Bosses plump for Blair...

Tories’ dream would bring Labour’s nightmare

Why the left must stand: Centre pages
Birmingham campaign for public services

by Bob Whitehead

A 'COMMUNITY Conference' is planned for October 22 at Birmingham Union Club. It seeks to unite providers and users of public services in a campaign of resistance to further government cuts.

Tens of millions have been taken from the City Council by central government over the last fifteen years. Attacks on local democracy and on the workforce, through compulsory competitive tendering, have continued relentlessly. Despite current government weakness, more are threatened. It is high time to re-create a spirit of resistance: the best way is to build unity.

Sponsorship has already come from UCATT, UNISON, NUJ and the NUT. Several Labour Party wards have added support and more are expected. If the Trades Council and District Labour Party agree sponsorship the local labour movement can really swing behind this conference.

So far the focus for the campaign has been council services, but the last planning meeting decided to widen the scope of the conference to include the crisis in the local NHS. Residents, pensioners, community groups and the voluntary sector are being contacted. Of course only widespread industrial action can halt attacks on public services. But the prospect of such action is brought closer by uniting all those on the receiving end of Tony policy. It will help cut into the divide and rule policies of CCT, 'purchasers', 'sellers' and 'charterers', allied to new management techniques.

The Community Conference initiative originated from Birmingham Socialist Campaign Group but the intention is for it to take on all of its own as a democratic, united and dynamic body.

Planning meetings are on the third Wednesday of the month, except for June, which will be on the 8th at 7.30pm in the Union Club.

St Helens jobs fight led into blind alley

by Glenn Voris, Treasurer St. Helens Trades Council

RECENT JOB losses in St. Helens (700 at Pilkington's and 500 at Smith Kline Beecham) led to two 1000-strong demonstrations in the town, and the formation of a committee involving local trades unions and the Labour Party, which decided to organise a demo and rally in London, followed by a lobby of Parliament, on May 25.

Jim Bond, convener of Pilkington's AEEU, made himself coordinator of this March For Jobs campaign. St. Helens TUC decided to support the campaign, which could mobilise the people of St. Helens and also help towards rebuilding the Trades Council.

Jamboree

However, serious problems started to arise as this labour movement oriented campaign was diverted into a popular front jamboree.

Bond, frightened of any left-winger influence in the campaign, put pressure on a pub landlord to cancel an SWP meeting with leading local trades unionists. Management at Pilkington's and Beecham's saw this as a green light to intimidate the union speakers.

The right-wing Labour council and many rightist trade union leaders supported Bond's actions, saying that they didn't want the SWP to hijack the campaign.

Any talk of strike action was scrapped. The campaign's sole effort was to organise an appeal to the Tories, demanding more regional aid to create permanent jobs - a recipe for disaster. Many trade unions now have little desire to become involved.

Frightened by possible Liberal Democrat advances in the local elections, the council at first supported the campaign. As soon as the elections ended without lost seats they virtually dropped out. While claiming to support the Beechams workers, they were secretly discussing with Beechams management to turn most of the site into a car park.

Churches

Jim Bond's enormous involvement in the Church means that about a third of the coaches to the London demo will be filled from the churches. Many church leaders, including Archbishops, will speak at the rally, as will Liberal David Alton and Tory Nicholas Winterton.

On a more positive note, Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures will speak at the rally, and together with St. Helens TUC will be on the lobby of Parliament. The campaign has mobilised large sections of workers in the town.

Unfortunately the Beechams workers have now decided to give up the fight and accept the redundancy offer.

Despite the obvious weaknesses, St. Helens TUC has been able to use the campaign to revitalise its organisation, gaining around 12 new affiliates so far.

■ Socialist Forum Meeting, June 8, 7.30pm, Nags Head, St. Helens
Tory dream would bring Labour nightmare

COMPARED with today's Labour activists, the legendary Hobson had plenty of choice.
None of the established candidates regarded as front-runners offers any kind of socialist perspective. Worse, there is a real threat that the new leader could herald a new lurch to the right.
The only significant strength of John Smith's party as leader was that he brought a welcome respite from the frenzied witch-hunting and abandonment of policies under Kinnock.
And though he sought to stamp his authority on the Labour Party by high-profile conflict with the unions over aspects of One Member One Vote at last year's conference, Smith himself, with his instinctive alliance with the traditional right-wing of the union bureaucracy has been described by UNI-
SON's Mr Ftix Tom Sawyer as 'the best friend the unions have had for a long time'.
But all this could change. Barely had Smith's body begun to cool before Tory watchers began to weigh in with their at-
tempt to promote the candidacy of their chosen young pretender, Tony Blair.
This has been linked to ef-
torts to hurried through the elec-
tion process, one aspect of which would be to minimise de-
bate and consultation inside the unions.
Economically described as a 'moderniser', a bland term which has replaced 'moderate' as the right wing.
Blair represents the young, am-
bitious wing of the Labour movement but is most remote from the unions and hostile to the party's historic links with them.
It was Blair who led the crusade to break Labour from any commitment to repeal the Tory anti-worker laws.
Now, as Shadow Home Secre-
tary, he has taken on the con-
stantly growing power of police powers.
Against these two stands the 'traditionalist' John Prescott, and the allegedly 'left-wing' wing Robin Cook (so left wing he was managing the election of his own for-
mer leader).

Common policy
But Brown, Cook and Prescott are all keen co-signatories to a common policy doc-
ument pressing for greater involvement of private capital in public sector projects. And Prescott, supposedly the hard defender of the union link, was the on one widely credited with putting John Smith's chilli out of the fire in last year's OMBO debate.
Despite the schismes noted by Smih as the man who allegedly made Labour electable, even right wing union leaders such as the GMB's John Edmonds, some-what influenced the Labour Party's lack of any clear campaigning stance, going as far as to support left initiatives like the coming Trafalgar conference.
The main explanation for the party's current high rating in the polls and success in May's council elections is not Labour's strength but the crisis of John Major's scandal-ridden min-

Small wonder, therefore, that the Tory press should seek now to ensure that any future Labour government comes to office with a 'safe' leadership firmly committed to the interests of big business.
But as for workers, their ability to resist the demands of an important layer of left trade unions for a new organisation, following financial scandals with the So-

The United Left (Gauche Unions) is the result - an ali-
ance which has the aim of continuing after the elections are over.
In Britain, the crisis of Ma-

Socialism, which, since the fall of the Iron Curtain, has emerged as that country's principal left-opposition body, will be leading a di-
verse list of candidates. Among them will be a member of the left-wing Party of Communist Refoundation (PGR) in Italy.

This marks an encouraging trend amongst left parties and organisations to build more concrete links - an im-
portant counterweight to the existing links between Europe's ruling parties.
In the French-speaking re-
gion of Belgium the election campaign coincides with the 100,000 demonstrat

Tory dream would bring
Labour nightmare

Left lines up against Maastricht

FIVE YEARS on from the last elections and the so-
called European Union is no more than a supermar-
ket, a super-bank and a greasy super-power.
For the continent's ruling classes the lunacy of the Un-
on is clear: dismantle the Welfare State and wage war on the working class, youth, women and immigrants.
Our verdict is unanimous: this Europe is not our Europe.
The up-coming European elections will see left-wing parties and alliances cam-
paigning for an alternative.
The left will enter the Stras-
bourg parliament in greater numbers than ever before. At 150,200 seats, it is a simple message: Europe yes - but Maastricht no.
In Germany, the ex-Commu-

Socialist Outlook calls for a Labour vote in the Euro elec-
tions not because we endorse

EDITORIAL
Unite the anti-racist struggle!

By Jeff Lowe

EVERYONE claims to be in favour of anti-racist and anti-fascist unity. But the more we talk about unity the less there is. Not one of the existing anti-racist organisations unites all those opposed to racism and fascism and all have serious weaknesses. It would be much better if the existing anti-racist groups united in a single organisation, led by Black people. But at the moment anti-racist unity will almost certainly mean building local coalitions to campaign around specific issues.

• The Anti Nazi League is predominantly a front controlled by the Socialists Workers Party.
• Youth Against Racism in Europe – whilst less sectarian than ANL – is under the control of Militant Labour.
• The Anti-Racist Alliance has a lot of support amongst trade unions and in the Black communities, but refuses to collaborate with other organisations. Its current leadership is also under attack by Black activists for failing to deal with any of the major issues facing black communities in the UK.

Socialist Outlook has long argued for unity in action against racist attacks. We have tried to bring together all those who want to oppose racism and fascism.

We supporters played an important role in the Unity Committee that organised the successful May Day march against racism in Manchester. We have stressed the importance of the campaign to close down Campfield.

Much of the left has ignored Campfield. None of the anti-racist organisations has made it a central issue. Yet the detention of large numbers of Jamaicans over Christmas received wide publicity and led to protests by the Transport Union leader Bill Morris. Racism, factory hunger strikes by Algerian detainees have also made it a focus.

Campfield

Campfield is important because it presents the main threat to Black people in Britain, and elsewhere in Europe, comes from the racist, capitalist state. This does not mean we should ignore fascist activities and racist street attacks. We have to insist on the right of Black people to defend themselves from racist attacks, whoever the perpetrators. Self defence is no offence! The labour movement must rally behind black communities which fight back against racist violence.

But state racism and street racism reinforce each other. State racism legitimises racism generally. Racism is widespread throughout society, including large sections of the working class. It will not be defeated just by actions of minorities.

We have to take anti-racism into the heart of the labour movement – as well as amongst women’s organisations, the lesbian and gay movements, and young people – to unite with Black, Jewish and Irish communities.

Racism and fascism are not just moral questions. They divide the working class and make it more difficult to fight for our interests.

The roots of racism run deep. They are not just a response by backward sections of the working class to lack of jobs or houses. But these material conditions undoubtedly fuel racist responses. It is no accident that the fascist BNP has been able to win support in run down areas like the Isle of Dogs and former mining communities in the East Midlands.

The recent TUC march against racism was a welcome development. But as long as the trade union and Labour Party leaders refuse to fight to defend jobs and wages, and fail to mount campaigns against unemployment and homelessness, they help to create an environment in which people turn to the fascists because they appear to offer the only radical solutions.

Leaflets issued by the Labour Party in Millwall – despite the good campaign reported elsewhere in this issue – show a real failure to understand the nature of fascism. They claim ‘Business will not support the BNP. This may be true at present but not always so. In Italy and Germany big business was the main backer of Mussolini and Hitler.

The working class must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets. But that can only be done by fighting for solutions that meet the real needs of working people.

Discriminations of the evils of racism and fascism – however well-intentioned – are not enough. Efforts to unite the anti-racist struggle must be stepped up.

A useful first step would be a united campaign to defeat BNP leader John Tyndall in the Dagenham by-election on June 9.

Kick racism out of football

by David Thomas

In 1993 the Commission for Racial Equality and the Professional Footballers Association launched the Lets Kick Racism Out Of Football Campaign.

Press conferences, articles in match-day programmes and the decision by clubs to ban and support the prosecution of ‘fans’ responsible for racist behaviour was wellcome.

However the recent First Division play off game between Millwall and Derby County shows football supporters have a long way to go before racism is eradicated from the terraces.

In an evening punctuated by violence Millwall supporters invaded the pitch to assault Derby County players. Derby took the unprecedented decision to substitute their two black players five minutes before the end of the game because they were concerned for their safety.

This is not the first racist activity at Millwall this season. In August Ricky Otto of Southend was subjected to sustained racist abuse. During Nottingham Forest’s recent visit to the Den a Millwall ‘fan’ tried to run on the pitch to assault Stan Collymore, Forest’s centre forward.

During the late 70’s and early 80’s racist activity was a serious problem at football grounds up and down the country. National Front paper sellers were regularly seen at many clubs including West Ham Utd, Newcastle Utd and Portsmouth. Football violence against black people was endemic often with a racist character.

The N.F. newspaper Bulldog used to publish a league table of ‘honourable’ gangs. Football terraces were often hostile environments for black people.

A combination of factors has led to some improvement. First, the last fifteen years has seen an increasing number of black professional apes.

Heroes

Ian Wright at Arsenal, Andy Cole at Newcastle and Paul McGrath at Aston Villa have become heroes to thousands of football fans, black and white. This summer Paul Ince became the first black player to captain the English national side.

There has also been a proliferation of supporters based ‘fans’ which have often campaigned against the racists at their respective clubs. Leeds United fans produce the programme ‘Marching Altrougher’ which is explicitly anti-racist.

The Celticiarie Aot The View has linked up with supporters of Hamburg side St Pauli who have an impressive record of combating the far right in Germany. The resurgence of the BNP has led to the English Defence League reuniting their heads again at football grounds. Charlton Athletic fans have also turned their backs from the BNP HQ at Bexley, has been a particular target of EDL. Front Bros have been reported to be working with the notorious ‘Headshrun- ers’ gang at Chelsea.

How should we respond? The GREFPA is set to continue next season. ARA should pressure the players unions to follow the example in Italy where every Premier League team took to the field carrying anti-racist banners.

We should urge Labour candidates to campaign against football clubs and supporters groups to ensure football grounds are free from racist activity. In the 1990s Le- wisham council promoted a series of meetings with Millwall, mainly with the aim of bringing more women to matches.

Unfortunately, with Le- wisham implementing a cuts programme, all these meetings was cut. Given the appalling success this would it clear they should have stepped up rather than cut back their campaigning.

Let’s kick racism out of football.

Demonstrate for Britain’s Forgotten Prisoners!

JUNE 4, 1994

ASSEMBLE 1pm Exeter Hall, Kidlington

Tunney march leaves St Giles, Oxford at 10.30am

MARCH to rally 2pm at the gates of CAMPSFIELD detention centre

SPEAKERS include JEREMY CORBYN MP, MARC WADSWORTH (ARA), BOB PURKISS, chair TUC race relations committee, MOHAMMED IDRISH

Stop the detentions and deportations!

Asylum is a human right!
How Labour (eventually) beat the BNP in Millwall

By Christine Fraser

MAY 1990: Three Labour councillors elected in Millwall.
1995-1999: Liberal Democrats pump out racist propaganda and launch community mobilisations on racist demands. National party leaders ignore Labour complaints. BNP begins to organise covertly. Key activists infiltrate appropriate community groups and forums, raising racist propaganda and mobilising around racist demands.

October 1992: Millwall by-election called. Millwall anti-racist/anti-fascist committee formed between Bengali organisations and other anti-racists. Liberal Democrats fight viciously racist campaign. Labour councillor Ted Johns elected, with BNP candidate winning 20 per cent of poll. Labour Party ward right wing, including sub-agent James Hunt, says BNP vote was a good thing: it reduced the Liberal vote and allowed Labour to win.

SWP pack meeting of Millwall anti-racist anti-fascist committee, and change its name to Island Against the Nazis. May 1993: Millwall selects three candidates for next May's elections, de-selecting sitting 'left wing' councillor. Selection includes Ted Johns and James Hunt.

Summer frustrated by SWP wrecking tactics. Island Against the Nazis ceases to function.

September 1993: Millwall by-election. Local Liberal Democrats spontaneously tone down racism (but are picked up for racist hints afterwards). SWP issue leaflet in name of Island Against the Nazis.

Labour campaign for James Hunt picks up some of the intrinsically racist demands of previous Liberal Democrat campaigns. The left is comprehensively excluded from any involvement from the campaign.

Five of our local paper carries alleged 'leaked Labour canvass returns' showing possible BNP victory, which fuels confidence in vote BNP. Derek Beackon wins surprise triumph for Millwall, with vote for BNP by 7 votes.

National press says it is a protest vote about housing. They are a year too late; by now the racist ideology has taken hold and some white voters vote openly to sapostle local Bengali hillies (establishe

rave music. SWP/ANL appear at Labour Party canvass points and go door to door petitioning, carrying Socialist Worker with reinforcing BNP propaganda that the ANL underlines 'rent-a-mob' tactics.

The Labour canvassers meet resistance to voting Labour because of ANL doorstep tactics. After two weeks, a mediator from Millians Labour brokers a peace agreement; when the two groups meet, the Labour Party will say 'we're going this way, you go that way'. It works, preempting reformist demands for UN intervention.

Some white voters admit they are voting BNP with a little emotion as if they had said 'No Vernon's, I'm with Littlewoods'. Others go purple and shout about a lot. Scary incident with BNP supporters surrounding three Labour canvassers who have become separated from main party persuading Labour to stick closer together in future.

Dog bites 'comrade'

Black voting dog bites slightly dodgy Labour candidate in hand. Left activists de-lore a can't talk about political sophistication in face of the overriding need to unite to beat the BNP.

Labour campaign defends non-racist housing policy and says the BNP's victory would end any investment in the area by business or in social housing by public or private sector. BNP bring out another issue of 'British Nationalist' re-playing these claims in detail and carrying the full text of the ex-chairman's resignation letter with a catalogue of bizarre allegations against Labour.

'London Stop the Fascias' network organise counter-demonstration on the Saturday before the poll at a local supermarket to protest at Beackon's public appearances. BNP feel obliged to organise counter-counter-demonstration.

Thugs

Massive police demo keeps forces for apart: local population can't move for police vans and helicopters. Labour insistence that the BNP are bringing thugs on the streets thus ironically proves it. Police ship in van loads of riot shields ready for polling day.

Sunday's Labour campaign day sees over 100 activists leave their localities and come to Millwall - fully half of them are from the organised left, and at least 5 per cent are Labour Party full-timers.

May 5. Polling day: Labour wins, more than doubling its previous highest vote. BNP - 7 votes (Beackon's by 50% in six months), Liberal Democrat vote down to 5 votes. Record turnout for a council election in the UK.
UNISON holds back on pay

UNISON’s first conference failed to defend its members against current government attacks on the public sector. In the debate on public sector pay, a toothless motion was carried. But the fighting for a national one-day strike was defended, despite gaining only 57 per cent support. This buttresses any lingering hopes of UNISON taking national action against the pay freeze this year.

Action over pay in some sections is still possible, though this is unlikely given the leadership’s willingness to settle for offers of around 2 per cent. The only lost victory was on the split with the adoption of a motion, opposed by the Executive and UNISON leader Rodney Bassett, committing the union to oppose closure of health facilities by means ‘up to and including strike action’.

Real battle lines were not drawn over policy issues but over democracy and the running of the union. Since the merger, union officials have increased their control of the apparatus at members’ expense.

A mood of distrust of National Officers and the National Executive Committee amongst delegates met with a ruthless response from the bureaucracy, led by ex-NUME officials. Ex-NUME full-timers acted on the issue of Labour Party affiliation to divide the conference, claiming that the ex-NALGO office, left which was not affiliated to the Labour Party, was trying to control the union’s political fund without paying into it.

New union rules prevent ballot on Labour Party affiliation until 1997. Division into affiliated and non-affiliated union sections prevents discussion on Labour Party issue. This allows leaders to wish-bump the left by playing on distrust between delegates from the former unions.

This mood was used to overwhelmly defeat affiliation to the Anti-Nazi League and Youth Against Racism in Europe.

As conference wore on an anti-left sentiment amongst delegates culminated in a unanimous vote against plans to build new headquar ters.

Closure

However a consequence of this will be the closure of the old COMSN and NUME headquar ters, with bureaucracies concentrated in the NALGO head office.

The closure, predominantly by ex-NUME officials, against rank-and-file activity has culminated in the closure of the trade union movement.

This development must involve working to overcome the divisions between former unions, with mergers occurring quickly as branch level despite obstruction from regional officials.

Local government branches will have to fight for practical solidarity with struggles against hospital closures.

We must meet this challenge so that the left will not be wiped out in UNISON. A July meeting will plan an autumn conference.

The Campaign for Fighting Democratic Unionism can be contacted c/o Jim Iglinton UNISON "A" branch, 1a Cannonbury Street, London N1 2TA.

NCU Broad Left defeat

THE NATIONAL Communications Union Broad Left has lost control of the union’s National Executive Council to the right wing “Centre Left” grouping.

Colin O’Callaghan, Ian Cumberworth and Paul Moore, all on the hard left of the BL, lost their seats in the Engineers Constituency, reducing the BL majority to 15-5, while the right wing “centre” maintained their 100% grip on their 12 NEC seats.

The drop in support is due to the NEC majority’s failure over the last year to confront BT management over a whole series of issues.

Failure

These include the flagging of a strike study, failure to ballot the membership on last year’s pay deal, and the failure of the NEC to agree on workers representation for BT management.

The NEC also backed down on a final offer of increased pensions for workers with long service.

Merger

The NCU bureaucracy will reassert itself over the forthcoming merger with the Union of Communication Workers, which is under solid right wing control.

But the major failure over the last year has been the breakdown of the Broad Left organization. The steering committee has only met twice and has failed to take any public position on any of the key issues, let alone campaign on any of them amongst the members.

It has even failed as an electoral organisation, the recent (unsuccessful) General Secretary campaign has been run completely independently of the BL.

The branch needs to be held if lessons of this defeat are to be learned.

Lyons tamed?

By Glenn Newsham, Conference delegate.

THIS YEAR’S MSF Conference, held in Brighton May 7-11, was crucial for the credibility of General Secretary Roger Lyons.

He expected conference to endorse his massive consultation exercise, MSF into the 21st Century, designed to transform MSF from an independent union on the left of the TUC into an American-style business union.

In the event, Conference decisively rejected this plan and its class-collaborationist logic.

The leadership also suffered defeats on two other fundamental questions of democracy.

The decision of MSF’s delegation to last year’s Labour Party Conference to abstain, contrary to MSF Conference policy, on one-member-one-vote for parliamentary re-selections, which had delivered OMOV to the Labour Party leadership, was roundly condemned.

This year’s Conference instructed MSF to campaign for a return to the block vote in Parliamentary re-selections.

An emergency motion calling for a lay-member investigation into the struggle over the recent NEC elections was also carried.

This is the first time an emergency motion that had been ruled out of order has ever been discussed, let alone carried.

This was even more remarkable since Lyons had obtained legal advice that the terms of the motion were illegal.

Although Lyons and the General Secretary are unlikely to act on these decisions, the importance of Conference defeating the leadership cannot be over-emphasized.

Lyons was successful at fractionally moving the union’s formal political position to the right, by weakening MSF’s commitment to campaigning for nationalization of important sectors of the economy.

It was only with the power of a major defeat on nationalization at last year’s Conference that Lyons had to back down.

It was only with an open NEC conference in the autumn that Lyons will face a similar situation.

Relations between Left currents in the union have considerably thawed, creating the possibility of serious political discussion and debate between Unity Left — the previously Stalinist-dominated TASS broad left — and Network 90, Militant, Socialist Union and SWP members seemed to recognize that sectarianism has no place when the Left must unite to hammer out an alternative political programme.

Lyons has lost credibility with rank-and-file MSF activists.

The task of the Left is to prepare a fight for an alternative leadership.

For more information on Network 90 and its activities, write to Network 90, c/o Jamie Tweedell, 80 Penfrooke Street, London N1 2OP.
Racists gain support in Dutch elections

By Ron Blom in Amsterdam

ELECTION results in the Netherlands show a decline in support for the right-wing government parties the Social Democratic (PvdA) and the Christian Democrats (CDA).

Opposition parties, the openly racist conservative-liberal (VVD) and populist radical-liberals (VVD), were the main beneficiaries.

All four main parties now have similar numbers of seats. Against this right wing coalition, the Workers' Socialist Party (SP), Dutch section of the Fourth International, and the revolutionary youth organisation Rebel, fought on a clear left programme of open borders and welfare rights.

All four of the main parties have similar right wing politics. The Social Democratic campaign on an austerity programme of attacks on the welfare state that included cutting sickness benefits. So too was the Christian Democrat goal of cuts in pensions.

The government has attacked migrants and increased immigration controls. This fits with the right wing policies of the VVD, who called on children of migrant workers to be barred from state education.

In seeking to destroy the welfare state, the establishment parties seek to benefit the capitalist road builders and transport companies - through a massive programme of road and airport building to create 'Netherlands - the distribution country'.

The Green Left (a fusion of former Communists and pacifists), made no gains, with ambivalent policies on migration that included proposing a coalition against racism with the VVD.

An anti-establishment ticket in the form of the Socialist Party nonetheless echoed the main parties in calling for migrants to be spread equally around cities - with no more than ten per cent in any one area.

So it was the Workers' Socialist Party and Rebel which campaigned on a clear anti-racist stand against immigration controls.

This campaign involved thousands of young people, including migrant youth, many of whom are too young to vote or who have not been given Dutch nationality. Defence against racist attacks became an element of the campaign, and SAP and Rebel were prominent in building the fightback.

Mujahedin breaking up Afghanistan

by K. Govindan

AFGHAN mujahedin are fighting each other as bitterly as they once fought occupying Soviet forces.

The fall of the Soviet-backed PPDA regime of Mohammad Najibullah in April 1992 unleashed squabbling among the diverse Muslim sects and ethnic/linguistic groups cobbled together in an 'anti-communist' front.

Over 11,000 Afghans, mainly civilians, have died and tens of thousands seriously injured. The capital Kabul lies in ruins. Most of the population have fled to the devastated countryside.

The government of national unity, comprising the major militia leaders, was doomed to failure when General Rashed Dostum, the former prime of Afghanistan's 29 provinces, was left out.

Babuddin Hikmatyar, an arch fundamentalist from the traditionally dominant Pushtun people who leads the Hezb e Islami joined forces with Dostum, an ethnic Uzbek and former Najibullah loyalist.

Their enemy is 'President' Burhaneddin Rabbani who heads the Jamiat e Islami party. Fellow Tajik, Ahmad Shah Masoud, is Rabbani's main ally.

The new war in Afghanistan has significant regional dimensions. Saudi Arabia backs the Islamic e Islami party while Iran finances the Shi'a Hizb e Wahadat e Islami. Pakistan officially supports Rabbani and Masoud, while attempting to mediate between rival factions.

However, the Pakistani intelligence agency ISI is thought to be arming Hikmatyar, who has ethnic affiliations with the Pathans of Pakistan's North West Frontier Province.

New players are the central Asian republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan which share common ethnicity and culture with some mujahedin leaders.

The governments in these formerly 'communist' republics are secular and deeply worried about the strength of fundamentalist forces in their own states - Uzbek forms Back General Dostum not only because he is Uzbek but also because he has secular credentials.

Tajikistan may have been expected to support the ethnic Tajik Massoud. But he has ambitions beyond the borders of Afghanistan.

Unification

He wishes to unify Tajik areas of the country with Tajikistan, an idea the Russians don't want to easily. The Tajikistan government fears Moscow more than Massoud.

Popular support for the mujahedin has less to do with sympathy for Muslim fundamentalism than hatred of an occupying army. Their ability to offer a credible alternative has been seriously damaged.

In late March, in Kabul, there was a sizeable demonstration of civilians demanding an end to war and expressing no confidence in any of the factions.

Nevertheless, the break-up of Afghanistan into ethnic/linguistic regions seems a likely outcome.

Sheffield United boss Reginald Brealey blamed for deaths of Indian workers

Blood on his hands?

by South Asia Solidarity Group

ON NEW YEAR's day 1994 a worker from the Victoria Jute Mill in Calcutta died of starvation. His family hold the mill owner, British businessman and owner of Sheffield United Football Club Reginald Brealey, responsible.

Brealey has already told off 2.5 million in pensions and statutory benefits and more than six months' unpaid wages.

In 1989, Brealey became chairman of Tilghat plc which controls the nine Jute mills of the Thomas Duff group. Since then, despite the profit of just rising sharply on the world market, the 20,000 workers have been living on the edge of starvation, with the mills remaining closed for weeks at a stretch.

In 1990 the company made profits of £15.6 million. Yet the 2,000 people who have retired since Brealey took over have received nothing of their pension. Brealey has also been charged under the Foreign Regulation Act 1973. Instead of modernising or investing in the mills Brealey is attempting to increase the work load while reducing the number of workers. His latest offer is more layoffs off 500 workers, abolishing the eight hour and introducing a four day week. Despite their desperation the workers have rejected it.

Recently Brealey brought twelve British managers to Calcutta. On 16 March, when the workers came to present their demands, two of these managers, Whitesbridge and Vigers, taunted the delegation with racist abuse.

The workers refused to tolerate this final insult and the managers were dragged out of their offices into the crowd outside and had to be rescued by senior police officers.

A mass picket of the British Deputy High Commission in Calcutta demanded an apology for the managers' racist behaviour.

Setting an example?

In a bizarre twist Brealey has just bought a £6,320 acre estate in a remote part of the Sudan for £2.5 million (the exact amount owed to the Indian workers). The estate will be used for setting up a project to train young people who have been in care.

The project, named 'Back to Basics' will be run by a retired army colonel and includes visits to the Calcutta jute mills where "youngsters will see how people earn their living and change their attitudes'.

Brealey's supporters have faced continual police repression. One worker is feared dead after being taken from his home by police, others have been beaten and their homes raided.

On 24 February the workers set up a camp outside the Aga Khan Mission with 500 workers and others who have been laid off. In June they are planning a series of actions to draw attention to their demands, which are:

1) Brealey's extradition to face charges
2) Re-opening of the mills under conditions which provide a living wage
3) Payment of wages owed
4) Repayment of the pension fund and other statutory benefits (a total of 2.5 million) which legally belong to the workers
5) Unconditional release of all those arrested.

Details of the campaign from: South Asia Solidarity Group, c/o Londence, Instrument House, 295-27 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1X 9TB. Tel: 071 713 7907.
Fighting back for socialist policies

With Labour's politics once again in the melting pot in the aftermath of John Smith's death, the fight for a genuine socialist alternative takes on an added importance. SOCIALIST OUTLOOK spoke to Socialist Campaign Group member JEREMY CORBYN MP about the forthcoming Campaign Group Network Conference on Full Employment.

SO: This conference is timely coming in the wake of the local and European elections and in the context of the leadership contest. What do you want it to achieve?

JC: What I hope it will achieve is a serious analysis of the European election results and the problem the party has failed to address so far. We have been achieving good election results over the past two years based essentially on an anti-Tory vote rather than a pro-Labour vote.

Most voters are looking round the country and asking who's the best placed candidate to defeat the incoming Tory and voting for them — whether they be Liberal, Labour or Nationalist. That is a very weak position for a political party to be in.

We are seen as a force for a negative rather than a positive. What has to be addressed is what a Labour government is there to achieve and what it is capable of achieving.

The General Election defeat of 1992 was very thoroughly analysed by a lot of people including the Essex University report, and a number of factors emerged. There was a slight increase in Labour support amongst the mobile middle class vote. But there was a serious falling away of support amongst the poorest: voters and amongst pensioners, which would suggest that we're not getting through some-

Low paid workers, like these Burnall's strikers, are looking for radical answers from Labour.

"We can say to those in the Labour Party who feel disenfranchised by the Kinmonth years, and feel ignored by the modernising drive of the party, that there are other people who think like they do, and there are other people who have joined the Labour Party because they believe in socialist politics".

Labour Party who feel disenfranchised by the Kinmonth years, and feel ignored by the modernising drive of the party, that there are other people who think like they do, and there are other people who have joined the Labour Party because they believe in socialist politics.

SO: What sort of campaigning and what sort of structures do you think are necessary for this task?

JC: An open left organisation within the party. It mustn't be secret, it mustn't be prescriptive or prescriptive. It must give people the space to discuss and debate, which they are increasingly denied within the normal party machinery. And it must be attractive to socialists who are outside the Labour Party at the present time.

The Labour Party has an age and an image problem. Its age profile is increas-

"We can say to those in the Labour Party who feel disenfranchised by the Kinmonth years, and feel ignored by the modernising drive of the party, that there are other people who think like they do, and there are other people who have joined the Labour Party because they believe in socialist politics".

Labour Party who feel disenfranchised by the Kinmonth years, and feel ignored by the modernising drive of the party, that there are other people who think like they do, and there are other people who have joined the Labour Party because they believe in socialist politics.

SO: Do you think that the Network is a beginning for this type of organisation?

JC: It must live up to these expectations. Its always going to be difficult to organise the network because it's all done on a shoestring by essentially voluntarily labour, and there is always a danger that people will say that the Network must say A and demand A of everybody. It just can't, you just can't operate like that. It's got to operate on the basis more or less of a consensus on the direction in which we go.

SO: What is the position of the MPs in relation to the Network? Do they welcome it?

JC: The Campaign Group supported the establishment of the Network and its first conference in Leeds was extremely successful. The second one in Sheffield was rather small, and perhaps not as well prepared as it should have been. I'm hoping that the Manchester one will be very large indeed and will be representative. I think what comrades are
Looking for when they come to Manchester to hear what the thoughts of people are for the Campaign Group, and to make a contribution. We think the Campaign Group might present itself in Parliament and in the party. And above all to have other people in the party see things.

We’re not going to change society in Britain by sitting back and waiting for a general election after which the rip cherry will fall into our lap. We’re going to change society in Britain if we mobilise people into the expectations of what a Labour government could achieve and demand it of that Labour government. That is a strength in politics—a weakness is just sitting back and waiting for it to happen. That leaves the forming of public opinion to people who are not friends of Labour.

SO: How about the Tribune conference on June 25. It seems to be based on a platform that’s considerably to the left of Tribune’s public platform?

JC: Firstly the date is regrettable because it clashes with the Global Forum meeting in Manchester which is an international meeting.

But I think the Tribune Group and Tribune newspaper are increasingly at variance, in that Tribune newspaper is genuinely trying to give a platform to various people and groups within the party, and I think it is succeeding in doing that. I appreciate the effort they’ve made in that direction.

The Tribune Group in parliament is basically a huge conglomeration of essentially pro-establishment figures. It is now the establishment group within the party. Because it is so broad it is really incapable of being a serious left force within the party.

SO: The Campaign Group has recently recruited former members of the Tribune Group. What do you make of that?

JC: The Campaign Group could become much bigger because it offers the opportunity of serious political discussion and debate and offers the opportunity of putting forward those views in parliament in a credible way.

The Tribune Group is incapable of doing that. It is hopelessly compromised by its very close relationship with the leadership, whoever the leader is. In fact, I think all of the potential leadership contenders with the exception of Jack Cunningham are members of the Tribune Group.

SO: I’ll close on the central theme of the SGGM conference which is full employment. What would you like to see come out of this conference in terms of carrying forward campaigning around full employment?

JC: What I find depressing is that we were all pleased last year when John Smith declared himself in favour of full employment. The whole raison d’etre of the Labour Party since its inception was a campaign for a job for everybody, a secure and permanent job for everybody.

In coming to something where we consider is a move to the left if the leadership of the party even think of full employment. But nevertheless his declaration was extremely welcome.

The problem is that we are not being offered an economic policy that is anything other than demand management within the economy. That isn’t going to lead to full employment, not least because there are serious structural problems of unemployment in Britain through industrialisation and reorganisation and the power of multi-national capital to switch funds all over the place. These jobs are expendable in any one country.

Also the arguments the British government has signed in Maastricht and GATT make it much more difficult to control those forces. If we are to achieve full employment there has to be a degree of planning in the economy, there has to be a shorter working week and there has to be a minimum wage.

All these things have to be done. Nearly every one of these will bring a Labour government into conflict with the EC commission and possibly with the GATT rules. This is an argument we have to have. It means a Labour government has to be very determined that it is going to achieve full employment.

It’s the one issue which could win us a general election. It’s the one issue which unites young and old and gives real hope to people.

But if we only half-heartedly put it and don’t add the details of how we’re going to achieve it, it will just be laughed at during the election campaigns for being a cynical election manoeuvre.

And if we put it forward and then do nothing about it as a Labour government, we shall quite rightly receive a lot of opprobrium from people.

Why the left must stand a candidate

By Helen Shaw

In the wake of John Smith’s death there hasn’t been a single day when the bourgeois media has failed to offer its latest suggestion or assessment of who should step in to Smith’s shoes.

But who do the left think should stand, and how can the left make it voice heard above the media circus? Activists in the Labour Party are crying out for fighting alternative that breaks the economic consensus with Tories. In order to play any significant role in the political debate, in this context the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour Mps’s (SGGM) must stand a candidate.

Those that suggest you can influence the debate without a candidate are living in a dream world. Questioning the candidates about the left’s policy priorities will be dismissed if there is no candidate standing who embodies those policies and gives party members a chance to vote for them.

Any ideas coming from the left that the SGGM’s stand are outdated. They protest to abstain rather than risk defeat. They’ll never get anywhere if we always wait for the right conditions for a struggle.

Arguments about the potential failure of a candidate to achieve the prerequisite number of nominations from MPs fail to grasp the opportunity to expose the lack of democracy in the current system. They also fail to recognise the potential to regenerate the left of the party with the call for and if possible the standing of a left candidate.

Undemocratic

Should we wait until Labour Party conference overturns the undemocratic rule—which was precisely designed to stop the SGGM putting up candidates or the selection of new left wing MPs who will make it possible to achieve the requisite number of nominations? If those goals were to be achieved it will be because the SGGM take a fighting position and head up a recomposition of the left. Failure to stand merely capitulates to and consolidates the undemocratic nature of those rules.

The SGGM needs to put aside personal differences, look beyond the House of Commons, and work collectively to obtain the required number of nominations and allow the left in the party to participate in the contest. If there is no left wing candidate, hundreds of party activists will be effectively disfranchised.

Why should left candidates even stand for the NEC if the criteria for participation in elections is guaranteed success? They recognise that they can’t necessarily win, and over the years at the NEC have seen low votes which could be seen as derogatory and indicative of the weakness of the left. And yet they have consistently campaigned for places on the NEC. What is so different now?

If SGGM members are elected to the NEC without being prepared to fight for a left leadership candidate they are effectively saying they will be prepared to be Blair’s lieutenants.

Prospect is perceived by the Guardian, and apparently also by Socialist Organiser, (which is calling, ludicrously, for ‘Prospect Committee’) to be the ‘left wing’ candidate. The danger is that unless the SGGM intervene to change this perception it will become the reality and the sole parameter for any political (non) debate. If the SGGM are not even willing to get enough nominations to run a left candidate, it would constitute a further shift to the right of the spectrum of Labour politics and leave the SGGM as marginalised and discredited critics on the edge of the party.

The SGGM conference is very timely. But are the SGGM just going to be observers to an open political beauty contest, missing a great opportunity to regenerate socialist ideas in the party?

It is pointless standing on the sidelines if the only people on the SGGM are Jack or Robin Cook. People who are opposed to the approach must find an alternative to SGGM or the SGGM must stop pretending to be a socialist alternative to problems of full employment, defending the welfare state, housing the homeless—is the list endless?

Those who make their judgement based on an assessment of what’s left of the old left rather than where the new left could or should be going.

Pressure should be brought to bear to insist that the left turns words into action and fights for a candidate.
A cruel spring in Sarajevo

JENNY MEEs, from the Belgian section of the Fourth International, was with the first International Workers' Aid convoy into Tužla last November. She has been in Bosnia again with the regular IWA convoys running since early April.

Jenny spent a month in Tužla and a week in Sarajevo as part of an IWA delegation to the May Day celebrations. IWA were guests of the trade unions and spoke at the May day rally.

Here Jenny, who is at the moment back in the IWA base in Split in Croatia, gives her very personal impressions of being back in Bosnia at the end of the winter nightmare.

SPRING is the cruellest season. I heard this said many times from people in Tužla and Sarajevo. It is the time nature awakens. It is the time of great religious festivals. It is the time of expectations of new life.

Clubs and Town Halls are resounding with discussion and hope. The purifying cold and the merciless hunger are gone. The cities no longer die at 16 in the evening and wait for another day of bombardment. But people have few reserves of spirit and no money at all, it all went in the bad winter months.

People emerge dazed. ’We have all changed’. ’I don’t recognize my own city’. ’This war makes people behave like criminals’. ’How can you understand this when we cannot understand what is happening to ourselves?’. ’Worst of all the war continues and fear is everywhere.

Workers’ Aid convoy welcomed back to Bosnia

In the now sunny streets of Sarajevo people again walk in the middle of the street, but last week four human beings died by the sniper’s bullet. Tužla market is full of vegetables and fruit, but last week three shells blew two people to pieces.

The shops now sell personal belongings exchanged in the winter for food and life. During my four weeks in Tužla the price of eggs dropped from 54 to 6 for 54 to 36. I thought everyone could buy them but no. When I bought some for the family of my little friend Arsi it was a big event. Our daily companions Amir and Emir let it slip that ’we have four for five days and then something will have to be done’.

Senad, who writes poems about the war, followed the political and military situation carefully. ’There is to be an offensive in Brcko; we will have to go and fight and we will die’.

Mrs Majeski prepares me a lovely dinner out of nothing and talks about her garden — will the birds eat the seeds saved so carefully through the winter months? Her daughter Ehla cries when I leave for the outside world.

Dancing

On May 1st there was no curfew in Sarajevo and the student club stayed open all night. Young people danced. There was Brogo on his crutches and Eden in his wheel chair.

The day before I had walked through the city with Mehmed, a trade union activist and a great believer in a happier future for BIH. We passed a poster for the rally the next day “Pro Me”. This walk and my discussions with Mehmed was my real May Day — much more than the new government’s big words and broad gestures of three presidents of European trade unions on their flying visit to this city.

These discussions in Sarajevo and the faces of the children in the street when our International Workers’ Aid trucks arrived back in Tužla in April after four winter months away are my most vivid impressions of the spirit of resistance in BIH. ’You came back, you came back, welcome back, they told us’. They gave us a present — a little dog (which is at this moment sleeping peacefully in the IWA office) who is brave and tough as they are. Of course we called him Tužla.

In future editions we will carry interviews Jenny conducted with trade unionists in Sarajevo.

The ‘Other’ Serbs and ‘Other’ Croats speak out

by Geoff Ryan

KARADZIC and the Pale assembley claim to represent the Serbs of Bosnia. This is legitimised by the UN and EU who accept their right to negotiate on behalf of Bosnia’s Serbs.

The voice of Serbs opposed to partition is stifled. At the beginning of the war those who openly opposed ethnic cleansing were executed. Since then the anti-nationalist opposition has hardly been heard in Bosnia.

In the west the Serb opposition is not given a platform to express their views. Governments and media collude in presenting Karadzic as the voice of all Bosnian Serbs. This is a totally false picture.

Some hundreds of thousands of Serbs live in territory controlled by the Bosnian army. Nearly five hundred, from throughout Bosnia, met in Sarajevo on 27 March. They set up a ‘Serb Civic Council’, with 33 members. One of the vice-Presidents is Nicola Kovac, Bosnian ambassador in Zagreb.

According to one of the participants they ’amended’ the accord signed in Washington, so the Serbs are presented as one of the three peoples making up the so-called ’Croat-Muslim Federation’.

On 6 February Bosnian Croats held a similar meeting in Sarajevo. 400 people opposed to the Croat nationalist policies of the Zagreb government met in the ’Great Assembly of Bosnia-Hercegovina’.

They were mainly MPs elected to the Bosnian Parliament in 1990 and councillors from the centre and north of Bosnia, as well as some members of the Catholic church.

’Great Popular Council’ expressed opposition to the partition of Bosnia-Hercegovina.

Socialists and those fighting to defend a multi-ethnic Bosnia have to ensure the voice of these Serbs and Croats is heard. We publish here the text of an appeal by those who attended the March 27th meeting. It should be distributed as widely as possible in the labour movement.

Appeal to the Citizens and Peoples of the Republic of Bosnia-Hercegovina

’BEING AWARE of the terrible consequences of oppression, war and genocide we are launching an appeal to all citizens, political organisations, cultural institutions, citizens associations, religious bodies, humanitarian organisations and other pacific and democratic organisations in order to convene a General Assembly for Trust of all the citizens and peoples of Bosnia-Hercegovina.

The General Assembly for Trust will be the expression of our willingness and desire to start off a process for the rebuilding, promotion and development of trust between citizens and peoples, despite our determination to not forget, to identify and punish those responsible for war crimes and genocide.

The General Assembly for Trust will be the expression of our desire to live together — in peace and freedom — within Bosnia-Hercegovina, as internationally recognised sovereign state.

The General Assembly for Trust will be the expression of our wish to create a democratic state in which the rights of all citizens are respected and all nationalities are equal.’

Serb Civic Council, Sarajevo, 27 March
IWA goes from strength to strength
Workers' convoys roll in to Bosnia

THE INTERNATIONAL Workers Aid campaign in defence of a multi-ethnic Bosnia is going from strength to strength - both in terms of material aid to the trade union movement, direct links, and in political support for the struggle of the Bosnian people.

This report, which is still partial, is taken from campaign reports sent from the IWA Split office to the national sections of the campaign. Direct reports from those involved will be available soon.

Selim Bešlagić, Mayor of Tuzla, on successful International Workers' Aid tour of Sweden

THE FIFTH IWA convoy (the fourth of the broad programme) left Makarska near Split for Tuzla last Wednesday and a convoy is being dispatched every 12 days from the base which has been established in Makarska.

At the same time a delegation from IWA attended the May day celebration in Sarajevo as guests of the trade union movement and spoke at a rally of 10,000 people.

The broad programme is organised directly with the Krka miners union who distribute the aid to individual families in the form of packs of flour, oil and sugar for making bread.

There have been problems. The first convoy to Tuzla this spring had to return from the city authorities, who had been shaken by the antics of the WRJ campaign (their 'December convoy') which asked them to organise a reception on the basis of 80 lorrys arriving and then turned up with four!

A delegation from IWA stayed in Tuzla after the first convoy - including Jenny and Wim from Belgium and Yannick from the Netherlands - and had extensive further discussions with trade unions - explaining the stance of IWA in defence of a multi-ethnic Bosnia and the labour movement basis of our campaign.

They met a big delegation from the teachers' union which agreed to IWA campaign to develop the kind of links with them that has been developed with the miners union. They stayed with individual families and were able to get a deeper insight into the impact of the war.

They also had discussions with political parties in Tuzla and representatives of the Serb and Croat communities. Yannick established a project with students at Tuzla university which involves a video made in conjunction with Tuzla radio.

This is shortly to be edited and produced in the Netherlands. Talks were held and links established with the National Theatre in Tuzla, Radio Tuzla, and the Women's Association of Tuzla which has appealed to IWA to campaign for mammography apparatus for cancer screening which does not exist anywhere in Bosnia.

There were also discussions with the Civic Forum in Tuzla which is trying to get a newspaper and TV station off the ground.

Although IWA is now keeping an ongoing presence in Tuzla this needs to be strengthened and there are plans for a permanent office in the building of the miners union. This would enable closer working and the opportunity to establish stronger links with trade unions throughout the rest of ex-Yugoslavia.

Given the continuation of the war and the political situation in central Bosnia, IWA intends to continue to campaign through the summer and into the autumn, since it increasingly looks as if another winter war will have to be faced in the region.

The fifth international meeting of IWA (open to supporters of all the national campaigns), which will lay plans for the coming months, is to lie held in Cremona in Northern Italy on June 23-6.
Feminists fight Algeria’s Family Code

IN OUR last issue SANADJA, member of the PST (Socialist Workers Party, supporters of the Fourth International in Algeria) explained the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Here she looks at women’s organisations in Algeria and the national question in the Berber region of Kabyle.

BEFORE 1988 the FLN was the only legal party. After 1988 we saw 60 parties legalised, along with various associations. Women also organised themselves, notably around the Family Code.

There were three associations led by different political currents.

The Stalinists controlled the Association de Défense et Promotion des Femmes (ADPF - Association for the Defence and Promotion of Women). In the Association pour l’Emancipation des Femmes (APEF - Association for the Emancipation of Women) the majority of leaders were from our current, the PST. And the Association de L’Égalité Entre les Hommes et les Femmes (AEHDL - Association for Equality between Men and Women) where the majority were Libertarians (adherents of the French Trotskyist organisation, led by Pierre Lamberti). The two Trotskyist-led associations were for the complete repeal of the Family Code and for civil law, whilst the Stalinist-led organisation was in favour of revising the Code.

However there were differences between us and the Libertarians. We argued that whilst politicians and their allies agreed that it was necessary to change the electoral process, not stop the elections. Women just because the fundamentalists were at the door, many ordinary women did not agree.

For them continuing the elections meant an Islamic state, with women being confined to the home.

They said they could not understand how we, as feminists, could have such a position. It’s true that our position was, and still is, very difficult to understand within the fundamentalist movement. It is a very complex situation.

Unfortunately no third road exists at present. During the 1991 elections there was a small opening. The FIS was in first position. However, the FLN was in second position and the FIS was unfortunately third.

I could vote for this party, certainly not for the FLN or the FIS, but the problem is that it has very little implantation in the Arabic-speaking areas. It is primary in Kabyle.

There is a long history, dating back to colonial times, of governments forming divisions between the Arab and Kabyle (Berber) populations.

The government played this card a few times. Anti-Kabyle racism is so ingrained that many democrats opposed to the FIS and the FLN would never consider voting for the FIS because it is seen as a Kabyle party.

At the moment the FIS hardly exist in Kabyle. They have a few individuals in some villages and one or two offices but they are very much a minority. But there’s not a great difference in the position of women.

The Family Code is implemented everywhere. It doesn’t just apply to Arab women. But what is distinctive is that it is now a serious women is worse in Kabyle because it is in towns and small villages and maqsoo traditions are even stronger.

Yet since the legalisation of parties a very important Women’s Association has developed in Kabyle, which is the only one that continues to function openly since the freezing of politics in 1992.

They have begun to raise consciousness, more and more women are coming to meetings and conferences. That is because there are more facilities, we don’t have the PSI on our backs, there isn’t the same siege that exists in the cities.

The rejection of the FIS in Kabyle is greater than in the Arabic-speaking towns - not just amongst women, the whole population rejects them.

The fundamentalist phenomenon in Algeria is not primarily a religious project: it is, above all, a rejection of the existing authorities.

There are a lot of young men who drink alcohol, eat every young women who wear mini-skirts who voted for the FIS. Disgusted by the FLN and lacking a third alternative they turned to the FIS.

National question

However, in Kabyle there is no important national question. The first repression after the war of liberation was in Kabyle. Movements around the Berber question have continued; there is a certain level of political awareness. Rejection of the government was nothing new in Kabyle. That is why the FIS not did anything new, anything attractive to offer in Kabyle.

Women in Algeria need international support.

In France we are working with an association of Maghrebian women to create awareness among the fundamentalists to impose their control over women in France.

We have also got support from women in Belgium, Germany and Switzerland, whilst I was in Britain I met with Women Against Fundamentalists and Southall Black Sisters, who are discussing what can be done in Britain to raise the issue of the repression of women in Algeria.

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The Persil family: right or right-wing?

Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights leader SARAH ROELOFS made this speech at its recent Annual General Meeting.

THE QUESTION immediately poses another one - should "we" lesbians and gay men and in this instance lesbians and gay men active in the labour movement - say anything at all about the family?

How is the issue of the family relevant to the fight for lesbian and gay rights? Some may argue that the issue of family policy is outside the remit of a lesbian and gay rights organisation. Others may argue that the best thing - if not the only thing - we can say about the family is "just smash it".

This year - for the first time since 1988 - LCLOR is prioritising a campaign to win a debate on lesbian and gay rights at Labour Party Conference. Instead of focusing our model resolution on a supposedly simple single-issue such as the age of consent or employment rights, LCLOR has focused on the issue of the family.

Political issues related to the family that are currently pressing include - the notorious back to basics, through the Community Care, the Child Support Act, proposed housing legislation, immigration controls, control of who has access to donor insemination, the victimisation of lesbian Headteacher Jane Brown, in 'n' order, to the big E - education - education about the family, education about sex and sexuality, education about HIV/AIDS.

Wall to wall

But there is not just promotion of the family - small 'i', small 'l'. No - this is quite definitely capital 'I', capital 'L' - The Family. The positive perception of wall to wall propaganda of a one family form as superior to other, as the one normal, functional family form - as quite simply the best. And this family I call the Persil Family.

Persil Family is very definitely white and middle class. It is made up of the middle class in this country, in the UK and in America. It is able-bodied. And it is certainly not homosexual.

It is father and mother, in that order with mother financially dependent on father but taking primary responsibility for the requisite 2.4 children. Persil Family live in a nice semi, furnished from John Lewis's or Habitat, with a quite remarkable absence of any body fluids or physical or mental impairments or any conditions requiring care.

It is supremely untouched by poverty or unemployment. Although it may be experiencing some slight difficulties with the mortgage, it is racist. It is sexist. It is classist. It is heterosexual.

Persil Family is not real. It is a model, an image, an advertisement, a soap opera - but it is promoted as real and ideally attainable for us all.

It is explicitly exclusive. It excludes not only lesbians and gay men, but black people and disabled people - not to mention disabled and black lesbians and gay men. All alternative competitors - notably lesbians and lesbian mothers, single parents, extended families, black families, disabled parents - having been shown to be directly responsible for every ill and evil society could ever imagine - are, in a word, dysfunctional.

All the debates about The Family - real Persil Family - exclude lesbians and gay men and their families.

How it is envisaged that Community Care will support lesbian or gay disabled people? How does the Child Support Act support the children of lesbian or gay parents?

How will the proposed housing legislation tackle disabled lesbians and gay men?

How does immigration controls support lesbian and gay couples from different countries - not to mention black lesbians and gay couples? Do lesbians have equal access to donor inseminations?

LCLOR believes it is crucial that we engage in the political debates about The Family. If we do not we perpetuate our exclusion.

There are, in my view, two central reasons for lesbians and gay men to prioritise the family politics debate.

The first reason is to assert and defend our civil rights. Persil Family is society's preferred family form to the extent that it is a zero option. The degree of propaganda is so compelling that it feels utterly natural - and other family forms feel unnatural.

This being the case it is hardly surprising that many of us construct our families or wish to as variants on the Persil theme.

Alternatively our families may utterly nonconformist and innovative. However contrary to what the right, in law, to have our families viewed as equally valid as Persil ones.

This means we are demanding a wide range of equality measures eg. partner recognition in pension schemes; tenancy and mortgage rights; legal rights such as an equal age of consent and equal custody rights; health rights such as health care that includes equal reproductive rights; education rights and the right to get married.

It is especially important to defend those lesbians and gay men who are themselves attempting to implement equality policies in their workplaces.

Further to this is our vision of socialism. It concerns not just what we think is wrong with things as they are and how those things should be changed and improved, but how we imagine a better world. And in 1994 there is virtual silence.

My perceptions of the reasons for this supreme lack of political interest in such an important area is that it is related to these inter-related factors - the impact of 15 years of Tory misrule, the impact of the defeat of Socialism as perceived as a definitive defeat of socialism and the loss of an active high profile feminist movement.

15 years of one of the most right-wing Tory periods of government has resulted in significant political demoralisation and a growth of rampant individualism of the 'I'm alright and the rest of you' variety. Depoliticisation of the lesbian and gay movement has been quite marked.

The defeat of Socialism has been perceived as wiping socialism off the agenda. Capitalism has won and all that is possible is to fight for a warmer, cosier, more caring capitalism. The net result is a dramatic curtailment of political ambition.

Deprived

The loss of a strong feminist movement has deprived lesbians and gay men of a political context that radically questioned the status quo on personal, sexual and family issues. Lesbian feminism and feminism can certainly be criticised from many perspectives - not least the inbuilt racist bias of some of the key arguments not to mention the parallel virtual exclusion of disabled women. But fundamentally what feminism provided was the explicit promotion of women's interests and a deep questioning of the sexual political status quo.

Obviously the debate about the family has a more direct and immediate meaning for women than men. But is this what gay men want?

Is it truly the case that gay men are wholly uninformed and unaffected by these issues? Do 'girls just want to have fun' or is this a reaction to a fun deprived Tory landscape? As socialist lesbian and gay rights campaigners we are satisfied with this situation?

If we are not how do we best assert a lesbian and gay perspective on family policy both within the Labour Party and within the lesbian and gay movement?

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Uproar over Hawks at BAe AGM

By Paul Walker

OUTSIDE were 150 protestors including “Sailorto, Ma-

cer, CIA: how many kids have you killed today?” In-

side were twenty token shareholders making life hell

for the BAE board.

While the headline in the 1994

BAe AGM raised a series of contentious questions about the sale of BAE aircraft to Indonesia and their use in East

Timor against the civilian oppo-

sition and the armed resistance.

Supporters of Campaign Against Arms Trade continu-

ually pressed the BAE board about the recently agreed sales of Hawks helicopters and the human rights record.

Each of the 500 shareholders and the BAE board were handed an Alternative Report to the company Annual Report.

The报告 pointed to the United Nations and European Union condem-

nation of the Indonesian invasion and genocide in East Timor and called on the BAE board to concentrate on converting the

company from military to civil-

ian production.

According to The Guardian the AGM was in uproar over the

series of questions about the genocide in East Timor.

The Indonesea pointed out that the shareholder action came as a complete surprise to the BAE board. The Daily Tele-

graph carried information and a

picture about the action in its

business pages and also a sup-

portive article about the East Ti-

morese people in its foreign

news pages.

 Assaulted on all sides by hos-

tile shareholders, Chief Execu-

tive Dick Evans, agreed to a

meeting with shareholders to
discuss the evidence of the

Hawks being used in East Ti-

mor.

Clearly in a long way to go but BAE now know that they cannot get away with half-l

behind the UK government arms

trade policy. They now know that if campaigns from many different organisations are on their tail and are not prepared
give up until the delivery of the

Hawks due in 1996 is stopped

and there is a full military em-

bargo on Indonesia.

The campaign is taking off internationally.

April 24 saw the launching of a con-

sumer-wide campaign for an arms embargo on Indonesia in Antwerp by the European Network Against Arms Trade. In Sweden, Germany

and Ireland campaigns are de-

veloping to support the East Ti-

morese struggle for self-
determination.

Dick Spring, the Irish For-

eign Minister, has spoken out about the Indonesian occupa-

tion of East Timor.

During a recent visit to Jakarta by New Zealand Pre-

mier Bolger, 51 of the NZ leg-

islature’s 99 MPs signed a

petition on East Timor process-

ing against Indonesian genocide in East Timor.

In the UK things, too, things are beginning to move. The re-

cent Five Brigades Union con-
fereence passed a motion commiting the union to sup-

porting the campaign for East

Timorese self-determination and calling for a military em-

bargo on Indonesia.

The FBU is contacting its

Australian counterpart and is in-

tends to take the issue through the labour movement in Britain.

As some one once said: "A great beginning."

Jakarta can see the solidarity movement in its rear view mir-

ror-let’s make sure staring

beasts don’t get off the hook.

French march leads

struggle for jobs, 35hrs

A huge demonstration against unemployment will take place in Paris on May 20th. The demonstration represents the culmination of a separate march from the principal regions of France organised at the initiative of trade unions and representatives of associations of the unemployed in the ACF (Alliance contre le chômage (AC)) movement.

The first march set off from Marseille in the south of France on April 30th and marched towards Paris in an enthusiastic reception across the country. ACI argues for the adoption of a 35 hour week without loss of purchasing power and job classification to satisfy social needs, as well as a moratorium on all displace-

ments and the recognition of organisations of the unemployed.

France currently has 3.5 million unemployed according to official figures. Trade union estimates are over 5 million.

Facing mass unemployment, ram-

rant employers equipped with sav-

agely clever laws, and a war on

hard-won education, health and

welfare services, the working

class in Britain faces a real crisis — an inevitable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

Socialist Outlook exists to fight for a new way of thinking and acting in the world of work, based on the politics of class struggle and revolutionary socialism, to tackle this crisis.

The capitalist class, driven and politi-
cised by its own class interest, its require-

ment to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has been given the deter-

mined, vanguard leadership by a brutal

class-war Tory high command.

The Tory strategy has been to shackle

the unions with legislation, and to frag-

ment and weaken the resistance of the working class and organised, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time, using the full powers of the state.

The unemployed, of women, of pension-

ers, 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 internationalist current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises co-thinkers in 40 count-

tries world-wide.

Sectarianism

Unlike some other groupings 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 pos-
turing and abstinence 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 revolu-
tion. 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, will not bring socialism. The fight for policies which can mobilise and politi-
cally 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 unity within the front, for campaigns on key issues such as fighting racism and fascism — in which various left currents can work togeth-

er for common objectives while re-

maining free to debate their differences.

If you agree with what you see in Socialist Outlook, and want to join with us in the struggle for socialism, readers’ groups meet in towns across the country. Contact us now, get organised, and get ac-

tive!

Q Please tell me more about Socialist Outlook

Yes, I want to become a Socialist Outlook supporter

Name

Address

Phone

App

Send to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UJ
WANT YOUR event included?
Send details by June 3 to What’s Happening?, P.O. Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

MAY
Sat 28
ANTI NAZI League Demonstration & Carnival Liberation! and Socialist Outlook sellers meet 1pm for march from Kennington Park SE11 through Brixton to carnival with The Levellers, Credit to the Nation and more in Brockwell Park SE24

BOB SMITH MEMORIAL MEETING 7.30pm Birmingham Trades Club Parkinson Rd speakers: Mohammed Idries (West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign) Shirley Tash Shillingham CARF, Socialist Outlook editorial board and others

JUNE
Sat 4
SATURDAY 4 JUNE 1994

Sat 4
DEMONSTRATE to close down Campfield House Detention Centre Liberation! and Socialist Outlook sellers meet 1pm car park Exeter Hall Kibbington, by junction of A34 and A4060 (off M40 exit 9)

SCOTTIISH CND demonstration Assemble at Whitleyfield plastic site at 12 noon for rally at Fastane gates at 2.45pm dettials 041 423 1222

Wed 8
LIBERATION meeting 10.30am sharp London

Friday 10
EDINBURGH Miner’s Gala and festival march from Regent Road at 10.30am details: Gordon McDonagh 041 332 4946

VIVA AFRICA: workshops, stalls music 11am - 4pm Albert hall Douglas Way Deptford SE8 4AG free entry

Sat 11
FIGHT for Full Employment! Socialist Campaign Group Supporter Network conference with MFDennis Skinner, Seumas Milne, Alice Mahon, Jeremy Corbyn, Alan Simpson and others Register 10.30 11am - 5pm Manchester Town Hall

CREDENTIALS (£50/£35 includes SCSN membership)

Blades House, Kennington Oval, SE12 SW

Tues 14
SOCIALIST OUTLOOK discussion: The retrat of National Liberation Movements - Ireland, South Africa, the Middle East and Central America. 8.00pm, Unicom pub, Church Street, Manchester

Sat 18
LESBIAN AND GAY PRIDE march 11am Hyde Park to Brockwell Park details 071 737 6803

VIVA AFRICA: live music with African artists, poets, speakers & dance 8pm Albany theatre Douglas Way Deptford SE8 4AG tickets 081 692 4446 box office £5/£2

Tues 28
SOCIALIST OUTLOOK discussion: Ireland: peace or capitulation? with Liam Mac Aulad 7.30pm Stationer's Park Community Centre Mayfield Road off Weston Park N8

JULY
Sat 2
OXFAM GLOBAL VILLAGE Fete 2pm-8pm Battersea Park Live music, International Co-operative day, third world fair trade fair, Children's festival and Oxfam 5km run

AUGUST
Tues 9
SOCIALIST OUTLOOK discussion: The United Front. 8.00pm, Unicom pub, Church Street, Manchester

Thur 25-Mon 29
SOCIALIST OUTLOOK Summer School: ANALYSING RACISM AND FASCISM. Residential school in Abberleith, as suite rooms, plenaries, workshops and full social programme. £90/£20. Details from Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

BOB SMITH Memorial Fund

Regular readers of Socialist Outlook will have read in our last issue of the death of Bob Smith. Bob was the most frequent contributor to our paper and is sadly missed by the editorial team.

Bob died shortly before his name sake, John Smith. There were no Tories at Bob's funeral but plenty of ordinary workers who valued the contribution he had made to the fight for a socialist society.

Indeed, Bob would have been landscape by praise from John Major. He would have felt that somehow failed in fighting for the interests of his class.

Bob was a revolutionary socialist. He opposed everything the Tories stand for. He hated capitalism and all the injustices it breeds.

He would want to be remembered by us continuing his struggle. His watchword would have been that of American trade unionist Joe Hill: 'Don't Mourn, Organize!'

After discussion with Bob's comrades in Birmingham we have decided to postpone our current Fund Drive Appeal. In its place we are launching the Bob Smith Memorial Fund.

Money raised will go to continuing the work Bob devoted his life to. Send as much as you can to:

PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.
"EVERYONE who can should be on the ANL carnival. It's important that black and white stand together. We mustn't allow racism to divide us." Wimbledon footballer John Fashanu said it just right. That's why the Anti Nazi League carnival has won such widespread support.

In just two years since the ANL was relaunched by the Socialist Workers' Party over 100 Labour MPs, and national trade unions like the UCW, NULU, NUM, RMT and FBU have backed the campaign.

But anti-racists must fight racism and fascism at every opportunity. The demonstration against the Campfield Detention Centre on June 4 is the next big event, challenging the racist immigration laws (see page 4).

Everyone at the Carnival should join the Campfield protest. The ANL should give its support. We need to build democratic anti-racist groups in every town and city that can unite black communities, the organised labour movement, the ANL and other anti-racist campaigns.

is the first letter of the alphabet.

There are twenty-five more. Socialist Outlook has them all in some very interesting combinations.