BLAIR CRAWLS TO BOSSES

TONY Blair was touted as the best thing for Labour in years. But as the opinion poll lead fades to that before his election as leader, the reality of Blair's Labour Party is obvious: it is becoming the party of permanent retreat. Blair has:

- **REFUSED** to back the signal workers.
- **REFUSED** to criticise Chancellor Clarke's deflationary interest rate rise.
- **DOWNPLAYED** Labour's union links, stating they "have no special place" in the Labour Party.
- **REPUDIATED** any form of social ownership as an alternative to market capitalism.
- **RETREATED** on Labour's education promises.
- **RIDICULED** Labour pledges to have more women MPs.
- **CHAMPIONED** right-wing Tory "family values".

No wonder big business is becoming friendly to Labour, and many Liberal Democrats want a coalition; no wonder millionaire David Sainsbury gave money to his leadership campaign. As the bankruptcy of Tory policies is evident to the whole world, Blair wants to adopt them wholesale!
Wrong turn for signal workers

By a railworker

LAST WEEKEND's signalling Grades Conference brought into the open frustration at the lack of progress in the dispute and allowed Knapp and the RMT to harden their open-ended basis of retreat.

The conference was presented with a number of emergency resolutions, ranging from a call to start arbitration to a call for all-out strike action.

To many, arbitration seems an attractive proposition if it meant that Railtrack would be forced to re-enter serious discussions with the RMT.

In the end however the conference agreed to ask the national executive to examine resuming talks on the claim while at the same time progressing re-structuring talks - and if this was not possible to look at escalating the dispute. Any agreement on restructuring would be put to a ballot.

The idea of parallel talks had been raised by Knapp and some other executive members as a way of breaking the deadlock.

Climbdown

In practice it is a climbdown which gives back the initiative to Railtrack. There is no indication that the government is prepared to allow a settlement in any way favourable to RMT.

Now Railtrack can push its restructuring agenda, which means job losses, without having to make any concessions on the claim.

Only victory on the claim can put the RMT in a position of strength in restructuring discussions.

Any further talks will break down rapidly unless RMT makes major concessions: it is a recipe for demoralisation.

What is needed is a way of the RMT seizing the initiative. Escalation confined to signal workers is not an option; the dispute must be extended to other rail workers.

In line with health and safety legislation, drivers and guards who believe they are in imminent danger are entitled not to work.

There have been a series of near misses, as managers staff the signal boxes. The RMT strike committee has called a meeting with the Traincrew Grades executive to discuss these issues. Guards and drivers are extremely frustrated to be told to work normally on strike days.

The issue of health and safety must be used to underpin a call for guards and drivers to refuse to work on strike days.

"If the Labour Party support our claim, then they should support our action"

Socialist Outlook talked to RMT executive and strike committee member ALAN POTTAGE.

"The signal workers have done well. After three months the strength is still there, but we have to find a way to apply more pressure to Railtrack. This has become a political dispute, with the stumbling block of the government not allowing negotiations. They must be forced to withdraw. This will bring more than the signal workers themselves. It is an attack on the whole movement: the question is what is the movement going to do?"

Second front

We must alliviate the pressure on the signal workers by broadening the front. The issue of safety for other rail workers gives us the means of doing this.

We also need to get other unions to act. The TUC must mobilise the movement to defend trade unionism. We know they are capable - but so far they have been unwilling.

Pressure must be applied to make the TUC work for us. At the TUC conference other trade unionists took inspiration from the signal workers. But it is not something for the history books - we need action now. Their dispute must be brought to a head while ours is continuing, not left until ours is finished.

North West railworkers say...

All out to win!

By Glen Voris

FIVE HUNDRED people marched in support of striking signal workers in Liverpool on Saturday, 19 September, in a demonstration organised at short notice by the Merseyside County Association of Trades Councils.

Speakers included Vernon Hince (deputy general secretary RMT), Alan Simpson (secretary of the Campaign Group of Labour MPs), Nigel Flanagan (one of the Union Section 2) and Sylvia Pye of Women Against Pit Closures.

The general mood of the signal workers was that they remained solid but did not want to escalate the strike action once they were not convinced they could sustain it.

This reluctance to escalate the strike stems from a feeling of isolation, since the RMT leadership are hesitant to step up the action.

Demoralised

Without spreading the strike, signal workers will become demoralised and Railtrack will have won an important victory. The government would have kept the lid on public sector pay.

Havens Trades Council has already taken the initiative in establishing a support group, to organise workplace collections and a speaking tour.

Solidarity meeting calls for escalation

HAVING HEARD Jimmy Knapp explain the latest details of the dispute rank and file railworkers called for a broadening of the action at a packed solidarity meeting in central London last Tuesday.

While a successful meeting saw 2125 handed over to strike funds, one RMT member pointed out: "Collecting money is fine, but we need to extend the action. We have got to use the health and safety argument."

Walking across

As a guard from north London explained: "I stand on my picket line telling signal workers not to cross, then take off my picket's armband and walk in to work as usual. I think it's a disgrace that my union is defending itself!"

Another asked: "Why are signalling grades the only ones involved in the dispute? Every argument about signalling grades applies to every other grade on the railway. So why not broaden the dispute?"

Speaking from the platform a signal worker explained that his branch would be calling for an immediate strike action adding: "If anyone is dismissed as a result the executive should call out all RMT members in support."
Peace process ‘clarified’
Major upholds loyalist veto

THE BRITISH and Irish governments have moved decisively to reassure Loyalists in the Six Counties that their interests were not threatened by the “peace process”.

John Major, while abandoning government restrictions on the broadcasting of Sinn Fein representatives, made it clear that there would be a referendum in Northern Ireland over the outcome of any peace talks.

The restriction of such a referendum to the North effectively seals the right of the Loyalists to a veto on unification.

Major also stated that Sinn Fein would not be admitted to peace talks unless and until it clarified that the IRA ceasefire was “permanent”.

The statements by Major were reinforced by the frank admission by Irish premier Reynolds that Irish unification was off the agenda for decades.

The “peace process” package is now absolutely clear. First, the IRA calls off its armed struggle. Then there are talks, eventually involving Sinn Fein, which lead to the creation of a new Northern Ireland assembly, to which Adams and other Sinn Fein representatives are elected.

The government hopes that Loyalist opposition would be reconciled to this, and the paramilitaries demobilised. “Peace” would thus be established. But what exactly would be achieved from the viewpoint of the Republicans and the struggle for Irish unification?

While the whole process will be subject to a referendum in the North, the British state is not going to allow a 32-county referendum on unification. The outcome will thus be the election of a Six County assembly, and the transformation of Sinn Fein into a more-or-less radical nationalist, but constitutional, electoral party.

It is highly unlikely in such a scenario that Sinn Fein will replace the SDLP as the dominant nationalist party; indeed the political differences between sections of Sinn Fein and the SDLP will begin to erode. After all, what is the SDLP but constitutional, reformist, nationalism?

National rights
What this scenario does not include is anything to address the national rights of the Irish people, or indeed of the nationalist community in the North.

In other words, there is nothing in this package which addressed the question of the Orange nature of the Six County statelet, its existence as the institutionalisation of the Protestant ascendancy and the union with Britain.

Recent surveys have revealed that sectarianism, in the form of massive job and housing discrimination against Catholics, is alive and well. The privileges of the Protestant workers in a period of recession may be marginal, but they certainly exist.

The “peace process” as offered by Major and Reynolds is now being revealed for what it really is: an operation to tame and integrate the Republican movement, especially to end the armed struggle.

In this new situation Sinn Fein will of course carry on its political campaign for Irish unification. But there is nothing new. There is a long history of reformist nationalist politicians being elected to local councils and as MPs to the British parliament. That was the situation in the 1950s and 1960s, when such people called themselves simply “Nationalists”.

It was precisely the failure of this type of communal electoral politics, and the continuation of mass discrimination, which led to the emergence of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, which through its strategy of mass direct action broke with the old constitutional and clerical nationalist politicians.

Naive
Evidently, a lot of left-wing people naïvely welcoming the peace process don’t know very much about the history of northern Ireland before the civil rights movement.

A regression to the pre-1968 days in nationalist politics would be the waste of 25 years of struggle.

The Republican movement stands at a crossroads. The peace process in the hands of Reynolds and Major is not going to deliver a united Ireland because it leans on the Loyalist veto as sacrosanct. And that veto will be delivered time and again.

The way forward is not to make an “historic compromise” with imperialist domination of Ireland, but to elaborate a new strategy based on mass action, linking up with the struggles of workers in the South. That means the inter-unioning of the national and social struggles in Ireland.

It means a movement which fights for workers unity and a 32-county socialist republic. It means campaigning here and now for the release of all political prisoners; and for self-determination for the Irish people as a whole.

Old style nationalist reformism is not going to deliver it.

Join us for memorial dinner

SOCIALISTS from all over the country will gather in London on October 22 for a dinner to honour the memory of comrade Bob Smith, who died earlier this year at the age of 46.

Bob, who lived in Birmingham, was well-known in the anti-racist and Irish solidarity movements, and devoted much of his final year to the struggle of Asian women at the Burnalls factory.

The dinner will see the launch of a book, dedicated to Bob’s memory, on the anti-racist and anti-fascist struggle - Here to Stay, Here to Fight.

It will also feature speakers prominent in the anti-racist struggle.

The dinner will raise money for the memorial fund.

This fund will be used to finance the book, as well as to refurbish Socialist Outlook’s offices and buy new, urgently-needed computer equipment for the paper.

The dinner is not just for Socialist Outlook supporters, but open to all those who knew Bob and those dedicated to the anti-racist and anti-fascist struggle.

Be there!
Tickets cost £12 waged, £7 unwaged from:
Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Cheques should be made out to ‘Bob Smith Memorial Fund’.

Please send me … tickets for the Smith memorial dinner
(
□ waged,□ unwaged).
I enclose a cheque for £ ….

Name …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Address ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Send to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU
Blair boost for Tory ‘family values’

By Peter Purton
(LOCR - personal capacity)

THE “NEW model” Labour Party has benefited from a resurgence of support from lesbians and gay men. A poll for Channel 4’s “Out” programme has found 50 per cent of lesbians and gay men voted Labour at the last election.

The election of Tony Blair has seen this process continue. At this year’s Pride, the Labour Party stall did a thriving trade signing up new members.

Blair is the first Labour leader to openly signal support for an equal age of consent.

This, and strong support from the front bench – with the notable exceptions of Blunkett and Taylor – suggests that Labour is seriously committed to social equality policies.

However, beneath this veneer of progressiveness, Blair’s social policies are based on the same fundamentally “pro-family” stance that traditional Labourism has always had – a position it shares on all fundamentals with the Tories.

The limitations of the new Labour liberalism have been exposed during the furor over single parent status.

While Labour might argue for the more “humanistic” treatment of lone parents, it shares with the Tories the view that lone parent families are inferior.

Blair has reiterated his view that two parents are better than one. For him this view is self-evident.

For the vast number of people for whom the world is different, regardless of whether or not their “family” position is one of choice or necessity, such a view is clearly comforting.

‘Model family’

Labour’s “model family”, as codified by the new leader, is based on a substantially mythical “golden age” when we all lived in two parent, white, heterosexual, able-bodied households.

This view conveniently overlooks that such households are also the location of domestic violence, abuse, including sexual abuse of children, abuse of the elderly and a vast, but concealed, world of privatised domestic unhappiness.

It fails to take account of the diversity of forms of social organisation prevalent in different communities, and the strength against diversity that the lesbian and gay communities, for example, have been forced to develop.

It ignores evidence that it is not the number of “parents” or solely their biological relationship which determines that children are reared “properly”.

The controversial issue of access to fertility treatments and to donor insemination are probably influenced by whether (for example) lesbians and gay men are recognised as “suitable” parents.

Despite a hostile political climate, stoked up by “back to basics rhetoric and tabloid homophobia, progress is being made.

A recent court judgment confirmed custody of children to lesbians.

The TUC has promised a negotiator’s guide to “family leave”, which consciously includes black families, lesbian and gay relationships and adoptive families.

If the Labour Party is to give meaning to its equality policies, then it has to begin by questioning the privileged position it continues to assign to just one of the many different forms of social organisation.

Another Labour betrayal on Ireland

By Liam Mac Uaid

THE GOOD news is that the Labour leadership is still in favour of Irish unity – by consent of the Ulsterists of course.

The bad news is that they do not intend to do anything about it.

So they do not intend to become “pioneers” and will rely on the Unionists eventually changing their mind.

Thus another squashed footnote is added to the history of Labour’s leaders agreeing with every major policy decision taken by the Conservatives in Ireland.

So reluctant are they to take an independent position that Mo Mowlam, the Shadow Cabinet member responsible for broadcasting, was prepared to say on television that now is not the time to press for the repeal of the lurchorous, anti-democratic ban on the transmission of the voices of Sinn Fein members.

She does “not want to complicate the negotiation process for the ‘Tories’ – and has now found herself outflanked by them as the ban is now on.

Degrading

How much more can these people degrade themselves? Even Patrick Mayhew, the Tory minister responsible for the North of Ireland, let it be known that he wanted the ban to be lifted.

There are times when words are not adequate.

An element in Blair’s calculations is that the next election may be a rather close-run thing and his parliamentary majority will not be as comfortable as he would hope.

Major has had occasion to rely on the support of Unionist MPs, and it is not out of the question that Blair will also find himself in some tight corners.

Tom reaffirms anti-imperialist stance

By Bernie Hynes

DELEGATES to a national Troops Out Movement conference in Leeds on September 10 rejected proposals from the South London branch, endorsed by the new Editorial Committee, to water down TOM’s traditional anti-imperialist objectives.

This would have involved the idea of a “Troops Out” Peace Committee, with the specific aim of campaigning for “peace in Ireland”.

There was a clear majority at the meeting for continuing to build TOM on its two basic demands – “Troops Out Now” and “Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole”.

Forgotten

Many speakers in the debate voiced fears that if TOM did not campaign for these demands, anti-imperialist objectives would be forgotten.

Delegates also voiced fears that TOM’s anti-imperialist solidarity stance was submerged in “popular front” type politics.

Attempts by the Editorial Committee to get through a resolution welcoming the IRA ceasefire were also defeated, as being contradictory to TOM’s basic objectives, and traditional stance of not taking a position for or against the republican armed struggle.

It was agreed to hold the next Bloody Sunday march on January 30.

It was also decided to hold a November day-school on the current situation in Ireland, for TOM members to fully debate their views on the current political situation there.
**Lift-off for Welfare State Network**

**By Harry Sloan**

A NEW initiative to link up the campaigns, unions and individuals fighting in defence of the Welfare State was launched on September 18.

A full hall of 100 activists turned out to the meeting, convened under the sponsorship of the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee and the Socialist Campaign Group Network.

From the chair, Trudy Saunders told the meeting that over 300 MPs and national union officials and some organisations have already signed the basic policy statement on which the meeting had been called.

Platform speakers included a student nurse from Guy’s, pensioner’s activist Joe Harris, Islington councillor Liz Davies, John Lister from London Health Emergency, and Tony Benn MP.

A lengthy written message of support from Alan Simpson MP, the Socialist Campaign Group, was read out.

Platform and floor speakers were agreed on the need to support the various local and single-issue campaigns which have sprung up across the country to defend the existing welfare state against Tory attacks (hospitals, nurseries, nursing homes, pension rights, social security benefits, student grants, education services), and demand improvements including civil rights for disabled people.

Benn argued that the Tory drive to strip workers of social security and other benefits goes well beyond any economic motives, and is driven by their strategy to restore the power and discipline of capitalism.

"The Tories don’t just want to end the welfare state, they want to take the whole country back to where it was in the nineteenth century," warned Benn.

"We must do more than defend the welfare state, we must campaign for the things we want," he stressed.

John Lister from LHE pointed to the political significance of struggles over pensions and welfare state benefits in Italy and in the Swedish elections.

"We need a campaign like the Network to make sure that these issues punch their weight in British political life in the way they do elsewhere," he said. "We need to break down isolation, inform and link up campaigns, and reach for support into the labour movement, which has been too slow and timid in taking up these issues."

**Newspaper**

There was overwhelming support in the meeting for the Network to publish a tabloid newsletter, aimed at building a base of affiliations and sharing the experiences of successful campaigns.

The first, pilot issue, to give a taste of what could be done, will be published at Labour Party conference. This and future issues will be funded through donations, affiliations and selling advertising space to supportive organisations.

Also endorsed by the meeting was a call for a lobby of parliament on Budget Day, and the suggestion of a major national conference of the campaign to take place next spring.

While targeting activists in the existing campaigns and the labour movement, the Welfare State Network is committed to forming a broad coalition of those prepared to fight the Tories.

More information from, and donations/messages to Welfare State Network, c/o 22, Maude Rd, London SE5.

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**Labour's education policies: a dream or a fantasy?**

**By Richard Hatcher**

Labour's education policies are spelled out in the new White Paper, Opening the Doors to Learning Society. Out goes the prescriptive National Curriculum, to be replaced by a common curriculum framework.

Out go league tables based on national testing. Fixed-rate schools and new City Technology Colleges will be brought back into the LEA system. These and other reforms will be widely welcomed by teachers and parents as an improvement on the unpopular Tory policies.

But Labour's reform zeal is a pale shadow of the Tories'. The fundamental feature of our education system is that it is much better at reproducing social inequality than reducing it.

The White Paper for Labour: will it produce policies which do as much for working class children as the Tories have done for a privileged minority?

The White Paper is full of the rhetoric of overcoming disadvantage and fulfilling everyone's potential, but the remedies aren't radical enough to achieve it.

Labour's White Paper is trapped in the dilemma of trying to serve two masters - the demands of working class parents and students for an education system that works for them, and the demands of business for an education system that delivers a profitable workforce.

"Opportunity" Labour's document constructs a post-fordist fantasy. It begins, "A whole series of changes - economic, technological and cultural - have presented us with the opportunity of building a genuinely learning society - a society in which all individuals can fulfill their potential as active citizens in a prospering, civilized and caring community."

Note that these changes have already occurred. In other words, Labour's vision of citizen and community is based on the existing economic order.

This scenario, which promises that economic success goes hand-in-hand with social justice, is crucial to Labour's perspective.

Modern capitalism, it claims, requires all workers to be highly educated, and that will provide the motivation which the White Paper sees as the key factor in working class achievement in education.

This is a false dichotomy. In reality, new economic order combines high skill jobs for some with low-skill jobs for many, plus permanent high unemployment, all shaped by gender and racial inequalities. An education system geared to this economic order will continue to reflect those inequalities and de-motivate many working class students.

It is the acceptance of the logic of capital - not just the pre-eminent capital - which explains the absence of resource commitment in the White Paper.

Nursery education is also to be expanded, but only for half-time provision for three and four-year-olds. Class sizes are to be reduced, but no targets are set. Special needs are to be met in mainstream schools, but no extra funds are guaranteed.

No details are given of the criteria schools will be funded according to need rather than on a competitive numbers-led basis.

**Democracy**

It is also why the White Paper shies away from the principle of elected democratic control when it might offend dominant interests. The private schools retain their privilege.

The Training and Enterprise Councils will remain outside local democratic control. School governing bodies will not be directly elected.

The White Paper equivocates on other issues of inequality too. The sections on racial equality, and especially on gender are weak. "Parity of esteem" between academic and vocational qualifications is promised, rather than the abolition of A Levels and the creation of a genuinely unified qualification.

Perhaps the most blatant omission in the document is the lack of a clear commitment to abolish I+ selection in state schools.

There are good things in the White Paper. Some of them - such as the full reinstatement of GM schools and the end of league tables - may well have to be defended against Blair as the general election approaches.

But the logic of the White Paper, as with Labour's policies as a whole, is "partnership" with capital, and its logic sets narrow limits to Labour's education reforms.
Hunger strike highlights
Campfieldfield campaign

By Paul Clarke

TEN Algerian detainees started an indefinite hunger strike at the Haslar immigra-
tion prison, near Portsmouth, on September 15.

The ten, protesting their in-
definite detention under immi-
gration laws, are some of the
thousands of people who are impri-
soned each year because of
race immigration and asy-
ylum laws.

The hunger strike is likely
to become another flashpoint in the
campaign by prisoners and
campaigners to stop human
rights abuses by the British
government.

For the last year campaign-
ers against the immigration and
asylum laws have highlighted
the Campfield special immi-
gration prison at Kidlington
outside Oxford. Opened last
November, it has since been
followed up with the an-
nouncement of special immi-
gration wings at several other
prisons.

Asylum seekers

These facilities are being added
to the existing prison fa-
cilities for asylum seekers at
Hammondsworth, Haslar and
Pendlington.

One year on the Campfield
campaigners are determined
to continue and have announced a
programme of activity to mark
one year of Campfield’s exist-
ence.

Next Saturday, September
24, at 12 noon there will be a
"Sing Down Campfield" demo-
stration outside the prison
gates, featuring Cardiff Red
Chair.

On 29 October a further
demonstration outside the
prison will link the campaign
against the immigration laws
and the fight against the Cri-
iminal Justice Act.

November 13 will see a con-
ference against racist immi-
gration controls in Oxford (details
to be announced).

To commemorate one year
of Campfield there will be a
demonstration from Oxford to
London, starting on November
30 and arriving at Downing St
on December 4.

■ Help is needed with all
these plans. If you want to
get involved ring Oxford
(0865) 724452.

UNISON ‘Fightback’
conference: a sad
new SWP stunt

By Tim Foxley

TWO HUNDRED activists attended last Saturday’s
UNISON “Fightback” conference in solidarity with
the SWP, which after having been found in con-
tempt of court for defying the union laws, is now being
persecuted by its own union leadership.

UNISON General Secretary Alan Jinkinson repudiated the
action of SWP branch, which successfully, but illegally, took
strike action against council privatization. Now he is threat-
ening disciplinary action against the whole branch.

Sothe’s ‘crim’ is to have paid the fines levied on two branch
officers for defying the laws. A letter from UNISON
HQ has been sent to all branches forbidding them from
contributing to the defence fund.

■ Defiance

Despite this SWP branch has twice voted to pay the fines
of the victimized officers, Nigel Flanagan and Martin Murphy.

A number of other branches have similarly defined the
UNISON ban and generosity.

Attendance at the Fightback conference was a further show
of support from 60 branches.

There was also a useful discus-
sion about fighting the govern-
ment’s public sector pay limit.

However the weakness of the Fightback campaign was
revealed when a motion was ta-
bled calling on it to organise
further meetings and confer-
ences in its own name.

Fightback is basically an
SWP front in the mould of
the ANL. It calls initiatives and in-
vites affiliations, but has no
democratic structure.

In fact, despite arguing that
it is premature for the left
to organise in an ongoing way,
Fightback does not have an
organisational backbone - the
SWP.

Join forces

The Campaign for a Fighting
and Democratic Union (CFDU),
which is working to build a
democratic and non-
sectarian left network, made
a proposal to join forces with
Fightback, to organise a democ-
kratic, united conference of the
left.

This proposal was not just
rejected by the Fightback or-
geaters but ruled out of order
(1) and not allowed for discuss-
ion on the spurious grounds
that it had been submitted too
late - despite the fact that no
one knew in advance of the
conference that resolutions
were to be taken at all.

The SWP bureaucratic
bloc went to absurd lengths;
delegates were required to sub-
mit speaking slips giving an ac-
count of what the speaker
intended to say.

Fightback will not be a real
organisation, but will be taken
off the shelf and dusted down
when the SWP feel like it.

The CFDU must go ahead with its
December conference to create a
united and democratic left or-
organisation within UNISON.

New left wing in
UNISON

By Fred Leplat

A NEW left wing is being organi-
sed in UNISON, Brit-
ain’s largest union formed
from the merger of
NALGO, NUPE and CO-
HSE. The launch confer-
ence of the Campaign for
a Democratic and Fighting
UNISON (CFDU) will take
place on 3 December in
Leeds.

The need for an organised
left has never been so great,
with so many attacks raining
down on public service work-
ers.

Privatization, pay freeze,
cuts in services and attacks
on union organisation are just
some of the issues on
which a fighting leadership
is required.

The CFDU was initiated at
UNISON’s first national con-
ference last May, at a meet-
ing called by several re-
gional left caucuses. The
meeting had been organised
in response to national cam-
paigins, including industrial
action, against the attacks
we face and for real demo-
ocracy in the union.

The 150 delegates at the
meeting unanimously agreed
there was a need for a perma-
nent left organisation in the
union.

The CFU is appealing to
“Fightback”, a group of UNI-
SON branches influenced by
the Socialist Workers Party,
to join with the CFU to en-
sure there is one large,
united, left in UNISON.

There is much in common
between the CFU and Fight-
back, and those members
who want to see real action
to deal with the cuts and
services will not understand
why the left is split.

The launch conference of
the CFDU on 3 December is
at Swarthmore Centre, 4
Woodhouse Square, Leeds 3
(telephone available, accessible
venue). It is being organised
by the following regional cau-
cuses: London CFDU, UNI-
SON Left (North East),
Campania for Lay Control
in UNISON (Yorks and Humber-
side) and East Midlins
CFDU 80.

These regional lefts have
agreed a draft Statement of
Aims which will be submitted
for amendment and adoption
at the conference.

All UNISON branches are
invited to send up to five
delegates (£5 per delegate).
Any UNISON member can
attend as an observer with
speaking rights (£3 each).

■ Write to: CFU, c/o
Glen Kelly, Bromley UNI-
SON, Civic Centre, South-
well Close, Bromley BR1
3UN. Phone 081-464 3333
ext. 3773 for further de-
tails.

Nazis beaten back in
Shadwell by-election

THE ATTEMPT by the Nazi
British National Party to
stage a comeback in Tower
Hamlets, after the defeat of
their only councillor Derek
Beaconsfield last May, has
flopped.

In the September 15 by-
election in Shadwell ward,
they took 305 votes against
the Labour Party’s 1,800.
Shadwell is bisected by Cable
Street, site of the historic an-
fascist battle against Mosley’s
devons in 1936.

Despite their de-
feat, the BNP
came within 12
votes of the second-place Lib-
eral Democrats and the Conser-
vatives who got a
wretched 74 votes.

Although the BNP have not
succeeded in capturing an
other seat, their vote shows
that they are a factor in the
politics of the area.

Shadwell borders on Ca-
ning Town, where conspicu-
ous luxury stands
cheek-by-jowl with the des-
perate housing conditions and
general squalor in Shadwell it-
self.

There is a large Bengali
community. Bad housing to-
gether with a significant immi-
grant community leads to
cratic accusations that immi-
grants are getting preferential
housing allocations.

In every case this has been
proved to be nonsense. The BNP
are adopting typical
“divide and rule” tac-
tics, where homelessness
and unemployment is blamed on immigrants.

Last year’s BNP Millwall vic-
tory has however had a salu-
tary effect in mobilising
anti-fascists and the local com-
munity every time the BNP
shows their face.

Millwall will be much more
difficult for the BNP to repeat.
Gunboat diplomacy will not bring democracy to Haiti

By Charles Mullet

Restoring democracy, ending human rights abuses and upholding international law: these are the arguments used by US President Bill Clinton to justify sending a massive military force to remove the ruling junta in the Caribbean island of Haiti. Desperate last-minute negotiations led by former President Jimmy Carter appear to have extracted Clinton from having to mount a frontal military onslaught in the teeth of US opposition.

But anybody who believes that a US-led occupation of the island will fulfill the initial high-attentions drawn to its officials leaving Somalia in chaos under clan warlords..."...aid workers...are re-tracing from all outlying garrisons, abandoning areas of the country to government." UN backing

America’s gunboat diplomacy in Haiti has the backing of the UN Security Council and a number of Caribbean states are sending troops contingents. However, the US policy’s main source of credibility at the outset is given by Haiti’s Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Elected by a two-thirds majority with a popular mandate to carry out radical social and economic change, Aristide was driven from power in September 1991 by the Haitian army and a reign of terror followed.

By aligning himself with US intervention, Aristide has turned his back on the poor of Haiti who brought him to power.

UN sanctions against the island have already inflicted terrible suffering on them, and indeed it seems a reasonable assumption that the hope of seeing sanctions ended is one of the main reasons for alleged popular support for intervention on the island.

According to as leading as US foreign policy analyst “all the US wants from Aristide is his legitimacy, not his policies”.

Reforming the Haitian army and police will be in the hands of the same US services who have aided murderous ultra-right formations throughout Central America.

US-trained

Along with hundreds of other Haitian officers, the current Haitian chief of police, Colonel Michel Francois, was trained at the US Central Intelligence School for the Americas.

A huge US-led force on the island would be on hand to suppress movements for social justice.

Asylum seekers

It could also prevent Haitians fleeing the country to seek asylum in the US far more efficiently than the present military government.

Once in Haiti, the US will not find it easy to leave. Haiti is the US’s back yard, and unlike Somalia, failure would not go unnoticed by the voters.

On the other hand, according to American Haiti expert Walter Fauntroy, at least ten years would be needed to reshape Haiti to US design.

US-dominated

Even if the Haitian junta re-enters from power next month as agreed, a 6000-strong US-dominated force would still be in control. The United Nations headgare will remain to “install and maintain a secure and stable climate”.

Among its tasks will be moderating the armed forces and creating a separate police force, and it is scheduled to stay until 1996.

If far-reaching social and political engineering is envisaged then this has major implications for the sovereignty of all nations in the region.

From this angle, intervention in Haiti looks like marking a new watershed in the 150-year history of US blacklisting, and the rest of the Americas. Will Cuba be next?

Left throws out Swedish Tories

By Paul Clarke

THE RIGHT-wing coalition government in Sweden, led by Carl Bildt, has survived a confidence vote at the Riigiet on 9 December, with a narrow majority of 41.1 per cent of the total vote between the two parties, led by the Social Democrats (S). The result was a major victory for Bildt, who has been in power since 1991 and has been able to maintain his grip on the political agenda.

The Social Democrats, who ruled Sweden for decades before the right wing came to power in 1991, won 45.6 per cent of the vote, while the right-wing opposition won 47.6 per cent. The result means that Bildt’s coalition has a slim majority in parliament, and the Social Democrats have no clear commitment to reverse these cuts. Social Democrat leader Ingvar Carlsdotter wanted to form a coalition with the Liberals, one of the parties in the previous government, but this objective has been undermined by the defeat of the left.

The result has been seen as a “realistic” attempt to form a coalition between the Left Party or the Green Party, since the Social Democrats are likely to come into sharp conflict with these groups over issues such as social security, immigration, and other aspects of the agenda.
Where is Labour going?

By Helen Shaw and Pete Firmin

Tony Blair's election as Labour leader on July 16 was heralded as a great exercise in party democracy; but it presented little real choice to left wing party members and trade union affiliates.

In the short time since then, Blair has already revealed himself as willing to go to any length to gain the support of the establishment in his quest to become Prime Minister.

Blair's victory has been widely heralded as the culmination of a long struggle in the party between the "modernisers" and the "traditionalists".

The project of the modernisers has been to make the Labour Party electorate at virtually any cost.

Initially, Blair's election seemed to have given a significant boost to that project. On August 5 the party had a 31 point lead over the Conservatives.

Now, however, the polls are virtually identical to the state of play before Smith died - promising party press coverage of the "new attack on Tory taxes" over the few days following the latest polls.

The modernisers' whole strategy has been based not on providing any genuine difference between Labour and Tory, but on convincing electorate of Labour's ability to do the same thing better. This inevitability means that successive Labour leaderships have worked to repudiate the last vestiges of socialist policy and Blair has shown no sign of changing this approach.

Market values

In his first two days as party leader he bluntly repudiated any form of socialist values and attacked the trade unions. His inaugural speech was notable for his declaration that the party must move away from 'Marxist socialism based on social ownership' and fully embrace the market.

The idea that the Labour Party leadership has at any time this century had anything to do with 'Marxist socialism based on social ownership' is laughable. But the use of the term 'social ownership' as opposed to 'old-fashioned nationalisation' is significant. It is clear Blair wants to repudiate anything but the market.

He said 'common sense' would be the driving force behind Labour's approach to social policy rather than ideology. He has lauded the family as 'the essential, stable social unit'. Whilst he attacked the Tories for stigmatising single parents he said that adults should not choose to have children outside of stable relationships, claiming that women who did so were 'wrong'.

His pro-market view also came out on taxation. He claimed that 'only millionaires will pay more tax under a Labour government'. He has also been equally keen to woo the middle classes by his attitude to the trade unions warning them that they should not expect privileged access to the next Labour government.

Blair told BBC radio on July 22 that unions would have no more influence over the next Labour government than employers and his urging of the RMT to move to arbitration to settle the nationalise dispute makes it clear that he wasn't exaggerating.

The tactics of the modernisers have to be judged against the background of widespread disenchanted amongst business and the middle classes with the Conservative Party and a significant divide in the ruling class, itself reflected in divisions inside the Conservative Party.

On the one hand there are those who, as a generalisation, defend and pursue the interests of international finance capital - continued high military spending, a qualitative break with the post 1945 settlement, anti-European (and invariably pro-US) etc. On the other, there is Thatcher's ruling class adversaries, traditionally associated with manufacturing capital and relatively pro-European.

Accommodation

It is to the latter that Blair (and with him the John Mooks leadership of the TUC) has accommodated ideologically. They share the common belief that what is required today is a more thorough integration within the project of European unity and the establishment of what we could describe as a post-cold war settlement to replace the post 1945 consensus - this time based far more explicitly on capital's interests.

While the Conservatives remain divided - and the Major leadership has largely failed to paper over the increasing number of cracks - Blair's aim is to exploit the situation in order to establish Labour as the new, natural governmental representative of pro-European capital for the next century.

There have been a number of indicators that this project is progressing, at least so far as small sections of the ruling class are taking tentative steps away from the Tories and making overtures to Blair.

Despite repeated reassurances and figures indicating recovery in the economy and pointing towards steady, non-inflationary growth, the conventional assumption that this will translate into continued support for the government has not proved to be correct.

The last recession hit the middle classes hard. House prices significantly dropped after a boom in the late 1980s and the shake-out in the labour market not only affected the working class but hit the service sector and white-collar employees.

Career uncertainty

The insecurity in the labour market and the increasing flexibility in working practices has meant even middle class professionals now face constant career uncertainty and even they are forced to accept terms and conditions previously deemed unacceptable.

Economists at Morgan Grenfell have commented in the Financial Times: "In people's perceptions the recovery is not due to the government's good management but to an accident - our departure from the Exchange Rate Mechanism. And a government that got re-elected on the basis that it was the party of low taxation then hit voters with one of the largest tax increases in history".

Companies ranging from the Japanese electronic games manufacturer Sega to the security group Securicor are opening for exhibition stalls at Labour's Conference in October.

Corporate images

The Labour Party's corporate relations manager commented, "It really feels as if we are pushing at an open door. Corporate UK is clearly disillusioned with the Tories". The pro-Labour think tank, the Institute of Public Policy Research now includes amongst its clients Rupert Murdoch's News International, and multi-national Glaxo and Shell.

Their chief economist Mr Dan Corry said, "Our clients want to know what a Labour party is going to do because it is quite obvious to some of them that a Labour government is what they are going to end up with".

Marks and Spencer invited Blair to talk about whether the company could give financial backing to the Labour Party. At the same time there were reports that David Sainsbury, the millionaire supermarket chief, financially backed Blair's campaign for the Labour leadership.

Whilst Labour's public relations machine is keen to emphasise that Blair could not be expected to tailor policies in exchange for financial backing this development indicates the distance the party has travelled to the right with the "modernising" project.

The Blair-led Labour Party has also had a significant impact on the standing of the third major party in Britain, the Liberal Democrats. Their popularity in the recent past has rested on being anti-Tory but not linked to the trade unions and the left as Labour has been. In many constituencies in
City bankers and big business are the target audience for Blair's sound-bites

the south of Britain they have been the main opposition to the Tories but Blair's victory has pushed them way down in the polls.

There has been a project inside the Labour Party in favour of coalition with the Liberal Democrats to get rid of the Tories but with Blair's victory that no longer seems necessary on a formal basis. As Roger Liddle, a member of their policy committee said, "there are in reality no philosophical differences of substance between Blair and the vast majority of Liberal Democrats".

The pressure from the right of the Labour Party for coalition is off because the party has moved so far to the right that they will win Liberal Democrat voters anyway.

Breaking links

The project of the modernisers has been to lessen, and for some of them break the organisational link the party has with the trade unions, and to build a mass party which relates directly to its members rather than an activist party which relates to its members through local democratic structures. But their project is not yet won.

Despite Blair becoming leader, 43 per cent of those voting in the leadership election voted against him, with some of the major unions backing one of the other two candidates who campaigned on a more left social democratic basis around defence of the welfare state and for full employment.

There is a significant split amongst the "new realist" union leaders supported by left and centre left MPs who will not accept much of the modernisers' project. These are many of the same bureaucrats who were the architects of the reforms in Labour Party structure gradually introduced during the 1980s to curb the power of the left.

What is at stake is the very nature of the British Labour Party. Will it retain its constitutional link to the trade unions and will it champion policies like full employment, defence of the welfare state and the collectivist ideology which in the public perception characterised the post-1945 Labour Party?

Or will it totally "modernise" breaking its link with the unions, accepting much of the damage done to public services during the Thatcher years and become the acceptable party of the middle ground?

Alliances are beginning to develop around the defence of the welfare state which include hitherto "modernising" trade union leaders such as John Edmonds of the GMB. He posed the question at a conference of the Tribune newspaper during the election campaign that it was time for the Labour Party to make its mind up - which side was it on that of the employers or that of the workers? What were its policy commitments on full employment. He said that issue was the most important in order for there to be strong trade unions.

Whilst far from the hard left of the party it is a significant break from the new realist project of keeping their heads down and not rocking the boat that these sorts of union leaders have made such comments, spoken at conferences of the left and are prepared to back initiatives such as the Campaign to Defend the Welfare State.

It is also significant that the motions submitted to Labour Party conference show substantial support from unions and CLPs for renationalisation of the gas, water and electricity industries, scrapping anti-trade union laws, against "family values" for full employment, universal benefits and in defence of the National Health Service.

Rightward motions

It is a measure of how far to the right the Labour Leadership has moved that motions committing the party to universal benefits and full employment are now seen to be of the left. Throughout the 1980s those issues were seen as inmovable.

There are also many motions on the economy calling for the renationalisation of the railways, basic industries such as steel making, coal mining and shipbuilding and the Post Office which the government wants to privatise.

The battle lines inside the Labour Party are being drawn up, and there is the possibility of a real fight back from some of the previously dormant union leaders. It remains to be seen whether the British bourgeoisie will really choose Labour as the next party of government, but in the run up to that possibility at the next General Election in 1997, there will be a significant fight for the heart of the Labour Party.
"In many ways the general public are much more radical than the Labour Party" 

Alan Simpson was one of the 1992 intake of Labour MPs and is secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group. Rod Marshall asked for his views on the Labour party and socialism today.

SO: What's your perception of what people feel about Tony Blair?

AS: I remember hearing someone on my street saying that all this stuff about Labour's values sounds really good, but it's like being taken into an orchard and being shown these beautiful apples on the trees and you ask "I like the apples, where's the ladder?"!
But, I think there is a real danger of focusing too much on the personality of the Labour leader. The real challenges is what we are going to do?

SO: What can be done to stop the Labour Party from dying on the ground?

AS: The base of the party has been demoralised as a result of several things. First, by being in opposition for a long time and second by having been told for much of that time that all we needed to do was to look more respectable and be less political.

The problem has been reinforced by the erosion of party democracy and the hunting out of decent socialists within the party.
The good news is that increasing sections of the general public haven't waited for permission from the Labour Party to start clamouring for specific areas of policy change and specific issues to be pushed back into the national political agenda.

In many ways the general public are much more radical than the Labour Party and there is a real opportunity for the party to revitalise itself simply by getting involved in campaigns at local level.

SO: What would somebody gain by joining the Labour Party if they're already campaigning successfully on the issues that affect them?

AS: In that we've often done ourselves no favours by going round saying "vote for us and we'll do this". I think we have to be talking out a different message. If you want changes in the way the country's run then address the systems of government that ultimately make the decisions.

There are many lessons to be learnt from the '80s about the decline in campaigning activity which followed from people removing themselves from the Labour Party saying "its all just too much of a muddle". I think the muddle has been because radical and critical voices have stood outside. We need to bring people in from the campaigns.

SO: Are you in favour of 'mass entry' into the Labour Party, of lots of different groups and ideas and of a federal Labour Party of all different kind of organised groupings?

AS: No. I think the sectarianism of people outside the Labour Party saying "its all just too much of a muddle". I think the muddle has been because radical and critical voices have stood outside. We need to bring people in from the campaigns.

SO: Are you in favour of 'mass entry' into the Labour Party, of lots of different groups and ideas and of a federal Labour Party of all different kind of organised groupings?

AS: Most important has been a strengthening of the links between the Campaign Group in parliament and the network of socialist campaign groups around the country because it's brought people together who were wanting to talk about active campaigning and policy issues in a coherently and supportive fashion.

The linkage between the left in parliament and radical voices outside is extremely healthy.

On the other hand, those who have talked about a sort of Red-Green alliance outside the Labour Party and encouraging people to leave the party were more responsible for the defeat of Dennis Skinner and Tony Benn on the National Executive Committee than anyone else.

SO: How far does Clintonisation in the party have to go before the party ceases to be a Labour Party? And if it ceased to be a Labour Party would you cease to be a member of it or one of its representatives in parliament?

AS: We need to look at the position that Clinton himself is in as a result of Clintonisation. He is in deep trouble. It wouldn't surprise me if the Democratic Party didn't turn around and say to him 'you're unelectable' for a second term. Because you don't stand for anything.
I'm certain that Labour will get elected at the next general election. The real questions are what happens six to nine months in when the really deep rooted problems in the economy start to become absolutely clear and the press start to wade in wanting Labour to do even more of the dirty work that the Tories wouldn't do. Labour would be faced with very stark choices.

SO: There has been a lot of discussion in the leadership election about the enormous constraints placed on MPs from the Left who get into the shadow cabinet.

AS: The left have got to decide whether they want to be only in opposition.
I think we have to have an agenda which sees more and more members of the left in parliament getting into positions where they can shape policies and where they hold a corner in the ring whilst other people are climbing into it.

SO: Is that the same reason why you think the NEC slate is important?

AS: No, the NEC slate is quite different. I'm in favour of separating the NEC from the shadow cabinet.

You have this absurd position of the same people talking to each other about the same issues and just wearing different hats. So I think that the slate for the NEC has to address first of all the primacy of going onto that body to carry out party conference decisions. And second is to reclaim the NEC as a child of the party itself.

SO: Then the Campaign group slate for the NEC should include members of the party who aren't MPs and should be decided more by the actual supporters of the network rather than by the Campaign group MPs?

AS: I'm quite happy to see an increase in parliamentary Labour Party or shadow cabinet representations on the NEC and determined by the shadow cabinet. But there is an equally compelling case to have membership of the shadow cabinet incompatible with membership of the NEC.

If you go one step further, I ought to follow that there should be a guaranteed number of places on the NEC for party members not necessarily members of the parliamentary Labour Party.
Field day for zealots

Cairo Conference traps women between two fundamentalisms

By K. Govindan

WITH ALL the fuss the Vatic-
ican created at the Cairo sum-
mite, you would have thought it was a conference on abor-
tion and not the International
Conference on Population and
Development.

The Holy See, a mini-state
populated entirely by men and
feasting a birth rate of zero, stal-
tled the conference for a week on paragraph 8:25 of the draft declaration on which it was
condemning the right to abortion
on demand.

In fact the text only recog-
nised that with between 50 and
60 million abortions performed
worldwide each year, an esti-
mated 250,000 women are dy-
ing from back street operations and this is a primary concern for
women's health campaigners.

Failed alliance

Meanwhile, the so-called
"Holy Alliance" between the Catho-
lic Church and Muslim coun-
thies didn't materialise.

Many Muslim countries tol-
erate abortion when the woman's life is at risk. Even Iran is now vigorously pushing fam-
ily planning programs.

The women Prime Ministers
of Turkey and Bangladesh who
stayed away did so to avoid an-
tagonising fundamentalist
movements. Muslim delega-
tions concentrated on removing references to what they under-
stood to be "unnatural and not
reproductive rights".

By choosing to focus on abor-
tion and not contraception, the
Vatican accepted that most of
their flock is disbelieving it anyway.

All delegations accepted the
premise of the conference, that
at current fertility rates there
will be 12.5 billion people by
2050, but if the "programme of
action" is implemented there
would be 7.8 billion, the differ-
ence being the world's current
population.

The implication of this is no
longer the Malthusian night-
mare that population growth
would outstrip food production
that correlation has been empiri-
cally disproved) but of large-
groups of Muslim countries
from the poor countries to the rich
and intensified environmental de-
gradation.

In reality, there is consensus
between the developed coun-
tries and their neo-colonies that
curbs on population growth are
necessary to prevent social and
political chaos.

Authoritarian regimes in
poorer countries fear being overthrown if they cannot meet
the expectations of their people. Western countries are con-
cerned that demands on natural
resources in the Third World
will affect supply to their econom-
ies.

The social context within
which targets are to be reached is
possibly the best aspect of the
conference declaration.

It rightly identifies the impor-
tance of 1. education, espe-
cially for girls, 2. infant, child
and maternal mortality reduc-
tion and 3. universal access to
family planning and reproduc-
tive health services.

Feminist success

These aspirations reflect the
success of the feminist move-
ment in placing the woman and
not the womb at the centre of
any sensible discussion on pop-
ulation.

Unfortunately, these are only "goals" in the official rhetoric
and unsurprisingly there is no
binding political and financial
commitment in this area.

We should be cautious too about the use of terms like "em-
powerment of women" and "re-
productive rights".

The US government among
others admit that their involve-
ment in coercive programmes
like forced sterilisation in Latin
America have exposed the op-
pressive and selective nature of
any population control scheme.

To mask this, feminist lan-
guage is appropriated so that
the woman's right to choose seems
to be their prime consideration.

The fundamentalism that af-
fets most women is the interna-
tional monetary fundamentalism of neo-liberal economic policies which makes early marriage a survival strat-
egy, reduces health care and re-
moves food subsidies.

Literacy

Where birth rates have gone
down, even in poor countries, it
is because of political and eco-
omic conditions: freely elected
governments, land reform, liter-
acy drives, minimum wage
laws, food security and so on.

Crucial to this is improving
the status of women within the
family and society and their
economic advancement though
rural credit schemes and co-
opatives.

None of this is possible with-
out challenging the unfair and
unjust distribution of wealth be-
tween and within countries and
the patriarchal nature of society.

That is why the Cairo confer-
ence centred on a symptom of
poverty and exploitation and
not its root cause.

Oil strike crushed by crackdown

By Baile Kumar

NIGERIAN oil workers
called off their eight-week
pro-democracy strike on
September 6 as repressive mea-
sures taken by the milit-
ary dictator General Sani
Abacha and popular suffer-
ing wore them down.

The strike had been pro-
nounced by the June arrest
of millionaire businessman
Moshood Abiola, widely
thought to be the winner of
the 1993 presidential elec-
tion, which was annulled by
the military.

Abacha has been under for-
eign and local pressure to
rule-in protests which cut oil.
production, Nigeria's top econ-
omic activity, by one
third. The strike paralysed life
across much of the coun-
try west, although its effects
were felt everywhere.

On August 17, Abacha dis-
solved the executives of the
two oil workers' unions, Na-
peng and Panseru, and for
good measure that of the
Nigerian Labour Congress,
ap-
pointing state administrations in
their place.

The arrest and detention of
leading strike activists like
Nupeng general secretary
Frank Tukun and the disac-
crations faced by strikers' fam-
ilies, contributed to the drift
back to work.

It was the poor who bore
the brunt of the strike as the
authorities channelled oil
abroad to satisfy foreign credi-
tors, while rationing it within
the country.

Prices of basic foodstuffs
and necessities like beans,
bread and kerosene shot up
as much as 70 per cent in the
case of bread.

Fare increases

Millions were unable to
travel to work as bus fares
rose by 150 per cent in Lagos
and 300 per cent in Ibadan,
to make up for the cost of petrol.

This closed factories, banks
and government departments.

Two problems weakened
the strike and have had an ad-
verse affect on the course of
the mass movement. The oil
workers' actions were iso-
lated from the rest of the la-
bour movement and bypassed
by the Nigerian Labour Con-
gress (NLC) leadership.

A general strike in August
was suspended by the NLC af-
ter two days, in return for ne-
gotiations with the military
authorities. The rotten deal ar-
rived at included the release
of Abiola, in return for not in-
volving himself in politics for
the rest of his life.

This would have left unchal-
 lenged the military hold on
power and removed from the
scene the most popular politi-
cal figure. Abiola refused, but
the opportunistic NLC leader
shockingly abandoned any
threat of strike action, and
with it the oil workers.

The second problem is the
political leadership of the de-
mocracy movement.

The National Democratic
Coalition (Nadeco) is com-
promised of ex-general, old
 guard civilian politicians and
big business people.

They would like Abiola,
a member of their class, re-
 leased because his policies
don't threaten their power and
wealth -- unlike a popular up-
 surge from below.

General Abacha followed
up his clampdown on the
workers' movement with new,
 draconian, military decrees.

Hundreds have been detained
over the last year and may
now be imprisoned without
trial.
Invasion ideology

The New Ideology of Imperialism, by Frank Ferudi, Pluto, £8.95

Reviewed by Paul Clarke

As this review is written, the United States is preparing another invasion - this time of Haiti. This follows US military action in the last decade against Nicaragua, Libya, Grenada, Panama and of course the huge Gulf War operation.

Once again, the sanction of the UN is being sought, and the facadé of a "multilateral" operation is being cracked up, with small numbers of troops from other Caribbean states.

That the US has the habit in this field of "terrorist" or "gangster" states is now hardly contested.

The idea that each nation possesses sovereignty, that countries have no right to interfere in the internal affairs of others, has been quietly dispensed with. Yet national sovereignty is the basis of the UN charter.

Two worlds

In fact the world has, in the official ideology of Western states, been divided into two: those states dispensing with sovereignty, and without it.

As Frank Ferudi rightly points out, this is a function of a new and open rehabilitation of imperialism. In the academic and semi-official journal of Western thinking on imperialism, but is surprisingly weak on analysis of the dynamic of the imperialist system.

Although Ferudi correctly highlights the collapse of the Soviet Union as being an essential moment in freeing the hands of the Western powers to "do what they like" against the poor and dominated countries, that's about it in terms of analysis of the imperialist system.

Imperialism has entered a new phase, marked by deepening inter-imperialist rivalry and a rediscovered militarisation. It's that context that the re-arming of Japan and the Germany have to be considered. Rather than endless quotes from US think-tanks, some analysis of what the new imperialism represents would have been useful.

Equally, the failure of third world nationalism is noted, but hardly analysed. This is a massive topic in itself.

Pan-Africanism and Pan-Arabism are now almost de-funct. National development of the poorer countries within a capitalist framework was possible during the boom, but today has very limited potential.

Socialist strategy has to analyse and draw all the lessons from the new phase of imperialism, and the failure of all forms of third world nationalism, including the most radical.

It has to radically break from "third worldism" and the grotesque tail-endism of third world regimes exhibited by much of the Western left.

On much of this, of course Ferudi has completely correct positions. But the usefulness of so much research into official thinking in Western universities, military academies and foreign ministries has to be questioned.

It's an old problem for the RCP, with its one-sided concern with official, and especially liberal, ideology.

Socialist readers of this book will find a lot of quotes to back up what they already know about how imperialist thinking is evolving.

But what they need is a detailed analysis of contemporary imperialism - the laws of motion of the modern world system - not just examples of the latest outpourings from Western think-tanks and right-wing academics.

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Sleeping with the enemy?

Straight Sex - The Politics of Pleasure, by Lynne Segal (Virago £8.99)

Reviewed by Ellen Moore

'Penetration' enacts the subjugation of women by men' claims Andrea Dworkin. Lynne Segal's book takes issue with this idea, which, in her view, has come to dominate much feminist thinking on sexuality since the late 1970s.

Central to 'Straight Sex' are the questions of what is at stake in women's sexual desire for men and whether women can express their pleasure in heterosexual sex as linked and fundamental to the domination of women by men in all spheres of life. The book traces both feminist theory and practice, focusing on personal experience and history as well as covering the contributions of sociological and psychoanalytic theory and of 'queer' politics to the debates.

Repercussions

Segal acknowledges the debt to lesbian feminists in the development of a feminist theory of sexuality, taking up and describing many of the practical repercussions in the feminist movement resulting from some of the debates and battles over sexuality.

She describes the marginalisation of lesbians in the women's liberation movement, the subsequent development of 'political lesbianism' and how its general thesis came to dominate much feminist thinking on sexuality. How the views articulated by Adrienne Rich, amongst others, in her essay 'Compulsory Heterosexuality' that heterosexuality was 'forcibly and subliminally imposed on women' and all women were really part of the 'lesbian continuum' became centre stage in the women's movement.

In this process straight women were silent and guilty about their sexual practices and desire as were many lesbians who felt unable to talk about the reality of their sexual lives. Lesbianism was held up as an ideal and heterosexuality as an institution to enforce male dominance. The complexity of sexual desire, the contradictions and the complex issues of power and consent were swept under the carpet.

As American-lesbian feminist Jean Nestle commented later, 'We lesbians made a mistake in the early seventies: we allowed our lives to be trivialised and reinterpreted by feminists who did not share our culture.'

The slogan 'Lesbianism is the practice and feminism is the theory' was a good rallying cry but it cheated our history.

Segal asserts that women enjoying 'sex with men, confident in the knowledge that this, just this, is what we want, and how we want it...confused the political and cultural meanings given to heterosexuality; which define sex as something "done" by active men to passive women, not something women do.

Equality

She rightly asserts that all of us struggling for women's equality must attack the idea of heterosexual as a continuation of "machismo".

We must struggle against the idea that there is a necessary relationship between maleness, activity and desire as much as we struggle against the similar notion which associates women with passivity and sexual responsiveness.

As Jean Nestle said amidst great controversy, 'Don't scream penis at me, but help to change the world so no woman feels shame or fear because she likes to fuck'.

Traveller and baby lobbying the Commons

Signals of women's resistance

Inbar Tamari reviews the photo exhibition

'I won't give up or shut up'

"I am dangerous because I won't give up or shut up Or put up with your version of reality"

Thus says the "dangerous woman" in Joan Cavanagh's poem dedicated to the Greenham women. This provides a fitting title to an impressive exhibition by photojournalist Caroline Austin under the title 'I won't give up or shut up', part of the Signals Festival of women photographers.

The women photographed by Caroline Austin are not going to shut up. The exhibition provides a graphic history of the women's resistance and grass roots politics in the last five years.

Those warm and supportive pictures cast a fresh light on events in which many Socialist Outlook readers will have taken part.: The themes include women and violence, travellers' rights, anti-war campaigning, support for a nuclear-free Pacific and the current struggle against the Criminal Justice Act.

Though Caroline Austin is particularly interested in Ecofeminism, the photos and struggles represent a situation within a clear anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist framework. The viewer is brought face to face with a realisation that, though the degree and type of oppression suffered by the poor and oppressed of different nationalities are very different, it is caused by the same enemy.

The Signals festival comprises over 30 exhibitions and events in venues from community centres to international galleries all over Britain during September and October. It concludes with an international conference hosted by the National Museum of Photograpy, Film and Television in Bradford on October 28-30.

Up in London the London Women's Centre, 4 Wild Court, London WC2 will be 12 November. Signals can be contacted on 071-267 7531.
"I'd say I was a socialist, if the Labour Party hadn't devalued the term"

KEN LOACH has established himself as the world's leading filmmaker working in the English language. Since 1991 he has won twice major prizes at the Cannes film festival, for Hidden Agenda and Raining Stones. His new film Ladybird, Ladybird is released this month. He is currently editing his next film, Land and Freedom about the Spanish Civil War. Phil Hearse spoke to him.

In the mid-1980s you had a lean time of it, unable to get commissions either for television or cinema. This was obviously linked to the political reaction of the Thatcher years. But in ideological terms this has hardly changed. How, then, do you explain the widespread critical acclaim you are now getting?

At the start of the 1980s, I don't think I came up with the right ideas for fictional films. It was a time of huge attacks on the left, when being a socialist film maker was not very fashionable. I thought the best way to respond to that period, of mass unemployment and huge attacks on the left, was to make documentary. Feature films, once you've worked on the script, got the money together and actually made the film can take three or four years.

But I thought it was necessary to make an intervention at the time by making documentaries - not wait for several years. But the documentaries I made, like Which side are you on? about the miners' strike or Questions of Leadership about the unions, was effectively censored.

When you're involved in lots of things which are banned, then the word goes out that you're not safe. It seemed for a year or two that everything I touched got swallowed.

The turning point really was a telephone call from David Putnam asking whether I would be prepared to do a film about the Stalker Affair. That turned into Hidden Agenda.

That then won the prize at Cannes; and national recognition then gives people confidence at home. But I'm not under any illusions. Things could easily swing back, and I could find it difficult to get work again.

What are the political benchmarks which determine your choice of topic? How do you describe yourself politically?

I'd say I was a socialist, if the Labour Party hadn't devalued the term. For me as a film maker, if I define political allegiances much more specifically, then it can be used as a weapon against me. But I guess it's pretty clear where my sympathies lie.

The topics for the films generally arise from a conversation with a writer. It's a matter of finding a story which is valid in itself, but then has a significance and reverberation beyond its own limits.

The subjects which have drawn me are those which relate personal and emotional life to a wider background - a class background and an economic background. I've tried to show how people's personal lives don't exist in a vacuum from these things.

To put it crudely, it's matter of human interest put in a social framework.

You use a lot of non-professional performers in your films. Why? Hasn't this brought you into conflict with the actors' union Equity?

Not at all. We're one of the few companies left which are still working on Equity contracts. If you're making a serious film, not just a commercial enterprise, the people you have in the film are there because of who they are and the performance they can give, and that relates closely to their own experience. They reveal their own personalities in the performance.

Thus the people you choose may not be experienced film actors. Social class is important, so that people are not pretending to be what they're not.

Experience is important, so that performers can relate to the story and bring their own three-dimensional personality into the story. So the people you choose may not be professional actors; but of course they have to be able to act, to make a fictional story credible.

How do you respond to the accusation that your films are just agit-prop and political polemic?

The accusation that actors are just "observed functions", to go through a certain plot development without any real character depth, is much more true of the average Hollywood film.

I think there was a danger of descending to polemic in some of the films, where perhaps I should have made a documentary instead. That's why I made Questions of Leadership about the unions as documentary - so that people could put a political analysis very directly, without the mediation of fiction.

There is an idea among film critics that people in movies shouldn't be political, that there's no place for political argument in film. But why shouldn't fictional characters argue politics? It's interesting and absorbing, and people don't have to lose their personal identity to make a political argument.

The scene we're cutting at the moment from Land and Freedom is a passionate political argument in a very dramatic situation during the Spanish Civil war. The Republican militia have just taken a village and the people of that village are discussing whether to collectivise the land.

It's very appropriate that people involved in a civil war because of politics should be able to actually discuss politics in the film! On the other hand it's going to be a matter of fine judgement how long we can let this scene run, because if it goes on for 20 minutes the audience will have left the cinema. We'll have to make sure that polemic doesn't take over the film, but in a sense the politics is the film.

You've been known for taking a very outspoken position on Ireland. For example at the time of the Warrington bombings, when two children were killed by IRA bombs, you went on television to denounce the hypocrisy of the media coverage. How do feel about the IRA ceasefire?

I haven't studied and discussed it enough to make a firm judgement. What's interesting is the continued hypocrisy of the media coverage. On the day after the ceasefire when a Catholic was shot dead by Loyalist terrorists in Belfast, the press headlines were all about the controversy surrounding the transfer of your Republican prisoners to prisons in Northern Ireland from Britain, not about the shooting.

Now by any objective criterion, what was the real story that day? But of course on Ireland, as everything else, Tony Blair has nothing to offer.
Bosnia set for new bloodbath

By Alan Thornton

A NEW escalation of the war in Bosnia, including Serbian ethnic cleansing pogroms and the likely break-up of the "federation" between Muslim and Croat areas of Bosnia, point to a disastrous winter for the region.

Large areas of north eastern Bosnia have been "ethnically cleansed" in recent weeks by Bosnian Serbs, with thousands of Muslim families driven from their homes. The Serbs claim that these areas are now completely "Muslim free".

The Serbs have also been attacking Bihac and Gorazde in an attempt to destroy both Bosnian enclaves. Nor will the rift between Milosevic and Karadzic, the so-called "blockade" of the border between Serbia and Bosnia, be resolved after the Bosnian Serb leader Milojevic pledged to stop the escalation of the war.

The rift between Serbian leader Milosevic and Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic is real. Milojevic is desperate to get the sanctions, which have had a disastrous effect on the Serbian economy, removed.

Nonetheless he is not going to abandon his "Greater Serbia" plan. Before the rift, Bosnian Serb and Muslim Serb territories were also being established voluntarily by the Serbs, fuel and munitions dumps were filled up by Serbs. Supplies are severely cut and border controls by land and by helicopter.

Serbia has agreed to a 135,000 UN mission with powers of search, to patrol the 375 mile Serb-Muslim border and to monitor the situation. But this will not stop the secret movement of supplies.

Milosevic may be prepared to settle for the 60 per cent of Bosnian territory offered to the Bosnian Serbs in the US-sponsored settlement; but he will not ultimately abandon the Bosnian Serbs, since he runs the risk of being voted out by Karadzic, who increasingly presents himself as the real defender of Serbian interests. The Bosnian Serb position may well be strengthened by the breakdown of the Bosnian-Croat Federation. If this happens it could lead to a resumption of the war between Bosnia and Croatia.

The Federation has only existed in the form of an uneasy ceasefire between the Croat HVO and the Bosnian Army. In fact the Bosnian Croat ministry continues to exist despite the claimed failure of the federation. Now the Bosnian Serbs and hard line Croatian nationalists determined to destabilise the fragile situation. This would have serious implications for basic supplies to Bosnia. Even in its emasculated form the Federation has provided a link from Bosnia to Split and the outside world. Without it Bosnia becomes landlocked and vulnerable to short term starvation. Tuzla airport remains shut after the fanfare of its opening at the beginning of the year.

There is little real chance that the Clinton administration will lift the arms embargo against Bosnia.

The US has given a deadline of October 15 for the Bosnian Serbs to accept the proposed settlement, and stated that the arms embargo will be lifted if they do agree. But the US is under extreme pressure from the European powers, and could run the risk of default in the UN Security Council.

The implications of this are obvious. Although the Bosnian army is now better equipped and has been getting limited light weaponry, the military advantage remains with the Serbs. Multi-ethnic Bosnia is also politically threatened by the upcoming elections.

The importance of Tuzla is that it is the best remaining example of a multi-ethnic community which has survived the ravages of the conflict. Tuzla is governed by a multi-ethnic coalition.

The elections, which will take place at the end of the year, directly threaten this situation. There is serious danger that the secular and multi-ethnic parties could lose out to the Islamic organisations. Such a result would be a serious blow to the defence of a multi-ethnic Tuzla and of Bosnia as a whole.

The core of the current projects of International Workers Aid is a recognition of this and a campaign, based on a multi-ethnic convoy, which will give direct political and material support to the multi-ethnic forces. The convoy will coincide with and participate in a conference in Tuzla defending the continuation of a multi-ethnic society.

IWA convoys defend multi-ethnic Bosnia

THE SIXTH meeting of International Workers Aid, held in Stockholm last weekend and attended by 40 delegates representing campaigns in 11 countries, reviewed the progress of the campaign so far and decided ambitious new plans.

Reports confirmed that the provision of baking bread to the Tuzla area remains the basic solidarity initiative of IWA.

IWA has won a prestigious cheque - 650,000 dinars from the Tuzla municipality for the work of the bread programme in supporting the miners.

Reports from the IWA office in Tuzla described the conditions faced by the miners and the rest of the population. Although there is more food in the shops now, there is no money to buy it. A Tuzla miner's pay is just £1 a month; thus international aid is absolutely vital.

IWA activists reported up to 800 people outside a food shop, without a single person going in. IWA has now sent 14 convoys to Tuzla and 7,000 miners and their families continue to receive IWA aid through the Kreka miners union.

Rice, sugar and yeast is distributed through 12 distribution centres and miners and their families collect it directly from there. Much of the discussion at the conference was on the distribution of the additional "Multi-Culture" convoy which is being organised in advance of the elections, due at the end of the year.

This is aimed at giving direct support to the continuation of a multi-ethnic Bosnia, against the political threat posed by Islamic fundamentalist organisations. It will link directly with a conference in Tuzla organised by the Verona Forum, together local multi-ethnic organisations, which is being held in defence of a multi-ethnic Bosnia.

Women's convoy

An important component of this initiative will be a women's convoy. This unique initiative will take aid from women to women and women's organisations. Lorries from several countries are already organised for this.

There will also be a student contingent which will take aid directly to students in the university of Tuzla.

The budget for running the IWA convoys from now until January is £10,000. Please send your aid itself. Funding for this is urgently needed.

Send a donation or move a resolution at your union branch or college a contribution from your friends. All donations should be sent to: IWA 12-14 Thornton St, London SW8 OBL (071 970 9882).
What's Happening

SEPTEMBER

EAST LONDON Signal workers Support Group meets every MONDAY, 7.30pm, BRSA Club, Angel Lane, Stratford.

Sat 24 ‘Sing Campsfield Down’ demo, Campsfield Immigration Prison, Kidlington, nr Oxford. 12 noon. With Cardiff Red Choir.

Sat 24/Sun 25 COVENTRY Conference: towards a working class politics 10am-4pm Barras Green Social Club Coventry Street CV2 and CV2/1 details 051 260 0976

Sun 25 LABOUR Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights NC Friday 30 ‘Radical Chairs’ discussion, Trotsky and the Traditional Epoch, Conway Hall, London WC2. 7pm. £1.50/75p

OCTOBER

Sunday 16 WORLD day of action against McDonald’s and National Fast Food Day details 071 837 7557

Sat 22 BOB SMITH Memorial Fund book launch and dinner 7.30 South Camden Community School entrance by advance ticket purchase only. Send £12 (£7 students/UEA) to ‘Bob Smith Memorial Fund’, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU by 15 October.

NOVEMBER

Sunday 13 OXFORD Conference against racist immigration controls. To be hosted by Close Down Campsfield Campaign. (Details to be announced)

Saturday 19 BIRMINGHAM Community Conference in defence of public sector jobs and services. 10.30-4.30 The Union Club, 723 Pershore Rd, Salty Park. Details 021-451-2555

Weds 30 MARCH to London, to mark one year of Campsfield Immigration prison, starts in Oxford.

Small Ads

20p per word (minimum ten words) semi display £3.00 per column centimetre. Special deal for three issues for the price of two. Larger ads by negotiation. All copy should reach here by first post Friday and must be accompanied by full payment and phone number for verification.

‘FASCISM AND MARXISM BETWEEN THE WARS’ resource pack used at last month’s Socialist Outlook Summer School, includes fascist programmes and articles by Gramsci, Mussolini and Trotsky. Send £7 cheque/PO payable to ‘Bob Smith Memorial Fund’ to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

HOUSESHARE large room in spacious three-bedroom house London N4 2UU amenities £67 pw tel: 081 292 7079.

FOLK music cassette by songwriter Pauline Bradley. Send £5 cheque payable to ‘Bob Smith Memorial Fund’ to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

HEAR Ernest Mandel speak! tape available ‘Mandel on Fascism’—send £5 cheque/PO payable to ‘Bob Smith Memorial Fund’ to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Coming soon — ‘Malcolm X speaks’, ‘Mandel on the Popular Front’.

Sarah Lovell

VETERAN US socialist Sarah Lovell died in June at the age of 72. Born in Brooklyn, she joined the US Socialist Workers Party in 1933. She was a leader of the SWP until being expelled in 1973. After her expulsion she helped found the monthly magazine “In Defense of Marxism.” She also helped Dorothy Breein pull out some of the volumes in the Trotsky Workers Library. She was a former member of the Coalition of Labor Women and the National Organization of Women.

Anti-Hawk campaigners plan global day of action

“Stop the Hawks - No Arms to Indonesia” is the theme of a day of action on 12 November. Britain is supplying Hawk attack aircraft to Indonesia, which are being used against the people of East Timor, illegally occupied by Indonesia in 1975.

During the past 19 years hundreds of thousands of people have been murdered by the Indonesian occupiers. The day of action coincides with the third anniversary of the Bali massacre, when 200 people were gunned down in cold blood during a funeral procession. Others were later murdered as they lay injured in Indonesian custody.

The day of action will see demonstrations in Canada, the US, Portugal, Ireland, Britain and Australia. Over 50 separate events will take place in England Scotland and Wales. Central to the action will be a protest outside the Indonesian Embassy in London’s Grosvenor Square from 12 noon to 1pm.

For further information contact the Stop the Hawks coalition on 071-252 7937.

Sarah Lovell

National Conference

Fight for the Right to Strike

SUNDAY 26 NOVEMBER 10am-5pm Birmingham

Speakers include: Ken Cameron (Gen Sec FBU); Bob Crowley (NEC RMT); Doreen Cameron (NATFHE); John Ireland (UCW)

Organised by Birmingham, Lambeth and Oxford Trades Councils. Sponsored by Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, NCU Broad Left, Socialist Campaign Group Network.

Delegates from TU organisations each; from Unemployed Centres/Unwaged £3. Send cheques made out to “Right to Strike Conference” to TUN, PO Box 6498, London N1 1QW.

Surinder Bassi

A MEMORIAL meeting for Surinder Bassi, a leader of the Bursnalls strike in Birmingham, was held in London’s Conway Hall on 20 September. Surinder was on the picket line for over a year outside the Bursnalls factory in Smithwick. She had gone on strike for over a year to join a trade union - the GMB, for health and safety, and against forced overtime and the meagre wages for dirty and gruelling work.

Surinder, together with Darshna Kaur, became a spokes- woman for this historic strike of Asian workers. They trav- elloved the length and breadth of the country - speaking to Timpex strikers in Dundee; at the benefit held for Bursnalls strikers in London and at national conferences and rallies. She was always the first to challenge racist management, the strikebreakers and the po- lice who continually harassed the strikers.

Together with Darshna she won the Martin Ennals Award for Civil Liberties in recognition of the Bursnalls workers struggle for basic trade union rights.

Surinder was born in 1950. She came to Britain from India in 1968. Earlier this year Surinder received an Industrial Tribunal award to take her daughter for a holiday in India. Soon after she was taken ill and died in Queen Elizabeth hospital, Bir- mingham, at the age of 44.
The RMT Signal Grades conference on September 18 agreed to link talks on their pay claim with talks on “restructuring”. This is a step backwards in the dispute. It is preparing the basis for a climbdown by the RMT leadership.

The signal workers’ fight has become a test case for government attempts to hold back public sector pay. Railtrack wants to hobble the RMT before full privatisation of the industry.

There is no chance of the government agreeing to a settlement which is in any way favourable to the RMT – unless they have to.

Signal workers are becoming demoralised by the lack of success of one day stoppages confined to a small number of workers.

This is not the time to expect the government or Railtrack to be reasonable. This is the time to go for escalation.

It is absurd that other rail workers are working normally, while signal boxes are staffed, unsafely, by managers and scabs.

The safety issue must be used to bring out other RMT workers on strike days, as part of a programme of escalating the action.

Without such escalation, there is a danger that the signal workers’ fight could drift to defeat.