NATIONALISE THE BANKS!

BARINGS Bank, the oldest in the City of London, collapses, revealing that bank employees like Nick Leeson have been routinely risking hundreds of millions of other people’s money in crazy gambles on the movement of stock markets.

The Baring family which has creamed off millions from the bank over two centuries of exploitation and speculation now cynically try to wash their hands of the conduct of the executives whom they appointed and gave a free hand to maximise profits, regardless of the consequences.

Of course the cash at risk from their speculative efforts is not all from the Queen or wealthy right wing institutions like the Royal College of Nursing: hundreds of millions in pension funds was invested with Barings, who might just as well have put it all on a horse. Other banks are doing the same thing every day.

Creating crisis

The fact is that the banking system is at the centre of the anarchy of the capitalist free market: it does not just respond to shocks and crises, it creates them.

Bankers lay down brutal terms for loans, or pull the plug on firms or whole industries, sparing not a thought for the thousands of jobs at stake, or the communities they are devastating.

Tony Blair calls for more regulation of the City, but then tries to reassure bosses that a Labour will leave their profits and market freedoms intact. That’s also why he is so keen to ditch Clause Four.

But there will be more and bigger Barings-style crises as long as the banks remain in private hands, ruthlessly deploying the power of capital in pursuit of maximum profit.

Nothing could more clearly underline the need for the nationalisation of the banks and finance houses, as part of a planned socialist economy. Until it confronts the power of the banks, Labour leaders are condemned to act as their servants.

Defend Clause Four!
Defending education

Popular FACE of fightback

MARCH 25 will see thousands of parents, teachers, school governors and school students demonstrate in London on the first national protest against education cuts for many years.

Organising the march is a new organisation FACE (Fight Against Education Cuts in Education) formed in Warwickshire but drawing support from all over the country.

Socialist Outlook spoke with SUE LISTER, an Oxford chair of governors, and Chair of FACE.

SO: What is the political stance of FACE?
SL: The campaign is obviously politically – we are fighting against cuts, implemented at local level by county and borough councils – but it is not party political. FACE is a very broad umbrella group to keep local campaigns in touch and suggest national events and strategies for fighting cuts. It draws support from those members of all three main parties who are actively opposed to the cuts.

SL: We have contacts covering the whole of England, and now Wales as well. We would like to involve Scotland, too, but we are not sure how far similar problems are affecting them. Groups have been in touch from Newcastle to Devon, and there are more calls every day.

SO: Are these all ad-hoc local campaigns, or organisations?
SL: Both, FACE is now supported by the National Association of Governors, the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations and the Campaign for State Education, but it is also supported by a network of local campaigns springing up in towns and cities as angry parents organise to fight back.

SL: It appears that the National Union of Teachers has attempted to hold back support for your campaign, hinting that FACE is some kind of left wing front. What support are you receiving from teachers?

SL: FACE is a genuinely broad campaign, not controlled by any political party or faction. We are approaching the NUT nationally seeking their support. On a local level many teachers have been very demoralised by the NUT ballot vote to end the fight against the SATs tests, and in many cases it appears that the anti-cuts campaign is pushing the local NUT into activity.

But we are receiving strong support from NUT members and from branches: in Leeds, for example, the NUT branch has booked a coach to go down to the March 25 demonstration, even though there are no education cuts in the city.

SO: Are you piecing together any kind of national picture of what is happening to education? It appears that the county councils are making much bigger cuts than London and the big cities.
SL: This year the county councils face a much tighter cap on education spending after which the squeeze was on the inner cities, and many of them made painful cuts. Now, for example, in Oxfordshire, for example, the Liberals and Tories have combined to adopt a cuts budget which will slash education spending by 5%, on top of which there is the under-funding of teachers' pay, resulting in a cut of well over 6 percent: this means 300 teaching jobs face the axe in the county.

In Lambeth, on the other hand, where I spoke at a rally on Saturday, the cuts come from a different source: the council has decided to cut the council tax. The borough has actually been given an extra £7 million for education, but has decided to make cuts of £18 million instead.

In the big cities, it appears that the cuts are much more a result of the under-funding of the teachers' pay award than outright cuts in allocation: in the counties the big issue is the cuts.

Of course there is also the divisive element of the Grant Maintained Schools, which continue to get a preferential share of the cash everywhere. In Lambeth one grant-maintained school has £1 million in reserves, and is not facing any cuts: it will earn as much in interest as the state schools are losing in the borough.

SO: A big factor in your campaign is opposition to larger class sizes.
SL: Yes, many areas are facing class sizes increasing towards the 40 mark. This is not education, but crowd control, the industrial needs of the children cannot be catered for in big classes, and the result would be that the able child will find work too easy and get bored, while those struggling to keep up will switch off for lack of help and encouragement.

Teachers will be less able to respond to the emotional and social needs of the children, such as combating bullying, child abuse and drug abuse. Children only get one chance at education. We have got to fight to ensure resources to make sure we get it right. And that means fighting now.

SO: How is FACE organising in the run-up to March 25?
SL: We are doing meetings around the country, and urging every group fighting education cuts to contact us. We may be able to help with literature and posters for lobby groups. We can suggest ways of putting our case to MPs and councilors, and advise on phoney consultative techniques. But the main thing is to assure local campaigners that they are not isolated, and that through FACE we can find a national focus for the struggle against the cuts. That’s why we want a really big demo on March 25, in every town and city – and bring people with you!

FACE can be contacted by phone on 0589-789104.

Left teachers must back anti-cuts campaign

CAROL REGAN, founding member of the Socialist Teachers Alliance and Joint NUT vice-President, talks to Socialist Outlook's JOHN WICK in preparation for the future for the NUT and State Education.

RL: Carole, your election in 1994 presented a major breakthrough for the Left. How do you account for your success?
SL: In my election manifesto I made a clear call for support for campaigns such as the SATs boycott and support for restoration of Section 11 fund raising. The Home Office money for ethnic minority children). Defence of state education was a central theme of my platform and I believe this was a clear and attractive alternative to my right wing opponents.

RL: Between now and 1996 when you take over the union presidency what do you see as the major issues confronting the NUT?
SL: CR: Without a doubt the funding of education will be the central issue.

RL: We must campaign for funding on the basis of need and challenge the market philosophy which is being introduced into schools. We must also put pressure on the Labour Party to make a firm commitment to restore a fully comprehensive system - this means scrapping Grant Maintained Status and City Technology Colleges, and bringing them all back under democratically elected Local Education Authorities.

RL: How should the NUT relate to the growing FACE (Fight Against Cuts in Education) campaign?
SL: Of course the national union should unite with any campaign opposing the cuts, but the NUT bureaucracy is afraid of anything that they don't control - hence their refusal to support the national demonstration on March 25. By ensuring that this demonstration is a massive success we will put pressure on Doug McAvoy, and pull the NUT into the campaign.

RL: What about broader campaigns to defend the Welfare State?
SL: CR: It is clear that the entire public sector is being made to pay for the Tory crisis. It is essential that we link up all the varied campaigns and reject any notions that one service can be saved at the expense of any other - all of the platform speakers at the Oxfordshire strike rally on February 14 forcefully made this point.

An obvious link that the NUT should be making is with nurses and other health workers who are having their pay held down by government-appointed review bodies. The move towards Trust-level bargaining in the NHS is very much the 'writing on the wall' for education - first of all for GM schools and then the rest.

RL: Do you see any relevance for a union like the NUT, which isn’t affiliated to the Labour Party, in the current debate about Clause 4?
SL: CR: Of course! If we want a Labour government to be elected it must show a clear commitment to jobs and services which are run in the interests of the majority.

This means democratic control: Fifteen years of Tory damage to the public sector must be reversed and Clause 4 gives a clear and unambiguous direction for Labour to follow.

RL: Finally, how do you intend to use your presidency of the NUT?
SL: CR: Campaigning! I’m not interested in just spending my time in meetings - I want to help turn the NUT into an active, fighting union which stands up for teachers and state education.

If I’m even partially successful in this my election will have been worth all our hard work.
Tories in retreat on NHS cuts

By John Lister

THE DECISION of the SE London Health Commission to postpone until 1999 plans for the closure of Guy’s Hospital reduces Virginia Bottomley’s hospital closure plans to total chaos.

In October 1992 the Tony-appointed Tomlinson Report – set up to recommend a ‘hit list’ of closures to match London’s declining health budget – mapped out plans for the closure within two years of ten key hospitals in London, including four teaching hospitals, Charing Cross, the Middlesex, Bart’s and Guy’s or St Thomas’.

Tomlinson argued that London had too many hospital beds, and that hospital services could be replaced by expanded ‘primary care’ from GPs – a theory that has yet to be shown to work anywhere in the world.

So far, although the Middlesex has been run down in size, the only other closure from the Tomlinson Report has been the casualty unit at Bart’s, while the Tomlinson Report itself and the sketchy and selective figures on which it was based have been widely discredited.

Trolleys

Earlier this year a new report commissioned by the Inner London health authorities admitted that the number of acute hospital beds in the capital is under severe ‘pressure’, with many operating at above 100% capacity and some above 1000%, with patients lined up on trolleys in corridors.

While laboriously avoiding the word ‘crisis’, the report recommended a halt to any further hospital closures.

So from health chiefs admitted that the retreat on the Guy’s closure arose largely because of the huge groundswell of public opposition, or, to put it in officialese: “People needed convincing the plan was right”.

TONY BLAIR’s ‘Mission Impossible’ appears to be to salvage the crumbling unity and disintergration of the Tory Party.

He appears to be pursuing this objective on several fronts at once: by embracing the unpopular notion of a united capitalist Europe; by refusing to offer the slightest support or encouragement to those fighting cuts in education and other council services or the NHS; by falling with (and now apparently dropping) unpopular ideas of regional government in England, while still rejecting genuine self-government in Scotland; and by ditching Clause Four, dismantling any relic of radicalism in Labour’s economic and social policies.

The combined message is plain: a Blair government would replicate many of the policies that have reduced John Major’s government to historic depths in the opinion polls. Far from offering any radical alternative, the Labour Party appears to be challenging voters to find a reason to vote for it.

Absurd

Blair’s absurd Common’s motion on Europe – supposedly aimed to exploit divisions in Tory ranks – was so fanatically pro-EU as to seem calculated to push the ‘whiplash’ Tories back into the government lobby, which it duly did.

But the episode has served also to underline the utter servility of Labour to the project of consolidating the bosses’ European Union.

So, for the first time the party leadership’s support for greater ‘integration’ with European capital – contrary to the wishes of the European capitalist class and debate whether the controversial 1996 ‘Maastricht II’ late-governmental conference should be postponed by a year to maximise the chances of negotiating with a Labour government.

And while Blair – just days before the devolutions of the Spanish and Portuguese currenies – added his two pennypworth to the support for a single European currency, he remains silent on the implications of the resultant European wide economic policy, which would impose even more stringent austerity and cuts in welfare spending.

Already in Germany metal workers in IG Metall are fighting back in defence of living standards (see back page).
Behind Birmingham's 'Labour sleaze' allegations

By a Labour councillor

THERE IS a long story behind the suspension of four Birmingham Labour constituency Labour parties. It is an outrageous and orchestrated example of re-election paranoia meeting up with Labour’s inexperienced party leader and new General Secretary. There is no Asian MP in Birmingham. Even the existing Labour MP’s agree an Asian candidate should be selected in a winnable seat... so long as it isn’t theirs.

In Sparkbrook there is a retiring MP, Roy Hatton, and the chance to select an Asian candidate. But the constituency is already wide open where Labour-right MP Roger Goddard wants to stand again.

Goddard was selected last time after a protracted campaign in which allegedly misused union votes secured him the candidacy. His opponent, councillor Attila, is supported by neighbouring MP Clare Short.

Under one member-one vote individual recruitment is crucial to selection campaigns. Inevitably, there have been allegations of ‘odder’ recruitment with membership fees paid for. The party has partially closed arms. Sparkbrook and Small Heath membership against the electoral register.

Grants

A party official legally compared these details with applications for statutory urban renewal grants when these grants became entangled in the selection battle.

Renewal grants are part of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Local authorities now have to either close or open grants for public housing or give repair grants.

Three years ago Sparkbrook Labour party opened a major campaign to inform local residents of the grants. Councillors began to complain that applications for these grants were being placed on a slow avalanche on the desks of the councillors. Roger Goddard advised constituents to apply for statutory grants.

But details were leaked to the press, alleging that 50 per cent of statutory urban renewal applications in Sparkbrook and Small Heath were from households with a party member. In Sparkhill, the figure is 17 per cent.

The Observer headlined this as ‘Labour Sleaze’ on 26 February, alleging that Sparkbrook and Small Heath were ‘buying votes’ by assisting party members to gain housing grants.

The party leadership suspended the four constituencies for the ‘crime’ of elected representatives helping constituents gain statutory urban renewal grants.

It is feared that the NEC will either close or open grants for the demands of black communities ravaged by unemployment and poverty.

No confidence

It is hardly surprising that black people have little faith in white Labour Party politicians, and moreso to support candidates from their own communities.

With the Labour Party still a political arm, in the future, we should be encouraging black membership – the more we encourage the better – rather than expelling and alienating a candidate.

Councillors are expected to propose the suspension with the NEC to confirm the decision. The NEC, of course, has the power to reverse the decision.

Frame-up in Nottingham East

Kangaroo court expels black activist

By our correspondent

LABOUR’S NCC, in disciplinary tribunal, has expelled Hassan Ahmad, a prominent left activist in Nottingham East, for five years on a frame-up charge that he attempted ‘to persuade others to disregard the rules of the Party’.

Hassan was accused of presenting his case to the selection committee in October that they should select unendorsed candidates against the District Labour Party’s recommendation.

The minutes show that it was actually David Hunt, a white member with no political sympathy for Hassan, who made the proposal, and it was Hassan who proposed that the DLP’s recommendation be accepted.

True record

Of 22 members present, 20 endorse the minutes as a true record. Not all were Asian. Only 2 claimed otherwise, after charges had been brought to the DLP by Eileen Heppell.

Despite David Hunt giving evidence in person and conflicting evidence from the accusers, the NCC expelled Hassan.

Hassan Ahmad has been whitewashed out of the Party with hardly a murmur being raised by the vast majority of white LP members, including sections of the leader and Nottingham South MP Alan Simpson, Secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group.

Hempell’s husband is John Heppell, MP for Nottingham East. Hassan Ahmed was a threat in future reselections.

A conspiracy theory linked Hassan with Ian Ghazzi, ex-DLP Secretary, that they were attempting to deseat Labour councillors and take over the City Council. Hassan has just finished a 3 year suspension for organizing black councils.

Hassan’s expulsion shows the continued attack on Labour by the Labour Party that now operates.

The leadership is unwilling to show solidarity for the demands of black communities ravaged by unemployment and poverty.

Welfare State Network campaign conference

From the CRADLE... to the GRAVE

DEFENDING EDUCATION, HEALTH AND PENSIONS

11am-5pm Saturday April 8

Speakers (personal capacity) include:

- ALICE MAHON, MP
- JACK JONES (National Pensioners Forum)
- SUE LISTER (Chair, FACE)
- DOREEN CAMERON (NATHE)
- CAROLE REGAN (NUJ/STA)
- ALAN SIMPSON MP

Manning Hall, University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1.

Chelmsford bus strikers wait for TGWU support

By Roger Welch

DESPITE two setbacks the fight for reinstatement continues by the 196 Chelmsford bus workers sacked by Eastern National. The first blow to the bus workers was struck by the failure of a special TGWU conference for delegates across the Badgerline group to vote to take solidarity action. The second blow was struck by the decision of the bus workers in Chelmsford that this was not an issue for which the Eastern National said they would take action. The reaction of others, however, that the TGWU leadership had not fought hard enough to convince the delegates that this was an issue of real solidarity action. Such a clause could not only reinstate the bus workers in Chelmsford but make it clear throughout Badgerline and the bus industry that bullying tactics by management were not going to work any longer.

The second problem for the Chelmsford bus workers is that of the bus routes that they have to run to keep the bus service going. The management has obviously been instigated by Eastern National, and substantiates the sacked bus workers’ statements that they are being forced by Eastern National to take away their passengers.

Hurt

This has stopped the buses from operating, and the service is in the process of being registered as to the routes that can be used. This has caused a lot of work for the bus workers.

Momentum for wider solidarity action is building up this month. The sacked bus workers are travelling the country to build support; in particular they have invited speakers from Sheffield, Oxford, and Hull Trades councils.

A public meeting is being held in Chelmsford at the EEU House on the evening of March 17 with Paul Foot as one of the speakers. Most importantly, a march and rally is taking place in Chelmsford on SATURDAY MARCH 26, assembling at 10.00 at the bus station (near the rail station). The march will go past the bus depot and the union lists across the country are urged to come to Chelmsford and through weight of numbers close down the Eastern National depot.

If we show momentum, requests for support and donation, please contact Roger Welch, Chelmsford TUC, 87 Milton Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 0DN. Tel: 0245-263727, Cheques payable to Chelmsford Bus Drivers Support Fund.

HOME NEWS

Health

Surgery to cut waiting lists

A surgery is being opened in Kennington to cut waiting lists. Dr. Smith, of the surgery, did not divulge details, but said that the surgery was needed to treat patients who are waiting longer than normal.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

The surgery will be open from 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. The surgery is located at 123 High Street, Kennington.

Transport

New rail services

A new rail service is being introduced to reduce travel times. The service will run between 06:00 and 22:00, Monday to Friday.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

The service will stop at stations along the route, including London Road, and terminate at the main station. The service will run every 30 minutes, or as required.

Education

New schools

A new school is being built to accommodate the growing population. The school will be open from September.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

The school will accommodate 1000 students and will feature state-of-the-art facilities. The school will be located at 456 School Road, Kennington.
Clause Four fight hots up
down to the showdown!

By David Thomas

WITH LESS than eight weeks to go before Labour's Special Conference on April 29 large rallies have been organised in defence of Clause Four.

On the eve of Greater London Labour Party Conference 300 people at Conway Hall heard Doreen Cameron (NATFHE), Mildred Gordon (MP for Bow & Poplar) and Arthur Scargill (NUM) speak in favour of retaining Clause Four in Labour's constitution.

Video

Over £375 was collected and numerous copies of Ken Loach's video "Defend Clause 4" badges were sold.

GLLP went on to vote in favour of Clause Four by 59 per cent to 41 per cent with the trade unions voting in favour of the Clause by more than a 2 to 1 majority.

On March 1 at a meeting organised by Ealing Trades Council 200 turned out to listen to Tony Benn and Bob Crowe (RMT Assistant General Secretary).

The Motion of General Committee meetings will see delegates chosen for the April special conference. It is essential that the left stands pro-Clause Four candidates in every constituency and passes the Model Resolution on this page.

In the CLP's that have decided to have an OMOV ballot on the NEC's Statement of Aims and Values we must fight for the ballot to also include the Question: "Do you support Clause Four in its current wording?"

The campaign is now at a crucial stage. The weekend of March 11/12 sees the North West Region and the Scottish Labour Party conferences. Blair looks set to win in the North West.

The vote in Scotland will be close. Party members have come under enormous pressure to back Brian Wilson's "new" Clause Four.

Wilson is so open to democratic debate that he refused even to consider watching the video.No doubt he was too busy arm-twisting.

London thumbs down to Blair

Unions tip balance for the Clause

By Steve McNeill

TONY BLAIR's plans to get rid of Clause Four received a setback at the Greater London Labour Party AGM, the first of the regional party conferences.

A tremendous cheer, Chair Jimmy Fitzpatrick, announced the result of the vote: a victory for the status quo.

Under current party rules the constituencies have 30% of the vote and the affiliated organisations 70%. The vote was lost 12% to 18% in the constituency section but decisively carried in the affiliated organisation section by 47% to 23% giving an overall result of 59% to 41%.

"Emergency"

The left had to fight over the weekend to ensure that the issue was voted on. Ealing Southall CLP submitted an "emergency" resolution calling for a discussion, but no vote to be taken. This was admitted as an emergency by a narrow margin and only finally defeated by less than 1%

Edmonds' GMB: obtaining variously disappointing, reflecting the extent of the Labour Left's decline. This is probably greater than nationally following the right's sustained witch-hunting attacks on the "loony left" for so many years.

"Emergency" was passed in full strength, without debate or amendment. The union's opposition to the leadership was led by the RMT's Pat Sikowski who pointed out the significance of the debate in the leadership's refusal to commit themselves to reversing the privatisation of the utilities such as British Rail.

Barry Cannfield of the TGWU drew laughter and applause when he derided Blair for maintaining that the 1918 Clause 4 is not "modern" enough, when he professes support for 2000-year old ideas in the Bible.

The delegation of the newly formed Communications Workers Union was in turmoil.

Despite the fact that the 1994 conferences of both constituent trade unions, the UCW and the NCU, carried motions supporting Clause Four, the new NEC voted 27-18 to support the Blair leadership, to organise a consultative postal ballot, and to instruct all union delegations to vote for change in the meantime.

To make doubly sure that no rebellions took place, Joint General Secretary Tony Young refused to hand ballot papers to delegates in violation of current party rules, and also refused requests for delegation meetings.

A delegation meeting was finally forced when delegates protested to standing orders. The delegation majority voted 11-9 to oppose Young's ruling but the chair declared it carried 11-10 on his casting vote.

UNISON delegates also resisted Party General Secretary Tom Sawyer's arm-twisting and voted 12-3 for Clause 4. The GMB abstained in the final vote.

The situation is clearly up for grabs in several unions before special conference, in UNISON, MSF the CWU postal ballot and even in the GMB. Blair is unlikely to win a majority of union members in full employment in the constitution instead of Clause 4.
Bosnia on the brink of new war

**By Alan Thornett**

Despite the four month so-called ceasefire in Bosnia 200,000 people in the BIH pocket are on the verge of starvation and are under constant attack from Serbs from the Krajina area of Croatia. Within the last few days there are signs of a Bosnian army offensive near Travica in central Bosnia. The fact is that the ceasefire has never existed in any real sense but suited commandos on both sides were limiting their operations through the worst months of the winter. From the point of view of the Bosnians a protracted ceasefire is in any case unacceptable since it would freeze the current battle lines into de facto borders and hand 70 per cent of their country to the Serbs.

What is clear is that both sides are preparing for a major offensive as soon as the weather breaks and have used the lull in the fighting which has existed in some places to prepare their logistics. Despite dubious rumours of secret arms flights into Tuzla and past bluster from the US about the lifting of the arms embargo Bosnia still suffers a massive disadvantage of weaponry in what promises to be a major escalation of the war.

The wild card in the situation is which way the Croatian regime is going to jump in two months time. Currently Tudjman is under pressure from nationalists within Croatia, has told the UN that their four year old mandate to operate inside Croatia will not be renewed when it ends at the end of April, and the UN claims that this means that they will make their operation in Bosnia impossible.

**Tudjman**

Tudjman talks of recovering the 25 per cent of Croatia still held by Serbs since 1991. The Krajina, one of the principal areas involved, was a strategic area of the country particularly as far as communications were concerned.

**IWA sends aid ship to Bosnia**

INTERNATIONAL Workers Aid continues to develop worldwide. It has held seven international conferences in different parts of Europe and has now sent 20 convoys of aid through to Tuzla in central Bosnia. All its aid has gone to the miners union in Tuzla which has distributed it to about 12,000 families. It has an international office in Stockholm and a logistics office in Makarska in Croatia.

Campaigns

It has active campaigns or initiatives in Denmark, Sweden (which has 50 local groups), France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Belgium, Greece, Switzerland and a small initiative in Britain. Recent convoys have been women's convoys taking large quantities of women's packs to the women's organisations in Tuzla. IWA has also built links with Women in Black and women in opposition to Milosevic in Belgrade. Some IWA sections are making solidarity with women in ex-Yugoslavia the theme of their International Women's Day activities. The aid convoys (there will be four during the spring) will continue as an expression of aid and international working class solidarity from the Labour movement on Western Europe to the trade unions in Bosnia. This initiative comes out of a visit to Tuzla by a delegation from the Swedish dock workers' union. Now IWA is taking an even bolder initiative to meet a situation where the need is growing all the time - IWA is organizing a ship to Bosnia - or more precisely a ship to Makarska with containers for transit through to Bosnia itself. The ship is due to arrive in Bosnia on 21 April. The project is part of the larger aid efforts of Solidarity Unite, an organization of volunteers from the USA who are planning a large aid campaign to Bosnia. The ship will leave from Stockholm and visit various European ports picking up containers and then go to Tuzla.

**Trade unions**

The trade union leaders are united in their opposition to the war and, in many cases, they are the only ones to hold firm against Serb attempts to undermine them. The trade unions have established a network of solidarity to support Serbian workers. The trade union leadership is organizing a meeting of trade union leaders from around the world to discuss the situation in the former Yugoslavia at a conference in Stockholm, Sweden on 21 April.
**Young women: a world to win**

By Kathryn Marshall

WHILE visiting my former students' union recently, I became involved with their preparations for this year's International Women's Day. All the old banners and placards from previous events came out and people searched for last year's details so they could simply replicate them this time round.

It's wrong to approach the day like this — though it's great that they are approaching it — because it suggests that women's policies are not sufficiently inspiring and important right now for us to think of new ideas and campaigns to get active around. Feminists today have had a hard row to hoe because activity within the women's movement is at a pretty low level.

So, young women today are fearful that declaring themselves to be "feminists" is little more than a declaration of revulsion for the male species. Others say they are feminists because they do have such a revulsion, so low is the level of education about what the women's movement is really about.

Those who are involved in women's politics at colleges or in the workplace feel divorced from any widespread unifying struggle that they can be a part of. This is not because young women are suddenly no longer angry about the state of the world. It is down to a lack of real political activity.

You only had to look at all the women who recently took to the streets of Windsor against the Criminal Justice Act to realize how political anger and thirst for change there is.

But students' and trade unionists do not highlight the struggles that the women's movement went through in the 1970s and 80s around abortion rights, when mass action — meetings, pickets, demonstrations — won and defended improvements on this issue.

They don't use the history of Women Against Pit Closures to re-inspire young women, though it could do so very well.

Too often, women's groups are solely discussion clubs on matters which are very important, but which on their own do not galvanize young women into action about changing their lives.

There is also the babble from the capitalist media along the lines that women now have "equality." Yes, women are still exploited because they have fought to improve their status and quality of life, but we certainly haven't achieved "equality" — and "equality" under capitalism would be worth cheering for anyway.

Socialist feminists reject the idea that all our demands have been met.

The history of our movement tells us that it is only by joining together politically that we will see the kind of child-care provision that really frees women to have lives of their own, or the right to abortion that cuts out getting "permis- sion" from doctors, or further erosion of discrimination at work.

So, International Women's Day should not involve a dusting down of last year's banners as though the issues belong in last year. Instead it's a great chance to get across to as many young women as possible that the struggle for women's liberation remains.
Women's lives in the new global economy

Women's work

THE OVERALL implications of economic integration for women's work has been to promote contradictory prelaborization of women on a world scale, forcing them into the workforce and at the same time using their role in the family and society to justify job insecurity and casualization and the return of many private services to the "private" sphere of the family, to be shouldered by women.

Today's international capitalist restructuration involves the development of export-processing industrialization by multinational corporations whereby parts of the production process (usually those that are low-skilled and labour intensive) are located in free-trade zones throughout the Third World. These zones represent localized models of what the new trading blocks will create on a broader regional basis. Industries in these free-trade zones depend on the particular exploitation of women's labour to provide the increase in surplus value and in profits that is the goal of restructuring. As a result, a significant layer of Third World women are brought into industrial production and in fact into some of the most modern sectors of the economy, though under very exploitative conditions.

Informal sector

However, this development has also been accompanied by a huge expansion in the informal sector into which most women workers, including those who have been laid off from multi-national industries because of a shift in production, are channelled. In fact, women's work in the informal sector is used to underwrite the "cheapness" and "flexibility" of both male and female labour in the industrial sector and to provide a safety valve for periodic retrenchments in that sector.

This trend toward informal-sector work is accelerated by the increasing commercialization and export-orientation of local agriculture, a shift which frequently undermines women's role in the more traditional farming economy.

Fragmentation

Such fragmentation and casualization of women's industrial work, which is paralleled by the trend toward casual and part-time employment in the service sector, is a central component of capital's strategy of creating a "contingent" or "flexible" workforce.

Structural adjustment policies, and the resulting rise in unemployment, have served to drive women disproportionately out of the formal economy while also increasing their need to find some kind of income-producing work. They thus turn to the informal sector where women are increasingly forced to work as day-labourers, street vendors or prostitutes.

In some Third World countries, unemployment has reached such proportions that men and women are now competing over informal-sector jobs, thus removing even this safety net for women.

The establishment of formal trade agreements will most certainly accelerate these developments, leading to a further "misallocation" of women's work in both advanced capitalist and Third World societies.

None of their basic aims - aside from ensuring certain rules for capital flow and investment, while highly regulating things like patents - will be to generalise the elimination of certain regulations of working conditions and labour relations which have not already been eliminated, using the argument that their maintenance would constitute "unfair practices".

Undoubtedly, then, we would see challenges to rights such as:

- Rights to safe, decent working conditions. Hazardous conditions in both industry and services where women are concentrated already exist - for example, danger from the use of toxic chemicals in electronics factories, fires in garment sweatshops, and rising stress-related injury for clerical workers using computers.
- Retirement age requirements may be "harmonised" as is already being foreseen in Uruguay, where MERCOSUR could raise women's retirement age by seven to nine years to jibe with Brazil's higher age.
- Maternity leave with pay, as well as child care, both legal rights in Mexico, could be eliminated formally by NAFTA.
- Affirmative-action programmes, a hard-won for both people of colour and women in the US and Canada, could be challenged as an undue burden on capitalists in both countries, "prodding" their competitiveness.

In the agricultural sector, NAFTA and the EU will promote the diminution of agribusiness, leading to the peasant woman's further loss of economic base.
Health & Welfare

THESE CHANGES in conditions and security of work directly affect women's health and general well-being as well as the welfare of those family members (especially children) for whom women are primarily responsible.

Rising prices and unemployment put stress on women's own ability to provide for basic needs, while cut-backs in public spending and the dismantling of social welfare programs decrease state support for services such as education, health care and child care. This development is particularly deleterious to women because of their perceived role in both social and biological reproduction. At the same time, the state demands on women to "take up the slack" and provide on a private basis services that were previously provided by the government, thus furthering the process of structural adjustment.

NAFTA in particular threatens to unleash new health hazards for women as it opens the way to challenging existing environmental laws as "unfair trade practices." For example, in certain communities on the US-Mexican border, the growing problem of acid rain is linked to cancers of the female reproductive system and to severe birth defects such as encephalophic children.

Environmental

With the general weakening of environmental regulations, such problems could be more widespread throughout North America. As the same time, NAFTA will pose a challenge to the national health-care programs of Canada and Mexico while making it more difficult to establish a comparable program in the US. While this affects the whole of the working class, women, as consumers of health-care services and as those mainly responsible for family health, will be particularly hard hit. In the case of the EU as well, health care and other components of welfare system could be gradually chopped away.

Social gains & basic rights

CLOSELY RELATED to the question of health and well-being is the question of the effect of economic restructuring and the new trade policies on the social gains women have fought for in the last quarter century, and in relation to which they have won at least partial victories.

Sexuality

THE MANIPULATION of women's sexuality is one of the primary ways in which capitalist restructuring uses and builds on women's oppression. This happens in several ways. First, there are the attacks on sexual and reproductive rights discussed above. In this sense, such attacks can be seen as not only an effect of economic change but also as a way of preparing the way for further restructuring by making women more vulnerable in both economic and social terms.

Second, we can find numerous instances where the entry and dismissal of women from the wage-labour force, as well as the superexploitation under which most women work, are justified by images of female sexuality. This, for example, in very common in factories where women are alternately represented as "sexually loose" and thus "free" to be exploited, or as requiring stringent controls - including the physical organisation of the workplace using the threat of sexual violence - to maintain their sexual purity, thus limiting their autonomy and mobility.

Finally, there are particular instances - such as the expansion of the international sex trade in Europe, Asia and Latin America, the increase in dowry deaths in India, and the imposition of class-based population policies, for example in Singapore - in which women's sexuality is both commodified and controlled in ways that directly further the economic strategies of individual men or capital as a whole.

Ideology

THE IDEOLOGICAL transformation that accompanies global integration also has an impact on women. There is, for example, the manipulation of sexual images and norms we have just discussed.

Also of importance is the ideological emphasis on individualism and privatization that parallels recent changes in economic relations. Because of women's traditional role in the family, such an ideological development affects them differently: and also depends on their often unconscious collaboration to carry out such a broad cultural change.

Finally, there is the possibility that both NAFTA and the EU will play a role in undermining both memories of and aspirations for progressive national struggles. This in turn could have special implications for women, since it is through such struggles that women's demands are frequently raised and secured. For example, to prepare the way for the implementation of NAFTA there are already pressures to revise the official histories of the Mexican revolution.

Such revisions would serve to weaken the collective memory of the gains of the revolution, including those of particular importance to women, such as rights to maternity leave, child care, and health care. The Irish example provides another example, in that the dampening of its vigour because of the renewed ideology of a common Europe could also dampen the aspirations for women's emancipation connected with the goal of national liberation.

Growing US abortion rights movement

One thousand people attended a candle-light vigil outside the Planned Parenthood clinic that night. Two thousand rallied at the Statehouse the following afternoon. Over 8,000, mainly young people, joined a Boston celebration on the January 22 anniversary of the 1973 Roe v. Wade federal court ruling which established women's right to choose abortion. Other actions took place nationwide.

Limited

Abortion rights have been repeatedly limited in recent years. Federal funding has been withdrawn for abortions for women with low incomes. Forty-one of the fifty states refuse to use local funds for abortions. Only one county in eight has abortion facilities. Two-thirds of states have special rules restricting young women's right to choose.

In the last year, most US women's clinics had some form of violent attack. A quarter of clinics received death threats.

The April 8 demonstration, organised by the National Organisation for Women, helps to develop a mass action needed to defeat the anti-abortion offensive.

The struggle can be isolated by the weight of public opinion and the police can be forced to seriously attempt to prosecute the attackers.

Most importantly, the pro-choice movement can develop the kind of independent strength, organisation and mass support that can defend women's right to choose without relying on the police or the capitalist politicians.

Jacqueline Boyle and Mary Scully in Boston contributed to this article.
The Feminist, the Fatwa and Fundamentalism in Bangladesh

By K. Govindan

TASLIMA NASRIN has long been un-popular with fundamentalists and secular liberals for her atheist and feminist views which she expressed in a regular newspaper column.

Her refusal to leave exile in Sweden since August of last year and her meetings has addressed around the world has invited many on the reasons she left Bangladesh.

The publication of her fifteenth book La- jja (Shame) in 1993, conveying her dismay at the oppression of the Hindu minority and the erosion of secular values, focused fundamentalist ire upon her.

A little known fringe group called the Council of the Soldiers of Islam declared a fatwa (religious opinion with legal effect) offering 50,000 takas for her death. This was seized upon by the fundamentalist Jamaat-e- Islami party, who in turn associated groups launched agitations and mass demonstrations demanding her death and state action against her — resulting in the banning of Lajja — though not before it sold 60,000 copies.

The controversy was revived in May 1994 when, in an interview with the Indian newspaper Sainik, Taslima Nasrin was quoted calling for the revision of the Muslim holy book, the Quran.

This was equivalent to doubting the divin- ity of the text and challenging its adherents belief in its infallibility. Nasrin said she had been misquoted. She claims instead that she had urged reforms in the Sharia (Islamic laws and regulations), which discriminate against women.

Blasphemy

Scandalized by her audacity 100,000 funda- mentalists demonstrated in the capital city, Dhaka, against Nasrin and for the enactment of a blasphemy law. While the Bangladesh government had dragged its feet on providing police protection to Nasrin, and has taken no action to investigate the murder and assaults, her and made death threats, they speedily began legal proceedings against her! Nasrin is currently charged under the secular criminal law with blasphemy. Her trial was due to begin this month but has been postponed; the maximum penalty is two years imprisonment and a fine.

The least understood dimension of this affair is that the attacks on Taslima Nasrin’s intellectual freedom and the real threat to her life is part of a wider trend in her country. When the government led by Begum Khadiza Zia of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), herself a woman, acceded to fundamentalist demands and was backed by the major opposition party the Awami League led by another woman, Sheikh Hasina Wajed, both feared giving ground to the Jamaat-e-Islami.

A fatwa madness has gripped Bangladesh. The death threats are aimed at women’s groups and other non-governmental organi- zations. Bangladesh has a large non-governmental sector employing hundreds of thousands of field workers and having a real impact on the lives of millions.

Two of these NGOs in particular have been targeted by fundamentalists and accused of being un-Islamic, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and the Gramena Bank.

Both these organisations pioneered schemes to alleviate rural poverty through adult literacy programmes, health education and credit for women's co-operatives.

Challenge

What the mullahs fear is that as more women become literate and economically in- dependent they are beginning to challenge reactionary values and ideas in their homes and villages. To maintain their authority these clerics have forbidden women from working for NGOs; prevented children from attending BRAC schools and launched a moral crusade against 'western' values.

In many instances women have been forced to commit suicide, schools have been burned and NGO activists threatened as a result of the hysterias incited by these Fatwas.

All of society is in turmoil. Opposition parties have boycotted Parliament for over two years and in the last general elections in Chittagong.

The opposition is calling for the formation of a caretaker government in which all parties would be represented, and immediate elections.

Nationalism exhausted

Nationalist politicians based on an amalgam of mixed economic policies, anti-imperialist and pro-Islamic rhetoric, has been exhausted. Its historic standard bearers the BNP and Awami League stand discredited.

Neo-liberal policies reign supreme and as prices rise, wages are frozen and unemployment and with it popular discontent grows.

There is no confidence in the parties which are in ideological confusion following the collapse of the Left. Some of the capitalist reforms in China and Eastern Europe.

Meanwhile fundamentalist groups, like the Jamaat-e-Islami, are on the rise because of their support for Pakistan in the 1971 war of independence, have overcome that distrust.

They are flush with petro-dollars from re- ligious foundations in the Middle-East and monsoon-season expatriate capital as a socialist, is deceptively seductive.

In the preface to Lajja, Taslima Nasrin wrote: "The mullahs who would murder me would kill everything progressive in Bangla- desh if they are allowed to prevail".

Campaigning for the unbanning of Lajja, the dropping of blasphemy charges and Nas- rin's freedom to write and live, also means campaigning against religious fundamentalism and modernization in male-female relations with a democratic socialist feminist alternative.

The struggles we celebrate

By Gill Lee

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day was born out of the strug- gle in Europe for votes for women. Following huge demonstra- tions organised by women in the United States on that day the International So- cialist Women's Congress of 1910 set March 8th as an interna- tional day of action in favour of women’s suffrage.

The unifying theme was “The vote for women will unite our strength in the struggle for socialism.”

On the first women's day in 1911 meetings were held in Germany, Austria, Denmark and Switzerland. Alexandra Kollontai described how: "Germany and Austria... were on the brink of legalizing women. Meetings were organised everywhere - in the small towns and even in the villages. ... This was certainly the first show of mili- tancy by the working women. Men played at home with the chil- dren for a change and their wives the captive housewives, went to meetings." In Austria 30,000 women and men took part in the large street demonstration. The movements for votes for women were broadly composed. In England most of the suffrage movement demanded the vote for women on 'equal terms with men'. Due to property restrictions this would disenfranchise most work- ing women.

Revolutionaries like Sylvia Pank- hurst opposed this and demanded universal male and female suf- frage, nothing less. This division between 'bourgeois' feminism and revolutionaries was deepened by the now looming First World War. In 1912, the year after it was es- tablished, International Women's Day was to be a focus for peace in the Balkans as well as for women’s right to vote.

At an extraordinary congress of the Socialist International in Bangkok, Clara Zetkin, the German revolution- ary, and Marxist leader called for women’s right to vote and for peace: "Socialist women of all coun- tries fight against the war. War is only the maddest form of mass ex- ploration through capitalism. It is the goons of the proletarians who kill each other. Women and mothers deplore such a crime. War threat- ens all that mothers have taught their children about solidarity and international community. Women are willing to make many sacrifices. They know it is necessary to fight and die in the struggle for freedom. Both fights, the fight against the war, and the fight for freedom cannot be with- out women. Women on war!"

In 1914 World War One began. Only days before the 1914 Interna- tional Socialist Congress should have taken place. The Second In- ternational collapsed as its reform- ist leaders sided with their own capitalists against workers of other countries. In Britain the majority of the suf- frage movement - the suffragettes led by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst - sided with the British ruling class. They abandoned all mo- bilisations around women’s right to vote and joined the war effort. Sylvia Pankhurst and the marx- ist wing of the movement for women for women threw them- selves into the endeavour against the war.

In 1918, with tens of millions dead in the War, British women aged over 30 were given the vote in an amendment to an adult suf- frage bill which extended the vote to all women.

In Russia in 1917, International Women’s Day was chosen as the pretext for a mass protest of women workers, mainly from the textile fac- tories in the Vyborg district.

Angered by the lack of basic food supplies, they went on strike and picketed out of work. Under the rallying call of read! This new uprising in struggle triggered the February Revolution, which subsequently laid the basis for the first successful workers’ revolution in October.

For over 80 years women around the world have continued to celebrate International Women's Day. Through it we remember the women who fought for the right to vote, and for all women who have continued struggles of great importance to women around the world."
"We need a network of grass roots organisations and a Europe-wide anti-racist manifesto"
Would legislation be enough to implement Clause Four?

Is there a parliamentary road to socialism?

By Neil Murray

AMONG the many issues raised by the debate around Clause IV of the Labour Party's constitution is whether socialism can be achieved by peaceful, parliamentary means.

Socialism has to be clarified. It is not just the 'social justice' of the social democrats, or bureaucratic nationalisation of a few industries - banks or otherwise - by the capitalist state.

Socialism, to use the words of Clause IV, is 'the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange... under popular administration and control'.

It means at least the 'commanding heights' of the economy being taken out of private hands and run by a system of councils of workers' and consumers' delegates, accountable and recallable, into a national system. This would allow the economy to be planned in a way unthinkable under capitalism, determined by need, not private gain.

Same problem

Could parliament legislate such a system into existence? We do not need to suspend belief and hypothesise about Tony Blair's Labour Party being willing to take such steps. The factors involved would be the same, however determined any party or its leadership might be.

In Britain, we are told, that, while other countries have civil wars, revolutions, patch-ups, etc., we do things differently here - the existence of a stable parliamentary democracy means society can be changed peacefully without such violent ruptures. This is based on several myths.

Firstly about British (or, more correctly, English) history.

Civil War

The present relationship between parliament and the monarchy is based on the settlement which arose after the revolution of 1640 and the Civil War which followed, which marked the transition from feudalism to capitalism.

But we do not need to go so far back for examples. When the British parliament looked like granting 'Home Rule' to Ireland in 1914 the army revolted (known as the Cavan mutiny) to thwart those plans and ultimately produce the division of Ireland which exists to this day.

Spector and subsequent revelations have shown that sections of the secret services set out to destabilise Labour governments in the 1960s, and even then, though they were hardly precisely radical. Contrary to the myth, every indication is that the ruling class would have been the same, however determined any party or its leadership might be.

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Armed bodies of men: the military moved in to crush Allende's reformist government in Chile need to be sufficiently armed to defend and ensure working class control in the way of change.

Chile slaughter

Any failure to do so would lead to the kind of slaughter that occurred in Chile: after 1974, when Salvador Allende's supposedly radical government refused to be sufficiently armed to defend and ensure working class control in the way of change.

The working class would need to be sufficiently armed to defend and ensure working class control in the way of change.

Ten years on: key lessons from the 1984-5 miners' strike

TUC betrayal paved way for Blair

By Alan Thornett

The ISOLATION and eventual defeat of the miners' strike ten years ago starkly illustrated both the depths of treachery to which the leadership of the TUC were prepared to sink, and the weakness of the British left.

From the outset the right-wing majority on the TUC preferred to see the miners defeated rather than the politics of class struggle to win out.

The 'support' offered by the left was a facade, the union leadership was inept at best. There was no real attempt to mobilise the miners and break the NUM's isolation.

So the far left criticism was far too often limited to calls upon the 'rank and file', without putting demands upon the TUC and union leaders.

The left in general contributed to problems of class struggle and the education of workers is necessary to force open big divisions in the bureaucratic bodies.

Scargill: asked too little of TUC

Yet if the miners' strike brought anything it was a reawakening of the British labour movement it must be that for the advance of class struggle and the education of workers it is necessary to force open big divisions in the bureaucratic bodies.

Scargill was the key factor in the survival of the strike as a number of occasions and the voice of the most militant and committed of the rank and file miners.

But while he fought tenaciously against the government, Scargill's mistake was not to ask too much of the TUC and the Labour leadership, but that he asked too little. He did not fight hard enough.

His reservation meant not only that the union leaders were left off the hook at the time their political backing was needed most, but that when the event they were able to vindicate their lofty covenant by saying that they'd done all that was asked of them. The problem remained: not enough was asked of them.

Kinnock

The same can be said of the Labour Party leadership. The failure to confront Kinnock's defence were adequate, could have made possible the consolidation of the emerging "modernisation" project.

With hindsight we can see how the right of the Labour Party were able to cynically use the defeat as "proof" of the redundancy of class struggle methods. This gave them a spring-board to launch the offensive against the left.

They directly benefited from the defeat and were not slow to exploit their advantage.

Although in Kinnock the spin doctors found a second-rate, and - in their terms - rather smooth, mouthpiece, they were nevertheless able to use him to lay a firm foundation for their project.

Kinnock's direct political benefit of the scapegoat work done for him since the mid 1980s by the middle-class circles within the party who cut their anti-class struggle teeth on the miners' strike.

Seldom, if ever, has there been a national strike of such scope and importance, one so open to the left's input through the national network of support committees. Yet it failed to come up to the high standards of the 1984-5 miners' strike.

And this was a strike that was even more political than most trades union disputes are not. It was fought on the basis of challenging the profit motive - the so-called "viability" argument.

In other words, both the miners and those who supported them had to be convinced that there was an alternative framework to the market on which to build an economy.

Ideological fight

It was a sophisticated and explicitly ideological battle; one for which many of us put in significant support among working class people. One that should have been built upon far more than it was.

One of the clearest lessons from the strike therefore is the need for a political leadership in the workers' movement that rises above opportunism self interest and rigid "schemata" politics in order to develop a strategic initiative geared to the actual needs of the struggle.
'Rent-a-vote' bureaucrats took cash from bosses

Union officials for hire!

By Dave Osler

EVER GET the feeling that not all trade union leaders are on our side? Damn right. Some of them are literally bought and paid for by the bosses.

Throughout the eighties, a company called Industrial Research and Information Service Ltd (IRIS) gave a rightwing general secretaries six-figure annual hand-outs from big business to fund internal union machinations, with senior Tory peers acting as the link men.

Significantly, many key players on political right’s strike of 1984-5, Bill Sars general secretary of the steel workers union, was a director of IRIS at a time when local-level deals between the ISTC and the NUM were essential to maintain the supply of coal to British steel mills.

Another known IRIS supporter, Ken Cure of the AEU, sat on Labour’s national executive committee during the strike perute, while Sars was on the general council of the TUC.

Through these two men IRIS had access to the internal deliberations of the highest bodies in the labour movement – essential intelligence in the strikebreaking effort against the enemy within.

Top firms

Among the companies indirectly paying for IRIS through tax-deductible charitable donations were: Allied Lyons, Bass, Boots, BP (party state-owned), Cadbury Schweppes, Cunard, GKN, Glaxo, Grand Metropolitans, Guinness, Hanson Trust,ICI, Metal Box, NEL, P&O, Rugby Portland Cement, Scottish and Newcastle, Unilever, United Biscuits, Whitbread, T Group and United Newspapers.

IRIS was originally an offshoot of Common Cause, an unstable coalition of former socialists opposed to Stalinism, union officials brassed off by the activities of left activists, Tory right-wingers and military men; all on a platform of shared anti-communism.

One of the prime movers was C.A. Smith who represented the Independent Labour Party, an offshoot breakaway from the Labour Party, in talks with Leon Trotsky in the thirties.

But another member, Communist Solar System, with a foreword by Labour’s great nationalist, Herbert Morrison.

IRIS was funded by Common Cause until 1963, when it became autonomous. Papers recently released under the 30 year rule explains for the first time how this was achieved.

A massive state subvention followed a personal approach to the then Prime Minister, Harold MacMillan, from Lord Shawcross, who as Harold MacMillan, from Lord Shawcross, was a Labour cabinet colleague of Morrison’s in the 1945-51 governments.

Shawcross quit parliament in 1958 to become a director of Shell. He was chairman of the Press Council under the last Labour government before defecting to the SDP in the early eighties, and currently sits as an independent in the House of Lords.

After the story of IRIS’s state funding broke in January, he told a reporter from the Mail on Sunday: “It is 32 years ago and a long time to remember.” In fact, his involvement in fundraising for IRIS can be documented as recently as 1985.

Shawcross told MacMillan of IRIS’s “undercover” work in unions where Communists were influential. IRIS had influenced NUM internal elections, he boasted, and now needed to hire five full time organisors in the AEU engineering union.

Although IRIS was financially backed by Shell and Ford, Shawcross said it nevertheless lacked “sufficient funds”. Could the government provide money?

“Supermac” then detailed Home Secretary Henry Brooke to consider the request, and discussed the possibility of being conspiracy charges against Communist activists and introducing anti-union legislation after the next election.

IRIS was given £40,000 from the intelligence services budget, worth something like half a million pounds in today’s money. In a thankyou letter to MacMillan’s successor, Alec Douglas-Home, the following year Shawcross indicated that IRIS had raised £35,000 from the company donations, making it an extremely well-to-do operation indeed.

IRIS became a limited company in 1968. Records at Companies House show that directors have included former general secretaries of NALGO, USDAW, AEUW, NASUWT, ISTC and the old seatowners’, agricultural and woodworker’s unions, frequently linked to members of the TUC general council.

Also on the list is Ray Gunter, Wilson’s Minister of Labour from 1964-1968 and, briefly, minister of power in 1968. Gunter became notorious during his earlier stint as chairman of Labour’s powerful organisational sub-committee, using the position to block leftwingers getting selected as parliamentary candidates.

Some £1,000,000 went directly to IRIS. Similar sums followed in subsequent years. This funding probably exceeds the fundraising capacity of every trade union wide left put together.

Thanks to asswecome – albeit ineffectual – attention from the Charity Commission, direct donations from the trade to IRIS stopped in 1988-1989. Most of the money raised went instead to the Kennington Industrial Company, which simply passed the bulk of it on to IRIS.

Somewhat incredibly the Charity Commission eventually found that “on balance” the trust had used its funds to carry out its stated objectives, and that “there is no evidence of any connection between the trust and the Conservative or any other political party”.

With the decline of union militancy and the collapse of Stalinism there is no longer the same urgency for business to raise hundreds of thousands of pounds to combat the red menace on the shopfloor.

But there was little doubt that the same functions are today being carried out by a new outfit pledged to exactly the same anti-labour movement ends.
WHERE WE STAND

FACING MASS unemployment, rampant employers equipped with savage anti-union legislation, and a war on hard-earned education, health and welfare services, the working class faces a real crisis — an avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

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

The capitalist class, divided and politically united by its own crisis, its requirement to maximise profit, is the only leadership the workers in Ireland have been given, determined, vanquished leadership by a brutal class-war Tory high command.

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

In response, most TUI and Labour leaders have embraced the government’s new reality – an effective, pro-establishment Trade Union movement, offering effective political cover, seeking to fragment the working class, and in some cases, actively supporting the government's measures.

New realists is the latest form taken by the politics of reformation, seeking no more than improved conditions within the framework of capitalist rule.

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

Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of Stalinism, could these demands ever be achieved under the bureaucratically deformed worker states and degenerated USSR’s regimes, whose survival relied only by repressing their own working class.

This is the current, based not on the brutish totalitarian parodies of state manism, nor on the banal, fashionable version of ‘nationalism’ beloved by armchair academics, but the revolutionary tradition of Marx, 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 pensioners, of the black communities and ethnic minorities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth — and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and throughout the world.

Socialist Outlook takes an active internationalist, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises co-thinkers in 40 countries worldwide.

Unlike 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 has led to sectarian posturing and abstention from the actual struggle taking shape within the working class, playing into the hands of the right wing.

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gay people or the national demands of people in Scotland and Wales should be left to await the outcome of a socialist revolution. Instead, we insist that workers must organise themselves and fight now around their own demands, which are 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.

If you 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!

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

FEEDBACK

Socialist Outlook welcomes readers’ letters.
Write to Feedback, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Letters over 300 words may be edited.

Importance of veal protests

I very much appreciated your short article (Socialist Outlook 76) on the extraordinary upsurge around live animal exports. It was good to mark your "angle" however on several points.

To say that "the issue is immaterial" is completely wrong. These demonstrations are only one end of a long line of protests going back to Napoloeic times (and beyond?) and giving us laws against cruelty to animals in the 1820's, and laws against cock fighting and baiting in the 1830's and 1840's. Human sensibility towards animals has increased over a whole historical period — just as arbitrary cruelties have been suppressed in human relations: judicial torture, with beating, child beating etc., in the metropolitan bourgeoisie democracies.

I don’t think "the core of these protests is people with well paid jobs" etc. — my campaign group is in Hove, next Shoreham protests. One Group member is also prominent in the Shoreham protests.

Get off the veal wagon!

HUMANITY, the Shirehorses were not the only victims.

“H-e-e-l-e-e-e-n” can be heard. In my home town, the silence of the night was broken by a long, high-pitched wailing. The “huskies” were used to keep the herd quiet.

Jack, two years old, was standing in the barn, watching the sweat on the horse’s forehead.

“Why are they making them cry, Daddy?”

“Because they can’t eat that much on their own, Jack.”

A few minutes later, Jack was just as much at home in the barn, playing with a shirehorse's hair. He didn’t seem to have noticed the pain.

Little did Jack know that these silent, long-winded horses were not just part of the family, but also part of a larger world, a world where every living thing has its place and purpose. And that purpose was to be treated with care and respect.

Jewish question

DAFYDD RHYS’ article on the Jewish question (Comment, Socialist Outlook 77) raised the real issue.

"He (Trosky) saw that the expected assimilation had not occurred, and that he found further development of the Jewish language and created a vibrant Yiddish culture needed therefore that the Jews could be called a nation and that they therefore had the right to choose to exercise it, of a homeland of their own.

But even in Trotsky’s day this argument was problematic, since the conclusion, not that there was a Jewish nation, but that there was an Ashkenazi Jewish nation in Russia.

Where did this leave e.g. the Ladino-speaking Sephardi Jewish communities in the Balkans? Sayeret Yiddish was justified then because in general the right of people to choose their mother tongue is a democratic right, but some of the demands of the Band would have been more appropriate in relation to any minority in the Tsarist empire.

It is a single historical example where a community has named itself, but to the majority of the population of a territory without either assuming the role of sentinels or because of the military intervention of some outside power, as with the Turkish Cypriots.

Nowadays most Jews outside Israel have become assimilated on a linguistic level, though not necessarily on any other level. Yiddish has become rather marginal.

Can it really be prevented from becoming more marginal still? A Jewish identity which based neither on practising a different religion nor living in a different language from the majority of the population seems rather fragile. In the absence of a serious upsurge of anti-semitism (which above all cannot be ruled out) there is not an objective dynamic in the direction of assimilation.

Campbell McGregor, Glasgow and Chris Brooks, London N4
To advertise your event in Socialist Outlook, write 'to What’s Happening', PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU by first post on Friday March 17.

MARCH
Thurs 9 CRISS in the NHS: Birmingham Socialist Outlook forum with John Lister 7.30pm Union Club 60-62 Smallbrook Queensway.
INTERNATIONAL bookfair of radical Black and Third World books hosted by Huw Mance Manchester.
Sun 12 SAMINA Yasmin must stay 2pm Deephshy Centre Rochdale CLAUE 4 Socialist Outlook forum with Steve French, Leicester.
Weds 15 TASLIMA Nasrin speaks 7.30pm Conway Hall, London WC1.
OXFORD: Defend Clause 4 public meeting with Arthur Scargill 6.30pm Town Hall.
Defend Clause 4 lobby of NEC meeting to discuss new Clause 4 John Smith House 9am - 10am.
Thurs 16 DEMONSTRATE against the Job Seekers Allowance meet 12 noon Harcourt House Oxford.
Thurs 16 - Sun 19 INTERNATIONAL bookfair of radical Black and Third World books West Yorks Playhouse Leeds.
Friday 17 BADGEFLY strike public meeting 7.30pm AEU House, Premont Hall 215/217 Blackfriars Rd.
SATURDAY 18 SUFCU committee meeting 1,30pm Cathorpe Arms Grey’s Inn Road WC1.
MEDIA versus the people One-day conference hosted by NUJ and CPBF 10am - 5pm Congress House Great Russell St WC1.
Tues 21 MAE lobby of Southwark College governing body 5.00pm - 6.00pm Waterloo station the Cut Bar.
Weds 22 SOUTHAMPTON Socialist Out- look Clause 4 public forum.
Thurs 23 SOCIALIST Outlook Clause 4 forum with Peter Purton 7.30pm Red Rose Club Steven Sisters Road North London.
SOCIALIST Outlook Clause 4 forum with Steve French Brighton.
Thurs 23 - Sat 25 INTERNATIONAL bookfair of radical Black and Third World books Camden centre Borough- ough Street WC1 Entry £1.
Fri 24- Sun 26 SCOTTISH Dimensions a History Conference at Ruskin College Walton Street Oxford.
£22.50/£15/£10 from the college.
Details: 01865 294333.
Sat 25 BIRMINGHAM March for jobs and services 12 noon Victoria Square.
DEMOCRATISE For Justice! Protest against police inaction on racist attacks! meet 1pm Albert Hall Park Whitechapel Rd E1 de- tailed: CAPA 0171 729 1404.
NEWHAM anti-racist and anti- racist day 2pm-12 midnight Old Town Hall Stratford Broadway Details: NMP 0181 522 6254.
BADGERLINE national demonstration meets 10am Central Park Cheltenham Rd.
FULL Employment conference 11am - 5pm Congress House Great Russell Street WC1 Tickets £2.
Wed 29 AFTER the Soviet Union Leeds Socialist Outlook public meeting with Duncan Chapple 7.30pm.
Thurs 30 - Sat 1 INTERNATIONAL bookfair of radical Black and Third World books Patrick Bury Hall Glasgow.
APRIL
Sat 1 UNION Drive '96 national demonstration called by the NUJ in Shef- field.
GROUNDSWELL - a national fo- rum for independent unem- ployed and claimants groups.
11am - 5.30pm East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street Oxford. £4.00 for de- tails write to Oxford Unemployed Workers’ & Claimants Unions at the Community Centre telephone (01865) 723750 Fax 724317.
Sat 1 - Sun 2 LABOUR Party Women’s Confer- ence, Derby.
Sat 8 ‘FROM the Cradle to the Grave’ Welfare State Network Confer- ence on education, pensions and the NHS. 11am University of Lon- don Union, Malet St WC2.
SAT 29 DEMONSTRATION in Manchester against deportations called by Ok- olo Family Defence campaign 12.00 noon All Saints’ Park Ox- ford.
Sat 29 - Sun 30 LABOUR Party special confer- ence, London.
MAY
Sat 13 SOCIALISM, Social Democracy and revision Socialist Outlook day school London. Speakers in- clude Francis Versaci, United Secretariat of the Fourth International.
Tickets £6/£3 from Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.
Sat 27 DAY of Action by Campaign to Close Campfield.
AFRICAN Liberation Day March 1.00pm Kennington Park London SE11. Rally at Trundlebury Square Details: 0171 924 9033.
JULY
Sat 9 CRIMINAL justice after the Bill a day conference sponsored by the Halton Society and Socialist Lawyers. 9.30am - 4pm Cam- den Town Hall opposite St Pancras BR. £3/£10 from 20-21 Toeks Court EC4.
Fri 22 - Fri 29 INTERNATIONAL Youth Camp in southern France. Send £35 de- to liberation publishing Association, PO Box 1109, N4.

Campfield refugees are fighting back

By Bill McKeith

IVORY COAST refugees have responded to the government’s increasingly op- pressive immigration controls by publicly cam- paigning against government policy, even though some of them face victimisation.

Members of the Ivoirian Ac- tion Group, most of whom have asylum applications pending, demonstrated twice in five days outside campfield Immigration Detention centre at Kidlington, Oxford. They were supporting the demands of two Ivoirian de- tainees for the right to asylum.

Sita Kamara and Anna Marie Sauman started their hunger strike on 9 February. Sita was detained last July when she was 17, Anna Marie in September. Sita was active in the Ivoirian student movement. Sita’s detention and in consequence was assaulted by several government thugs.

On Monday 27, Sita’s was told she’d been deported in the morn- ing. In desperation, she ate soup and Calamine lotion. This stopped the removal. She was, however, taken to the police at Hive holding centre at Gatwick Airport on Thursday in prepara- tion for her removal.
At the same time, six to eight other detainees who protested against their removal and their own de- tention were removed to various prisons. One common space room had been wrecked in the protests. Early on Wednesday, Group Four carried out sallies of riot helmets and shields. Including an International Women’s Day solidarity vigil, there have been seven demonstra- tions at Campfield in 12 days in support of the Ivoirian and the release of all detainees.

A Wednesday 1 March demonstra- tion was called by IRAF and supported by the new Stu- dents Against Campfield group set up at Oxford University follow- ing a student meeting ad- dressed by local campaigners, Nigerian asylum seeker Andrew Adekunle and Jeremy Corby MP.

The determined resistance of the detainees and the supporting action of campaigners outside the 20 foot razor-wire topped fence are a powerful andendorsement to recent government race-rage mongering moves. These have included Charles Wardle’s resis- tance in order to lead off on further attacks on refugees and migrants; Home Secretary Mi- chael Howard’s announcement that 50 extra Immigration and nationality Department employ- ees would be hired; and the DSS’s rule denying migrant workers their benefit payments.

The Campfield To Close Campfield has proposed 27 May as national Day of Action at detention centres and prisons holding immigration detainees around the country.

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Socialism, Social Democracy & Revolution

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK is holding a special day of discussion and debate for defenders of Clause 4. To be held in London on Saturday 13 May, the school will examine the historical record of social democracy, the relationship between trade unionism and socialism, the civil rights struggles and the future of the Labour Party. Discussions will cover nationalisations, why mazixists call for a Labour vote, and other important issues of concern to those fighting for socialism in the 1990s.

OPEN TO SOCIALIST OUTLOOK SUPPORTERS. FOR TICKETS, SEND A CHEQUE FOR £5 WAGNER: £13 UNWAGED TO SOCIALIST OUTLOOK FUND, PO BOX 1109, LONDON N4 2UU.
12,000 German engineering workers in 30 plants in Bavaria have been on strike for almost two weeks, demanding a six percent pay rise with no strings.

But as we go to press talks have reopened with the leaders of the giant 3.1 million strong IG-Metall union: employers are pressing for drastic concessions in the form of 'flexibility' in return for any pay increase. This formula is grimly familiar to British engineering workers.

And German bosses have raised the stakes, threatening that if no settlement is reached by March 8 they will lock out workers at one plant for every one closed by strike action – obliging the union to pay strike benefit to members locked out.

Other sections of German workers are also in line behind the engineers demanding big pay increases, including 1.5 million building workers, chemical workers and 450,000 bank workers.

Like workers in Britain, German trade unionists are angered at sky-rocketing corporate profits while pay increases last year averaged just two percent and inflation three percent.

Worried that they could lose ground in the competitive world market, German bosses are determined to hold the line.

Though the strike so far is strong and solid, German workers have little reason to believe their right wing union leaders will be as eager for a fight.