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**Socialist Outlook**

New Labour - the road to nowhere

AND FINALLY, in the full glare of the camera lights, Tony spoke the oracle and the New Labour manifesto was revealed.

Caricatured by the Tories as the "road to ruin", socialists might see it as a way forward - but not yet. It says nothing about ending poverty, nothing about full employment, nothing about scrapping Britain's excessive and totally unnecessary nuclear determent. No wonder the Conservatives are so desperate to ridicule Blair and New Labour.

The manifesto makes it crystal clear just how far Labour has gone in hijacking the Tory agenda and on some issues going even further. The huge raft of anti-union legislation will remain in place. Party policy on crime is a disgrace to young people.

Even where hopes are raised the pledges are mainly about gits not substance. NHS red tape will be cut but Trusts will stay. Pensions won't rise but pensioners are promised "better value for money".

There will be a minimum wage but with the bosses playing a big part in the new "independent" Low Pay commission, it will be based on what they say they can afford. Such PR successes - together with deep hatred of the Tories - may be enough to get Blair elected. But it won't reverse the damage done over the last decade and more.

Real socialists in the Labour Party must continue to fight for real socialist policies.

---

**Build the Euro-March for jobs**

LATE LAST month the intergovernmental conference took place in Florence and European heads of state came together to push forward the implementation of the Maastricht treaty. The fact drive for the convergence criteria is fraught with difficulty and this has meant that attempts to drive down public spending to the level of 3% of GDP have become more and more ferocious.

At the same time, in rather less plush surroundings, 24 delegates representing various trade unions and unemployed groups from most European countries came together to plan a Europe-wide campaign against unemployment and in defence of welfare provision.

Marches from across the continent will converge in Amsterdam in June 1997 to confront the final session of the intergovernmental conference. Over the last year, the discontent against the EC governments has been growing. Belgium was rocked by the first general strike since the 1930s against austerity cuts and French workers organised mass strikes last winter.

In Germany, government cuts of 22 billion resulted in strikes and 35,000 workers marched in the biggest demonstration seen in Germany since World War Two. The Euro march is a wonderful opportunity to link up those involved in these actions and to generalise the working class across Europe.

In the run up to the Florence meeting, an initial appeal had been drawn up signed by prominent trade unionists across Europe. The appeal was endorsed in Florence. Maximum support now needs to be built for it at all levels of the labour and trade union movement. This will involve challenging those in New Labour and in the leadership of the unions who support monetary union and who try to con working people that this will be in their interests.

British involvement in the campaign has got off to a good start. Glen Vis, at the meeting on behalf of the Liverpool Dockers and the Welfare State Network brought a message of support from the Merseyside Association of TUCs.

Linda Tuberville from South Wales represented the National Unemployed Centres combine, Wales Campaign against Unemployment and the European Network of the Unemployed.

Plans are about to organise an initial meeting in late summer of all interested organisations in Britain to discuss how to take the campaign forward. A delegation of French trade unionists will participate in the Defend the Welfare State march from Hull to Blackpool in October to build the Euro March and the official launch of the British campaign will take place at the final rally at Labour Party Conference.

While the political parameters for the campaign seem pretty clear, organisational details will require a sober assessment of the real resources available. Under the current proposals, the longest march would take 2 months covering approx 1500 km.

The various marches would start from Gibraltar, Palermo, Athens, Istanbul, Kiev, Murmansk, Narvik, Norway and Aberdeen, and would finally converge in Amsterdam on 27 June 1997.

Marching from the furthest reaches of Europe is doubtless a worthy ambition, but it is vital that dealing with logistical difficulties doesn't detract too much energy from the crucial task of spreading the political message as widely as possible.

Participation in the actual marches will remain a minority activity whatever routes they follow. What will be most significant is ensuring that, at every level of the labour movement, support is built for the demands of the appeal. Financial support for the campaign will be important. Local meetings should be organised around the march and plans laid for the largest possible delegations for the final events in Amsterdam.

The next Euro organising meeting is planned for 21/22 September in Paris and a conference in Brussels of over 500 militants is scheduled for January 1997. Socialist Outlook supporters and comrades from our sister organisations in the Fourth International across Europe will be playing a leading role in the development of the Euro march and building workers unity to fight the European bosses' draconian attitudes.

This initiative has the potential to become the first genuine European wide campaign of the workers movement. The whole of the left and the labour movement should take up the challenge to build it!
Building a fighting union left

The Socialist Teachers Alliance's trade union left initiative continues to move forward. The three meetings held so far have been attended by representatives of left formations including the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic UIN, Socialist Teachers' Alliance (NUT), Communications Broad Left (CVU), PTC for the Left, and Cadres for a Democratic Union (CDU), MSF Unity Left, RMT CFU, NU, Left, NAFHE Rank and File, Equity Left Alliance, CPSA Left Unity and active members of the RMT.

This constitutes the big majority of known left trade union formations, although of course they represent varying degrees of influence and organised membership.

The most recent meeting agreed to organise a five-day meeting on the TUC and a national conference to be held in London on 1st February 1997. It is hoped that the conference will be able to draw activists from different unions together to discuss their experiences and agree to a policy statement and plan of co-ordinated action.

This could begin to challenge the rapid rightward shift of most trade union leaderships at the level of the trade union movement as a whole. Left trade union leaders such as Bickerstaffe have totally failed to hold the leaders accountable to that rightward shift.

Individual trade union formations, however militant and well organised, cannot defeat the TUC/Blair agenda alone.

How often have we heard our leaders say that a united front, getting rid of the Tory anti-union laws on the basis that it would put our union out on a limb without the TUC? The need for co-ordination at the simplest level of TUC resolutions is crying obvious.

How many disputes have gone down to defeat in recent years because of our trade union leaderships refusal to generalise them for fear of the anti-union laws?

A Left which functions as a co-ordinated solidarity network, which goes beyond seeking us to dip into our pockets at union conferences could give greater confidence to those in struggle to demand more of our movements in terms of solidarity action.

A coordinated Left would also increase the attraction of its individual component Lefts to activists within each union because it could provide a coherent and practical perspective for responding to employers and government attacks which they cannot provide alone.

Attempts to coordinate across the unions have all failed in much more favourable circumstances than the present - The Liaison Committee for Trades Unions (LCTU), the All Trade Unions Alliance, the Rank and File Coordinating Committee and the Broad Left Organising Committee in the 1980s.

The central problem was the domination of such formations by one political grouping or other and the tendency of these currents to treat them as their private fiefdoms.

This alienated many ordinary non-aligned activists, who, whether they agreed with the positions and actions of these bodies or not, had no control or say over them.

Their leaderships tended to turn them on and off according to the policies and alliances of the dominant group.

The Communist Party effectively destroyed the LCTU through relentless mobilization of the Government's Social Contract because it was supported by their allies in the left bureaucracy, led by Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon.

The new federation, while starting from a qualitatively weaker position, has the potential to break with the mistakes of the past by being directly accountable to the component Lefts who come from various political currents.

Certainly the tone and conduct of the meetings so far have been friendly and constructive and there is general agreement to proceed by consensus wherever possible.

The depth of the problems facing trades unions cannot be underestimated.

While there is something of a revival in strikes at present, such as in Royal Mail, London Underground and the threatened action by British Airways pilots, levels of action are still at an historically low.

Employers continue to downsize, outsource, lay off, break national bargaining, withdraw union recognition etc. And we can expect no relief in 1997/8.

We need a new Minority Movement, like the 1920s, within the existing trades unions, to renew them from bottom to top, independent politically and organisationally of the official apparatus, while avoiding the mistakes of the past.

The new federation could just be the small beginnings of such a movement. Our Outlook will discuss the minimum necessary policies and steps which can develop this initiative while maintaining the maximum potential left unity.

---

BALPA puts all-out strike concept back on the agenda

Alan Thomas

3200 BA pilots and flight engineers have voted overwhelmingly for an all-out indefinite strike in defence of their conditions of work, for improved pay and against differential pay rates. This has an important significance for the trade union movement in Britain.

The concept of an all-out indefinite strike has been almost lost. Strike decisions, where they have been asked for and obtained, have been routinely regarded to take one or two-day actions or a series of such actions. Union leaders have insisted on telling the employees when workers will be back at work as well as when they are going out. Strike action has been reduced to a level the employers can cope with, or at least a level which poses no serious threat. This is currently the case in the PO and on LUL. This ballot by BALPA breaks this mould.

Of course BALPA have yet to carry out their decision, but their willingness to ballot and to threaten serious action should be noted by trade union activists across the unions.

The challenge to differential pay rates for the same jobs within BA is particularly principle. These differences are a growing phenomenon across the labour force and are rarely challenged by the unions. One major demand of this ballot is the defence of a minority of the workforce.

Although BA air crews have considerable industrial strength, the strike will be fought hard by management if it goes ahead. The strike which is due to begin on 16 July could cost BA over £40 million a day and throw air traffic into chaos. This would be the first strike of British air crews for eighteen years.

BA is already threatening to bring air crews from abroad, hire them from other air lines or recruit alternative crews. They are reputedly searching their job application database for available pilots.

Management will attempt to operate as many services as possible this way if the strike goes ahead. If the strike goes ahead and scabbing takes place, the strikes will have a significant degree, it could be a bitterly fought battle.

Whatever happens from here, however, BALPA will have done more than just the trade union movement in Britain a service if it puts all-out strike action back on the agenda.

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London Underground - train crews hit back

By a London Underground Train Operator

The teamwork between workers and London Underground continues. While London Underground tries to impose restructuring and productivity work, especially train operators, are fighting for shorter hours and increased breaks.

Last year, ASLEF pulled out of a fight for shorter hours and claimed they had a deal with management to cut an hour off the working week. Many train operators switched to the RMT who continued the fight.

ASLEF have for several years attempted to push through with London Underground and arranged several such private deals. In return they received favourable treatment from management in terms of pay and bonuses and, to some extent, for their membership.

However, last year's deal fell through and the ASLEF leadership have been forced to fight to retain their members. Last month they called an early ballot even before London Underground's final offer, and surprised everyone by calling strike action.

The RMT ballot of train crew members is still not over, so once again, some train operators are on strike while others are not. Some are refusing to cross ASLEF pickets. Others are afraid of disbanding if they strike without legal protection, or else take a sectarian view of the ASLEF strike.

Many operators have not carried out as much intimidation of ASLEF strikers, in contrast to their behaviour during last year's RMT strikes. Furthermore, ASLEF has now been more open and more accountable to management than the RMT.

All of us should organise to unite in strike action and insist on a veto of any deals with London Underground.

At present, management and the ASLEF leadership have a few days left to do a deal. If this doesn't come off, both unions will be on strike together, the workforce will be united and the tempo will heat up. With the privatisation of British Rail, LUL is the largest railway company and a successful struggle would give an important lead to other railway workers.
Blair's road to where?

ITS BEEN A busy week for Blair. First the announcement of the ditching of policy on Scotland and Wales, then the attacks on Tony Blair followers by the big one - the much-hyped launch of the manifesto.

Time and again, Labour leaders have ditched policy with scant regard for party discipline. This is not to say they have ever shown little regard for friends and followers who are expected to sell the new line. What is breathtaking is the speed and solidarity with which the present changes are taking place.

Blair's 'modern', 'new' Labour is to be judged by the achievements of modern British capitalism - an equal partner in the European imperialist bloc, in which the workforce is disciplined through a combination of social partnership or "stakeholding" and a denial of basic trade union rights and destruction of the welfare state.

To achieve this Blair needs to overcome the resistance of sections of both the capitalists and the working class. The tension in the Tory party over Europe reflects divisions between those who see their interests in the European Union and those who back the good old days of empire.

Big change is increasingly coming to the Tories as an all-purpose 'big' nation. Desire for a real in the shaping of Europe; for a return to Britain - not only for his pre-European fervour, but also for his ability to restrain the working class.

And the former Labour Prime Minister then makes a new start; false, he says, that those who will Labour will expect him to reverse the wave of .

The presentation will outline: * A 'new office environment' for working office * Substantial improvements in the pay restructuring package * A new agreement on revisions of delivery duties that will provide safe guards for jobs * Assurances will be given that the union will not accept working, teamworking and protection of delivery positions.

Clearly there is pressure on the union bureaucracy and Royal Mail management to achieve a new deal of settlement. The intervention of Michael Heseltine after the first-round strike with a proposal to end Royal Mail's letter monopoly has pressed the panic button for those in charge.

But the settlement proposed falls well short of the aspirations of the CWU membership.

Jon Green

The postal dispute is reaching the cruxi- cal point as Socialist Outlook goes to press. After two successful one-day strikes by the CWU, Alan Johnson, the general secretary of the union, has re- gained the initiative from branch activ- ist.

The Executive called a cuck with Royal Mail in order to explore the vari- ous issues involved. This period of truce has now been extended over the weekend in an effort to reach a nego- tiated settlement. This is a dispiriting fact that there has been no movement on two of the central issues in the dispute, teamworking and protection of delivery positions.

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UNION CONFERENCE

Fred Leplat
London regional delegate (in personal capacity)

The Conference of Union's Britain's biggest union with 1.5 million members, was dominated by the coming general election and how the union should relate to a Labour government.

The two different approaches to a Labour government were expressed in the first major debate of the conference which was on the minimum wage. General Secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe stated in moving the resolution that £4.25 an hour was a decent level and that the union would fight for it. However, he opposed any amendment instructing the NEC to submit a resolution on the minimum wage to the TUC and called on delegates to "trust me, don't tie my hands".

A delegate moved by approx 6000 to 48000 to turn down Bickerstaffe's call on the TUC.

Other amendments calling for industrial action to force a Labour government to meet Union's demand for a minimum wage were overwhelmingly defeated. A lobby of the TUC on Monday 9th September on the minimum wage was being called by the left and should be called for by the TUC.

This was the pattern for the rest of the conference. Policies to restore public services and the workplace were adopted, but specific proposals for action to achieve these demands were rejected.

Although the platform expressed clear differences with Blair's New Labour, it decisively appealed to delegates to reject calls for action that may embarrass Labour before or after the election.

The government's attacks on Asylum and immigration rights have been ferocious and relentless.

The TUC's resolution said that the government's attacks on Asylum and Immigration are likely to enrage many of the community in the near future as employers ask staff to cooperate by carrying out checks on the status of their staff or "service users." The council of staff have been told to cooperate or be sacked.

Union branches should campaign locally with refugee organizations and support members who refuse to act as immigration officers.

Labour conference demands change from Labour

Fred Leplat
London regional delegate (in personal capacity)

The main opposition to the NEC and General Secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe was the National Executive. The NEC and the TUC have been able to co-operate to some extent.

The conference was also concerned about the situation in Liverpool, where a strike was planned.

A new left caucus was set up called Labour Union Left. Many of its supporters backed Bickerstaffe in last year's election for General Secretary, and are likely to do so for the vehicle for organizing supporters of the Socialist Campaign Group inside the TUC.

The creation of a new left formation inside the union is misguided when there are no differences on principles.

A new formation on the left to call for, for example, the union to act in defence of its members such as those at Hillingdon Hospital, or to join the National Union of Public Employees.

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Irish talks: The day after an IRA bomb

The IRA disruption: Elections will be held on 17 June.


disruption of the IRA cease-fire. The elections will be held on 17 June.


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Defending Marxism

Gerry Foley’s article in Socialist Outlook 104 makes serious errors. He implies that capitalism has been restored in the CPE. Various statistics can be quoted to demonstrate that this is not the case. One is the 20% increase in investment for education and the continuation of free education.

Panorama a few weeks ago showed that 90% of the farms are state owned and that they provide free education, health care and the right to work.

On May Day the Russian Army carried the Red Flag - not something I’ve ever seen a bourgeois army doing. This illustrates that the army is part of the state apparatus which defends the workers state. Foley fails to follow Trotsky who explained in the Transitional Programme that when the bureaucracy went into crisis different tendencies would emerge. Instead he talks about Zyuganov representing a “state capitalist” tendency within the bureaucracy. This is not a class analysis. Where are the capitalists who support Zyuganov?

Imperialism was hostile to Zyuganov’s election because the promised to defend and increase state subsidies. He represents in my view a section of the bureaucracy based on the Military Industrial Complex.

They want to keep their caste privileges and want, to settle accounts with the layers of the bureaucracy who have enriched themselves over the past period. They, as well as the working class, have suffered over the past period from the plundering of the workers state by the dominant layers.

The Communist Party have been calling for a coalition government. They want Yeltsin to pick a third of the cabinet, Zyuganov a third and the other parties the same. This represents a very strong fear of a serious confrontation between these wings of the bureaucracy, in which the working class could come through the middle and overthrow the lot. They want rather to develop a Bonapartist figure who will arbitrate between the different wings and create stability.

Revolutionaries are in favour of exploiting the divisions within the bureaucracy as Trotsky explained in “In Defence of Marxism”.

But we would be in favour of destroying the apatuitic elements through independent mass mobilisations. This could then be used as a springboard to overthrow the rest of the bureaucracy. Only if that is not possible would we give any support to those elements being destroyed by the Military Industrial Complex.

The fight for the programme of political revolution must continue.

Alan Barnett, Birmingham

UP AGAINST mass unemployment, rampant employers with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-earned public services, our working class faces a real crisis - an acute crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership. Socialist Outlook exists to build a new type of leadership, based on class struggle and revolutionary socialist. The capitalist class, driven by its own crisis, and politically united by its need to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has had determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal Tsykhomandram. The Trotskyist strategy has had to shackle the unions, and to fragment and weaken the resistance, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time. In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the dea leftist politics of ‘new realism’, effectively total surrender, while ditching any pretence of being a socialist alternative. Every retreat encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form of reformism, seeking only improved conditions within capitalism. We reject reforms, not because we are against reforms, but because we know that full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy can never be achieved under capitalism. Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of Stalinism, could these demands even be achieved under the bureaucratically deformed workers states and degenerated USSR, whose regimes survived only by repressing the working class. We are a Marxist current, based not on the totalitarian parodies of state marxism, nor on the tame, toothless version of ‘marxism’ beloved by armchair academicians, but the revolutionary tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Dock strike updates:

International solidarity brings successes

The international boycott by the International Dockers Longshoremen of America has been successful in persuading the Atlantic Container Company Ltd to pull out of the port of Liverpool. They have moved to the Thames Port in Kent and albeit only temporarily, as they have said they would return to Liverpool if the dispute is settled within the next 2 months. The Combined CAM Line Shipping Company are also threatening to pull out of the port if the dispute is not resolved.

This is putting massive pressure on the employers with the value of Mersey Dock and Harbour Company shares dropping by 25 percent The Port Users of Liverpool have called a meeting of discuss how to deal with these problems.

National Dockers Support Committee

Following a successful demonstration in support of the dockers in Liverpool on 29 June, a meeting was held to discuss the setting up of the National Dockers Support Committee (NDSC).

It was agreed:

1. That the first meeting of the NDSC will be held on July 20th.
2. That all organisations should send 2 representatives to attend the NDSC. This was controversial because the SWP wanted to elect the delegates them and then from a meeting they had packed. This was rejected by the dockers as if would exclude many organisations.
3. To call a major lobby of the TUC Conference in September to demand that the TUC:
   - Organise a national levy of all TUCs to support the dockers.
   - Oppose the anti-trade union laws
   - Allow the dockers to address the TUC conference.

The dispute could last several months yet and still needs your support. Invite speakers to your meetings and organise regular workplace collections.

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Step up the campaign in defence of asylum seekers

Derrick Colbert

THE LAST WEEK has seen yet another blow to the Tory government's plans to withdraw social security benefits from asylum seekers. The House of Lords, on a knife edge vote of 158 to 150, extended from one to three the number of days for asylum seekers to claim asylum.

According to this ruling, any person applying for asylum during these three days would remain entitled to benefits. This is contrary to the original proposals, rejected by the appeal court on two weeks ago, for any person not claiming asylum at point of entry to be refused benefit.

The Tories have pledged to overturn this change to the immigration and Asylum Act when it comes back to the House of Commons. However, the withdrawal of benefits if a claim is made after three days and while waiting for an appeal on an original application, will still have a devastating effect on asylum seekers and refugees entering Britain.

The resolve of the Tories to push through these vicious proposals speaks volumes for their overall agenda. A clear attempt is being made, as on countless other occasions, to link massive expenditure on social security, almost entirely created by Tory policies of high unemployment, with a tiny minority of people - most of whom happen to be black.

While they wait for the return of the fledgling refugee task force, the Tories are happy to lavish the votes of racist and xenophobes. The effect of the benefit withdrawals is to condemn asylum seekers and refugees to a life of homelessness and poverty, while they appeal for asylum or refugee status.

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While they wait for the return of the fledgling refugee task force, the Tories are happy to lavish the votes of racist and xenophobes. The effect of the benefit withdrawals is to condemn asylum seekers and refugees to a life of homelessness and poverty, while they appeal for asylum or refugee status.

Some councils, such as Wandsworth and Hillingdon in Greater London, have responded to these earlier changes by erecting sections of the Children's Act which oblige local authorities to care for and house children (under 16), along with their parents. However, this provision has not been used by all local authorities and does not help the many asylum seekers who arrive on their own or without children.

Other initiatives, under preparation by councils, voluntary and community groups, involve setting up of special shelters.

One such shelter is currently being planned in West London. These kinds of concrete initiatives, while necessary, will not compensate for this overall assault on the lives of innocent people - people who have fled for their lives, or in poverty, and are treated with contempt on arrival in Britain.

The rest of the Asylum and Immigration Bill proposals will increase the number of people immediately sent back when arriving in Britain and will reduce further the right to appeal. The campaign against these attacks has so far involved two major national demonstrations as well as more localised work to mitigate the effects of the legislation.

There is a real need to step up the campaign in the coming weeks as the Bill comes in for its final reading. The Campaign against the Immigration and Asylum Bill (CAAIR) have called a lobby of Parliament between 3-5 pm on July 15th. This will be followed by a public meeting in the House of Commons at 6pm.