"Publicly owned, publicly accountable"

Stop Rail sell-off

KEEP CLAUSE 4!
New fudge on employment rights for disabled

Don’t be vague: say no to Hague!

By Harry Sloan

TORY moves to head off the disability rights lobby with a package of largely cosmetic measures could take 15 years or more to show any results. New legislation talked on January 12 by William Hague, the Minister for Disabled People, would scrap all existing, almost universally flouted quota system, which ought to ensure that large employers include at least 3 percent of disabled people in their workforce.

Rather than attempt to enforce or tighten up this legislation, Hague has decided instead to legislate a "statutory right of non-discrimination" for people with disabilities, which is equally certain to be ignored in practice. There is no mechanism to enforce this even more vague policy, while the accompanying measures to make workplaces and premises accessible are so timid and general that they are most unlikely to make any real difference.

Employers would be required to make a "reasonable adjustment" to working conditions to make them accessible for potential disabled employees - were they to take any on. They would also be called upon (politely) to remove barriers and provide aids to ensure access to goods and services - but only "where reasonable and readily achievable".

Companies would have until the year 2010 to make these changes, though there are no definitions of what is "reasonable", and no explicit sanctions against those who fail to comply.

The limited nature of the changes to premises is underlined by the estimated average cost to an average business of just £500-£1,500. Giving employees 15 years to make the changes means they are being asked to fork out a far from lavish £35-£100 per year!

No lifts

"We can’t have businesses going bankrupt," Mr Hague told the Financial Times. "A company will not be expected to put a lift into a building at cost of tens of thousands of pounds. But it might be expected to buy a piece of office furniture costing much less."

After insisting that Labour MP Roger Berry’s much more specific and comprehensive civil rights Bill for the disabled (wrecked by Tory ministers and backbenchers) would have cost a staggering £17 billion to implement, the government now asserts its own proposals would cost "no more than £1.5-1.1 billion. No business would have to spend more than 5-10% of the rateable value of its premises."

Quango

Hague’s Bill would also set up a new quango ‘council’ for the disabled, with even more vaguely-defined role and powers, aiming to defuse anger when the employment proposals, in effect, would mean a much-needed employment.

The new legislation reflects the sustained campaign pressure of disability groups which have shared Tory MPs into a position of action. But it falls far short of the changes that could give disabled people access to public transport, buildings and a proper chance of employment. That fight will go on.

NHS beds crisis

BIRMINGHAM and Cambridge are the latest areas to face a serious shortage of NHS emergency beds as the Tories forge ahead with their hospital closure programme.

Both cities saw desperately ill patients shuffled long distances in ambulances in search of treatment. The London area is fast becoming a net exporter of patients.

60 miles

December saw a young girl from North London taken 60 miles to Addenbrooke Hospital in Cambridge for lack of suitable beds anywhere in the capital.

Since then two patients from the same area have been taken almost 40 miles to Hemel Hempstead, which turned out to be the only available Intensive Therapy Unit bed.

One of these patients, an elderly man with emphysema, was subsequently transferred again - in a coma - to Watford General Hospital so that just over £1 bilion could be his bed. He later died.

More such cases must be expected as a new wave of bed closures begins, led by the closure this month of the casualty unit at Bart’s Hospital.

The cuts are striking deep into the Tory heartlands. Planned closures of A&E services in Herefordshire have triggered mass demonstrations in the nearby surroundings of Welwyn Garden City and Stevenage.

All ten London borough and council in the county - many of them Tory-led - have banded together to fight the closures.

With Guy’s campaigners preparing to occupy against threatened closure, the going could get even rougher for Victoria Bromeley.
Plug that political gap – with Clause IV

IF CLAUSE IV IS such an electoral liability for Labour, why is it that of the last seven Labour leaders the only one to win an election was Harold Wilson – who not only defended the Clause, but even nationalised industries?

And if being politically right wing wins elections, why have the most consistent failures been those most obviously opposed to socialist policies – an igno-

rantly supported General Election through Jim Callaghan to Neil Kinnock?

This question, raised by Tony Benn in speeches and interviews as the debate heats up in the med-

ia and the Party, goes to the nub of the issues at stake.

Opposition

The scale of opposition whipped up by Tony Blair’s proposal to junk the Clause in the hunt for a new political identity for the Labour Party has gone well beyond the predictable knee-jerk reactions of old guard lefties and sectari-

an socialists.

The headline-grabbing gestures have been matched by the efforts of Labour’s Euro-MPs, many of them barely meriting the label ‘left wing’. was more than a cy

nclical stunt to remind British voters of their existence. It re-

flects a deep-going unease through wide layers of the La-

bour Party and broad sections of activists in the unions that the ditching of the Clause is ditch-

ing a political reference point which makes the Party different.

It is no coincidence that de-

cision to hold a special conference on the issue, and to ensure that it takes place in the Spring rather than the summer, means that rank and file activists at union conferences and on collective voice in the decision.

Blair hopes that in this way union delegations can be bounced and manoeuvred into nodding through his newly for-

mulated ‘mystery’ Clause, freed from any mandate from their membership.

Even so, he may find the go-

ing harder than he expected. And even if all works according to plan, the real problem would remain unresolved.

Because even if a bureaucratic effort managed to sweep Clause IV into the dustbin of history, the central problem the Clause addresses – the chaos, inequality and exploitation of the capital-

ist market system – would remain untouched.

Growing public disenchant-

ment and hostility to this same market system is a consistent underlying factor in the sagging fortunes of the Tories. Privatisation, once apparently the magi-

cal elixir of electoral success for Thatcher, has come back to poi-

on the chances of Major: it has become synonymous with profiteering, rip-off prices, re-

dundancies and scandals.

Polls now show that not only do a large majority of the gen-

eral population oppose rail pri-

vatation, but so do 48% of Tory voters.

But if Labour is to be opposed to privatisation and the disasters it generates, then what is the Party to propose instead?

Gapping hole

The ditching of Clause IV and embarrassed retreat from any notion of nationalisation leaves only a gaping hole where a policy should be – one which Blair may divert from but not conceal by his attempt to focus debate on other issues, such as devolution and constitutional reform.

This policy vacuum is what leaves many Labour activists uneasy. Few see the impene-

trable utterances of shadow chan-

cellor Gordon Brown on the market economy as an electoral asset; and though few may ex-

plicitly embrace a full socialist programme, many clearly want at least a token clause to pre-

serve their view that Labour is in some way an anti-capitalist party.

Of course Clause IV is by no means incompatible with capi-

talism.

Indeed each time Labour has been elected in the post-war pe-

riod on what was seen as a radi-

cal alternative economic policy to the Tories, it has proceeded to swing rapidly to the right.

In 1945, pledges of large-

scale nationalisation and the creation of the welfare state won a landslide for a far left-

wing Attlee government.

In 1964, Wilson’s radical-

sounding challenge to ‘thirteen years of Tory mistakes’ again served to secure election of a government committed not to socialism but to reorganise and reconstitute British capitalism in the ‘white heat of the techno-

logical revolution’.

Ruins

And in the ruins of the Heath government, with its sitting un-

employment, its three-day week and rampant inflation, Labour again ran and won on a platform of radical economic policies of offering what appeared to be a completely different approach, only to run aground as it at-

tempted to enforce repeated rounds of wage controls.

In each case the governments ran into difficulty not because of their left wing excesses but be-

cause they began openly to at-

tack the working class.

Blair appears now to be offering a platform that would elimi-

nate any ‘honeymoon period’, and cut straight to the chase, with the full-blooded, undis-

guised implementation of mar-

ket-driven policies.

That is not only a recipe to alienate thousands of existing Labour activists, but it is also a formula that offers little to the voters seeking desperately for a genuine alternative to Major.

There is no guarantee that the gamble would pay off. Blair’s Labour Party could sell its soul, and still be cheated of the elec-

toral reward. In his crusade against the Clause, Blair has no more a viable partner than Neil Kinnock. Perhaps that says it all.

In defending Clause IV and rejecting the defeatist logic of those who call for it to be jen-

tified in deference to the market system, socialists are waging a crucial fight. It must be stepped up in the next three months; the price of failure could be paid for years to come.

Mixed signals on Railtrack

JUST because an idea is mad does not mean the To-

ries would have implemented it.

The party that brought us the Poll Tax and the Child Support Agency is now offer-

ing the hallowed privatisation of Railtrack – as a desperate device to raise cash to fund tax cuts to win the next elec-

tions.

At first sight the chaos al-

ready created on the railways is big enough. With the old BR split into a billowing array of franchises and self-cont-

ained subsidiaries, while Rail-

track has taken control of track and signalling.

There have been warnings from various sources that the outcome of privatisation could be a catastrophic halv-

ing of the rail network.

But when the (Tony ap-

pointed) “independent” regu-

lator announced the possibility that as few as 300 stations might be able to sell through tickets for the remaining network, leaving passen-

gers to drive as far as 58 miles before being able to board a train, the whole illus-

ion appeared to have degene-

rated into total farce.

Blank cheque

Transport Secretary Brian Mawhinney insisted that there was nothing he could do about this, because the powers given to the regulator by the 1963 Railways Act, which is a blank cheque for the Tories to do anything they like to the railways. At first sight the entire sys-

tem is doomed to failure. So why is it expected that Rail-

track can be sold off to inves-

tors for an estimated £4-26 billion?

The answer, of course, lies not in train services but in the land. Railtrack is one of the few public bodies in Britain, with hundreds of square miles of property, much of it in in-

ner cities, which developers would just love to get their hands on.

Mawhinney’s main concern is simply and cynically to frag-

cent the existing rail networks in such a way as the privatised sections are almost impossible to piece back together, and to promote the sale of Railtrack –

so that the new shareholders can carve up the assets while trains become as rare as rock-

ing horse dung.

However Mawhinney’s ma-

neuvre has had one posi-

tive effect: they have forced Labour’s leaders into their first firm political pledge ap-

pearing to offer renationalisa-

tion if John Prescott promised “To ensure a pub-

licly owned, publicly accountable railway.”

Not only socialists but mil-

ions of rail users will wel-

come this policy, but some might ask if it makes sense for the railways, why not ren-

ationalise other privatised serv-

ces and utilities? If and when Labour is to fight the election committed to public owner-

ship of a key industry, why bother scrapping Clause IV? Just because a policy is mad, doesn’t mean Tony Blair won’t go for it, either!
TGWU campaign badgers union-busters

By Roger Welch

MINUTES before the Eastern National bus arrives, a TGWU one pulls up. This happens dozens of times a day.

It is the latest tactic in the continuing dispute between Eastern National and the 106 busworkers that the company sacked in Chelmsford in November.

On January 4 Bill Morris was once more in Chelmsford to launch the free minibus service driven by sacked drivers on some of the local routes. Talks between Bill Morris and Orbis (Eastern National Managing Director) took place on the same day but did not produce any shift in Eastern National's position.

While Morris was clearly angry with the company's continued refusal to re-instate the sacked workers, and also with the company's statement that the financing of the minibuses service was the use of union funds, he told the local press that he would not be calling for a national strike across the bus industry.

Here lies the rub of the current problem for the sacked workers. Their union is giving some support and the alternative bus service has certainly upset Orbis. However, this in itself will not force the company to back down.

Orbis is also clearly sensitive to how the union has drawn attention to Eastern National's position as a subsidiary of the Badgerline group.

Here lies the key to victory – solidarity action by TGWU members throughout Badgerline. Ideally this would be extended throughout the industry. However, Eastern National to re-instate the 106 sacked workers.

Notes on procedure should also call and properly mobilise for another Saturday demonstration which would provide the numbers necessary to close down Chelmsford depot.

Money and messages of support will also help maintain the morale of the workers. Socialist Outlook readers should ensure individual sacked workers are invited to their workplaces, colleges, union and ward branch meetings to talk about the dispute and help build solidarity action.

Protestors reject new realism

By Aldan Day

"Kept in the dark, abused and unable to move. And that's just our agriculture minister." The RSPCA's full page newspaper advertisement shows how the campaign against veal shipping is developing into something broader.

Cruelty toward caged animals with large dark eyes has always animated a disproportionately large number of people on this island. But the depth of feeling this time around seems to indicate something more.

Jonathan Porritt was taken aback at the luminosity of the movement which shows "principled positions defended beyond comprehension and sometimes beyond reason: an aptitude for the tactics of attrition that would have done credit to the Vietcong".

But really the issue is immaterial. This movement indicates how a whole social layer is becoming discontented with government and the established procedures of social order.

Margot Norman of the Times gave an insider's view: they are people "who already feel so powerless and disillusioned with the processes by which their lives are governed, that the sight of the crated calf gives them a sudden jolt of identity."

Lashing out

That's how they feel themselves. They are merely lashing out as an expression of their own "inequality".

Exaggeration? Well not really. Is not "inequality" an apt description of the feelings of powerlessness Tony Britain engenders in its inhabitants?

And these are not the forgotten millions the Tories are trying to marginalise. This is probably why the government has not used the Criminal Justice Act against them, even as the demonstrations bankrupted Sussex police.

The core of these protests is made up of people with well paid jobs, often liberal professionals, people who own houses and have a regular income – just the layer that Tony England relies upon to administer the day to day running of society.

When this layer considers itself outside society then the ruling classes really do have a problem on their hands.

Tory promises to defend railways are hollow: Labour must renationalise the whole of British Rail

Fighting rail privatisation

What price Labour's promises?

TOBY promises to protect the railways have been constantly shown to be hollow. Labour guarantees have been less than cast iron.

The RMT is relying on legal action to halt privatisation instead of depending on the industrial strength of the workforce.

To get the Railways Act through Parliament the Tories promised their backbenchers that services would be protected. But the Rail regulator has been allowed to restrict the sale of tickets to a small number of "convenient stations".

Transport Minister Brian Mawhinney at first tried to deny this – and instructed the regulator not to make the proposal. But the regulator, having independent powers, merely issued the proposal in the form of consultation.

The TUC have constantly been let off the hook by Blair's privatisation over renationalisation. Last year's Labour Party Conference unanimously passed a resolution calling for the renationalisation of all state railways, but the TUC have refused to support this.

Railworkers must insist on renationalisation of all sections of the railways. Plans are now being developed to stop the Nationalisation of the industry. Now the RMT must be prepared to commit itself to further action to stop privatisation.
Reach out to Labour's membership

THE CAMPAIGN to Defend Clause IV gathers support and pace every day.

Packets rattle

Baggies being held up and dropped the country bringing together a broad alliance of forces not seen in the labour movement for years. It is clear the tide is turning against Blair.

Within the constituency Labour Parties it looks as though the NEC at the end of January will be advising them to hold a ‘one member, one vote’ ballot. This makes it even more important to build debates which involve as many party members as possible. Where parties do not hold such a ballot, delegates need to be made aware of common ownership and the retention of Clause IV.

Labour Party Women's Conference on 1/2 April is another opportunity to build support for the campaign.

There is only one motion - from the electrical and engineering union AEU - which mentions the Clause; it notes the proposals and welcomes the debate.

Again, women in the CLPs and unions should be pressing the motion and getting delegations to the conference.

Tony Blair is on the defensive in his attempt to change the Labour Party constitution - attacked by MPs, wrangling with the trade union leaderships and temporarily deserted by many erstwhile supporters in the constituencies.

What is all the fuss about? What is it about Clause IV which has touched a nerve amongst so many in the labour movement?

Superficially, Blair’s project is interpreted as an attempt to make the Labour party modern and electable - acceptable to the middle classes in the south east. But it is clear that this current fight is part of a far wider project.

Blair knows that in order for ‘New Labour’ to win and to govern for more than just a moment he is attempting to shift the perceived values at the heart of the Labour Party to move it from its traditional social democratic, collective framework onto new ground.

Previous discussions in the Labour Party and the media about Lib-Lab coalitions have temporarily disappeared but Blair’s vision for the Labour Party is entirely consistent with that agenda.

His aim is to situate at the heart of the Labour Party’s constitution a form of words which reflects a ‘radical’ democratic agenda totally dissociated from any ‘rational’ social and economic principles.

Europe

The Labour Party’s aims must include aspirations to equality and democracy, in Blair’s eyes bringing the party into line with ‘modern’ European social democracy, without any commitment to the economic and social policies which can create even the previously inadequate welfareism of the post 1945 Labour Party.

This line of march follows on from the earlier 1980s projects of Marxism Today (the magazine which pronounced ‘the end of the working class’), the current interest by many Blairites in ‘communisation’ (focusing on the individual’s responsibility within the family as the key to social stability) and follows exactly the framework laid out in Robin Blackburn’s article before the last election, ‘The Ruins of Westminster’ which advocated a Labour/alliance.

Blair is above all engaged in making Labour acceptable to the Liberal Democrats and the pro-European bourgeoisie.

The Liberal Democrats press officer who attended the recent press launch of the Defend Clause IV campaign was in no doubt. When asked what would be the difference between Labour and the Lib Dems if Clause IV were changed her reply was succinct and to the point ‘there won’t be one’.

Clearly this is an exaggeration. The Clause IV fight is merely one - albeit important - part of a deeper and more lengthy project to change the nature of the Labour Party.

A victory for Blair would open up further assaults on the trade union link. This wider process is what makes its defence so crucial to the left.

The scale of victory or defeat is crucial to the speed and severity of future attacks on the left and trade unions.

The battle to change Clause IV is not about defending ‘socialism’. Clause IV does not and never did represent socialism.

It is clear that this is recognised, if not articulated by the very varied and heterogeneous groupings currently involved in defending the existing wording.

The alliance to Defend Clause IV ranges from David Winnick MP and the MEPs to Scargill and the Campaign Group. This issue has not just motivated the old Bennite left but a far broader alliance is being created in defence of social democracy.

Battle

It is a deeply ideological struggle, absolutely linked to the class struggle. Its importance for the left cannot be underestimated.

It is not just about winning or losing this important battle but about affecting the balance of forces in the longer war.

This fight is about how far Tony Blair will go in embracing the Thatcherite view that there is no such thing as society and her stress on the utter centrality of the individual.

It is about individualism versus collectivism. As David Marquand, pro-Labour intellectual put it at the Labour Co-ordinating Committee conference for a new Clause IV, the struggle is about Marxism or Liberalism as the predominant ideology amongst those opposed to the Tories.

It is a struggle taking place amid the evidence of the failure and inadequacy of social democracy to provide any solution to the gathering crisis of global capitalism.
Clause IV in the classroom?

Blair and Blankett opt out of comprehensive schooling

By Richard Hatcher

"THE MOST conservative education available in Lon-
don outside the private sec-
tor." Where else would a Labour Party leader want to send his son?
The Sunday Telegraph's de-
scription of the London Oratory captures well how reactionary the opted-out, grant-maintained school is.

Tony Blair's decision to send his son there is a calculated po-

tical move designed to mollify the fears of potential Labour voters deserting the Tories, at the expense of undermining La-
bour's traditional commitment to the comprehensive school

system.

The London Oratory's head, John McIntosh, helped draft the education passages of the 1987 Conservative manifesto, and claims to have invented the idea of opting-out.

Complaints

Senior Catholic officials have complained to the Depart-
ment for Education that the School operates a covert selec-
tion policy. It is run by the Oratory Fathers, one of the most reactionar
cy fundamentalist sects within the Catholic church.

But it would be a mistake to see this as an individual aberration by Tony Blair. On the con-
tary, he has simply walked through the door that was opened by David Blunkett in his
first statement as Labour education spokesperson.

Speaking just after the 1994 Labour Party conference which reaffirmed Labour's policy of a comprehensive school system under local authority control, Blunkett made clear that he would disregard conference policy.

Opted-out schools, he said, along with City Technology Colleges, would not be abol-
ished but would be treated 'equitably' by a Labour admini-
stration within "a flexible and ac-
ceptable framework to achieve their and our goals.'

The problem is that their aims and ours are completely incom-
patible.

The GM schools have opted-out precisely in order to escape control by local councils. Blunkett is currently trying to negotiate with the GM heads a

Blunkett and Blair are sending out a clear message that Labour represents no threat to the grant-maintained schools or the grammar schools, which can carry on operating selective policies.

Mass action is needed to defend education

Labour education policy further to the right than at any time since the 1960s. But it would be wrong to accuse them of betray-
ing Labour's education policy in the principle of elected democratic control.

The Towning and Enterprise Councils will remain quangos outside local democratic con-
trol. The private schools will re-
tain their privilege.

Blair's hurried retreat from the suggestion that Labour might levy VAT on private school fees is further evidence that as the general election ap-

March for Union Rights
SATURDAY 21 January
Called by National
Union of Journalists

Assemble 9.45 Tower Hill
March to News International. Bring Banners
US right declares war on poor

By Aidan Day

First he entered with a scapel. The next day he brought in a Bowie knife. The third time round it was a machete.

Congressman Bob Livingston's showy illustration of what his Republican Party are going to do to the US Federal budget leaves no avenue for misinterpretation. They are going to butcher it.

It was supposed to be humorous. If you have to be a fat cat living in riches on Capitol Hill then maybe it was. For the majority of Americans however the new Republican majority in Congress will mean a relentless attack on living standards.

Most of all, the victory of the right signifies a new war on the poor.

They call in a drive to end 'big government'. This is just rhetoric.

Just like the British Tories, the right in America uses the public perception of bureaucracy as a cover for social dumping. Behind the talk of 'freeing the individual' from state control lies another intention - dropping all responsibility for the welfare of its citizens.

The Republican amendment to the constitution that will compel the administration to 'balance its books' is an essential ingredient of this offensive.

Ever since the Reagan allowed the federal budget to spiral deep into debt economists have been looking for a solution. The plan before Congress is to amend the Constitution so that by 2002 deficit budgets will be forbidden.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, it will require $1.2 billion of cuts over seven years to achieve the 2002 target. Clinton and his cohorts ask where it is supposed to come from. They have a point.

The US budget can be divided into three - defence, interest payments and so-called 'entitlements', which includes social security, health and welfare.

Of these only the third is being considered safe. The Republicans' 'Contract with America' actually calls for an increase in military spending.

But even if there were massive reductions in military spending combined with the slashing of welfare it would still be insufficient to cope with the projected $32 billion deficit forecast for 2002. Aid for families with dependent children cost the federal budget less than $14 billion last year.

The only way money goes into Medicare and Medicaid - $600 billion in 1995. And the people who benefit most from these packages are not the poor.

To them would mean not only taking on the companies who make a fortune out of private health care, but also directly attacking the better paid constituency on which the political system relies. It's one thing to hurt Bill Clinton's limited health care reforms, quite another to pile even higher medical bills onto millions of hard pressed middle income US families.

It's hard to see how either of the parties of big business in the USA would even countenance such a move.

Pensions

With an increasingly aging population the difficulties deepen. It has been calculated that by 2010 pensions and health care alone will need the total budget revenue. Dick Armey, the House majority leader acknowledged that the extent of cut required would make the knees of congressmen buckle.

It's hard to see how either of the two Republican and Democratic politicians are well aware of this. But neither party wants to make it an issue for fear of sparking off mass opposition.

The scale of cuts required is staggering. Perhaps this is why the Republicans have left a number of loopholes for themselves. The amendment does not specify what would happen if the budget was not balanced. It could also be waived in the face of 'imminent and serious military threat'.

They have also been careful to place the requirement of 'balancing' upon the President, not the Congress, so that it would be the President who was seen as responsible for the cuts.

In the sense then the Republican proposed law is not intended for implementation. Economic commentators are unimpressed by the move.

The Financial Times editorial slits its nose, declaring "as is well known, the economics behind such a rule is flawed, at best".

Alas Greenman the chair of the Federal Reserve board has warned that the markets would react badly to any change in the budgeting system.

What is in no doubt however is that it is intended to prepare the ground for massive cuts in welfare and set in course a profound restructuring of society into what 'new' House speaker Newt Gingrich calls the 'conservative opportunity society'.

This is a code word for social dumping, mass unemployment, the strengthening of the repressive state and the war on the poor. Gingrich has promised $500 credit for every child in a tax-paying family and to halve capital gains tax.

Moreover the 'Contract with America' commits itself not only to restoring defence spending, but to financing a new development of the hugely expensive strategic Defence Initiative - more money to big business less to those who need it most.

The Democrat response has been pitiful. They are hiding behind a supposed shift to the right in American society evidenced by the Republican poll victory. But a second glance at the supposed 'Republican landslide' indicates otherwise.

In the November 1994 election only 38 per cent of those eligible to vote took part. It was a 'landslide' of 20 per cent of eligible voters! The real landslide was one of rejection - a rejection of an electoral and political system that is totally failing the majority of Americans.

The lack of resistance by Clinton to the ultra right offensive led Gingrich to conclude after their meeting that there was a "real willingness to try to find a way to work together".

All the mock radicalism in which Clinton draped himself before his election has disappeared. He is even proposing a bill to deny benefits to single mothers.

There is no more sorry a sight than Hillary Clinton confessing to how she had been "naive and dense". On the fateful day of the Democrat election campaign she now says "I regret very much the efforts on healthcare were badly misunderstood, taken out of context, and used politically against the Administration. I take responsibility for that, and I am very sorry for that".

Instead of fighting back, the President nacionalised the fight with his "middle-class bill of rights" - a half hearted attempt to honour some of his campaign promises.

In every significant area the Democrats accord to the Republican agenda - they are just as committed to the "conservative opportunity society" as the other party of big business.

British 'bastards' ape rabid Republicans

It’s not just in the USA that the loony right is gunning for the poor and oppressed. In some ways the US Republicans are taking a lesson from Thatcher’s politics of grasping individualism.

But America’s example appears to be galvanising a fresh offensive by the Tory right.

On top of this year’s brutal attacks on unemployment, sickness and invalidity benefits – designed to slash payments to tens of thousands of claimants, John Major’s top cabinet ‘bastards’ are lining up to inflict more welfare cuts. In three closely co-ordinated speeches last week, Tory ministers Michael Portillo, Peter Lilley and John Redwood set out new plans to slash state spending.

Every proposal is to be shrouded in the kind of anti-government rhetoric that would make Newt Gingrich proud.

Portillo, the heir apparent of the Tory right, is trying to reinvigorate laissez-faire capitalism and Victorian values of private morality. The state is, he argued, "in danger of making the people its servant rather than serving the people".

Peter Lilley went a step further. He is paving the way for the return of the Poor Law. Addressing the Social Market Foundation, he signalled the end of the principle of uniform national social security provision, claiming that "there can be advantages in some circumstances in devolving responsibility to a local level".

It’s not just in the USA that the loony right is gunning for the poor and oppressed. The world is watching the US as an example of what is to come here in Britain. This is the moment to redouble our own resistance to this wave of attack.
Bloodbath in Chechnya

The causes and consequences

A special report from Russia, by ALEXANDER BUZGALIN, a professor and a Council member of the Party of Labour, and ANDREI KOLGOV, also a professor, and a member of the Organising Committee of the Union of Internationalists.

DURING the time we take to write this article, several dozen more people will almost certainly be killed or maimed in the North Caucasus.

Dozens of mothers with cry out their unending grief; no one can give them back their sons or daughters.

Dozens of wives will have become widows, and their children, orphans.

At one pole in this conflict are several thousand fighters and hundreds of thousands of peaceful civilians. At the other are several divisions of Russian troops, together with hundreds of tanks, aircraft and armoured personnel carriers.

Almost a month of senseless bloodshed... this is terrifying and amoral, monstrous and disgraceful.

Human beings need to do more than simply to show indignation and compassion. They have to understand what can and must be done, and by whom, in order to stop the slaughter, to prevent the renewal and spread of fratricidal conflicts.

The causes of this senseless war on Russia’s southern border, a war which has now become the epicentre of pain and anguish for our homeland, unfortunately run very deep.

Russia for a long time has been proceeding along the road of bloodshed and official arbitrariness. The Yeltsin government started with mass beatings of demonstrators on the streets of Moscow in 1993.

But it finally abandoned all restraint in October of the same year, trampling on the constitution and not only dispersing its own parliament, but also opening fire on it with tank artillery and machine guns.

The people behind that episode were the same Yeltsin, Grachov, Yerin and co. who are now directing the carnage in Chechnya. At that time, however, they still had with them a number of people who now seem to have regained their powers of sight — people like Yegor Gaidar and Gleb Yakunin.

Even Sergei Kovalyov, now showing genuine heroism defending human rights in Chechnya, looked on passively in October 1993 as hundreds of defenceless Moscow citizens were murdered, as deputies were arrested and beaten, and as police savagely beat their fellow citizens.

Both then and now, the violence was no accident. The authorities in Russia have been implementing policies which cannot possibly be put into practice through peaceful, democratic methods.

These are the strategies of 'shock without therapy', which have resulted in a steep decline of output, disorganisation of the economy, government corruption, legal arbitrariness and a terrifying increase in crime.

Can a president and a government who are incapable of enforcing a minimal degree of order in their own home "restore order" in Chechnya or anywhere else?

Is it any surprise that the peoples of Russia should want to take a different road from the one of inflation, decline and disorganisation that is typical of Yeltsin's Russia?

And what about the impoverishment of the majority of working people as social inequalities increase?

Yes, we are now seeing a rise in average real incomes following their collapse in 1992. But this 'normalisation' is like quoting a 'normal' average body temperature of patients in a hospital. One may have already died while the other is toasting about in a fever, but their average could be 'normal'?

So it is in our country. The 'new rich' in Russia are blotted with wealth, and have become living legends among the big spenders on the international scene.

Meanwhile the 'new poor', who include almost half the population, live nostalgically for the Brezhnev era — which only a short time ago was condemned as a time of low living standards.

How could the policies of the present regime fail to provoke citizens to indignation, and the authorities to violence?

Sovereignty

And what of the government's policy on the national question? When Yeltsin still needed to court Gorbachev, he told the republics of the Russian Federation: "Take as much sovereignty as you can handle!" Then when he came to power the screws were tightened, and any attempt at independent behaviour was met by the rattle of automatic weapons.

How are the nationalities and ethnic groups of Russia supposed to see this?

These questions have a rhetorical character, because power in Russia today lies with socio-political forces that benefit most from instability, disorganisation, unjust methods of rule, and violence.

Those who make up these forces are the 'new Russians' who, unlike 'normal' Western entrepreneurs, do not aim at stable profits of 10 or 20 percent, but at rapid enrichment.

Their goal is profit rates of hundreds of percent a year, the super-concentration and centralisation of capital through extraordinary economic means — speculation, corruption and violence.

(There is, to be sure, a sector of Russian private business today, in which the 'primitive accumulation of capital has already been carried out. In this sector a point in the concentration of wealth has been reached at which stability is more important than rapid enrichment. This explains the fact that some of the right-wing parties which at first gave their silent assent to a 'police action' against Chechnya, later came out against an escalation of the war.)

Another sector of these forces is made up of corrupt bureaucrats who can only receive their privileges and bribes in a general context of lawlessness and institutional chaos.

The scale of these illicit gains beggars the imagination. Boris Fedorov, sometime finance minister of the Gaidar government, let slip at one point that the market value of the dachas, hunting lodges and other properties at the disposal of the President is close to a billion dollars - that is the total loan funds promised to us by the world community!

The cost of the fence that was erected
recently round the House of Government is equal to the price for which a large Siberian oil and gas complex was sold at about the same time.

Unfortunately, very similar processes are under way in the autonomous republics and regions of Russia. The power wielded by Dudayev is a small piece of mirror glass in which our general problems are reflected.

In Chechyna we see the same low level of legitimacy (three years ago, Dudayev, with support from Moscow, dissolved his own parliament). We see the same massive disorganisation of economic and social life, the same domination by all-powerful mafia clans, the same inability and unwillingness to solve the differences between ruling groups and oppositions through democratic methods.

Yes, we now have a ruling layer which finds incessant armed conflicts unavoidable. The more savagely the Yeltsin centre behaves, the greater will be the wave of local separatism. The stronger the nationalism in the Russian hinterlands, the more powerful will be the outbursts of great-power Russian chauvinism in the centre, and the more real will be the danger of an authoritarian, semi-fascist regime in our country.

So who are the people supporting Yeltsin today?

Expansionist

Zhirinovsky, notorious for advocating a push to the south (an expansionist policy aimed at creating a ‘Greater Russia’), and Barkashov, the leader of the semi-fascist organisation Russian National Unity.

In addition there are a few jingoist parties, as well as former members of Yeltsin’s administration and government. And that’s all. Even Gaidar and his colleagues have turned their backs on the President.

This is no accident. Four years ago we were shouting at the top of our voices: “Yeltsin is not an alternative, simply a pedestal for Zhirinovsky and co. to climb up on!”

Then a year ago, after the bloody events of October, the President began openly trying on the cloak of Russian chauvinism, borrowing the vocabulary and slogans of the Prokhovskis and Zhirinovsky.

It remained only to be seen when Yeltsin, by his own ‘push to the south’, or begin struggling against a non-existent ‘Jewish monoculture’.

The first outbreak came in Chechyna. But Russia and its army were in decay, so instead of the hammer blow of a great power, what we saw was the clumsy groping of fat, blindly-spread fingers.

The result was the corpses of our young men, in Russian and Chechen uniforms, and the bodies of Chechen and Russian children and old people.

To give them their due, the majority of Russian political organisations criticised the conflict, although in different ways, almost as soon as it began.

For Gaidar and his associates from the Russia’s Choice party, until recently the President’s best-known supporters, denouncing the war was as far as they could go against the high-handedness of the President and his administration.

For Gaidar’s and his colleagues adopted a much firmer position, struggling consistently both against the war and against the high-handedness of the President and his administration.

The majority of human rights organisations, including the Movement for Democracy and Human Rights in Russia, Memorial and others, took a similar stand.

Among the most active individuals was Sergei Kovalyov, the President’s commissioner for human rights. After spending several weeks in Grozny, Kovalyov returned to Moscow, and did a great deal to tell the truth about Chechyna to the citizens of Russia and the whole world.

Social democratic parties took a somewhat ambiguous stand on the conflict, on the one hand calling for the integrity of Russia to be maintained, and on the other pleading the necessity for the defence of human rights.

By contrast the Communist Party of the Russian Federation fought (thank goodness!) its usual great-power rhetoric, bluntly condemning the war and the authorities responsible for the destruction and casualties.

The relatively small democratic socialist tendencies such as the Union of Unionists, the Party of Labour and the Russian Party of Communists were extremely active. We organised something like a dozen pickets, rallies and round-table discussions, as well as issuing press statements and collaborating with defenders of human rights.

So practically all the major political forces in the country lined up on one side of the barricades: on the other was a bloc of Yeltsin, Zhirinovsky and Barkashov.

Disagreements

Although all the anti-war forces were in favour of a halt to the bombing and military action, and called for negotiations to be opened up, beyond this point disagreements began to appear.

The Gaullists were opposed on principle to calling on Yeltsin to resign, and many social democrats ‘forgot’ this demand.

Democratic Leftists were demanding the withdrawal of Russian forces from Chechyna, and for the Russian government to respect the right of the peoples of Chechyna to decide independently and on a democratic basis whether they would remain in the Russian Federation and if so, with what degree of autonomy.

However this demand received only feeble support. Many rightists argued that a rapid and professional ‘police action’ in Chechyna was desirable, and condemned not so much the ‘big stick’ as the ‘unprofessionalism’ of the army wielding it.

There is reason to fear that if the war had been ‘organised’ professionally, only the democratic left and a few human rights defenders would have spoken out against it.

But the struggle against the war is continuing. Citizens of Russia are more and more beginning to understand that the slaughter in Chechyna is a crime whose consequences will remain for a long time to come. It will weigh on human souls, sowing still more seeds of inter-ethnic hatred, nationalism and separatism.

It has strengthened the authority of Dudayev and his supporters, and is strengthening separatist tendencies throughout Russia.

And it is an economic crime. Billions upon billions of rubles have been spent on senseless slaughter.

Already high inflation is edging up, still further. Budgets for health care and culture are being cut to pay for military spending. The ‘realistic’ 1995 budget will have to be recalculated, drawing still tighter the already suffocating, noose of inflation and economic collapse.

It is necessary to say “No!” to the war and to the authorities which have unleashed it. This must be done by military personnel refusing to carry out illegal orders, by civilians participating in acts of protest in their neighbourhoods, their villages, their workplaces.

If we can stop this slaughter, if we can learn to struggle together at least against such obvious crimes of the authorities - if this can be achieved, then at least to some extent the sufferings and sacrifices of this winter in Chechyna will not have been in vain.

According to reports in the leading Moscow newspaper Izvestia, the order to stop the war was given by Defence Minister Pavel Grachev in the midst of a heavy drinking bout. Grachev and vice prime minister Oleg Sokolovets hit the bottle to celebrate Grachev’s birthday on New Year’s Eve. Hours later the army’s Caucasus command received orders by phone to take the Chechen Presidential palace, triggering the attack. Grachev has since been relieved of command of the Chechyna operation.
Beginning of the end for House of Saud?

HEADLINE news on the Saudi troop build-up on the Yemeni border points to deeper-seated problems. PAUL WALKER probes the facts.

A DEEPENING crisis is developing in Saudi Arabia. At the centre of this process are the now visible signs of the end of the House of Saud, the family which has governed Saudi Arabia, with western backing, for over half a century. Rather than strengthening the dictatorship in Riyadh, the Gulf War has unleashed forces which are now undermining a regime which practices torture, murder and widespread repression as everyday tools for maintaining control over its own population.

At the heart of the crisis is the instability which the war brought to Saudi finances. The Saudi contribution to the war was some $35 billion – more than a drop in the ocean for a nation which has an annual GDP of around $80 billion.

Borrowing

Annual domestic borrowing has spiralled out of control from nothing to $56 billion in the last six years. Combine this with the historically low oil prices since the mid-1980s and the coffers begin to look empty.

In response the Saudi monarchy introduced a 199% cut in state spending in 1994, and there are more cuts to come in 1995.

The international impact of this has been for a number of institutions to lowering the Saudi credit rating.

Both ACCC Credit Insurance, which handles 80% of Britain’s short term export credit guarantees and Cultex, the French export credit agency, tightened terms for Saudi credit at the end of 1994 squeezing payment delays to companies exporting to Saudi Arabia and the “very grave” financial situation which the Saudi monarchy faces.

Such a crisis has opened a space for a domestic political opposition to emerge. There are two opposition groupings, both of which work within the political framework of the Sharia Law.

To the right is the development of a pro-Iranian fundamentalist grouping, based in Qaum, a town in the heartland of the Najd desert.

Clerical radicals

The radical clerics at the centre of this movement are a new generation of thirty-somethings whose politics are relayed on cassette tapes sold in shops throughout Saudi Arabia.

They are the product of Islamic universities and schools set up by the Saudi regime. Poor

Saudi families received grants to send their children to these institutions.

The result, according to Saudi Arabian specialist, Kathy Brand, has been “tens of thousands...of young men untrained in the skills that modern Saudi society needs...Unemployable and unversed in anything but the Koran.”

The poor social background of many of these Islamic graduates makes them a perfect social base for fundamentalist ideas which attack the House of Saud for corruption, hoarding of wealth and subservience to the United States.

The liberal opposition, organised around the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights, is made up of clerics and university professors.

It has no social base to speak of and while it represents a genuine development of political forces in Saudi Arabia, largely exists outside of the country itself given that its domestic backers, who publicly launched the Committee in May 1993, were immediately jailed.

The Saudi regime, faced with such opposition has resorted to widespread repression.

Crackdown

Over 1600 people were arrested at the end of 1994 in dawn raids throughout Riyadh. This was the most recent chaplet of events over the last two years which have witnessed both an upsurge both in public discontent and public executions.

The traditional tactic of a ruling class in deep trouble is to try and unite the nation against a common foe. This perhaps explains the increase in tension between Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

In the last month there have been a series of clashes between Yemeni and Saudi troops on their disputed border. The most serious fighting erupted on January 1st 1995 in the In-Yatmah and Khabr regions, near the strategic oil fields in northern Yemen.

There followed negotiations and a supposed mutual agreement to stop crossing troops there. On January 15th this agreement broke down as Saudi Arabia moved large numbers of troops and military hardware to the disputed area.

Whatever the outcome of this particular series of events is, it is clear that the Saudi Arabian security forces are losing patience and are no longer willing to be dictated to by the House of Saud.

It is also clear that the oft repeated claim of the British Foreign Office and British Aerospace, the main military supplier to Saudi Arabia, that Saudi Arabia is not another Iran, are beginning to ring hollow.

British Aerospace: Friend of torture regimens throughout the world

The Saudi torture trail starts in Britain

By Aidan Day

“The British police would be delighted to have something like this said the arms dealer dealing in instrument of torture...Little did he know that they are already testing electro-weapons.

Channel Four’s Dispatches investigation went deep into the murky world of the slaughter industry on Wednesday to reveal just how much British companies are involved in the production and distribution of equipment that can be used for torture.

Behind all the official denials and formal bans the government also stands directly culpable. As Dispatches revealed, it seems that in with the £200 million AI Yamamah arms deal negotiated by that Thatcher was a consignment of electro-baton.

Just before the Gulf war began Britain was selling torture equipment to the Saudis by the case load.

These frightening weapons deliver a 40,000 volt shock. An Amnesty International spokesperson explained how they have become the standard tool of torturers. While they are capable of inflicting tremendous pain upon their victims, they leave no external marks.

The shocks are applied to blindfolded prisoners to ‘soften them up’ before interrogation. These ‘non-lethal weapons’ are part of a growing industry. Torture is big business. And Britain is at its centre.

The military’s experience in Ireland has made them world experts in matters of what is delicately termed ‘internal security’.

All prison camp guards in China carry the terror devices. The General Secretary of Amnesty said that their use “has become so endemic that it is almost impossible to document and follow the cases of the number of victims”.

Officially their export is banned from Britain. But when Channel Four’s undercover reporters approached the Royal Ordnance they found no problem in arranging purchase. Philip Morris the sales manager offered to put a multi-million electro-shock baton deal together.

Two more new pieces of information emerged from the programme. One was the sale of 8,000 shock batons to Saudi Arabia as part of an AI Yamamah deal – an arrangement that were known.

It’s been revealed that the state of the Saudi interior ministry has been asked about.

Whatever British Aerospace, as part of that country’s parent company, has included another batch in with the deal for the execution is a question yet to be answered.

Another striking thing the programme touched upon was the use of shock weapons by the British police. This has gone unreported here so far. The police appear to be already in possession of the shock shield. Under the guise of an anti-drug protection shield they have already got hold of these fearsome weapons.

Like the baton the shields deliver a non-lethal shock that incapacitates the victim. They disrupt the nerve control of scraps, even producing extreme pain by high voltage. The salesman told Channel Four’s hidden camera that the 40,000 was the ‘optimum voltage’.

The programme makers could have made a lot more of this. The plans to use terror weapons in Britain is something we should know about. Dispatches revealed how the ICI, Technical Plastics firm in Glasgow manufactures a whole range of instruments of repression with the complicity of the Scottish Office.

Its boss Frank Scott said that he had sold shock batons to South Africa, in Abu Dhabi and to the Chinese. He was filmed in preparation for a trip to South Africa where he was included by the Scottish Office.

Channel Four has done a very valuable service in exposing the extent to which Britain backs the torture regimes throughout the world. They have also indicated what the police have in store for us if we don’t stop them.
Bloody Sunday: litmus test of ‘peace process’

By Piers Mostyn

THIS YEAR’S Bloody Sunday demonstrations will be the first since the IRA declared its ceasefire over four months ago.

In January 1972 in Derry, the British army murdered thirteen people on a peaceful mass demonstration protesting against internment without trial.

Historically, the annual commemoration of this event has been something of a ritual, symbolising a lack of political strategy rather than mass political resistance to British rule in Ireland.

But in recent years they have been used by the republican movement to demonstrate a new strategy that has now emerged more clearly with the ceasefire.

In particular, the Bloody Sunday Initiative, in which Sinn Fein members took a leading role, was one of the first united front campaigns on the national question to be set up by republicans which openly tied itself to non-violent methods of campaigning.

As a major show of strength of the militant wing of the nationalist community, this year’s march will reflect any new political direction of the republican movement and its ability to mobilise the community behind it in new causes.

New questions

Since the ceasefire little has happened to contradict what appears to be the British viewpoint that the republican movement’s leadership has abandoned the armed struggle as a method of achieving its political aims. But new questions have arisen.

Has armed struggle been replaced by other methods as the strategic orientation? Or is an alliance with the governments of Dublin and Washington the new central tactic?

Does the movement envisage achieving Irish self-determination through campaigning for unconditional British withdrawal and Irish unity? Or is the perspective one of a process in which these are only later stages?

In Irish self-determination still defined in terms of the people of the island as an indivisible whole acting within the British framework of ‘in’ or ‘out’, or is the perspective one of a process in which these are only later stages?

In Irish self-determination still defined in terms of the people of the island as an indivisible whole acting within the British framework of ‘in’ or ‘out’, or is the perspective one of a process in which these are only later stages?

Has republican leadership abandoned armed struggle for mass action? Sunday marches, the commemoration is particularly symbolic this year for a number of reasons.

Until 1972 there had been a mass civil rights movement. Although flawed in many respects, it involved mass action, mobilised the whole nationalist community on the streets, and commanded extensive support in the South and internationally.

The Bloody Sunday shootings represented the high point of a British terror campaign that effectively drove mass action politics off the agenda for almost a decade.

The result was an increasingly depoliticised movement and the strengthening of its militarist tendencies.

The 1969/70 split in the republican movement widened the gap between a militarist ‘provisional’ wing and a political, increasingly anti-nationalist, ‘official’ wing.

Hunger strikes

The hunger strikes of 1980/81, the most mass campaigns and the turn towards an electoral strategy reflected the movement. But it failed to develop a strategic mass orientation out of these openings.

The mass action did not outlive the hunger strikes. The electoral strategy reached its limits by the mid 1980s, and the main strategy since has been to seek alliances with bourgeois nationalist parties and call for negotiations with the British.

Has Sinn Fein’s focus been on two demands: an acceleration of the process towards round table talks that include Republicans; and the need for symbols that substantially advance towards British denationalisation.

British strategy

If Bloody Sunday represents a key moment in the history of mass resistance to British rule, it is also seen as symbolic of British strategy itself. Behind it lies everything from murder campaigns to curfews and mass raids, emergency laws denying fundamental civil rights, and disinformation and censorship.

Immediately after Bloody Sunday there was an official inquiry by Lord Widgery. It is now widely accepted that this was a whitewash that exonerated the British army and blamed the victims, using lies and smears. Army officers in charge on Bloody Sunday have been promoted and decorated.

Although the official position has been thoroughly discredited, the state has yet to answer the smallest word of recognition or apology for what can only be described as a war crime.

Nationalists of many hues demand that a precondition for any ‘denuclearisation’ must involve the British government removing the military and accompanying oppressive structures.

The British state will not have seriously begun to turn its back on such strategies until the truth about events such as Bloody Sunday is publicly acknowledged. If the ‘peace process’ itself is to mean anything, the symbolism of Bloody Sunday cannot be taken for granted.

Meanwhile, despite the ceasefire, harassment and intimidation by British forces continue on a daily basis.

Through soldiers are no longer patrolling the streets in daylight hours, the enormous military presence remains, the vast poppydom of emergency powers remains untouched, and the RUC and UDR remain armed to the hilt as local sectarian militias.

Negotiations

Sinn Fein has finally reached a negotiating table of sorts. Substance round table talks may begin this year (with or without the Paisleyite).

A form of words may be found to enable republican participation without a surrender of arms (the RUC having indicated their view that this should not be an obstacle). The joint London-Dublin document providing a framework for a new settlement will emerge.

Sinn Fein’s paper Republican News has rightly described 1995 as a ‘Year of Decision’. The question is - what will be decided?

Having got the talks, what hope is there that they will lead to a real expression of Irish self-determination and a British withdrawal?

The history of British involvement and the majority of parties involved suggests an extremely depressing answer. After all, what the pressure can Sinn Fein bring to bear that would lead to meaningful progress? The only answer seems to be to trust London, Dublin and Washington.

Militant nationalism will only come out of the process better if the balance of forces outside the negotiating room are strengthened in favour of genuine Irish self-determination. Hence the importance of Bloody Sunday and other initiatives this year.

Withdrawal movement

The withdrawal movement in this country faces similar issues. Having suffered from a process of disorientation and decline over the last five years, it has been wrecked by division over the ceasefire.

The leadership of TUM (the main organisation), breaking with its traditional opposition to British organisations taking part in the talks, is the only group that has been able to attract serious support. The Sixth of July in London was a triumph for TUM’s new strategy.

Organisational and political differences continue. It is unclear whether the continued existence of a viable British-based solidarity movement is possible.

This year’s Bloody Sunday demonstration in Manchester will be an important signpost, as retreat from the left and the labour movement will be decisive.

1995 Bloody Sunday
Memorial March
PEACE THROUGH BRITISH WITHDRAWAL!
Saturday 28 January
12 noon Platt Fields
MANCHESTER

SPEAKERS include Labour MP Jenny Corbyn and Bill Etherington; Sinn Fein, a relative of a Bloody Sunday victim, Bloody Sunday Justice Group. Details: TOM 0171-609-1743

IRELAND UNFREE
Anger mounts as Palestine peace deal goes sour

By Roland Rance

GROWING Palestinian discontent with the Israel-PLO ‘peace’ deal has led to the establishment of a new Palestinian Democratic Party.

It describes the Oslo and Cairo agreements as a ‘conglomeration of all Israeli demands and calls for “free and democratic elections”… based on the principle of the unity of the Palestinian nation’.

The party, backed by the Popular and Democratic Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP & DFLP), by independent activists, and by several prominent members of Arafat’s PLO, including Dr Hader Abu Del Shafi, former head of the Palestinian delegation to the negotiations, Arafat co-founder Hami al-Hassan, and former PLO executive member Shafiq al-Hut.

The recent murder by Israeli troops of several sleeping Palestinian police (Israel claimed that the police, while asleep, had fired ‘in self-defence’, and that this was a further sign of Israeli contempt for Palestinian opinion, and for its supposed partners in the deal).

But it would be a mistake to assume that the agreement is failing. On the contrary, Israel is succeeding well in its purpose of coopting the PLO into a unequal relationship with the protectors of the occupation, while Israel continues with its projects of regional domination and colonisation of Palestine. The past few weeks have been marked by clashes between Israeli troops and Palestinian residents, backed by Israeli activists, protesting against land expropriations for new settlements in the Bethlehem area.

This is just one of several planned expansions of settlements. For example, the Israeli settlement of Efr el Zahav, on the lands of Sufra al-Jahr near Nablus, is projected to increase from 65 to 4400 families. By Israeli law, only Jews will be permitted to live in these settlements, whose lands are officially described as ‘redeemed’. Meanwhile, Israel continues to consolidate its political gains and expand its influence in the Arab world.

Visit

Following the treaty with Jordan, King Hussein made a well-publicised visit to Israel, where he was promised a continuing role in Jerusalem affairs – a further snub to the PLO and its policies towards the Palestinian people. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin visited Oman, the first Arab Gulf state to welcome an Israeli leader. It cannot be long before Saudi Arabia too signs a deal with Israel, with which it has no border dispute and much common interest.

As if to symbolise this deepening alliance with Arab reaction, Israel has now threatened a pre-emptive air strike against Iran, the nuclear reactors, to prevent the development of nuclear weapons by Iran.

Ironically, Iran and Iraq had earlier been nuclear partners, collaborating to assist their South African nuclear project.

Sheikhs

The loss of these two former staunch allies has encouraged Israel to look for new sheikhs and colonels of the Arab regimes – a direction long advocated by a part of Israel’s military establishment, notably Rabin himself, who has reportedly for many years viewed Iran as a greater long-term threat than the Arab states.

In confirming these threats to Iran, a BBC interview, Rabin repeated [his] earlier statement that ‘Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East’.

This is a lie: Israel has had nuclear weapons since a project was developed by Shimmon Peres, new Defence Minister, in the 1950s, and currently has about 300 nuclear warheads.

Some days before Rabin made his threat, Israeli prisoner of conscience Mordechai Vanunu passed his 3000th day in solitary confinement.

Vanunu, a former nuclear technician who leaked details of Israel’s nuclear industry to the Sunday Times in 1986, was exiled from London to Rome, and on 30 September 1986 he was kidnapped, drugged, and flown back to Israel.

Tried under conditions of strict secrecy, Vanunu was convicted of treason and espionage, and sentenced to 18 years imprisonment.

He has spent the entire time since his kidnapping in solitary confinement, permitted no contact even with members of his family, in conditions described by Amnesty International as ‘cruel, inhumane and degrading’.

Vanunu’s brother, Meir, now lives in exile after an Israeli court ordered his arrest for publishing details of Mordechai’s kidnapping; the British government has rejected his application for political asylum.

Insanity

Israeli officials have claimed that Vanunu’s conversion to Christianity is a betrayal of his country and evidence of insanity.

By their treatment of him, they seem to be driving him towards a breakdown, though people who have visited him report that he is surviving and has great inner strength.

Vanunu has been nominated several times for the Nobel prize, and has been supported by the European Parliament as well as many British MPs and labour movement bodies.

Indian voters reject new economic policy

By K. Govindan

IN THE Indian general elections, which took place on 15 and 25 March, the Congress(I) party, led by Morarji Desai, was routed.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), under the leadership of Atal Behari Vajpayee, scored a stunning victory, winning 282 seats and forming the new government with a clear majority.

However, what most voters saw as a rejection of the Congress(I)’s economic policies, which led to high inflation and unemployment, and a desire for change.

The BJP has promised to implement a series of measures to improve the economy, including reducing taxes, increasing agricultural productivity, and attracting foreign investment.

In the wake of the elections, political and economic analysts have begun to speculate on the future of Indian politics. Will the BJP be able to deliver on its promises and prove that it is capable of governing effectively? Only time will tell.
Sky's the limit in big bucks sport

By Aidan Day

Last week John Paul Prayor for a speedy resolution to Italy's political cri-
sis. This week it has a new prime minister.

The installation of Lamberto Dini ends 22 days of
drift since Berlusconi stepped down
dafter losing the con-
dence of his alliance partners.
Dini, a former "in-
pendent" minister in Ber-
lusconi's cabinet, is a
toer director general of the
Bank of Italy. He spent 16 years at
the International Monetary
Fund in Washington and
is known as a dedicated
free-

marketeer.

Technocrats

Dini accepted the nomina-
tion saying "now will be a
government of technocrats"
whose task is to "contribute
to the rescue of absolute
paralysis in the stability of this
country's institutions and re-
considering the political
roles".

He has declared his inten-
tions to restore "public
will not link to political
groups" instead they will be
selected "solely on the basis of
their professionalism and
abilities".

Far from being inde-
pendent however Dini is ac-
ually the man behind the
pension reform proposals that
mobilised millions in protest
last November.

He is also largely respon-
sible for much of Italy's priva-
tisation programme - in
particular that of the INA, the
state insurance group. He is
complaining to keep the pri-
vatisation bandwagon on the
road.

Right winger

Although he is being hailed
as an unbiased technocrat, in
fact Dini has always been
close to the Christian Demo-
crats. He was always on the
right of Berlusconi's cabinet.

He has already promised a
mini-budget to begin economic
reform and has been widely
welcomed by big business.

Most importantly he wants
to find £3.3 billion in cuts in the
1995 budget. Also on the
shopping list is reform of the
pension scheme, changes to
the system of proportional
representation and "transi-
tional" measures to control
the use of television.

This last aspect means di-
rectly taking on Berlusconi -
his main backing - over the
media is one of the cen-
tral issues in Italian politics.

If the left is able to main-
tain the momentum that was
built up then Dini won't be around for long -
however hard John Paul Prayor.

By David Thomas

EVEN Tony Blair now says
things have got out of
hand. £7 million. Who could possibly
be worth that amount of money?

Well, according to Manches-
ter United Andy Cole is and
they have pumped up the cash in the belief that he will help
them retain their Premier
League title, thus ensuring me-
bucks in the European Champi-
on's League next season.

In the past paid £5 million plus a player in part exchange for
him. Football clubs do that - swap players as if they were
cigarette cards or telephone
numbers. According to Cole he
did not know about his transfer
until 11 p.m., the day before he was sold.

Currently English football is
rolling in money - or at least
the Premier League is. In the
same week that Andy Cole
was transferred for £7 million,
Third Division Gillingham, with
an average attendance of less
than 4,000 spectators and sp-
ning debts, went into receiv-
erhip.

In a bizarre move the play-
ers 'united' the Professional

Footballers Association has
agreed to pay the team's wage
bill until the end of the season.

As Glenn Moore in Thursday's
Independent commented "it is if the TUC had bailed out
Swan Hunter's shipyard". Why
should a union pay its mem-
bers' wages?

Sponsorship of the Premier
League has reached staggering
proportions. Over a four year
period Carling will give the
league £12 million.

Lucrative by way of a million
a year to be the leagues' official
drink (presumably Carling
don't mind) and Citizen pay
the preposterous sum of
£300,000 to be the official
time-keeper at Premiership
matches

Individual clubs have not
been slow to join the money

merry-go-round. Manchester
United earned £14 million from
merchandising last year. Much
of it has come from the
enormous number of different
kits they have worn in the past
two seasons.

Indeed they launched a new
away strip two days after
Christmas - ensuring that any
building Ryan Giggs (swoon)
would insist that the replica kit
bought for them was no longer
any good and could they have
the new one please.

Even Tony Blair - not known
for his commitment of market
forces - was forced to comment
"loyalty does not seem to be
enough any more: rather it is ex-
ploded to us make pay more".

The massive influx of cash
into the Premiership over the
past three seasons has led to

worrying developments for
spectators. Leading clubs seem
to have taken a con-
scious decision to change the
social basis of the people who
attend matches.

In London it is now virtually
impossible to watch a top game
for less than £12. Children, the
unemployed and D.A.P.s who
used to be admitted at half price
now have to pay the full whack
on the basis of that they are oc-
cupying a seat rather than a yard
of terracing.

This means that a whole sec-
tion of working class fans are
excluded because they can no
longer afford the admission
ticket. Unlike the 1980s, when
top games were screened live
on ITV and BBC, supporters
are unable to watch their
teams live on television.

Sky has exclusive screen rights
to five Premiership matches.

Football clubs should be,
and in the past sometimes
have been, part of the local
community.

Changes in the organisation
and structure of football in the
past period have pushed fans,
particularly working class fans,
farther away from the clubs
they support. It's about time we
reclaimed the game.
Where We Stand

Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

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

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, working to link and unite the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of blacks, 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-directors in 40 countries world-wide.

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 posturing and abstention from the actual struggle taking shape within the labour movement, playing into the hands of the right wing.

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland and Wales should be left to await the outcome of a socialist revolution. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight for 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 politically educate workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour Party and every campaign and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

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

Please agree with what you see in Socialist Outlook, and want to join us in the struggle for socialism, readers' groups meet in towns across the country.

Contact us now, get organised, and get active!

Feedback

This reminds me of Lenin’s famous line about carburizers.

Steve Revins, Warrington.

Aid solution?

One result of Republican gains in the US congressional elections (US aid budget faces axe, Socialist Outlook 75) will be the slashing of the aid budget to some of the poorest countries in Africa.

The $500 million annual Development Fund for Africa seems set for the chop. Of course we are not against aid to Africa or anywhere else that is ravaged by the effects of capitalism, but aid is not in any way a solution to the problems faced by the ‘Third World’.

Capitalist ‘aid’ is for capitalist projects — or do we believe that the US ruling classes, or at least the up-till-recently dominant sections, really are concerned about the world’s black masses? Get real!

Finally the article lets us in on the real meaning of the ‘new world order’ and the capitalist market improving life for the African masses seems further away than ever.

Well, did we ever believe that capitalism was ever making life better?

Big Big Big Prizes

Every month Socialist Outlook outsnaes the National Lottery for just one minute while we draw our 300 club.

Labour Party committee rooms, trades union halls, student union buildings and entire workplaces are covered by an intense hush. This week we have a double treat. Since last month’s draw would have happened after the previous issue was printed the prizes have rolled over to make this month’s draw extra special. Not two, but five lucky winners can be announced!

Stephanie from north London wins Your rights at work, described by TUC General Secretary John Monks as a clear guide to the main effects of the law on their working lives.

Jane from south London meanwhile gains an autographed copy of Left’s Club: radical face of Stalinism, re-released this month on the 50th anniversary of its first publication.

Deborah of east London’s price is Ethnic Conflicts in World Politics, the latest book from the CIA’s Westview Press. Barbara Harff of the US Naval Academy concludes the right-wing volume predicting “the resurgence of xenophoobia, a fear of cultural dilution, that subordinates Europeanism to pan-Germanism, Franco-Phillipine and British Insularity.”


But the finale finger of fortune has a special prize from Oxford, for our bumper £50 cash award for a poem on capitalism.

Ascpiculo now here we come!

Join the Club!

For just £5 a month you get a chance to win £50. You can have as many chances as you want, safe in the knowledge that you have a far better chance than the National Lottery!

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Staff of a day of (month) 1995 and thereafter every month until countermanded by me in writing.

Signed

Date

Please return to 300 Club, PO Box 1198, London, N4 2UU.
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JANUARY
Thurs 19  CLAUSE 4 debate with Jeremy Corbyn and Margaret Hodge 7.30pm Red Rose Club Seven Sisters Road N7.
CLAUSE 4 debate with Alan Simpson and Dennis McShane, Sheffield.
Sat 21  BUILD a Wapping Union! March for trade union rights assemble 9.45am Tower Hill tube, march to rally on green opposite News International. Called by NUJ.
DEMONSTRATION against Oxford County Cuts.

Tues 24  MASS lobby and day of action against Oxford Cuts.
Weds 25  'STOP the SATs' lobby of NUT executive 4.00 - 5.30pm NUT HQ Mallesden Place WC1
'STOP the SATs' rally Friends Meeting House Clifton Rd WC1 5.30 - 7.30pm.
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IRELAND

Troops out now!

No British solution