmarking only makes sense if education is to be treated as a commodity (educated children) produced for profit would have been a powerful argument to win parents and students support.

It would have disabused militants of the notion that strikes to bring it forward were in any way progressive. It would explode current illusions that as a result of ASTI action benchmarking is now less of a threat. A defeated strike will not have made benchmarking any less dangerous.

There is to be a new ballot of ASTI members in September. They should not follow the demand of Teachers United to seek 'an immediate review of pay within the PPF.'

Such a route forward fails to learn the lessons of the dispute and accepts defeat of the project of rejecting the PPF. When Ahern promises that everything is possible within it he means only that the plans of the government become the benchmark against which any changes can be made.

There can be no disguising the difficulties ahead for teachers simultaneously attempting to gain pay increases due to them while defending their terms and conditions.

However a start can be made by reviewing the action so far in an honest manner and rejecting the wrong lessons which they will hear far too much of in the months ahead.

Mystery over union leader's suspension

Defend Mick O'Reilly!

THE SUSPENSION of Mick O'Reilly (and a colleague) as head of the Irish District of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union by his bosses in London following an 'organisational audit' is a worrying development.

So far no justification for the suspension has been offered but O'Reilly has been unable to publicly defend himself because of a gagging order by London, breach of which might give the excuse to turn suspension into a sacking.

Powerless

The membership of the union has thus been left speculating on what is going on, leaving them feeling powerless to even form an opinion, never mind take action on the basis of it.

Rumours have been rife as to the cause of the suspension, with reports circulating that it was the result of a request from Bertie Ahern to Tony Blair to use his influence on the T&G leadership in London to get rid of a thorn in his side.

The ICTU leadership felt compelled to disclaim any responsibility in the matter, and since he is almost as much a thorn in their side as Bertie's, no pressure will come from them for public justification of the move or opposition to it.

This was quite clear from the ICTU Congress in Bundoran where the hierarchy of the union movement was determined not to let it become an issue.

Enforcers

This was obvious when delegates were locked into the hall in order to hear Bertie Ahern once again praise social partnership, and the role of ICTU enforcing it on workers.

What is also abundantly clear is that the suspension is an attack on the rights of workers and of those opposed to part-

nership with the bosses.

The press has already let it be known that it was O'Reilly's support for the train drivers in the Irish Locomotive Drivers' Association joining the ATGWU that lies behind the suspension.

This and O'Reilly's prominent opposition to social partnership, and lately the Nice Treaty, all point to the inescapable conclusion that as far as the establishment is concerned (an establishment that includes ICTU) there is to be no choice given to workers.

The ICTU and the state do not want alternative organisations for workers fed up with company-friendly unions. They don't want alternatives to the cosy social partnership deals and they don't want anyone voicing political opposition to pro-big business plans encapsulated in the various EU treaties.

Oppose

All these are good reasons why militants in the union movement and the left must prioritise opposition to the suspension.

This can be done immediately by recalling the recently launched rank and file union campaign whose founding we reported in the last issue of Socialist Democracy.

While it is especially important that a campaign be built in the ATGWU, in Britain as well as Ireland, the threat to Mick O'Reilly is an issue for the whole trade union movement.

It is not necessary to agree with everything Mick O'Reilly stands for - and we certainly have many differences with him - to see that he is being attacked because he offered an alternative to workers fed up with the present suffocating consensus.

His silence will weaken the fight to build such an alternative.

Crisis? What crisis?

“Moderate” Trimble back with the bigots

John McAnulty

After years of Pollyanna-like optimism and uncritical support for British policy in Ireland, the British and Irish media have finally accepted that the good Friday agreement is in crisis.

Yet even now, when the agreement has failed to deliver on any of its promises and is quite clearly the framework of a society in which sectarian division will be frozen for the indefinite future, crisis is probably too strong a word – instability would be a better word.

The difference between crisis and instability is quite simple. A crisis would require a conscious opposition putting forward an alternative, and this is conspicuously absent from the current situation.

The walkout by the spokespeople for the loyalist paramilitaries simply indicates that their guns aren't going to be surrendered – not that the British government or the unionists are concerned about death squad arms – and that they do not believe that a deal will be done at the meeting and want to appear as the hard-line opponents.

All the parties, without exception, support the new Stormont institutions and want them to continue, along with the gravy train and the patronage that go with them.

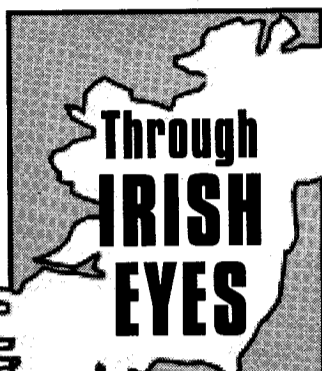
But the unionists want it spelt out that their sectarian privilege is secure in the new state and, such is their bigotry, they may still bring the agreement crashing down. If they do, the institutions of the agreement will still remain. The British will still call the shots, and the perspective of all the parties, including Sinn Fein, will be to lobby the British.

The threat to the agreement comes from the right. Sinn Fein support for the agreement is total and no significant threat has emerged from dissident republicans or from the left.

The threat from reaction has existed from the beginning. Any impartial examination of history shows that the difficulty has been that the British have never been able to persuade their unionist base to accept anything that would remotely satisfy the mass nationalist revolt.

In the end the British waited for the collapse of mass opposition and the entry of their erstwhile opponents into the reformist camp before putting together the Good Friday agreement.

They gave nothing of real substance, and pleaded with unionism to support the deal. It scraped through and, despite constant shifts in the agreement to placate the right, ever since then there has been a slow but steady



A column from Socialist Democracy, Irish section of the Fourth international

erosion of the pro-agreement unionist vote.

The current situation represents a crisis because up until now the British have been willing to ignore the opposition of Paisley's DUP and have based their policy on holding the UUP under Trimble.

This is no longer possible because the anti-agreement unionists now hold the majority in the UUP and the British have no intention of discarding their unionist base.

What that means right away is that the July crisis conference has nothing to do

with placating Sinn Fein. It has only one purpose. That is to force a public surrender and the disposal of arms by the republicans.

There is no longer any opposition to a deal on arms from the republican leadership. All they say is focused on what they will get for their sacrifice, the need to bring back the agreement to where it was and assurances that the arms question will not extend into endless demands from the unionists – which of course it will.

What is becoming clear is that the republican leadership,

having abandoned revolution, really believe in reform. The agreement retreated from the Patton report, in their view, because then secretary of state Peter Mandelson got it wrong – not because the sectarian northern statelet needs a sectarian police.

At the centre of their current strategy is the belief that the British really wish Ireland well and want to do the right thing. That view cannot long survive.

What they will be offered are ways of sweetening the

pill, and that may not be enough at the present juncture and a more extended period of instability will follow.

The republicans also believe in electoralism – that more votes mean more power. They don't understand that British control is not changed in the slightest by their vote and that by accepting the Good Friday agreement they are in a catch-22 situation.

A small vote would mean they were weaker and had to make concessions. A big vote is a vote for the deal and they still have to make concessions!

Gerry Adams rails against deadlines, but there is one deadline that he can't avoid – next year's general election in the South.

The price of coalition is the disposal of arms and all the other parties to the agreement, including their erstwhile friends in Dublin and Washington are united in demanding the final surrender.

The breakup of the Weston Hall talks indicates the limited nature of the crisis. It suggests not that agreement is impossible, but that it IS possible, requiring so much



Out of office, Trimble is again boosting the Orange bigots

however that the parties need the excuse of British imposition to make it work – much in the way that the original Good Friday agreement was imposed.

Leaks from the republicans indicate that the sticking point is not decommissioning on their side but unionists acceptance of a republican presence on local police boards – something that was in the Patton report but then removed.

What irony! The British are to fight tooth and nail to allow the disarmed republicans to take responsibility for a sectarian police force over which they will have no control!

Behind the scenes lies a real crisis. In the period since his resignation David

Trimble has endorsed the unrestricted sectarian right of Orangemen to march wherever they please.

More chillingly he “mistakenly” slandered a catholic youth, Cieran Cummings, the victim of a sectarian killing, as a drug dealer.

There was no mistake here. All the intelligence resources of the state were at Trimble's fingertips. What he was doing was lining up with the army of bigots who quietly endorse the use of terror against the nationalist population.

This is the face of moderate unionism on which the Good Friday agreement is based. This is the sectarian hell-hole that London, with Dublin as junior assistant, are attempting to stabilise.

Anger at Ardoyne school back-door “compromise”

CHILDREN from a particular ethnic group are allowed access to school only by the back door. Where are we? Some fascist redoubt in the Balkans? An enclave of the old South Africa? No. We are in the British colony in the North of Ireland, the area supposedly democratised by the Good Friday agreement.

In the run-up to the Twelfth – the sectarian orange festival – Loyalists in Belfast's Ardoyne area demonstrated against Catholic primary school children attending school.

Children were forced to enter and leave the school by travelling across fields to the back door of the school. The protests only ended when the school closed for the summer holidays.

Ethnic cleansing
Loyalist groups have been involved in a growing campaign of violence for some time. Low-level ethnic cleansing of Catholics is interspersed with drug and turf wars amongst themselves.

The British stepped in before the elections to force them to issue a statement saying that they were still on

ceasefire. This didn't change their behaviour but did justify the British turning a blind eye and continuing to fund their activities.

The confrontation in the Ardoyne arose when UDA members were erecting sectarian emblems at the entrance to the school and began intimidating parents collecting their children.

Reinforcements

When the parents retaliated loyalist reinforcements quickly arrived. A leading role in the siege was played by Billy Hutchinson, PUP assembly member, hailed as a socialist by many on the Irish and British left.

Enter the new RUC. They had distinguished themselves earlier by dispersing without arrest 30 UDA members who had trashed a street in North Belfast, burning three cars and smashing up homes.

Their contribution to keeping the peace was to prevent the children and their parents from going to school. As is normal in these situations, only a token loyalist presence was necessary. The RUC took over the job of suppressing the Catholics.

In the riots that followed

yet another local tradition was followed when the RUC used the new, more lethal, plastic bullets that they were recently issued with against nationalist youth while attempting to conciliate the loyalists.

What was new in the situation was the attitude of Sinn Fein. After what one of their leading members described privately as “playacting”, the republicans acted quickly to contain protests, earning praise from the RUC for their efficiency in demobilising nationalist protest.

Negotiations followed with the “compromise” that the children could use the back door to school. This was formally rejected by the nationalists but became the de facto settlement on the last week of school term.

At the height of the riots local Sinn Fein assembly member Gerry Kelly was heard to remark; “If the Good Friday agreement is no use on the streets. What good is it?”

Ardoyne Mark 2

The battle in Ardoyne on the night of July 12 was immediately presented by the state forces as an

attempt by the Provos to return to conflict with the RUC.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The humiliation of having to defuse local resistance to loyalist and RUC blockades of a local school in the previous fortnight was proof enough of that.

The Provo account is accurate enough. They attempted to lead a peaceful protest and were attacked by the RUC, this attack then escalated into a full-scale offensive.

Paralysed

This is typical of the normal sectarian behaviour by the RUC, who allowed an Orange protest in Derry on the 12th to paralyse the city for most of the day. They looked on helplessly when opposing UDA and UVF orange gangs fought pitched battles in the centre of Belfast.

One of the central elements of the Patton report which the republicans still cling to is the promise that the RUC will become 50% Catholic (in the sweet by and by).

A recent recruitment drive, when things were going well

and the RUC were free to define adventurers from around the world as “Catholic” gave a figure of over 30% applications.

Any sustained conflict would quickly erode even this shortfall and remove the pretence that these uniformed gangsters would be reformed by the back door.

Resistance

On this occasion the RUC ran into very stiff resistance, led by leading local republicans. The reasons for this are twofold.

The area had already been under sustained sectarian attack and defence preparations had of course been made.

The other may prove more problematic for the republican leadership – the burning resentment felt by the local people over the humiliating trek they were forced to make with their children over fields to the back door of the school.

What happens when supporters of the Good Friday agreement, supporters of the republican leadership, find that the bottom line is that they are still second class citizens in an occupied country?

Blair and Adams: decommissioning Republicanism

David Coen

Responsibility for the latest in a long line of crises in the "peace process" is once again laid at the door of the republicans, who reply they are willing to do so in the context of a general implementation of the additions agreed last May.

The real reason for the ongoing crises is the agreement itself. Reflecting the military stalemate between the British and the Republicans, it promises one thing to loyalists and another to republicans, that it will somehow reform the sectarian state but keep everything the same. It can't work nor will it unless something gives. The gives are expected from the Republicans.

It is for this reason that "de-commissioning" is the key test and it may not be far off. A chorus from Britain, the US and Dublin demands that the Republicans "put their weapons beyond use" - a polite way of asking them to hand them over.

Trimble's antics makes it harder for them to do so; it smacks too much of surrender. Handing over the weapons would be a public declaration, not alone that armed struggle has failed, but also that the struggle itself was pointless and that Republicans have in practice accepted partition and the 6 County State. This is what the Unionists believe the Republicans signed up to in the Agreement.

Socialist Outlook has long welcomed the ceasefire but opposed the "peace process" because it leads to republicans making peace with British imperialism. The Stormont Agreement is but the latest attempt by Blair and his Tory predecessors to refashion the British state.

We support the ceasefire because the armed struggle is not likely to drive out the British state and also because armed campaigns are necessarily elitist and discourage mass involvement.

That is not to say that socialists favour surrender of weapons; doing that would put defence of nationalist areas in the hands of the RUC and the British army. Neither does it mean we draw a line between armed actions carried out before or after the Agreement: both are political and whatever rights were accorded to prisoners before April 1998, should still be accorded to those convicted after.

But decommissioning is not just a test of Republican attitudes towards partition and the 6 County state: it will also tell us about the strategy of the Republicans on the island as a whole.

For some Republicans it comes down to "waiting for the demographics"; the belief that a higher Catholic birth rate will bring a nationalist majority in the next couple of decades - a mirror image of the Unionist bigotry and discrimination characteristic of the sectarian state since its foundation.



This dangerously apolitical and utterly sectarian nonsense should be repudiated by all socialists and republicans.

More important is the question of participation in the Executive. Every member of the Assembly must declare themselves Unionist or Nationalist. Correspondingly, Sinn Fein and the SDLP represent the nationalists while the UUP and the DUP represent the unionists.

Sectarian divisions are set in stone, exactly the intention of the founders of the state.

Alongside this is the growth of a whole new "salaried" which depends on British/EU "reconciliation" funds, some administered by the churches, and which has a vested interest in continuing divisions.

Nationalists who understood that the Stormont regime (nor the British) could not concede even the mildest of concessions in 30 years of struggle now find their leaders comfortable in the very statelet that for decades oppressed them and against which they waged a bitter war. But no alternative politics seems available and even mild disagreement is stamped on by the thought police within the Republican Movement.

Neither is this a surprise. By participating in Government with some of the most reactionary elements in the British state Sinn Fein will be forced, if it wants to make the Stormont Agreement work, to impose this reactionary politics on its own base in the nationalist areas. It will also cut itself off from the loyalist working class and instead of making an effort to win them away from the reactionary politics of unionism, it locks them on the wrong side of the class divide. Not surprisingly, seeing that all they are being offered is a souped up version of Fianna Failism in the South and no prospect of an improvement in

their material conditions, loyalist workers are prey to the sectarians of the loyalist paramilitaries and their friends in the British security apparatus, both of whose politics and activities represent much more closely the true attitudes of the British side than the platitudes of Blair and co.

In the South, while Sinn Fein was an important component of the recent Anti Nice Treaty vote, this is no more an obstacle to participating in a future coalition government than the traditional Fianna Fail opposition to military alliances involving Britain. Describing themselves as the only all-Ireland party, Sinn Fein hope to win enough seats in the next elections for the Dáil either to hold the balance of power or to be invited to

join Fianna Fail in a coalition government. Here too decommissioning is a pre-condition for participation in government. After all, Fianna Fail itself repudiated armed struggle when it entered the Dáil in 1926 and this meant de-facto acceptance of the settlement imposed by the British in 1921 under the threat of overwhelming force. It is worth remembering that the new Fianna Fail government launched a very harsh repression of republicans and socialists who refused to give up the struggle.

Many on the left in Britain fondly believe that the "peace" agreement allows normal class politics to operate. But the class struggle is not somehow hidden under the battle between unionists and nationalists; it is at the core of the struggle.

Loyalists slip through the "peace" net

Ethnic cleansing, Sectarian killing, gangland battles in full orange regalia with ceremonial swords and pikes, dramatic walkouts from meeting and statements that they no longer support the Good Friday agreement.

All these add up to only one answer - the loyalist paramilitaries are slowly but surely slipping out of the political process and back to what they do best.

The reason is very simple. The loyalists are what they appear to be - sectarian gangsters with no real political base who prey on Protestant workers as well as Catholic and have no hope of building a political base.

The UDP leader, Johnny Adair, at present interned by the British, is the subject of a hilarious campaign - his only crime was loyalty! Anyone

tempted to fill in the real list on the posters would quickly run out of paper. The UDP have a ramshackle organisation for accepting community grants (in reality bribes to keep quiet) but its so poor that they failed even to register the name of their party for electoral purposes.

The UVF and their mouthpieces in the PUP have a more organised base after years of copying the Provos and looking for political advice on the British far right but, despite a sympathetic press and the - to speak bluntly - criminal behaviour of sections of the left in endorsing their brand of reaction and class resentment as socialism, they too are failing for exactly the same reason as the UDA.

As we indicate elsewhere this is far short of a crisis. The loyalists have

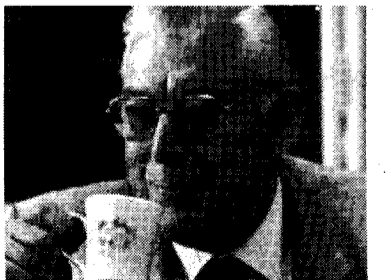


On the one side is the British ruling class organised by the state; on the other is the nationalist working class. The battle between them is the class struggle.

Some suffer the delusion that the Britain is neutral or even benign and call on Blair to pressure the Unionists to do a deal. This is essentially the line of Adams and Sinn Fein as well as some New Labour lefts.

Such naiveté regarding the British state could have disastrous consequences for socialists because it disarms them against it. It is based on the reformist idea that the state is neutral and can be transformed from the inside.

Whatever the outcome of the latest crisis talks, one thing is certain: there will be further crises. And sooner or later Republicans will have to confront the question: do they join Tony Blair in his attempts to restructure the British state. That is the real meaning of "decommissioning": very little to do with arms, all to do with politics. The omens are not good.



been running a low-level war against Catholics since the beginning of the ceasefire. As long as they keep it within bounds the British can use a combination of carrot and stick, peace funds and police surveillance to control them.

What it does mean is that those who accept the Good Friday agreement have to accept loyalist intimidation as part of the background baggage and that working-class opposition will have as one of its tasks that of defence against state-sponsored thugs.



Strike action by the unions should wipe the smile off Mbeki's face

South African unions threaten strikes against privatisation

Charlie van Gelderen

While New Labour, under the leadership of Tony Blair, is moving helter-skelter to embrace privatisation, the South African trade unions are mounting a full-blooded attack on privatisation.

Both the main trade union federations, the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) are threatening strike action against the ANC-led government's increasing moves toward privatisation.

In a measured statement, outlining their position, they state that it is rank idiocy to imagine "that one form of ownership is inherently more or less efficient than another". That is the position of most of the trade union movement.

Any enterprise or service, especially on a large scale, requires workers with certain skills, infrastructure, financial capital and a management system. Ownership may or may not have a bearing on any of these often complex factors.

Efficiency should never be confused with profitability. Such profitability is only a measure of how efficient an enterprise is in creating wealth for its owners.

This is the essence of the trickle down economics: the theory that the richer the rich become, the more wealth will trickle down to, the more wealth will trickle down to the poor. The fact that there is no evidence that this actually happens - and indeed rather the contrary - has not deterred its supporters - to the chagrin of the trade union movement.

Particularly annoying for the trade unions is that such profitability often comes at great social cost through lost jobs, lower wages and the marginalisation of "unprofitable" communities.

Most unions, and certainly those organised in COSATU and NACTU federations, therefore oppose privatisation while supporting the concept of efficiency.

This is the basis for the COSATU threat of a general strike against privatisation.

Simply put, the union position is that it is essential that the best and most efficient means be used to provide goods and services to the greatest benefit of those who most require them. A well-resourced and managed public sector would be the best way of achieving this.!

This does not mean that the unions eschew profit. Because of the economic system in

which we function, they accept that a balance be struck between income generation, especially for re-investment, and the provision and pricing of goods and services.

Herein lies the fundamental difference between the public and private sectors. The nature of private ownership dictates that greater and greater profit for the shareholding minority must always be the priority. This must of necessity come at the cost of lesser services, fewer jobs or higher prices for the majority.

One of the most quoted examples in South Africa which demonstrates these realities, is the story of what happened to municipal services in Buenos Aires. The water and sewage system in the Argentine capital was handed over in 1993 to Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux, on a 30 year contract.

This French enterprise has been actively lobbying for water and waste contracts on South Africa and other developing countries. As a result there have been two "evaluation" trips to Buenos Aires by groups of South African local government officials. They returned enthusiastic. Not only was the firm making great profits, but apparently services had burgeoned.

But, on May 3 a report was released which showed that the Buenos Aires experiment had been anything but an unalloyed success.

The report, compiled by the Municipal Services Project (MSP) after a six-week survey in Buenos Aires, is highly critical of this supposed flagship of privatisation. The researchers discovered that the greater number of water and sewage connections had little to do with more service provision.

More connections came under the control of the firm when the municipal boundaries were extended. Existing water and waste connections were simply added to the figures.

The MSP report and the facts it contains has been taken up by the unions as further evidence that privatisation is not a solution. It will form part of the basis for renewed arguments with the government.

In particular, the unions will be attacking what they have dubbed the TINA (There is No Alternative) syndrome. The promotion of this idea is seen as short-sighted and often self-serving. Instead they are urging the government to develop a FAAF (Find An Alternative Fast) syndrome!

Milosevic trial rocks Balkans

Geoff Ryan

The appearance of Slobodan Milosevic in the dock at the Hague was greeted with amazement by many people throughout former Yugoslavia.

They had never expected Milosevic to face trial for war crimes. Once they had recovered from the shock they expressed great joy at Milosevic being put on trial. Such sentiments among Milosevic's victims are totally understandable. Nevertheless they are misguided.

Socialist Outlook has not taken the view that Milosevic should never face the Hague tribunal, though we did not demand that he should do so.

We have consistently argued that the rebuilding of working class unity throughout former Yugoslavia demanded that any trial of Milosevic for war crimes should take place in Serbia.

However, as I wrote in SO 44 "if the Yugoslav government did freely decide to hand-over Milosevic I certainly wouldn't advocate taking to the streets to oppose it." I also argued that "we utterly oppose any attempts by western powers to bully the Yugoslav government into handing over Milosevic."

By no stretch of the imagination could the Serbian government be said to have 'freely decided' to hand over Milosevic. The transfer was carried out extremely rapidly and involved highly irregular, possibly illegal, behind the scenes manoeuvres.

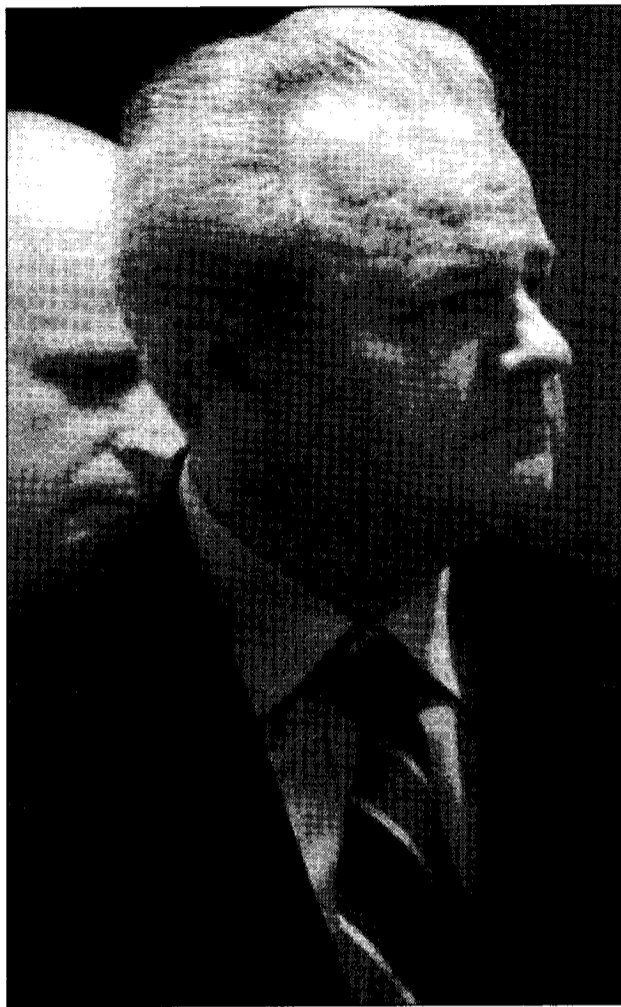
Moreover, the decision was taken because western powers, in particular the United States, offered massive bribes (£1 billion) in the form of aid, to the Serbian and Yugoslav governments. If Milosevic was not handed over, then the people of Serbia would be left to starve.

Milosevic's pending trial is not, therefore, the triumph for 'justice' that most bourgeois journalists have claimed. On the contrary: it is a triumph for blackmail, bullying and bribery, led by the government of the United States.

The handing over of Milosevic has hardly brought stability to the region. In fact the actions of the unelected tribunal are now causing considerable instability.

Divisions between Yugoslav president Vojislav Kostunica and Serbian prime minister Zoran Djindjic have increased with, Kostunica denouncing the handing over of Milosevic while Djindjic has claimed that Kostunica went along with the decision.

In a recent article in the Belgrade daily *Politika*, Kostunica expressed fears that the break-up of



Yugoslavia will continue and issued dire warnings against attempts to redraw boundaries throughout the Balkans, sentiments echoed by Russian president Vladimir Putin.

Although Kostunica referred specifically to Macedonia his article appeared shortly after Montenegrin president Milo Djukanovic announced he would hold a referendum on independence, probably next March.

Attempts to comply with the demands of the Hague tribunal have also had serious consequences in Croatia. Social Democratic Party prime minister Ivica Racan agreed (under protest) to the handing over of two high-ranking military figures, widely believed to be General Rahim Ademi, and retired General Ante Gotovina. Four members of the Social Liberal Party, junior partners in government, resigned in protest. Racan now faces a vote of confidence, probably on Sunday July 15.

The decision to cooperate with the Hague tribunal was, in fact, taken by the previous government of president Franjo Tudjman, (whose death possibly prevented him from being indicted as a war criminal alongside Milosevic). This has not stopped the nationalist HDZ, the party founded by Tudjman, from opposing any attempts to indict Croats.

The HDZ has been actively organising protests against the Racan government alongside veterans' groups. Last December a massive rally was held in Split in

protest against the arrest of another Croatian General.

Recently a riot took place in Split after the local football team Hajduk Split lost 2-0 to Dinamo Zagreb in a Croatian cup match. (The Zagreb team have now reverted to their traditional name after it was forcibly changed by Tudjman from the 'too communist' Dinamo to Croatia Zagreb).

The riot was not simply a reflection of traditional hostilities between football

rivals. It had political elements. There is considerable hostility in Split, where unemployment is high, to the relatively wealthy Zagreb. The HDZ has strong support in Split and many Hajduk fans carried banners supporting the HDZ and denouncing the government.

Oddly, both sport and Split may have combined to save the Racan government. Goran Ivanisevic's triumphant return to Split was greeted by a crowd of 150,000 people and led to the opposition deciding to call off planned anti-government demonstrations and threats to blockade road and rail links to the major holiday region of Dalmatia.

The Croatian tourist industry is only just recovering from the previous blockade of Dalmatia. Ironically that was carried out by pro-Milosevic Serbs waging war against Croatian independence.

Racan claims he is hopeful of winning the vote of confidence but this is only a temporary reprieve. The current national euphoria surrounding Ivanisevic's Wimbledon victory will not last.

The more Racan tries to comply with the Hague tribunal the less likely his government will survive. The most likely winners of new elections are the HDZ who have pledged to tear up the limited (and never implemented) concessions made by Tudjman.

The handing over of Milosevic has also done nothing to arrest the moves to civil war in Macedonia. Milosevic, in fact, was already in prison in Serbia when fighting started in Macedonia.

Although the latest ceasefire appears to be holding, for the moment, negotiations between the Macedonian government and leaders of the Albanian minority have made little progress.

The government has rejected Albanian demands for equal status with Macedonians guaranteed in a rewritten constitution, claiming this would lead to a break-up of the country.

Like its Yugoslav and Croatian counter-parts, the Macedonian government also finds itself torn between complying with western demands and its own survival.

When they agreed to allow the withdrawal of National Liberation Army forces, the parliament in Skopje was besieged by Macedonian nationalists demanding much stronger military action against Albanian fighters.

In order to save himself President Boris Trajkovski then launched a massive military campaign against the NLA.

The net result is increased support for the NLA, a hardening of Macedonian nationalism and total lack of progress in peace talks.

While western governments have made some criticisms of Macedonian military actions these are totally hypocritical.

Macedonian troops have been trained by NATO and NATO states have made plain their opposition to any Albanian secession.

Moreover, NATO has announced it will send troops to Macedonia only when a lasting truce has been agreed.

The main role of NATO troops will be to disarm the NLA but as the NLA are excluded from the talks it is highly unlikely they will agree to lay down their arms.

Since NATO states are unwilling to risk the lives of their own soldiers then the Macedonian army will have to do the dirty work for them. Far from reducing the risk of civil war NATO's intervention makes it more likely.

In that situation socialists should have no hesitation in supporting the right of the Albanian minority to secede.

ALAN THORNETT was among the guest speakers invited to participate at this year's Marxism event, organised by the SWP. These are his impressions from the sessions he attended.

New debates, new invitations at Marxism 2001

The major themes of Marxism 2001 were the future of the Socialist Alliance and the Scottish Socialist party and the anti-globalisation movement. The slogan was "A New Movement, a New Left".

It is not new for independent socialists and campaigners to be asked to address sessions of Marxism, of course, but invitations to members of other far-left organisations are not so common.

This time speakers from other revolutionary organisations were invited to the event. While these were mainly from the Fourth International, in particular the LCR from France, it is a good step in the right direction.

On the theme of the future of the left there were a number of sessions which extended the current debate on both the Alliance and the SSP in the post election situation. A strand of this was whether the Alliance in England should follow the SSP in Scotland and become a party rather than an alliance - which implies a looser and more informal structure.

The first such discussion was *Socialists After the Election* with Liz Davies and John Rees. Liz Davies argued that there is not only a need to restructure the Alliance but to ensure it is democratic - including the right of local alliances to select their candidates and take decisions relating to standing in elections. She said that the Alliance did need to become a party, but on the other hand it was in many ways already a party.

John Rees stressed that it is necessary, even crucial, to consolidate the Alliance and renovate its structures, but that it should remain an Alliance and not become a party. What was needed, he argued, was a structure which could accommodate both revolutionaries and those who did not consider themselves revolutionaries and in particular be accessible to people breaking from Labour to the left.

The ISG stressed that the Alliance should eventually develop into a party, and that the SWP are wrong to think that this will cut us off from those breaking from Labour. But we absolutely agree that revolutionaries need to have a strategic orientation to this layer, which is far broader than the existing sup-



Alain Krivine (above) based his analysis on current developments across Europe, and prospects for the future

porters of the Socialist Alliance. The theme of renovating and rebuilding the left was taken onto the European level on Saturday evening with a session titled *The Future of the Revolutionary Left*, with Alain Krivine and Chris Harman.

Harman opened with a contribution which, it has to be said, was overwhelmingly about the history of the revolutionary left rather than its future.

It ranged over the 20th century, touching on debates around issues of reform and revolution, and polemicising against the guerrillism of the 1970s, including what he presumably saw as the line of the Fourth International at the time.

Only in his last few sentences did he touch on contemporary politics, and then only in general terms and in the context of the need for a revolutionary party... i.e. the SWP.

Krivine on the other hand took up concretely the recomposition of the anti-capitalist left across Europe, putting it in the context of the fall of the Berlin wall (and the collapse of some of the Western CPs) and the adoption of the neo-liberal agenda by European Social Democracy.

He argued that this has opened up wide space to the left of social democracy across Europe, which has put on the agenda the building of broad anti-capitalist parties in a number of European countries. The revolutionary left has a major responsibility to relate to this process and build on it.

As examples, Krivine pointed to the Left Block in Portugal, Rifondazioni Comunista in Italy, the United Left in Spain, the Red Green Alliance in Denmark, the ODPE in Turkey, and important new developments in Greece, the Socialist Alliance in England and Wales and the SSP in Scotland.

He referred to the success of the LCR/LO slate in France in the European elections, the strength of the far-left vote in the local elections, and the possibility that the

far-left may well out-poll the Communist Party in the presidential contest next year.

He stressed that within these broader regroupments, which are taking place, we have to take up the issue of the unity of the revolutionaries themselves. The new links which are being forged, for example between the LCR and the SWP, and the SWP and the ISG, are important in that process.

These themes were taken up in the discussion. A speaker from the SWP group in Canada said that new levels of unity were being forged in Canada around the anti-capitalist movement which includes far left currents which have simply been rivals in the past - the SWP grouping and people from the FI for example.

He argued that this should be developed further. "You have to know the old debates from the past, but the basis for unity today is on the politics of today", he said.

A speaker from the International Socialist Movement, the majority platform in the Scottish Socialist Party stressed that the upsurge of struggle across the globe has resulted in new opportunities and new support for new parties of the left. It is an opportunity which should not be missed.

Another leading SWP member, Alex Callinicos intervened with a contribution which could only be seen as sharply at odds with Chris Harman. He said:

"The LCR and the SWP are two of the organisations which have emerged from the downturn more or less intact. Now the very methods we used to survive during the downturn become obstacles when we are moving onto new levels of struggle.

"This is why this is a challenging time for us, because we have to shed all kinds of past habits which were useful but now are an obstacle and we have to give up outdated dis-

putes. "I agree completely with Alain that historically important the argument of the interpretation of Stalinism was it would be ridiculous to say that this can be the reason for having separate revolutionary organisations today.

"We need to move forward in a new era in which we no longer have to compete directly with the Stalinists as we did in the past and indeed we are in a period of regroupment - both with the SA and the SSP.

"We also need on an international scale to explore the extent to which we can work together. But it is also important to understand that we as revolutionary organisations, the LCR and the SWP, all of us, face a very real challenge; we are confronted with a new anti-capitalist movement that is producing a new left.

"We have to prove that the revolutionary socialist tradition is relevant to that movement - which is not automatic".

Chris Harman, however, made no concessions to this in his reply to the discussion. He returned again to the old debates. He distorted what Krivine had said, accusing him of calling for the building of a series of electoral alliances across Europe, which he thought would be wrong. Of unity between the FI and the IST he stressed only the problems and the need for clarity to avoid splits and a return to "the Life of Brian".

It has to be said, however, that this was not the general tenor of Marxism 2001 on these issues. Overall the mood was one of far left unity and the stress was on the building of the Socialist Alliance in Britain.

John Rees in the session on *Where Now for the Socialist Alliance* could hardly have been more insistent on this, arguing that the building of the Alliance was of 'strategic importance'. He made it absolutely clear that there is no equivocation in the SWP's commitment to

building the Alliance.

These discussions were however placed in a strange framework. The SWP argue that there was a downturn in the class struggle from the middle of the 1970s, and an up turn at the end of the 1990s.

In fact the level of strike struggles was more or less equal at the beginning and end of the 1970s, and 1978 was the highest since the general strike. There is also an over-estimation of the radicalisation of recent years (crucially important as it is) particularly in Britain where it is presented as more or less a return to the early 1970s.

In fact in Britain we remain at historically low levels of strikes despite the important recent rise in some industries and the extremely important development of the anti-capitalist movement which is a qualitative and ongoing development world-wide.

In Britain, however, developments are still limited to some extent by the low level of strike struggles. The contrast with France, for example, is obvious where sharply rising levels of class struggle since the mid-1990s have intersected with the anti-capitalist sentiment of the anti-globalisation movement and created big social movements like ATTAC.

These debates were reflected in the impressive session called *Witnesses Against Globalisation*. It was an inspiring and mobilising session but the analysis from the SWP (IST) speakers was over the top in their analysis - almost suggesting imminent revolutionary breakthroughs.

Boris Kagarlitsky projected the same super-optimistic view he often does. He was strong, however, on the defence of the Gothenburg demonstrators (as were the other speakers) pointing to the violence of the state and saying that the state forces "put us in a position where it is impossible to be peaceful".

There was, however, virtually no mention of environmental issues in the whole session. This is a problem, given the role of environmental activists in the anti-globalisation movement and the fact that the neo-liberal globalised agenda is not just privatising and deregulating but also wrecking the planet in the process.

In fact the whole question of the environment was a very low profile subject in Marxism 2001 as a whole with only one session out of the 200 sessions and workshops at the event specifically on the environment.

This of course reflects the weakness of the left as a whole and not just the SWP. But given the gigantic problem now posed by global warming and environmental destruction it is a priority the whole of the left has to come to terms with.

Another omission was the whole question of European integration and enlargement and the question of the single currency. There was not a single workshop on any aspect of the EU as such. This despite the stress on the importance of recent mobilisations at Nice and Gothenburg which were at EU summits dealing with the future shape and development of the EU as the central vehicle for the neo-liberal project in Europe.

Overall, however, Marxism 2001 was an impressive event involving large numbers of socialist and activists beyond the ranks of the SWP and making an important contribution on its central themes of building the Socialist Alliance, reshaping the left, and building and mobilising the anti-capitalist movement.

Chinese whispers

RUMOURS in left wing circles that the ISG is on the point of joining or merging with the SWP have been greatly exaggerated.

The two organisations have had an initial meeting to discuss the issue of revolutionary regroupment.

The ISG leadership has since decided to seek further discussions with the SWP to address the political questions involved.

Any definite proposal would of course first be put to a conference of ISG members before any decision was taken.

We will report any relevant developments to our readers and supporters... as soon as there is anything of significance to say. Meanwhile, watch this space!

Children, the family and the lynch-mob mentality

Jane Kelly

The popular response to the parole board's decision to release Richard Thompson and Jon Venables who, as children killed James Bulger, has been nothing short of appalling. The gutter press has encouraged a lynch-mob mentality in its readers.

They have ignored all evidence that these young men have accepted responsibility for the murder and feel remorse and sorrow for the event, that they have been thoroughly rehabilitated and are intelligent and well educated young adults and so could, in the best of worlds, reintegrate themselves into the community.

Rejecting the idea of rehabilitation, the press have called for retribution, and delight in calling these young men 'evil', arguing that they should be 'locked up and the key thrown away'.

Unfortunately it was not just the gutter press which responded in this way. James Bulger's family and supporters have vowed to hunt these young men down, and there is a widespread support for this threat.

In Scandinavia Thompson and Venables would have been treated very differently. The age of criminal responsibility there is much higher than in Britain, and children of their age would not have been tried as they were in an adult court.

Instead, they would have been returned to their community with high levels of support, would have gone back to school and resumed as normal a life as possible.

The facts of their upbringing and background, which were only made public months after their convictions, revealed Thompson and Venables as the children of poverty, with alcohol abuse and sibling violence an integral part of everyday life.

Ironically their incarceration in secure units, with their parents making frequent contact, has given them a more stable upbringing and better education than they could possibly have expected if none of this had happened. But none of these facts are allowed to undermine the call for retribution and punishment.

How is it that such a response is possible in Britain now, when twenty-



Gutter press have stoked up a frenzy

five years ago it was so different? Why is it different in other countries? What is it about children that raises such extreme and irrational emotions?

To answer these questions we need to look at the family in Britain today, its relation to the state and the place of children in it. In most parts of the world the bourgeois nuclear family is society's basic unit of organisation.

While in the 1970s in Britain and North America, feminists analysed the family as oppressive to all its members, especially to women and children, today these questions are far less discussed. There is little understanding of those ideas, despite the fact that, in Britain at least, the family is under much greater pressure than it was then.

Socialist feminists in the 1970s exposed what Engels in the late nineteenth century had also understood – that in the nuclear family the man is the bourgeois and the woman the proletarian.

They pointed out that the form of the family under capitalism suited the bourgeoisie, ensuring the husband's inheritance to his children, but for the working class, then with nothing to pass on to future generations, it was a convenient form of cheap reproduction, daily and generationally, materially and ideologically, as well as a useful form of social control.

Today the nuclear family remains society's basic unit, but is increasingly in contradiction with people's material and emotional needs. At the same time an idealised version of it, based on some variant that may have existed for some in the 1950s, remains the aspiration of millions with no alternative available form.

Promoted by governments of both left and right,

throughout the century, with Blair's brood a shining (if vulnerable) example, parents are expected to be responsible and reliable in teaching their innocent children to be model citizens and future workers.

In this scenario, children especially are the subjects of moral panic. Throughout the twentieth century, 'teenagers' were seen as a dangerous and unruly group. Nowadays, younger children are the subject of similar moral panics.

Perhaps the deepest of the contradictions associated with the nuclear family is visited on children. They are assumed at the same time to be innocent and empty vessels to be filled with correct behaviour and beliefs; but when this goes wrong the individual concerned can only be described as inherently 'evil'.

Despite the ideological pressure to marry, live in families and have children, many people know very well that far from being a safe, caring haven from the competition and vagaries of public life, the nuclear family is a violent and uncaring place, where we learn relationships that harm us for the rest of our lives.

These relations of dependence, of competition and rivalry are patterns that we have to spend the rest of our lives trying to unlearn.

Far from some families being 'dysfunctional', it is the bourgeois nuclear family that is in itself, dysfunctional. The fact that fewer people than ever are marrying, that divorce is still rising, that we are having fewer children and later in our lives, that more and more people are living alone – all attest to the long, slow break up of the nuclear family.

These changes are not driven by simple experience or individual desire for something better, but are linked to a transformation of the labour market and the workforce.

In Britain today women make up about half the workforce, but with the growth of the flexible labour market, many men and women, as well as young people, work in poorly paid, non-unionised jobs, on short-term contracts and in bad conditions.

Workers in Britain also work the longest and most anti-social hours of any workforce in Europe. The Daycare Trust's report 'Shift Parents', published in September 2000, revealed 25% of the workforce working at some point between 6pm and 6am, as well as 15% at night.

61 per cent of working families have parents away from home during the early morning, evening, nights and weekends.

So even when there are two adults in a family, with both parents working and fewer state provisions for creches, after-school clubs, etc. children are increasingly left to their own devices, uncared for and having to fend for themselves.

Added to this the awful poverty that has resulted from the deindustrialisation of some inner city areas, schools worrying more about league tables than the education of deprived children, widespread drug use and the criminality associated with it, and it is no wonder that many children are alienated and desensitised.

It is all of this which creates children who are capable of what Thompson and Venables did; or what was done to Damilola Taylor on the North Peckham Estate at the end of last year.

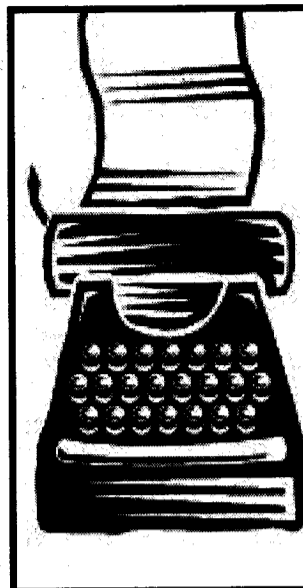
The failure of the state to appreciate or care about what is happening to our children in these situations is nothing short of a disgrace. And the refusal to provide proper safety nets for such children, in the name of privatising as much of the welfare state and public sector provision as possible, is accompanied by an ideological attack on the most vulnerable in society.

The behaviour of children is at one and the same time blamed on 'evil' children, 'poor parenting', 'single mothers' – anything but the real culprits.

The lynch mob mentality of the gutter press and many ordinary people has been fuelled by government policy and statements.

Calling asylum seekers 'bogus' cuts off any humane and just support for people fleeing persecution. Calling those who have committed criminal acts 'evil' and refuting the notion of rehabilitation leaves people like Myra Hindley rotting in prison her whole life.

It is not a big step then to seek retribution rather than rehabilitation for the child killers of James Bulger.



Writeback

We welcome readers' letters on any topic. Letters over 400 words may be cut for space reasons. Write to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. email: outlook@gn.apc.org

Alliance gains in Streatham class struggle!

I study in the Dunraven in Streatham. Dunraven has been awarded as the most outstanding secondary mixed school in South London by the Evening Standard and Ofsted.

On the very same day of the elections (June 7th) almost all 1,000 pupils voted in simulated elec-

tions.

The Labour Party won most of the votes. The interesting thing was that the Socialist Alliance got their best result in England (7.4%). The Socialists got three times more votes in our school than in our borough (Lambeth)!!!

Leon

Creaming off PFI profits

The Big Lie underlying the government's propaganda around the PFI, PPP and whatever other euphemisms may be found in the future is that private money is being put into the provision of public services.

The opposite is the case. The use of the term privatisation only serves to confuse since, unlike the sell-off of the utilities, Sid will not be invited to this, thirty year, party.

Can I suggest that those individuals and groups opposed to this agenda settle on the metaphor of siphoning to describe the basic underlying idea behind all these schemes.

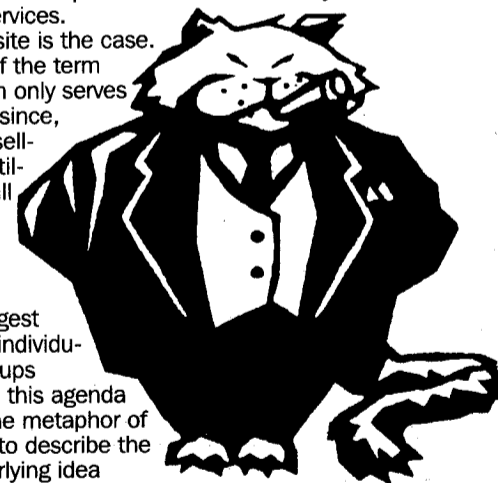
Siphoning captures the way in which these schemes are like driving your car on someone else's petrol.

It lend itself readily to illustration, such as taxpayer's money (cream) being poured into bowls labelled NHS and Education whilst various cats siphon off their share for the next thirty years.

There is no economic argument for these schemes but once you have

the utilities and the mutuals, the only "market" left in the mature economies of the west are the provision of Education and Health service.

The beauty of these



schemes is that they are risk free and come with a guaranteed income stream that is ring-fenced for thirty years.

I hope you can find the opportunity to use and elaborate on this metaphor in the weeks to come.

Terry Mc Ginn

PS Forgive me if this seems a little patronizing; on re-reading the words granny and eggs come to mind.

Socialism on the internet

Socialist Outlook web site: www.labour.org.uk

International Socialist Group: www.isg.org.uk

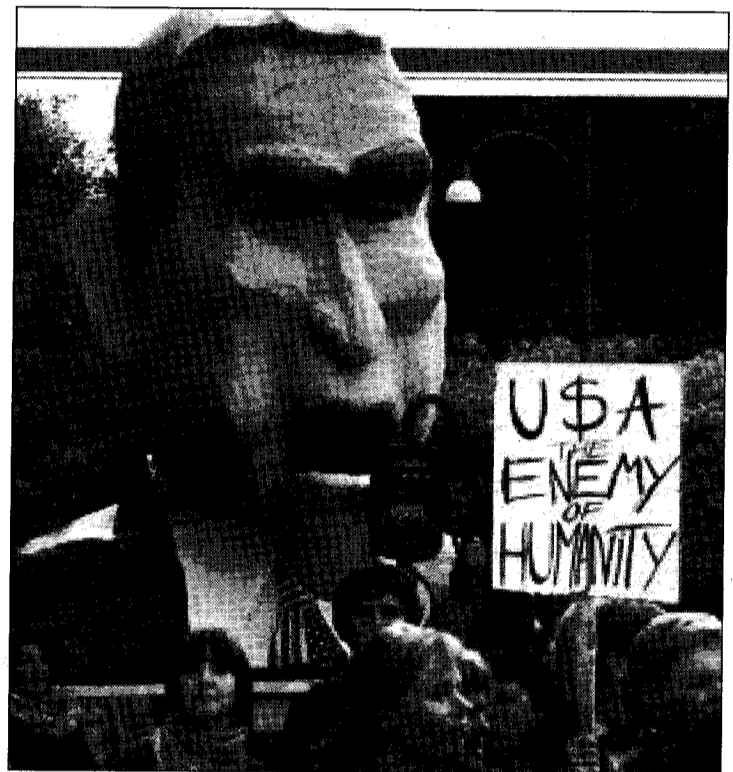
Socialist

A monthly marxist review. No 47. July-August 2001. 50p

OUTLOOK

Menwith Hill protestors say:

Star Wars starts wars!



George Bush is undoubtedly relieved that the missile test carried out in Vandenburg Air Force Base in California on July 14 was successful – particularly given the fact that the previous tests in the sequence were either failures, or in one case only a partial success.

Millions of people disagree with him – as it is clear that this programme is the biggest threat to nuclear disarmament faced for many years. Demonstrations highlighting opposition on this deadly question, as well as in support of the Kyoto treaty are following the President wherever he goes.

It's clear however that whether or not the test had "succeeded", Bush was committed to pushing ahead with the Ballistic Missile Defence programme.

His proposed defence budget for 2002 provides \$8.3 billion for missile

defence research – an increase of almost 40% over this year's allocation. Since the test, it has been made clear that further tests will continue, and plans are being laid for constructing a long term test site in deepest Alaska.

Meanwhile activists here in Britain have again highlighted the fact that American bases on British soil are crucial to the project. On July 3 and 4 groups of activists were able to enter Menwith Hill base in Yorkshire, which together with Fylingdales is essential to the Son of Star Wars project.

More than 100 Greenpeace supporters breached security at the base in 3 places, and the occupation which gave effective publicity to opponents of Bush's military madness. Pictures of activists with banners atop radio masts and the huge water tower carried the message that

"Star Wars starts Wars".

No sooner had the police finally managed to remove all the protestors bar one almost twenty four hours later, than a second breach took place. Not a happy present for George W on American Independence Day.

Key to the protestors' demands was the call that Tony Blair should say no to British involvement in the system.

Greenpeace Executive Director Stephen Tindale explained that Bush needs the two British sites as the "eyes and ears" of the planned Star Wars system and added "We urge Mr Blair not to kowtow to Bush on such a crucial issue".

However the Prime Minister has continued to block debate on this issue despite the fact that more than 100 MPs have signed an Early Day motion opposing the scheme.

Replying to Chris Mullin following

the Menwith Hill protests, Blair retorted

"I don't agree with him (Mullin) that the Americans are wrong to identify weapons of mass destruction as a genuine threat.

"They are. And I believe we need to be prepared to look at all systems that are necessary... offensive and defensive systems."

"I think it is important that we keep an open mind on it," he added.

Blair's position, doggedly maintained since Bush's election is that the US have not yet made any request to Britain, so there is currently nothing to discuss!

Over the months ahead we need to build a broad and effective disarmament movement which can effectively demand that Blair answers our questions – not those of his mate George W.

Stop missile madness
CND national demonstration
LONDON
October 13
Blockade FASLANE Trident base
October 22



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