ALL OVER Britain the Tory NHS reforms are driving hospitals into crisis and closure.

Guy's Hospital in London is just the highest profile victim of a wave of closures now also threatening Birmingham, Newcastle, Manchester, Sheffield, Liverpool, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and other cities.

Even where hospitals stay open, cash for routine treatment is running out. In Redbridge and Waltham Forest in north-east London, there is no money to buy any waiting list treatment at all for local people during 1994-5. Local Trust hospitals have been plunged into financial crisis.

Health workers are fighting back. At Guy's, unions have linked with consultants and with the local community to build a joint campaign.

But unions have been painfully slow to act, despite the threat to thousands of jobs. The fight must be stepped up, with strikes and occupations called where necessary to defend threatened beds and wards.

Time is running out. Get active. Defend our NHS!

NHS on the Danger List – SEE INSIDE page 5
Racist violence hits Oxford

There has been an abrupt increase in racist activity in east Oxford in recent weeks.

In Regent Street the home of a Somali family was badly damaged by fire. Police are treating it as arson: the family escaped but five members were hospitalised overnight to monitor the effects of poisoning by smoke.

On Cowley Road the house of a rabbi and prominent local leader of El Chaim was attacked with firebombs which failed to cause serious damage.

This attack has been ascribed variously to people outraged by the massacre of Palestinians in a Hermon housing estate by a Jewish settler, or to fascists.

Graffiti BNP and racist graffiti has appeared outside DSJ's office and a community centre; a window was broken at the next-door Unemployed Workers and Claimants Union Office.

Former National Front organiser John Wildman, who served nine months for attacking a mosque in Aylesbury, backs the Oxford. He claims to be a returned character.

Two Killarney men last year got off charges of plotting an BNP attack on an Anti-Racist Alliance event in Islington, West London.

Jailed asylum seekers protest!

AT THIS moment, hundreds of people seeking political asylum are on hunger strike in Home Office detention centres and other premises in England.

On Friday 11 March some 158 joined about ten already on hunger strike since the previous Monday at Campsfield House, the new 200-place detention centre at Kilndington, Oxford run by Group 4.

About 70 are on strike at Harlow prison. Portsmouth almost all are from Africa and Asia. They have been held for months - some over a year - without chance to appeal or the decision of immigration officers to be free while their asylum applications are considered.

The government is trying to break the strike by moving strikers from prison to prison, by threats of deportation and confining them to their rooms.

Detainees are supposedly allowed free association. But they report force-feeding and other violence by immigration officers and Group 4 staff.

Campsfield and Harmondsworth are profit-making enterprises.

Three times as many asylum seekers, 750 last month, are being detained than a year ago.

It is part of an agreement made in secret by Europe's governments.

Labour's Graham Allen MP has called for an inquiry. Instead he should call the Home Office over immigration laws and detention centers.

CLOSE CAMPSFIELD demonstration. Saturday June 4, Keddington, near Oxford.

Build on TUC demonstration!

By Nigel Fisher and Charlie Langford

THE MARCH 19 demonstration in Tower Hamlets shows the way forward for the anti-racist movement.

With 60,000 people and countless trade union banner it was a magnificent show of solidarity with the black community of the East End. The facists of the BNP and racists generally have had notice served on them that they will meet a united response from the trade union and anti-racist movement.

Anti-trade unionism is confronted with a huge struggle to combat racism in all its guises.

The immigration laws jail asylum seekers or prevent them from escaping from oppression. The police still criminalise black youth.

Racists are still attacking black people on the street and in their homes. Black people still face discrimination in housing, education and jobs. They suffer the worst of the bosses onslaught whilst at the same time are made the scapegoats for the crisis the bosses have created.

It is now far easier to take up anti-racism within trade unions, and to challenge the inherent racism of the labour movement.

With labour movement input, it will be far harder for the petty functionaries of the ANL and ARA to feed about primacy in the movement.

It is now important to keep up the momentum. In May and June there will be local and Euro-elections. The Tories are likely to do badly in both. We need to turn the anti-Tory mood into an effective fight. The only way to do this is to support the Labour Party.

Of course the trade union leaders will want to control and divert anti-racist activity, but last Saturday's demonstration was by trade union members rather their leadership.

This needs to be built upon to ensure a movement based on the activity of rank and file trade unionists and anti-racists is created.

Breeding ground

Anti-racists and trade unionists must put pressure on the trade union leaders and Labour Party for policies which really combat the decaying social conditions which are a breeding ground for racism and fascism.

Creating new criminal offences is not the way to defeat racism. Using violence for what ever reason is already a criminal offence.

The problem is that the police force and the courts are thoroughly racist. What we need is labour movement solidarity with all those who defend themselves from racist attacks.

The Liberals run Tower Hamlets council - a council which refused the TUC demo permission to meet or disperse from council property in the borough.

The Tuesday before it also similarly harassed an NUT demo against racist cuts in section 11 funding (for specific educational provision for school students who do not have English as a first language).

The ruling Liberal councilors have been under (totally ineffective) investigation for racism by the national Liberal party since the election of a BNP councillor in the Isle of Dogs last October.

The disgrace of Tower Hamlets council shows why the Liberals will never be able to combat racism effectively. The TUC was right not to permit Paddy Ashdown to address the demonstration.

What we need is labour movement solidarity with all those who defend themselves from racist attacks.

Unity in Leeds

by Graham Smallwood

At the recent AGM of Leeds Campaign group the initiative was taken, all the suggestion of Socialist Outlook and Socialist Organiser supporters to organise a public meeting to co-ordinate activities around the March 19 TUC demonstration.

The public meeting, although relatively small represented a significant step forward.

Activities from the AFA, ANL, YRE and AFA along with socialists and trade unionists discussed the best ways of building the demonstration and working together locally.

Between 20 and 30 activists, from the different campaigns, came together to distribute thousands of leaflets. It is hoped that after the demonstration we can continue to work together and perhaps establish a more permanent framework.

Pulling out

Unfortunately after contributing to the first meeting the SWP decided to pull out of any joint activities. At a recent SWP public meeting with Tony Cliff Socialist Outlook and Socialist Organiser supporters were told they would not be allowed into the meeting.

It is hoped that the local SWP branch change their attitude and play a positive part in the joint campaign against racism and fascism.
Stop TUC collaboration with Tories!

5,000 SHEFFIELD council workers have given a good example of how to fight the Tory anti-union laws.

Confronted with a choice of more wage cuts or massive redundancies at the hands of a Labour council which last year slashed their pay, they held an angry, 2-500-strong meeting – and voted there and then for a one-day strike.

Officially disowned by union officials petrified that they might see their funds sequestered under the draconian Tory anti-union laws, strikers produced a defiant leaflet slamming those Labour councillors who had denounced their strike as illegal.

"The decision of a members' meeting of more than 2,000 people on March 8 may be contrary to the Tories' anti-union legislation – so what?"

"We造价 our own hands, if you like, it's not trivia2 accept a deter-

The legislation is almost impossible for unions to comply with. According to the Court of Appeal, the ballot stepped outside the rules by failing to notify college houses of the individual names of every union member entitled to vote. One judge said the union records must be accurate to "within the number of fingers on two hands".

But NATFHE has 50,000 members. There is scarcely a union in the country, other than a minority in workplaces where all members pay contributions by check-off, which could not fall foul of this ruling, no matter how big the major-

Longer hours

The NATFHE action was called to oppose brutal new contracts to take effect from April 1, imposing longer working hours, reduced holidays and "flexible' working. In other words, the anti-union laws are now being used in earnest for their prime pur-
pose – driving down the pay and condi-
tions of the working class.

The NATFHE leaders, disregarding their own 62% ballot vote for action, meekly buckled before the court threats, it is becoming increasingly clear that de-

NATFHE, after Appeal Court judges had ruled that the union's ballot and March 1 strike call were unlawful.

Union branches, regions and this sum-
mer's conferences must give a prompt and unequivocal answer: they must back the example of the Sheffield council workers, and demand the unions break off all talks and collaboration with the Tories, which does nothing but strengthen the employers.

Instead unions should synchronise and mobilise their campaigns and mass action to defy and break the Tory laws.

Public sector unions must band to-
gether in a fighting alliance to smash the pay freeze and end the parliamentary barrier.

Coordinate

The Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, which has consistently cam-
paigned to unshackle the unions, can play a leading role in coordinating the efforts of the left at this summer's conferences. Its April 9 meeting should map out plans to pile pressure on the collaborationist union bureaucrats.

With threats of redundancy running from top to bottom through every indus-
try – including retail, banks and even telecom management – there can be no peace or security for workers if their unions until this hated, discredited, authoritarian government is defeated.

Lambeth call to defend union rights

LAMBERTH Trades Council has called a conference for April 23 arising from the NATFHE judgment.

Under the slogan 'Fight for the council's rights', the confer-
ence seeks to bring together as many trade unionists as possible to press London to debate the way forward. As the promotional leaflet points out:

"According to the Tory judges, if a union's membership details have more than ten inaccuracies, then any ballot is unlawful. Under these conditions, strike action is virtually impossible, and now that the govern-
ment is funding any Tom Dick or Harry's court action against such 'unlawful ac-
tions', no trade union or shop floor activist is safe from the courts."

The conference, scheduled for 9.30am to 1pm on Satur-
day April 23, will discuss the legal implications of the new situation, and debate ways of fighting back.

Speakers include a rank and file activist involved in the unofficial Tube strike. Coordinates: 51 from TUC, 12/14 Thornton St, London SW9 0BL.
Labour’s timid recipe for failure

By Dave Osler

THE ROW sparked off when the shadow Chancellor, Gordon Brown, claimed that La-bour’s recent policy statement, Financing Infrastructure Investment: Promoting a Partnership Between Public and Private Finance (FII), had ‘stolen a march on the Tories’ provided journalists with rather sexier copy than the contents did.

It’s a droll subject, perhaps. Yet Britain is crying out for infrastructural renewal. Some 5,000 miles of primary roads are in urgent need of repair.

One sewer pipe in six is more than 100 years old. If something is not done soon, we could quite literally end up in the brown stuff. So what is Labour saying?

The document, co-authored by Brown, employment spokesman John Prescott and trade and industry spokesman Robin Cook, is poorly presented and hardly racy reading.

Its basic proposition is that as long as it gives item of infra-structure is up and running, who gives a toss who paid for it?

Co-author John Prescott said labour has always based its economic thinking on what used to be called the mixed economy. Prescott developed similar themes for British Rail during his stint at transport, with little ideological flack from the Left. Labour Keynesians such as Roger Berry find both good and bad in the document.

Infrastructure

For their part, the Conserva-tives have no qualms whate-ver about funding major infrastructural projects, provided they are in Malaysia and that there’s a nice little drink in it for their business buddies. Even the Bolsheviks’ New Zealand Labour Party echo the same theme.

Borrowing

If governments can always borrow more cheaply than pri-vate companies, as FII rightly points out, why doesn’t Labour put its cards on the table and say it will increase government bor-rowing to fund essential invest-ments?

The probable answer is the trade unions’ ingrained fear of allowing the media to brand La-bour’s plans as ‘tax and spend’.

Many on the Left are worried about one sentence in particular: ‘We also see a limited application in the provision of private finance for publicly led projects in education and health.’

What the advantages are, other than the party’s private enterprise credentials, are not spelt out.

Nor are some of the draw-backs of private sector involve-ment. Private companies can and do go bust, especially under a Government hell bent on en-suring a recession a decade.

The extension of London under-ground’s Jubilee Line to Docklands was made condi-tional of £400 million funding from Olympia and York, developers of Canary Wharf. Their spectacular bankruptcy put the project back years.

But probably the most impor-tant criticism of FII is that it is devoid of macroeconomic con-text.

Instead of drawing up an iso-lated check-list, plans for re-building Britain’s crumbling infrastructure should form part of a socialist government’s wider strategy for generating full employment. The big pic-ture has clearly not been thought through.

And if Labour sticks to its guns and ensures health and safety standards and the right to trade union recognition on Brit-ain’s building sites, let alone try to extend social ownership, it may find that the traditionally Tory civil engineering and con-struction firms are not so friendly after all.

STAFF REPORT


The conference will be held at Manchester Town Hall on June 11 between 11am and 5.30pm and will open with a plenary session setting the agenda for the day.

There will be five current topics for discussion – unem-ployment and strategies for full employment and the fol-lowing: the rise of racism and fascism; the international con-text; arms conversion and public ownership; the welfare state and the trade unions.

The workshops will be fol-lowed by the final plenary session which will take report backs and voting on resolution.

The national forum also discussed model resolutions which will be promoting for La-bour Party conference.

The SCGN will prioritise resolutions on full employ-ment, youth rights, the Child Support Act, public owner-ship, universal benefits and the Labour Campaign for Le-gislation and Gay Rights resolu-tion.

The forum also passed two emergency resolutions. The first regretted the recent re-fusal of some Labour MPs to vote for an equal age of con-sent at 16 for gay men in line with current party policy. It heavily criticised Campaigng Group members Bob Cryer and Bob Parry for their failure to vote for 16.

The second motion con-demned the TUC for inviting Treasury Minister, Stephen Dorrell to meet with them. SCGN members in the trade unions will be taking this emergency resolution to this round of trade union confer-ences.

The forum decided to push for the Campaign Group state for the NEC to have a clear po-litical platform and will be discussing this with the MPs.

The forum called on net-work members to plan meet-ing and rallies in support of the state in June and July.

Details of the confer-ence, model resolutions and information about the net-work from SCGN, 3 Blades House, Kennington London SE11.
Emergencies only as cash runs out

By John Lister, London Health Emergency

WAITING list NHS treatment for over 300,000 residents of north east London will grind to a halt in April, as the Redbridge and Waltham Forest health authority runs out of money. The crisis situation spells out the desperate plight of some health authorities under the Tories’ cost-saving system.

The authority faces an end of year deficit of up to £6 million, with further reductions in its budget for 1994/5 and in following years as a result of the Tories’ health reforms.

To add insult to injury, Redbridge residents could find that while they face a minimum 12 month wait for elective admission to their brand new local hospital, patients from neighbouring Barking & Havering could be admitted before them, because their health authority has just increased its contract with the Redbridge Trust.

Unions at King George’s have already begun to organise a campaign of resistance to any further cuts, while Whips Cross has seen consistent struggle against repeated cutbacks by the crisis-ridden Forest Health Care Trust.

The only contracts health chiefs will place for 1994-5 will be for emergencies, maternity, urgent cases, and treating those waiting over 18 months.

Rocketing

There will be no elective admissions to Whips Cross or the new £70 million King George Hospital at Goodmayes. Waiting lists at King George’s, which rose 38% in the three months to last November, will rocket upwards.

The cuts mean that Redbridge Healthcare Trust which runs King George’s faces a financial crisis, with a projected £2.5 million deficit next year.

Already the Trust has had 35 jobs to save £600,000. Further cuts can seem inevitable.

How greedy GP fundholders hold on to funds

585 fundholding family doctors are expected to share out a surplus of £28 million of the cash allocated to them for patient care last year.

This is the amount left unspent, after an expected £4 million is returned to regional health authorities, according to figures obtained by Darlington MP Alan Milburn. The government has no power to demand repayment of unspent surpluses - although health ministers insist that the money cannot be pocketed by the doctors themselves, and has to be spent on their practices.

This vast pool of spare cash has rapidly increased.

Rip-off

The regional facing the biggest rip-off is NE Thames, where the average fund-holding GP drummed in more than £500 of every £6 allocated - a cool £77,000 per doctor.

These figures are growing criticism of the controversial system, which gives fundholding GPs a much more generous budget per patient than given to District Health Authorities, but follows this up with only minimal monitoring of their performance.

Questions are being asked in some regions about the apparent link between vast under-spending by fundholders and the rapid increase in numbers of fundholders’ patients admitted to hospitals as emergencies.

Emergency bill

Health authorities are required to pick up the bill for all residents who receive emergency hospital care, while fundholders are supposed to pay from their budgets for elective treatment.

The West Midlands Health Monitoring Unit points out that Coventry SHA saw a massive 19% increase in emergency admissions from fundholders’ patients in the first year of the scheme, against an increase of just 6.5% from non-fundholders. By contrast elective admissions from fundholders decreased by over 13%, compared with 2% from non-fundholders.

Of course the most publicised aspect of fundholding is the emergence of a ‘two tier’ service within the NHS, with GPs using their purchasing power to force local Trusts to give preferential treatment to their patients, ahead of others in the queue.

Fast-track

A recent BMA survey of 173 hospitals showed that 73 of them were offering preferential services to fundholders’ patients: 41 were offering ‘fast-track’, more rapid admission.

But this ‘advantage’ for the patients of fund-holders could soon be wiped out by government proposals to make all GPs fundholders. Precisely how such a chaotic system could operate alongside District Health Authorities, and with every fundholder trying to score an advantage over every other, has not been explained.

Not everyone can jump the queue at once!

Case exposes collapse of mental health care

THE BLINKERED determination of ministers and their clients to push through massive bed closures in London’s psychiatric hospitals has opened the door to disaster.

The publication of the inspection report of the tragic case of discharged schizophrenic Christopher Clowes, who stabbed a man to death on a tube platform in December 1992, revealed not only a catalogue of failure by five different agencies, but a complete absence of any overall control or chain of responsibility to ensure that community care can work.

No matter how many high-sounding ‘guidelines’ may be published in response to disaster, the system that has emerged is a total sham.

There is no individual or body with the authority to compel cash-starved local health Trusts, purchasing authorities, social services and relevant voluntary groups to sit down and plan out a comprehensive service. Instead each of them tends to seek to balance its books at the expense of the other, leaving the police to tackle the problems that can arise when a potentially violent patient is left without care or support.

While the holes in district level provision are big enough, there is no London-wide strategy for community care instead councils throughout the capital have been left without the cash to create a proper infrastructure of day care and other community-based services for people with mental illness.

The government in 1988 specifically rejected recommendations from Mrs Thatcher’s advisor SirRoy Griffiths that there should be a minister for Community Care.

Dodging blame

But Bottomley has also refused to accept responsibility for the collapse of the fragmented and under-resourced system her government has put in place, attempting to shuffle the blame onto under-funded boroughs.

The inquiry report called for an increase in provision of acute and specialist mental health beds, of which there is a dire and chronic shortage in inner London and more secure units for the treatment of severely disturbed patients.

Even the Tomlinson Report, proposing drastic cuts in medical and surgical hospital beds, called 18 months ago for an urgent review of the adequacy of provision of acute psychiatric admission beds. This has been ignored. London Health Emergency now offers another £12m for provision of community-based services.

London Health Emergency has consistently exposed the lack of planning and community-based psychiatric services to replace the thousands of mental health beds closed since 1984, and warned of the pressure on acute mental illness beds in the capital.

Information Director John Lister called for an immediate injection of cash to tackle the problem. He said: “It is a scandal that it takes a tragedy like this to gain attention for the neglected mental health services, and the collapse of the so-called community care policy. Psychiatric wards all over inner London are bursting at the seams, and mental health beds more than 100% occupied.”

“Even now the government is throwing £5 million into two voluntary sector schemes designed to close down 150 more mental health beds in London, while this report shows there are already too few psychiatric beds to meet the needs of desperately ill patients. Immediate action is needed to stop further suffering.”

For a FREE copy of Health Emergency newspaper, send 25p stamp and your name and address to LHSU, 446, Uxbridge Rd, London W12 0NS
UNISON Local Government Conference

Promising signs in the gloom

By Doug Thorpe
Islington UNISON 'A' Branch

DELEGATES attending the first local government conference of UNISON on March 4 could be forgiven for feeling like extras on a film set.

National paid officials clearly saw the conference more as a cross between an excursion in crowd control and a sound check rather than a policy making meeting.

This was the first significant national conference in UNISON since the merger of NALGO, NUPE and CORSE. To ex-NALGO delegates the differences quickly became apparent.

There were far fewer paper sellers outside the doors reflecting the reduction in numbers of delegates from left organisations. Inside there was much more rigid control, no stalls from political groups, and no hustling allowed.

Even requests for printing or distribution had to be approved by the standing orders committee under the “guidance” of the ubiquitous Roger Poole, whom many of us had last seen on our television screens selling out the ambulance workers a few years ago.

It wasn’t long before cracks began to appear in the veneer of efficiency. Towards the end of the first day the management of proceedings degenerated into force as it became apparent that the voting figures allocated to branches bore no relationship to real membership.

Delegates poured up to the rostrum to protest at wrong figures, as much as 2,000 votes out in one branch, and the conference had to be adjourned in the middle of the first card vote.

The next day officials brazed it out and insisted the numbers could not be changed. The results of subsequent card votes, particularly the closer ones including an amendment deleting the call for a national ballot for one day strike, were clearly of questionable validity.

The key debate over cuts and the pay freeze took place on the second day. Service Group Executive (SGE) succeeded in defeating any and all proposals for specific national strike action over cuts, privatisation or the pay freeze.

Balloons

On the devolution of local government by cuts and Competitive Tendering, all the SGE had to offer was the usual balloon-waving campaigning.

While they made much of their support for a Day of Action they resolutely opposed and defeated a proposal for a national strike on this day (whenever it is, they couldn’t give a date).

They said this would be illegal and, as Morning Star supporter Judy Cotter said for the SGE, “a kamikaze action that would destroy our union.”

If the executive were bereft of ideas, the balance sheet from the left was not particularly sharp either. Speeches were not well received and showed some confusion.

There were some promising signs amongst the gloom. Although the bureaucracy won all the crucial votes their margin of victory was small. The proposal for a national one day strike got 47% of the vote on a card vote.

On the final day the Executive lost a number of votes over lesser issues and the left showed some organisation, successfully moving the agenda along to reach motions that had been put at the end of the agenda by the standing orders committee in the hope that they would not be reached.

One of these motions which was carried calls on the NEC and political fund conference to consider removing sponsorship from UNISON sponsored Labour MPs (ie David Blunkett) who did not vote for the age of consent to be lowered to 16 for gay men.

Organise

The crucial issue for the left is still the need for organisation. A fringe meeting called under the heading “Building a Fight-Back” was supported by 25 branches and showed a militant spirit that was absent from the conference itself.

The organisers (SWP) have promised a recall meeting for sponsoring branches but it is not clear whether they can be persuaded of the need for an ongoing, democratic structure as opposed to a series of ad hoc meetings called by them.

The other strand of organisation is through a number of regional caucuses that have formed, most notably the North East Bread Left and the London CPDU.

The London CPDU, is supporting an initiative to co-ordinate the regional caucuses at a national level.

Both of these initiatives are welcome and preferably can be drawn together to form one national left organisation.

For this to happen trust needs to be built and past antagonisms overcome.

This can only be done on the basis of democratic structures.

Women’s TUC sees light on Tory Child Support Act

By an NCU delegate

IN A MOOD of defiance at this year’s Women’s TUC, delegates decided now is the time to fight against the Tories at tack on single mothers and to build the campaign for the repeal of the Child Support Act (CSA).

If you are new to this issue, Audrey Wise MP, president of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW) moved the motion on the CSA.

The motion states that the government’s response to the CSA has not been sufficiently consultative and has failed to address the needs of women.

The motion points out that the CSA has caused harm to single mothers and their children, and that the government’s response to these concerns has been inadequate.

The motion was carried unanimously and now the next step is to organise a petition to the government to repeal the CSA.

Some members of the congress were concerned that the motion could be seen as supporting the government’s proposals on family support, but the motion clearly states that the CSA has failed to address the needs of women.

The motion calls for a campaign to educate women about their rights and to encourage them to resist the CSA.

Women’s TUC delegates have also expressed support for single mothers and their children, and many have been involved in campaigning against the CSA.

The motion states that the government’s response to the CSA has been inadequate, and that the CSA has caused harm to single mothers and their children.

The motion is a response to the government’s proposals on family support, and it calls for a campaign to educate women about their rights and to encourage them to resist the CSA.

The motion was carried unanimously and now the next step is to organise a petition to the government to repeal the CSA.

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Time for NUT left to join forces

By Roy Leach, Secretary Oxfordshire NUT (Personal capacity)

This Easter over a thousand delegates will gather at the NUT annual conference in Scarborough.

Media attention will, as always, be focused on the most political of (teacher) union conferences where 'executive bushing' has become almost routine.

Unable to win the vote in key debates the new realist leadership resorted to overturning conference decisions on the executive where they have an increasingly tenuous majority.

The results of this year's executive elections (half the seats are re-elected each year) offer the possibility of the long-awaited breakthrough by the left.

Even the SWP revoked their policy of refusing to 'get their hands dirty' and are standing candidates on the Socialist Teachers' Alliance slate and are likely to see one or two of their comrades elected.

The conference agenda has once again been set by the left with STA motions being prioritised for debate in five out of eight sections of the agenda.

Backing boycott

Last year the conference was dominated by the SATs issue.

Now, following a second overwhelming ballot result, General Secretary Doug McAvoy, with his eyes set on five more years as Britain's top paid union boss, has kicked his colours to the boycott and whipped up the spirit of colleagues to vote for a boycott in five out of eight sections of the agenda.

Conference will be presented with the stark choice between the failed casework and atomised local action strategy of the executive or a national campaign alongside other public sector unions.

Recent advice issued by the 'five teacher associations' (which includes the scab PAT) is all about managing redundancies 'fairly' and shows that the new realists have learned nothing from the past 14 years.

The executive is seeking to reverse last year's decision to support both the ARA and ANL, citing the police riot in Welling as a reason to make support for the ANL conditional.

Cuts in Section 11 funding threaten thousands of teachers' jobs (most of them women from ethnic minorities) and would be a massive blow to children already subject to discrimination and increasingly subject to racist abuse and attacks.

Last year's conference voted for a national ballot for a boycott of appraisal because of its links with PRP. The leadership's failure to implement this decision will provide yet another clear example of their lack of fitness to lead.

There are two left formations - the STA and the smaller Campaign for a Democratic Fighting Union. Both are genuine broad lefts and there are no principled obstacles to their merger.

This is vigorously opposed by the SWP and a few non-aligned socialists who argue that this would represent a shift to the right and a dilution of socialist politics within the union.

Democracy

They fail to understand that the STA is not a united front of revolutionary Marxists but a genuine broad left in which a commitment to union democracy, accountability and defence of members' interests should be the touchstones of membership.

The left in the NUT is the best placed of all to create a genuine class-struggle union and yet the mechanism of the SWP threatens this and the hard won gains of the past years.

As a result an open 'unity caucus' has been formed with the goal of building a genuine broad left which can mount the challenge to the right wing and new realism that teachers and the trade union movement so desperately need.

Broad but by no means left: NUT General Secretary Doug McAvoy hopes to ride tide of anger over SATS to win a new term of office.

School youth join protests at Eton cuts in school spending by Walsall council.

Re-run call for UNISON ballot

By Terry Smith

A re-run of the ballot for Regional convenor, the senior elected post in the London Region of UNISON, has been demanded after a series of irregularities came to light at the first meeting of the union's London Regional Council.

In the disputed election, left wing candidate Geoff Martin tied with Debbie Long, each receiving 59 votes. But under the proportional voting system used, Long won the post on the basis of more first preferences.

However it then emerged that a string of delegates who would have voted for Geoff Martin had been denied ballot papers, with officials claiming their registration papers must have been 'lost in the post'.

Martin, branding the ballot a 'total shambles', has now written to UNISON General Secretary Alan Johnson demanding a fresh ballot.

He and several prominent left wingers were elected to the Regional Executive, with ICH strike leader Candy Udwin topping the poll.

Satwinder Bhanra has been falsely imprisoned for 11 years. A protest picket on March 9 marked the anniversary.

HOME NEWS
THE ELECTIONS taking place in South Africa on the 27th and 28th April open up the risk of important political battles during the few weeks of campaigning, reports PIERRE FRANÇOIS in this second (and concluding) article.

THE RECENT evolution of the ANC has opened the door to all kinds of possibilities. At its base the organisation is almost totally disjointed, except in a few regions which function in a quasi-independent way from the 'centre'.

These include central Natal, which is in the hands of the charismatic Stalinst leader Harry Gwala, and the Eastern Cape. The latter is a totally deprived region on the economic plane but one in which the leaders of the mass movement of the 1980s still have influence.

Mandela and the centre that surrounds him try to complete this demobilisation by constantly appealing for 'calm' and insisting that everything is 'under control'.

Demobilise

The electoral campaign is consciously designed to demobilise whatever militant energy remains. Thanks to the 'judicious' commend of a team of American experts sent by President Clinton, all energy is directed into a primarily media-based campaign.

Moreover, the 'mass meetings' organised by the ANC are modelled on the 'population consultations' due to the heart of the American president with 'questions' and 'answers' from a specially selected audience.

The South African left, whose scattered ranks operate both within and without the ANC, has been seen to largely neutralised since 1990. For example, the trade unions of COSATU, who wanted to take forward the debate on the programme for economic construction, have had to admit defeat.

Failure

Their efforts to give a mass content to the social issues at stake failed to raise the interest of a substantial part of public opinion. Of course the lack of enthusiasm in the mass movement is a consequence of the economic crisis, which severely affects the popular layers, not just the underclass and unemployed, who make up more than 50% of the Black population, but also trade unionists in work.

But is this a reason for total capitulation – without even batting an eye lid, as has been the case since COSATU's special conference last autumn – by becoming part of the ANC's electoral slate even before trying to seriously negotiate about the programme of the organisation?

The warnings from certain sectors, notably from within the metal workers union NUMSA, have not been heeded, not least by a good part of the leaders of the trade union left, who have decided to be ANC candidates. This capitulation has been well orchestrated by the 'liquidationist' tendency that controls the Communist Party (including J. Slovo and J. Cronin) and which exercises, particularly on the central apparatus of the trade union confederation, a control bordering on dictatorship.

Marginalised

The CP is, in fact, trying to use the trade union movement to avoid being totally marginalised by Mandela, who is becoming more and more explicit in his ambitions to 'purge' the CP from a 'post-apartheid' ANC.

In essence nothing can stop this tendency, at least between now and the elections. The most aware sectors of the masses have more or less given up on the project of influencing the actual march of things, consigning it to a long term issue.

Conference appeal

The appeal recently launched by NUMSA for a national conference on the future of the 'South African left', endorsed by other popular movements and a few small left-wing organisations (notably WOSA) could, therefore, become an issue of important debate.

This is despite the fact that the CP, aware of the importance of keeping its organisational monopoly, is doing everything possible to sabotage the idea.

On this point the right-wing liquidationists who control the party are joining up with those nostalgic for Stalinism who, whatever opposed to both Mandela and Slovo, are fearful of an initiative which could by-pass them on their left.

Meanwhile, for the masses, the days after the elections will be salutary. They will have to engage in very long and hard battles. They need not just to recompose the mass movement, but also to find new people prepared to carry out a left-wing political project based on the masses, outside and probably against the ANC.
Before and after the elections

WOSA puts down a marker for socialism

Regular readers of Socialist Outlook will remember that in issue 56 we carried an analysis of the current situation in South Africa from NEVILLE ALEXANDER, the National Chairperson of the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA). Here, prominent WOSA activist SALIM VALLY, former-convener of WOSA’s strategy in the forthcoming elections and beyond.

AS COMRADE Neville outlined in his article for Socialist Outlook last month, the idea of a mass workers party in this country is not simply an ultra-left scheme; it actually has resonance in the working class and oppressed masses at the moment.

Neville mentioned, the survey in which 60 per cent of a random sample of black people here thought a mass workers party should be formed. Also the largest trade union in South Africa, NUMSMA, the Metalworkers Union, passed a resolution at its last congress saying a workers party may be necessary to unify the left and for workers demands.

It is not only in NUMSMA that this debate has taken place. In several unions there has been a very sharp debate around this question. It has raised a very real tension in the ranks of the South African Communist Party, with on the one hand serious of the Left denouncing the idea as being inspired by ‘dopes of the South African Intelligence Services’ and on the other hand members saying ‘no comrades, this is a serious question to which we must give serious consideration.

Workers’ List

So it is in this context that we in WOSA, along with several other left groups and individuals active in the trade unions and the Civic movement, have taken the decision to stand in the forthcoming elections as the Workers List Party as part of our ongoing strategy to bring about the formation of a mass workers party.

We do have serious misgivings about the elections. An interim constitution has already been decided upon and entrenched before a representative governmental structure has been established, and in particular, clauses have been included that preserve white domination in both the economic field and the civil service.

And that’s not to mention the power sharing compromise for the next five years and the constitutional court that will outlaw any radical attempts at wealth re-distribution.

Despite these misgivings, we took a significant majority of decisions in WOSA to take part in the elections in order to propagate the mass workers party idea.

We decided on the name the Workers List Party for two main reasons: firstly, we have a list of working class demands and secondly a list of working class candidates.

Premature

We do not call ourselves the Workers Party because this would be premature. We are very much aware that the timing of the launch of a real mass workers party will be of the essence, and that it should coincide with big working class struggles and significant working class support moving in our direction.

However, we believe that it is essential that a list of working class demands are raised in this election.

To those who say ‘well surely the ANC are promising jobs, homes and Free Education for all, and it’s simply sectarianism to stand against them’, we would answer with the following.

The ANC have at present made it very clear that they will not be prepared to challenge the power of big business interests, and will therefore be unable to do much more than tinker with the major inequalities and social problems we have in this country.

We are talking about a situation here where we have more than eight million people who are unemployed, probably an equal number who are homeless, we have people who are literally starving in some rural areas, we have hundreds, even thousands of street kids, children between the ages of 7 and 14 living on the streets...

And we have an extreme concentration of wealth in the hands of a few monopoly companies...and the ANC has dispelled its commitment to anything more than perhaps re-nationalising some public utilities recently privatised by the National Party!

For us, this is simply not acceptable as a strategy for true liberation.

We are called unrealistic because we argue for nationalisation under workers control of the commanding heights of the economy. But we respond that the real unreasonableness is believing that dependence on foreign investment, the world bank and the benevolence of capitalism is going to benefit many more than the small existing and emerging middle class as far as the black population of the country is concerned.

Labour costs

Capitalism will only invest here if it believes labour costs can be kept to a minimum, and in comparison with the Pacific rim countries, South Africa is not a major contender in the global beauty contest to attract high finance.

So we believe we are correct to point this out forcefully at this stage, to put our marker down because we are aware that our standing in the election serves primarily to increase our profile and raise working class demands.

Opposition

As far as the list of working class candidates goes, we stress that the sheer opposition to the make-up of the list of candidates adopted by other parties.

For example, on the ANC list, there are several prominent former collaborators with the apartheid structures, such as Nelson Ramachand, the leader of the Lebowa ‘homeland’, and General Ramashawana, former head of the Venda ‘homeland’ and now the leader of the National Peacekeeping Force.

He was involved in the ‘elimination’ of several ANC and MK comrades in his former role in the South African Security Police. They have greatly enriched themselves in the process to the tune of millions of Rand.

There are many others, including Iahmed Richards who was the person who actually turned us over to the security forces during the uprisings around the boycott of the tri-cameral parliament in 1983-84. So when we talk about a workers list we are talking about people who have served the workers struggle rather than riding on the back of it.

For all these reasons we believe our decision to stand in this election is a necessary one and is not an ultra-left scheme.

We also need to take the opportunity to point out that there are a number of us believe that repressive measures against the non-African left will be no so far away given the social pressures outlined, the ANC’s unwillfulness to take the radical measures necessary to deal with them, and their probable willingness to deal with working class reaction to this.

And that is not to mention the present threat of all-out civil war instigated by the extreme right with their strength in the state security structures and the civil service.

What we have embarked upon has serious risks, but also tremendous possibilities for progress, not only for us but for the left globally. We feel we have an enormous responsibility here to hold up the banner of real democracy, socialism and independent workers struggle, and also to expose the role of those who have for years held up the Stalinist societies as examples of socialism.

But we also think that our struggle is your struggle and urgently appeal to you to support us by contributing financially to our election fighting fund so that we can put up as many candidates as possible and really get our message across at a national and local level.

Cheques payable to WOSA can be deposited by bank transfer directly into:
Account no. 1979 3164533.
 Ned Bank, 100 Main Street, Johannesburg, South Africa.
Who lost Belarus?

By Colin Meade

'THese PEOPLE have got a problem,' said the chair of the US Senate's Intelligence Committee last week. He was referring to the American state's spying and terrorist network, the CIA, which, at an estimated cost of $3bn a year, faces the spending axe.

And indeed they do have a problem - a seemingly irresistible tide of Communist and crypto-Communist victories throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Not only do the CIA failed to stem this flood, but they do not even appear to have collated the readily available facts which add up to this astonishing picture.

How much damage did Russian super-mole Aldrich Ames do to US security? And who is keeping quiet about the facts on Capitol Hill?

In some ways the ironies of our times it falls to Socialist Outlook to outline the mandate of defence of the free world and put the question straight: who lost Belarus?

First of all, there are the election victories of the successor parties to the old ruling Communist parties and close allies in a series of countries over the past two years. These have occurred in Lithuania, Romania and Poland - in the latter case ousting a government of the elite of the Solidarity movement that did so much to shake the Stalinist edifice in Eastern Europe in the 1980s.

In many other countries similar parties view their political future with rising confidence.

One example is Hungary, long seen as a front-runner in pro-Westernism and privatization. The Socialist Party is showing up in the polls as the most popular party with 27 per cent support, up from 11 per cent at the 1990 elections.

And then there is East Germany, where the former-Communist PDS may pull ahead of the governing party, the right-wing CDU, in this year’s series of regional and national elections to become the second strongest party after the Social Democrats.

Overshadowed

Perhaps most important is Russia, where, overshadowed by the spectacular entry of Vladimir Zhinikovsky onto the front of the political stage, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and its associated Agrarian Party gained 100 seats between them, well ahead of Zhirinovsky’s (63) and the leading pro-Western formation, Gaidar’s Russia’s Choice (76) in the December 1993 elections.

Alongside these party victories, a series of leading figures from the old days of the Soviet bloc have met a similar fate from the dissolution of history.

Tanks represent nationalist sentiment in Azerbaijan

‘The ‘democratic’ governments were often little more than figureheads’

Notable cases are those of Gorbachev’s former foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze, now back in power in his native Georgia, and Gaidar’s first-secretary of the Azerbaijan

“The ‘democratic’ governments were often little more than figureheads”


And finally, Belarus. Here nationalist leader Stanislav Shushkevich was recently voted out as chairman of the Supreme Soviet and replaced by a figure from the old nomenklatura. This means the abandonment of Belarus’ neutrality as this former Soviet republic is firmly re-integrated into the Russian economic and security space.

This trend, which will continue, exposes the fact that the ‘democratic’ governments were in many cases little more than figureheads. The main centres of power remained in the hands of the former nomenklatura.

Furthermore, the Russian government has used its raw material supplies, and particularly its control of the region’s oil reserves, to discourage displays of excessive independence on the part of the countries of the Near Abroad.

The inability of the post-Soviet opposition governments to deal with the geopolitical realities - so far from Washington and so near to Moscow - is but one aspect of the utopianism prevalent in these circles, which led them to make promises they cannot keep.

At the heart of the perspectives of the free market enthusiasts lays a mistaken view of the international political and economic system which wholly ignores its discriminatory and power political qualities. Detached from all historical and geographical bearings, the liberal democratic systems and the world capitalism market are seen as perfectible systems without inherent defects.

According to this view, the problems of the world flow from the obstacles to the perfect functioning of the system presented by cultural backwardness, and among other things, by the Soviet-style regimes. Remove these obstacles so the theory went and the American model can, with American expert advice, be installed.

In reality, of course, the capitalist powers have no interest in creating competitors and their aim in the former Soviet bloc is to make a quick buck, exploit cheap labour in pursuit of competition with one another and get their hands on sources of raw materials.

Nationalist

As well as the pro-Western strand, the opposition has also had an extreme nationalist element. In both Georgia and Azerbaijan regimes came to power pledged to win conflicts with internal and external enemies.

As it became clear that there would be no such victory, the former rulers, with their networks, contacts in key ministries and agencies in the former republic and throughout the Soviet bloc, came back in.

Thus in Azerbaijan pro-Turkish nationalist Abulfaz Elchibey had to flee after Armenian advances in the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The former CPs have revived because they are the parties of powerful interests firmly rooted in social and economic realities. The Supreme Soviet in Belarus which replaced Shushkevich is full of collective farm chairman and state enterprise managers.

The membership of the Hungarian Socialist Party is dominated by skilled workers, professionals and middle managers. Recent local elections in Russia brought overwhelming victories for members of the nomenklatura - managers, party officials and the like.

Voters

Underneath the leadership layers are the voters, all those millions adversely affected or threatened by market reforms and social disintegration. While insisting that the ‘reform process’ will continue, as a Romanian newspaper put it, ‘the government has two faces, like Janus. It says one thing to the IMF and World Bank and another at home. Its aim is to keep the status quo and protect state property.’

However, these parties, even when in government, have no clear plan to restore the former Communist system. That system collapsed partly because its rulers decided to abandon it - because it was not viable.

Whole waves of technological innovation were passing these countries by as easy sources of fuel and raw materials were exploited to the point of collapse. As one Hungarian privatizer put it ‘we do not advocate for or against a monopoly, but we have to get together a functional telephone service.’

But it is not just their problem. The Soviet bloc was part of the Cold War arrangement devised as a means of keeping the Americans out, the Russians in and the provide the circumstances for German industrial power to be rooted in social and economic realities.

Such a push would also make for job creation for the American intelligence community as they tried to find out ‘Who lost Europe.’
USA gives up on Somalia

The US contingent in Somalia pulls out at the end of March. Socialist Outlook asked ASHA-KIN F. DUALE, Somalia's only woman barrister and prominent children's rights campaigner for a comment. Due to her representation of political dissidents during the Barre regime, she was forced to flee Mogadishu, and now lives in London.

SD: How do you assess the American involvement in Somalia?
AK: The US marines came on a humanitarian mission - to retrieve the guns their governmment had supplied to the Barre regime. But their intervention was extremely problematic. The image of the US soldier dragged through the streets of Mogadishu shows the outrage of the people. The media ignored the killing of 750 Somalis in those three days of clashes due to their pro-west bias. Famine is part of the history of every nation. By fighting back, Somalia have shown the world that those who claim to bring humanitarian aid are only acting in their own interests. People are happy that the US is leaving.

SD: How about other contingents?
AK: German troops were stationed in Beled Weyn. Among other problems they have caused, local people blame them for the lowering of the level of the Schellebe river. Most people depend on this river for their livelihood. The troops lived in luxury while the people suffered.

SD: Some see Farah Aidrade as a national hero, others as a bandit. What is the opinion of most Somalis?
AK: Aidrade is the reality of today's Somalia. People are proud that he was more than a match for the Americans. However, his role in the warlord conflicts means he has no place in the national reconciliation of Somalia.

SD: The UN has sponsored a number of conferences in Addis Ababa between clan militias.
AK: The UN has a hidden agenda. It is imposing from above a settlement using hand-picked 'leaders' who are not representative of the wishes of the Somali people. The UN has favoured some faction leaders above others.

SD: How do you suggest a genuine national reconciliation is achieved?
AK: It must come from the grass roots. Somalis were a nomadic people. We had a system of conciliation among clans, from clan elders up to district level and up to national level.

SD: The former British protectorate of Somaliland has declared itself the independent Republic of Somaliland. How do Somalis view this?
AK: Hargeisa and Burco in the North were bombed by Barre's forces. People in the south have no ill-feelings against people in the north. Barre also terrorised the south with summary executions. There should be a referendum to decide the future of the Union.

SD: The media concentrates on the manoeuvres of militia leaders, but are there agencies more accountable to the people?
AK: There are women's associations in the north and south who play an important role through they are sidelined by the United Nations. They are fully involved in clan conciliation, food distribution and national reconciliation.

Development related projects related to agriculture and irrigation depend on financial support. Although there are Somali non-governmental organisations striving to carry out these projects, money is only channelled through Western NGOs. This ties the development aid to the west.

Together we can stop the Hawks

BAA sells Hawk jets to Indonesia. Indonesians use them to kill civilians in occupied East Timor. More Hawks will be delivered in 1996. Do not provoke!

PROTEST outside the BAA AGM bring your organisation's banner.

26 April 12 noon Mandarin Hotel Grosvenor Square London

JOIN the Campaign Against USA arms Trade. Media stunt. 200 people are needed to represent the 10,000 East Timorese dead.

Contact: CAAAT, 11 Goodwin Street, Lon. N1 3HJ. 071-254 2293 for more information.

Fraticide in the Tamil Tiger movement

By Bala Kumar

A CRISIS among the leadership of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has shaken that organisation to its roots leading many to question its future as the dominant expression of Sri Lankan nationalism.

One time deputy leader of the LTTE, Gopalasamy Mahendran, better known by his nom de guerre 'Mahattaya', was arrested along with 120 of his supporters late last year by Tiger cadres.

What shocked Tiger members and supporters was the disclosure in December of his execution planned for January. Some of his loyalists had already faced the 'revolutionary justice' of a Hangman court. The charges were essentially treason to the LTTE and its absolute leader, V Prabhakaran.

According to the Tigers, Mahattaya, had been secretly collaborating with the Indian intelligence service and plotting to topple Prabhakaran.

Appeals from the Tamil expatriate lobby and from Amnesti International as well as a courageous demonstration of civilians in the Tiger stronghold of Jaffna peninsula led to re-

Tiger leader Vekkalal Prabhakaran with 'Mahattaya' Gopalasamy Mahendran (left)

1985 when 150 Sinhala civilians were slain in the streets or the massacre of Muslim civilians in the east in 1990.

This episode reflects the weakness of the Tigers organisation and Prabhakaran's strength. Nobody takes seriously the trumped up charges levelled against Mahattaya. Tamil support for the LTTE is sustained by fear and grieving respect.

Free elections it is likely they would continue minority support from the increasingly war weary and long suffering residents of Jaffna.

Their situation is grim. Since the renewal of hostilities in June 1990 between the Sri Lankan armed forces and the LTTE, the government has mounted an economic blockade of the Peninsula seeking to starve Tamil civilians into revolting against the Tigers. The Air Force and Navy regularly bombard homes, schools, places of worship and medical centres.

Many would seek for peace with the chauvinist Sri Lankan government to regain some sanity in their lives. Apparently Mahattaya and some others favoured immediate negotiations with the government to a political solution short of an independent Tamil state of Eelam.

In a movement where democratic debate is alien, where young boys and women are cannon fodder and the aims of a liberation struggle have been subordinated to those of a power hungry clique, there was only one way Prabhakaran could respond to any challenge to his authority.

Can the Tiger cadres be weaned away from their self destructive ideology? Will the reformation of many marginalise the LTTE creating a new democratic space and a renewal of thinking on the politics of Tamil struggle?

On all this and much more the progressive wing of Tamil nationalism and the broader Sri Lankan left will be tested.
French youth force retreat on cheap labour

By Chris Brooks

Despite violent police attacks and three sets of concessions from Edouard Balladur's conservative government, mass mobilisations against the cheap labour 'youth Smic' scheme continue unabated in France.

According to Charles Pasqua, minister of the interior, over 230,000 marched in towns outside Paris last Thursday, while 52,000, mainly students, filling place Denfert-Rochereau in Paris were later charged by CBS riot police.

The size of the militant mobilisations outside Paris was especially striking. The towns of just 50,000 or 60,000 people had demonstrations thousands-strong.

The Contract of Professional Insertion (CIP) aims to place 750,000 youth in workplaces for six months on weekly wages between £50 and £134 - far below the minimum wage or 'Smic'. The contract is only renewable once.

Responding to initial protests, employment minister Michel Giraud met 7 March with the CIP 'partners', the employers' gang-pressed into sponsoring the scheme, to agree a major retreat.

Youth with college diplomas on the contract will now be paid 80 per cent of the agreed minimum wage for the industry, for 80 per cent of the time.

Employers now have to provide Titanic job offers, running which has alarmed the trades union federations. The CUT opposes any acceptance of the new arrangement. According to Force Ouvriere's Marc Blondel, the tutorials are 'reactionary' and threaten a return to the power of the 'apprentices' dairies' compiled by employers in the 19th century.

The anger on the demonstrations has been marked. One riot police commissioner commented: 'For the first time in a 25-year career, I felt afraid. We felt the desire of the demonstrators was to injure us physically and, for some, to kill us.'

Unemployment, especially amongst the youth, is becoming a pressing social problem in France. Over 4.6 million are jobless or on work schemes.

The 'Act Against Unemployment' (ACI) campaign has been launched by left-wing trade unionists to mobilise for radical measures like reducing the working week.

The Ligue communiste revolutionnaire, French section of the Fourth International, is calling for a one-day general strike to force Balladur's resignation.

This week's Liberation newspaper, Rouge, explains over 'a quarter of society victimised by the crisis has come into action.'

Crisis for student unions

By Jake Farrier

APRIL'S conference of the National Union of Students will face crucial decisions about whether to liquidate the union into a charitable institution.

Preempting this, leftist students are attempting to prepare for alternative organisation to the NUS.

The poverty of leadership offered by the NUS is shown by its response to the government's 30 per cent cut in the grant. If trade unionists, students or even prisoners faced such a cut there would have been a massive organised response. There has been a response to the grant cut - but it has largely flowed around the NUS leaders.

When an impressive 10,000 students marched in central London last month, they did so under the inexperienced lead of the student left. Socialist Worker students foolishly attempted to break police lines and charge Parliament.

Meanwhile, stewards, many of whom are members of Left Unity (which reflects the positions of Socialist Organiser) or Socialist Organiser staff, joined forces with the police to prevent students breaching through to Parliament and aggressively herded protesters back onto the route, while police attacked the part of the march nearest Parliament.

George Napier, a student who did not participate in the attempted break to Parliament, was one of many violently assaulted by the police. "A tall policeman strode towards me swinging a truncheon - I am hit on the head again, my neck across my shoulders and then my kidneys. As I scrabble up the truncheon smashes my right hand and then I am swamped by police, pushed down into the gutter, my limbs knell on, twisted. "At the time," George adds with restraint "I really annoyed me that no one came to help me. Thinking back on it now, I realise that it was the organisers of the march who were to blame - they were more concerned about 'liaison' with the police than defending students exercising their right to protest." Quite right.

In the run-up to NUS' conference however, Left Unity candidates are looking more credible than this behavior would suggest - mainly because of the total isolation of Labour Students, which has held the leadership since 1982. Left Unity candidate Sarah Willings was elected NUS Women's Officer last week by 66 to 24 for the labour candidate and 35 for 'Re-Open Nominations'.

Rank and file student demos lack effective self defence

This strikingly high vote for RON partly reflects a confused layer to the right of Labour which may be volatile at the national conference.

Labour Students is the architect of the plan to protect the NUS from government attacks on automatic NUS membership and student services by converting the union into a charity.

Its careers centre prioritises services and the enhanced prestige of status may offer.

They consider it a victory that the forthcoming Education Act retains union's right to control its finances, while taking away automatic membership of student unions.

Some student unions already hold charity status, in whole or for part of their activity. On occasions, charity status can be skilfully employed to give student unions financial advantages while retaining well-funded student campaigns free from the control of the Charities Commission.

This is not the plan of the Labour Student Leaders. They counterpose charity status to student campaigning. So does a section of the student left.

In this context the student left must be slowly re-oriented through maintaining the orientation of the student unions to campaigning. Premature 'rank and file' national student federation risk giving up the fight in the mass student organisations.

Instead we need a delegate-based organisation of all student unions who wish to defend the role of the NUS as a national coordination of campaigns, and to carry out that coordination when the NUS refuses to do so.
Defend Jane Brown
Stop Hackney's witch-hunt!

By Roland Rance

Governors at Hackney's Kingsmead School continue to back 'Romeo and Juliet' case headteacher Jane Brown. She is still threatened with dismissal by Hackney Council in a determined attack on lesbian and gay rights, union rights and equal opportunities.

The Labour council, which is receiving rare enthusiastic support from the gutter press, even threatened legal action against the governors in a desperate attempt to scare them into line.

The school governors' investigation into the allegations against Jane Brown is expected to issue a report next week. Although details of the case are supposed to remain confidential, the Council regularly discusses them with the press.

In further attacks on Jane Brown's rights, the Council has denied her right to union representation, has released her name to the press, and has banned her from speaking to the press herself.

Hundred

The Kingsmead Support Group has organised two bobbies of Hackney Council, attended by several hundred people.

The group, established by friends and supporters of Jane Brown to organise support and solidarity for Jane and the school against the vicious and homophobic attacks by the press and to oppose the unfair and partial treatment by Hackney Council, has opposed all attacks on equal opportunities.

Outraged by right-wing Hackney Council: Education Secretary Petten

Nevertheless, the group has itself been the subject of attacks and rumours of racism in its attitude to Hackney Director of Education Gus John.

Supporters

The group points out in a letter refuting these allegations that supporters of the campaign include members of Hackney CRE, Hackney North MP Diane Abbott, Linda Bellos and the London Collective of Black Governors.

The Voice, 'Capital Gay: the Pink Paper and the Hackney Gazette have all failed to print this letter.

In its letter the group writes:

Gus John has an understanding of the historical oppression of class, race and gender. Why is this not extended to the oppression of those who are lesbian and gay?

In a recent article in the Voice, Gus is quoted as saying 'equal opportunities are about equality, not about special treatment for lesbians or anyone else'.

Surely the core of the argument is that because of the historic oppression of sections of society, and the resulting widely held stereotypes and prejudices against them, people do not come from equal starting points, and equal opportunities are all about addressing the resulting 'needs' which are not the same for everyone."

The Kingsmead Support Group is campaigning against the ripping-off of Hackney Council's Equal Opportunities Policy. The council's attempt to divide the borough's minorities must not be allowed to succeed.

Messages of support and donations can be sent to Kingsmead Support Group, c/o Hackney NUT, 219 Mare Street, London E8 3QH.

Exhilarating battle of wills

Draupadi's Robe written and directed by Raman Kaur performed by Chandica Arts Group, reviewed by K Govindan.

IN THE EPIC poem, The Mahabharata, princess Draupadi is stalled and lost in a game of dice by her husband to his cousin. When the victor unravels her Davis attempting to disrobe her, he finds it without an end, so her honour is preserved.

This exhilarating play performed by a new theatre group featuring a young cast of South Asian origin draws from the epic's theme of women as sources of energy, power and resistance.

Harjit and Priya are two university-going women and the best of friends. One day Harjit is seen dating a (shock, horror, shock) Muslim boy, by a bobby neighbour.

News of this is not slow travelling to her Hindu parents, before Harjit realises what's happening, a deeply old chant from Canada arrives in Britain. Her parents have obtained the horoscope of a suitable match to marry her off before she causes them further embarrassment before the community.

The rest of the play revolves around the battle of wills between daughter and parents and the evolution of Harjit and Priya's friendship into sexual love.

Draupadi's Robe is a bold exploration of the status of Asian women in society and the clash in attitudes between different generations of women.

The play breaks new ground in its overt treatment of sexuality within the context of racist Britain, the patriarchal family and conservative social beliefs.

Punjabi and English are used interchangeably reflecting the shared and conflicting identities of young Asians. While some of the play may be lost on a non-Punjabi speaker the meaning is generally clear enough.

Of note too is the extensive use of verse, often stanzas from the poetry of Punjabi feminist Amrita Pritam; these recitations are interrupted by dance and song giving the audience a chance to absorb the dialogue.

Tight knit

All of life in a tight knit community is found here. The noisy Amrits who always has the latest gossip and is never ready to dispose of gossip—'statistics show love marriages have higher divorce rates than arranged marriages'.

There are jokes apolitically borrowed from Hindi movies Indian film songs and British popular culture.

While the happy ending seems too good to be true and the treatment of sexuality a trifle superficial, there are outstanding performances by Parminder Sekhon (Priya), Poulomi Desai (Harjit) and Sahabz Nazir (Aruny).

About all this production heralds the coming of age of a confident and culturally aware generation of British Asians. Their hopes, fears and preoccupations. Bravo!
WE HAVE always considered the embargo on Serbia as prefiguring possible direct aggression.

The shooting down of four Serbian planes may be a first step towards such aggression: or the imperialists may keep on scaring about neutral or peaceful pressure.

Especially given the part the barrel of a gun barrier attitude of French imperialism and the press campaigns here, we prioritised the campaign against the embargo, while explaining our overall analysis of the war.

In a war between Serbs, Croats and Muslims, we don’t support any of the belligerents. Unlike you and your international co-thinkers, we have never campaigned for support for Bosnia, or Serbia or Croats.

Yes, we certainly have established links with Serbian trade unions, specifically with the principal independent union, Genkom, which is against the war and against Milosevic. If we had the opportunity we would be delighted to establish similar contacts with Croatian unions.

We and Milatovic Militant oppose all forms of blockade and economic embargo, or arms, imposed by imperialism on the belligerents in ex-Yugoslavia (or elsewhere). But we don’t campaign around this question, whereas you do.

You support Bosnia, and favour the Bosnian regime having more arms. You invoke the right of nations to self-determination at the same time as you defend ‘multi-ethnic’ Bosnia which refuses the right to accede to the majority of Serbs and Croats who don’t want to live within the Bosnian state.

Same right

The Bosnian Muslims have the right to self-determination just as much as the Serbs or the Albanians or the Croats.

But we don’t think the solution lies in establishing bourgeois states in ex-Yugoslavia, ‘multi-ethnic’ or not.

Socialist Outlook writes: ‘Yugoslavia is dead and can not be rebuilt’. The Yugoslav regime of Tito is dead and cannot be rebuilt. But what can and must be rebuilt is a bigger and better socialist Yugoslavia.

Bigger, because embracing the whole of the Balkans. Better because based on workers’ democracy.

That’s why we defend the traditional communist slogan of a ‘Socialist federalization of the Balkans’. Not an immediate solution, but a class solution.

Our analysis starts from the process of restoration of capitalism in ex-Yugoslavia, of the use of nationalism by all the non-socialist regimes, of the role of imperialism.

That leads us to ‘prioritise’ opposition to imperialist intervention and to give no support to Milosevic’s Serbia, Tudjman’s Croatia, or Erbegevic’s Bosnia.

Apart from a few token Serbs and Croats, the government of Sarajevo is largely Islamic.

When Socialist Outlook talks about the ‘multi-ethnic’ defense in Tuzla and elsewhere you also explain unwisely why we shouldn’t support it.

You pinpoint the problem: ‘those brigades are part of the overall defence of Bosnia’. They’re part of the armed forces of the capitalist Muslim-dominated government.

It would be different if the multi-ethnic workers’ defence militias were against the government, the Muslim workforces and militias that also commit atrocities.

[International] Workers Aid would be different if it were not providing material aid for Bosnian workers’ organisations, and not smuggling in your line of military support for the Bosnian regime.

You write: ‘Socialist Outlook has no illusions in the UN or imperialism. We are against Western military intervention’.

But how is it compatible with ‘the necessity to open Tuzla airport, easily within the power of the UN’? They’ve opened it.

The UN on its own couldn’t open a tin of baked beans. Its only strength comes from the fact that it has backed by imperialist military force, or the threat of it.

Socialist Outlook welcome readers’ letters. Letters over 400 words will be edited.
**WHAT’S HAPPENING**

Monday 28
A prospect of peace in the North of Ireland? Socialist Youth public forum with Liam MacAulay 7.30pm Union Club Pershore Road Selly Park Birmingham

Tuesday 29
TOWER Hamlets 6 Defence Campaign pledge 9.30am Thames Magistrates Court Bow Road

EXTENDING Universal Benefits Open meeting of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MP’s with Prof. Peter Townsend 7pm Committee Room C 1 Parliament Street London

Wednesday 30
ANGOLA Emergency Campaign Launch of Parliament 7pm Room booked in the name of Bob Hughes MP details 071 387 6771

Thursday 31
DEFEND Cuban Public meeting and slide show with Cuban First Secretary Manuel Vinas 7.30pm Old White Horse 261 Brixton Rd SW9 Brixton tube APRIL

Tuesday 5
DEMONSTRATE against the Child Support Act 730am regional office in Dudley, Plymouth, Hastings, Birkhead and Millbank, central London

Saturday 9
COMMUNITIES of resistance against racism and fascism national rally 1-5pm Pakistani Community Centre Stockport Road Longsight Manchester

Monday 11
WHAT’S in South African elections for black workers? Socialist Outlook public forum with veteran South African revolutionary Charlie van Gleden 7.30pm Union Club Pershore Road Selly Park Birmingham

Mon 11-Thur 14
NATIONAL Union of Students conference Winter Gardens Blackpool

Saturday 16
CAMPAIGN Against the Child Support Act national conference 11am-6pm Kingsway College Siddom Street off Grays Inn Road Kings Cross WC1 details PO box 287 WNW 5GU

END THE Blockade: Cuba Solidarity Campaign day school Conway Hall Red Lion Square WC1

Sunday 17
BERT JANSCH plays benefit for campaign against M11 link 7.30pm Hatchette Arts Grove Green Road Leytonstone E11 £4.50/£2 details 081 527 8957

Fridays
CAMPAIGN Against the Arms Trade Candelight Concert 7.30pm St Martin-in-the-Fields Trafalgar Square tickets £5/£2/£2 from 071 930 0089

Sunday 24
MOZAMBIQUE Angola Committee AGM 11am-3pm BDAF 22 The Ivories 8-8 Northampton St Islington N1 tube: Highbury & Islington

Tuesday 26
LOBBY of British Aerospace AGM Marriott Hotel Grosvenor Square W1

Thursday 28
MARCH to commemorate International Workers Memo- rial Day 12.00 Euston Station to Parliament details Construction Safety Campaign 071 537 7220

CAMPAIGN Against Haz- ards in London meeting 2.30pm - 6.30pm Church House Dean’s Yard off Great Smith Street details 071 226 5436

LOBBY of Parliament against deregulation 2.30pm - 7.30pm

Sat 30
LIBERATION editorial meeting 11am sharp South Manchester

LEEDS TUC May Day March and rally 11.30am assemble outside the art gallery

MAY
Saturday 7
GERMANY’S role in Europe: day-long seminar with Peter Gowen (New Left Review), Collin Meadle (Socialist Outlook) and Gun- ter Minnerup & Gus Fagan (Labour Focus on European Europe). Details: Peter on 071 607 2789

Wednesday 21
ANGOLA Emergency Campaign Lobby of Parliament 7pm Committee room booked in the name of Bob Hughes MP details 071 387 6771

Sat 21
NATIONAL free speech day - picket your local McDon-aid’s details London Greenpeace S Caledonian Road N1 9DX

Saturday 28
ANTI NAZI League Carnival march from Kennington Park to carnival in Brockwell Park South London Route venue changed again

JUNE
Saturday 4
DEMONSTRATE to close down Campbellfield Kidlington, Oxford

Saturday 11
FIGHT for Full Employment! Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network conference Manchester details: 19 Moorlands Avenue Leeds LS3 1AP

Wednesday 22
ANGOLA Emergency Campaign Lobby of Parliament 7pm Committee room booked in the name of Bob Hughes MP details 071 387 6771

Saturday 25
ANTI-Apartheid Movement Extraordinary General Meet- ing

JULY
Fri 22 - Fri 29
INTERNATIONAL Youth Summer Camp Tuscany Italy leaflets/details from Liberation, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

NOTICE
SOCIALIST Outlook will be skipping a week to avoid going to press on the Easter and May Day bank holidays. Issue 66 will be dated Saturday 16 April and we’ll be back fort- nightly from then.

Fourth International consolidates publications

Spanning the world

By Duncan Chapple

THE FOURTH International is consolidating its system of publications. Critique Communist, the magazine of the LCR in France, has been merged with Qua- trimbre Internationale, the an- nual French-language review of the FI. The new large-format, perfect-bound quarterly journal is called Critique Communiste. The final issue of Interna- tional Marxist Review is in its ‘old’ review format come out the press this week.

Entitled “Capitalism’s new economic order — restructuring the labour process”, the bar- gain-priced 144-page book in- cludes Claude Gabriel, Andy Kilmister and Eugenio Preo on globalisation, ‘new production’ and New Management tech- niques. It is available for just £2.50, plus 50p for pdp from Socialist Outlook.

International Viewpoint, the bi-monthly review of the Fourth International, is al- ready showing the benefits of more resources.

Enhanced graphic design, shorter times between copy dates and delivery and a new nine- country network of circulation representatives sold to a UK price cut to make the glossy re- view even better value.

Regular readers already kn- ow about our combined intro- duc tory offer on Socialist Out- look and International Viewpoint.

As part of drive to increase the readership of the in-depth magazine in Britain, the special £2.50 price is now to be continued after the first year and in open to those who pay in other ways than direct debit.

This will under a major ex- pansions in the circulation of In- ternational Viewpoint. Direct debit subscribers will be stepped up amongst students, and also among current and past readers of Fourth Internationalist publi- cations in Britain.

Special mailings are being prepared for past subscribers and for sympathisers in Britain of the Fourth International.

The press reorganisation has also been reflected in increased interest in publications of the Amsterdam-based Interna- tional Institute for Research and Education. A great anthology — “Women’s Lives in the New Global Economy” — elabo- rates themes touched on in the new International Marxist Re- view. Penny Duggan and Heather Driver introduce the substantial dossier by demon- strating how feminist and work- ers’ struggles can re-assert women’s right to decide their future.

The anthology is available for £5 including pdp from So- cialist Outlook.
Bosnia deal won’t bring peace

By Geoff Ryan

THE OLD Ottoman bridge in Mostar stood for over four centuries. It survived over 30 earthquakes and numerous wars. It was finally destroyed by the shells of the Croat HVO. Now a fragile footbridge, that only the bravest can cross, has been installed in its place.

This new bridge across the Neretva is a fitting symbol of the accord for a Muslim-Croat federation: a timid hope but perhaps also a new trap designed to snare the weakest.

The way in which the Croat-Muslim federation is being formed greatly suits the nationalist parties. Non-nationalist and secular parties such as those who run Tuzla, risk being marginalised.

If the nationalist parties remain in charge there will be new forms of ethnic partition of Bosnia-Hercegovina with a federation split into cantons which will be empowered to take sides.

There will also be a Serb Republic of Bosnia where ethnic cleansing will continue. It is reported that in Banja Luka there has been no let-up in ethnic cleansing.

The Radio Frankfurt of December 2 reported they have eye-witness accounts of three camps, each with about two thousand detainees, still in operation.

Some opposition to this new formation of Bosnia-Hercegovina is beginning to emerge. Seven hundred inhabitants of Sarajevo demonstrated against partition and for the right to live together.

On March 19, at the initiative of the Student Coordination Against Ethnic Cleansing, demonstrations and meetings were held in at least 13 major cities in Europe. Students from Belgrade, Zagreb and Pristina (Kosovo) took part.

Belgrade struggle

When a delegation from the Co-ordination went to Belgrade they were met with complaints from Serbian students that they had been abandoned internationally, even though they had been fighting against the Serbian regime for several years.

Activities were also organised in the United States, Moscow and Israel. In Jerusalem Jews and Arabs demonstrated together against the ethnic partition of Bosnia-Hercegovina. In Paris over a thousand demonstrators took part in a demonstration. These are important beginnings that we have to build on.

Theatre may be running again in Sarajevo, even along Sniper Alley, but the proposed Croat-Muslim federation is no solution.

CONVOY!

By Alan Thornett

THE SECOND, European wide, International Workers Aid convoy to Tuzla in central Bosnia is on target to go through later this month.

Despite the recent reaction—any deal being pushed by the USA for the partition and canonisation of Bosnia along ethnically cleansed lines, Bosnia is still fighting for its existence against the Serbs.

It is still cut off from the outside world apart from inadequate UN convoys and the slender link of the Southern route.

Despite TV images of extra UN convoys getting through since the Bosnian-Croat cease-fire line in 1998, in central Bosnia, where both resistance to Serb attacks and desperate need of the bare essentials of life continues.

The need for the aid and for the international working class solidarity represented by IWA, with a people and working class fighting for its existence, remains in full force.

Office and warehouse facilities have been established in the southern part of Split in preparation for 20–25 lorries from campaigns in six or seven European countries which will arrive there by April 7.

Specialised lorries have been purchased for the journey through the Southern route over the mountains and into the Tuzla region.

In fact IWA intends to step up its aid shipments, particularly its bread programme with a ‘rolling convoy’ over the next few months.

Tuzla unions

Lorries from campaigns in several countries will make repeated journeys to Split whilst specialised lorries take the aid through to Tuzla, and deliver it to the trade unions who will hand it to individual families.

The campaign in Britain sends a lorry from London on this stage on 2 April to link up with the campaign in France and then travel to Split. The lorry has to be fitted with aid over the next ten days.

The priority is for basic foods—particularly flour, sugar and cooking oil for the bread programme.

Other basic foods can be considered but cultural difference need to be remembered.

Clothing is a low priority with the exception of new children’s clothing which is a part of the women’s appeal.

Donations and information: IWA Britain 12-14 Thornton Street London SW9 0LB Tel 071 787 8822.

IWA International office: Box 6507, 11363, Stockholm, Sweden. Tel 08 8612 1248. Fax 08 673 03 45.1.

Should newspapers take sides?

Fred Walker

known for.

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