Hit back at Tory tax rip-off

SMASH THE PAY FREEZE!

Demand TUC Day of Action. Lobby General Council April 1
**Brutal new Tory attack on homeless**

*By Paul Clarke*

ACCORDING to the housing charity Shelter, more than 1.7 million people are homeless.

This includes people out on the streets, in bed and breakfast accommodation and the hidden homeless – families and individuals forced to live with relatives or friends, when they need nowhere of their own to live.

Now new government rules throw thousands more onto the streets. The Tories plan to cut back on statutory council tenancies to the homeless, but also to play off different sections of homeless people against one another.

The effect of the new rules is worsened by the new trespass law, which threatens to evict up to 50,000 squatters.

The changes will mean that people with any sort of temporary accommodation will not be regarded as homeless, and those with nowhere to live because of domestic rows will also not be deemed homeless.

Young people thrown out by their parents will not be ‘homeless’, nor wives and partners thrown out, or who leave because of domestic violence.

And if you’re renting a room with friends and they throw you out, then you’re not homeless either!

Single mothers living with parents will also not be defined as homeless.

The attempt to cause divisions among the poor and homeless comes in with the greatest priority apparently given to families who have been on waiting lists for a long time.

Removalism is often caused by people on waiting lists for a long time. Seeing others given greater priority. This is one of the factors underlying resentment among council tenants on the Isle of Dogs.

According to Shelter, there are more than 1.2 million homeless people forced to live with family and friends, who desperately need re-housing. Millions more live in sub-standard and decaying houses.

But the problem for people awaiting rehousing is not that single mothers or other people in desperate need are ‘jumping the queue’.

**Destruction**

The problem is the lack of cheap, socially-owned housing. This is caused by the insane policies of successive governments and especially by the Tories ‘right to buy’ destruction of council housing stocks.

Private rents have sky rocketed. Those unable to get a mortgage are often in a chronically difficult position.

It is worsened by the failure to build new houses of any kind, and to renovate existing housing.

Britain’s housing stock is among the most dilapidated – and amongst the most expensive – in any major country.

Tens of thousands of houses and flats are being left empty by want of buyers who can afford them, for the money to renovate them, or – as the Westminster scandal showed – simply because they are council properties waiting to be sold.

Housing costs an arm and a leg of the income of working people, whether they are renting or buying. For the overwhelming majority of workers, buying or renting, housing is a millstone round their neck for life.

Meaning that something like £7000.

John Patten: back to bigotry

unleash a wave of homophobia and anti-LGBTQ hysteria.

Witch-hunters in chief have included LGBT+ commentator Robert Lough and whacky education minister John Patten who says that people ‘over-react’ to ‘politically incorrect’ phrases like ‘little Black Sambo’.

**Reactive war**

The attack on Jane Brown is part of the reactive war being waged against ‘political correctness’ by the racist and homophobic right wing.

It’s not just a war against anti-racism and anti-sectarianism. It’s also a war against progressive education and radical teachers.

Many progressive teachers will think this is the wrong approach to try to stop children being exposed to material – especially in the classics – which has racist or sexist overtones.

William Shakespeare would be definitely off limits by such a vast amount of the artistic production of western society. The point is to be able to freely discuss this aspect of these works, and to point out alternatives. But in the Jane Brown case, this is a sides issue.

You don’t have to want to stop kids seeing ‘Romeo and Juliet’ to see the main issue in this affair. Stop the witch hunt against Jane Brown!
Bust Tory wage freeze!

The帛or economy consensus

So now it's official - the Tories lied when they said they wouldn't raise taxes. The last couple of weeks have seen enormous blows to the government's credibility on the whole range of its social and economic policies, from 'back to basics', to pay, to taxes. The sleaze and corruption of the Tories has been revealed not just by the West- 
mister housing scandal, but by the reve- 
lution that foreign aid money has been used for arms deals with Malaysia and Indonesia.

At the heart of the government's un- 
popularity is a inertia of the perception that most working people are struggling economically: and that 'back to basics' is not just fore- 
most about personal morality, but about finding reasons to attack the welfare state.

Allies

The Tories biggest allies in getting away with this con are the Labour and trade union leaders. The 'new realist' union leaders are silent and demobilising, and the Labour leadership is taking advantage of putting forward any proposals that might wound the slightest bit radical.

Take rail privatisation. The logical thing is to say that Britain needs a state- 
owned rail industry with a private subsidy - especially in nearly every other advanced capitalist country. There's no problem with this at all.

Yet Labour is reduced to saying 'pub- 
lic or private is not the issue' - when everyone knows it is precisely the issue. Take housing. Why don't the Labour demand a massive programme for build- 
ing new social housing, and government grants for renovating the decrepit housing stock? Getting the building indus- 
try going again would help the home- 
less and start to get 500,000 unemployed building workers off the dole.

Labour doesn't do any of these things because they could be interpreted as a spending pledge. And Labour won't promise new spending because they re- 
fuse to promise to tax the rich to reduce spending.

And they refuse to do anything which 
might increase inflation. They are tied to the Tories' free-market, deflationary or- 
thodoxy. The net result is that while the 
Tories are in trouble, they can still get away with murder because the opposition is so feeble.

Major's government is in deep trouble with its public sector wage freeze. A de- 
celation by the major public sector unions that they intended to put forward co- 
ordinated wage claims and fight for strike 
action would send the Tories reeling.

It is a sad comment on the political degeneration of the Labour leadership that it cannot even defend some minimal Keynesian reflationary 
proposals, let alone radical or socialist solutions.

Spain shut down as millions 
back general strike

MILLIONS of workers in the 
Spanish state heeded the call 
for a general strike on 27 
January. Nearly all industry and 
transport was shut down, and is a red 50 per cent 
of small shops closed.

The scope of the mobilisa- 
tion can be seen from the size of the 
evening demonstration in Bar- 
celona - 130,000 in a city the 
size of Manchester!. Similar 
demonstrations were held all over 
the country.

Flying pickets were out in all 
the main cities and in front of all 
the main factories.

The strike was called by the 
two main union federations, the Workers Commissions and the United Labour Federation. They were protesting against government 
plans to restrict social se- 
curity and employment rights.

Austerity

The Socialist Party govern- 
ment of Felipe Gonzalez has been 
one of the most 
militant in Europe, provid- 
ing over austerity and very high 
unemployment.

Despite that, the Socialists 
beat off the challenge from 
Spain's main right wing party in 
last year's elections.

Commentators noted that it was the 
more radical workers who 
last year rallied to the defence 
of the government who were carry- 
ing out the general strike.
A key political force in the 
movement for a strike was the 
United Left, a broad coalition 
led by the main wing of the former Communist Party.

The United Left has shown 
itself capable of winning more 
than 10 per cent of the votes in 
national elections.

NO SIGN of consensus in LEICESTER, where 
2,000 students rallied on January 20 as part of a national 
day of action in protest at Tory plans to 
slash grants by 30%. The protest was backed by 
teachers' unions NATFHE, AULT and NUT.
Domestic Violence – Zero Tolerance!

By Helen Shaw

THE ASSOCIATION of London Authorities (ALA) launched a high profile publicity campaign ‘Zero Tolerance’ against violence against women last week. The campaign is designed to raise awareness – and reduce tolerance – of violence against women and children.

Posters have appeared all over London backed up by leaflets detailing help and support available to women victims of violence.

Part of its aim is to expose the 1980s of domestic violence in London. One hundred thousand women seek treatment for violent injuries received at home each year, four

in ten homeless young women leave home because of abuse, almost half of all murders of women are by a current or former partner.

Unreported

Only two per cent of violent attacks on women are reported to the police and domestic violence accounts for a quarter of all reported violent crime.

The Chair of the ALA’s women’s committee, Jacqueline Abbott, said: ‘The aim of the campaign is to make violence against women socially unacceptable. It carries a message for all men: violence against women is a crime.’

This campaign is to be welcomed and should be used as a springboard for further action against domestic violence. Calls for the government to back the campaign need to be accompanied by demands to improve options for women who are victims.

Services to support victims are underfunded and scarce. Local government cuts potentially affect women’s choices.

Combating women’s oppression is fundamental to the campaign against violence against women and the wider struggle against capitalism.

As Lynne Segal says in her book Changing Men, ‘...what we are confronting here is the barbarism of private life reflecting back the increased barbarism of public life, as contemporary capitalism continues to shirk the political and other responsibilities it has in the face of its own decline. The more unions are wedded to productivity, the more difficult it will be for them...

AFTER POSTAL workers’ emphatic rejection of the ‘processing productivity scheme’ and ‘delivery remuneration packages’ last year, Royal Mail management are now having another go.

The recent 4-1 vote to accept the 1.5 per cent pay limit has given them confidence to increase attacks on the workforce and attempt to further marginalise the UCW.

If they are successful in introducing productivity agreements for Delivery, Processing and Distribution, they will attempt to further restructure the workforce around the concept of ‘team-working’.

Millions have been spent restructuring management and investing in new technology.

They have made direct approaches to workers using focus groups, questionnaires and bulletins in an attempt to break the UCW’s support.

But to inflict a decisive defeat, they have to go much further. This is now on the agenda.

The misnamed productivity agreement ‘Sharing in Royal Mail’s success’ would sell tens of thousands of jobs and increase the use of part-time or casual labour while relying on a core workforce encouraged by bonus payments, to sell more jobs to increase those bonus payments.

This year underlying discontent on pay was shown in a number of significant minorities in the unions in favour of strike action. The more unions are wedded to productivity, the more difficult it will be for them...

By a UCW member

Redundancy threat in the post UCW: stamp out Royal Mail productivity con

DECISION day nears on age of consent

By Peter Purton

LAST WEEK 2000 people lobbied parliament in favour of equalising the age of consent for gay men to 16.

It is still not clear when the vote will be but whenever it is there will be a candlelight vigil from 7pm-10pm outside the House of Commons.

There has been a successful campaign to put pressure on Labour MPs to vote for Labour Part Conference policy on equality.

John Smith has made a public statement in support, and a large number of MPs have committed themselves to the vote on 16 where previously they were undecided.

The Campaign Group of MPs voted unanimously to support for 16 and the T&G and MSF are instructing their sponsored MPs to vote for 16.

Campaigning will continue up to the night of the vote and it is still important to contact MPs to ensure they support equality and that they will turn up for the vote.

Stonewall have called a rally supported by the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights on Saturday Februrary 5 in Trafalgar Square from 2pm - 8pm.

There will be a platform in including 16 year old gay men, celebrities and MPs supporting equality.

Everyone who supports equal rights is encouraged to attend.

By Paul Wozny

PETER JENKNS, Southampton Labour councillor and UNISON branch secretary, was beaten by five BNP thugs on Saturday 15 January, after going to the aid of SWP paper seller.

Clr Jenkins, not known as a friend of the left, received a black eye and assorted cuts and bruises. One SWP member was hospitalised and later released with a dislocated shoulder.

The attack was inspired by John Morse, a leading BNP member who has deposted for John Tyndall while Tyndall was in jail.

Morse has been leading a re-

creating drive at the Bitterne Brewery pub, near the scene of the attack.

The Nazis left shouting ‘seig heil’ and giving the Nazi salute.

Morse’s gang in Southampton are responsible for a series of violent attacks, including the desecration of Jewish graves, beating up an Asian bus driver and petrol-bombing Asian homes.

Morse works as a bus driver for Hampshire Bus. Southampton trades council and other action bodies have called for his expulsion from the RMT transport union.

But union leader Jimmy Knapp has shushed the issue to the organisational sub-committee, which has just put Morse on probation.

By a BT worker

Telecoms union on strike threat

The LONDON council of the NCU has called on the telecoms union NEC to organise a strike ballot over new moves to cut jobs.

By Peter Purton

BT plans to remove 1100 engineers from its core workforce, while simultaneously introducing 150 contractors to cover engineering work.

Those removed from the core workforce will be compensated to take the company’s voluntary redundancy package, and their long term future is unclear.

In response to the strike call BT managing director Michael Heper has promised no compulsory redundancies in 94-5. But since BT is ‘re-

structuring’ its workforce, compulsory redundancies will come if voluntary redundancies are not taken up.

Board Left supporters who control the union’s NEC have promised support for the strike ballot.

But preoccupied with the proposed merger with the UCW, the union leadership has shown little urgency. The committee will can authorise the ballot meets on 8 February.

By a BT worker

Birmingham campaigners protest the violence of Bhupinder Basl against his wife and child
Ireland: as weeks drag on

Still no sign of peace

By Liam Mac Uaid

TAOISEACH Albert Reynolds must have been disappointed when Santa didn’t deliver his pipe dream of “peace by Christmas”. It is now obvious that the process opened by the Hume-Adams talks and the London-Dublin declaration will only unravel slowly.

Despite the Republican leadership’s desire to deliver an Arafat-Mandela style settlement, the British government seems uninterested for the moment. Together with its Unionists allies it is hedging out for a defeat and capitulation of the Republicans.

If the British were seriously interested in a negotiated settlement, they could easily offer Adams the ‘clarification’ he is seeking.

Major can afford to hang tough because the Republicans are trapped by their contradictory demand for a republic’s clarification on the question of the invasion of 1916.

By seeking alliances and deals with bourgeois parties, by trying to put themselves in the same political framework, they end up playing in hostile territory where their opponents set the rules.

Not questioned

It is the parties of the Irish and British ruling classes which are setting the agenda. The problem is reduced to the validity of the republican rule. Britain’s right to rule Ireland is no longer questioned.

It is disingenuous for Adams to seek ‘clarification’. A document which allows Reynolds to say that the joint declaration allows for the possibility of a united Ireland, and for Major to reassure the Unionists at the same time, should set alarm bells ringing.

It does not need to be clarified, only rejected. There is little difference between the declaration and the Labour Party policy of ‘unity by consent’. The Irish Press was right to observe: ‘There is little which now separates Fianna Fail, Sinn Fein and the SDLP’.

Despite the rhetoric, not much has changed on the streets of Belfast.

It is not clear that British imperialism will allow the republicans the clarification they want. But if a deal on British terms were done, it would be a major setback.

In one sense, however, it would change little for British socialists. Our task is not to demand that Major talks to Adams or to advise Sinn Fein on negotiating tactics.

Our task is to demand that Britain quits Ireland.

Unconditional and immediate British withdrawal remains our slogan.

Tories flunk nurseries test

By Emma Teitelbaum

IT MAY have been the ‘season of goodwill’ that prompted John Major to speak about the need to improve nursery education. The most New Year resolution, however, is unlikely to be carried out.

Only in women’s work will suffer most from the Tories’ false promises, and working women will be excluded from the Tory dream of a ‘happy family’.

Nursery education can produce huge benefits in adult life. A recent long-term American study in Michigan showed that those who received good quality preschool education were four times more likely to earn $10,000 by the age of 27.

The Tories’ verbal commitment to nursery education started in 1972. Education Secretary Margaret Thatcher said free nursery education would be available to 60 per cent of four-year-olds and 50 per cent of three-year-olds within 10 years.

But the Tories have delivered. A European commission study showed Britain behind all European Union countries except Portugal with only 26 per cent of children receiving nursery education.

A further 23 per cent are early entrants to nursery classes in primary schools. Playgroups are used by half of the British under fives.

The four-year-olds who enter nursery education are up to a third below children of the same age in Germany and the US.

Most nursery education in the UK is conducted by volunteers. Most nurseries are open 35 weeks a year and provide nursery education for up to 35 children.

This way of ‘doing it on the cheap’ does not allow for the child’s full development and future in the education system.

Most nurseries and playgroups, operate on a half day basis (2.5 hours).

In this way the local authorities increase the numbers in pre-school education on their books, without spending more.

Parents have to supplement this provision with childminders, friends and extended family if they are to do even part-time work. Even if the child has a full-time place in a school nursery it operates to school hours of 8am -3.15pm.

Full day nursery provision is available for the two ends of the economic scale. Local authority nurseries are means-tested. With limited resources, most of the places are taken by children on the ‘at risk’ list.

Most nursery and private nurseries operate from 8.00am to 6.00pm but these cost hundreds of pounds each month per child.

The government’s latest proposal is to provide vouchers for nursery places. But unless resources are allocated to full-time quality nursery education are increased, there will be no benefit to children and working parents.

Another example of Tory hypocrisy and double standards. Single mothers who live on benefits are seen as a burden on the community. Working women are seen as taking men’s jobs and possibly leaving their children ‘home alone’.

The Tories’ back to basics family values campaign is supplying a cover for the government’s failure to make adequate childcare provision.

Major: doing things for kids?

primary education early, are often taught in crowded conditions, with one teacher for up to 35 children.

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Councillors fined for voting against cuts

Bow Street magistrates found three Lambeth Councillors, including Socialist Outlook supporter Greg Tucker, guilty of voting to defend jobs and services.

Councillors Hollifield, Tucker and Webb were fined a total of £250 on Tuesday January 11 – for voting against council cuts whilst in poll tax arrears.

From the dock the three denounced ‘an outrageous attack on local democracy and a tax on principle’.

‘This law is designed to punish those of us who helped defeat the poll tax. Poor people will be discouraged from standing for election. It is a disgraceful attack on democracy’.

A Fighting Fund has been set up to support the three and 20 others facing similar charges around the country.

Send donations made out to ‘Campaign to Defend Local Democracy’. C/S Anne Hollifield, c/o Lambeth Town Hall, London SW8.

All out to back TUC demonstration

Saturdays 19 MARCH

Assemble 11am Spitalfields Market, East London

March starts at 12 noon for rally at London Fields

This will be the biggest anti-racist demonstration since the 1970s. It is being supported by all the main anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations, including ARA, YRE and ANL. Every socialist and anti-racist should be there!
New openings for socialists in the unions

When bureaucrats fall out ...

By Harry Sloan

GROWING political divisions in the top echelons of the labour movement offer new possibilities for struggles and campaigns at rank and file level. There is a real opportunity for left activists to build a serious challenge to the defeatist political positions of the trade union bureaucracy.

Ever since Neil Kinnock was manoeuvred into the leadership of the Labour Party by a union-orchestrated coup, the rightward and backward progress of the Party has revolved around an alliance of union and Labour bureaucrats.

Under the banner of ‘new realism’, unions abandoned any pretence of serious resistance to the Tory onslaught, seeking to cash any action by their members, who were told to pin their hopes of solving problems on the return of a Labour government.

For their part, Labour’s leaders ostensibly maintained any residual commitment to class politics, socialist policies, and any hint of social radicalism or internal democracy, in a pathetic effort to exorcise the wrath of the Tory press.

Attrition

The result has been repeated, ignominious electoral defeats for Labour, and a term against the unions, which have lost five million members, with whole industries and their workforces decimated.

The union leaders have been marginalised by the government, derecognised by the most bitter employers, and increasingly pushed aside and regarded as an embarrassment by their own political co-thinkers in the Labour Party.

With John Major’s scandal-wrung and unrepresentative government appearing weaker than before, and the prospect of a new Labour government appearing ever less convincing as a solution to the immediate problems of workers under the banner of aggressive employers, a new spirit of resistance is beginning to make itself felt in the unions.

Teachers have defied and beaten Education Secretary John Patten on the issue of schools testing. A left candidate has won the vice-presidency of the ‘new realist’ led NUT.

Central line tube workers in the RMT managed to loosen the shackles of the latest anti-union laws sufficiently to take strike action and defend victimised militant Paddy Scans. Civil Service unions showed their potential strength to fight privatisation with a powerful day of action early in November.

There have been long and powerful strikes at Times and Bursa, as a strike at the right wing leadership of the AEEU and GMB. A handful of health workers at London’s University College Hospital raised the banner of strike action against NHS cuts and closures for vital weeks last summer. Postal workers and BT engineers have been balloting for strike action.

This new stirring of traditional forms of struggle at rank and file level has helped spur union leaders into an assessment of where new realism has got them: the balance sheet is universally negative, and its future prospects are worse.

As a result there has been a fracturing of the block that has paralysed both the unions and the Labour Party. Right wing union leaders frustrated at the low profile and weak performance of Labour’s front bench, and angered at their refusal to co-operate with the unions, are seeking new ways to make their influence felt.

The new realist alliance was always going to be self-defeating as far as the unions were concerned. Kinnock’s team sought a Labour Party modelled on European social democratic parties or even Clinton’s Democrats. They were therefore driven towards eventual severing of the link with those impeccably class-based organisations that had founded the Party itself - the unions.

It was obvious from the start that once he had cynically used union block votes to run through wholesale right wing changes to Labour’s policy and constitution, Kinnock would seek to pull up the ladder by scrapping the block vote itself.

In the event it was John Smith who undermined the commitment of Labour’s right wing to distancing the party from the unions. Despite pleas from two prominent union chiefs – Bill Morris of the TGWU and John Edmonds of the GMB – he forced a vote on a minor constitutional change on selection procedures at last year’s conference.

Smith won by a whisker – ironically on the strength of a switched block vote from white collar union MSF, but he is paying a heavy price for his brief moment as the darling of the Tory press.

Already the unthinkable has happened. The GMB, for years synonymous with the right wing Labour establishment, and then under Edmonds the pillar of new realism, has withdrawn its £500,000 a year support from Trade Unions For Labour. If TULF without the GMB was hard to imagine two years ago, the TGWU’s decision to slash £600,000 from its contribution to Labour is equally significant.

Unlikely challenger of Labour’s front bench wins: GMB leader Edmonds

Break consensus

The GMB has thrown official support and funding behind Bryan Gould’s Full Employment Forum, which is lobbying for a Keynesian ‘back to basics’, but crucially calls for an end to Labour’s damaging economic consensus with the Tories. These other unions have also backed the PEF, if have dozens of MPs and constituency parties.

Public sector union UNISON, politically dominated by NUPE’s arch new realist Tom Sawyer, joined the TGWU and GMB in sponsoring a conference on defence of the welfare state late last year, chaired by Ken Livingstone MP. Again a central theme was the need for Labour to break from its consensus with the Tories.

Other issues, too, have brought a difference of approach. While Labour remains shamefully silent, Bill Morris took the lead over Christmas in challenging the racist deportations of the plane load of Jamaicans and the establishment of the Campsfield detention centre.

Build the Fightback – Unshackle the Unions Conference

Saturday - Sunday Feb 5-6, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, LONDON

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS include Tony Benn MP, Ronnie McDonald (DILC) and Jaide De Barriores (Teachers Union and PT South Para, Brazil), John Hendy QC, Patrick Sikorski (RMT), Christine Holme (CPFA).

SATURDAY EVENING RALLY and SOCIAL at 7pm with speakers from Cuba, Bosnia, Sinn Fein, Kurdish solidarity and Jaide De Barriores from Brazil.
The possibilities for action to combat and defeat the pay freeze would be also improved by moves to synchronise pay claims from different sections of public sector workers - health workers, local government, civil service, teachers, fire fighters and so on. This is already being proposed by the left within UNISON.*

Synchronising struggles of healthworkers, council workers and others can bust public sector pay freeze

A tremendous opportunity opened up by the mass movement in defence of the miners late in 1992 was squandered by the TUC at the point it could have rallied and focused opposition to the Tories.

On this front, nothing much has changed. There is no sign of discontented new recruits - apart from the active support of union members for their limited rebellion. Edmonds and Morris in particular have a lot to do in mobilising what is left of the rank and file who would make it more difficult for them to stitch up a truly mega merger of two of the country's least democratic, most bureaucratised unions into a huge new body.

Elsewhere, too, union leaders taking stock of the dire results created by new realism are turning not to radical recruitment campaigns or class struggle politics, but bureaucratic mergers, redundancies among officials, asset-stripping closures of union offices and substituting tribunals and court cases for disputes and negotiation.

But the questioning by union leaders of Labour's right wing consensus politics, and the public voicing of anger at the party's toothless opposition, opens up a vital space for debate in the unions at a point where more workers are considering the possibilities of struggle.

Wage claims

While Labour's front bench haggles pathetically with the Tories on who would impose the higher income tax, the message for union members at shop floor level is that tax hikes this year and next make wage claims far more important than the inflation figures might suggest.

This turn helps focus attention on the Tory move to impose a two-year pay freeze on five million public sector workers - and creates improved conditions for a fight. Major's government escaped trouble in imposing its 1.5% public sector pay limit last year partly because of historically low inflation.

Now the demand for the TUC to call a Day of Action on April 11 against the pay freeze has already found an echo in some public sector unions, despite the predictable pessimism of some union leaders that it could 'expose our weaknesses'.

Lobby TUC

The TUC General Council on April 1 which will decide on this Day of Action should be lobbied to press for strikes on that day.

The possibilities for action to combat and defeat the pay freeze would be also

an alternative approach centred on UNISON's aims, full employment, and increased spending on welfare and public services, financed by a system of progressive taxation. A programme of useful public works, including housing, transport and infrastructure renewal should be the means to create tens of thousands of new jobs.

These popular demands fall short of a socialist programme, but run flatly counter to the bare-toothed market forces of capitalism which dictate Tory policies and have intimidated Labour's leaders into total incoherence.

They also link in to the need to fight a new wave of privatisation, which is now threatening British Rail, Royal Mail, British Coal, civil servants ('market testing'), health and local government staff.

Again Labour, hung up on its concessions to the ideology of the free market, has been shown incapable of categorically defending the principle of a nation-owned railway. In building mass campaigns and industrial action to beat back privatisation, public sector workers need to combat consensus politics.

Offensive

The stakes are high. The Tories have responded to their crisis by forging ahead with a brutally reactionary offensive against welfare and public services, while employers continue their war of attrition against union strength from behind barricades of repressive legislation.

But this also forces the unions to some form of self-defence. The latest anti-union laws contain a deadly attack on the soft underbelly of the unions: the check-off system of collecting union dues.

The TUC calculates that this could result in a membership loss of 20% from affiliated unions if it takes effect in October. UNISON has warned that even a 5% per cent loss of membership would cut its income by £5 million a year.

To retain the members, unions have to contact them and persuade them to 'sign up' by September.

Those unions which can be seen to be acting most energetically to defend their members, and those which are most successful in mobilising them will be the best at retaining them.

Full-time officials cannot do this job: a key layer of stewards and branch officers must be mobilised. Strong campaigning against the Tories and employers can be the cornerstone of a revival of union strength - from the shop floor upwards.

And socialists can build strong support if they throw themselves into this activity.
South African socialists to campaign for new mass workers’ party

The South African Workers Organisation of Socialist Action (WOSA) was formed in 1990. It brought together many long-standing militants from the Trotskyist tradition with a newer layer of members from the liberation struggle who were disillusioned with the ANC. WOSA’s national chairperson, speaks to Socialist Outlook.

NA. THE LIKELY outcome, an ANC-National Party dominated government of National Unity, will effectively be a white veto on changes in state and business structures. But we also recognize that one-person one-vote elections are a fundamental advance, won as a result of the mass pressure of the liberation movement. To demand and boycott them is to marginalize yourself. We are hoping to put up a workers’ list in participation with other socialist groups and independent unions and civic militants. How extensive this list will be depends on the degree of unity we can achieve with these other comrades in the available time, but steps have been taken and limited progress has been made.

NA. YES. The fundamental goal of WOSA is to make a practical contribution to the founding of a workers’ party that is truly and seriously for workers’ interests and workers’ government, and is democratic both in its internal and external practices. Far more like the Brazilian Workers’ Party (PT) than the British Labour Party in other words!

"The mass workers’ party is an idea whose time has come. Sixty per cent of a random sample of black people recently believed that a mass workers’ party is necessary and desirable in South Africa"
Homage to the father of state capitalism

The Tragedy of Bukharin by Donny Gluckstein (Pluto Press £9.95 pbck). Reviewed by DAVE OSLER

THE TRAGEDY of Bukharin offers a concise and readable account of the political ideas of a key leader of the Russian revolution. In doing so, it knocks a number of holes in the author’s own brand of Marxism, namely that of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). No wonder, because Bukharin was rightly hailed by Lenin as an important Bolshevik theoretician, despite the ultra-leftism which marred his early work.

After Lenin’s death, he shifted to the right, hardened the policy line of the party, arguing that market mechanisms in agriculture should be actively encouraged while ‘socialism in one country’ was built, in his own words, ‘at a snail’s pace’. Bukharin became the ideas man for the Stalin faction in its clashes with Trotsky and the party left, who wanted industrialisation to proceed at a formidable pace. Yet his subsequent opposition to Stalin’s post-1928 policies, although rooted in the extreme, was sufficient to ensure his execution in 1938.

By the mid-1970s, Western ‘market socialists’, most notably Stephen Cohen, were actively promoting Bukharin’s anti-Stalinist credentials.

Revival

In the glance period, Bukharinism even underwent a revival in its homeland, as Russian historians argued that Bukharin’s ideas were the only realistic alternative to the deliberate confusion of Trotskyism with Stalinism. ‘Socialism in one country’ was clearly not the solution to the world’s problems; similar formulae were abroad.

This is the first time, to my knowledge, that an SWP theoretician has used the term, with the party hitherto holding the view that such a phenomenon is a logical impossibility, that either the proletarian is the ruling class or it isn’t. Unfortunately the author does not define the meaning of ‘degenerated workers state’, a singular omission in the circumstances.

Gluckstein only comes back on side by ripping up Marx’s Eleventh Theses and de-picting the events of 1928 as a social revolution, somehow resulting in the rule of a new class without smashing the existing ‘degenerated workers’ state’ machine!

Positive view

Gluckstein is also forced to positively evaluate Bukharin’s first major work, Imperialism and World Economy, which postulates a ‘very strong tendency toward transforming the entire national economy into one gigantic combined enter-
prise under the tutelage of the financial kings and the capital-
ist state.’

This idea is acknowledged as a building block for the theory of state capitalism, which forms the basis of this book. It is by no means revolutionary, but it is a real contribution to the understanding of these issues.

To suggest otherwise is to fall prey to Bukharinism, of course.

The rights and wrongs of ‘Political Correctness’

Oleanna, play by David Mamet, directed by Harold Pinter. Duke of York’s Theatre, London WC2

Reviewed by S. Doyle

TWO CHAIRS face each other across a desk. On the higher one sits a middle-aged American academic, on the other a student who timidly enquires after her grades. Her lack of understanding of the subject and his inability to enlighten her eventually re-
turns her to tears of frustra-
tion. He places his arm around her for comfort.

In the following act the stu-
dent returns with charges of sexual harassment based on the physical contact. Etiquette, sexism, classism, promoting pornography—eventually rape—are added to the accu-
sations. As a result the profes-
sor is fired.

The play has had an enor-
mous impact in America. It ad-
dresses ‘Political Correctness’ (PC) head-on.

PCs voice in the play the student ‘Carol’, depicted as a ferocious phlegm adolescent in-
tent on wrecking the life of a well-intentioned—slightly in-
opt and insensitive—liberal academic.

In pursuit of her dogma she undermines not only his posi-
tion, but symbolises PCs’ frightening threat to intellectual openness. When in the final scene the academic physically assaults her the audience has nothing but sympathy. In New York they even stood up and cheered.

Mamet’s all-out attack on PC is misplaced. The problem with PC is not its dangerous extremism but its lack of radicalism.

By taking language it subordinates individual change for a change in society.

More than ‘error’, it is a basic flaw at the heart of liberal individualistic politics. If only enough people thought differently then things would change. Persuasion becomes strategy.

The problem lies in its igno-
rance of the fundamental divi-
sions of class that determine one to another. Such a strategy can’t work—and never has.

Unable to achieve any signi-
ificant result using persua-
sion, a campaign of legislative change becomes the fault of the advocates of PC—struggle and solidarity are written out of a politics based on individual behaviour. This is the return PC has taken in the USA.

Mamet’s counter-position of ‘freedom of speech’ to PC should be debunked for the same reason. His is a defence of a cloy middle-class ‘free-
dom’ of the academic estab-
lishment to churn out self-promoting mediocrity un-
flattered by any sanction.

Any threat to intellectual en-
deavour comes today not from women’s groups or ’extram-
lists’, but from governments in-
creasingly determined to fashion a workforce of uncrit-
ical, docile, compliant consum-
ers and producers.

This trade against PC re-
mains as much trapped in indi-
vidualistic politics as are its supporters. Mamet’s freedom is one of individuals to say what they please. Socialists in the West know only too well how limited this freedom can be without proper access to the media it is a more conven-
te way of conveying the power of the majority in con-
voying alternative viewpoints. Access is a key matter here: who owns and controls what.

This limits and determines what is said, when and to whom. Similarly it is not right-
thinking individuals free to ex-
press themselves who have the ability to change the status-
duo, but social forces: collec-
tivities built out of shared interests, classes. Mamet’s an-
ti-environmentalism shows how far he is from this under-
standing.

Obama joins the nascent anti-PC backlash in Britain be-
fore the PC campaign has re-
ally got off the ground.

Perhaps a debate is due never-
theless.

Just what do we expect to achieve by changes in our lan-
guage? Language reflects rela-
tions of power and domination —so we need to be aware of the prejudices that accompany words, and try to avoid them. But getting rid of oppression and suppression will take more than a change of words. US-style PC is more a distortion from this task than a threat to ‘freedom’.
A regular look at the world of business, compiled by Insider Dealer.

Darling of the fiddlers
IT WAS a double whammy for investment analysts everywhere when the House of Commons debated insider dealing in January. Goebelharker number one; the government actually proposed tightening up existing legislation. Goebelhacker number two; Labour and the Tories again ignored the idea, calling instead for more effective operation of free market forces in the sale of securities. Next time you bloody clowns come round canvassing, put me down as a definite no.

The Tories at least have the excuse of their disgraceful actions recently on an EC directive to comply with. Until now, a loophole made it OK for a Brit with inside information to one of the many securities quoted in both London and another market (Paris, Frankfurt, New York or Tokyo, for example) to make a killing for the price of a ‘phone call.

Now it’s freedom to sell! Thankyou the Labour Party for speaking out against such draconian infringements on the liberty of the good tax-exempt investor.

Step forward Alastair Darling, Labour MP for Edinburgh Central, and the most junior member of Gordon Brown’s infamous treasury team. Mr Darling con


demned the proposals were far too complicated.

WHERE WE STAND

Facing mass unemployment, rampant employers equipped with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-won education, health and welfare services, the working class in Britain faces a real crisis – an avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

Socialist Outlook exists to fight for a new type of working class leadership, based on the policies of class struggle and revolutionary socialism, to tackle this crisis.

The capitalist class, driven and politically unified by its own crisis, its requirement to maximize profits, and the squalor of the working class, has been given determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal class-war Tory high command.

The Tory strategy has been to shackle the unions with legislation, and to fragment and weaken the resistance of the working class and oppressed, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time, using the full powers of the state.

In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defeatist politics of ‘new realism’, effectively proclaiming total surrender on every front, while ditching any pretence that they offer a socialist alternative. Every retreat and concession they have made to the employers and the government has simply fuelled and encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form taken by the politics of reformism, seeking no more than tiny improvements in conditions within the framework of capitalist rule.

Socialist Outlook rejects reformism, not because we are against fighting for reforms, but because we know that the core of the working class – for full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy – can never be achieved under capitalism.

Labour’s market values
Geoff Hoos, Labour MP for Aberdare, who called Labour’s opposition to the Tories’ rather minimal clampdown thus: “I am sure that Conservative members are not calling for tougher legislation on insider trading because that would ensure a free market in securities. The government is trying to prevent the operation of that free market.

When the opposition argue for tougher regulation and enforcement, they are arguing for more effective operation of free market forces in the sale of securities. Vote for the consistent Thatcherite party, Vote Labour.

Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. Our socialist alternative is not based on parliamentary elections or illusions of peaceful legislative change. We fight to mobilise and unleash the power of the working class – the overwhelming majority of society – to topple the corrupt and reactionary capitalist state and establish its own class rule.

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, working to link and unite the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities and ethnic minorities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth – and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and throughout the world. Socialist Outlook is above all an international socialist current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises co-thinkers in 40 countries world-wide.

Unlike some other organisations on the British left, we do not believe a mass revolutionary party can be built simply by proclaiming ourselves to be one. Too often this degenerates into sectarian posturing and abstention from the actual struggle taking shape within the labour movement, playing into the hands of the right-wing.

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland and Wales should be left to await the outcome of a socialist revolution. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now around their own demands, which are a part of the struggle for socialism.

But propaganda alone, however good, can never achieve socialism. The fight for policies which can mobilise and politically educate workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour Party and every campaign and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

To strengthen this fight we press for united front campaigns on key issues such as fighting racism and fascism – in which various left currents can work together for common objectives while remaining free to debate their differences.

If you agree with what you see in Socialist Outlook, and want to get involved in the struggle for socialism, readers’ groups meet in 16 local Socialist Societies throughout the country. Contact us now, get organised, and get active!

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STOP CUTS on Mental Health service 11.30am Beckford Centre Warminster Bath
PROTEST harassment of Turkish workers by Stoke Newington Police 2pm Hackney Town Hall

Sudh Forma Conference organised by Birmingham NUT 11am Carrs Lane Church Centre Brum

Monday 14
DEMONSTRATE against the Child Support Act 1.30pm Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square
ANTI-IMPERIALIST Strategy Today Socialist Outlook discussion with Sarah Parker 7.30pm Stationers' Park Community Centre Mayfield Road off Weston Park N8

Fri 18 & Sat 19
RE-THINKING Worker Democracy Conference Centre Great Russell Street WC1 details CAIFS 404 Camden Road London N7 0JS
Wednesday 23
DEMONSTRATION against cuts in student grants London
EUROPE between Recession and Revolt Socialist Outlook forum with Duncan Chapelle 7.45pm Queens Head pub 56 Acton St WC1 Kings Cross BR

Saturday 26
SOCIALIST OUTLOOK Social, Approach Tavern, Approach Road, (off Old Ford Road) E2 (cost £1.50) Quiz night starts 7.30pm Vegetarian meal available from 6.30pm

BETTER Housing; Better Health, Socialist Health Association conference 10.30am - 4.30pm St Alban's Centre Baldwin's Gardens Holborn EC1 details 071 490 0057 RACISM, Fascism & the Euro-elections Conference details Reading Labour Party, 81 Kings Rd, Reading Berks R1 300 Tel: 0734 577 756

Sunday 27
ROGER and Me London Socialist Film Society showing 1.30pm for 2pm Conway Hall Red Lion Square WC1 tickets £3.50/£2.00

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APRIL
Saturday 9
LIBERATION/ editorial meeting 11.00am
Saturday 23
ANTI-AZE League carnival London

Lies, dam bribes and Tory arms deals

By K. Govindan

BRITAIN's declining aid budget is being cynically used to secure foreign export orders for the arms industry. Sir Tim Lankester, a senior civil servant attached to the Overseas development administration (ODA) has confirmed this to a parliamentary select committee.

The controversy started over the Pergau electric dam in the north-eastern Malaysian state of Kelantan. The dam cost a total of £400m, of which £24m is British aid money being personally approved by Douglas Hurd and John Major.

Thatcher

Shortly after this package was raised, a record £1 billion arms deal was initiated by the then prime minister Margaret Thatcher.

Kickbacks and bribery significantly inflated the value of the export order. It is alleged that £60m was donated to the leading government party, UMPNO.

That dam woman again

Bui, and that a further £40m greased the palms of several Malaysian officials.

Britain's aid is generally 'aid' and no money is spent on British goods and services. Thus even if local firms offer cheaper products, the aid recipient has to buy British and thus lose some of the money comes back to Britain. Consultants, contractors and engineers will be British even if local expertise is available.

In the case of the Pergau electric dam there was not even a tender to find the cheapest bid. The British firm Halluin Beauty was awarded most of the work.

To top it all, the aid was not a grant but a so-called 'soft' loan repayable over 14 years.

The Pergau dam has been bitterly opposed by local people, environmental groups and opposition parties. It is a long-standing issue of dispute between the Kelantan state government and the federal government. But this is largely a squabble over the division of future revenues.

More serious is the severe economic and environmental dislocation that the 600MW power plant will cause. The reservoir behind the dam will inundate thousands of acres of agricultural land across two states.

Dry up

The dam will also dry up water to downstream areas for at least 10 months a year.

Due to heavy sedimentation, the dam will only be able to work for about 35 years. Meanwhile thousands of people will lose their farming lands and will be driven away from their villages and communities.

The rising water will threaten much of the unique wildlife in this densely forested region including Sambar rhino, tigers and leopards. Lush Malaysian rain forest is being mercilessly destroyed, denuding the land and laying the ground for soil erosion, landslides and calamitous floods.

Protection

Local environmentalists point out that water supply to the dam would only be enough to power a 150MW plant. They argue for a smaller scheme, or at least the adoption of stringent environmental protection.

Malaysia's prime minister Mahathir has given the dam his full backing because a doubling in the country's energy capacity is part of his pet scheme, Vision 2020. This aims to make Malay- sia a "fully developed" country by 2020.

Part and parcel of this process is a growing authoritarianism, control of the mass media, money politics and electoral chicanery.

The Arms deal with Britain will beef up Mahathir's repressive machinery.
Bloodbath threatens Bosnia

ARMAGEDDON in Europe

A new and savage attack on multi-ethnic Bosnia is being prepared by the Serbian government. Because of the refusal of the Bosnian government to agree to a three-way split of Bosnia, the Yugoslav army - in reality the army of Serbia and the ally Montenegro - is mobilising to crush Bosnian resistance. Tanks, artillery, anti-aircraft guns and other weapons are pouring into Bosnian territory together with Serbian troops. UN officials have reported that they are preparing a spring offensive.

Now that the Serb Chetniks have failed to crack the Bosnian resistance in Sarajevo and the area around Tuzla, the regular army is being called in to smash them. If such an assault is launched against the Bosnian government troops, who are hobbled by the international arms embargo, there could be a much bigger bloodbath than has already occurred.

Ethnic cleansing will look like a picnic compared with the slaughter if the Yugoslav army were to break into the major centres of Bosnian population. The new Serbian mobilisation comes when the Croatian HVO and other militias are engaged in a major offensive in central Bosnia. The Serb and Croatian governments have signed their own 'peace' deal, effectively leaving both sides free to concentrate on defeating the Bosnians.

The assassination of British aid worker Paul Goodhall is part of the continuing attempt to obstruct aid getting to the people in need in central Bosnia. The killing shows the necessity to open Tuzla airport, which is within the power of the UN, in order to ensure that aid gets to the central Bosnian population. The Western powers have refused to do this because they are using aid, supplied with an eye on the Bosnian leadership into accepting the carve-up deal. It is not true that the conflict is a 'civil war' between three groups of nationalists, equally responsible. The war, and the rise of ethnic nationalism, was pioneered and launched by the Serbian leadership in Belgrade - a means of popular mobilisation to keep them in power.

Bosnia has for centuries been a multi-ethnic, multi-national entity. They have resisted the attempt to carve up ex-Yugoslavia on the reactionary basis of single-nation states.

Hundreds of thousands have been killed in this war, and two million made refugees. But the war could last a lot longer. The people resisting aggression from Serb and Croat forces in multi-ethnic Bosnia deserve our solidarity and support. The campaign and convos run by International Workers Aid are an important means not just of practical support, but of political pressure on Western leaders to back the arms embargo. Yugoslavia is dead and cannot be rebuilt. The only way forward now is through establishing the right of self-determination - and that means for Bosnia as much as for Croatia and Serbia.

Help the Workers Aid convoy planned for the spring. Send money to IWA, 12-14 Thornton St, London SW9 0BL.

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