Cholera  ●  War  ●  Famine  ●  Unemployment

The brutal face of capitalism

FORTY million people are estimated to be at risk from starvation in the latest African famine. Countless millions more children and young adults have been irrevocably damaged by malnutrition. Yet African countries are still plundered from low cost raw materials and shamelessly milked of billions of pounds each year to bolster the balances of western banks.

CHOLERA, which has not ravaged the big cities of Western countries since Victorian times, is again moving rampant through the slums of Latin America, feeding off chronic poverty and the lack of elementary sewers and clean water. And each year billions are being pumped out of Latin America into the vaults of the big banks.

After the carnage in the Gulf, WARS are still taking their toll as brutal Western-backed forces kill, torture and maim in their efforts to overthrow governments in Angola, Mozambique and Cambodia - just as the US-backed contras did in Nicaragua. Elsewhere, western arms, aid and influence prop up dozens of bloody and repressive regimes against mass opposition - in El Salvador, Israel and now even Saddam's Iraq.

Capitalism in its heyday speeded the development of science and technology, ushering in a huge expansion of the productive forces. There are now easily enough resources to house, feed, clothe and educate the world's population. Enough resources to build sea defences for Bangladesh, ensure stable food supplies in Africa, and provide clean water in Latin America.

But modern capitalism - imperialism - continues to hold the third world in utter poverty, through systematic exploitation of the big multinationals and banks, and the murderous austerity imposed by the debt.

A new world order is needed - not George Bush's, but a new order built on social justice and solidarity between peoples. But that means not increased charity, but the fight destroy imperialism. We can make a start by campaigning to cancel the third world debt.

See editorial p.3 and centre pages

INSIDE: Ireland talks ● Tories crucify NHS
Lambeth cuts face mounting opposition

by Councillor John Tuile

Lambeth council has a neat way of making their financial crises disappear—you hand the crisis to others to cope with.

Voluntary sector nurseries closing down, refugees denied access to English classes, the elderly shunted to more ‘commercial’ housing, workers sacked. The list goes on, as what could have been a political crisis for the Tories is turned into a social and personal crisis for thousands of sacked workers or tenants denied services.

Lambeth council is no exception, despite its recently unterminated left-wing image and the witch-hunt against 33 Labour Councillors, including the council leadership.

Having aroused the chagrin of the national Labour Party and the Tories by voting against the Gulf War and Poll Tax battles, the council leadership seems determined to see through the £26 million cuts programme, and to alienate their supporters among the local trade unions. Poll Tax to be capped will mean a loss of £26 million of jobs and services abandoned.

Resistance is mounting. Two Consumer Advice Centres were to be closed. The work involved occupied the entrées and have opened up for business. Workers never given a chance to discuss the cuts. Local MP, David McNally has carving a niche of offices are showing everywhere possible, giving advice on welfare benefits, housing, and local services to some of the poorest areas.

Locals bring in food and small change in support. Having had the telephone-cuts off by the council, Lambeth has supplied two mobile phones. Now into its third week, this example of how to fight closures is showing every sign of digging its heels in until the council gives way.

On May 1 London NAPTE called a strike against cuts in adult and further education.

They then failed to build it, except in Lambeth. Lambeth NUT came out solidly in support, as did the local Trades Council. It was just a start to what may happen in education across the country.

There have been huge lobbying by committees of groups facing closures of services. Lambeth anger mounting as a handful of councillors sweep away services with a small, ashamed move of their voting hands.

The black community has been particularly vocal, as in the year we commemorate 10 years since the Brixton uprising, the partial gains forced out of the council and government are evaporated.

There is no need to overemphasize the sectionalism of the response to cuts. Lambeth Anti-Cuts Campaign (LACC) has been established and begun the work of building joint unions/community action. There is a long way to go.

But there is a growing understanding that the cuts can only be stopped if the local community, each group that begins by lobbying for their own services, links up with others to force the council’s refusal to take hold of their arguments.

Lambeth NALGO is balloting for all-out strike action as we write. If won, it represents a chance to focus a real fight against the cuts. But a major opportunity is lost. At least six London NALGO branches have recently balloted on strike action.

Linking up these ballots would have been a step towards overcoming workers’ fear of fighting the battle alone. What has the NALGO bureaucracy been doing, as the trade unions try to take on the council and services get smashed? LACC is considering convening a meeting of London trade unions and community groups and this can be contacted for information on 071 733 5670.

Unipart stewards sacked

by Martin Anthony

UNIPART, the supplier of spare parts for Rover cars, has embarked on a new offensive against union rights in the Owen project. Since privatisation four years ago, the union leadership has made little or no concassion after another to the company. This has led to the acceptance of all the new contracts—something that has been rejected in every other section of the Rover car company.

But now the Unipart management has moved to destroy union organisation altogether. It seeks to introduce a new ‘team leadership’, a key part of the process of jeparisation, were strongly rejected by mass meeting on 6 March.

An attempt by the management to prevent the meeting was met by the fact that the mass meeting of 2800 workers the mass meeting two days later was ignored, with workers insisting on support for the management to the union’s representatives.

In the event, the management response was swift. At 3pm the next day, two stewards, the Senior and Deputy, went to the factory floor and were booted out.

and expelled from the premises along with the AUEW Senior Stewards.

All three had around 30 years service with the company and many years as stewards.

A further mass meeting was then organised, which saw the sacked stewards win a vote of confidence in any industrial action. They pointed to the possibility of legal threats and recommend a procedure culminating in a ballot.

In practice this has not played out. The company was wary of Unipart that any worker taking action would face the sack — and that a ballot would not protect them. In addition, the company organised showings of videos of mass meetings where the stewards were better off.

Eventually, on May 1, all three senior stewards were offered a £25,000 buy-out—why they accepted. An important opportunity to not only protect their jobs but that a ballot would not have been wasted, instead trade union action would have been taken in a plant that was once among the best organised in the industry.

Wales swings to the left

by E. Madden and D. Rhyd

THE LOCAL elections produced important changes in Wales.

In the Labour heartlands of the Southern valleys, Plaid Cymru (PC) gained significantly. For the first time in its 17 years history, Labour lost Taff Ely county. This also lost seats to PC in the Rhymney, Cynon and Rhondda valleys and in Neath.

Anti-Poll Tax activists formed a ‘Council of Action’ and unseated the Labour deputy of Merthyr council. In these Labour areas, councils brutally implemented Poll Tax collection. This slavish obedience to Tory policies caused the swing to Plaid Cymru—a sharp rebuff to Labour. This also follows the Penguin and Neath by-elections, where PC sharply cut Labour majorities.

In Cardiff, Labour ran a minority administration. Here the result was different, with Labour gaining from Tories and Liberal Democrats and winning control. In the key Causton ward, which saw a massive swing to Labour unseating three Tories, anti-Poll Tax activists mounted a ‘Don’t Vote Conservative’ campaign.

There is a clear pattern to the anti-Poll Tax vote in South Wales. Where Labour implemented Tory policies, voters looked elsewhere to protest. Where there was a minority, there was a turn to Labour to get rid of it.

Now the task of anti-Poll Tax and left activists is to pressurise Cardiff council to ensure that there is a return to past practices—doing the Tories’ dirty work. Labour councillors can no longer claim that their hands are tied by lack of a majority. This must be the approach throughout South Wales: to bring Labour councillors to book.

Plaid Cymru is no alternative. In Taff Ely they are forming a council with independents and Liberal Democrats—hardly a left opposition to Labour. The party remains unable to contest the views of the working class. Plaid Cymru has shifted significantly towards Labourism by its refusal to back Poll Tax non-payment.

Opportunities

Locally, both the increased Labour and PC votes represent a left swing by sections of the working class. Though the left is not well placed, opportunities are open in the election aftermath.

Local anti-Poll Tax activists—the backbone of the campaign—need to link up with the Labour left to give the leadership’s abdication and Miliam’s sectarianism. They can work together against the continued effects of the Poll Tax on jobs, services and local democracy.

The Labour left can use such links to strengthen their position and bring leaders to account.

Backs on PC by student supporters of the Campaign Group of MPs, the only organised left in the Welsh party, will not help. Their anti-nationalist approach, which is in common with Kinnock, will mean that the left must be built from scratch.

The Poll Tax and its effects on local government jobs and services will only be felt as the recession deepens in a depressed area. It must be a time of organisational and preparation by left activists across Wales to challenge the Welsh Labour Party.

A long tradition of struggle against cuts: Liverpool demo 1964

THE FIGHT against the nearly 1000 redundancies announced by Liverpool City council is continuing. Rotating strike action, mainly by NALGO and GMB workers, has attracted a large number of council servers.

Nearly 400 redundancies were agreed by a full meeting of the council on 6 March, and more than 500 by a council sub-committee on 26 March.

NALGO is challenging the legality of the second wave of redundancies in the high court.

The jobs are a far cry from its work in Liverpool. The financial crisis of the city will mean that unless the present wave of closures is defeated, many more will follow. The political situation on the council has been complicated by the outcome of the local government elections. Five ‘Labour’ candidates, backed by the Militant, defeated the ‘official’ Labour candidates imposed by the party leadership.

The five have joined with 20 suspended Labour councillors to form a ‘Broad Left’ group on the council. There are 25 Labour councillors backing council leader Larry Hamer and another two suspended councillors who have not joined the Broad Left council group.

In effect this means that in Liverpool there is now a right-wing Labour-Liberal coalition running the city.

The five ‘Labour’ candidates won a total of around 8000 votes, in a total of 50,000 votes for Labour in the council elections. This compares with 90,000 won by the Labour Party at the last local government elections.

The five ‘Labour’ candidates are: Brian Jones, Councillor for Toxteth; Fred Hepple, Councillor for Park; Gorvain Black, Councillor for Wavertree; John Bailey, Councillor for Seel Ward; and John Gaffney, Councillor for Mossley Hill.

The Militant claim that the five candidates are backed by separatist and Trotskyist groups, and that they were not the result of a proper Labour selection process.

The Militants say that they will hold a meeting to consider the legal position of the十大 candidates.

The Militants have already had one meeting of council workers—mainly NALGO and GMB workers—attended by 250 people. The Militants claim that the council workers are determined to resist redundancies.

The Militants are also planning to hold a meeting of Labour councillors to discuss the situation.

The five ‘Labour’ candidates say that they will continue to work with the Labour Party, but that they will not be part of the council’s administration.

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A toll of not so natural disasters

NO SOONER has a star-studded international pop concert been organised to help the Kurds, than the catastrophe in Bhopal has happened. Tens of thousands are dead, and cholera – fast becoming the modern plague – threatens millions more.

The organisers of last weekend’s pop concert could have organised it for many more causes. On top of the crisis in Kurdistan and Bangladesh, famine is stalking Africa on a huge scale; and a tragic cholera outbreak is threatening millions in Latin America.

The disasters hitting the third world are coming so thick and fast that it is difficult to keep up with them. But are they natural? Just a series of accidents? In fact they are not. Each and every one of these ‘natural disasters’ has a human cause and a human cure.

The cyclone in Bangladesh. Of course a cyclone is a natural event (although the erratic world weather patterns may be affected by global warming). But the scale of the disaster was entirely predictable and preventable.

The worst devastation was on the islands off the coast. They are heavily populated because of the lack of land for the peasants. Hunger forces them to take the risk of farming the exposed islands.

Bangladesh has repeatedly suffered tidal waves from cyclones. It needs an effective sea-defence system and much more numerous cyclone shelters. But the rich urban middle class has spent a lot more on defences against river-flooding, a small danger by comparison.

Land reform and the investment for sea defences could stop this periodic carnage. Neither the International Monetary Fund which polices Bangladesh’s economy, nor the country’s rich rulers are interested in either land reform of effective sea defences.

The cholera epidemic in Latin America tells a similar story. Only an ample supply of clean water, basic hygiene and adequate food can keep cholera at bay. But millions of people in Peru, Colombia, and the other countries of the Andes basin do not have these.

‘Natural’ disasters are worsened by poverty or simply caused by it. These disasters are accelerating because the third world, in a period of capitalist crisis, is getting poorer.

The desire to raise money to give immediate relief to the millions suffering and dying is commendable and should be supported. But not as an alternative to a longer-term resolution of this third world crisis.

A major cause of the crisis is debt bondage. Once a country is unable to repay its debt, the World Bank and the IMF come in to impose austerity – which means terrible suffering and poverty for millions.

Who will improve public services?

As election fever mounts the Tories have carried out a gobsmackingly hypocritical ploy in launching their ‘Charter’ for decent public services. The only rational point in this offensive is public services are in crisis – they are in decay. Anyone who has to use public transport in most of the country, or relies on social services, or can even see the state of the streets in most major towns can tell you as much.

But the core of the Tories’ proposal is the idea that wrecked public services are the fault of the workers. If you’re homeless, then its the fault of the NALGO workers at the council housing department. If the dustbins aren’t emptied then it’s the fault of the CMB workers emptying the bins. And if the tube is impossibly crowded and dirty, then of course its those ASLEF and RMT workers who’ve sabotaged it. They must be held to account through performance related pay and other sanctions.

No rational person could believe this nonsense. The services and infrastructure of Britain are in crisis because of underfunding, because of privatisation and deliberate run-down.

But Labour’s response is hopeless. All Kinnock and Gould can say is ‘they stole the idea from us!’ John Major’s line that Labour’s promise to improve thing all round and not raise taxes is empty has a point.

Where would Labour get the money to renovate the NHS and improve public services all round? Especially when Labour says it will not cut defence spending. Especially when there are no plans for radical attempts to redistribute wealth from the rich.

Labour’s promise to improve public services sits ill with the ‘we’re promising nothing’ line. Labour is promising nothing because it comes to power it will do so on the basis of not reversing the main planks of Thatcherism. Official party politics is becoming a beauty contest where the three main leaders pedal what are essentially similar policies.

If Labour wanted to really defeat the Tories public service cuts, then they should expose its content - that of blaming the workers. Neil Kinnock and Bryan Gould are a million miles from associating themselves with anything so principled.

Build on our success

The first issue of the new newspaper-style Socialist Outlook got a good response from our supporters and sympathisers. Sales were higher than they ever were when we had a magazine. We now have a steady flow of new subscribers, and donations, including gifts from people we did not previously know.

The good response has been heartening – but there is a long way to go. We have had a healthy flow of new subscribers and, donations, including gifts from people we did not previously know.

There are a number of ways in which our supporters and readers can help the newspaper develop. First, by having suggestions for improvements and for articles. All the criticisms and comments we receive are being collated and regularly discussed by our editorial staff. Let us tell you what you want to see in the paper.

But we need more reports of local and labour movement events. If you have a proposal for an article, or news on which we can base an article, send it to us at FO Box 1109, London N4 2UJ.

We need to ensure that we maximise sales, and especially subscriptions. Supporters should utilise the opportunity of the 250 introductory subscription to get people to subscribe. And we want supporters to tell us of any local wing bookshops which do not get the paper.

Most of all we need to get money back from sales to our office as soon as possible. Socialist Outlook supporters who take a regular bundle can help us by paying for it through a standing order.

Socialist Outlook, in line with our support for the Socialist Movement, supports its new paper as a back-to-order that we do not clash with the launch issue of socialist, there will be a three-week gap between issues 2 and 3. Our next issue will be out on 9 June.
Step up fight against sexism in unions!

by Carolyn Sikorski

WOMEN ACTIVISTS in the trade union movement resist and discriminatory practices both in the workplace and in their trade union. Combine this with the sexism and discrimination in society in general and the result—women are under- 

Tube workers suffer defeat on jobs

By an RMT Tube Worker

800 JOBS have been lost on London's underground. Two of the unions representing tube workers, the RMT and TSSA had voted 2-1 for industrial action to oppose over 1,000 job losses. But by the close of the balloting period and after London Underground (LUL) had called for negotiations at the arbitration service ACAS the unions felt unable to implement the action.

The two clear reasons for this were a massive and unprecedented campaign of intimidation by management and the splitting of the union side by ASLEF—the train drivers’ union.

Negotiations at ACAS 200 jobs and instituted talks on rosters which could increase staffing. Proposals to cut another 800 jobs were withdrawn and working parties on staffing and pay levels set up after the 1,000 strikes, but aban- ded by management, were reconstituted.

The talks renegotiated promotion and transfer arrangements and extended from 16 months to three years the protection of earnings of displaced staff. Nevertheless, large-scale re-organisation of the ‘permanent way’ and engineering staff, which at this stage involve no job losses, remains.

Management could move quickly towards the break-up of these departments. Individual line managers would control their own permanent way and engineering services, with the option of putting the work out to private contractors.

However, it is unlikely that any major changes to passenger services will be proposed this side of a General Election. LUL management is severely dis-credited in the eyes of the public. All their macho style has produced is a £100 million deficit and worse scores. The public want better and safer ser- vice with more staff on trains and stations. Only a new Tory election victory would give management a fresh mandate to cut back in these areas.

ASLEF, the association which represents 50% of LUL train staff, collaborated with management’s plans from the start. They adopted a position that they would not fight for cutting staff or even for the loss of 322 train jobs—because there were no compulsory redundancies.

For the first time in living memory, a union negotiated a deal with management after the others had failed to agree, and before they had finished balloting. Their national officials stated that they would not sup- port any of their members who requested official picketing. Their local officials actively campaigned against the RMT and TSSA ballots and declared support for management’s plans in a back attack.

During previous ballots in 1987 and 1989 management took no initiatives. This time, threats of the sack were widespread and backed up by individual letters to the whole workforce. In addition, management imposed the pack- age while unions were not involved. A letter from LUL within the new anti-unions laws meant that the new arrangements were in place four weeks before ballots could be conducted.

By the time LUL management called talks at ACAS, activities were concerned that a repeat of 1985 was on the cards. Then, an all-out strike called by the RMT against the one person opera- tion of trains was ignored by the majority of the workforce and had to be called off within 12 hours.

In view of this situation the decision to call off the strike was understandable.

The immediate task is to deal with the problem of ASLEF. For ten years ASLEF has been the tail that wagged the dog of the Federation of London Underground. At the same time as consistently refusing to ballot for full amalgamation, ASLEF has reached more than 1,000 mem- bers from RMT on both BR and LUL.

The bureaucratic charm of the federation must be taken on board at this years RMT AGM. Fighting for one industrial union must be combined with consistent propaganda to defy the anti-union laws.

The RMT LUL District Coun- cil has made it clear that mass balloting in both in between and after disputes. To this must be added a new tradition of assemblies of activists which alone can organise widely enough to combat management intimidation.

Socialist Movement
Trade Union Committee

Public Meeting

Unshackle the Unions
Thursday 13 June, 7.30pm
City Halls, Candleriggs, Glasgow

Speakers: Judy Coster, Liverpool NALGO
Carolyn Sikorski (SMTCU)

This meeting has been sponsored by the Scottish Socialist Movement and Scottish Labour Party Socialists. After the meeting there will be a discussion on the formation of a Scottish sub-committee of the SMTCU.
Northern Ireland negotiations

A new guarantee for partition

by Piers Mostyn

ALL BUT ONE of the parties in the north of Ireland are to participate with the Dublin and London governments in a process of negotiation. Secretary of State Peter Brooke appears to have pulled off a coup de grâce initiating the first significant round-table talks on Northern Ireland in 18 years. The 'bottom line' has been the objective of a new parliamentary settlement based on devolution, and the exclusion of Sinn Fein. The Irish government should be opposed on this basis alone.

Excluded

It excludes both a party representative of the six-county population and the aspiration of the majority of the Irish people (confined in recent opinion polls) for national unity and independence.

Simultaneously the British are drafting in military reinforcement and preparing legislation (the 1991 Emergency Powers Bill) to add new unprecedented repressive powers to uphold the border. The last such initiative was the 1974 Sunningdale Agreement, which resulted in a combination of 'power-sharing' government of the six counties by majority rule, but with the 'minority' given minor executive responsibilities with an 'All-Ireland Council'. The Unionists' desire for a return to the unfettered seces- sionism of 1969 Stormont was initially unacceptable. The bourgeois nationalisation SDLP had been persuaded that becoming junior coalition partners in a reformed Six County government was worthwhile.

Sop to nationalists

Dublin involvement was thus seen as a sop to nationalist aspirations and a brake on any Unionist misuse of their position. The power-sharing executive was brought down by loyalist resistance, culminating in a general election. Their main objection was not so much to power-sharing per se, as any hint of southern involvement in decision-making. In 1985, Dublin and Lon- don governments signed the Hillsborough Agreement, which sought to address the same objectives. Paper recognition was given to the aspirations of Northern nationalists and republicans, but not a political settlement between London and Dublin initiated. But support for partition was copper-fastened. The Accord was little more than an attempt to realign all the main bourgeois parties against militant republicanism. It failed. Support for Sinn Fein was not significantly eroded. The Unionists were trans- parently opposed. If anything, violence increased.

Softened up

But the Accord did help to soften up the constitutional nationalists into accepting further political compromise. Under Sunningdale the all- Ireland dimension was there at the beginning as an integral element of the devolved power-sharing package. Under the current talks there will be three stages that will ensure an internal settlement is agreed between the Northern parties, before discussions begin with Dublin. The SDLP will thus have to agree to a six-county devolved government without any guarantees about the South.

At stage two (North-South talks the Unionists, will refuse to countenance any institutional set up giving Dublin a say. But the trap will be set. By then it will be difficult for the SDLP or Dublin to withdraw, as the loser will already have stated its acceptance of the internal settlement.

The final stage, London-Dublin talks, will formally set the seal on the whole deal.

Thus, contrary to the media's hype, the initiative is not about a Unionist climbdown. It's success would be in drawing constitutional nationalism into the first devolved power-sharing administration since the fall of Stormont. How has Brooke done it?

First, the Accord not only softened up the SDLP, but also helped to marginalise the Republicans. After the mass mobilisations around the 1981 hunger strikes and the electoral rise of Sinn Fein, Republicans failed to mobilise against the Accord.

Underrated

Indeed, they underestimated the threat it posed. The period since the early 1980s has seen a decline in the mass struggle. The SDLP can now enter a new arrangement with less fear of a Unionist-led boycott.

Second, politics in the South are on the move. The long-term effects of a national debt of Latin American proportions, and the erosion of its electoral base, have forced the Flann MacFaul government to rethink its strategic alliances.

It can no longer rely on its traditional role as majority party, the occasional token nationalist posture, and an alliance with the church. Political stability and a partnership with British, European and international capital are essential to stave off economic crisis.

Hence Haughey, who opposed the Malvinas war and the Accord and described the six counties as a 'failed non-entity', has done a U-turn.

Gulf War

He breached the 26-counties neutrality by allowing Bush refuelling facilities in the Gulf war; he has embraced the new talks; and is now offering articles two and three of the constitution (embodies the aspiration to Irish unity and independence) up for negotiation.

Third, European unity is on the horizon. Post-1992 socio-economic harmonisation with the North and Britain poses a type of economic unity that is far more attractive to the Irish capitalists than the risk of national unity, with the dangers of instability and a re-united working class.

The result will be a historic compromise of the Irish people's rights to self deter- mination, independence and unity. The package will be sold as 'democratic' with the backing of all major British and Irish parties. Even the loyalist paramilitaries have guaranteed not to put a spanner in the works. So far the silence of any opposition (particularly from British Labour) has been deafening.

Nevertheless, it remains a high-risk strategy for Britain. A resurgence of mass nationalist struggle in the North remains a possibility and could challenge the achievements of the SDLP.

Southern politics are very unstable - especially given a strengthening of the left, reflecting dissatisfaction with Haughey's vicarious austerity programme. Even in Britain, the Irish vote will be important in the forthcoming election.

Link-up

A link-up between the left and the Irish community could help crack the appearance of consensus. Socialists in this country need to build such an opposition and expose the lie that this is a democratic peace process, rather than another neo-colonial settlement imposed undemocratically and upheld by force.

Bangladesh - much more than just a natural disaster

by Oliver New

JUST SIX helicopters were available to the Bangladesh government to deal with the devestation left in the wake of the cyclone which killed up to 200,000 and left 4 million people homeless. One immediate consequence of this is that so many people are attracted to live in even the most low-lying sand spits. Bangladesh plans to build five more cities between it and the government against these inevitable tides for the last ten years.

Thanks to the TV cameras joining the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the Indian media in the media with the India
The end of Apartheid
A long road ahead

by Charlie van Gelderen

During his recent visit to Britain, South Africa's President F. W. de Klerk convinced John Major that he had gone far enough in abolishing apartheid to justify the end of sanctions.

The president, of course, did not mean much convincing. Like Thabo Mbeki before him, he was never very enthusiastic about sanctions. For the black majority in South Africa, however, the picture does not look bright.

At the opening of parliament in February, de Klerk announced the repeal of 19 of the 41 sections of apartheid, the largest reduction of restricted black voting representation to 17% of the land, the Grangerسلط (the statesman) diet, the proposal to open books in the education of where people of a "different race group" would be able to live and work, and the dismantling of the PRA (Patriotic Front Alliance), which classified people as white, black, or colored.

The PRA is being replaced by the National Environmental Bill, which was adopted by the South African Council of Churches as a "new form of apartheid," but it is not a new form of apartheid. It is no mention of the now-disavowed term "race" in the text of the Bill. The provisions include that black people cannot use public transport to drive between black and white areas. The Bill creates a "struggle" area, where the road to the end of apartheid is long, not only physically but also emotionally and psychologically.

From austerity to epidemic

PERU is under a state of emergency with the first cholera epidemic in the country in more than a hundred years.

It is the first major outbreak of the disease in the Western Hemisphere since 1911. Alberto Fujimori's government declared the state of emergency back in February, when the health minister estimated that 300,000 people were infected and 10,000 were expected to die as a result.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned the government to act quickly to control the epidemic and to prevent the spread to other countries. The WHO has provided technical assistance and advice to the government.

The government has announced a series of measures to control the outbreak, including the distribution of cholera vaccines and water treatment plants. The government has also encouraged residents to practice good hygiene and to report cases of cholera.

However, the epidemic continues to spread, and the government has been criticized for its slow response. The situation is likely to remain critical for the foreseeable future, and the government will need to continue to work closely with the WHO and other international organizations to control the epidemic and prevent its spread to other countries.

Roland Wood

Peru Support Group
20 Compton Terrace
London, N1 2UN
Yugoslavia – Collapsing Fast

The break-up of the state of Yugoslavia, in all probability through civil war, draws closer every day. The problems faced by the new impartial federal presidency headed by Ante Markovic are not purely those of national identity.

A quarter of Yugoslav firms have already collapsed and unemployment has soared past the 20% mark. But the often conflicting national aspirations of the Serb, Croat and Albanian sections of the population (among others) have dominated the scene.

Brazil – economy minister resigns

Along with her team of economic advisers the economy minister of Brazil, Zelfa Cardosa de Mello, was forced to resign last week after President Collor withdrew his support for her. She had rather embar-

rassed Collor's "business-like" image by saying that Brazil couldn't afford to keep its foreign debt repay-
ments up to date.

Collor with his new economy minister, former banker Marco Filipo Moreira, took ready to accept the IMF's latest and most savage austerity package for the country, tempted by the carrot of a $1.2 billion standby loan. The plan is very similar to that which the Mexican government is now im-
pementing.

The managing director of the IMF, Michel Cam-

cam, wants Brazil to eliminate its $12 billion debt problem within three years. Who's kidding who?

Italian Communists Organise

The abandonment of any commitment to Marx-

ism by the new membership debate by the Italian Communist Party has led to a split, with a substantial portion of its base preparing to form a new party. In February, the Italian Communist congress in Rimini changed the name of the party to ‘Party of the Democratic Left’, removing any reference to tradition

communist goals.

Disdients will hold a congress in November to establish a new party. So far 144,000 membership cards for the new party have been distributed. Leading figures include Cesotta, long-time leader of the old pro-Soviet tendency in the PCI and Garagnone, former trade union leader and PCI deputy.

The main Italian far left organisation Democratic Proletariat (DP) seems certain to go into the new party.

US Marine faces death penalty

Eric Larsen, a US Marine Reservist who cam-

paigned against the Gulf war, now faces the death penalty for 'desertion in time of war'. Out of the 3000 or so GI registers who spoke out against the war, Larsen is the first to be charged with desertion.

His civilian attorney, Robert Nieki, represented thousands of contentious objectors since the Viet-

nam war. He maintains that the Marine Corps acted illegally in issuing Larsen's action order for deployment to Saudi Arabia in February. He says that there was an unnecessary delay in processing the soldier's application for contentious objector status.

The anti-war movement in the US is mobilising support both for Larsen and also Tahman Jones, a black marine and prominent anti-war activist, who is expected to face the same charges when he gives himself up.

Tory backs Labor

While he was Tory Party treasurer in Britain, Lord Moyle is now preparing the Labor Party elec-

tion campaign in Australia during 1985. The embar-

rassing news came to light during an inquiry into the suspect whole dealing around the Government of Western Australia.

McAlpine has large business interests in the state and has never denied the close relationship he has with the ultra right wing Labor Party. He said at the time he was the treasurer of the British Conservative Party. I don't find my strong conservative philosophies incompatible with the Labor Party in Australia. Enough said really.
The poor third world countries are getting poorer. A central cause of their misery is the austerity measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to cope with the $1200 billion owed to the West. The debt crisis is literally murdering thousands annually. Here SAM INMAN looks at the background to the crisis.

WHEN THE MEXICAN government announced in August 1982 that it faced bankruptcy and might not be able to pay its debt, shock waves spread through the international banking system.

Mexico was not the first state to face insolvency—other third world countries were in a similar position—but the sheer scale of its debt threatened a major crisis in the world economy.

Mexico was the world’s biggest debtor after Brazil, owing some 10 per cent of the world total. Letting Mexico default would have signalled to other countries that this was a way out for them too.

An international bank crash was only averted by a rescue plan cobbled together by governments, private banks and the IMF.

Short-term relief for the bankers, though, merely served to extend the burden of debt on the third world. Debts were not written off but simply rescheduled for payment at a future date. Even tougher austerity measures were laid down by the IMF and third world governments were strong-armed into accepting these penalties.

The debt crisis has continued to deepen, rising from $763 billion in 1982 to over $1200 billion today, and it remains just as unsolved today as it was nine years ago.

What are the fundamental reasons for the debt? Foreign debt is nothing new. All the imperialist powers were originally built on it and still go on today. In fact, the largest debtor country in the world is the USA—although it has the immense advantage of being simply able to print more dollars than any other country. Unlike Brazil, Sudan or Bangladesh.

In fact the third world debt trap dates back to the last century. In those days payment of debt was enforced militarily. Today the IMF imposes debt repayment through threatening to cut off future credits—which would make new imports impossible and financially wreck the countries concerned.

Bretton Woods

The IMF came into existence at the end of the second world war. However, its roots lie in plans that were drawn up during the war to ensure the expansion of US capital in the post-war era and thus increase the economic and political hegemony of the US.

The founding conference of the IMF took place in 1944 at Bretton Woods in the US. Most third world countries were still under the yoke of the colonial powers. Not surprisingly, the interests of the colonial and semi-colonial world were not represented here.

What the key imperialist players wanted was a plan that could avoid a repetition of the world economic crisis of the 1930s which had facilitated the rise of the Nazis in Germany and consequently the second world war.

The main players in the conference were Britain and the US. It was inevitable given the declining role of sterling and the ascendency of the dollar that US interests won the day. Stalin’s representatives were also present, but in the era of ‘peaceful coexistence’ and ‘socialism in one country’ they had no impact on the outcome of the talks—indeed the Soviet Union has still not yet joined the IMF.

While there was agreement between the main imperialist powers around the pillars of the ‘new order’ (free world trade, fixed exchange rates and equal treatment for trading partners) there was disagreement over what to do about balance-of-payments deficits—foreign debt.

John Maynard Keynes, leader of the British delegation, proposed a plan for countries with a surplus to finance the deficits of others. Both debtors and creditors would end up paying towards the imbalances.

IMF

Realising that in the future it would have high balance-of-payments surpluses, the US rejected Keynes’s plan.
millions

but generally for 'prestige' projects, armaments or even salted away in private fortunes in Swiss bank accounts.

But although the oil crisis gave the debt problem a special twist, in fact it had been accelerating since the 1960s.

Oil Crisis

In 1960 third world debt had stood at $18 billion. By 1970 it had shot up to $77 billion. At the beginning of the oil crisis it was $112 billion. These figures show that there has been a long term worsening of the overall position of the third world countries which has progressively worsened their debt situation.

In 1990 the share of world trade involving third world countries was 3.2% per cent. By 1970 it had fallen to 17.2 per cent. High inflation in the advanced capitalist economies pushed up the costs of imports to the semi-colonial world even further.

Banks

Between 1973 and 1982 there was a massive explosion of loans to the third world. As the recession deepened the debtor countries were forced to borrow more and more purely to service the interest on these loans.

After the near disaster with Mexico in 1982, the IMF stepped in much harder to keep the semi-colonial world in line. Debts were rescheduled through IMF negotiations and debtor governments forced to adhere to a strict IMF 'stabilisation programme'. These adjustment policies are used to control the debts of more than 80 per cent of loans granted.

Their effects are devastating for the peoples of the semi-colonial world. Governments are told to cut spending on welfare, subsidies on food and housing, cut wages, devalue and restrict credit, devalue the currency, and of course encourage 'free enterprise' and foreign investment.

In order to force through these austerity measures state terrorism and repression are often used against workers and peasants who organise or who are suspected of organising opposition to the onslaught.

The facts speak for themselves. In 1970 Africa fed itself. By 1984 140 million out of 531 million African people were being fed on imported grain. Today 29 million people in this continent face starvation in the coming weeks.

Sanctions

How can the third world break out of the debt crisis? For an individual country it is incredibly difficult to repudiate its debt. Repudiation of the debt would lead to an immediate cut off of credits, and the debtor country would be unable to gain loans and foreign currency to buy imports. Trade sanctions by the US and other Western countries would devastate the economy of a country which defaulted on its debt.

Repudiating the debt could only be realistically achieved by a series of major countries like Brazil and Mexico acting together. The main obstacle to that of course is that a full-scale confrontation with the imperialist powers is not in the interests of the capitalist leaders of most third world countries. Repudiating the debt is a task of revolutionary proportions which needs revolutionary answers in the third world. Meanwhile, it is an elementary duty for socialists in the West to demand that the debt be cancelled.

International Demonstration and Carnival

Support third world struggle against the debt

Saturday 13 July

Assemble: 12 noon, Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park
Rally at Trafalgar Square 2.30pm

AIDS

Millions of people worldwide die from preventable disease each year. The cholera epidemic now sweeping Latin America is not caused by an 'act of God'. It is caused by poor sanitation and lack of investment in local infrastructure and healthcare - all of which have been cut back because of IMF-imposed austerity programmes.

The AIDS crisis in many third world countries, and events like the duster in Bangladesh, have the same roots in world poverty.

There is increasing concern that the debt will never be finally repaid. As a result, new and not-so-new methods are being employed to seize the assets of debtors. The secondary market in foreign debt is growing rapidly. This means that a third party buys up a portion of debt at discount, and then trades it for some asset of the debtor.

Another idea which is already widely being put into practise is 'debt for equity' swaps. In other words, the banks arm a part of the debt in exchange for ownership of industries and businesses in the debtor countries. This just increases the economic stranglehold of the capitalist world over the South.

Cancel the debt

by Terry Conway

THE CAMPAIGN to Cancel the Third World Debt has been set up in Britain in response to the Group of 7 summit taking place in London in July. Many of those involved have been involved in long term work against the debt, but want to use this opportunity to focus the minds of activists on this vital question.

Despite the fact that the demands of the campaign have the support of many heads of state in the Third World and now even of the Pope, it is rather harder to get support here in Britain. The Green Party and supporting the campaign, as are the Student Liberal Democrats, National Organisation of Labour Students and the Scottish National Party. But from the main political parties, despite the horrors of the famine in Africa and the cholera epidemic in Latin America - both obviously affected by debt - there is a deafening silence.

It is crucial that this issue is raised at every level in the labour, black and women's movements, amongst anti-war activists and those involved in international solidarity campaigns. It is vital to explain that it is the self-same World Bank and IMF that is stealing from the workers and peasants of the poorest countries that is imposing austerity policies leading to low wages, casualisation and unemployment in the West. The campaign seeks to celebrate the struggles against debt and oppression taking place in many countries across the world, rather than to promote a passive image of 'poor starving third world people'.

Resolutions should be put supporting the campaign and arguing to publicise the demonstration and arrange transport. Donations are desperately needed, as are performers prepared to give their services both for the demonstration itself and for fundraising activities between now and them. Speakers are available from the campaign, as are leaflets for the demonstration and lists of people interested in your area.

The campaign is attempting to ensure that activity takes place in as many major cities as possible. As well as the separate Scottish and Northern groups are being launched in Manchester and Oxford and plans being laid in a number of other places. But time is short and action is urgently needed.

- For unconditional cancellation of the Debt
- An end to the structural adjustment policies of the IMF and the World Bank
- For a just and fair economic system to prevent the reappearance of the debt.

For further information contact Cance

The Debt, c/o 23 Beavon St, London N1 8BY or phone 071 263 8239.

Cancel the Debt (Scotland) c/o Latin America Institute, 60 Oakfield Ave, Glas
gen.
Chaos - attack on marxism?

FOR THE LAST five years the "science" of chaos has been the subject of intense controversy. Whole sections of bookshops are devoted to it. Douglas Adams says he's seen the light, and Living Marxism denounced it as bourgeois pessimism. What exactly is it, and is it compatible with Marxism? PAUL CLARKÈVE investigates.

CHAOS theory has been applied to a wide range of phenomena that it is difficult to sum up in a few simple propositions. But at least most general level the proponents of chaos say the following.

First, all events and systems in the real world have determinate causes and are law governed. But there are phenomena governed by particular mathematical laws which despite being determined and law-governed have unpredictable, apparently random and chaotic outcomes.

Randomness

Second, within the apparent randomness of 'chaotic' phenomena are general patterns and structures that underpin the apparent randomness of chaotic events, and give them order.

'Anyone in the least familiar with the basic propositions of dialectical materialism will instantly see how the ideas of chaos parallel some basic Marx ideas about the world. The real interest and application of chaos theory is, it is necessary to look at how it arose. Chaos theory grew up within separate and apparently diverse disciplines - meteorology, fluid dynamics, and of course pure mathematics. Weather forecasting and predicting the behaviour of liquid flows regularly come up against a similar problem. At a certain point regular and ordered events suddenly go 'chaotic'.

Models

Building mathematical models of these events is incredibly complex, because the number of variables involved is so large. In other words, the mathematical equations which govern outcomes are non-linear. Beyond a certain point developments in the weather or liquid flows seem random and unpredictable, by definition.

Maths's closest collaborator, Frederic Engels, made a striking remark about the historical process which can be taken as summing up his concept of dialectical materialism. Events, he said, are governed by a 'paradigm of forces'. In other words, there can be thousands of individual determinants of a single event, but in principle, if you knew all the different determinants you could trace the course of a particular event with absolute certainty and predictability.

Chaos theory says something different. It says you can know all the determinants, and not know the outcome. The deterministic particle theory has known this for a long time. In a particle accelerator you can repeat a particular experiment over and over again, in exactly the same conditions, and never get the same result. This is not the range of results over, say, 100 experiments. You may in certain cases be able to predict the average result over a large number of experiments. But the result of a particular experiment you cannot predict. Many physical events can be modelled in terms of linear equations - i.e., those with few variables. Their progress is more-or-less orderly and predictable. But at the heart of chaos is what happens in the invention of non-linear equations (the repeated multiplication of these equations by a constant).

Progress in this branch of mathematics has been accelerated by the progress in computers, enabling huge numbers of iterations of non-linear equations to take place in a short period. The results are striking.

Instead of the regular progression of results you get with linear equations, non-linear equations seem to produce random results, with no pattern at all.

Strange attractors

But then something peculiar happens. Periodically, the same results occur over and over again, the result often settles down around three or four standard outcomes. In the heart of chaos there is order. In the parlance of chaos theory these repeated results are known as 'strange attractors'.

The rapid advances in computers have enabled strange attractors to be mapped visually. Every equation can be represented by a graph - a picture. Benoit Mandelbrot, a scientist working for the computer giant IBM, pioneered the computer graphics of huge numbers of iterations of non-linear equations.

The results have been spectacular - patterns of infinite complexity, and numerous levels, which at different levels of magnification never repeat themselves, but throw up the same images over and over again.

Contradictions

All Marxists have been particularly concerned with the notions of contradiction and rupture. In other words, Marxists theory seeks to explain how, at a certain point, systems - whether natural or social - go into crisis, decay and reformation.

Chaos theory, strictly speaking, deals with a different world - the behaviour of non-linear dynamical systems. But many people, not least the US Defence Department, have been quick to try to find parallels in the social and political world, for example crowd control.

Might not a rioting crowd be considered a 'non-linear dynamical system'? Might there not be a hidden regularity in its apparently random and chaotic behaviour? Marxists, of course, know there is.

Narrow

However, at the present state of our knowledge, it is far too early to start to claim that chaos represents a new magical key that will reshape the whole of human knowledge and every scientific discipline - its proved applicability is so far too narrow.

But the insights of chaos are broadly in line with Marxism, and have been even anticipated by Marxists themselves. Chaos shows us that reality is law governed, even if particular events, in principle, cannot be predicted. It shows that extremely complex systems, involving many variables, are extremely sensitive to initial conditions - i.e., as they develop, initial errors and deviations become magnified in a dramatic way (apply that to socialist organisations and you get some interesting results).

It shows that although science cannot 'explain everything' - it can predict every event - it can trace the parameters that give rise to the apparent disorder.

All this of course is down to a particular kind of mechanical, non-dialectical, determinism. Marxists should not worry about that. Reality can be looked at as ordered chaos, or chaotic order. Whichever way, it is subject to intervention and change.

Is chaos compatible with Marxism? Yes. Is it a major step forward in human knowledge? Wait and see.
Reflections on Being 'Out'

Debbie Epstein

The experience of 'coming out' and being 'out' as a lesbian or gay man is different for everyone, but there are some common features. In this article, I want to reflect on my own personal experience and how it fits into what is common to all lesbians and gay men.

Something which few heterosexuals understand is that coming out is not a once and for all action – something you do once and never have to repeat. It is a continuous process, not only because you meet new people, but also because what it means to you to be lesbian or gay may change.

I came out as a lesbian on national television at Labour Party conference about four years ago. Before that the number of people who 'knew' generally could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Some people find coming out so publicly have proved to be groundless – that all my straight friends would drop me for而来, because I was more interested in my friendships, other than with people I knew, which was generally important. I have done the same for others I have been subject to verbal abuse, not just from Sun readers – on occasion, it has come from people who 'knew to keep better including occasionally, members of left groups. I have been the subject of personal abuse in meetings.

Clothes

After I spoke, some work colleagues refused to speak to me. I am, at the moment, finding difficult to get a job. I have no way of knowing whether or not this is because I am a lesbian, but I know that my clothes (always worn trouser and hair short) are signifiers of lesbian. I have been threatened when holding hands with a girl friend in the street.

All this is difficult, but what I find more difficult in many ways, is the profound lack of support and un-democratic treatment of heterosexuals on the left. This has ranged from total marginalisation to being told that the issues I was concerned with were unimportant, and certainly shouldn't (couldn't?) be prioritised for discussion at, for example, my union conference. The assumption is there that everyone is heterosexual, and this is how we are on the left as well as in wider society.

Straight - even sympathetic ones – don't, perhaps, understand how emotionally exhausting the constant marginalisation is. They don't seem to appreciate that speaking at a meeting as a lesbian is not an easy option, but fraught with difficulty and even physical danger when the meeting is public.

Marginalisation

I am one of a handful of lesbians wishing to speak on public platforms, but every time I do it, I have to screw myself up to come out publicly yet again. Sometimes I make the effort and find myself marginalised on the platform, either because the organisers have not stated that there would be a lesbian speaker, or because there of a (deliberate?) marginalisation of lesbian and gay issues from certain left groups, which have the ability to dominate meetings by force of numbers.

So when I want real emotional support, I don't feel able to go to my comrades on the left. I look to lesbians and gay people in the community – many of whom are hostile to left groups because of the appalling record they have – at best marginalising lesbian speakers, and at worst claiming that 'homosexuality is a bourgeois deviation'. Despite this, I think it is right to be a socialist and to call on lesbians to stop taking up the wider struggle – in their own interest as well as everyone else's. So the question is, where do I, as a socialist lesbian, go? Answers on postcards please.

The Doors

directed by OLIVER STONE
reviewed by Sean Tunney
SIXTIES America. It was a whole different scene, man. Vietnam and shit, it blows your mind.

It was different then too, none of today's manufactured shit. Hell, we had Dylan, the Stones, and Her- man and his Hermits. But the craziest dude of them all was Jim Morrison. Hey, and after Jim Morrison, even gets Nico of the Velvet Under-ground to give him job in front of Pan. weird but true, Pan freaks at this. Stone, though, sure makes us feel this is just one of Pan's hangups. Later on again when Pan get just a little too heavy, Jim's so together that he locks her in a closet and sets fire to it. The director just stays there wild guy!

Liberated

Sure in those days we were liberated. Why when Jim's a groovy chick by the name of Pam, he just follows her home. Before you can say Lizard King, he's grabbed and kissed her and she's fallen for his animal power.

Hell, though, what free-love rock star wants to be held down by just one woman? So later on Morrison even gets Nico of the Velvet Underground to give him job in front of Pan. weird but true, Pan freaks at this. Stone, though, sure makes us feel this is just one of Pan's hangups. Later on again when Pan get just a little too heavy, Jim's so together that he locks her in a closet and sets fire to it. The director just stays there wild guy!

The Great Escape

Sleeping with the enemy

Directed by JOSEPH RUBEN
Reviewed by Louise Whittle and Sean Tunney
OVERALL, this is a good film by male Hollywood's standards. Women have had enough of the portrayal of neurotic women pursing poor old men in such films as "Fatal Attraction" and "Play Misty for Me." They know in real life it is almost always the other way round.

Laura (Juliet Roberts) is, on the surface, happily married to a successful financial consultant. However, unknown to the outside world, Laura is also the subject of physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

Locked away in a modernist mansion isolated by the sea, she is only allowed out of her jail a few days a week. Martin (Patrick Bergin), the stereotypical chilling in "psychopath", is the main character. She watches her constantly.

He demands perfection in everything, from making sure towels hang at the right angle, to checking the fins of fish in the cupboard are placed straight along with labels at the centre.

Watching Laura submit herself to his abuse in mute terror is pretty horrific. Paradoxically, these scenes are all the more effective because generally the violence isn't actually shown, just implied. Meanwhile, Laura has been planning her escape.

The sea which has been her captor provides her flight for freedom. Secretly she has been having swimming lessons. So, when she goes yachting with her husband, she fakes a drowning and leaves to find a new life.

Commemorating her mode of escape, she renames herself Sarah Waters. Eventually she finds friendship with a drama teacher (Kevin Anderson), who is everything Martin is not. For starters, he wears casual suits and doesn't have an eerie visage. They start a tentative relationship, and she opens up about her past for the first time.

But, of course, Martin is on her tail. He tracks her down and manhandles her, even more aggressively. When he finally meets up with her, she resents him to therists.

Selling the story among the rich has its strengths and weaknesses. It means that Laura has a financial independence not afforded to working class women. However, it also questions the myth that abuse only happens in working class families.

Equally, Julia Roberts is quite convincing in her multi-layered role. She has, at the same time, to convey the idea of being under her husband, while undermining him and also trying to find herself. Sometimes such a task is too much and she resorts to expressing one-dimensional terror.

The latest cliché, though, is the portrayal of Bergin's character as in some way 'feminist', while Anderson's character is all new men. It would have been much more interesting to see how their personalities switched. Despite these criticisms though, the film is well worth seeing.
Don't blame Lenin for Stalinism!

THE DULL THUD of the happiest baby being thrown out with the bathwater has been heard all over eastern Europe as angry intellectuals and workers reject the shambolic bureaucratic parody of "communism", and increasingly blame Lenin for Stalinism. HARRY SLOAN looks into things a little more deeply.

LENIN was no more to blame for Stalinism than Marx and Engels were responsible for Neil Kinnock, Felipe Gonzalez or the other luminaries of today's so-called 'Socialist International'.

In each case a revolutionary theory, a movement and a tradition were established, only to be taken over, distorted out of all recognition and turned into their very opposite by others who responded to very different class pressures.

Marx and Engels fought for the First, and then the Second International as an expression of class solidarity and the political independence of the working class from its capitalist rulers in each country.

But by many European countries the Second International's number sections became mass parties in which the leaderships were politically "bought off" by their own powerful imperialist ruling class. They abandoned revolutionary politics, to seek reforms within capitalism through parliament and trade union pressure.

By the outbreak of the First World War they had repudiated Marxism and politically degenerated to such an extent that each socialists' party voted in Parliament to back the war efforts of its "own" ruling class.

Emerging in opposition to this degeneration, in the left wing of the Russian social democratic party, Lenin's principal legacy consisted in his struggle to reassert the principles of revolution - the rigorous fight for the political independence of the working class from the bourgeoisie; the uncompromising defence of internationalism; and the concept of democratic centralism as the method for organizing a vanguard party to lead the struggles of the working class.

**Attack**

Without these strengths, the Bolshevik Party would never have lived the October Revolution of 1917, in which Tsarism and capitalism were overthrown. And it was against precisely these traditions that Josef Stalin, emerging in 1922 as General Secretary of the CPSU, aimed his most deadly attack.

Likewise the Second International, Stalin's strength was not as an individual, least of all as an advocate of wrongness, but the fact that these ideas reified and represented material class forces which threatened to undermine the October Revolution.

The backward Russian capitalist economy had been further dislocated by World War, and then by years of civil war and imperialist wars of intervention aimed at ousting the Bolsheviks. Stalin represented the bureaucratic administrative layer that emerged, using police powers to regulate the quasistates and shortages.

The Communist Party itself had grown rapidly in the revolutionary upsurge, but many of its best cadres were fighting with others over-stretched in their efforts to fight the war, consolidate the revolution and develop the economy.

**Careerists**

Stalin's approach echoed both the more conservative layer of 'Old Bolsheviks' who had been, reluctantly and lagged into the October Revolution by Lenin, and a vast new illusory into the Party of careerists elements with no marxist culture, keen to prosper by joining the side that had won.

The largely peasant-based economy had forced the Bolsheviks in 1921 to make a temporary retreat from the "new economic policy", and to concede modest limited market freedoms to small peasants and producers to get production moving - the New Economic Policy. Stalin in the years up to 1928-29 reflected the backwardness of these petty bourgeois forces.

It was from this power-base in the economy, the countryside and the Party that Stalin was able in the aftermath of Lenin's death to mount a major unrelenting onslaught on Leninism.

**Mummified**

While iconising Lenin's memory, Stalin rejected his fight for internationalism and the concept of world revolution. Against Lenin's consistent warnings of the dangers of bureaucratism and capitalist restoration should the Soviet Union become isolated, Stalin insisted that it was possible to build 'socialism in one country'.

In place of Lenin's emphasis on the USSR's obligation to defend socialist revolutionary struggles elsewhere, Stalin stressed the duty of revolutions to subordinate their struggle to defence of the USSR.

Under Stalin the Communist Parties became an instrument of Soviet foreign policy, curtailing influential reformist and even bourgeois leaders - including the British TUC prior to 1926 and Chang Ka,k'ai in China.

**Gag opponents**

To gag Leon Trotsky and other defenders of Leninist principles, Stalin led a crack-down on bureaucratisation of the CPSU. A ban on internal factions, (mistakenly) introduced as a temporary emergency measure at the height of the civil war, was used to gag all internal debate: democratic centralism was extinguished, and the ability of the Party to correct its errors through open criticism was eradicated.

Stalin also rejected Lenin's clear class analysis of the peasantry as a layer of small property owners: instead at first he believed them to be the leading force in the revolution, increasing the concessions made to them under the New Economic Policy.

Only when it became inescapably obvious that these measures were recreating a burgeoning new capitalist class did Stalin abruptly and brutally switch course. His bloody turn to forced collectivisation and crash industrialisation was then dressed up in freighted sectarian pronouncements of a new 'Third Period' of class war. This determinant the entire Communist International, precipitating the fatal divisions in the German workers' movement that opened the door for Hitler in 1933.

On every level Stalin represented not the continuation but the antithesis of Leninism. In consolidating his grip on the Party and state apparatus, and transforming the Party’s into a monolithic parody of itself he was forced to wipe out every vestige of Leninist tradition, even while he erected a facade of statues and paid empty homage to the dead revolutionary.

We should shed no tears as the masses today in eastern Europe uproot many of these monuments to Stalin's hypocrisy. But the fight must begin anew for these and other workers to learn the real strengths of Leninism.
Neither Washington nor Moscow: internal socialism

Trotskyism
by ALEX CALLINICOS
Open University Press £8.99
Reviewed by Stephen Valentine

Alex Callinicos is on the way to becoming one of the leading Marxist intellectuals in the English-speaking world. He has written a bagful of books and proved himself a lucid and tenacious scholar. Callinicos' erudition matches his commitment: he is an active member of the British SWP. However, his work—from earlier books like Is there a future for Marxism? to his recent Against Post-Marxism—is a labor from the same flaw. Suddenly the foundations of every piece of Trotskyist work are upset by the key to answering everything, theoreticallBATman taking the unlikely shape of Tony Cliff and the theory of state capitalism. In most of these explanations the capped crusaders' Robin is played by Chris Purcell.

Trotskyism's departure from the CIO is the academic precision followed by a startling sectarian lurch. It is much more straightforwardly the SWP's line given academic expression. One piece of the puzzle is how Trotsky saved the revolutionary heritage of 1917. He kindled the flame of October while European capitalism in the pyre of Fascism, Stalinism and the worker's state to the ground. He was able to keep together — in the face of all the Stalinist pressure and the small band of socialists who repented both social democracy and Stalinism. Meanwhile, Trotsky also began to deepen the tactical and strategic implications of Marxism. Because of the circumstances though, these were very partial and unexpected. It was these weaknesses which were to dominate, after the Old Man died. Pre-war boom and the extension of Stalinism in eastern Europe left Trotskyists in a quandary. Like medieval scholars they manipulated and twisted the theory, sheltering it from the working class and reviving Trotsky's ideas, which became dogma.

The SWP's orthodoxy

Callinicos identifies two fatal flaws in orthodox Trotskyism. The first is 'substitutionism' — the urge to supplant the working class as the key agent of socialism. Thus the Fourth Internation, according to Callinicos, has regularly extolled the virtues of third world peasants, students, non-proletarian oppressed layers and the vanguard of socialist change.

The second is 'dogmatism' — the rigid adherence to Trotsky's thought. The question of the strategy in Cuba and the question of the strategy in Poland are now becoming surplus parts of the theory.

In fact there seem to be two explanations necessary to explain the SWP's failure to reproduce the main role of the workers. One part is Trotskyism itself. The weakness of the SWP from its origins is that in many third world countries it did not build a mass base amongst the poor peasantry, it was crucial for revolutionary strategy. It has recognised that in advanced capitalist countries there is a potentially anti-capitalist dynamic in the struggles of the oppressed. The search for credible revolutionary strategy in the conditions of the SWP having the working class at their centre, is not a product of an opinion, it is a product of an opinion, it is a product of being a socialist. The SWP doesn't fancy this at all. Like most British far left groups its focus is on building itself, establishing international contacts mainly with groups in Western Europe, leaving the hard work of building an international to unfocused future.

International socialism

Along with fabricating the Trotskyist view on the world states, Callinicos can't make up his mind about the nature of revolution.

This reflects an inherent contradiction in the ractio of England. The SWP can't admit that it was correct to found a new revolutionary Marxism in the post-1945 period. For, if the SWP was good only then, it is surely even better now. Revolutionary forces are stronger. Stalinism is dying and capitalism is in deep crisis. If this is granted, then a whole new approach is implied.

Revolutionary organisations would need raising their sights from this island's shores towards a Marxist International. The SWP doesn't fancy this at all. Like most British far left groups its focus is on building itself, establishing international contacts mainly with groups in Western Europe, leaving the hard work of building an international to unfocused future.

This was not Trotsky's view. His politics could be distilled down to one word, internationalism.

Today, there is more 'national' politics. Only through practical application the world over can Marxist politics be tested and enriched. This means a permanent political organisation and international lobbying network.

This is why the SWP was founded on the dead bones of the Stalinised Third International. Far from 'disabling' Trotsky and his followers, it has been Trotskyism's very lifeblood.

This is the real meaning of Trotskyism began as a critique of Stalinism. At the end of the life of one, what better to consider the career of the other. This book misses the chance. Callinicos is able to portray 'Trotskyism' by the addition of a York University lecturer's learning, invoking Lakatos and Popper. But these are only bolt-on accessories. The argument is marred by the qualities of Tony Cliff-thought. It is the same one you can have with any Socialist Worker seller in a shopping precinct.

Fighting Labourism

The SWP offers half a strategy

By Pete Firmin

THE SOCIALIST WORKERS Party has produced two pamphlets on the Labour Party — 'Can Socialism Come Through Parliament?' and 'A Dream Betrayed' — in an attempt to explain reformism in Britain.

The first point is showing that the ruling class would not peacefully give up power and that Labour government has always been managed capitalism rather than bringing reform. The second point shows that the explanation is partial. We are told Labour's betrays are not due to a capitalist state but, to the lack of a planned economy. They stem from the very politics of 'parliamentary socialism'.

The argument is that the Labour Party has always been a socialist party, ever since the beginning, and ever since it has been able to explain why Labour has always been reformist.

The SWP says that while Labour has an organic base in the working class, this in fact is a political expression of the union bureaucracy, and because of the bureaucracy's role of mediating between bosses and workers, this constitutes an absolute obstacle to the Party becoming socialist. But what prevents the left overthrowing the bureaucracy in the unions and the Party?

Missing is any explanation of how and why the role of the unions under capitalism is reformist — trying to secure a larger share of the cake, but not the whole cake, for their members.

But this would sit uneasily with the SWP's view of industrial struggle and how it leads to consciousness changes. Their view of industrial struggle is not in contrast to their view of the struggle in the Labour Party. It is not explained why the rise in strikes in the 70's, should have led to the Labour government. We are told 'even one of the Left's "socialist" unions' in the 70's have organised industrial action.

The SWP also say that nobody is changed by an election, ignoring the possibility they provide for socialists to speak to a wider audience about the way in which they realising their interests should do.

The growth in strength and influence of the left in the Labour Party throughout the 1974-79 period and for a few years afterwards is mentioned only in respect to its demise. Its role and its character is not explained. It is the only reason given for its defeat is that it is finally defeated by the weight of the government of the left"

The main failing of these pamphlets, in line with the SWP's whole trend towards idealising 'struggle' and especially trade union struggle, is this. While they admit that when trade union struggle meets Capital workers will turn towards the existing mass reformist alternative — the Labour Party — no account of this is made in their strategy.

The struggle inside the Labour Party is not something which has no meaning on the overall level of struggle or the level of consciousness of the working class. Indeed it has a profound impact. How, then, can socialists stand aside from it?

The labour bureaucracy in Britain is divided between the SWP and the Labour Party bureaucracy. But this is a division of tasks, not a fundamental difference of character. The fight against bureaucracy has to be won on both wings of the labour movement, and especially in periods when the working class vanguard turns towards the party. A strategy which ignores the fight inside the Labour Party is only half a strategy.
Madonna – boringly predictable?

WELCOME to your ‘New Look’ journal. It’s good to see a new socialist newspaper, at a time when the Left is fighting for survival!

Look at the picture of a feminist, however, as well as a socialist - I look at your first neat publication for an understanding of the importance of feminist politics and at least an attempt to take your feminist readers seriously. An article on Madonna: “Is she a feminist or isn’t she?” packs a Marxist publication recently, and neither, unfortunately in its line.

Glossing over the complex debates on sexuality and sexual politics taking place in the feminist movement at the moment, S. Pickett and Sam Inman unreasoningly accept Madonna’s liberal individualist politics without questioning the way in which feminism, fantasy and sexuality are undermined by individual women ‘taking control’ of their sexuality - and such control is to be found in ‘dressing like a bimbo’ and ‘choosing to be chained up’.

Feminally, I always thought that being sexually submissive and masochistic, and ‘dressing like a bimbo’ were precisely what this culture intended women to ‘choose’ in their sex lives. I fail to see any ‘breaking bourgeois taboo’ in a woman singer expressing her heterosexuality by dressing in familiar pornographic codes and singing that she likes to be spanked and told what to do. On the contrary, this is pretty boring and predictably what women performers have been doing for years.

Perhaps what is different about Madonna - and here the article gets it right - is that she expresses a new form of bourgeois individualism and also a new form of so-called sexual liberalism. Let’s not be fooled for one moment that this has anything to do with feminism. Madonna may have learnt how to use libertarian language in order to redefine her depressingly traditional feminism, but this presents no threat to either capitalism or patriarchy.

The very attempt to distinguish between consumenial and non-consumenial sex in this way is a problem. Unless you happen to believe - which presumably as Marxists and materialists we don’t - that power is held by individuals to give or take at will, then it is blatantly ridiculous to argue that any woman freely consents to being tied up or dominated, and freely ‘like’ it.

The notion of consent here is no more relevant than it is relevant to say that women ‘choose’ to go into particular (worst paid) jobs, or to marry or to be heterosexual. These are hardly ‘free’ choices made from a shopping list of fairly presented options.

Sexuality in our society is constructed in a context of male domination and women’s subordination; when this subordination is excised this is hardly ‘breaking bourgeois taboo’. As socialists we know that women’s sexual subordination - like their economic subordination - can only be challenged on a collective basis, by challenging the underlining unequal power relationships existing in capitalist and patriarchal cultures.

Feminism, like socialism, is a term which the liberal right has long attempted to appropriate. It’s a shame to see Socialist Outlook going in the same direction as other left journals of male dominated organizations - de-politicising both power and sexuality, and thereby trivialising feminist politics.

I hope to see the balance redressed in future issues!

Rachel Wingfield
London N4

Revolutionary to be black?

THE THEORY + practice supplement on lesbian and gay liberation in the first issue of Socialist Outlook, that provocative and a serious analysis of an issue historically neglected by the left. However, despite its depth, I think that the overall analysis suffers from a fundamental flaw, which leads to immense contradictions.

The very first sentence asserts ‘our necessary starting point is that all sexuality is produced historically, not biologically, determined’. This is an incredibly sweeping statement that is directly and heavily-handed response to the much more commonly referred to ‘liberal view’ that recognizes that the presence of a fixed minority, that I think it is incorrect to correspond to the ‘fixed liberal view’, an equally fixed assumption that every newborn child is like a blank sheet of paper, that biology plays no part whatsoever in the development of sexuality. The comparison with those who believe this theory, is very unconvincing, as it assumes a lot and proves nothing.

It also fails to point out that the argument used against the so-called ‘liberal’ view - that it is contrary to the experience of many lesbians and gay men (coming out, for example) - is equally opposed to the ‘blank sheet of paper’ view, as one can only speculate as to how it is possible to discover one’s sexuality if it has been socially determined in the opposite direction. This blunt view is even less able than the liberal view to explain why it is a minority who feel compelled to rebel against the social conditioning. Rather, I think that it is more realistic to adopt a more flexible approach (in the tradition of dialectics) and accept a compromise of the two extremes.

Even if sexuality is 90% socially determined and 10% biologically determined, then that would explain the fact that there is literally no uniformity in human sexual behaviour and preferences.

The conclusion of this seriously flawed analysis is that the question of lesbian and gay liberation is not simply a question of democratic rights - but something more. But what? Could it be that being gay is itself a revolutionary act, in the same way as being a woman or being black? -

Trevor Wongsam
Manchester

Is this really feminism?

SO MADONNA is a feminist - official! It seems her virginum-who promotes, her curious outings, video with lesbian overtones and simulated masturbation on screen is a political statement?

Funny...I’ve always thought being liberal about celebrating your sexuality on your own terms - not pandering worst...Not only do they have the staidness of repressed males... Madonna may be a versatile performer who isn’t afraid to dump it up. But she is also a prime example of how the ideas of women’s liberation can be cynically co-opted, distorted, commercially packaged and led back to be used, not to treat, money-grabbing entertainment industry. If, as your article suggests, millions of young women wanna be like her, it shows how much work needs to be done still to do.

There’s nothing liberating or stimulating about being ‘sexually assertive’ on TV. I think that being a hoodwinked sisters. Kollontai wouldn’t have been.

Kathy Kirkham
London N7

Hands off the family!

SOME PRAISE and criticism. The praise comes from the arrival of the new Socialist Outlook. This is an important step in getting to a wider audience of class of revolutionary marxism. The criticism, concerns the supplement and the attitude it took towards the family.

The line of the article towards the family is clearly expressed - as a form of social organisation the family and its associated ideology opposes women, young girls and older women and gay men whether they live in a nuclear family arrangement or not. irrevocably presents a hostile - and incorrect - attitude to the family. The conclusion of this is that the destruction of the family is a step forward.

It is true that the family in bourgeois society is one of the major mechanisms of the ruling class. But I disagree with the article’s purely hostile view. The deconstruction of any family in working class life is more controversial. The conclusion is that it is not an innately oppressive form of ‘social organisation’ but rather a battleground between classes.

The dominant class in our society preserves the dominant ideology of the family. This aims to use the family to oppress the working class. It aims to use the family as an ideological school, moulding children into the right to the system, maintaining its labour force and disciplining its ‘disciples’. Many accept this role as the ‘natural order of things’, including, it appears, the authors of the supplement. But why? The family is a ‘social organisation’ and as such can be used by either class, in the same way as schools and the education system.

It’s important to clear up this falsehood. The theory in t+p doesn’t correspond with my experiences of the family, nor, I think, with the experiences of many working class people. To many it can be the primary place of resistance to the onslaught of the capitalist state. I do not deny that to others it is the instigator of that oppression, but if it is only a ‘reactionary force’, how do you explain its ability to play a progressive and defensive role for the working class?

Without my family I would not be a Trotskyist. Without my family I would not be able to survive in prison in the 70’s, vicinified for my beliefs, yet still confident in my political and my continued resistance to capitalism.

Matt Lee
Wandsborough Prison

Hull engineers strike for shorter working week

by Keith Sinclair

SIXTEEN workers are on strike at a Hull factory owned by Parsons Brothers, a part of British Steel, as a part of the national campaign for a shorter working week in engineering.

The majority of strikers are in the engineering workers union, the AEU, which is supporting them through a national levy.

The workers came out on indefinite strike on May 2 after months of negotiations and two ballots. Pickets have had important victories including the withdrawal of deliveries. The management have responded to a ‘dirty tricks’ campaign of lies in the local media, claiming that the action is unlawful and that negotiations are continuous.

AEU Steward Dave Gemmell told Socialist Outlook: "The present management has been in charge for two years and labour relations have reached an all-time low. Members are adamant that they will not lose this dispute."

The price of official AEU backing has been an insistence on full compliance with all aspects of Tory anti-trade union laws. This will cause problems when the strike begins to bite, with machinery falling due to lack of maintenance. Efforts to build support for the action in other Hull factories owned by Van Leer need to be stepped up, building on the early successes that have already been organised.

Spreading the action to the other 17 workers at the same steel producing union’s position. Hull Trades Council has appealed for support for the pickets when they lose a record of strong support for other workers’ struggles. Donations should be sent to: Parsons Strike Fund, 45 Stannarm Avenue, Beverley High Road, Hull.

SOCIALIST MOVEMENT
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Renew your membership now.
Tories attack teachers' unions

by Martin Allen

THE TORY government has imposed a 'Pay Review Body' on teachers. This is the latest, and probably the most significant, attack on organised teachers. It has come in the context of massive demoralisation among the workforce, with the Trade Union Campaign for a Democratic And Fighting Union, having been outmanoeuvred in the recent ballot over action against the SATS tests, will be making determined efforts to ensure that the TUC leadership now holds the line.

This cannot be a foregone conclusion, given that the union's executive first response to Clarke's announcement was to ditch their own conference policy of campaigning for and the restoration of negotiating rights.

The 'Broad Left' that dominates the executive is still unable to control General Secretary Doug Mc чего have no strategy beyond 'waiting for Labour'.

Like The Guardian, the paper 'sympathetic' to teachers, the Labour leaders continue to attack the NUT if it does anything that hints of confrontational, dilatory pressure as a result of the decision of two non-TUC unions to some extent, the AMMA and the PAT (a strike-pression programme, AID in the Family, for example, didn't mention that gay and lesbian groups of people with AIDS and there was an implicit denial by omission - that gays have families or close relationships.

In this context the Birmingham group RECLAIM organised Altered Images, a very little over the nature of AIDS and the way the NUT's role in the crisis - as will be seen - is a major one, is a major issue in the past. It is time that this changed. The prevention of HIV and AIDS and caring for people with AIDS is a major concern for thousands. Many are discriminated against in various ways - from housing and health care provision to the way in which housing and health care provision to the way in which housing and health care provision to the way in which housing and health care provision to the way

Brighton plans campaigning Lesbian And Gay Pride

by Dani Ahrens

LESEBAN AND gay activists in Brighton are planning a series of activities for the first 'Brighton Pride' festival at the end of May. The event is intended to mix protest and celebration and has been organised by the local group Brighton Area Action Against Section 28.

In the wake of Clause 28 of the government's local government's bid to outlaw any attempt to prevent lesbians and gay men from forming a community, another marker is the lesbian and gay movement's determination to demonstrate this at the end of May.

Speakers include Simon Watney (producer of Red, Hot and Blue), Peter Tatchell and artist and activist Sami Gupta, it drew from the celebration and pride in England. While many were professional and volunteer workers in the medical profession. the event was also attended by many of the many community activist present.

The left has not made HIV and AIDS well known for the past three years since the campaign has been active. During this time the group has maintained its activity, monitoring the effects of Section 28 and sparking a range of events affecting lesbians and gay men.

A successful Pride Brighton weekend will bring a new influx of activists into the group, and a further consciousness of its importance within Brighton's lesbian and gay community.

The weekend includes: building the creation of a giant chalk drawing in the town centre on May 24, a march through the city and a party on May 25, followed by a cabaret, and other events culminating in a Pank Plonk in the Bank Holiday Monday.
Everybody loses in new ‘market’ NHS

Tory ‘reforms’ crucify the NHS

By HARRY SLOAN
HAVING TRIED and failed to rid themselves of the Poll Tax, John Major’s crisis-racked Tory government is now embroiled with another embarrassing legacy of the Thatcher years—the NHS and Community Care Act.

Best known for its creation of opted-out hospitals, the Act also creates a new ‘internal market’ which is now wreaking havoc in health authorities across the country.

The crisis blew into the headlines in the run-up to the local elections, and cost the Tories heavily in lost votes.

But with even the British Medical Association once more accused of angrily protesting, and shock revelations emerging almost daily, nothing short of a policy U-turn can prevent the issue becoming a huge liability to Major in the General Election.

After a decade of Thatcherism has starved the NHS funding, the Tory ‘reforms’ go much further: they are devastating and could potentially wreck the entire NHS.

Within days of the Act taking effect, a barrage of scandals began to rock Ministers: there were cuts, closures, announcements of almost 1,500 redundancies, patients refused treatment, and the explicit emergence of a two-tier service in major hospitals. Many who had ignored the passage of the NHS Bill have begun to wake up to the damage that has been done.

Competition

Dreamed up by Thatcher with a tiny handful of extreme right-wingers, the Act was intended to bring ‘competition’ into health care. The undeclared objective was to prepare the most popular of the public services for eventual US-style privatisation.

The Tories set out to create an ‘internal market’ by ending the system whereby local health authorities were responsible for planning and providing a balance of services in their locally-run hospitals.

Now smaller, even less accountable health authorities are simply

purchasers’, using their cash-limited budgets to buy health care for their resident population from separately managed or opted-out hospital ‘provider units’, locally or further afield.

This completely untested new system needs powers; this means that an expensive new bureaucracy has been created by each provider to cost, price and issue invoices for each patient treated, while purchasers need extra clerks and accountants to check and pay the bills.

Even before the new system got under way, rows had broken out between purchasers and providers over the costs of treatment and the number of patients to be treated, with the patients caught in the middle.

Because the new system puts each hospital into competition with others, it has also forced panic measures to wipe out long-running deficits built up by many health authorities, to create a ‘level playing field’ on which all will compete. Hence the huge wave of cuts, bed closures and job losses in health authorities all over the country in the run up to April 1.

Management were led to believe that they could improve their competitive position by ‘opting out’ under the Act to form a self-contained business - ‘Self Governing Trusts’. 57 Trusts were given the go-ahead from April 1: the attraction for managers include the ‘freedom’ to tear up national agreements on pay, conditions and trade union recognition (while awarding themselves huge salary increases), and unlimited freedom to close beds, privatise services or sell off land without consulting anyone.

However few of the Trusts had any real financial viability; many began in deficit and are now looking to cuts along the lines already made in Guy’s and Brompton.

Financial crisis

Throughout the NHS the financial crisis is worsening: the new system has all the worst features of a ‘market’ with all the disadvantages of cash limits.

Health authority budgets are fixed. There is no extra cash in the system, but more bureaucracy to pay for. Any hospital that generates a surplus can do no more than ringing off another health authority and potentially bankrupting another hospital.

The dog-eat-dog competition is most ferocious in London, where high overheads and property values bump up the costs of the major hospitals. The government has already insisted that it will not bail out any ‘losers’ in their internal market, while civil servants admit that at least one of the big teaching hospitals could go bankrupt and close.

While NHS managers ape their brothers in private and privatised industries in their hunt for cash savings at the expense of the workforce, they are also looking for other ways to attract extra business from purchasers.

This is why some big hospitals, led by Manchester’s Christie Hospital, are offering a two-tier service, with queue-jumping ‘fast-track’ admissions for patients from health authorities or GPs prepared to pay extra. The improved service for a few comes at the expense of cutbacks for the rest.

Chaos

Even as the chaos of the new system begins to show, more managers are lining up to join a second wave of hospital opt-outs that could include over 190 units. Health Secretary Walford has made it clear that this will continue.

Public opposition to the Tory ‘market’ plans for health has always been massive: but the health unions and Labour Party have failed to tap this or build any serious campaign to stop the legislation, and there was little campaigning against the first wave opt-outs.

Kinnock now is mealy-mouthed, making no commitment to immediate increased funding of the NHS or immediate steps to debrief the Trusts, return the opted-out hospitals to direct management and move towards elected health authorities.

It is clear that the only way these catastrophic changes to the NHS will be halted or reversed is through a change of government. Building high profile campaigns on the NHS can help to ensure that this happens, and is followed by campaigning that ensures a Labour government acts to restore our NHS.

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