

**An injury to one is an injury to all**

# Solidarity

**& WORKERS' LIBERTY**

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**Government wallows in  
crisis and cash scandals**

# Scapegoating black and Asian youth

**BY ROSALIND ROBSON**

**A**N increase in, and a strengthening of, stop and search powers looks set to become a key part of the government's "tough on crime" agenda.

Currently the police have to state a specific reason for stopping someone and/or searching them in the street. The reason has to be in line with current legislation. They also have to give you form stating exactly why they stopped you and what the outcome was. If the stop and search is conducted under anti-terrorism legislation the police do not have to suspect you of having committed a crime in order to stop you.

New Labour have extended a anytime, anywhere, any reason "stop and search" scheme to four piloted areas. A just-published review of policing (the Flannegan review) recommends ditching the police form when police stop "suspects". The freed up time, says the review, will enable the police to carry out more stop and searches.

Whatever the government does, the Tories will say they have not gone far enough — short of having the legal right to batter you to death, the Tories want the police to be given many many more powers.

It all looks bad especially as, in practice, the police often stop people simply because they are black or Asian and young. In the cops' minds they are more likely to have committed a crime, so they deserved to be stopped.

Continued on page 2

# SWP- Respect to challenge Livingstone

BY MARTIN THOMAS

**L**ET'S look on the bright side first. SWP-Respect is reaffirming the need for a left challenge to Livingstone as London mayor. George Galloway and his Respect-Renewal are now backing "Red Ken", and appealing for a vaguely-left "Progressive List" for the Assembly. SWP-Respect says it will run candidates in the London mayor and assembly elections (May 2008) to respond to the needs of "working people" and present a "positive alternative".

SWP-Respect is emphatic — has to be, I guess, following the split-away of Galloway and most of the Respect councillors in Tower Hamlets — about the need to win votes across London and not just in Tower Hamlets and Newham, where Respect won a large chunk of its votes last time round, in 2004, on a "Respect-is-the-party-for-Muslims" pitch.

So up to a point SWP-Respect is trying to do the right thing. But its leaflets for the London elections, and for a current by-election campaign in Leyton, East London, contain no reference (even by implication) to the working class or to socialism — only a fairly random list of "bullet-point" demands, presumably chosen on the calculation that they represent left-wing ideas which will play well with the electorate.

On Thursday 31 January SWP-Respect called a rally of its London supporters to choose candidates to fill the gaps left in its London Assembly list by the Galloway split.

Two of us were there from Workers' Liberty, with a leaflet advocating that SWP-Respect go back on its previous opposition to the rail union RMT initiating a broad working-class left list for London (a vocal minority opposition in the London Transport region RMT, which may have been a factor in the RMT Executive's decision that there wasn't enough momentum behind the idea of a list to make it viable was fomented by the SWP). We advocated that SWP-Respect make a positive turn away from the "party-for-Muslims" line by seeking to support and participate in a broad working-class left list initiated by the RMT or other unions.

We didn't get to speak, because the "discussion from the floor" in the meeting consisted of four obviously pre-planned speeches.

The rally launched a fund-raising drive for the £30,000 they'll need for the London election.

It seems that the SWP has decided, for now, to try by "voluntarist" means to sustain SWP-Respect as an SWP electoral front, without seeking any new alliance to replace the broken one with Galloway.

Not a good basis for rebuilding an electoral base after the Galloway debacle, or for allowing (let alone encouraging) serious debate on that experience.

# Scapegoating youth

From front page

Why the government believe stopping and searching is a good way to wrinkle out Islamist terrorists in this way, is baffling — as if the average would-be suicide bomber goes around with a jihadist handbook in their back pocket! In reality the stop and search routine, under the anti-terror laws, has been a pretext and a prelude to taking in "suspects" for questioning (Asian looking people with "Islamic-sounding" names). A big increase in police questioning and arrests of Asian people since 2001 has produced a tiny number of relevant charges being brought.

Both New Labour and the Tories say that there will be no reintroduction of "Sus Laws". Twenty or thirty years ago the police routinely used 19th century vagrancy laws to give them unlimited power to stop and mainly young and/or black men they suspected of committing a crime (hence the "sus"), or "being about to commit a crime". That person could be arrested and charged and convicted merely on the say so of the police. The police used the Sus Law to routinely harass mainly young black men, labelled as criminal by a racist criminal justice system and the wider society.

Surely New Labour won't reintroduce this? Don't be too sure about that. What's the context?

This measure, and others such as ASBO and other anti-social behaviour policies, are the result of the prevalent "fear of crime" ideology. Crime is a real problem and a rational cause for fear for many working class people, especially if you live in a deprived area. But there is also a great deal of hysteria and ignorance being pedalled by media and politicians.

To hear some of them talk you would think that the streets of Britain's cities are like the Wild West. (For instance the recent Jacqui Smith comment about how "one does not go out on the streets of Hackney after dark"). Urged on by the Tories, the government are pushing the police to get out on the streets more, to "clean up" anti-social behaviour, be a physical intimidating presence in working class communities. Everything area of urban life is to be policed — from stopping teenagers from drinking in public to deterring litter droppers with talking CCTV cameras.

It is all a convenient distraction for a government that's up to its neck in petty corruption and charges of incompetence, a government that is (rightly) anxious about a serious downturn in the

economy.

Increasing stop and search is a policy of people who have no imagination, ability or inclination to deal with crime as a social problem (or for that matter, Islamist terrorism as a political and social problem).

And increasing stop and search means increasing racist harassment, discrimination and injustice on our streets.

*Fact: black men are six times more likely to be stopped and searched than white men.* Black people in general are four times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people. And Asian people are twice as likely to be stopped and searched. Stopping black people if they have nice cars is not about protecting black people from crime, as David Cameron would have it, it is about accusing them of stealing a car! Stopping young Asian men is not about stopping them from being stabbed, it's about assuming they are a terrorist.

*Fact: 67% of stop and searches are currently for drugs.*

Put the two facts together and you get the police's favourite script about average everyday crimes: all young black men are drug pushers.

The racist assumptions absolutely stink, but that is not the sum total of the stupidity of this kind of policing.

Only 7% of all drug-related stop and searches actually result in an arrest. It seems likely therefore that the police are routinely harassing people either for personal possession of drugs, or because they just want to, because they haven't got anything better to do, and they really don't know how to prevent drug-related crime.

In the 1980s hatred of the "sus laws" was one of the incendiary ingredients of a series of huge explosions of anger by black youth on the streets of British cities. In April 1981 the police sent 100 extra police into Brixton under "Operation Swamp". Nearly 1,000 people were arrested. This followed years and years of "sus law" operation. When one young man was arrested, his head bleeding, a crowd of people rescued him from the police. The police went wild, wielding batons and chasing people as the people of Brixton fought back. Elemental battles like these helped change the law — for the better.

Do New Labour and the Tories want to see such things happen again? Maybe not. But they are either too stupid, too parsimonious or just too

illiberal to do anything better.

It is the job of socialists, people who want to create a better society, to advocate something better.

In the first place we have to fight hard to defend civil liberties. Weak as water statements from the professional civil liberties organisations have been the reaction to these proposals. We need to be clear: nobody should have to put up with being routinely harassed on the street, in public or in private, anywhere, as they go about their business.

We call for social answers to crime. Instead of building more, bigger prisons, spend more money on drug rehabilitation.

Create a society where people have equal and full access to housing, education and health care.

Instead of creating ever more sophisticated anti-social interventions for youth, have a budget for youth facilities, or stop cutting and dumbing down further education.

Instead of threatening to evict council tenants if they don't look for work, create real jobs and

*Backlash against the SUS laws, Brixton, 1981*

# Bread and roses for the rich

BY REUBEN GREEN

**T**he battle over arts funding is still raging, with the latest fallout this week being a £3.5 million cut to the arts in Wales.

When in March last year it was revealed that the Arts Council of England would soon be making drastic cuts in light of an apparent £1bn lottery shortfall — and a massive diversion of these funds to the Olympics — a theatrical furore ensued. Tessa Jowell having brazenly lied about the Olympics budget, which now stands at nearly four times what was originally touted, was unapologetic about grabbing £112.5m from the arts for the £9.3 billion "once in a lifetime good cause"; the Heritage Lottery Fund was set to lose £161.2m and Sport England faced a £99.9m cut.

The spotlight has largely been hogged by the prima donnas, with a set piece at the Old Vic last month where some 500 big-wigs of the theatre world — members of Equity union — overwhelmingly passed a resolution of no-confi-

dence in the Arts Council of England. Details of cuts decided upon by the Council were announced in December, with appeals to be submitted by mid January, which allowed 12-18 working days to respond!

Since then, partly as a result of high profile campaigns, 17 organisations — mainly more prominent outfits — have retained their funding, while a great many of the 212 organisations that have not had their funding renewed are smaller, more precarious initiatives, including touring groups and practitioners who do less vaunted educational and therapeutic work at a local level. Indymedia also reports that "among those who have lost all their funding are Tara Arts, a leading Asian theatre company specialising in classical plays; the Drill Hall, London's leading lesbian and gay theatre venue; and London Bubble, a south London company producing children's theatre".

While many are simply furious with the heavy handed and unaccountable behaviour of the Arts Councils, the episode has largely been

portrayed in the media as an Arts vs Sports stand-off. This angle has in some ways played into the hands of government spin. New Labour and the Olympic cartel have talked a lot about the regeneration of one of the most deprived areas of Europe, the sporting legacy for the underprivileged next generation etc etc. The eight per cent Sport England budget cut will result in 186,000 fewer people being given a chance to take part in a sporting activity.

Working-class people throughout East London know — or will soon realise — the horrific truth of what the Olympics will hold for them. As with every other Olympic build in the last decades, it has been an opportunity for the rich to orchestrate what are essentially mass clearances and gentrification of working class areas under the cover of the razzamatrazz and patriotic rhetoric.

East Londoners will see rising house prices and living costs, evictions, raised local taxes, Compulsory Purchase Orders, the loss of Hackney Marshes and much of the Lower Lea Valley, which includes an extensive network of waterways and natural habitats on a key migratory route... this will be the main impact for the working-class in East London. The London Development Agency has ridden roughshod over previous planning regulations to preclude community opposition. Also, there are fears that even the many thousands of jobs created will not match the skills of local people.

Urgent working-class community and trade union action needs to be taken to fight both the encroachments of the Olympics and the cuts to local arts projects.

# A horror story to learn from

**A**N 81 year old retired Irish cardinal, Desmond Connell, has gone to the High Court in Dublin for a writ to stop his successor as Archbishop of Dublin from handing over church files on paedophile priests to a state-organised inquiry into clerical abuse of children.

He has called on the court to prevent the head of the Catholic Church in the Dublin diocese from handing over information about criminal priests to the government-appointed investigation. He has got an interim writ, freezing proceedings until there can be a full court hearing. He claims that some of the files contain solicitors' advice to him, and therefore that they are privileged, exempt from scrutiny without his say-so.

This strange affair deserves the attention of socialists and secularists in Britain.

Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, Primate of the Catholic Church here, who plausibly claims that his is now the most numerous Christian denomination in the country, has a lot to say on social and political questions these days.

A lot of it is reactionary — its attitude to lesbians and gays, for instance.

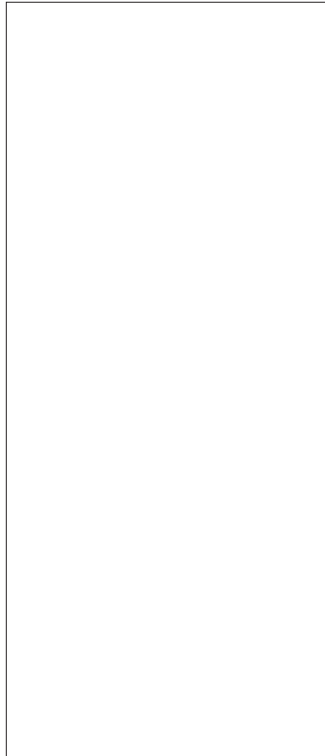
His overriding concern is to have as large a part as he can of the affairs of society — its mores, its morality, what it allows and what it forbids to the citizen — regulated by the "laws of God", as his church understands them. In Britain now it is an effort to have society ruled according to the teachings of a church which the big majority does not accept.

The attempt by Murphy O'Connor and his bishops to impose the prejudices of their church so that lesbians and gays could not adopt or foster children is only one recent example.

The Catholic people of Ireland are now once again, in the grotesque Cardinal Connell affair, being unpleasantly reminded of what rule by priests, bishops, and cardinals sometimes has meant for them. For many decades, Catholic priests, members of the Christian Brothers (a monk-like teaching order), and nuns, running Irish schools, orphanages, and reformatories, savagely abused children, beating and raping them.

That they subjected them to relentless and merciless violence was known to everyone. What was not widely known — scarcely known at all, except to its small victims and to maimed and troubled adults who had been small victims — and certainly never discussed in public, was that sexual abuse of children in schools, orphanages, and reformatories, was also an everyday thing.

The abuse of children is now understood to be a feature of all institutions where children are helpless at the mercy of adults. In Ireland, within a loose and light framework of state regulation to



*Desmond Connell: "the savage spirit of the old Irish hierarchy".*

check such things as the qualifications of teachers, schools (etc.) were an archipelago of hell-holes run or supervised by priests, Christian Brothers, and nuns.

Officially, Catholic Ireland was a desert of lacerating, arid sexual puritanism — a place where for many decades the average age of marriage was 35, and many lay men and women, never marrying, lived entirely celibate lives.

The poet Patrick Kavanagh — he is also the author of the well-known song, "On Raglan Road" — borrowed the common name for the Famine of the 1840s, in which a million starved to death, the Great Hunger, for the title of a long poem about that, Ireland's other great hunger.

In that Ireland, the priests and nuns were honoured as paragons and models, demigods more closely connected to the Big God than anyone else could be. They were the moral police for a strict and very puritanical morality.

In the towns and in the villages, the priests were central in all social and political activities, honoured and deferred to in a way that people in Britain's quasi-secular society cannot easily imagine. They set the standards in everything, including what writers of fiction could

publish. They imposed rules under which most of Ireland's best writers had at least some of their work banned in Ireland.

They laid down the law to politicians. When, half a century ago, an attempt was made to bring in state provision of rudimentary medical care for mothers and children, the bishops squashed it. They sent for the Minister of Health, Noel Browne — a Catholic who would be Ireland's leading socialist until his death a decade ago — and told him that it should not be done.

## The horror stories from the land where the Catholic Church ruled the lives of children tell us: don't be complacent.

Why? He tried to ask, and was told — the minister of the elected government — that they would not discuss it. It was not for such as himself to have explanations given to him by such as themselves, the Princes of God's Own Church.

He asked why, then, the bishops had not denounced the National Health Service in Northern Ireland, which was a great deal more advanced that what he proposed. He was told: we do not explain.

The answer was only too obvious: in the 26 Counties they could get away with banning reform; in the UK they couldn't, and didn't try.

In Catholic Ireland, the priesthood had for centuries shared the oppressions of the people at the hands of the then bigoted Protestant British state. They were the leaders of the helot Catholic people. Their prestige and their power with their people came to be greater than anywhere else in Europe, even in clerical-fascist Spain. The Irish clergy did not need a police state: they ruled with the reverent consent of the people.

Those priests who were the conscience and model of Ireland were — and are now generally known to have been — often viciously hypocritical child-molesters; and the Bishops are generally known to have been, at best, their protectors. An accused priest was frequently, perhaps normally, simply moved by his bishop to another diocese — and new victims.

Cardinal Connell, who became Archbishop of Dublin in 1988 was forced out in 2004 after a big sex scandal was exposed in Dublin. Now, like the savage spirit of the old Irish hierarchy rising out of its bolthole, the old clerical hoodlum

has rudely pushed aside his successor as Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin, appealing to the courts to prevent the church files compiled during his Archbishopric being read by the official investigation.

It is said that his action has the quiet support of many priests. But now there is a well-informed and critical Irish citizenry watching and listening and judging.

The good side of this story, if it can be said to have one, is that Connell, a priest since 1951, bred in the old school of Irish Catholic priests, is digging the Irish Catholic Church deeper into the mire by his arrogant assertion that the clergy are a privileged breed, answerable only to their own caste and to God.

The historical atrocity that is the story of Christianity in modern Ireland — of the Catholic Church, but not only the Catholic Church: arguably the most evil of all the Christian bigots in recent Irish history is the 83-year old Ian Paisley, now "First Minister" of Northern Ireland — holds the mirror up to Britain.

Religious bigotry is growing. Segregation of religious-ethnic communities is increasing. The bungling clumsiness with which the Government pursues its "war on terror" is contributing greatly to communal polarisation. Religious assertiveness by organised groups of bigots is growing.

In Britain faith schools have multiplied, encouraged by the New Labour government.

These are schools where Christian bigots, Jewish obscurantists, medieval-minded Muslims and others are licensed by the state to inflict their fantasies, obsessions and food-fetishes on emotionally and intellectually vulnerable children.

The Catholic Church campaigns against the right of a woman to abort a foetus at any stage in pregnancy. Murphy O'Connor recently even presumed to tell Catholics in Britain that Catholic doctrine on abortion should determine how they voted.

The horror stories from the land where the Catholic Church ruled the lives of the people and of the children, and the cover-ups by bishops like Connell, show how much they care about living, real children.

What the unrepentant old scoundrel Connell says to us in Britain is, don't be complacent. What *Solidarity* says is: fight for a secular Britain, for the separation of church and state, the banishment of religion from public life, the abolition of faith schools, and the creation of a comprehensively secular schooling system where the children of parents of all religions and of none are educated in a common secular citizenship.

FURTHER EDUCATION

Lecturers' strike on 24 April

BY AN FE LECTURER

THE UCU has announced plans for strike action for Further Education lecturers to coincide with the action planned by the NUT on 24 April. (Universities cannot join the action since they are entering the third year of a three year deal, although rising inflation might cause that deal to fall apart later this year.)

Although the 2007-8 pay claim remains an issue of dispute, the union is bringing forward a demand for 2008-9 for 6% (with a minimum of £1,500). They are doing this jointly with other unions in the FE sector.

Accelerating the 2008-9 pay claim is necessary since some branches have already accepted pay increases for 2007-8 and therefore could not be balloted on that issue. The union have said that if college principals do not agree to the 6% figure by 5 March, they will start a ballot on 14 March.

This is good news — co-ordinated strike action across the education sector will help demonstrate what is necessary across the larger public sector.

UCU in Further Education now has a left wing majority on its leading committees, one which is willing to build action. It is important now to build for the ballot and to campaign in local branches. Unfortunately there are credible rumours that some well-organised branches have chosen to opt out of action by not supplying up-to-date membership lists.

Nonetheless the argument for spreading action across the public sector has to be made. Many UCU branches are weak, especially among hourly (poorly) paid lecturers. Even the strong branches are largely based on full-time "main grade" staff. The SWP-led UCU left needs to focus much more closely on building an organisation of activists based in the branches, to push both the arguments for co-ordinated public sector action and to create strong and confident branches.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Birmingham strike against single status pay cuts

ON 5 February some 20,000 council workers took strike action in Birmingham in protest at the imposition of a "single status" wage package which will see pay cuts for 5,740 people.

Some will see as much as £18,000 a year taken out of their salaries. Two thirds of the losers are women, who the "single status" scheme is meant to assist. At a rally on 12 January, Unison deputy general secretary Keith Sonnet pointed out the hypocrisy of council chiefs: "It can't be fair that more than 100 workers face a pay cut of £10,000 when the council leaders can vote themselves over £65,000 in allowances." Even those workers who are benefiting from single status are far from happy. 3,000 women will see their salaries increase by less than £100.

On the day of the strike over 3,000 teachers, carers, refuse collectors, street cleaners and other council workers staged a lunchtime demonstration in the city centre. The effects of the strike were far-reaching, forcing the closure of 120 schools, 24 libraries, 11 leisure centres and 22 neighbourhood offices. The strike was the biggest to take place in the city since the 1970s.

Displaying its arrogant disregard for the workers, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat administration which rules Britain's largest local authority has offered a take-it-or-leave-it pay deal to the 55,000 employees, threatening those who do not accept by 1 April with the sack. As yet, some 16,000 people have refused or failed to return their contracts. Hoping to appease one of the more powerful sections of the workforce, the Tories and Lib Dems also used the "carrot" approach, offering refuse

Teachers: take action on pay!

This leaflet from Leeds NUT outlines the reasons why teachers are fighting for better pay. Activists in every union, especially public sector unions, need to put the teachers' case to other groups of workers. This is an important pay battle that we should all help the teachers to win.

A SPECIAL meeting of the NUT National Executive on 24 January decided to call on its members to support industrial action to challenge the teachers pay award for 2008-11.

The ballot will open on 28 February and the planned strike day is Thursday 24 April.

Here are ten key reasons for teachers to support this call for action:

1. The pay award means a 2.45% increase from September 2008 at a time when inflation is 4%. Hence it means a pay cut in real terms for members.
2. This will make 2008 the fifth successive year in which teachers have had a pay

workers a paltry compromise deal which would see their pay cut limited to "only" £2,000 a year. Spurning this pathetic concession, they were out in force on the picket lines on 5 February.

The strike was called by Unite, Unison, Amicus, GMB and UCATT unions, displaying the unity of the labour movement locally in fighting against the single status deal.

The fight against pay cuts for council workers is a national one, and not only because of the single status scheme being rolled out across Britain. While the Labour group on Birmingham council has offered some — very weak — support for the council workers, asking that they be treated "in a considerate and equitable manner", elsewhere Labour councils have been just as happy to slash wages and privatise services. As if to prove the point, the government's new local government funding figures will require councils to cut their budget by 3% by making "efficiency savings", no doubt by cutting pay and services.

Single status was introduced with the claim that it would give women workers the same deal as their male counterparts. In fact, low-paid women workers are in many cases those who lose out most from the scheme. We say yes to equal pay, but we demand that this should be a levelling-up exercise, increasing the salaries of the worst-off without any attacks on services, jobs or other workers' pay.

REMPLOY

Strikes planned

DISABLED workers employed by Remploy have taken part in and plan further strike action in opposition to management plans to close 28 factories and cut 1600 jobs.

Remploy workers at factories in Birkenhead and Aintree were on strike on 6-7 February. Further strikes are planned for 13-14 February and 21-22 February. The York factory has voted for strike action and will join the strikes on 13-14 February.

There are a further five official strike ballots in the pipeline. Results are expected in the coming weeks for the Remploy factories in Hartlepool, and St Helens, and Treforest, Ystradgynlais near Swansea and Brynamman in South Wales.

The dispute has been hotting up since November, when Remploy, which provides employment for people with disabilities, received approval for its "modernisation" programme from Peter Hain, at that time work and pensions secretary. It is currently looking to slash its budget by £59 million, to the detriment of disabled workers.

Indeed, Remploy had previously planned to slash another 15 workplaces, but under criticism from the unions, claimed that it wanted 55 factories to remain open — up from 40 — subject to satisfactory progress towards an "acceptable loss per disabled employee".

In response to the bosses' plans, Unite and

increase which is below inflation.

3. The latest award proposes that we get two further years of pay cuts with 2.3% in 2009 and again in 2010.

4. Pay increases in the private sector are averaging over 4%

5. Teachers' starting pay is 10% behind that of other graduate jobs and within the first five years the gap widens to 30%

6. 30,000 teachers have lost management allowances as part of the move to TLRs and it is estimated that this will rise to 50,000 by December 2008 when safeguarding runs out. Many thousands more have suffered pay reductions by moving to a TLR of less value than their allowance.

7. The government claim that the real measure of inflation is the consumer price index (CPI) which is 2.1%. When it comes to the repayment of student loans, however, they increased the rate to 4.8% because that was the figure for the retail price index at the time. So they choose the lower measure when

paying us but the higher figure when we have to pay them.

8. Young teachers repaying student loans and trying to get on the housing market are particularly severely hit by measures of inflation which the pay award ignores (interest rates, mortgages, student loan repayments).

9. Lower pay means a poorer pension. All teachers, but especially those within 15 years of retiring, will find that the pension they have to live on after work will be hugely reduced by lower pay now.

10. The alternative to collective action is increased debt, mortgage defaults, teacher shortage and three more years of pay cuts

- What can teachers do?
- Vote yes for action on pay.
- Ensure that the case is spread in the staffroom.
- Hold a union meeting in school
- Talk to other school unions about the support they can give.

Email [patmurphy@ntlworld.com](mailto:patmurphy@ntlworld.com)

the GMB balloted their members for strike action — the first at the firm in 60 years — and secured a 73% 'yes' vote in Aintree and 100% in Birkenhead.

LABOUR REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE

The future of the left?

BY DALE STREET

AROUND 70 people heard John McDonnell speak at a Scottish Campaign for Socialism meeting in Glasgow on 2 February.

Speaking on "The Future of the Left" McDonnell's starting point was that the current economic crisis was a vindication of Marx's analysis of the nature of capitalism. But the Labour Party, despite the role played in it historically by socialists and revolutionaries, was now dominated by the forces of neo-liberalism. Any opportunity for the Party's rank-and-file membership and affiliated trade unions to influence Party policy had been largely closed down.

The left outside of the Labour Party he said was hardly in a healthier state than the left inside the Party. Overall, the existing organisational forms of the left were inadequate. What was needed, therefore, was a new strategy and new organisational forms.

Campaigns were "everywhere" he said, about the environment, in defence of women's rights, against the arms trade, in support of asylum-seekers, for workers rights, against the visit of the Saudi royal prince... What was needed was to link up with these individual campaigns, and to combine campaigning activity with intellectual activity. Socialists needed to "seize the moment" and build a "broad united front".

The local SWP organiser chimed in with McDonnell's emphasis on campaigning activities, citing the "Stop the War Coalition" as an example of how a broad and active campaign could be built. But other SWP initiatives — "Respect" in England, and "Solidarity" in Scotland — were passed over in silence. And for pretty obvious reasons.

Alan McCombes, speaking on behalf of the Scottish Socialist Party, stressed that the SSP was prepared to work with anyone to the left of the Labour Party and the SNP, and also the left in the Labour Party and the SNP. But such joint work should be based on co-operation, not attempts at control. (Translated into plain English: There'll be no joint work with the SWP or any of its front organisations.)

Asked whether the Labour Representation Committee was aiming to build a "rainbow coalition" of social movements or whether it was aiming to rebuild working-class trade-union-based political representation,

McDonnell replied that it was the latter.

The problem, however, is that little in McDonnell's lead-off had pointed in that direction. And while it is true that any re-assertion of working-class political representation would want to reach out to all those campaigns "out there", a project for rebuilding working-class political representation is certainly not the same as knitting together a latter-day "rainbow coalition".

As McDonnell himself said, the working class is the decisive force for socialist transformation of society.

Councils threaten cuts

From back page

The numbers included an assumption that local government will make "efficiency savings" of 3% a year. But 50% of local government expenditure goes on wages, and a large part to education; and however more "efficient" teachers become, councils cannot at all increase class sizes.

The Government will "help" by trying to cut teachers' and local government workers' wages in real terms, with the 2% limit, due to be locked in with three-year settlements. But additional pressure is being put on the system by "single status", an agreement for restructuring local government pay which was made in principle in 1997 with details to be negotiated locally in each local authority by April 2007.

A number of local authorities "stopped the clock" in April 2007 and continued negotiations on the basis that the deal would be backdated to April 2007. According to the *Financial Times* (6 February), two-thirds of councils have not yet agreed a deal.

According to the Local Government Information Unit, the impact of the central government allocation for 2008-11 will vary from area to area. "Some local authorities will be under enormous strain, finding efficiency targets difficult to meet without cutting services".

A socialist policy would demand a big expansion of local government autonomy, including the right for local government to tax businesses, including businesses not in the local government which employ workers from that area. Immediately, socialists must be on the alert to support local government workers and service-users fighting against the squeeze likely to come in many budgets this April.

# Would you like a certificate with that?

BY HEATHER SHAW

**Y**OU'VE tasted the Big Mac, you've probably had some McNuggets in your time but how about getting your chops round a McA-Level? Sceptical? Me too.

David Fairhurst, senior vice-president and chief people officer of McDonalds, is hailing his company's decision to award work-based qualifications as "an important and exciting step" for the company. The qualifications, by combining marketing, HR and customer service skills to the equivalent of A Level, will offer employees the all-important opportunity for "social mobility", roughly translated as "getting working class kids to stomp on other working class kids in order to earn higher wages".

Network Rail and Flybe have also been granted permission to run this kind of work-based education scheme, which will contribute points to university applications.

With "McJob" taking its formal place in the dictionary last year, this latest initiative seems to me to be a perverse response. As they leave compulsory education these days, kids aren't exactly being offered the world on a platter. You can go to college, if you can get the grades and support yourself financially, you can do an apprenticeship if you don't mind being paid the legal minimum of absolutely nothing to be someone's slave. You can claim Jobseekers' Allowance and live off £50 a week whilst trying to find someone to exploit you. Or if you want to "Be The Best", get fit, get paid and get out of that shit town, you can go and kill people in the name of your Queen. Good choices? No.

McDonalds, decision to employ such tactics

*Put down that book!*

may on the surface seem generous, noble even, giving their staff the opportunity to gain useful qualifications whilst earning a crust, but in reality it is part of the continuing "dumbing down" of Further Education.

McDonalds workers should not have to rely on their bosses to provide them with skills; the education of young people who make up the majority of the McJob labour force should be more than grooming to be the next generation of low-paid workers! Education should be free and accessible to all! This kind of faux-altruism is beyond patronising — telling workers that it is their fault they are where they are in the system and that the least they can do is battle to improve themselves and up their employability.

Young workers make up a large part of the lowest paid sectors making them some of the most vulnerable. Choosing their own mode of exploitation is not an improvement.

## Assessing anti-sweatshop campaigns

BY BRUCE ROBINSON

**T**ODAY'S globalised clothing industry involves transnational networks of production and sales in which manufacturing is subcontracted to producers, usually in developing countries. To respond to the often horrific sweatshop conditions that result requires organising across national frontiers with multiple targets — the brands under which the clothes are sold and the subcontractors who supply them.

In a new book about garment workers \* Ethel Brooks provides a critique of certain forms of "transnational labor organising" by looking at both ends of the chain, which she divides into the global (campaigning in the US in support of garment workers) and the local (the real conditions in the countries and factories where production takes place).

She argues that several US campaigns of the mid-90s, by ignoring the specificities of "the local" and also taking agency and control away from the workers they were supposed to be supporting, were counter-productive in terms of any real progress out of sweatshop conditions and towards self-emancipation. She also questions the way women workers are presented as victims or models in those campaigns.

Brooks looks at three major campaigns: on child labour in Bangladesh; protests against working conditions in an export processing zones in El Salvador; and against abuses of immigrant workers in New York. She includes detailed research on the situations of the workers and the local contexts behind their struggles.

Brooks is particularly critical of three aspects of these campaigns. Firstly, that they are oriented to US consumers who are presented as having the power to fight sweatshop labour through their consumption decisions, thus detracting from the agency of the workers and the centrality of production relations, reducing the action to pressure on the corporations and letting people think they are accomplishing something when they shop. She also points out that the consequences (for example, of the US law boycotting Bangladeshi products made with child labour) may be bad for the workers involved.

Secondly, such campaigns often paint sweatshop production as something apart from the normal operation of global capital, so that the owners of the US brands can say they didn't know about the conditions in their subcontractors' factories or that certain firms are bad employers. Brooks details the case of Kathie Lee Gifford, who used the exposure of some of her suppliers to claim the moral high ground through a televised "confession" and expression of regret which allowed her company to carry on business as usual.

Thirdly, she claims that such campaigns go

over the heads of the workers involved. One aspect of this is that agreements are signed around issues such as independent monitoring of subcontractors without the consent of the workers. Another criticism is that such campaigns are controlled by activists who present particular identities and information as the basis for campaigning, ignoring the multiple identities of women garment workers as "classed, gendered, racialised". This is part of Brooks' post-modern concerns with forms of discourse and identity.

There is much in Brooks' critique of these campaigns that activists involved in No Sweat would agree with. No Sweat oppose boycotts, characterise sweatshop labour as "modern, global capitalism stripped bare" rather than an exceptional state of affairs, and seek to build links with independent workers' and community organisations, focusing on their working and living conditions and their own campaigns and struggles.

But there is a major problem with Brooks' position. It is overgeneral — applied to attempts all at international labour organising — and out of date. Although the book was published in 2007, there is no reference to the development of anti-sweatshop campaigning in the eight years following Seattle and the growth of the movement "for globalisation from below" beyond a passing remark that there has been "a learning curve" for activists. Certainly many of the lessons she draws have been assimilated by them (or were even recognised beforehand) — which is not to suggest that all aspects of sweatshop campaigning are easy or unproblematic.

Brooks' postmodern position threatens to dissolve any sort of activism away from the sites of "the local". She even questions her own right to present the results of her research and represent the situation of the workers. "Does this mean that transnational organizing cannot happen?... Not necessarily." She picks out as an example of where it is possible a Bengali women's organisation where women are "reframing their own subjectivity... as actors and agents" and refusing to let solidarity organisations define its agency.

Fine. No Sweat also seeks to work with independent organisations, above all unions, that represent a real assertion of the power of the workers and their communities. But to restrict campaigning to supporting these organisations is to lose real opportunities to support the many women workers who are fighting their sweatshop conditions. Much of what Brooks says should be taken as points activists should be aware of and seek to act on. But it is wrong then to draw the conclusion that little is possible.

\* *Review of Ethel C. Brooks, Unraveling the Garment Industry: Transnational Organizing and Women's Work, University of Minnesota Press, 2007.*

### No Sweat speaker tour

## Supersize my Pay: young workers get organised

Anti-sweatshop campaign, No Sweat's 2008 week of action (11-18 February), with Mike Treen of New Zealand's Unite Union and Supersize My Pay campaign and Axel Persson, a young fast food worker and CGT union activist from Paris.

#### Meetings

Monday 11 February 1pm: Oxford

University Balliol College

daniel.rawnsley@keble.ox.ac.uk

Monday 7pm: Community Base, North

Road, Brighton

marksandell1@yahoo.co.uk

Tuesday 12 February 12 noon: Room 131,

University of East Anglia, Norwich

patyarker@aol.com

Tuesday evening: Cambridge University

Richard on 07905 060 469

Wednesday 13 February lunchtime: Hull

University

wideload.wood@gmail.com

Wednesday 5.30pm: LG11, Trent Building,

Nottingham University

lqzytat@nottingham.ac.uk

7.30pm: International Community Centre,

Mansfield Road, Nottingham

thomas.unterrainer@talk21.com

Thursday 14 February 12.30pm: Sheffield

GMB HQ, Thorne House, 188/190 Norfolk

Street, Sheffield

skillz\_999@hotmail.com

Thursday 7pm: Lecture Theatre 1, Arts

Tower, Sheffield University

lougified@hotmail.com

Friday 15 February lunchtime: London

School of Economics

a.d.fisher@lse.ac.uk

Friday 15 February 6pm: London reception

sponsored by Battersea and Wandsworth

Trades Council. The Bread & Roses, 68a

Clapham Manor Street, London

paul@hampton1968.freereserve.co.uk

Saturday 16 February 2pm: University of

London Union, Malet Street, London

Email admin@nosweat.org.uk

Sunday 17 February 7.30pm: Durham

University.

katherine.obrien@durham.ac.uk

Monday 18 February 7.30pm: Swarthmore

Centre, Woodhouse Square, Leeds

mjw501@york.ac.uk

Tuesday 19 February evening: Glasgow

meeting

darcyleigh@gmail.com

#### What else you can do

We will be targeting Starbucks and other companies during the week of action.

- Organise a meeting with a No Sweat speaker and film.

- Organise a local picket of a Starbucks or other anti-union shop or company.

Get in touch: [admin@nosweat.org.uk](mailto:admin@nosweat.org.uk) /

07811 347 486

Downloadable leaflets and resources see

<http://www.nosweat.org.uk/node/690>

# Serbia's colony demands independence

BY COLIN FOSTER

**T**HE narrow victory of Boris Tadic in Serbia's presidential election on 3 February slightly lessens the tensions over the independence of Kosovo. But only slightly. Kosovo's elected government, currently operating under UN control, was likely to declare independence immediately if Tadic's rival Tomislav Nikolic had won the presidency. Now it will delay a few weeks.

Kosovo, 90% Albanian in population, was conquered by Serbia in 1912, and again after World War Two. It was a "colony" of Serbia for most of the 20th century. Its people have a right to self-determination.

From about 1974 to 1988 Kosovo enjoyed fairly liberal autonomy. Then Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic launched a crackdown, culminating in an attempt in 1999 to massacre or drive out the Albanian population.

In face of NATO bombing, Milosevic eventually withdrew from Kosovo, and the following year his rule in Serbia was topped by

popular revolt.

Since 1999 Kosovo has been under UN control. Chauvinism still runs warm in Serbia. Tadic does not dare recognise Kosovar independence, but - unlike Nikolic - he is determined to get Serbia into the EU, and knows that most EU states will recognise Kosovar independence.

Serbian prime minister Vojislav Kostunica refused to back Tadic for president - although Tadic's party is part of his government - because he considered Tadic too "soft" on Kosovo. Kostunica is more "eurosceptic" than Tadic.

Relations are further envenomed by the persecution by Kosovo's Albanian majority of its Serbian minority.

Because most of the big powers (except Russia) are willing to accept Kosovo's independence, and Serbian imperialism is relatively small-scale and regional, some on the left are inclined to deny Kosovo's rights. But the rights of oppressed nations are not conditional on the power oppressing them being the USA, or a US ally.

# How many more bubbles to burst?

BY VIOLET MARTIN

**W**HEN the scandal broke about a single trader running up £4.7 billion in losses for the French bank Société Générale, the first response from financiers was shock because they thought Société Générale was particularly well-regulated - "the gold standard", one called it.

Now France's finance minister says that "internal control procedures didn't work".

It is not a problem of Société Générale. It is an endemic problem of capitalism, and especially of the highly "financialised" capitalism of the period since 1980.

For all that the apologists of capitalism will tell you that the system fosters creativity for the public good, actually it funnels the brightest, most energetic, and most imaginative - those who don't end up designing ads for cars or toothpaste - into devising financial tricks which outsmart other financiers.

In a system that puts the race for profit before everything, every boom will spawn bubbles, scams, and frauds. Before the Great Crash of 1929 it was the Florida real-estate bubble, where prices on bits of swampland (some never to be developed) escalated so that land bought for \$800,000 could within a year be resold for \$4 million, and then crashed in

1926.

What post-1980 capitalism brings as new is that the bursting bubbles are more complicated and obscure.

According to the *Financial Times*, John Thain, the man brought in to put Merrill Lynch straight after it had to admit huge losses, told the World Economic Forum in Davos that "there is more trouble to come in the US mortgage market. The credit contraction is spreading across the world, and there are many more losses within the financial system to be revealed".

No-one knows whether he is right. And the very fact that no-one knows tends to make the credit system freeze up even more.

That is why the US Federal Reserve bank has cut its official interest rate more sharply than at any time since the early 1980s, and to below the rate of inflation; and IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn has thrown all IMF convention to the winds by calling on governments to spend more and tax less.

As Martin Wolf has pointed out in the *Financial Times*, if these measures succeed in softening the downturn in the US economy, it will only be by perpetuating the weird imbalances in today's world economy - notably the gigantic US trade deficit - and making the structure, long-term, even more unstable.

# Kenya: thieves fall out

BY SACHA ISMAIL

**T**he December election was, by all accounts except the Kenyan government's, rigged to ensure the "re-election" of president Mwai Kibaki. Since then Kenya has been plunged into ethnically-based violence. Many hundreds have been killed and many hundreds of thousands displaced - overwhelmingly from among the poor.

The US, Britain and their allies saw Kenya as a relatively stable ally in the war on terror and a bulwark against Islamist threats from Somalia and Sudan. Now the threat to stability in East Africa is so great that the big capitalist powers, who at first in effect congratulated Kibaki on his "victory" have been forced to urge negotiations, though typically what they advocate is power-sharing to ensure stability, not genuinely democratic elections.

The murder of hundreds of Kenyans in the last few weeks has been largely attributed in the Western media to "tribal" ethnic hatreds. That is part of the picture. But the background is a reality of staggering economic inequality and exploitation. In a country where millions are jobless and most of those who work do back-breaking, dawn-to-dusk, poverty wage jobs, the slightest spark can easily explode into violence.

Kibaki's government has broken from the worst excesses of the old regime under Daniel Arap Moi (in power 1978-2002) and, with encouragement from the West, undertaken some very limited anti-corruption measures. The economy has grown quickly, but few benefits have "trickled down" to the masses.

This led to widespread anger at his regime and allowed the populist Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), led by former minister and - surprise, surprise - wealthy businessman Rail Odinga, to rally some of the poorest sections of society around rhetoric about redistribution of wealth.

In a society where unemployment and poverty are structured partly on ethnic lines, and in the absence of a class movement capable of uniting people across those divisions, class struggle can easily be short-circuited into attacks by the destitute on those slightly better off than them (small business people, or even employed workers) and into ethnic hatred. Meanwhile many local ODM leaders have turned a blind eye to violence against members of the Kikuyu (Kibaki's tribe).

It is clear that Kibaki lost the election and should be ejected from office; but Odinga's movement represents a dissident section of the ruling class, not a real alternative for the mass of the people. Events in Kenya vividly and horrifically demonstrate, in the negative, the need for class politics: for a workers' party which organises across ethnic lines and provides a powerful pole of attraction to all Kenya's poor and oppressed. We must try to find ways to make links with socialists and working-class activists in Kenya if we can.

*This following is abridged from the liberal website [kenyanpundit.com](http://kenyanpundit.com). While we would not endorse all the politics, it is an interesting insight into the situation for ordinary Kenyans.*

**Kenya: I refuse to fight for leaders who clearly care nothing for me...**

I refuse to fight for so-called leaders who clearly care nothing about me, the common citizen. As we speak, they've already been sworn into parliament, which guarantees that they are on their way to becoming Kenyan millionaires (at our expense). In effect, we the voters, put them in that position, hence giving them the power to walk all over us now and for the next five years. My question is; what are we gonna do about it? What can we do for ourselves?

Many Kenyans have lost their lives or those of their loved ones, their homes and/or properties, their livelihoods, .... and they continue to suffer as they fight battles for leaders who seem indifferent to their plight. Who will pay for the loss of lives and the damage to property? Is it all going to be 'collateral damage' in the quest for justice and democracy?

We keep hearing about justice, but justice for whom? Everyone is entitled to this justice, regardless of their political (or other) affiliations. I say that we, the wananchi, the common citizens, must stand up and demand justice for ourselves. For those who have incurred losses (physical or material), who will compensate them? If I lost my livelihood or my home as a result of the post-election violence, should I just take it lying down? Why should I have to become a refugee or a beggar in my own country?

Political parties and their leaders must be held accountable for all the damage and losses caused by their supporters. The government must also be held accountable for the damage and losses caused by the state machinery.

My ideas of peaceful protests against injustice do not include getting killed or maimed by bullets or batons for the sake of supporting one side of the so-called "leaders". We should take action against the "giants" who have put us in the situation we are right now. Many thought that giants like "Big Tobacco" companies could never be successfully taken on by "common person". But it happened. Even colonial powers have been successfully taken on by small communities oppressed by them.

We Kenyans have to stand up for ourselves if we're ever going to break the pattern of impunity by our so-called leaders. Serious crimes against humanity have been committed against Kenyans in the recent past. I'm sure there's a lot that we can do for ourselves but we've got to stop being victims and pawns in a game that we'll always lose in. We've got to start thinking of ways to help ourselves because it's nonsensical to continue dying and suffering for so-called leaders who don't even know (or care) that we exist.

## International news at [www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org)

1. Victory in Ukraine — Volodymyr Denyazhyn reinstated
2. Hands off Zohreh and Azar Kabiri! Stop the stoning of "adulterous" women in Iran! — two Iranian women face execution for committing the "crime" of "adultery"
3. Death of Indonesian butcher Suharto — on the 33-year rule of Suharto's repressive regime
4. Hands off Venezuela — repeating the mistakes of the past — nationalisation and workers' control under Chávez
5. Venezuela: support Orlando Chirino — the UNT union organiser critical of Chávez has been victimised by the state oil company PDVSA

# French left hopes to build "from below"

## MARTIN THOMAS REPORTS

At its congress on 24-27 January in Paris, the LCR (Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire) decided to set about building "a new anti-capitalist party".

It has already started setting up local "collectives" of activists interested in taking part in this "new party", and hopes to pull them together into a new organisation by the end of the year.

The LCR has been talking about a "new party" since the late 1980s, but up to now its perspective has been of some sort of broad merger of left-wing forces including large chunks from the old Socialist Party and Communist Party. This congress marked a turn.

The majority argued that to chase after such a merger is hopeless, and that the LCR should instead build primarily "from below", from among the new activists (or old activists returned to life) which have gathered round the LCR in the election campaigns of its presidential candidate Olivier Besancenot and in strug-

gles like those in 2006 over young workers' rights and late last year over pensions.

The direction proposed for the "new party" is thus more left-wing than in previous projections. The LCR says the new party should aim to "revolutionise society", to replace capitalist ownership of the means of production by social ownership, to win a workers' government. It should reject any perspective of managing the existing system by participation in governments or municipal executives.

Only a small minority at the LCR congress stuck to the old perspective, suggesting that the LCR aim to build something more like the Linkspartei in Germany. (Or Respect in Britain, minus the "party-for-Muslims" quirks? But no-one in the LCR congress debate mentioned Respect, favourably or unfavourably.)

The LCR congress, which I attended as an observer from the AWL, was impressive. The LCR has recruited large numbers of able young activists, and conducts its debates with an intensity and lack of demagoguery which puts the British left to shame.

Whether it is actually possible to pull off an expansion sufficient for the title "new party" remains, of course, to be seen.

And there will be many political issues to thrash out. Olivier Besancenot says that the new party will be out to revolutionise society, "but not Trotskyist". For many LCR leaders, this is more than not wanting to deter people with jargonistic labels. They themselves want to replace Trotskyism by some as yet undefined "new programme". Trotskyism was defined as a "left opposition to Stalinism", so is made into a thing of the past by the collapse of Stalinism.

But the LCR still hails Che Guevara. And Olivier Besancenot uses Hugo Chavez's slogan of "socialism for the 21st century".

There must indeed be more debate. But it cannot achieve clarity for the future without some measure of clarity on the great question of the past (and not entirely past): Stalinism.

**Daniel Bensaid, the main theoretician of the LCR, spoke of the LCR's 40 years since it was founded in the wake of the great**

## general strike of May-June 1968

We set off with the LCR without imagining that it would be such a long journey. If someone had told me then that we would still be at it 40 years later, I would have been a bit worried.

In the 1970s there was a rise of struggles, carrying on from the shock of 1968, not only in France but across Europe, and that was reflected in the Ligue...

The most difficult years were the Mitterrand years [Francois Mitterrand of the Socialist Party was president of France from 1981 to 1995]... That period corresponded to a shift in the international balance of forces, with the neo-liberal offensive of Reagan and Thatcher from 1979.

We suffered a lot. Sometimes we were close, if not to disappearing, at least to being reduced to a network of trade-union and campaign activists rather than a political organisation with the ambition to make an impact as such.

Then came the beginnings of a remobilisation, of which the symbolic dates are: the Zapatista insurrection of 1994 in Mexico; the 1995 strikes in France; and the alternative-globalisation movement starting with Seattle in 1999.

From 1995, the Ligue, which had been very much weakened, began to regain strength and reconstruct itself. That accelerated after the presidential election in 2002 and the good result for Olivier Besancenot's candidacy.

You can see what we manage to do with 4000 activists, so imagine what we could do with 10,000 or 12,000... We are not strong enough by ourselves to get into a dynamic and sweep aside the resistance of organisations who do not want to commit themselves to something new, or do not want to detach themselves from their alliances with the Socialist Party. And, at the same time, we are strong enough that some people are worried about us being hegemonic.

Since we do not want to reduce our numbers voluntarily in order to dispel the fear of us being hegemonic, the only solution is to grow more and gain strength so that we can pull along those who are hesitant and build something together with them.

## Olivier Besancenot, the LCR's presidential candidate, explained the congress decision to the press

It's a matter of bringing together all those who want to act and think about what the socialism of the 21st century can be. It will be a party which wants to revolutionise society, but not a Trotskyist party. We want to bring people together from below rather than from above. We do not want to construct a cartel of existing organisations.

## Yvan Lemaitre, a leader of the left-wing Démocratie Révolutionnaire current in the LCR, welcomed the congress decision

We have decided to rise to the challenge, to put our organisation at the service of the building of a new party of the workers and the oppressed...

The political current represented by Démocratie Révolutionnaire and *Débat Militant* has argued for this perspective since the first elements on which it is based began to form and express themselves in 1995, after Arlette Laguiller got more than 5% of the votes in the presidential election and after the strike movement of November-December. Those elements have been strengthened and deepened: the need for a new workers' party has become an emergency with the collapse of the Communist Party...

*Débat Militant* will participate, in a new form, in the necessary debates and discussions around the many problems which the anti-capitalist and revolutionary movement will have to confront, resolve, and surmount...

• Fuller reports at [www.workersliberty.org/lcr](http://www.workersliberty.org/lcr)

## Union action wins legal status for migrants

### BY ED MALTBY

In France, bosses have limited powers to regularise migrant workers; and in recent strikes in the Essonne region, this has been used against them. Last summer, at nine branches of the Buffalo Grill steakhouse chain, around 30 staff went on strike to demand that their bosses regularise them. They occupied one restaurant for several days, and most of them won legal status.

Shortly after the Buffalo Grill strike, workers at an industrial laundrette called Modeluxe struck in solidarity with their undocumented co-workers' demands for regularisation.

The strikes have changed the way union activists and sans-papiers look at the issue. "Before," explained the CNT militant, "sans-papiers would just join a union for protection on workplace issues. But now they're starting to join because they see that as a way to win legal status. It will take a while to build up momentum, and people are naturally nervous about reprisals if they strike, but it's begun."

A number of union branch activists all over France have started targeting sans-papiers, distributing a leaflet which explains about rights at work, rights which apply even if to

those working illegally, and the ways that unions can protect them from deportation as well as the actions of employers.

"Union bureaucrats don't want to touch this", a socialist activist told me, "why would they? It's a lot of fuss, it upsets their cosy desk jobs."

But the government is stepping up its war on undocumented migrant workers. Sarkozy's ministers have multiplied police round-ups and deportations of suspected migrant workers.

French bosses like this. The CGT union say that in the fast-food industry, bosses are "systematically" employing workers they know to be undocumented, in order to deny them employment rights. A CNT union activist working with sans-papiers in Paris, told me that "employers use immigration law like a whip: they say to undocumented workers, 'if you don't work harder, I'll report you'."

Another activist told me that the hotels in which undocumented workers and their families are lodged at extortionate prices and in terrible conditions enjoy the tacit support of the government: "At Saint-Ouen there are two hotels, with one shower, one toilet each in the lobby, with 468 families living in them. The cops know and they don't touch the

place. I think the government subsidises them. MEDEF (equivalent of the CBI) want these workers to stay in France."

More heat is being generated by a series of revolts in detention centres. An African union activist was recently taken to a detention centre next to Charles de Gaulle airport. The socialist activist tells the story: "He raised hell, made speeches, organised a revolt. There were demonstrations, hunger strikes, riots. The authorities quickly moved him, to Vincennes, where he did it again. People were setting fire to their beds, refusing to go back in their cells after exercise, refusing to be counted. They made the place ungovernable. Some wrapped razor blades in chewing gum and swallowed them, so that they'd have to be taken to hospital. It's very dangerous, but it means that they have to let you go. You can only be detained for so many days before they must either deport you or let you go."

At a recent demonstration outside the Vincennes detention centre in support of the protestors "a lot of sans-papiers turned up, which was brave. There were people there from the CNT, especially members of our cleaners' section, which is growing fast. There's going to be another demonstration soon."

# For left unity in the student movement!

## FROM THE EDUCATION NOT FOR SALE NETWORK

ENS has nominated four candidates for the full-time positions on NUS National Executive. These are:

- *President: Daniel Randall, Sheffield University*
- *National Secretary (and Block of 12): Heather Shaw, Sheffield College*
- *National Treasurer: Koos Couvée, Sussex University*
- *VP Further Education: Laura Simmons, Park Lane College, Leeds*

Our common statement outlines why we are standing:

**W**E are standing because we want a campaigning NUS that mobilises many thousands of students in mass action to win; because we want a democratic union controlled from below by its members, not the bureaucratic travesty of the "Governance Review" [which will turn NUS into a lobbying organisation with hardly any democratic structures]; and because we want a National Executive that learns from, supports and champions students' struggles, rather than ignoring them or seeking to hold them back as it currently does. Whether we win or not, we will continue the fight for those goals. We represent a left that is democratic, libertarian and socialist, fighting for a society in which capitalist exploitation and all forms of oppression have been abolished.

Our key ideas are:

- No to the Governance Review. Defend and extend democracy, transparency and accountability in NUS. Defend national conference, restore winter conference. Full financial transparency, bring the bureaucracy under control.
- Free education for all. Mass action including a national demonstration in London and occupations to abolish all fees and win a universal living grant for every student. Launch a serious FE campaign. Fight to kick business out of our colleges and universities; tax the rich to fund education.
- Solidarity with workers in struggle – consistent support for our lecturers and campus workers, and with all workers fighting for pay, conditions and services against cuts, privatisation and Gordon Brown's pay freeze. For a major campaign to unionise students

## King's students banned... from reading!

BY DAVID BRODER

**S**TUDENTS at King's College London staged two "read-ins" in a cafeteria last month in protest at regulations which bar students from reading, writing or using laptops while eating their lunch.

A few dozen students participated in the protests which took place at the Chapters cafeteria on the Strand Campus at lunchtime on 15 and 17 January, flouting the rules either by quietly sitting at the tables studying, leafleting other students about the read-in, or carrying out a survey about what people think of the rules.

During the read-in the security guards seemed confused and carefully studied the leaflets being given out. While not asking us to stop or to leave the cafeteria, they did have a prolonged argument with the



2002: when NUS did a very small amount of campaigning. Now it does pretty much none

who work.

- Make internationalism a priority. No to war on Iran; for mass action including occupations in the event of war; against the occupation of Iraq. No to Iran's theocratic regime: solidarity with workers, women and students in Iran and Iraq. Solidarity with the Palestinians and the Israel anti-occupation movement. Support workers' and students' struggles worldwide.

- Liberation is not negotiable. Defend the autonomy of the Liberation Campaigns. Consistent support for women's, black, LGBT and disabled liberation. Against all forms of racism, including anti-Muslim bigotry and anti-semitism. Defend migrants' rights, fight immigration controls. NUS as a whole must support the Women's Campaign's call for free abortion on demand, as well as broader demands around real right to choose.

Over the last two months, ENS has taken part in discussions with two other groups on the student left, Student Respect/SWSS and the so-called Student Broad Left, with a view to creating a united left slate for the six full-time positions on the National Executive. (We also attempted to involve Socialist Students, who declined.) These discussions made considerable progress — for instance in terms of persuading SBL to agree to the inclusion of a clear statement of opposition to the Governance Review, and persuading both groups to accept a statement of solidarity with students, workers and others fighting the theocratic regime in Iran. However, it was not in the end possible to achieve an overall agree-

ment; ENS, Respect and SBL have therefore all nominated candidates separately.

student who had organised the protest, who is far from being a leftist radical.

However, it came as no surprise that the huge majority of students asked for their opinions thought that it was ridiculous that the cafe (in a university of all places) forbids reading between the hours of noon and 2:30pm. Not being allowed to read while sitting in the cafeteria is not analogous to the ban on eating in the library — study space for students at the Strand Campus is very limited.

The situation at King's College London is just another case of the mad logic of privatisation and marketisation of education and the opening up of campus services for profit-making. Unfortunately, it seems that the student union is unwilling to do anything to kick up a fuss.

ment; ENS, Respect and SBL have therefore all nominated candidates separately.

We want to stress our firm commitment to building a united left, including for elections at NUS conference. Last year we asked for discussions about a united slate, but were turned down by Respect and SBL, who claimed that our differences on international issues made unity impossible. This year, we issued a public appeal for left unity, which is what led to discussions between the three groups.

We also showed a repeated willingness to compromise — for instance by accepting, given firm guarantees about the politics of the slate, that SBL's Ruqayyah Collector could be the presidential candidate. This, despite our unhappiness with her record (she was on the Governance Review body but never sounded the alarm or tried to organise a campaign; she voted for parts of the Review at the NEC; and she previously voted for a £100,000 management consultant to research "NUS reform"), with SBL's broader (soft left, Stalinist) politics and with their declaration of Ruqayyah's candidacy without any consultation or attempt to reach an agreement with the wider student left. We felt that on the basis of a clear common programme, the achievement of left unity would outweigh these problems.

In the absence of a united slate with a clear programme, however, we did not feel it was possible to support Ruqayyah for president, which is why we have nominated our comrade Daniel Randall — to ensure that delegates have the opportunity to vote for a socialist and militant activist in what is the defining election of the conference. We will, of course, call for a second preference transfer to Ruqayyah, and hope that she will reciprocate.

In addition, we note that there are three elections — National Secretary, Vice-President Higher Education and Vice-President Welfare — in which there is only one left candidate of any sort. We are therefore endorsing Rob Owen and Hind Hassan of Respect for the latter two; we call on Respect to endorse ENS supporter Heather Shaw for National Secretary, and on other left-wing activists to endorse all three of these candidates.

The general factors necessitating left unity have not changed — and they are greatly strengthened by the huge threat the Governance Review poses to the very existence of NUS as an even semi-democratic national student union, seeking to replace it with an NGO dominated by management teams, external trustees and consultants. It is, or should be, self-evident that the left needs to unite to beat back this threat. We are therefore not only willing but eager to enter into further discussions to see if a higher degree of unity can be achieved.

In addition to further, open negotiations for a united slate, we propose:

- Open discussions for members of the vari-

ous left groups, as well as unaffiliated left activists, on as many campuses as possible in the run up to NUS conference.

- A joint fringe meeting at the conference to galvanise opposition to the Governance Review and build the campaign for a democratic, fighting NUS.

- Joint conference caucuses between the various left factions and unaffiliated activists on specific issues, eg NUS democracy, free education, internationalism.

- A joint activist event after NUS conference to discuss the way forward for the student movement after the vote on the Governance Review, and develop our vision for the student movement and education system we want to see.

The left can and must continue to work together on campaigns like that to save NUS democracy — but such campaigns will be greatly strengthened if we can, after all, create a united challenge for the leadership of NUS.

- Get in touch and let us know what you think: sofie.buckland@nus.org.uk

## Soft on racism?

The Student Broad Left group have accused Education Not for Sale of responsibility for scuppering negotiations for a united left slate. One of the specific allegations they make is that ENS's refusal to support Ruqayyah Collector for president is motivated by opposition to NUS challenging racism and imperialism. Sofie Buckland sets the record straight here: [www.free-education.org.uk/?p=433](http://www.free-education.org.uk/?p=433)

## Respect

## Renewal in NUS?

**W**HILE the SWP lost dozens of its own members to Galloway's populist, Stalinist split from Respect, Student Respect remained almost totally solid, with the vast majority of independents siding with SWSS. The positive consequence of this has been a left turn by Student Respect — in terms of a willingness to talk about women's liberation and abortion rights, for instance — as well as a greater willingness to engage with other socialists like the AWL.

Nonetheless, Respect/SWSS is still supporting Ruqayyah Collector, the very soft-left candidate put forward by Student Broad Left/Socialist Action, for NUS president. And it appears that in doing so they will be helping their rivals in Respect Renewal get a foothold in NUS.

Rumours have been circulating for a while that Ruqayyah is a supporter of Galloway's organisation (though, being an opportunistic politician, Collector mentions it even less than she mentions her support for SBL.) Now the evidence is mounting up. Student Socialist Action members were all over the founding Respect Renewal conference, and SBL candidate Bryony Shanks has a quote from Salma Yaqoob on her manifesto. Moreover, the second issue of Respect Renewal's paper features a centre page open letter from Collector about her candidacy — a letter entitled "Offering students a real alternative in the NUS" and advertised prominently on the front page.

Student SWP and Respect members should protest against this alliance and make an alternative one with other socialists in organisations like Education Not for Sale and Workers' Liberty.



# The free-speech fight that shaped the New Left

*There is a quotation from the ninth chapter of Moby Dick which I think is very appropriate, kind of our motto: 'Woe unto him who would pour oil on the waters when God has brewed them into a gale.'*

Mario Savio, a student leader of the Free Speech Movement

*[Berkeley] had everything in terms of American superlatives: the largest and longest mass blockade of a police operation ever seen ... It was, in sum, by far the most gigantic student protest movement ever mounted in the United States on a single campus.*

Hal Draper, *Berkeley: The New Student Revolt*

BY TOM UTTERRAINER

THE momentous events that unfolded from September 1964 through to January 1965 at the University of California in Berkeley confounded many people. "Why", they asked, "are the brightest and the best of this generation at war with their university and the police?" By the mid-60s a fair proportion of liberal journalists, academics, writers and politicians had managed to get their heads around the Civil Rights movement. They understood the simple — but awful — truth that the history of black people in America is a history of enslavement and oppression and that the time for change had come. But these privileged, gifted, mainly white students... what did they have to protest about?

On 14 September 1964, Dean Katherine Towle announced that a proscription of all political campaigning not related to the activities of the Berkeley Democratic and Republican clubs was to be enforced. This meant the banning of any and all outside speakers, discussions groups, fund-raising efforts and political recruitment on university property. The mainstream Democrats and Republicans didn't escape the new restrictions — they were banned from backing any particular candidate and raising funds for "off-campus" activities.

They were restricted to disseminating information leaflets. They had to submit posters for vetting, secure the backing of a tenured professor and pay for "security" for each meeting. All political activity on campus was now either banned or heavily regulated by the administration. To many students these limitations were a direct attack on Constitutional Amendments protecting freedom of expression. To others, they were the culmination and natural consequence of a deeply cynical process.

Prior to the banning order the central avenues through campus were a lively scene, with street stalls and political gatherings. In the post-McCarthy era Berkeley was considered the very model of a modern, liberal institution. Its new President, Clark Kerr, had acted as a mediator between his predecessor Robert G Sproul and faculty during the "Year of the Oath" where academic staff were instructed to swear an oath of allegiance.

As Hal Draper put it "the long fight of the faculty against this indignity, to which most ended up by capitulating, [resulted in] the loss of some of the most eminent men on the faculty, who left rather than disgrace themselves and their profession." Compared to the open reactionary Sproul, Clark Kerr was a breath of fresh air. All expected the "liberal" Kerr, a winner of the "Alexander Meiklejohn Award" for contributions to academic freedom, to sweep out the old and open up a new era of scholarly development. They were to be sorely disappointed.

## POWER, BUREAUCRACY AND CLARK KERR

"IN a book that I recommend to everyone here, *Uses of the University*, President Clark Kerr describes what he calls the multiversity and using the following metaphor, he called it a knowledge factory. He said that it has a president ... a board of directors ... It has employees ... And it has raw materials, the

students". [Mario Savio, *The Berkeley Knowledge Factory*]

As a young man, Clark Kerr was a member of the Student League for Industrial Democracy, a socialist organisation of which Jack London, Upton Sinclair and Norman Thomas were all members. This youthful radicalism gave way to a form of liberalism that was soon transformed by the ideas Kerr developed as an academic.

The students of Berkeley could have no doubt that Robert G. Sproul was an open reactionary. With Kerr — an advocate of the "managerial revolution" — things were not so clear. Kerr's 1960 book, *Industrialisation and Industrial Man*, advocates a form of society based on "bureaucratic managerialism". When applied to a university, what did Kerr's form of "management" produce?

Mario Savio, a student leader of the FSM and undergraduate in Physics and Maths, described the university administration as follows: "We should not ask whether such intellectual cacophony and bureaucratic harassment are appropriate at universities — for certainly they are not — but rather, whether these local 'plants' in what Clark Kerr calls the 'knowledge industry' deserve the name university at all."

"Kerr is sensitive to the real relations between Ideals and Power in our society. Ideals are what you are for, inside your skull, while your knees are bowing to power" (Draper).

Kerr wanted a regulated and standardised university system that, like an automated factory, would produce uniform products. In his writings, Kerr advocates the "systemic and systematic bureaucratisation" (Draper) of all society, from industry through to institutions of learning. In this way a "bureaucratic vanguard", the "captains of bureaucracy", would take the helm of society, ensuring order and productivity. With a strong managerial layer and systems in place to "guide" workers/students/'citizens' in their daily lives, industrial and social relations would be transformed. Unions, pressure groups, political parties — all would become redundant. With all Power concentrated in the hands of a select caste — protecting the "liberal" Ideals of the free market — the Ideals of diversity, expression, democracy, liberty would be superfluous.

Apart from crushing the creativity of academics and students in the classroom and lecture hall, Kerr was responsible for a long list of crimes against liberty. The so-called "Kerr Directives" issued in 1959 softened some aspects of university life, but in other important ways the situation worsened.

Draper lists the following as "highlights" of the Kerr regime: "The student government [like student unions in British universities] was forbidden to take stands on 'off-campus' issues, except as permitted by the administration, and

was effectively converted to a 'sandbox' government ... Political-interest and social-issue clubs were misleadingly labelled 'off-campus clubs' and forbidden to hold most organisational meetings on campus, or to collect funds or recruit ... Outside speakers were not permitted except on a 72-hour-notification basis ... Off-campus activities could not be announced at impromptu rallies." This list goes on.

## STUDENTS FIGHT BACK

Although issued in 1959, the "Kerr Directives" were not enforced by the university until Dean Towle's announcement in 1964. The exact circumstances of the enforcement revolve around big party politics, civil rights and media power. "Some time in July [1964], a reporter for the *Oakland Tribune* (which was boosting Goldwater, of course) noted that pro-Scranton students were recruiting convention workers at a table placed at the Bancroft entrance to the campus ... It appears that he [the reporter], or someone else from the *Tribune*, pointed out to the administration that the table was on university property and violated its rules" (Draper). The *Tribune's* partiality to Goldwater, a particularly reactionary Republican presidential candidate, was not the only point of concern for the newspaper bosses.

On 2nd September a committee comprising members of the civil rights groups CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) and SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee) began a picket of the *Oakland Tribune* to demand a fair-hiring agreement. This move outraged William Knowland, owner of the *Tribune*, Goldwater campaign manager and "a kingpin in the entire power structure" around Berkeley. The *Tribune* ran a front page denunciation of the picket on 3rd September and Knowland swung the considerable weight of the Goldwater campaign into action to pressurise the Berkeley administration to stop the campus organisers.

Activists continued to exploit loop-holes in the "Kerr Directives" — especially questions around the ownership of certain sections of the Berkeley campus — to continue organising. They also began to organise active resistance to the directives, resulting in a series of re-issues and clarifications of the rules.

Then on 1 October activist Jack Weinberg refused to show identification papers to campus police "visiting" the CORE campaign stall. He was promptly arrested and taken to a nearby police car, but before he could be driven away students surrounded the vehicle. It's estimated that up to 3000 students were involved in a thirty two hour blockade of the car. A succession of speakers climbed onto the car roof

demanding Weinberg's release, repeal of the restrictions and condemning the university administration.

This one, almost accidental, moment of petty brutality crystallised the forces of what was to become the Free Speech Movement. As one FSM member put it students were "sick and tired of being shat upon" by an administration determined to transform itself into a bureaucratic overlord and students into raw-materials for the "knowledge factory". They'd had enough of a system struggling to adjust itself and retain control in the wake of McCarthyism, the Civil Rights movement and a brewing Cold War. A system captained by the likes of Clark Kerr and his co-thinkers.

The ultimately successful struggle of the Free Speech Movement was a precursor to the emerging New Left. The story of what happened next and the way it influenced a generation of student radicals is both historically interesting and of importance for struggles today.

\* Hal Draper — a prominent third camp socialist — was a librarian at UC Berkeley at the time. The FSM amended their slogan "Trust no one over thirty" to include "...except Hal Draper" in recognition of his continuous advice, solidarity and support.

## The Nottingham Free Speech Campaign

Students at the University of Nottingham are organising for a mass demonstration for Free Speech on 21 February. After a series of incidents, including fines for "unauthorised" petitions and the arrest of one student at a Palestine Solidarity stall, it is time to act.

The campaign is demanding the repeal of legislation that requires "permission" for political campaigning, an end to fines, an explanation and apology from the Vice-Chancellor for the arrest of a student, and a commitment to never use the police to suppress student protests.

Students from around the country are expected to join the protests — the campaign encourages student political and campaign groups to follow suite. For more information, contact [freedomofspeechfighters@googlemail.com](mailto:freedomofspeechfighters@googlemail.com).

# Against the "Swedish Model"

# AW

BY LAURA SCHWARTZ

THE law on prostitution is about to change. Whether this will be for the better or the worse, however, remains to be seen.

Former Home Office Minister Fiona MacTaggart is calling for new legislation based on that implemented in Sweden in 1999, which criminalises the men who buy sex rather than the women who sell it. The call for a review of prostitution laws has been supported by leading Labour MPs, while deputy leader Harriet Harman has defined prostitution as violence against women.

At the moment, the buying and selling of sex is not illegal in the UK, only certain forms in which it is carried out, such as street soliciting and brothel keeping. The Swedish Model would change this, outlawing the buying of sex under any conditions.

It's nothing new for sex workers to find themselves on the wrong side of British law and the victims of state repression masquerading as the regulation of "vice". What makes the recent call for the introduction of the Swedish Model interesting, however, is that it is being touted as the feminist alternative to the existing laws which unfairly make the sex workers themselves liable for prosecution. Instead, it is claimed, the Swedish Model will protect the women working in prostitution while targeting the real perpetrators of violence and exploitation — the men who buy their services.

The anti-trafficking organisation the Poppy Project and many leading feminist campaigners against violence against women also support the proposals for this new legislation.

It is worth noting, however, that the same MPs claiming to be so concerned about sex workers in the context of the Swedish Model debates, also just voted for the government's Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill which further criminalises prostitution and requires that street workers be subject to forced "rehabilitation" or face imprisonment.

It's easy to see how the Swedish Model acquired its feminist appeal. The idea of finally turning the tables on the men who benefit from an undoubtedly exploitative industry, but who have up until now walked away scot-free from police raids and government crack-downs, is admittedly rather enjoyable. However, it is also clear that the criminalisation of clients would indirectly impact upon sex workers too, in some cases making their work even more dangerous than it is under existing laws.

As a result, the International Union of Sex Workers, the English Collective of Prostitutes, the Safety First Coalition (set up in 2006 after the Ipswich murders) and the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe all oppose the Swedish Model. They claim that women working with clients who are worried about arrest will have less time to carry out basic safety precautions. Street workers will be deterred from working in more public and better lit areas and will have less time to assess the client beforehand.

Those working indoors will find it harder to find rented accommodation from which to work and will be put off working with other girls for fear of attracting too much attention. The laws effectively make the sex workers responsible for protecting their clients from arrest, or otherwise risk losing custom and their means to earning a living.

Pye Jacobson, a founding member of Sex Workers and Allies in Sweden, who has been organising for sex workers' rights since 1994, says that the Swedish laws have forced sex work underground, increasing the amount of pimping and middle-men. At a recent meeting on the proposed legislation, held in Parliament and sponsored by John McDonnell MP and the Labour Representation Committee women's caucus, Jacobson said: "Now we have internet pimps, who arrange where we can put our ads for a ridiculous amount of money, and apartment pimps because we are not allowed to rent an apartment and work from it."



Blairite MP Fiona MacTaggart is pushing for the Swedish model to be implemented here

Perhaps most worryingly, she also claimed that sex workers were now less likely to report violence to the police, since this would inevitably entail an investigation into their working lives and result in the closure of the brothels where they worked or heavier policing of red light districts. Whereas under the old laws male clients would sometimes report cases of violence from other clients or pimps, now none of them are willing to risk arrest in order to look out for the girls whose services they use.

Worst affected by the Swedish model have been illegal migrant workers in the Swedish sex industry. Those without papers are unable to access government initiatives to provide women with an alternative to the, now illegal, job of prostitution. With no choice but to keep working in an illegal industry they have no recourse to the law should they be subject to violence and, under the pressures of criminalisation, they are increasingly hidden away and isolated from other sex workers with whom they might act collectively to improve their conditions. The irony of this is that proponents of the Swedish Model loudly proclaim their aim to use it to combat sex trafficking. But the use of the term "trafficked" as a word for migrant sex workers of any kind is telling, and brings us to the heart of what much of the support for the Swedish model is really about — immigration control.

"Trafficking" has become an incredibly powerful discourse amongst both MPs and feminists. Although the term is rarely defined in any precise manner, it conjures up images of women kidnapped, forcibly transported to another country where they are imprisoned and forced to have sex with men. This is certainly the story told by the government-funded Poppy Project and "The Truth Isn't Sexy" anti-trafficking organisations, whose publicity borders on the pornographic in its accounts of women raped, beaten and "forced to have sex with up to fifty men a day"

All prostitution has increasingly come to be equated with trafficking, while all trafficking and migration within the sex industry is viewed as a synonym for slavery and sexual abuse.

The government's statistics on trafficking have been criticised for lumping together all illegal migrants working in the sex industry, whether they came to the UK of their own volition, paid someone to bring them here, or were kidnapped off the street, held hostage and forced into slavery. Sex worker rights organisation have also criticised the fact that even when such women have been "rescued" in police raids their most likely fate is deportation. Creating panic about "trafficked women" thus provides a moral justification for the government's draconian immigration policies, and a useful guise under which to step up the policing of migrant workers.

The IUSW and the ECP argue that of course the government should seek to prevent

slavery, sexual abuse and rape, but it is counter-productive to associate these issues especially with the sex industry (it is often ignored that many trafficked women also work in domestic service or in agriculture), and that further criminalisation of prostitution will not solve these problems and might make them worse. Moreover, the trafficking debate is premised on a particular construction of all sex workers as victims and on the belief, adhered to by Harriet Harman and many radical feminists, that even consenting sex work is violence against women.

The Swedish model is based on a similar set of assumptions. But the recent debates about changes to the law on prostitution have also been revealing of feminists themselves and the kind of feminism that is currently driving the government's wider policies on women and establishment women's rights organisations.

Many of the "Blair's Babes", the female Labour MPs who support the Swedish model and have contributed to the trafficking debates, proudly call themselves feminists. Moreover, most of them became politicised in an context in which they would have identified as socialist-feminists. In calling for the criminalisation of men who buy sex they see themselves as concerned to protect economically underprivileged women from violence and exploitation, a desire that is in keeping with a broadly socialist-feminist perspective.

This causes me to pause to reflect upon what I mean when I call myself a socialist-feminist and how this might differ from the feminism of, say, Harriet Harman. Feminism in Britain has a rich and very complex history — drawing on a variety of political and intellectual traditions, including Christian morality, social purity and imperialism. Even those women in the labour movement who sought to fuse their support for women's rights with their commitment to working-class solidarity or socialism inherited many of the more problematic feminist ideas about the need to "protect" women from male violence and male sexuality.

Thus, even today we find ourselves in a strange situation in which Labour MPs (who have at least a notional commitment to the principle of organised labour) and many trade unionist women, deny other women, i.e. those working as sex workers, the right to work and reject their attempts to organise against exploitation as a betrayal of the sisterhood. This kind of socialist feminism — or rather social-democratic feminism — is simply a case of bolting together two separate traditions: [male] workers' rights' on the one hand, [middle-class] women's rights on the other. At times it leads to some strange inconsistencies.

For me, if the term "socialist-feminist" is to mean anything, it should be an attempt to use the one political analysis to illuminate and transform the other. Socialist feminism should be about looking at the ways in which the capitalist system oppresses women as well as workers, and women as workers, and about how gender power relations enhance and interconnect with economic power relations.

Surely the socialist principle of workers' self-organisation is about empowerment from below rather than top-down philanthropic endeavours, and the belief that the oppressed have the ability to fight their exploitation rather than permanently exist as the victims of those more powerful than themselves. A socialist feminist perspective therefore, should encourage us to analyse exploitation in the sex industry from this perspective and to approach prostitutes as workers rather than victims.

This does not mean ignoring the poverty that compels the majority of sex workers to earn their living in this way, or the violence that many sex workers face, or imbalance of power that potentially exists between a sex worker and her client. It does mean, however, that we need to face up to the fact that criminalisation — no matter how well intentioned — will not work.

**The Campaign Against Climate Change trade union conference takes place in London on Saturday 9 February. Paul Vernadsky discusses some important issues .**

CLIMATE change will remain a significant ecological and political question for the foreseeable future. Marxists like the AWL believe that the working class is the essential social agent in that struggle. We hope the Campaign against Climate Change trade union conference on 9 February will help the drive to win the labour movement to action on the issue.

For Marxists, climate change is the product of class relations and in particular of capitalist social relations of production. The Marxist account of capitalism centres on the exploitation of waged labour by capital. The same processes that lead to the pumping of surplus value from the working class also lead through the capitalist labour process to the degradation of nature. The generalised production of commodities is the root of both the exploitation of waged labour and the despoliation of eco-systems.

The pursuit of profit by competing capitals is the driving force behind the exhaustive use of fossil fuel energy sources. Accumulation is the goal of capitalism as a whole and takes place regardless of the consequences. This implies: expansion into ever-wider areas of space and their subsumption under the rule of capital, the creation of a constant stream of commodities that permit the realisation of value however wasteful this may be, and the attempt to keep consumption at a level at which this realisation can be assured.

**The working class and climate change.** The special interest of the working class in preventing climate change is given by the common root of exploitation and environmental degradation. Just as waged workers are the basic exploited class under capitalism, so capitalist relations give rise to environmental damage.

Workers are hardest hit by the effects of climate change. Workers will be expected to pay for market-inspired "solutions" in the form of lower wages, higher prices, higher taxes and other penalties. Preventing climate change is a matter of basic working class solidarity and internationalism.

The working class has the social power to prevent climate change. Workers have the power to strike, to occupy workplaces and to halt production. The working class has the power to substantially modify and partially control the labour process under capitalism, both for its own material well-being and for wider social goals. Workers have the potential to control and limit carbon emissions through collective action.

Workers have the social power to overthrow capitalism and to reorganise production under different imperatives — such as to meet social needs and to respect ecological limits. Workers have the power to control the size and distribution of the surplus product through the common social ownership and control of natural resources and the means of production.

**Bourgeois politics on climate change.** Mainstream bourgeois politicians argue that climate change can be mitigated profitably, if only the right conditions are established by the state. Such politics are now widely put forward by business and its representatives in government — e.g. the Stern Report 2006. Most assume that mechanisms to create or work with the market (e.g. emissions trading, carbon taxes) are the answer.

It is both characteristic and sickening that capitalism can only deal with a threat to the future of humanity by creating another commodity that can be traded at a profit. This represents the commodification of another sphere of life rather than an adequate approach to reducing greenhouse gases.

We reject carbon trading schemes, regressive taxation and corporate hand outs to tackle climate change. Our general policy is for direct progressive taxation, summed up by the slogan: "Tax the rich". We should be selective about where we advocate the use of taxation to encourage certain behaviour, on the grounds of effectiveness, equity and how the money raised is used. But we support taxing luxuries and other activities that are particularly polluting — such as driving 4x4s.

# Workers' programme against climate change

The lamentable record of attempts to reduce carbon emissions from the Rio summit in 1992 to the Kyoto agreement in 1997 — as well as the recent talks in Bali — suggest that the global capitalist class does not have the interest or will to seriously tackle the problem.

Local communities supplied by local production? To make this idea the cure-all is equivalent to reversing the whole division of labour and patterns of exchange developed by capitalism and reverting to semi-autarkic production. This response to climate change is both utopian and reactionary and we should oppose it.

**For a militant campaign to prevent dangerous climate change.** There is no single overarching campaign against climate change in the UK, and not one that is widely backed by the labour movement. We fight for a united, militant campaign to prevent dangerous climate change. Such a campaign should orientate towards the labour movement without being bound by the trade union bureaucracy. It should consist of democratic structures, including elected and representative committees nationally and locally that want to fight. The Campaign against Climate Change (CaCC) may be able to develop into such a campaign.

**For a working class programme of action on climate change.** To make the labour movement the leading agency for combating climate change involves winning wide sections of the working class to coherent ecological politics.

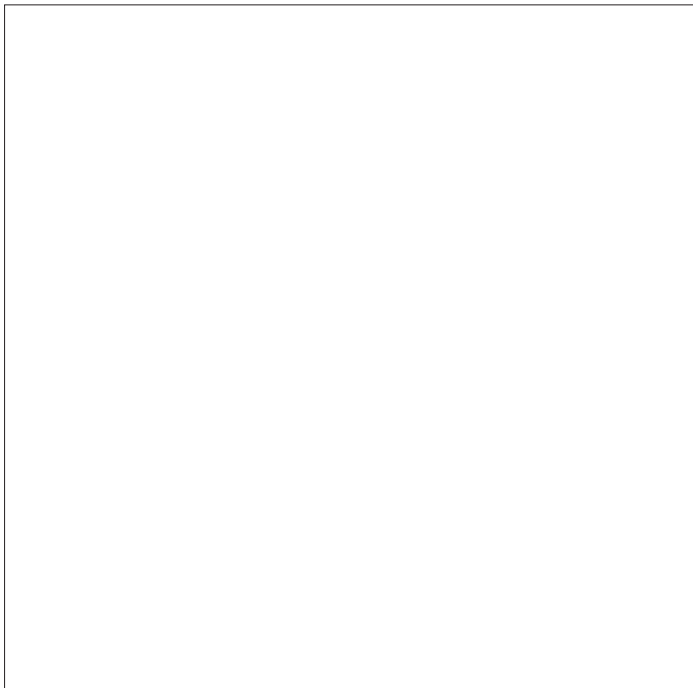
There has been such a tradition in trade unions, although it has not always been prominent. In Britain, unions were instrumental in effectively banning the pesticide 2,4,5-T (known as Agent Orange) and stopping the dumping of nuclear waste at sea in the 1980s. Shop stewards at Lucas aerospace developed alternative corporate plans in the late 1970s, including for fuel cells, a hybrid car and a road-rail vehicle for integrated public transport.

Environmental measures, including action on climate change, may sometimes cut across the immediate concerns of some unions on jobs and conditions. We should have these debates with workers in industries such as nuclear and aviation. We fight for the bosses to pay for the transition, not workers.

We fight for trade union independence from the bosses and from the government and for the development of an independent working class perspective on climate change. This means winning rank and file militants and organisations to progressive politics on climate change. It means organising workplace and industry-wide committees and caucuses that fight for action on climate change at work and in working class communities.

## We fight for the following demands:

- For a 32-hour maximum working week, as a step towards a 4 day week! We fight immediately for shorter hours, longer holidays, more leisure time with no loss of pay, as part of the struggle to secure the material interests of workers during any transition to a low carbon economy.
- Workers' control of production! Workers' plans are central to reducing carbon emissions at work and reasserting workers' right to manage production in all areas of work. Workers' control is necessary to deal with the shift from wasteful, high emission or polluting production to alternative jobs. Workers' control is essential for protecting the interests of workers in jobs in existing, often ecologically damaging, forms of production. We fight for the labour movement and workers in the industries affected to discuss and develop ecologically friendly alternatives to existing jobs.
- Open the books! We fight for the right to know about real scale of workplace, industrial and employer greenhouse gas emissions, energy use, transport arrangements, waste etc.
- For energy efficiency at work. Workplaces



*Ice melts as climate change accelerates*

should be audited by union reps to determine improvements in insulation, lighting, computer use, recycling etc. Financial gains from energy efficiency should be passed onto workers.

- For a crash programme of free insulation and other energy saving measures, starting with social housing, the elderly and low paid workers. High quality home insulation should be made freely available to those who want it.

- For cheap or free public transport! We fight for integrated transport systems to provide a real alternative to the car. For safe cycle routes, separated from traffic and subsidies to encourage cycle use.

- A moratorium on road building and on airport expansion. For a workers' enquiry into transport, including on domestic flights.

- Massive public investment is a pre-condition for changing present behaviour. Immediately there needs to be R&D and the development of renewable energy and low emissions technology; investment in public transport, expanding rail, bus, tram, light rail and underground networks; and investment in public housing, built to high, energy-efficient standards.

- For public ownership of the energy and transport industries! The privatisation of energy and transport industries over the past 25 years has only benefited the bosses and their lackeys, at the expense of job losses and worse conditions for workers and a worse service for the public. Privately run energy and transport makes the fight to reduce carbon emissions harder. We demand that these firms brought under public ownership and workers' control.

- For the imposition of high standards of building regulation and minimum fuel consumption requirements on all cars and lorries. We demand stricter regulation of all forms of industrial pollution and stiffer enforcement and penalties against corporate polluters. We want the redesigning towns and cities to improve the environment.

- For international solidarity! For an international treaty to cut greenhouse gas emissions, with the most drastic reductions made by the richest countries. Cancel the debts and remove the trade restrictions on countries that already suffer the

effects of dangerous climate change. For subsidies to stop the destruction of the rain forests and to support reforestation. For the massive transfer of wealth to the poorest people of the world to improve their living standards and to help them protect their own environment.

- For a workers' government! The fight against climate change must be advanced now under capitalism. But a lasting and socially just transition requires the overthrow of capitalist government and the rule of the working class. We fight to build working class parties with the politics, outlook and mass basis in the working class to lead the fight for socialism.

## Climate camp update

About 70 activists from around the country met at the Common Place social centre in Leeds on 26/27 January to discuss a range of proposals after last summer's Heathrow Camp against Climate Change. The key concerns were to "join the dots" of what may appear to be a list of single issue campaigns so that the overall anti-capitalist stance towards the issue of climate change is registered. There was a very healthy culture of focussed and respectful discussion and a series of important consensus were reached.

The summer's actions are to be even more ambitious than the two previous years. The main target will be the new wave of coal-powered stations that New Labour is pushing through at the moment, focussing on the flagship station at Kingsnorth in Kent. A vocal and convincing contingent pushed an anti-biofuels focus as a necessary complement to targeting fossil fuels; for information see [www.biofuelwatch.org.uk](http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk). A commitment to continue the work on Heathrow was evident and this will also be targeted again this summer with more work to be done on reaching out to workers; the campaign against expansion is building apace with one meeting in Ealing last month attended by more than 500 local people. A 'caravan' or convoy will travel between targets, consciously reminiscent of the traditions of the working-class movement — with the 1936 Jarrow March on the North East to Westminster against unemployment as a direct inspiration.

It was good to see the general seriousness with which activists addressed the need to ground this movement in working-class communities and work-place struggles; the "caravan" idea and the yet-to-be-decided potential to move from a field-based camp to a city-based convergence reflect these priorities. The creation of the Workers' Climate Action network was welcomed and many indicated they will be attending this weekend's trade union conference on climate change.

*Robin Sivapalan*

## Workers' Climate Action Network

ON 13 January 2007 the Workers' Climate Action network had its first meeting. The initiative is about working for national unity between the labour movement and activists from the environmental milieu, to change current trade union policy, and create just transition plans for a future of sustainable industry. We are in the process of building a website which will serve as an educational resource.

Our aims: To function as a grassroots campaign, joining picket lines rather than simply lobbying trade union or government hierarchy. Workers are demonised by some in the environmental movement as a cog in the machine of a "bad" industry, and environmental concerns are neglected by trade unions where an expansion of (often unsustainable) jobs seems incompatible with the need for changes to industry. Lots more jobs would result from environmentally aware expansion, for instance a free and integrated transport system.

To help rank and file trade unionists make

transitional demands in their workplaces, for "greener", sustainable workplaces, and so on.

To emphasise the idea of workers' control in industry, as part of the solution to tackle rapid climate change.

To advocate direct action movement be employed by the trade union movement.

Work out how environmental direct action would fit into industrial struggles, and having an awareness of its impact on workers.

To consistently highlight capitalism as a root cause of environmental damage.

To be a decentralised network, using the internet for ideas sharing, struggles currently happening and central educational facilities. This will also allow us to engage with current workers' struggles and existing campaigns.

Next meeting: Sunday 24 February at Sheffield University Student Union. All welcome. Website soon at:

[www.workersclimateaction.com](http://www.workersclimateaction.com), alternatively e-mail: [lougified@hotmail.com](mailto:lougified@hotmail.com)

# Sex, prison, law and racism in the blues

## PETER BURTON CONTINUES HIS HISTORY OF THE BLUES

It was the fusion of blues with ragtime and Jazz in the early twenties by band leaders like Handy that popularised the blues. His signature work was the St Louis Blues. The other way blues reached white audiences was through the classic female blues performers, the music evolving from informal entertainment in bars to entertainment in theatres.

The blues performers were organised by the Theatre Owners Bookers Association (also known as "Tough on Black Asses"). Musicians performed in nightclubs such as the Cotton Club, juke joints and infamous bars along Beale Street in Memphis. At the same time Okeh, Paramount and the American Music Corporation began to record African-American music. With its growth came the rise in popularity of country blues performers like Bo Carter, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Lonnie Johnson, Tampa Red and Blind Blake, country blues songsters like Charlie Patton, Son House, Robert Johnson and singers like Blind Willie McTell and Blind Boy Fuller.

But the 1920s was also the time of classic female urban or vaudeville blues singers like Mamie Smith, Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith and Victoria Spivey. Key Urban male performers included Big Bill Broonzy, Leroy Carr and Tampa Red, the latter having a risqué hit with "It's tight like that". Stories about oppression, often coded, sometimes explicit, covered themes like male/female relationships, lesbian relationships, economic migration, prison experiences, racism, violence, illegal numbers playing, and coping with the law.

### MEN AND WOMEN/WOMEN AND WOMEN BLUES

*Men sure is deceitful and they's gettin' 'worse every day*

*Men sure is deceitful and they's gettin' 'worse every day*

*Act like a bunch of women, they's just-a gab, gab, gabbin' away*

*There's two things got me puzzled, there's two things I can't stand*

*There's two things got me puzzled, there's two things I can't stand*

*A mannish actin' woman and a skippin' twistin' woman actin' man*

*Foolish Man Blues* doesn't reveal anything

particularly about Bessie Smith's sexuality, but it does have some interesting takes on gender. There's a treasury of blues songs by and about lesbians.

Lucille Bogan, recording under the name Bessie Jackson, accompanied by pianist Walter Roland from 1935, recorded one of the best. She's talking about "bull dykes" or "bull daggers" in *B.D. Woman's Blues*.

Lesbians were common on the classic blues scene of the 1920s and 1930s, singers like Alberta Hunter. They lived in an environment where their sexuality could at times be flaunted, at other times it had to be hidden. The songs reflect this. Their stage shows did even more so. Whatever they were representing, most of these performers never stopped entertaining.

Ma Rainey was the first superstar of the classic blues women. She was a married woman, married to Pa Rainey, but in the 1920s, her love of women was no secret. She was arrested in 1925 after a police raid at a party where several women including Ma were found together naked and having sex. In *Prove It on Me*, while backed up by a sort of a jazz jug band that featured Thomas Dorsey, she sings about the elusiveness of her sexuality and her feelings toward men and women.

Charley Patton was the greatest chronicler of Mississippi in blues song. In *Stone Pony Blues* from 1934, he sings about Vicksburg, Greenville, Lula, and Natchez. Stone Pony was an expression for anything good. Patton's uses the phrase as a metaphor for young women he has seen around Mississippi. Bukka White sang about his troubled times with the women in Aberdeen, Mississippi.

New Orleans is over 300 miles away from Aberdeen. But that was nothing to many blues musicians willing to pick up and go for any reason. Bukka White sung about getting away from the Aberdeen women to get to some new ones down in New Orleans.

Big Bill Broonzy was one of the many who made the trek out of Mississippi to Chicago. But he never forgot the south. In *Lowland Blues*, from 1936, he sings about Jackson, Greenwood, and anywhere in Mississippi being his true home.

### PRISON BLUES

FIELD recordings from Southern penitentiaries were a frequent pursuit of folklorists recording for the Library of Congress or universities. Alan Lomax recorded

some remarkable songs by prisoners about their experiences, including a harmonica feature from a man known only as Alex and a haunting vocal from Tangle Eye, though Leadbelly's songs are the best known.

Life in the penitentiary was the subject of many a blues song. Furry Lewis sang about the inevitability of ending up in the penitentiary once he ended up in the court of Judge Harsh. Furry sang about heading to prison despite never having harmed a man. His woman offers money to the judge, but it's not enough to keep the penitentiary from becoming his home.

Peg Leg Howell recorded several songs about crimes and prison. In *Ball and Chain Blues* recorded in Atlanta in 1929, he sings a song about the hard labour that comes with a sentence. Labour was a constant in Southern prisons and it took various forms. Howell discusses being part of a chain gang. He knew what it was like to endure physical labour for the state as a prisoner.

Chain gang work had a reputation for harshness, but there were equally harsh systems in states like Mississippi, with Parchman Farm, and Louisiana, with Angola penitentiary. They had their prisoners work the fields of a prison plantation. Nearly all observers remarked on the similarities between these prisons and the systems of plantation slavery that had ended decades earlier in those same states. Bukka White recorded two songs about prison including *Parchman Farm Blues*.

Parchman Farm's crops created a huge amount of revenue for the state of Mississippi creating an incentive to imprison labourers for the fields. The prison's brutality was the stuff of legend.

One of the few ways to be released early was for one prisoner to kill another that was thought to be trying to escape. The state farms and the chain gangs held many in an era when hard labour was the punishment for those who ended up in prisons, some guilty of violent crimes, others lesser offences that still violated the Jim Crow system. This included countless blues musicians who recorded dozens of songs. Together they create a fascinating document of prisons in the 20s and 30s.

### DEALING WITH THE LAW BLUES

ONE of the most difficult things about living in a discriminatory society is having the law work against you rather than protecting you. This was the situation for

African-Americans in the Jim Crow era. Even lawyers of the time referred to an unwritten "negro law" that treated black men without regard to their rights. This was implemented at every level of justice from the police to the courthouse to the prisons and jails.

Thanks to the heritage of slavery, black men and woman would need the protection of white men to avoid ending in trouble with local police. This protection would often be unavailable for someone living an itinerant blues lifestyle, and a huge number of blues songs were recorded about dealing with the law.

Bo Carter expressed the trouble that can come from a black man having even a little alcohol in the age of prohibition in his 1931 song *The Law Gonna Step on You*.

Memphis musician Robert Williams recorded *Police Sergeant Blues* in 1930. The song equates trouble with his woman to trouble with the law. He describes the inevitability of a sentence once the police come for you.

Blind Blake recorded a song about being thrown in jail, and he wished someone would have told him *What a Low Down Place the Jailhouse Is*. In the song, Blake was thrown in jail by a judge. Even worse than getting sent to jail for a few weeks was being sentenced to the state prison Leroy Carr's *Prison Bound Blues* describes the feeling of knowing your headed to the penitentiary and losing the life you enjoyed.

The number of blues songs about police, lawyers, judges, jails, and prisons testifies to the difficulty of dealing with the law for those living a blues lifestyle. Though the stories of lynching and murder are told frequently, these songs help document the smaller problems with the law that African-Americans could have on a nearly daily basis in the Jim Crow South.

These could include being thrown in jail without a second thought from a police officer and being sentenced with little more consideration from a judge.

### RACISM BLUES

WHEN these 1920s blues songs were recorded, skin-lightening cream products ads were always seen alongside the blues record advertisements in black newspapers like the *Chicago Defender*. The assumption was that light skinned was automatically more attractive.

Blues singers often subverted this assumption, but at times reinforced it. The popular music comedy team from the 1920s, Butterbeans and Susie, sing in *Brown Skin Gal* about how a brown skinned girl can be trusted and is the best, but she might not have the money, status, or look as good as a yellow.

Leroy Carr and Scrapper Blackwell have a similar take in *Good Woman Blues*. In It's Heated, Frankie "Half-Pint" Jaxon gives his ideas about sexual stereotypes with the darkest woman coming out on top: "Now a yellow gal is like a frigid zone, brownskin's about the same. You want some good loving, get yourself an old Crow Jane."

The term Crow Jane shows up in dozens of blues songs referring to dark women. Texas Alexander subscribed to the lighter-is-better school in *Yellow Girl Blues*: "Black woman evil, brown skin evil too. Going to get me a yellow woman and see what she will do."

Some male blues singers expressed the attitude that the high status of light-skinned women made them more difficult to deal with as romantic partners. The idea was that light-skinned women may be more beautiful, have more money, and a generally higher status, but they won't treat a man well.

Bo Weavil Jackson sang in *Some Scream High Yellow*: "Some Scream High Yellow, I scream black or brown. High yellow may mistreat you, but black won't turn you down."

In this way issues of race and class were written and thought about in the blues culture of the time.

# The Irish in Glasgow

Bill Price reviews *Irish — The Remarkable Saga of a Nation and a City* by John Burrowes, published by Mainstream publishing

*Irish — The Remarkable Saga of a Nation and a City* tells the story of the Irish in Glasgow.

The real origins of Celtic FC and those responsible for the religious sectarianism between Celtic and Rangers are also explored — something that only began several years after the clubs were founded. Both players and fans socialised after the games in the early years.

The strength of Burrowes' account lies in his prose style and great anecdotes that brings home to the reader the level of exploitation and oppression that the Irish went through. The story of the Irish in Glasgow really is a "remarkable saga".

John Burrowes has written extensively on different aspects of Glasgow over the years — everything from short pieces on John MacLean and "The Battle of George Square" to the World Championship boxer Benny Lynch (see his *Glasgow Stories* Volumes I and 2). His journalism is always perceptive, articulate and informative.

In ten days in August 1847, 11,080 new immigrants arrived fleeing the Great Famine. 33,000 more were to arrive over the next three months in "Coffin Ships". Those going to America and Canada via Liverpool often did not arrive at all, thousands dying because of the conditions en route.

Burrowes describes the horrific story of the SS Londonderry. It set sail on the 1 December 1848 in weather conditions that virtually guaranteed its sinking with the loss of 72 lives. He exposes the corrupt relationship between the Glasgow authorities and "Coffin ship" owners, who were allowed to by-pass quarantine laws for financial gain.

*Irish* goes on to give harrowing anecdotal accounts of how both individuals and families met their deaths in an Irish Holocaust that started in the Eastern counties before spreading all over Ireland. He relates how the actions of a free market government guaranteed the crises turned into a total disaster. The book discusses housing conditions in Glasgow and describes how social engineering ensured the Irish lived in the worst slums and got sent to the worst poorhouses — "you'll be sent to Barnhill" being a threat that still exists in living memory.

The role of the Church of Scotland and the press in representing the Irish ensured sectari-

anism and division, and Burrowes details the story of the "Battle of Partick Cross". Religious sectarianism existed in workplaces to divide and rule, and there are anecdotal accounts of how this affected work on the Clyde. The book has a section on the Blantyre disaster, the lives of the Irish Navies on the railways and their relationship with other nationalities and grades.

The most interesting section of the book explores the role of the Irish Republican Brotherhood in Glasgow and the effects of the actions of the Black and Tans in Ireland on the Catholic Irish in Glasgow. The consequences of the Irish civil war are also explored in accounts of volunteers who took refuge in Glasgow and the sometimes unlikely sources of help they got in fleeing.

In the 30s Glasgow appointed a new Chief Constable to deal with the roughly 50 gangs that existed. There was laughter and ridicule when the gangs found out that the new Chief Constable was an Englishman called Percy who liked choir music as a pastime. The establishment more diplomatically asked "is there really no one Scottish who could do the job?" Burrowes explains how Percy Sillitoe stopped all the laughing.

# Keeping the victims in disaster mode

BY PAT LONGMAN

**T**HE *Shock Doctrine: the rise of disaster capitalism* is a recent book written by left-wing writer, journalist and broadcaster Naomi Klein (author of *No Logo*). The book's central theme revolves around how for the past 50 years, neo-conservatives, adherents of the right-wing economist Milton Friedman, have been consciously initiating and exploiting "shock" events to bring about "free market capitalism" and to destroy the public sphere (a theme which was featured in *No Logo*).

By shocking and cowering populations into submission, corporations, backed up by right wing governments, have been able to penetrate into areas of a country's economy from which the private sector were previously excluded — education, housing, health, security, prisons and the armed forces.

To back up her claim she examines major political and economic upheavals in Latin America, Iran and the Middle East, South Africa, Asia, Russia and Eastern Europe and draws attention to how Iraq has been the location for disaster-capitalism's most recent escapade.

It is an excellent antidote for anyone who views capitalism as benign. Klein explains how Friedman believed that for complete privatisation and market liberalization to take place, authoritarian conditions would be required.

One of the first places to experience the Friedman doctrine was Indonesia, where General Suharto (1965) demonstrated that by applying massive repression pre-emptively, the country would go into a kind of shock, making it easy for resistance to be wiped out

before it took place. She describes how a group of Indonesian economists, "the Berkley Mafia", who were followers of Friedman's ideas, helped Suharto achieve his ambitions and records how the CIA, which had been involved in the coup, regarded it as a model operation. Klein reports on how the "shock doctrine" was quickly followed up in Chile, in Russia in the 90s, in the US after September 11 2001 and in a host of other countries.

She spells out how "disaster capitalism" exploits security threats, terror attacks, economic meltdowns, political and economic crisis and natural disasters to its own advantage in order to "privatize governments" and to take control of some of the most sensitive core governmental functions. Many Latin American countries, with the return to some resemblance to democracy, found themselves saddled with the debts of the former dictatorships — a fact that was eagerly seized on by Friedman's adherents to bring about further privatisation and liberalization policies.

Disaffected Friedmanites stated that Friedman's economic policies, which included the privatisation of Chile's social security system, were so wrenching that they could not "be imposed or carried out without the twin elements that underlie them all: military force and political terror". Klein criticizes the human rights movements for regarding the mass imprisonment, killing and torture of those who disagreed with Friedman's economic medicine as narrow "human rights abuses", rather than as tools that served clear political and economic ends.

Klein claims that Chile was transformed into a corporatist state, which she defines as

a "supporting alliance between a police state and large corporations". Its features: exploding debt, ever widening gap between the rich and poor, aggressive nationalism that justifies bottomless spending on security, shrinking civil liberties and torture.

As free market philosophies have spread so have the features identified by Klein.

In a recent radio interview for Democracy Now, Klein goes one step further to suggest that the US is close to becoming a fascist state.

She fails to elaborate further on how the adoption of a "corporatist" analysis would inform a fight back, influence the political strategies that would need to be adopted.

Indeed, the last chapter, "The shock wears off", which deals with how the measures are being resisted and fought against, is the most disappointing.

Focusing again on Latin America she describes the governmental changes that have taken place resulting in economic reforms and partial re-nationalizations, and details how the IMF and World Bank have both come under concerted attack for their privatisation policies.

She also cites a number of examples of grassroots fightbacks, for example in Lebanon and in Thailand. However, the chapter appears unconvincing. Because Klein fails to spell out a strategy for concerted working class action, she is left backing up "left wing" governments and pointing to the heroic activities of isolated groups of trade unionists and community activists in Lebanon and the Philippines. Considered in the context of the march towards worldwide privatisation and liberalization, this hardly provides a worked out political strategy as to

how working class activity can be revived and mobilized.

Environmental disasters, she writes, have been exploited by corporations intent on dismantling public sector provision in every sphere. At a time when the effects of global warming are just beginning to be felt, a section of capital is waiting eagerly for the next disaster!

Klein reports how in Sri Lanka, after the devastation of the 2004 tsunami, foreign investors and international lenders used the atmosphere of panic to hand the coastline over to property developers and to dispossess thousands of fishing people who wanted to rebuild their villages near the water front.

In New Orleans, the flood was regarded by capitalists as a golden opportunity for radical social engineering: Klein describes how they went about privatising the school system and destroying any vestiges of public housing.

But in her chapter on South Africa, Klein sees the inability of the ANC to improve the conditions of the South African working class as being exclusively due to the international financial markets. She fails to analyse the *politics* of the ANC, portraying them as being victims of finance capital. The ANC were trained by international finance capital not to implement the "Freedom Charter". Any sign that they were about to renege was met with economic shock tactics by the markets. Nelson Mandela said at the ANC's 1997 national conference that "it was impossible for countries to decide national economic policy without regard to the likely response of the markets"; he cited the debt burden as the single obstacle to keeping the promises of the Freedom Charter.

On Iraq, Klein quotes from Rumsfeld's forgotten speech "that the job of government is not to govern but to subcontract that task to the more efficient and generally superior private sector". That vision of a hollow government was applied to Iraq, in which "Everything from war fighting to disaster response was a for-profit venture". The role of the state was not to provide security, but to purchase it at a market price.

In Bremer's Iraq the Friedman dream became a reality, with the "public sector reduced to a minimal number of employees, mostly contract workers, living in a Halliburton city state, tasked with signing corporate-friendly laws drafted by KPMG and handing out duffle bags of cash to Western contractors protected by mercenary soldiers, themselves shielded by full legal immunity."

In relation to Iraq that Klein spells out further how she sees "disaster capitalism" as being different from liberal capitalism. In the past companies in capitalist economies wanted stable, profitable environments in which to make profits. Coups and military interventions were a means to that end, not the goal itself. In disaster capitalism wars and other disasters are ends in themselves for sectors such as military industries, security and privatised health; wars, epidemics, natural disasters and resource shortages translate into booming profits. Klein believes that the "war on terror" has provided for corporate America an even more effective way of making money by providing avenues for endless war abroad and a security state at home.

This book is well researched; particularly well worth a read are the chapters on Russia and South Africa. However, because the main focus of the book is on the development and implementation of "disaster capitalism" throughout the world, without any critical analysis of left political movements, the reader comes away with the depressing impression that workers and the left are always destined to be victims, and not architects of our own destiny.

## State patriarchy on film

BY REBECCA GALBRAITH

**A**CCORDING to Anamaria Marinca, one of the two lead actresses in *4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days*, "It isn't a film that is pro-abortion, neither is it against it; it's not as easy as that."

This may be true, but *4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days*, leaves you in no doubt about the horrific reality of illegal abortion. It is set in Romania in 1987. Abortion has been illegal for 20 years, as has contraception, (in order to swell the population), and an estimated 500,000 women have died from backstreet abortions.

Otilia (Anamaria Marinca) and Gabita (Laura Vasiliu) share a room in a student dormitory. Gabita is pregnant and Otilia offers to help her friend arrange an illegal abortion — finding the cash, booking the hotel room and liaising with the abortionist, Mr Bebe (Vlad Ivanov). The three meet in a hotel room where on finding out that Gabita's pregnancy is more advanced than he had previously been told, Bebe demands sex from both women.

Filmed over one afternoon and evening, for the most part it uses available light and is shot almost entirely in long takes with

extended, hand-held tracking shots or static cameras, increasing our involvement in this true story. One particularly claustrophobic scene is a static tableau of a tea party in which lengthy conversations are framed in a way that excludes people's heads and dialogue is delivered from off-screen.

Otilia is forced to attend this party at her boyfriend's parents' flat, leaving Gabita alone in a hotel room, where she is in danger of hemorrhaging if she moves and at risk of being sent to prison if she calls an ambulance.

The parents' friends are middle aged doctors and academics who belittle Otilia for her sex, education and lower class family. She sits through their depressing conversations about the best way to cook potatoes, having just been subjected to the

horrors of Bebe and waiting to return to find out if her friend is still alive.

The tension of the film is exacerbated by glimpses of life in the Eastern Bloc — the need to produce ID for everything and the bullying police. There are no blatant incidents of state brutality, but the patriarchy of the state is palpable in every scene, as is the isolated vulnerability of the two women, entirely at the mercy of Bebe grotesquely bathing in his power and knowledge.

Carrying the camera on her, the film closes with Otilia disposing of the fetus down a rubbish shoot, her only choice in a desperate attempt to avoid the police. Uncomfortable to watch, but an intimate and salient reminder about the choices women face when abortion is illegal.

# The first British Marxists

Cathy Nugent continues a series on the politics of the early modern British socialist movement with a brief assessment of the politics of the socialists in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century

*“Do not on any account whatever let yourself be deluded into thinking there is a real proletarian movement going on here. I know Liebknecht tries to delude himself and all the world about this, but it is not the case. The elements at present active may become important since they have accepted our theoretical programme and so acquired a basis, but only if a spontaneous movement breaks out here among the workers and they succeed in getting control of it. Till then they will remain individual minds, with a hotch-potch of confused sects, remnants of the great movement of the ‘forties, standing behind them and nothing more.”*

Engels to August Bebel, 30 August 1883.

SO Engels more or less dismissed the Social Democratic Federation at its inception. Engels never essentially changed that view, despite his closest political associates Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling joining the SDF not once, but twice, with the years in between being spent in William Morris’s Socialist League (a 1884 split from the SDF).

For Engels the problem with the SDF was in good part the role of its organiser, leading light and patron, Henry Hyndman. Hyndman’s ideas are very confused, said Engels, and moreover, he has an unhealthy desire to dictate all that the group thinks and does. Was Engels right? Partly, but I believe it is important to balance Engel’s assessment of both Hyndman and the SDF.

Hyndman started his adult political life as a well-heeled Tory. His way into socialism was by way of “reactionary socialism” as Marx and Engels called it in the *Communist Manifesto*. He admired the Benjamin Disraeli who set up Young England, a group of people who despised the avarice and destructiveness of the new bourgeois order but favoured an alliance of the new working class with the aristocracy. Once he got the socialist bug, Hyndman never let it go. What Hyndman retained of his Tory roots, his hatred of the Liberal Party for instance, was quirky, but secondary.

Hyndman did have some important weaknesses: shocking anti-semitism — unfortunately not uncommon in the socialist movement — and inconsistent chauvinism was the worst of it. But his basic socialist propaganda is not bad. A *summary of the principles of socialism*, for instance, written with William Morris in 1884, is an interesting description of the historical development of the British working class.

The SDF was not a monolith. There were always differences and tendencies. Hyndman was domineering and proprietorial, but also often on the losing side of political debates. SDF branches would often go their own way, blurring the differences between the views of local members and the official policies of the SDF.

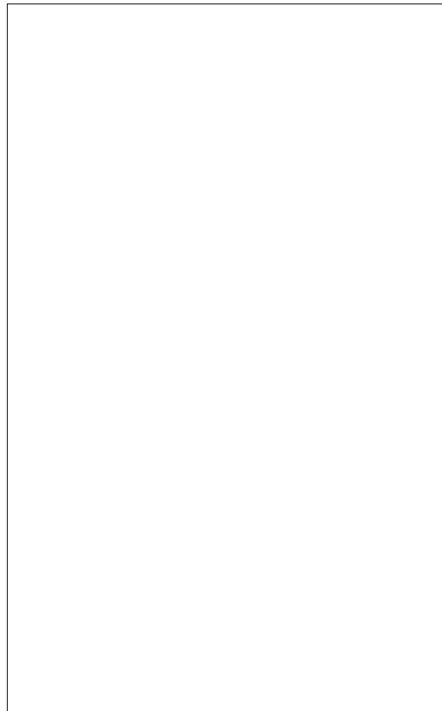
Hyndman also had a well-known lack of enthusiasm for trade union struggle. In the beginning this it founded on justifiable revulsion at the conservatism of the old craft-based, unions of the 1870s. If it was difficult for him to see the importance of trade unionism for socialists, he was not alone. The Socialist League (which split from the SDF at the very end of 1884) also emphasised the limitations of trade unionism in their 1885 *Address to Trade Unions*. Both groups thought and said that because big political struggles were on the horizon, day-to-day trade union struggle would soon be superseded.

The SDF (and later on the Socialist League) can be forgiven a lot because what they were trying to do was important — re-establish socialism as an organised force. They inspire admiration because they had such limited intellectual material to hand.

The early SDF was based not on extensive written works by Marx and Engels, because they didn’t have access to them, but on the most extreme views circulating in working-class Radical clubs of London of the time. Stan Shipley in his history of those clubs describes the context:

*“It was the discussion of the theories of Bronterre O’Brien, Robert Owen and, more occasionally, Karl Marx [only the Communist Manifesto and one or two other works were available] in the metropolitan clubs... which produced the atmosphere in which an avowedly socialist movement could emerge. The working men of the Manhood Suffrage League termed themselves Radical, but when the matter of ‘Communism’ was under debate a majority of them seem to have been predisposed in its favour.”*

Bronterre O’Brien was a leader of the Chartist movement. In the 1880s his followers were based in the Manhood Suffrage League in west London and believed, among other things, that political reform — through universal suffrage — was the key to social change. They saw society as a natural order which had



William Morris: imagining what socialism would look like

been corrupted by property and class. They abhorred monopolies of all kinds — of political power, the means of production and land. Breaking up land monopolies occupied a special place in their political programme.

It took many years for the work of Marx and Engels to be circulated in Britain.

The *Communist Manifesto* had been published in 1850, in a workers’ newspaper, the *Red Republican*, that is, in an ephemeral form. The International Working Men’s Association (the First International) in which Marx and Engels were heavily involved was reported in a workers’ paper, the *Beehive*. Marx’s “lessons of the Paris Commune”, *The Civil War in France*, was translated into English and published by the IWMA.

But in Marx’s lifetime, there were no other English translations of his (or Engels’) writings. In 1885 Hyndman got published a serialisation of the first ten chapters of *Capital*. The SDF issued a cheap edition in 1897. In 1886 SDFer JL Joynes translated *Wage Labour and Capital*. In 1887 the first volume of *Capital* appeared, translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, and edited by Engels. It was very popular, going through four printings in four years. The *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* appeared in 1898, *The Poverty of Philosophy* in 1900 and the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* in 1904.

Hyndman was more educated than most in “Marxist” ideas. But he seems to have taken some things from the German socialist Ferdinand Lassalle, who had a “statist” or “reformist” conception of socialism. The founding programme (1883) of the SDF took its opening sentence (“Labour is the source of all wealth”) straight from the Gotha programme, the founding document of a united German socialist movement. Marx had criticised that sentence, and the whole programme, harshly in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875).

Hyndman also adopted the “the iron law of wages” popularised by Lassalle. This stated that wage rises are only ever temporary and will always be pushed back to the physical minimum on which a worker can subsist. Such barininess propped up Hyndman’s lack of enthusiasm for trade unions.

BUT despite its limited beginnings the SDF did develop as a political organisation. By the end of the 1880s the O’Brienite influence had faded. With the advent of New Unionism, and the involvement of so many of its members in trade unions, the SDF had to explicitly reassess trade union struggle. By the end of the 19th century the SDF had taken over the London Trades Council. In 1897 the Executive recommended that all members join their trade union and local co-operative society.

For me both the SDF and the Socialist League had an important strength: they fundamentally understood, firmly grasped and entirely felt, that to make a better world, the workers must take economic, social and political power. This contrasts very sharply with many socialists today.

However on the question of how the workers would take power the socialists were a lot more vague. Detailed thought about how the workers would take power, the necessity or otherwise of insurrection, whether insurrection would be violent, how the workers would take over and run the economy, was not absent, but does not seem to have been a great concern.

Socialists of the time (everywhere) thought socialism was inevitable, and achievable within a short time span. They thought a workers’ revolution would arise out of a tremendous social crisis. All further questions would work themselves out in the course of time. Although it may look to us as if the socialists were stumbling and grasping at political culture, they may not have seen it that way. The socialism they preached was often repetitive, simple and focussed on basics about class exploitation. Since they were not able to read the subtle, concrete analysis of Marx and Engels, how would else would they conceive of the socialist project?

William Morris is always well worth reading, though sometimes plain wrong (right up until the end of his life, he thought “Parliamentary action”, i.e. socialists standing in elections and advocating reforms, was opportunistic). Much of the writing his available on the Internet. *Socialism from the root up* by Morris and Ernest Belfort Bax ([www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1888/sru](http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1888/sru)) is good. Together with *News From Nowhere* it describes how (these) socialists imagined a socialist society would look like.

“We ask our readers to imagine the new society in its political aspect as an organised body of communities, each carrying on its own affairs, but united by a delegated federal body, whose function would be the guardianship of the acknowledged principles of society; it being understood that these two bodies, the township or community and the Federal Power, would be the two extremities between which there would be other expressions of the Federal principle — as in districts that were linked together by natural circumstances, such as language, climate, or the divisions of physical geography.”

Both the SDF and the Socialist League emphasised a political revolution. And both emphasised winning converts to the socialist doctrine so that the workers knew they needed to take power. Once the workers were in power the socialist transformation could take place.

Marx and Engels saw workers’ revolutions in less narrowly political terms. For them the political revolution was always the culmination of social and economic struggles. The political heritage of the British socialists — the Chartists and O’Brienites — must have a great deal to do with their emphasis.

Tom Mann knew instinctively that it was possible to transform the union movement with a socialist intervention, and that would help build the base for a revolution. But Mann never integrated his idea of developing workers’ struggles with an overall revolutionary strategy. In *The Student’s Marx* Edward Aveling takes an unusual view by describing how political movements could be a way to promote and develop (rather than to solve) social questions. Expropriation in factories, he says, would be backed up by the workers in government.

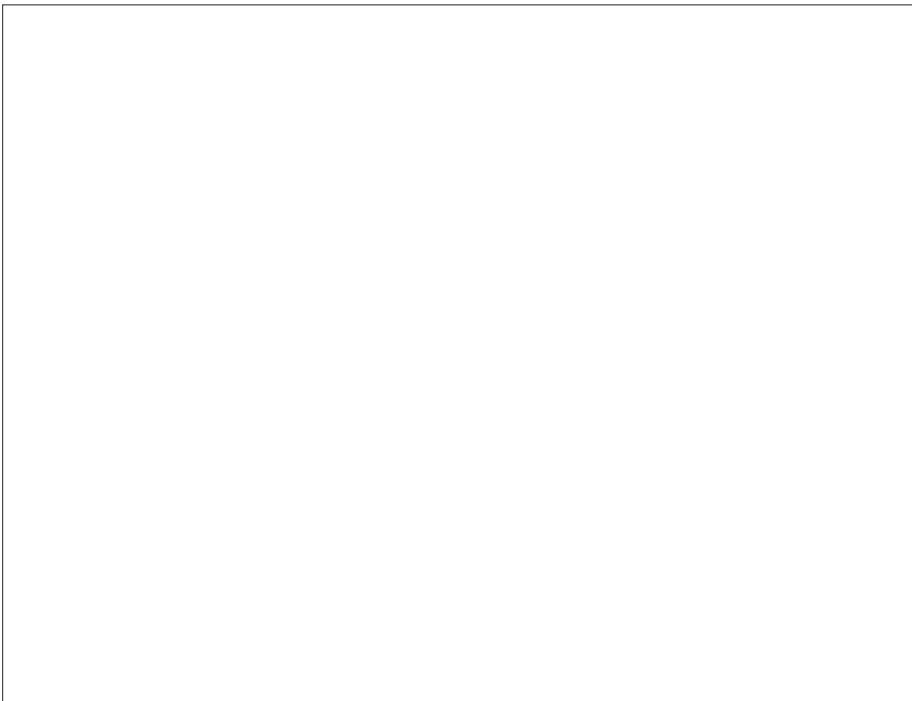
What would the SDF’s political revolution look like?

In the early years there was popular saying among the socialists — “gunpowder against feudalism, dynamite against capitalism”. Many accepted that the social crisis out of which the workers would grasp power might get violent — the bourgeoisie might fight back

However, in general SDFers wanted to temper that idea: “Gunpowder helped to sweep away feudalism when new forms arose from the decay of the old; now far stronger explosives [dynamite] are arrayed against capitalism, whilst the ideas of the time are rife with revolution as they were when feudalism fell. To obviate anarchy we must organise.”

But the question of violence or non-violence, was never the central issue for Marx and Engels. The SDF’s concern was to educate the workers so that they would be fit to take power without “anarchy”. Marx and Engels wanted to promote and develop the social processes that gave birth to a revolutionary class.

ONE question of controversy between the Socialist League and the SDF was over whether or not the workers needed a transitional state, to reorganise society and



Long Kesh, the prison outside Belfast which would be used to house paramilitaries throughout "the Troubles"

# The debacle of demagoguery

This article is part nine of a series on the breakdown of the Northern Ireland state in 1968-9 — the biggest political crisis in Britain for a very long time, and one that shaped decades of ensuing "Troubles" — and the response of the left. Parts seven and eight covered the events of August 1969, when Northern Ireland erupted into civil war, barricades went up in Derry and Belfast, and British troops went on the streets; and the panicked debates at the conferences of IS (what is today the SWP) in September 1969 and April 1970. This article looks in more detail at what generated those debates — IS's sudden shift in August from shouting "Troops Out" (when the troops were playing no active role), and effectively advocating Catholic-Protestant civil war, to effectively supporting the troops. The previous articles can be read at <http://www.workersliberty.org/node/9920>.

BY SEAN MATGAMNA

*So the crowd come, they care not what may come.*

W B Yeats

IN Northern Ireland, the British Army had quelled the fighting by supplanting the RUC and B-Specials as the mainstays of the sub-State. Welcomed by the Catholics, it surrounded the Catholic areas with a wall of military steel; but it did not attack the barricades or those who, after their recent experience, were determined to maintain them and if necessary to defend them.

The Catholics attempted to use the fact of their secession from the Six-County state, behind barricades in Belfast and Derry, as their main political bargaining point, setting political conditions for their political "return" — for removing the barricades and letting the representatives of the Six Counties state, or rather, of the UK state, back into their territory.

The Belfast Catholic sub-state within a sub-state was deep in the Protestant-Unionist-Orange heartland. Derry was on the border with County Donegal and the Republic of Ireland.

Beyond demanding, in effect, the end of the Orange-Protestant Northern Ireland state, the Catholics had no perspective for what to do with their little "Free States" — other than to

physically defend the barricades if or when an attempt was made to remove them.

But no attempt was or would be made to assault them physically. The assault would be a political assault.

A sort of dual or triple power now existed between the Belfast government, the barricaded areas, and the UK state. It was not quite the "Catholic power" that Michael Farrell had talked about in *New Left Review*; through the army, London had overall physical control, that is, in the last reduction, the state power.

The political pressure to take down the barricades began immediately the Army appeared. It came from conventional Catholic politicians — though not, at first, all of them. And above all and most effectively, from the Catholic Church, whose priests and Bishops appealed to the people to take the barricades down. The Bishop of Down and Connor himself, Dr Philbin, went from his episcopal palace down amongst his slum-dwelling flock on the Falls Road to urge them to "do the right thing" — let the British Army and the RUC in.

Urgently concerned to re-establish their own authority with the Catholics, which they feared had been shaken by events and by revolutionary, Republican, and socialist propaganda, the bishops made a formal statement on the events of mid-August, siding entirely with the Catholics.

It took them a month to wean the Catholics from self-reliance in Belfast, and the better part of two months in Derry. Barricades were taken down on a number of occasions in both cities, but then hastily re-erected in response to communal clashes. It took the reforms now rushed through — disarming and phasing-out of the B-Specials, and the decision to disarm the RUC — to finally convince the Catholics to end their secession.

I

FROM mid-August 1969, when Northern Ireland began to collapse into Civil War, IS's leaders were like a driver desperately shifting gears in a car that is skidding on icy ground, the wheels unable to get traction on the surface.

The comments, "line", and "analysis" of IS — and of the "heavy" editorials as much as, or more than, the headlines —

were shaped and primed by the needs of agitation. Usually, it was shallow, thoughtless, demagogic, blustering agitation.

But under the bluster was political abdication. Through the autumn of 1969, *Socialist Worker* would express its attitude to the British troops and the British state in such statements as: "when the Catholics are armed, they can tell the troops to go"; "the intervention of the British troops only allows a temporary breathing space"; the troops are "not angels"; they "won't stay forever".

It is never the business of socialists to give credence and political confidence in advance to promises or even progress by the bourgeois state and the ruling class. What IS said about the troops from August to October 1969 amounted to giving them and the London government enormous credit in advance. It left the organisation asserting its political "independence" by way of too often naive and foolish scoffing at the politicking that was an aspect of the British Government's overall policy, and whose instrument the troops were.

Now, endorsement of desirable activities by bourgeois governments is for socialists always, and rightly and necessarily so, is something that is done mainly in retrospect — an activity, so to speak, of late evening, not morning.

But if our critical comment on what governments do, our agitation, is boneheaded and obtuse, showing us incapable or unwilling to comprehend what is going on, then it will simply not work with people who have minds and newspapers.

It will confuse and disorientate. It will hinder the group's supporters from learning to think for themselves politically. Among those who see some of the reality, but accept the "need" to flam and spiel and "put it over" in the interests of constructing an organisationally convenient "line", it will breed cynicism

**Socialist Worker would express its attitude to the British troops and the British state in such statements as: "when the Catholics are armed, they can tell the troops to go"; "the intervention of the British troops only allows a temporary breathing space".**

and a manipulative conception of what "revolutionary politics" is — a conception whose full-strength version was for decades to be found in the malign works of the Stalinist parties. The relationship between agitation and propaganda would be central to the ensuing debates in IS between the IS leaders on one side and the Trotskyist Tendency (forerunner of the AWL) and others, on the other.

THE wreckage of the previous policy and analysis — in so far as there ever was anything remotely resembling an independent IS analysis — cluttered the special "Irish issue" of *Socialist Worker* published on 21 August. It was flimsy, even as a hastily put together effort.

It had four main articles — an account of capitalist exploitation in Northern Ireland, by Michael Kidron; a strangely gamey look at Irish-British history by Duncan Hallas, riddled with factual errors; the text of a leaflet put out by the left in Derry; and a front-page editorial.

The criticism of IS here is not intended to mean that at the time I saw clearly and rejected all of what I am criticising. But I rejected and criticised a lot of it, for instance the idea that became IS's magic mantra in this period, that if workers in the south would seize British-owned property that would transform everything for the better. I will deal later in the series with the Trotskyist Tendency's politics, including what we shared with the IS leadership, what we rejected, and what we counter-posed to their politics.

The (unsigned) editorial was — unmistakably — written or "creatively edited" by John Palmer. It appeared under headlines backing the demands of Catholic Derry and Belfast:

The Barricades Must Stay Until:

- B-Specials Disbanded
- RUC Disarmed
- Special Powers Act Abolished
- Political Prisoners Released

By the time that the issue of SW dated 21 August went to press, the way things were going and what the British Government intended was pretty clear. The B-Specials were being disarmed and there was talk that they would be "phased out".

What SW headlined was what the British Government was shaping up to do, and anyone with any political sense would know that. SW's "militant" demands were a list of things that were already being conceded. The "difficult" stuff like abolishing Stormont was omitted from the headlines, though SW was implicitly calling for that by way of denouncing London for not getting rid of Stormont.

The editorial's opening lines were: "Britain's police state in Northern Ireland erupted last week. The people of Bogside, discriminated against, confined to appalling housing, often

without hope of ever getting a job, stood up for themselves". But the people of the Shankhill also had bad housing: very few Shankhill houses had baths, and most had outdoor lavatories. This was pointedly, a Catholic-sectarian way for a socialist paper to present things.

"Immediately there was an attempt to beat the whole Catholic population back on to their knees".

The RUC, "controlled by members of the sectarian Orange Order... moved in to smash all resistance... In Belfast they used... automatic rifles and sub-machine guns." Thus SW said from the start that "the people" were the Catholics, and the Protestants were invisible except as "thugs". Yet:

"What took place was not a riot over religion. The discrimination and denial of civil rights in Northern Ireland does not flow from religious beliefs. It is the result of a deliberate and sustained effort to develop and deepen religious hatreds by the Ulster rulers of Stormont."

This is not even formally logical. The editorial presented a conspiracy view of a deep-seated historical phenomenon.

"By making the condition of the Protestant population seem marginally superior to that of the Catholics, by arming them in the B-Specials and by permitting them to engage in periodic pogroms..." — though there were disturbances in 1942, the last major sectarian fighting had been back in 1935 — "the Protestants have been prevented from seeing their real interests in opposition to the Unionist ruling class".

That was economic blindness to the political questions that immediately concerned everyone, on both sides. In fact there was a comparatively powerful trade union movement in Northern Ireland. The author meant not that Protestant workers had ceased to see economic conflict between themselves and Unionist bosses, but that they had rejected Irish unity in a Catholic-majority state.

Then the editorial offered sleight of mind: "The most oppressed section of the working class in Northern Ireland has begun to fight back in the last ten months".

That was to substitute sociology for politics, subsuming everything else. It was true, but it was also a lie. It was not as workers that the oppressed Catholics had fought back, but as Catholics, part of the Irish "Catholic" nation — implicitly for the basic civil right they lacked, national self-determination.

The author simply defined away the communal civil war that had erupted. IS was still pretending, misleading, still pushing the liberal/nationalist picture of "the people" against "the State".

"For us the immediate priority must be to give as much support as possible to this beleaguered minority. We can hope that Protestant workers will see their true interests and fight alongside them" — for what, politically? — "and socialists must ceaselessly press for Protestant-Catholic workers' unity" How? With what goals? By supporting Catholic-nationalist or Catholic-sectarian goals?

And the troops? "Certainly the mass of Catholics, after three days of bitter fighting were relieved to see the RUC and the Specials withdrawn and to this extent were glad to see the British troops. But it should not be thought that the presence of British troops can begin to solve their problems".

Under the cross-head "Not Angels", the editorial began to meld its Catholic-nationalist demagoguery with an illusion-ridden de facto endorsement of the troops:

"Because the troops do not have the ingrained hatreds of the RUC and Specials, they will not behave with the same viciousness — although the former terrorisers of Aden and Cyprus are not the angels the press presents them to be. They are in Northern Ireland to preserve 'law and order'; which means preserving the existing set-up. The Catholics will still be confined to their ghettos. They will still have the worst houses and the highest unemployment rate. And when the troops leave, the RUC, the Specials (in or out of uniform) and the armed Orange thugs will still remain." So the big problem with the troops was that they would only be there for a short while?

What was a B-Special out of uniform? An Orangeman, a member of the Protestant community! What could be done about such people "remaining"? What should we want done? Their subordination to the Catholic community? To Dublin?

The editorial continued:

"The role of the British army is not to bring any real solution to the problems of the people of Northern Ireland" — i.e. not to bring socialism? — "but to freeze a situation that looked like getting out of hand and damaging the interests of the ruling class in Ireland."

"Britain invests more in the South than in the North and is worried by the effects of an undisguised pogrom in the Six Counties on the rest of the island. They preferred to send in British troops rather than risk intervention by the population and even sections of the the army of the South".

If not for British investments in the South, the British government would have ignored the breakdown into civil war of a province of the UK? Agitation rots your brain! In fact the author was "explaining" why IS's oft-repeated assertion that the British army would aid the RUC and the B-Specials has proved false.

"The Stormont regime... was set up with the support of the British ruling class. Its borders, artificially devised to ensure a Protestant majority, were fixed by Britain. The arms it uses to keep the people down come from Britain... It has in the past served British imperialism... by safeguarding British capitalist interests in the North, and making impossible any real independence of the regime in the South".

"Real" independence? The only sense this could make is that the editorial meant "economic independence", and endorsed the claim of the woolier Irish nationalists that this would be possi-

ble if only the island were reunited.

"The British ruling class feels that it can no longer afford to keep control over its enclave in Ireland in the old way — through a sectarian-based openly repressive regime. The British armed presence may prevent the worst excesses of the Specials in the short term [why only the short-term?]. In the long term the troops are there to protect the regime" The old Orange regime? But not in the short term too? The author is trying to square what IS used to say with what has happened.]

"In Bogside the population are making it clear that they will not dismantle their barricades until the RUC is disarmed, the B Specials disbanded, the prisoners released and the Stormont regime ended. They are absolutely correct. The only force that will ensure the end of the repressive regime and its arbitrary terror is the continued mobilisation of the oppressed population".

Indefinite mobilisation? For what goals? The end of Stormont was the only one that was not about to be won.

"Every help must be given to them in their efforts. But this needs to be real help, not the sort of meaningless gestures made by the Southern Government".

## However, IS's "politics from below" backing the Republicans' call was irresponsible idiocy. And to combine that with sighs of relief and oblique support for the British Army in the North — and with denouncing us for "wanting a bloodbath"!

Here SW swung over from "criticisms" of the British troops as not likely to stay long enough, or not bringing socialism, i.e. only providing a "breathing space", to agitation suggesting a view of how Dublin might give "real help". What real help would IS advocate from the South? Invasion? Though it did not call for the withdrawal of British troops, IS was still preaching war. Why then was the Northern Ireland Nationalist Party leader Eddie McAteer not right in calling for Southern troops rather than British troops?

What "long term" solution — i.e. solution of any sort — could the British government conceivably provide, and be rationally denounced for not providing? In this part of the article, the counterposing of revolution to reform was intended to exclude the existing governments. Everything must be "from below", the politics of the street. SW would demand: open the arsenals!

Translated, that approach was either an assertion that there would soon be a unification of Catholic and Protestant workers on both sides — or a call for letting the sectarian forces fight it out. And at the very beginning of the article the author had already effectively dismissed the Protestant workers.

"The Green Tories of the South showed that while Irishmen were being attacked by armed sectarian mobs, their chief concern was to keep the Southern arsenals locked, while making unreal speeches about a UN peace-keeping force".

"Irishmen" were being attacked? And what were those who attacked them? What nationality were the Protestant sectarian mobs? What nationality were the "sectarian" Catholic youth who stoned the Orange march? It would be difficult to find a more concentrated expression of primeval Catholic-nationalism than this! The editorial wanted to expose the Southern government as not good "Irishmen".

In fact "open the arsenals" was the cry of the comic-opera Stalinoid "Republicans", whose major contribution during the mid-August crisis was to stir things up and vindicate Northern Ireland prime minister James Chichester-Clark's story that what was happening was a general Catholic-Nationalist insurrection, with the lie that the IRA had active service units fighting in the North.

The cry "open the arsenals" was a cry that the southern Government should abdicate in favour of letting nondescript "republicans" loose on the Northern Protestants: that is — abdicate the responsibilities of government and let the island dissolve into civil war.

Since no government would choose to do what "open the arsenals" implied then, the demand was an "impossibilist", for propaganda-purposes-only, Sinn Fein demand to show up the Dublin Government as "traitors".

From what point of view, anyway, should socialists want such chaos? The consequences would have been Catholic-Protestant civil war all over the island. As it was, there was a small eruption of Catholic sectarian threats against Protestants in Donegal and a Protestant church was set on fire.

In the name of honest dealing, I need to say here that if the Southern Government had on 12 or 13 August sent its army into Derry and the other Catholic-nationalist territories on the border, including the Catholic-majority towns, then I would not have been amongst those who condemned them. Socialists would, in my view, then of course have tried to protect Protestants, denounce the Irish hierarchy, condemn church-state relations in the South, etc.

However, IS's "politics from below" backing the Republicans' call was irresponsible idiocy. And to combine that with sighs of relief and oblique support for the British Army in the North — and with denouncing us for "wanting a bloodbath"!

One of the curious features of IS's performance is that it did not call for volunteers from Britain to help the embattled

Northern Catholics, as in all seriousness it should have done. The Trotskyist Tendency did, in a fashion. Immediately after IS Conference, the IS branch in Manchester where we were mainly concentrated sent Joe Wright and myself to Derry.

THE editorial continued: "The real answer to the hypocrisy of the Dublin Government was given in last week's [Republican-inspired] demonstration of dockers and other workers in the city. They demanded that the government give the only meaningful form of aid at their disposal. They should open the arsenals of the 26 County Army for the oppressed people of the North and those Southern Volunteers who want to go to their aid".

That was, hook, line, and sinker, to follow the Stalinist-led IRA. It was a demand for a mass Southern invasion of the North. The facts that the Republicans could not actually organise such an invasion; that for there to be a widespread urge in the Catholic South to "go North", civil war would have to be raging in the North; and that the British Army had that under control by the time the editorial was written, did not inhibit the writer.

Indeed, the fact that IS would not be called to face the situation their slogans would in life have conjured up may have encouraged this exercise in pseudo-Republican pseudo-militancy.

The combination of the kitsch Republican fantasy with the very loud clang of the cast-away slogan about troops — and it could not in the circumstances be other than very loud: having been making so much noise about troops out, IS could not just decide that emphasis on that slogan did not make sense in the circumstances — was very odd indeed.

Just as odd was the combination of talk of a workers' republic with the new line on the troops. As the Trotskyist Tendency — Rachel Lever, I think — put it, the new IS line amounted to: "On to the Irish workers' republic, though cheering, encouraging lines of British soldiers!"

The editorial continued by stating that the South "is a good friend of British capitalism and the status quo". Why, specifically, British capitalism? This was a nod to the republican mindset which thinks of Irish Catholic leaders as "Irish traitors", rather than Irish capitalists.

And the Irish Army mobilised on the border to the West and South of the Six Counties border? The army was mobilised on the border "it is claimed... to give medical aid to the victims of the Northern fighting. In fact they are there to intercept those moving North to aid the beleaguered community..."

So readers of SW had somehow to work out that what the 26 Counties army was doing was something different in kind from the description of what the British soldiers were doing which SW would soon suggest to its readers — namely, to allow the Catholics to arm, after which the Catholics could tell the British troops "to go" [Stephen Marks, 11 September].

Editorial: "The only hope for the people! In the North is a mobilisation of the Southern workers and small farmers... In the South British factories and landed estates should be seized and held by the people in ransom for the lives of the Northern Catholics".

Ransom? The lives...? To compel the British to do what, exactly? As a general idea this was small in its possible application, even were it acted on in full; but it would almost certainly be petrol on the fire in the North, stirring up the Protestants, perhaps especially Protestant workers: the pogrom in the Belfast shipyards in 1920 was triggered by the death of a Northern police officer in the fighting then going on in the South.

Such action in the South would be the work of republicans; it would be "working class action" only in the sociological sense, not in the socialist sense... Above all the slogan "seize the British factories in the South" was a piece of foolish panacea-mongering.

Editorial: "Time is vital to bring aid to the Northern people. The intervention of the British troops only allows a temporary breathing space in which the defenders of the Catholic community can be strengthened". And then? We can go on to civil war, clawing in both the South and the North? It would result either in the conquest of the North by the South or, in the real world — including the British soldiers' likely role in such a war — the redivision of Ireland, shifting the border north and east.

Editorial: "In Derry in particular, the Bogside has a real chance of holding out". Until when? For what? Indefinitely? "The Derry people, who are overwhelmingly anti-Unionist, were never consulted about the border. They were forcibly co-opted into the Northern State and their city allowed to die. One day the people of Derry will take their city from the Chichester-Clarks and the slum landlords". Indeed? Therefore? Secession? Did IS at that point have some use for the secession idea? Stranger things were happening...

"British workers have a grave responsibility in the present situation. They can take action in many ways: by raising money for the ICRSC to send medical aid and other equipment to Northern Ireland, but most of all by joining the Irish workers in taking strike action to demand that the Mafia thugs spawned by Britain in Ireland, the Specials and the RUC, are fully removed and the Irish people allowed to decide their own future."

This was quite a long way from the IS line in January 1969. The role the troops were said to be playing in allowing the Catholics to arm and then take over from the British army was an addle-pated version of the Fianna-Fail-IRA line that Britain should be "persuaders" for Irish unity, an extra absurd version of it.



The demagoguery continued full blast. “The immediate reaction in Bogside to the Wilson-Chichester Clark talks was: ‘The Barricades Stay’. It is the right reaction to the pious platitudes in the Downing St Communiqué... [which] concedes nothing to the civil rights movement, which must now intensify its struggle.”

This was a fantastic judgment! Granted that it is not the job of SW to concede any confidence, etc, in Britain, it is nonetheless the irreplaceable job of a socialist paper for thinking people to have some grasp of what is and is likely to go on — to ground its agitation in the real world. SW’s assertion was grounded on an inability to take in that some things had changed.

The fact that British troops are now in full control of both the RUC and B-Specials showed what?

“The degree of detestation which Catholics have for for the ‘Guardians of Law and Order’..”

But what did this control add up to? The B-Specials were to be “phased out” of action only while the troops remained. And of course the troops had come on a short visa only: when the Catholics are armed they will tell them to go, and they will politely oblige. Then the B-Specials will be “phased in” again? This was such a fantastic idea that the author could not have actually believed it.

“They have to be asked to surrender their guns — but there is no machinery to enforce this and the right wing of the Unionist Party has already made it clear that it is opposed to the surrender of weapons.”

Remember that for SW the British Army was only there to let the Catholics arm: it could not possibly be a “machinery” for forcing on the right wing Unionists anything they didn’t want...

In fact the British army, and the RUC and sections of the B-Specials would fight a very fierce gun battle with the Protestant intrants in the Shankill Road in early October.

“The B-Specials have their guns in or out of uniform.”

In fact already the British Army had established central depots at which B-Specials had to hand in their guns. It was one of the first things the British Army commander did.

“There is no guarantee that these fanatical thugs and bigots will cease their indiscriminate murder of Catholics and the burning and looting of their homes. And when the troops go the RUC and B-Specials will remain to reinforce the Orange police state.”

The troops, remember are only visiting... To reduce to the ridiculous caricature of gross exaggeration the case against the B-Specials was quite a feat in view of what has happened in Northern Ireland — but SW managed it!

The truth seems to be that they just don’t know what to say, how to square what they were now saying, (and eloquently *not* saying) with what they had been saying yesterday.

These passages were “yesterday’s” agitation, warmed up. And it hadn’t been very good or true to life even yesterday.

They had nothing to say about the new situation — though what SW was *not* saying said everything.

The agitation was not only yesterday’s agitation, but also, safe agitation — agitation, so to speak, behind the lines of British troops. It was typical Labour fake-left stuff.

What SW said to remove troops from the equation — whether

about B-Specials being restored to old as soon as the troops finished their quick visit, or the Catholics arming behind the lines of the gallant British Army — was plain silly. SW would not now call for the troops’ withdrawal, and covered up by, for most purposes, refusing to recognise their existence. It was unutterably silly.

## II

THE leaders of IS had brought out an issue of *Socialist Worker* on Thursday 14 August, the same day that the troops were put to work in Derry after two days of fighting there, and just before Belfast exploded. Evidently, they did not work up much of a sense of urgency about what was happening in Ireland. The lead story in the 14 August SW was: “Steel Strikers Fight Union-Boss Alliance”. IS was probably waiting to see what happened. The report on Ireland was one column on the right hand side of the page.

What do the minutes of the IS committees show of their thinking as they readjusted?

Holidays had depleted the IS centre, but the key people on Ireland, Palmer and Cliff, were in London; the phone lines to Derry and Belfast still worked; and in London they managed to convene, on Sunday 17 August, a special meeting of available members of the two leading committees of IS (the National Committee and the Executive Committee) to discuss Northern Ireland.

The very rudimentary minutes record the vote at the end of that discussion:

“A vote was taken as to whether we should demand the withdrawal of British troops as a headline. For: Comrades Hallas, Protz, and Nagliatti. Against: Comrades Looker, Harman, Cliff, Osborne, Cox, Widgery, Palmer, [Jessa] Lindop.”

Troops out, the central slogan of IS since the Irish issue came to centre stage, was not to be raised as a headline. “As a headline” — the decision was not, if the minutes are accurate, to drop “troops out” entirely. The IS leaders believed in “subtlety” and smoothness and, besides, on 17 August they may not have intended to drop it entirely. In fact it would not be raised at all in the upcoming issue of *Socialist Worker*, four days later, or for months to come.

The EC met the next evening, on 18 August. Things were beginning to subside in Northern Ireland as the army extended its grip to Belfast. The next day, 19th, the Army would take formal control of “security”, and the RUC.

Ireland was not discussed.

On 21 August, SW appeared with all of its four pages devoted to Ireland. The key slogans of the preceding nine months were absent. In their place were slogans taken from the Catholics behind the barricades, and focusing heavily on “maintaining the barricades”.

The next EC, on 25 August, did not discuss Ireland at all! Palmer was at that meeting. The barricades were still up, but things had quietened down. Jim Higgins, Tony Cliff, Duncan Hallas, Chris Harman and Geoff Carlson, almost all the “great men” of the organisation, were on holiday.

The EC, however, did receive a resolution from the Swansea branch, and someone formulated an informative reply to it.

“Swansea IS branch, while appreciating the importance of

the Irish events last week, nevertheless does not think that the entire issue of SW, August 22 (sic), should have been devoted to it, especially with the anniversary of the Czechoslovakian invasion that week. If this was an editorial decision [sic] we would move to censure the EB. If not we ask who it was took the decision”.

Reply: “It was reported that an extraordinary meeting had been called on the 17 August to decide what line SW should take. As many NC and EC members as possible were contacted and the decision to make the next SW an Irish issue was taken there. The EC at its next meeting upheld that decision. The EB, because the majority of its members were on holiday, didn’t meet. It was reported that the Irish issue of SW had had to be reprinted because of the demand.”

Roger Protz was to write to Swansea and explain.

IS Conference met on 6 and 7 September. It was not until 8 September — after the conference! — that the EC had its first substantial discussion on the breakdown a month earlier of one wing of the UK state into communal civil war.

After the great Sinn Fein election victory in the UK general election of 1918, a Republican priest famously said: “The people have voted Sinn Fein. Now we must explain to them what Sinn Fein stands for”.

The conference, amidst scenes of wild demagoguery, had voted for the EC. The EC had sold the idea that their old policy now meant “massacre” and civil war, and that those who refused to join them in scuttling that policy must want “a bloodbath” — while still calling for the Dublin government to open the arsenals to those who wanted to fight an anti-Unionist, or anti-Protestant, civil war. Now they had to work out what they stood for. The minutes read:

“There was a discussion on the slogans we are putting. Comrade [Fred] Lindop [who represented the “Democratic Centralist” faction on the EC] felt that as well as calling for the disarming and disbandment of the B-Specials and the disarming of the RUC, we should also call for the withdrawal of British troops, to be coupled with calling for the opening of the Southern arsenals and the arming of the Catholics.

“The other comrades on the EC felt that to use the slogan ‘withdraw British Troops’ now is to misunderstand the difference between an agitational as opposed to a propaganda slogan. An agitational slogan is one which explains in concrete terms a realisable, operational demand. A propaganda slogan need not be immediately realisable and its function is primarily educational.

“The Catholics of Derry are unarmed and open to attack at any time. It is totally unrealistic to demand the withdrawal of troops whilst the Catholics are in such a vulnerable position and is tantamount to asking for a pogrom against the Bogside and Belfast Catholics. The slogan also begs the question of who is going to get rid of the troops.

“Obviously not British imperialism: this being the case, the only logical development of the slogan is to demand that the Catholics attack and drive out the troops themselves as in Aden and Malaya. This is obviously nonsensical in the present situation.

“Comrades agreed that this was an important political point and felt there should be an article in the next SW, which comrade Marks should write. It was agreed that Comrade Marks should be a fraternal delegate to the PD Conference the coming weekend.”

AND SO IS felt obliged to formulate clearly the guiding approach in its political practice, which it had not formulated clearly before. This declaration about “agitation” and “propaganda” would start an important discussion in IS; and it holds the key to the history of the group after about 1957, when IS’s forerunner, the old Socialist Review group, which had been “orthodox Trotskyist” with a special line on Russia, disintegrated and biodegraded into the labour movement.

The doctrines elaborated here on the relationship of agitation to propaganda, the “realisability” or otherwise of slogans, and the purpose of slogans and “demands”, were not new either to IS or to the socialist movement. They had been central in the disputes amongst the Russian Marxists at the turn of the 20th century.

And they were central to IS, to what IS was and became. They were central to the approach which Tony Cliff neatly summed up at the National Committee in mid 1971, when a 180 degree turn around on the organisation’s attitude to the European Union was being discussed: “Tactics contradict principles”. (See *A Tragedy of the Left*, Workers’ Liberty, 1991.)

In September 1969 the “tactics contradict principles” notion came in the form of the idea that propaganda and agitation can be politically at odds. In the course of arguing for their conception, the EC and its champions would themselves, and none too wisely, invoke as their justification the discussion between Lenin and Martynov at the beginning of the century. We will in due course examine that debate.

But to resume: the IS leadership was in disarray. They had said that the British army’s role was certain to be something other than what it now visibly was. They had been gung ho for civil war, until it got started. Their close comrades in Northern Ireland had called for British intervention (Devlin and McCann on 12 August, and Farrell and PD on the 14th), and had pointedly looked to London for help, while IS had focused on demanding that Dublin’s arsenals be thrown open to the Catholics of the North and those who wanted to go and defend them (or to go on a Catholic-sectarian offensive against Protestants). In the South the Republicans were still calling for

the “opening of the arsenals”, organising demonstrations outside some of them which sent in messages asking for guns.

The too-charitable Trotskyist Tendency was at first inclined to account for the IS leaders’ behaviour as motivated by humanitarian concerns. But that was to fail to understand them and their instrumental attitude to political slogans.

Even where their emotions were heavily involved — as I think John Palmer’s were here — the *modus operandi* remained the same.

As I have argued earlier in this series, the whole logic of the “politics in the street” and the “militant come what may” tactics of PD was to foment Catholic-Protestant civil war and then either to bring on British central state intervention or to fight an island-wide civil war: there was no middle ground.

Now IS, following the Northerners, had tumbled into the political pothole dug by the Labour-left Tribune MPs, who had been demanding direct rule from London all along.

IS, being “subtle” and capable, unlike more simple-minded folk, of juggling two contradictory slogans at once, did not then entirely drop the politics of calling for island-wide Catholic-Protestant civil war. It still demanded Dublin “open the arsenals”, in reality to the IRA.

And IS had another problem, in the relentless hammering at them of the SLL (the Socialist Labour League, then far the biggest grouping of the revolutionary left in Britain).

The EC met again on 15 September, a week after the first big discussion on Northern Ireland. Already the underlying conflict between the Northern Ireland Catholics, behind their barricades, and the combination of politicians, Catholic bishops and priests, Stormont ministers, and the British Army, was being resolved in the “voluntary” taking down of the Belfast barricades.

Derry was still barricaded and would remain so for another three weeks. The pressure now focused on Derry. The left had far more influence and clout there than in Belfast.

The minutes of that 15 September meeting of the IS EC say in toto: “Ireland: Brief discussion on this”. The barricades, the preservation of which IS had presented to central well-being, were coming down, without discernible opposition by PD to the Republican leadership behind the barricades — and the IS EC did not even go through the motions of noticing the fact!

The reason behind the all-in-all astonishing paucity of discussion on the leading committee of IS is not just that the crisis came inconveniently — but predictably — during the holiday season, when people were tied in to family commitments and bookings. The truth is that policy on Ireland was made all through the period we are surveying by a couple of people, Palmer and Cliff. The other EC members (apart from the “Democratic Centralist” faction representative) gave them pretty automatic backing; or where they disagreed, as Hallas, Protz and Nagliatti did on Ireland, helped by supportive silence and active clique-factional hostility to the EC’s critics.

Behind the democratic procedures lay the rule of a clique around Cliff, sometimes constrained by the formal structures but never controlled by them.

The minutes of the EC of 29 September record “... a lengthy discussion on the situation in Ireland and our attitude to British troops.

*Whilst there seemed to be general agreement on the role of SW editorials in stating the reactionary role of the British*

*troops, of the role of British Government, the argument still raged over the putting of the slogan now: ‘Withdraw British Troops’. Comrades Cliff and Palmer had said we must emphasise working class action in the South, whilst recognising that the workers in the North wanted British troops to remain.*

*Comrade Hallas said that it was incompatible to support working class action in the South and yet accept troops in the North to protect Partition, however unpalatable, we have to tell the truth. [But outside of minutes such as these, Hallas himself never told the truth, even to IS members].*

*Comrades Harman, Palmer and Cliff pointed out that we have to take the objective situation in Northern Ireland. Catholics are not asking the British troops to withdraw. If they did the troops would go and the Catholics be murdered. The B-Specials had not noticeably responded to the decision to disarm themselves. There were 20,000 licensed guns (how many unlicensed?) and the Catholics hadn’t got them. At the same time, Comrade Palmer pointed out, to protect Paisley, but to consolidate the Stormont regime, and with Paisley calling marches against Unionist traitors, the troops would be forced to act against*

## Didn’t the IS leaders feel an obligation to square what they were saying with what they had said before? Not at all!

*Paisley and his supporters.*

*The meeting, after further discussion, very clearly held three positions.*

*1. Comrades Palmer, Cliff, Harman, Harris and Protz — that we continue with our present policies;*

*2. Comrades Hallas, Nagliatti — that we should prepare the ground in our editorials to eventually call for the withdrawal of British troops;*

*3. Comrade [Fred] Lindop — that we call for the withdrawal of British Troops now.”*

The minutes record: “...Catholics are not asking the British troops to withdraw. If they did the troops would go...”

Even allowing for some distortion in the simplified minutes — though their accuracy was never questioned by any of the participants — that was an astonishing judgment. From people who had so recently campaigned against British troops in Northern Ireland on the grounds that they would only help the RUC and the B-Specials beat down the Catholics, it was something more than astonishing.

Hadn’t the IS leaders believed what they were saying then? Didn’t they feel an obligation to square what they were saying now with what they said, and, ostensibly, were guided by, then? Not at all! Like the philosopher’s flowing river which you could not cross twice, IS “flowed”. That was then and this is now...

Continuity? Continuity was continuity of persons, or of the IS Person of Persons, “Comrade Cliff”, and whomever he was listening to at the time.

They had corrected their never remotely serious idea that the British government did not want reforms, that in the crunch it

would back the old regime, unreformed. But they had swung over to no less one-sided acceptance of the troops and the British Government behind them, mystified and dressed up in Catholic-nationalist demagoguery. They swung from one piece of foolish one-sidedness to the other...

I wrote a letter to *Socialist Worker* protesting at the dropping of “troops out”. Written (I think) before the IS conference discussion on 6-7 September, it was published in *SW* of 11 September.

“The troops are there to freeze the status quo... In certain conditions, if the status quo is seriously threatened by the minority, the troops will be used against the Catholics...”

“*Socialist Worker* must challenge the partition, and demand the break-up of the Six Counties state, or at least the right of secession of those areas where Catholics form the majority — ultimately leading to a united Ireland with autonomy for the Protestant areas, not after the Workers’ Republic, but as a necessary and unavoidable step towards it”.

The letter argued from a belief in the untenability of the Six Counties state and of partition, or at least of the existing partition.

Though it raised the question of autonomy for the Protestant-Unionists in a united federal Ireland, and that is important for the history of the disputes, it failed to give due weight to the Protestant community and the rights they could properly claim.

Though it was not something that could be flatly opposed, I had regarded IS’s previous focus on the British troops, as for example in the *SW* front page headline on 26 April, as a piece of deranged pseudo-nationalism. Moreover, when combined with acceptance of the Six/26 County division until a socialist Ireland was in being, it amounted to advocacy of an independent Northern Ireland, an entity that could not survive as such and would dissolve into Catholic-Protestant war. But now the letter was disoriented by the raging dispute over IS’s precipitate dropping of the axial slogan that for IS concretely expressed opposition to British imperialism. It confused or conflated the issues raised by IS’s sharp turn, expressed in its juggling with slogans but not limited to that, with the question of whether “troops out” should or should not at that point be an up-front slogan.

To anticipate, the letter also made it plain that the Trotskyist Tendency did not advocate repartition: when we advocated that the Catholic minority, in the areas where they were the majority, should break away, we believed that would make the Northern Ireland state impossible. That was a false assessment common then, and shared by the IS majority.

After the collapse of the Northern Ireland state, we thought, the right of the Protestant-Unionist/British-Irish to their own identity could be accommodated by way of autonomy where they were the majority, in North East Ulster.

None of us envisaged what in fact happened: the “long war” between the IRA and the British; the smothered civil war between Catholics and Protestants; the British army propping up a “failed state” for 38 years; and finally the creation of an intricate bureaucratic political superstructure which cannot but perpetuate Protestant-Catholic sectarianism.

In that time the “repartition” that would occur — and it exists still — would be the “repartition” of Belfast by way of great walls to separate Catholic and Protestant.

# The first British Marxists

from page 14

guide socialist transformation. The Socialist League, in their founding programme were talking about the SDF when they condemned as “no... solution” “State Socialism, by whatever name it may be called, whose aim would be to make concessions to the working class while leaving the present system of capital and wages still in operation: no number of merely administrative changes, until the workers are in possession of all political power, would make any real approach to Socialism.”

It was not a fair representation of the SDF as a whole. The SDF were revolutionaries in the sense that they wanted to overturn the existing order of things — they wanted the workers to take over the capitalist means of production. But the SDF, or Hyndman at least, does seem to have conflated the idea of a transitional state with the *final* goal. “To get complete control of the state departments for the people was the main object, in order to democratise them entirely, and thus do away with the State as class domination for ever.” said Hyndman (*Justice*, 19 January 1884).

On the other hand the SDF was clear enough on the role of the existing state in perpetuating bourgeois class rule. The

growth of the British state, its bureaucracy and its repressive forces left them in no doubt about that. In 1907 Harry Quelch concluded “the ruling class will not be made to submit to law and order which is not their law and order, except by overwhelming superior force.”

At the same time, the SDF did envision Parliament or perhaps other institutions of the state being *democratised*. They had no clear idea of a radical break between the existing capitalist state and a workers’ state. The old institutions were not going to be “smashed” as revolutionaries would say today.

The Socialist League’s accusation of state socialism was partly tied up with their hostility to the SDF’s comprehensive programme of reforms for the here and now, which they would expound on at times of election.

Electoral activity was always very important for the SDF. If there was universal male suffrage, as there was more or less after 1885, why not use it? They were encouraged in this by the examples of electoral activities of their sister parties in the Second International. Bit by bit, standing in elections came to be less about “soap boxing” socialist propaganda, and more about wanting to be in a position to implement reforms, even small ones.

In the early years many in the SDF were ambivalent about reforms — palliatives, as they were known. Such things could be injurious if they stripped away a feeling of rebellion among the workers.

But eclectic lists of reforms were standard artefacts of the movement. And the reform demands were sincere. The SDF believed that the conditions of life for working class people had to be raised somewhat, or socialism would not necessarily be the outcome of the capitalist crisis. They wanted to “raise the physical, moral and mental status of the working class and to better fit them for the struggle for their emancipation.” (Bax and Quelch, *New Catechism*)

They also felt reforms had a certain value in exposing the

bourgeoisie, i.e. when the capitalists refused to reform the workers would see “what the masses have to expect from the governing class.”

By the twentieth century the SDF were firmly committed to palliatives. They were, said *Justice*: “the stepping stones to cross the stream, from the wild disorder of private search for gain to the regulated industry of the Socialist Commonwealth... The palliative is the means of arousing that discontent by consideration, which shall finally change the basis of the social structure and proclaim freedom by ending man’s power to exploit his fellow man.”

After some years, and some experience of trade union and social struggles, the SDF began to tailor their reform proposals to the concrete needs of workers.

For the unemployed they proposed work creation, farm colonies on nationalised land; they agitated for, in essence, full employment.

When two SDFers were elected to the school board in Reading at the end of the 19th century they advocated such things as improvements in heating and ventilation, smaller classes, pianos, swimming, visits to museums, woodwork, housewifery [!], abolition of corporal punishment, an increase in teachers’ salaries and reduction in the difference between the salaries of masters and mistresses.

In such activity, and in their development of a more sophisticated reform programme, we see, once again, the SDF’s keenness on political action — how they emphasised it over trade union action, strike support work and so on.

By the end of the nineteenth century SDF branches in the north and in London were heavily involved in trades councils. It was an opportunity to bring together economic class activity and politics, a key arena for the new activity of working class political representation and the attempts at socialist unity.

I’ll deal with these in the next article, and return to my original theme of Tom Mann’s role in the movement.

# Open the books!

BY JOSEPHINE MALTBY

**T**HERE are a lot of myths about accounting. Some of them accountants don't like — which have to do with their being drab failures as human beings. But they put up with those myths, because they make such a lot of money out of the other set of myths.

The other mythology says that accounting is not only dull but also fiendishly complicated financial engineering. So the accountants who write and decipher companies' financial reports deserve massive salaries: civilians would be baffled and bewildered if they tried to join in.

Some accounting is startlingly dull, some is difficult. Quite a lot is neither: instead, it is rather informative about the private lives of companies.

Capitalists don't like to feel too exposed to the world, but they do like to monitor their investments, and the last 200 years of UK company law and financial regulation has been a struggle between those two warring impulses.

The result has been the requirement for companies to produce annual accounts and for those whose shares are traded on the UK Stock Exchange (listed companies) to disclose a lot of data in the balance sheet, the income and expenditure account, and copious notes breaking down the details of the major statements. For the majority of these companies, the accounts are available on the company website (usually behind a tab called Investor Relations). The urge to secrecy means that the accounts will include large swathes of complexity, but they will also answer some straightforward questions quite readily.

For example, First Great Western, "Britain's worst-performing rail route" (*Times online* 10 January 2008), attacked on the same day by Bob Crow for "heavy-handed and confrontational management... undermining our members' jobs" ([www.rmtbristol.org.uk](http://www.rmtbristol.org.uk)).

Who owns First Great Western? Google will tell you rapidly that its parent company (i.e. owner) is the First Group, the largest rail operator in Great Britain. And the First Group's website <http://www.firstgroup.com/index.php> will rapidly take you to its most recent annual report — going up to March 2007.

How well is it doing? Start with the page one of the report, "Financial Highlights", to discover that First

- Increased its revenue by 22.4% on 2006
- Increased earnings per share (profit divided by the number of shares in issue) by 9.1%
- Reduced its borrowings from £704 to £516 million
- And finished the year with a share price 56% up on the previous year (from £4.25 to £6.65)

All good. But how can it do so well when it allegedly lets its passengers down and attacks its employees?

Accountants know these things. So look at the Finance Director's review (pages 17 to 21) for a breakdown of results. We know about First's UK rail and bus divisions, but the Finance Director also reports (page 18) a set of divisional results. They show that in 2007 North America contributed just under 22% of its revenue (£803 million out of £3709 million) but more than 26% of its profits (£68 out of £259 million). This is good going. So who are the North American money-makers?

Now look at the "Chief Executive's Review" (starts on page 3) for his take on the big operational picture. You rapidly see that the main North American business is called First Student. They run the school buses.

Thanks to First Student, First can illustrate the Review with a photo of a little yellow school bus and a cute ethnically diverse little schoolboy. And the chairman can sound really over-excited about the North American market. The statement includes a lot of technical remarks about tuck-in and infill acquisitions, but the main message is that North America offers "significant growth opportunities" — so more corporate takeovers of school bus provision are on the way in the US.

The latest one — in mid-2007 — was the Laidlaw transport business, which was opposed by the Teamsters. The Chief Executive doesn't mention that, but his statement gets quite sweaty and flustered with excitement: taking over Laidlaw is "a transformational deal with considerable prospects for value creation. This is a unique opportunity to... generate significant value and returns for shareholders".

Significant value is getting generated, and the School Bus Workers website tells what happened next: in October 2007, a poster to the site comments that:

"First Student has had a major problem with allowing their employees to unionise..."

"Many First Student locations are run like a low budget flick! They want to run the routes as cheaply as possible, whether it means using unsafe equipment or not purchasing supplies that are needed to keep the operation running smoothly. When the mechanics have to ask to purchase motor oil or the company fails to pay their bills and lose service or the privilege of charging fuel there's a major problem somewhere in this company"

(<http://www.schoolbusworkersunited.org/united-website/2007/10/3/what-can-we-expect.html>)

The School Bus Workers and the Teamsters say that First Student has an anti-union policy, and the buses are filthy, the routes mean it can take kids an hour to get to a school a mile away, schools have to cut their day because the buses are so late (all at the same link as above).

Just under the cute yellow bus photograph, the FirstGroup chairman says that the North American strategy is "to continue to improve our product offering and closely manage our cost base in order to offer a compelling service to our customers, parents and students". What's compelling about the service is that FirstStudent is the largest school bus carrier in North America, with contracts with 500 school districts. They can run a crap service because passengers have no choice; and they threaten and bully union members because they want to "generate significant returns for shareholders."

Does it remind you of anything transport-related anywhere nearer home?

FirstStudent isn't the only reason First is coining money — but it gives a nice illustration of the set of policies that First is pursuing so successfully in the UK market, whilst swearing blind that it loves its customers and it treasures its employees. And all that fell out of the financial report without even getting as far as the balance sheet. Financial accounts are full of good things.

## Debate: US elections Why working-class independence is a principle

**I**N his reply to my article on the US elections (*Solidarity* 3/124), Eric Lee displays complete indifference to the principle of working-class political independence.

It's true, perhaps, that describing the Republicans and Democrats as "almost identical in policy terms" was a bit flat-footed on my part. But my statement was nowhere near as off the mark as Eric's claim that "on every single policy issue that concerns American voters, regardless of their class, Democrats and Republicans come down on different sides."

Both parties: against socialised healthcare. Both parties: for keeping the bulk of the US's anti-union laws. Both parties: against a living minimum wage. Both parties: against a well-funded welfare state. Both parties: for an imperialist foreign policy.

The only way that Eric can get round this uncomfortable reality is by posing the issues in such soft terms ("if you want x, you vote Democratic" — never mind whether they'll legislate for even this very moderate demand) that an optical illusion is created to make the differences seem stark. The reality is that, even on social issues such as gay rights and abortion, where the differences between the parties are most real, the Democrats do not take consistently progressive positions. And on "class issues", the gap is much smaller.

John Edwards is now out of the race for president. He told his supporters that they should nevertheless expect the Democratic nominee, whoever it is, to "make history". Will Eric be joining him? Doesn't the fact that Edwards was never going to make all Eric's fervent preacing of "practicality" rather empty?

Edwards' policies on union rights, poverty, and corporate lobbyists, make him a liberal; better than Obama or Clinton, perhaps also as left-wing as the Liberal Democrats here. His programme goes nowhere near even the most basic demands socialists raise (e.g. socialised healthcare). Is Eric claiming something more for him? Perhaps not, but the issue of Edwards highlights a fundamental difference in our approaches.

The essence of liberalism is the idea that the workers should vote, their organisations support etc ruling-class politicians who will introduce positive reforms (big or small) on their behalf. Hence the US unions' long-standing policy of selectively supporting candidates (in various parties, but mainly the Democrats) who are "friends of labour". This is opposed to the idea that the workers' should have their own candidates, standing against all the parties of the ruling class, who take the class struggle into the arena of politics.

As a trade union activist, Eric supports the idea of independent working-class organisation and struggle to force concessions from the bosses. He does not accept the idea that workers should rely on bourgeois philanthropists. So why does he not apply the same principle to elections?

In this context, it is clear that my comments about Edwards' personal wealth, his spending \$400 on a haircut, are not personal swipes, but highly relevant political facts. The point is that he is a member of the ruling class who favours making certain — perhaps quite significant — concessions to the workers. His election would thus not be a step towards working-class representation in even the limited way that the creation of a bureaucratic, unsocialist workers' party would be.

For Marxists working-class independence in elections is as much a principle as working-class independence in the workplace.

Eric is presumably aware of this idea, which is why he goes out of his way to dismiss the notion that US workers could ever create a political party of their own. He attacks the Labor Party which was established in 1996, as existing "only on paper". In reality this organisation represented a small but real movement at its inception. It withered because it unwilling to become fully independent, for instance by contesting elections. Every time an election came around, the bulk of the trade unions affiliated to it would go back to the Democrats.

For the last eighty years, every genuinely progressive movement in the US — from the industrial unions of the 1930s (when, by his logic, Eric would have joined the Stalinist CP in calling for support for Roosevelt) to the anti-war, black and women's movements of the 1960s and 70s — has been sucked into the Democratic Party and neutered. The argument that it is necessary to stop the right immediately, and that there will be time to build something better in the future is powerful, but its consequences have been disastrous. The time for independent initiative never seems to come.

Breaking the organisations of the labour movement and the oppressed from the Democrats is the key task for those who want to see the transformation of American society.

Sacha Ismail

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# workers' liberty & Solidarity

## How the first Starbucks strike was made

BY MARK SANDELL

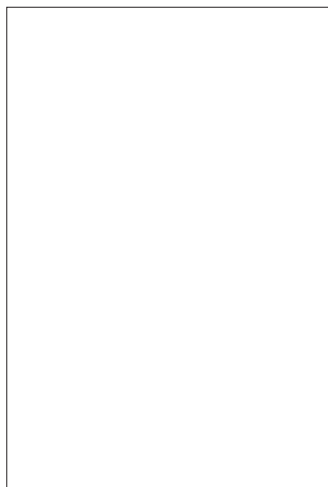
**M**IKE Treen, National Director of the New Zealand union Unite, will be touring the country in February as part of a No Sweat national week of action. He will explain how his union organised the world's first Starbucks strike, winning recognition and better pay. What can we learn from Unite's approach?

The scandal of jobs in fast food chains has often been exposed. The GMB union found that Burger King were making their staff clock off when a restaurant was empty. Workers paid the minimum wage were being forced to work many extra hours for no pay, because for much of the time at work they were not "officially" working.

Starbucks too pay the minimum wage — which we know is well below a real living wage — but they do not guarantee staff a fixed number of hours work per week. If your manager does not like you, or fancies some extra hours themselves, you can have far fewer hours in any given week. From week to week you simply do not know what you will be earning or when you will be working.

These are the working conditions that millions of workers are suffering from. Often young, and always exploited, these are the British workers least likely to be in a union. But while British unions talk a lot about the scandal of Mc Jobs, they put the task of systematically organising these millions of workers in the "too hard, not much fun" box.

Even from their own point of view — keeping the union ticking over, so that it continues to pay out wages to the union's bureaucrats, this is a serious mistake. British unions have suffered a drastic decline in membership since the early 1980s; numbers have halved from 12 million to fewer than 6.5 million today. In the private sector, union



membership and organisation has collapsed — only 16.6% of private sector workers are in a union. Only 5.3% of union members are under 25. Yet the young are the future of the unions. The conclusion should be clear, but most unions do little or nothing to deal with their organisation crisis.

In fact British unions have responded by merging, managing decline, or simple defeatism — "young people are not interested", they say.

Almost everything, from TV ads through embarrassing "yoof campaigns" to just waiting for better laws and support from New Labour, has been tried and failed. Very few unions have done what they should — a concerted effort to organise the unorganised. This is where Mike Treen and other organis-

ers like him can help us out.

**T**HE New Zealand trade unions also collapsed in the 1990s. Membership went down from 500,000 members, 43% of workers in 1991, to 300,000, 21% of workers, in 1999. Some unions froze in the headlights and went bankrupt, many merged. But some got serious about organising.

Unite (no relation to Unite in the UK) was formed in 1998 with only 200 members; today it has 10,000 members, with 6,000 in the fast-food and restaurant sector and 1,000 in hotels. Unite organises in Burger King, McDonalds, Wendy's; it also organises Restaurant Brands Ltd NZ, which includes KFC, Pizza Hut and Starbucks.

Unite was built out of a campaign against a compulsory work scheme for dole claimants. With those roots, Unite was not afraid to organise low paid young workers in Mc Jobs.

In 2005 Unite launched a Supersize My Pay campaign to organise workers in the fast food sector. By 2006 they had won union recognition at Restaurant Brands. The main demands were for a \$12 an hour minimum wage, abolition of youth rates, and security of hours. Mike Treen explains what they did.

"Our campaign was above all political. We used a combination of on-the-job pressure tactics and mobilisation of broader community support to win union representation.

"We bought a bus, decorated it with the campaign material, and attached big bullhorn speakers. Then we would use it to travel from one worksite to another, and mobilise very loud and visible support outside the workplaces where we were organising or bargaining.

"Dozens of short strikes were held with the young workers making a real noise on the busy highways and intersections where these fast food outlets are situated.

"When we launched the campaign, we did it with what we called 'the world's first Starbucks strike' [in November 2005]. Because the pizza delivery network had one national call centre, it didn't require a lot of industrial action to put a lot of pressure on the company. We would have a rally outside the call centre on a Friday or Saturday night. The call centre workers would come out and take part. Workers could stay for as long as they liked. Some would only stay out for half an hour; some would decide to go home for the rest of the night. The net effect was to back up calls for hours."

British unions and union activists have a lot to learn from Unite New Zealand. The first step is to move from abstract propagandist condemnation of Mc Jobs to serious focused campaigns to organise young workers in these and other "new" sectors. To get some ideas about how we can do that, come along to one of the meetings in the tour.

• More information:  
Unite website: [www.unite.org.nz](http://www.unite.org.nz)  
No Sweat: [www.nosweat.org.uk](http://www.nosweat.org.uk)

## Council cuts threatened

BY RHODRI EVANS

**C**OUNCILS are preparing their budgets for 2008-9. Some councils, notably Newcastle and Southampton, are planning sizeable cuts.

In recent years, such cuts have been rare. Cumulative central government controls since the 1980s have reduced local councils to little more than local agents of central government.

About three-quarters of local councils' budget comes in allocations from central government; rates for the council tax which is most of the other quarter are subject to central government "capping"; councils are legally obliged to do some things, and restricted by law and government regulation from doing many other things (for example, from building new council houses, except in the tiniest numbers).

With central government income relatively buoyant in recent years, the local government workforce has actually increased from 1.67 million in 2003-4 to 1.70 million in 2005-6 (latest figures). The biggest factor there is a rise in the number of teachers. With other local government functions increasingly privatised or contracted out, teachers are 27% of all local government employees.

In late 2007 the Government published its figures for local government finance in 2008-11. The Local Government Association (a consortium of England's local authorities) described it as "the worst settlement for a decade".

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