Students, pensioners, health campaigners, postal workers...

Fighting back!

NEW LABOUR may be trying to continue where the Tories left off, but they are not carrying all before them.

The last few weeks have seen an upsurge in grass roots resistance to Labour’s plans, giving a small taste of the type of fight that could be organised if the trade union leaders were not hand in glove with Tony Blair.

* TWO MILLION students across the country are estimated to have joined the recent Day of Action against the imposition of tuition fees, despite the low-key campaign on the issue by a Blairite-led NUS.

* THOUSANDS of pensioners showed what they thought of Gordon Brown’s pitiful budget when they turned out for the national day of action on March 26.

* POSTAL workers across the country have been staging and winning strikes in defence of their jobs and working conditions.

* CAMPAIGNS to block a new round of hospital closures across the country have been gathering strength, with big meetings and demonstrations in county areas including Kent, Hertfordshire, Essex, Oxfordshire and Worcestershire.

* DISABILITY campaigns, battling against Labour threats to benefits, appear to have forestalled the expected drastic proposals in Frank Field’s Green Paper.

There is more to be done: even the victories won so far have been partial and temporary. But it is clear that workers and campaigners are willing to fight – and in need of leadership.

No to a bosses’ Europe! Demonstrate in Cardiff June 13
Reclaim Our Union Rights

Greg Tucker
WHAT MIGHT have been a group meeting in the end was a passably good one.

As Arthur Scargill said in summary, "If this conference is nothing but good speeches then it all takes place for nought. What is required is a massive campaign." Whether or not such a campaign will emerge is still too early to say.

Around 300 delegates did hear a series of good speeches. Early on Shirley Winter from Magnet earned a standing ovation. But this was followed by a lack lustre Jimmy Narco. In London the delegates were more interested in maudling SLP than drawing any lessons from the Liverpool Dockers dispute.

Set the pattern that there were speeches from the floor, delegates could be forgiven for believing that the whole thing had been carved up in advance.

Whilst the organisers tried to resist the pressure to turn the day into an SLP recruitment exercise, the threat that this was all was there lingered at the back of one's mind.

Having painted themselves into a corner by committing themselves to a massively long list of platform speakers it is perhaps excusable that no firm practical discussion or decisions were taken.

Instead the conference agreed to a basic statement, after little debate, and then accepted that decisions on all major questions, plans of action, election of officers and a steering committee will be dealt with in a series of follow up meetings to be held on April 18.

A small conference is to be called before July 1. Only at those meetings will the real direction of the campaign be confirmed. The maximum effort need to be made to mobilise for April 18 to ensure the healthy development of the campaign.

Reclaim Our Rights has to take up three points:

- Building a grass roots campaign out on the streets.
- The plans for regional conferences and for a march against the application for a loan in a year's time must focus on this aim.
- Fighting in every union to call our so called leaders to account, placing demands on the TUC, and the Labour Party to force them to act in our class interests.

As Geoff Martin from UNISON put it: "When John Edmonds said get out on the streets I was pleased. The question is, John, when are you going to do it? Our pressure has to trigger the TUC into calling a national demonstration."

Despite many problems, the Reclaim Our Rights conference must be marked a success.

If out of it we can build a broad, united campaign of resistance to the attacks on the trade union movement that Thatcher started and Blair is continuing, then it will have been useful.

But to confirm its potential it needs to sink roots deep inside the trade union movement. We must set ourselves that task.

Greg Tucker

New Deal means Hard Labour

New Deal picks up where Tony 93A left off

by a North East London PCSU rep

Unemployed, Jobcentre workers will see little of the £3.5 billion spent on New Deal. The State will waste most of it on subiding miserably bosses to take on cheap conscripted youth, instead of increasing the appalling wages and job security for Employment Service (ES) staff, New Deal is having the opposite effect.

The government has allowed the private sector to run New Deal in ES districts and ES workers are being offered a derisory 2% wage 'rise' in return for all the extra work.

Simultaneously ES management have launched another attack on the ES sector: terms and conditions by attempting to selectively open up ES as a private sector.

Even in areas where the ES is 'leading' New Deal, so that the private sector is poaching ES work, yet their pay and conditions are far worse.

In Hackney and City, Reed Personnel Services were granted favour to deliver the whole of New Deal after their Chairman donated 100,000 to the Labour Party.

ES workers are now determined to take on all the work and left some scraps to the ES, particularly privatisation has already cost dozens of civil servants their jobs. Reed have replaced ES workers with their own New Deal advisers offering less than £2000 a year less than ES equivalent grades and longer hours.

Reed will make a vast profit from supplying youth to jobs through a network built up by ES, In Hackney, Reed have even taken over a Jobcentre.

Every effort is being made by the government to support such private sector initiatives. These developments are the tip of an iceberg.

In Hackney, the PCSU, the new Civil Servants Union have generated a good publicity campaign against creaping privatisation and linked up with a growing network of unemployed activists in the area. Yet industrial action may be the only way to stop Reed et al.

Such action would be fought by the right wing, national leadership of the PCSU, as they are tied to the coalfields of New Labour. For years they have been telling civil servants that privatisation would be reversed by a friendly Labour government, but it is clear Blair has no intention of keeping any such promises. There is little vocal opposition to New Deal amongst Labour MPs - they seem to have been conned into believing it will create jobs.

Civil Servants will have to fight battles on pay and privatisation without national leadership in the shape of the Trade Union Left Alliance has an important role in trying to link up battles across public sector unions on these issues. Yet trade unions should not need to rely on the PCSF or Left leaderships either. The Socialist Party dominated Section of the PCSU in the North East last year sold a miserly 100 copies of the New Deal. The PCSU Broad Left must galvanise its support amongst ES workers to fight on such issues and reject leaders who see it purely as their electoral machine.

In London the Socialist Caucus run PCSU Regional Executive. They have started a lively campaign picketing Jobcentre on New Year's Saturday. The threat posed of a six day week is a real threat. A leaked memo from the Regional Director of ES to District Managers stated "I have been very pleased to see DM's have begun to experiment with extending opening hours above the 36 hour minimum. I think this is a step forward in the development of a full week's work and just the sort of thing we should be doing to improve customer service and PERFORMANCE...I would want you to continue with extended hours".

The public have so far given a thumbs down to this development - the single person showed up when Poplar Jobcentre opened on Saturday February 2.

Nevertheless New Labour and ES Management will persist in their efforts to increase labour flexibility. Civil Servants unions must unite in their efforts to fight for permanent, well paid jobs for all, a common interest in fighting for a socialist alternative.

New Deal means Hard Labour

Neil Murray

MORNING STAR journalists have now been on strike for several weeks over the sacking of editor John Haylett.

The dispute started when Haylett was scheduled for a series of articles in the Daily Mirror. On the day of the meeting, Haylett was called to talk about the column and then the editor was put on notice that he would be sacked. Haylett refused to resign.

There were no examples given of why Haylett was being fired. The editor was also told that Haylett was not fit for the job and that the column was 'dangerous' and 'not appropriate'.

All of the 'charges' against Haylett were false. Several coming down to the fact that he carried out his remit as editor, or refer to things which were known from common practice in the Morning Star office.

The action against Haylett was precipitated by an internal faction fight between the Morning Star office and the Daily Mirror. Following their conference last year Rossiter's partner Mike Hicks resigned in protest from the Daily Mirror. Hicks was the new General Secretary of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the NUJ has been demanding for Hicks to be allowed to resign from his post as editor of the Daily Mirror.

On a programme that was supposed to be about 'appropriate opportunities' was a two hour meeting to suspend Haylett from his post as editor of the Daily Mirror.

In the process of suspending and sacking Haylett, management is trying to undermine the NUJ's position by bringing in new management, which includes people who have been brought in specifically to undermine the NUJ. The NUJ has been demanding for the Daily Mirror to be run by the NUJ.

MORNING STAR journalists are not the only ones to be fired. Two journalists who had been fired for refusing to resign were rehired by the Morning Star. Haylett is still on the Morning Star staff.

Contact the Morning Star NUJ Chapter at 622 King's Road, London E8 4AA.
Brown delights
Euro bosses

Daren Williams (Wales Labour Party Executive member - personal capacity)

The Wales Labour Party, and the whole Welsh political establishment, is preparing for the first elections to the National Assembly for Wales, due to take place in May 1999. The establishment of limited self-government for Wales has already proven a fertile source of controversy over everything from the pay of the Assembly's members, to the location of its building.

Within the Labour Party, opposition to the principle of devolution seemed to have been largely silenced by the successful outcome of the referendum campaign in September. Fresh divisions have now been created, however, over the method by which, the party will select its candidates.

As with the European and unitary authority elections, Labour is moving away from direct selection by constituency parties, towards a more tightly controlled system. Would-be candidates have to apply directly to the Wales Labour Party, to be considered for inclusion in a centrally compiled list. This of course allows the party bureaucracy to filter out anyone considered politically unacceptable.

Furthermore, the removal of any requirement for nomination by ward parties or union affiliates, means that the lack of a real support base need not hinder ambitious opportunists hoping for a seat. Their path has been further smoothed by the unpopularity of that particular decision that candidates need only have been party members for one year.

All of this has fostered dissent among party activists concerned about the continual attrition of democracy. The greatest anger has, however, been focused on the party's proposal for achieving a gender balance in the Welsh Assembly.

The objective of equal representation for women and men - for the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and the London authority - was agreed by Labour's Brighton conference in March. The need for a clear action to bring this about in the case of Wales is unquestionable.

Women are grossly underrepresented in Welsh politics. Only seven women MPs have ever been elected here, and three of these first entered Parliament at the last general election. Women also account for only 19 per cent of councillors in Wales, and the country's politics is gripped by a macho, sexist culture, at least within the Labour movement.

The system proposed by Labour for addressing this problem is more questionable, however. Parliamentary constituencies would be twinned, with the whole party membership across any pair of seats voting on a shortlist of four women and four men. The highest-polling man and woman would each then take up the party's candidacy in one of the two seats.

A far better system would be for each constituency to have two Labour members, one male and one female, and this alternative would do less harm to gender support in the Welsh party. If it had been allowed to have any say, 'twinning' was adopted, however, by Labour's Welsh Executive Committee in January, without prior discussion of the issues having taken place within the party's official structures in Wales.

As with the decision to incorporate an element of proportional representation in the Assembly's voting system, a broadly progressive measure has been introduced in a top-down, undemocratic manner.

The announcement of the move created an immediate backlash, with around twenty constituency parties declaring their opposition to the proposals, and many of them helping to establish a pressure group, 'Constituencies Against Twinning'. This body represents an uneasy alliance of three different tendencies; die-hard opponents of devolution, who will take any opportunity to obstruct the Assembly proposals; out-and-out reactionaries, hostile to any form of positive discrimination, who would like to see the party renounce even its aspirations to achieve gender balance; those who oppose only the mechanism of twinning, as another constraint on the independence of CLP's to make their own decisions.

The distinction between these three tendencies is of course blurred in individual cases, and it is a troubling aspect of the situation that much of the debate has been pushed into a coalition with some of their natural enemies.

While the belated assertion of constituencies' rights to autonomy is to be welcomed, Labour's bureaucratic bungling has given some of the most reactionary elements in the party the opportunity to obstruct the pursuit of a positive objective.

The whole saga has also shown the Welsh Executive to be a completely inept body, incapable of exercising any real independence from the NEC in London.

When it was allowed to discuss gender balance - for the first time, on 19 January, the Welsh Executive had to make an immediate decision to accept or reject the NEC's twinning proposals in their entirety, because of the lack of time available.

A majority therefore agreed to do this, despite strong misgivings. By the time the Executive next met, on 16 March, the revolts in the constituencies had made the need for a rapid change of plan apparent even to the NEC. The Welsh Executive again obeyed instructions from London, this time reversing its earlier decision and putting twinning on hold, to allow a period of consultation to take place.

Constituency parties, branches and affiliates as late as 23 April to discuss the issue properly, after which a final decision will be made by a special meeting of the Welsh Executive.

Socialists will have to support whichever system emerges from the consultation process with the best prospects of ensuring gender balance - while keeping up their criticism of the party's increasing centralisation of decision-making and attacks on democracy.
Socialist Alliances move forward

Chris Jones
A STEP forward for left co-opera-
tion was achieved at a meeting of English Socialist Alliances in Coventry on March 21. Forty people representing 30 national and local organisations discussed the current political situation and agreed to form a united left.

Several organisations were represented for the first time. This included the Socialist Perspectives group, who have recently left the SLP and the Green Party. Will Rees, secretary of the Trades Union Link Alliance (TULA), gave an opening address which highlighted the difficulties and benefits of drawing diverse groups together. TULA's experience offers a useful model from which the Alliances can learn. Spencer Fitzgibbon of the Green Party argued that the Green Party was essentially left wing, and that its starting point was social justice plus ecological sustainability, but that it has still to realise this yet. He has fought hard to draw the Green Party towards the Alliances with some success.

From the point of view of those within the Alliances most interested in (in some cases obsessed with) standing in elections he provided the biggest upset of the meeting. He said that the Green Party would be standing in the next Euro elections. In 1999 and asked that the Alliances confined themselves to pushing Greens to the left towards a clearer socialist platform.

While the electoral wing of the Alliance remain strong there was a stronger mood at this meeting to make campaigning activity the key to the Alliances future. Work over the Summer on Trades union rights was agreed to, preferably in conjunction with the Reclaim our Rights initiative. The meeting also unanimously endorsed demonstration in Cardiff at the time of the next Euro summit.

The mad decision of some comrades involved in London Alliances to try to stand a hundred candidates in local elections this May has hopefully led to a more sensible appreciation of the role of electoral campaign in the future. This has once again shown the Alliances' failure to come to grips with the fact that thousands of socialists and trades union militants with whom we wish to work do not see electoral campaigns against Labour as the right thing to be doing at this time.

The meeting resolved to move towards an organisation with a structure based on our common political aims (while encouraging local initiatives). A further meeting in September will discuss how this should be done.

The meeting was a step forward for the cause of left unity. Comrades are behaving in a non sectarian manner and looking for opportunities for co-operation. At some stage, however, the thorny questions of working with activists in the wider Labour and Trades Union movement will have to be addressed.

The Socialist Labour Party: a lost opportunity

Supporters of the Marxist Bulletin participated in the Socialist Labour Party for two years. They have recently resigned and are establishing a group outside the SLP. Here they draw a balance sheet of the SLP, which we publish despite our disagreements with it as a contribution to the debate on reorganisation.

Terry Conway
50 PEOPLE packed into a House of Commons Committee room on March 26 at a meeting organised by London Region MSF to discuss how trade unions should relate to Blair’s New Labour Party. Jeremy Corbyn MP and Hugh McAllister, Regional Secretary addressed the meeting.

Individual trade unionists have been part of many discussions whether the left should stay and fight in the Labour Party or whether we should begin to build a new party. However, this is the first such meeting I heard of actually discussing this.

Yet the fight within individual unions is time and again hampered by the ‘new realism’ of its leaders – the very ideology of partnership with the bosses that Blair himself has made an art form. If there is to be the creation of a genuine alternative to Blair’s Labour, then this must involve significant forces from the unions.

Blair is destroying the collective voice of the unions through the ‘modernisation’ of the Labour Party. All trade union activists whether or not they are individual members of the Labour Party must be concerned about how to develop a collective political expression for their demands and campaigns.

As expected a range of different views were expressed – although no one had a good word to say for Mr Blair. Corbyn was warmly received when he pointed out that Frank Field’s cry of ‘responsibility’ rather misses the mark, since it is socialists who believe in collective provision precisely because they are responsible for all in society.

There was also consensus that the left needed to step up the fight inside the unions. Other issues were more contentious.

There was a discussion about the extent to which New Labour is the product of deeper changes, of the process of globalisation, and the fact that social democracy has no more crumbs to throw to the working class whatever it wants to our not.

The discussion as to whether people should remain individual members of the Labour Party was somewhat separate from this, and obviously people will make their own choices on this question.

For some at least it seemed that the major barrier to leaving the party they had spent their active lives building was as much emotional as structural. For others the lack of an obvious alternative meant that they were holding on to their party cards but with little conviction there was much point.

The final area of debate was the extent to which the union’s political fund should continue to be given exclusively to the Labour Party. Many felt that in the present situation at least a portion of those resources could be better spent on direct campaigning by the union.

All in all, this was a positive exchange and one that not only needs to be further explored by London MSF but deserves emulation by other trade union bodies.

The SLP has been ‘impressed by the incapacity of its founders to lead a real break from Labour’...
Socialist Outlook 5

Islington Anti-deportation campaigns

Here to Stay, Here to Fight!

Sheila Malone

A recent report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has named Britain as having "the worst record on asylum seekers in Europe." Fewer and fewer refugees are gaining asylum here, while others are locked in detention centers - sometimes for as long as twenty months. People who have settled here for many years are suddenly being arrested and deported. From 1991 to 1996 an average of 5,575 people per year were deported from the UK under Immigration Act powers - around 107 people every week. 590 were deported in September 1997 alone. This included Albert Tong, who had lived here for 21 years.

Stephen Lawrence Campaign: British 'justice' exposed

Simon Deville

The RACISM of the British state has come under increasing scrutiny throughout the public inquiry into Stephen Lawrence's murder. The remit of the inquiry has been focused on whether the police investigation was hampered by police racism or bureaucratic incompetence.

In the same week that the BBC's Rough Justice reported on the fitting up of the M25 three for murder, and the impact on Alton Manning produced a verdict that he was unlawfully killed in prison, the excuses put forward by state officials are looking pretty shaky.

Richard Tilt, head of the prison service claimed that the proportionally far more blacks dead in custody because black people are more prone to die of positional asphyxia.

There must also be a gene that makes black people act in a way that makes police more likely to stop them and to prosecute them, that makes courts more likely to find them guilty and to give them custodial sentences.

Tilt attempted to justify his claims by stating that research has shown that more blacks than whites are killed in custody in other countries, not just within Britain. He has also assumed that this was simply because racism was an integral part of the police system as opposed to a specifically British invention! Whilst all this has focused atten-

Up to 900 asylum seekers are presently detained in camps throughout Britain, under a system described by the Chief Inspector of Prisons himself as "a complicated and utter shambles." Detainees are kept here for longer periods and with less legal sureties than anywhere else in Europe.

There are people who have fled persecution and torture in their own countries and do not understand why they are now being treated here like criminals. In desperation some have gone on hunger strike to draw attention to their plight.

After Labour's election victory last May, Immigration Minister Mike O'Brien announced a "fairer, firmer and faster" system of dealing with refugees, and promised to treat individual cases in a "compassionate and sensible way". In fact all we have seen is increased fear and insecurity amongst many communities as well as the spectacle of fantastic inhumanity towards "unwanted immigrants" in Dover.

Mushrooming

We have also seen the mushrooming of deportation camps in defence of asylum seekers, for their release from detention and their right to stay in my own area of Islington, when a meeting was organised last year in defence of one family, others under threat turned up with their supporters and a local anti-deportation campaign was born.

We are fighting to stop the deportation of a mother and her four children back to Nigeria and of two Kurdish families back to Northern Cyprus.

All of them have lived here for a number of years and are part of their local communities. The children go to school or college here and are being supported in their fight to stay by teachers and local community meetings.

Always the campaigns bring to light not only the distressing circumstances of particular cases, but the fact that they are only the tip of the iceberg of many, many more that need to be taken up. They also usually reveal the often shameless manner of political motivations behind the government's behaviour.

The oil interests of multinationals have usually influenced Britain's attitude to Nigeria. At one time this brutal regime was going to be put on the 'white list' of countries considered safe for deportation. Only public outrage at the execution in 1995 of nine minority rights activists, including the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa, caused the government to change its outlook.

Yet deportations and the threat of deportations continue. Gillian Achu fled Nigeria eight years ago following her refusal of a forced marriage. She and her children have since led a settled and secure life here and would suffer great disruption, distress and probable retributions should the family be sent back.

Jeremey Corbyn MP has stated "in view of Gillian and her children's very human needs, the government must view her situation with compassion." I await the response of Mr O'Brien to my recent request that she should remain here.

Puppet state

Northern Cyprus, from which the two Kurdish families have fled, actually demands to be on the 'white list'. Strange, since this little puppet state of Turkey is not even recognised by Britain or by most of the rest of the world. Set up after Turkey invaded Cyprus in 1974, it remains occupied by 35,000 Turkish troops.

Turkey itself is not on the 'white list', because of its appalling record of human rights abuses, especially against Kurds.

Yet when in forces of occupation persecute and harass in Northern Cyprus this is conveniently ignored by Britain.

Cooked

In fact 'ethical' Foreign Secretary Robin Cook is presently involved in negotiating a deal to admit Northern Cyprus to the European Union, despite an Amnesty International inquiry into 'disappearances, missing persons, and deliberate and abitary killings'.

Both the Ozbay and Sengal families have suffered NTC arrests, beatings and constant harassment because of their Kurdish origins. None of this the government is proposing to send them back to face further persecution.

Setting up an anti-deportation group has strengthened the support and morale of the refugee families in Islington. The National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns has been supporting campaigns throughout Britain since 1995, and already 38 of these have been successful.

A lobby of Parliament has been organised by the NACDC to call for the ending of all deportations and detentions and for the right to remain.

Be there if you can.

Join the lobby

April 29

Houses of Parliament

Lobby 1.30-3.30pm

Public Meeting 3.30-5.30pm

Organised by National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns
6 SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

A Trojan horse for business in schools

Richard Hatcher

The effects of Education Action Zones are not just a problem for 25 areas of the country. They are intended to be tests for future Labour policy for the whole education system - or to be more exact, they are intended to be tests for the private system in working class areas.

The decision to hand over schools to be run by private companies marks a historic break in Labour's education policy. It is a step that even Thatcher felt unable to take. Education Action Zones would become Education Profit Zones. But to make a profit, companies will want to take the opportunity offered by Labour to remove the obstacle of teachers' national pay and conditions.

We already know how this will work. Labour has taken the idea from the United States, where state schools are already franchised out to private companies including management companies, Procter and Gamble the detergent manufacturers, and Disney.

One of these companies, Edison, which runs 25 state schools in the US, is planning to bid for a Zone in Tameside, near Manchester, and has already approached schools and LEAs in Surrey, Nottingham and Hackney. In the US, Edison schools have longer days and teachers are contracted out of union protections. Another American company, the Toledo Private Industry Consortium, is involved in a bid in Bradford.

But there are plenty of homegrown British companies already making a profit out of the schools, and now anxious to take full control of some. Labour has set up a new scheme, the Public Private Partnership Programme, to encourage them. For example, the Centre for British Teachers, based in Reading, carries out school inspections, teacher training, consultant and supply teaching. Says its chief executive, 'The market is opening up. In principle there is no reason why private companies shouldn't run whole schools.' No doubt they see their partnership with Lambeth LEA in its EZ bid as a first step.

Of course contracting out the schools to the private sector is just the logical extension of what Labour, following on the Tories before them, has done in other areas of the public sector.

They claim it is different from Tory privatisation because the schools will still be publicly owned and regulated. New Labour's 'Third Way' says 'the job of government is to steer, not row'. This is the problem: the steering ends up being driven by the overriding logic of profit, as we can see elsewhere in the neoliberal public sector.

But contracting out the schools is a risky political step for Labour, and so is locally dismantling teachers' pay and conditions. Both of these proposals have already aroused opposition, and many schools and local authorities have refused to consider EZAs on their patch. The proposed Zone tempted to try it should know that it will be met by a huge campaign of opposition including striking action by teachers.

A goal of around 50 bids has been announced. The vast majority are led by LEAs, though a few private sector involvement is in some cases these are education businesses, in others they are companies like the TSB (Croydon) or the Optimum Health Trust (Southwark). None of them have ever known to be planning to break teachers' national agreements (though they would keep quiet about that at this stage anyway).

What is emerging is a range of models of EZAs. None of them represent a fully fledged example of Labour's preferred model, and to that extent it is a political set back for the government. But more, they contain other dangers.

Private funding

Zones will only receive £250,000 a year from government. That isn't enough, shared among 20 schools, to bribe them into compliance in the way that the Tories did with opting-out. Zones are expected to find matched funding from the private sector. It is by no means certain that the private sector will want to subsidise the schools (after all, the Tories' City Technology Colleges failed to secure much private funding), unless of course they are confident it is a profitable investment.

EZA quangos

The Zones represent a further dangerous strain of the private sector of schools being part of the system of local elected government. All Ezas are to be run by an 'Action Forum'. The form this takes is flexible, but the model Labour clearly prefers is in which the schools hand over their governing body powers to a small, unrepresentative and unselected quango, run by a high paid executive, and on which LEAs would only have minority representation.

Selection

At least one secondary school of the two or three in each EZA is to become a 'specialist' school, selecting 10 percent of its intake by 'aptitude'. This extends the principle of selection within the comprehensive system. (My prediction is that 'specialist' schools would not be content for long with selecting only 10 percent.)

Again, this idea is imported from the US, where 'magnet' schools can be successful, but at the expense of the local schools.

A formula for failure

On the curriculum the aim of the EZAs is to raise school achievement in socially deprived areas. The Tories' National Curriculum is experienced as boring and irrelevant by many young people in schools, and has contributed to a widening of inequality. The EZAs permit schools to opt out of the National Curriculum, but the alternative being offered is a mixture of 'basic skills' and narrow vocational education feeding into low level courses in FE. This reproduces inequality by locking students, mainly from working class backgrounds, into lower paid low skill jobs and excluding them from the entry qualifications for higher education.

Boycott

EZAs are not part of a radical programme to tackle the roots of educational disadvantage in poverty. Without that they seem likely to be the failure of the Policy of Education Priority Areas of 30 years ago, of which one critic wrote that 'no two man education reformers have been guilty of producing native school-centred solutions with no sense of the structural, the political and the historical as context'.

Certainly, if they undermine pay and conditions or the principle of a public-ly-run school system, then the reforms of these models which avoid these, omit 'specialist schools', and make LEA's able though with business as a commnity involvement, like the two Birmingham proposals? Even if we wanted to boycott them - and in my view we should not - they will go ahead anyway.

Our attitude should be to oppose the negative parts, support the positive, and push for more radical policy changes. One fact is that in many areas local working class communities will be involved in EZAs, because they are desperate for anything that will provide a better education for their children.

Democratic alternatives

There are good things we can take from schools in the US as well as baulk at - they will go ahead anyway.

Taken together, the reforms told in this book say something quite important about the realities of democratic school reform. In each case, success required the building of coalitions within the school and constituencies outside it. In none of the cases was the impetus generated from the 'top'. Instead, bottom-up movements - groups of teachers, the community, locals etc - provided the driving force for change. Finally, none of the reforms were driven by a techni- cal, achievement-at-all-costs vision.

Instead, each was linked to a broadly defined set of values that was put into practice: enhancing participatory citizenship and in the school, empowering individuals and groups who had heretofore been largely silenced, creating new ways of linking the roots of educational problems with the school so that the school is integrally connected to the broader movement of people in their daily lives.'
As New Labour flunks the test

Teachers must prepare to fight

Roy Leach (NUT, Executive, personal capacity)

THIS YEAR’S NUT conference will act as the first barometer of the extent to which disillusionment with the Labour Government has established itself, not just amongst teachers but organised labour in general.

Delays in publishing the ‘Fairness at work’ White Paper and strong hints that Blair is leaning towards the CBI view of what a ‘majority in the workplace’ actually means, have set the alarm bells ringing amongst even the previously staunch loyalists Edmonds and Morris.

For the General Secretary Doug McAvoy and the ‘Broad Left’ majority on the Union’s executive, worries about the direction New Labour has taken have grown almost since the moment they took office.

Blunkett’s decision to ‘name & shame’ the so-called worst 20 ‘failing schools’ was firmly in the mould of his Tory predecessors whilst the ‘Standards & Framework’ education bill does little to undo the damage of 18 years of Tory education reforms and, in some respects, extends them into territories they appeared to be stuck at entering.

Crumbs

There have been some crumbs from the table which McAvoy has eagerly seized: additional capital has been allocated to do away once and for all with outdoor school toilets; nursery vouchers have been scrapped – but they haven’t been replaced with quality nursery places for 4 year olds, and in many areas provision for 3 year olds has all but disappeared as LEAs pack 4 year olds into classrooms to improve their under-5s funding (as part of the SSA mechanism).

The phased abolition of the Assisted Places Scheme has allowed for the reallocation of the savings to reduce class sizes for 5.6 & 7 year olds but despite this, only 90 per cent of Chief Education Officers responding to a PACE questionnaire still believe that the proportion of pupils in classes of over thirty will increase.

However, no other substantial issues there have been few if any concessions.

Blunkett has backtrack on his “read my lips - no more selection” promise by raising New Labour’s colours to the mast of ‘specialist schools’ which receive additional funding and can select part of their intake on the basis of aptitude (i.e. ability).

Grammar schools are to continue and the current minority of opted out Grant Maintained schools – a minority of which operate covert (and not not so covert) selection will be given a new privileged status of ‘Foundation’ schools to distinguish them from LEA ‘Community’ schools.

The issues at NUT conference which are likely to produce the sharpest debates are those with the potential to align the Union in clear opposition to the Government, something which McAvoy for September 1999 and LEAs which have not put in bids have received hand written notes asking to explain why they haven’t.

The writing is on the wall for LEAs as democratically accountable providers of state education.

McAvoy himself recognised this when he confessed to the Union’s executive that LEAs will only be needed where schools are in difficulties and “at the Government’s agenda is to increase the number of EAZs where schools are in difficulties.”

When the Tories introduced opting out the NUT maintained a principled opposition to this, fighting every opt-out ballot whilst ensuring representation for members in GM schools.

At the conference the left will have to ensure that this policy is adopted in relation to EAZs - it won’t be possible to stop the creation of the first ones but, as with opting out, the process can be brought to a standstill before all education is delivered through profit making EAZs.

Set piece

Other ‘set piece’ battles at the conference will be around the issue of ‘capability procedures’.

Here, an ambiguous wording agreed at full-time as a series of ACAS meetings with the employers (subsequently rubber stamped by the executive) has opened up the route to the introduction of ‘fast track’ dismissal whereby ‘raising a concern about performance to dismissal may take only 4 weeks.

NUT branches which have sought to hold out for less draconian procedures have been undermined by full-timers whilst sympathetic LEAs have been warned by Schools Minister Stephen Byers that they may be ‘named and shamed’ and have even worse schemes imposed.

The anti-union laws will also split the conference down the middle with the ‘Broad Left’ seek to head off a call for Labour to repeal the Tory laws.

Socialist Teacher

There are some things which you know instinctively are utterly rubbish. The recent government and media panic on the so-called under achievement of boys is one such event. Those statistics together with the shocking revelation that there are not many male primary school teachers is all it takes to put two and two together and come up with the conclusion that more men will make all the difference.

SO STARTS Carole Regan’s article in the latest edition of Socialist Teacher, which goes on to explain that girls doing better in examinations than boys is nothing new - and more pertinent to ask why Labour is doing nothing to tackle the much more serious problems of the class gap.

Get your copy of Socialist Teacher now from John Yandell, 96 Carysfort Rd, London N1 6 YAD. tel 0171 690 4308 fax 0171 690 4611 e-mail john@socialceas.demon.co.uk

NURSERY VOUCHERS SCRAPPED

NUT members fought cuts under the Tories (above) - and must stand their ground now, ready to fight alongside parents to defend education. (Left)

STOP Y CUTS
There have been two main pieces of economic news in Britain in the last fortnight: the budget and the rising value of the pound. Commentators have tended to treat these separately, but in reality they are closely linked and both arise from the particular position of British capitalism at present.

Marxism can help to explain this linkage and point to likely future developments for the UK economy.

There are two central economic problems for the British employers. Firstly, there is the problem of extracting profits through the process of production, both by keeping wages as low as possible and by increasing the intensity of work. Secondly, there is the problem of realizing these profits by selling goods and services in the market. This requires a stable economic environment and is thrown into danger by booms, slumps and crises.

The continuing weakness of British capitalism has been its inability to reconcile these problems simultaneously. The strategies adopted to try and raise the level of exploitation in production, particularly wage cuts, have not allowed for stable economic growth. When growth has occurred it has been through inflationary booms which have threatened to undercut the conditions for profitability in production.

High profits

The last six years have, however, seen the British economy temporarily appearing to provide high profits and continuing growth. This has been based on the interaction of low labour movement both in struggles over wages and new management techniques. The devaluation in 1992, and relatively fast growth internationally outside Europe. This has not sated some economists to predict that the days of profit squeezing are over in both the UK and USA, are over and that capitalism can now look forward to a phase of steady expansion.

Blair and Brown know that is not the case. The conditions which have underpinned growth in recent years are changing rapidly. With spare productive capacity now largely used up and unemployment somewhat lower further growth may well lead to inflation.

At the same time the Asian crisis is likely to reduce world economic activity, and British firms are among the most vulnerable here as big investors in the region. The government's strategy is centred around trying to prolong the upswing and avoid a crash, while limiting inflation. Brown's budget is important to this process. The key element of the budget, the Working Families Tax Credit, is a highly reactionary instrument, which is effectively a massive subsidy to low-wage employers.

It extends and reinforces the privileges of “the middle class” of bosses need not pay decent wages because the state will foot the bill. In this way the hope is that the size of the potential labour force will expand reducing wage pressure, and that unemployment will continue to fall even through investment is low and most jobs being created are low skilled and low paid. Not content with simply accepting that British employers pay low wages, Brown is also actively encouraging them to do so by removing the employers' contribution to National Insurance for the low paid.

This is financed by increased contributions for those paying higher wages, which they will surely attempt to pass on to workers.

Low-paid jobs

These measures are not simply accidental. They are based on a strategy which sees continuing growth as dependent on creating large numbers of poorly paid jobs, and forcing the unemployed into them. This provides profits in production, while the state subsidises enough demand for these profits to be realised.

This is not an original strategy, it is the basis for much of the growth over the last decade in the USA. American unemployment is relatively low but real wages have fallen and inequality is at record levels.

Just as in the United States a low minimum wage is an essential part of this approach. Big capitalists build at seeing unlimited state acceptance of very low wages which are predominantly in smaller companies. The minimum wage provides a "ceiling" to the amount of tax credits which the state pays out.

In reality these jobs are based on the minimum wage being low, as in the USA, and we can expect to see this as a major area of conflict over the next year. Brown's generosity to business does not stop with the labour market. Corporation tax, already the lowest in Western Europe, is to be cut even further.

Modest rises in spending on areas like health and child benefit are only a fraction of the amount the government is paying back in record debt repayments, and appears to be saving for future tax cuts.

How successful is this strategy likely to be? It is here that Marxist theories of crisis can help in understanding the contradictions facing the British economy. Two competing explanations of crises in the Marxist tradition are "underconsumptionism" and the "profit-squeeze" approach. Both of these have elements which can be applied to Britain today.

Underconsumptionism sees the root of crises as being in a lack of demand caused by the constant pressure to keep wages low under capitalism. The profit-squeeze approach, on the other hand, sees crises as resulting from higher wages and input prices which eat into profits when the economy booms and the level of class struggle rises.

In reality both of these approaches captures all aspects of capitalist crises. Rather they are each appropriate to different phases of the business cycle. The underconsumptionist approach relates to the difficulties capitalisation faces in restarting growth after a slump, while the profit-squeeze approach deals with the difficulties which occur at the break-up of a boom.

Heads for crisis

Brown's strategy can be seen as an attempt to avoid both of these potential causes of crisis; to provide demand while keeping costs low and profits high. But in doing so he appears to be leading the British economy towards a third kind of variant of crisis from the Marxist tradition.

"Disproportionality" theories see the roots of crises as lying in an imbalance between the production of consumption and investment goods (in Marx's terminology: Department 1 and Department 2 of production).

Continued stable growth depends, as Marx shows in volume 2 of Capital, in keeping these two sectors in balance so that enough investment goods are produced to make the consumer goods which are in demand and enough consumer goods are produced to clothe and provide for the workers in both sectors.

When Britain is booming today is a growing imbalance between these sectors, such that some economists have begun to speak of a "dual economy". Consumer expenditure is growing faster than business's low wage economy provides no stimulus to investment. Even if labour costs are held down, the shortage of productive capacity is likely to feed through into higher inflation over time long.

Interest rate

The Chancellor's response to this has been to rely on higher interest rates and the Bank of England to keep prices under control. But by raising interest rates investment is cut back even more, worsening the disproportion.

Higher interest rates are also relatively ineffective in limiting consumer demand, since there are a large number of consumers who are savers rather than borrows, especially elderly people. Their income rise if interest rates go up.

Not only do interest rates lower investment, they also push up the value of the pound. This again worsens the disproportion as manufacturing industry is hit, while services, which are still traded less across borders, continue to grow.

This effect is especially serious because there are strong pressures from financial centres which are pushing the pound up at present.

This group of members in this European Monetary Union. The pound has been one of the few exceptions for international speculators who do not yet trust the Euro and prefer to hold their monetary reserves which do not plan to join the single currency in the first waves.

Over the last five years the experience of the Swiss economy has made it clear what effect this can have, as currency traders have pushed the franc high and the country into long-term recession.

Fundamentals

Capitalism remains a crisis-ridden system, and British capitalism has not solved its fundamental problems. The growth of the last six years has lasted longer than most economists expected. But it will not last forever and may now be beginning to reach its limits. Blair is hoping that by reshaping the labour market they can push the country further and further into the future.

But the measures they are taking are doing this to workers in harmony with the needs of big business. When this does happen, the impact could be formidable in helping us to understand the conflicts facing British capitalism.
WIN BACK
OUR UNION
RIGHTS!

ANOTHER trade union conference season, one year in to a Labour government, opens with little sign of progress on trade union rights. Here JOHN McILROY explores the issues at stake and argues for a concerted campaign.

British trade unions are diverse, but they share an aim: to protect the rights of their members at work. This includes the right to strike, the right to negotiate with employers, and the right to collective bargaining. These rights are fundamental to the functioning of a democratic society.

In recent years, the government has sought to erode these rights, through measures such as the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act, which criminalizes certain forms of industrial action. This has led to a decline in the effectiveness of trade unions, as members are deterred from taking collective action.

We need a new charter for union rights!

We need to go beyond the piecemeal approach of Blair and the TUC. We need to dismantle the Tory terror, not trim a tentacle or two.

We need an isolated change here and there but a new, integrated, code of workers' rights, a blueprint for strong trade unionism that we can campaign for.

Starting with organising and recognition. But going beyond it.

We need a new charter for union rights hinging on:

* The right to organise
* The right to recognition
* The right to strike
* The right to picket
* The right to take solidarity action
* The right to make our own union rules
* The right to a minimum wage
* The right to take political action.

We can fight again: but with present leaders? And present policies?

We have had a beating in Britain — although our comrades in Australia, New Zealand, the USA and France have had it worse, and particularly in France, where membership of TUC unions declined by 20.6% last year.

Nevertheless, the fabric and confidence of British labour have been severely shaken. The membership of TUC unions in 1993 was just under 12.2 million members, but in 1987 it was 6.7 million.

This is not enough. It means less than a third of workers are trade unionists, less than half are covered by collective agreements and today there is little support for collective action.

We have experienced historic defeats in the 1986-85 miners strike at Wapping, in the oil strike in 1989. We have seen the successful imposition of a battery of anti-union laws, the dwindling of strikes to the lowest numbers since statistics began, and the qualitative erosion of our role in the Labour Party.

This has laid the basis for a significant increase right across industry of employer hostility to trade unionism. Deregulation spread from publishing and printing to the docks, the oil industry and the privatised utilities. Its incitement has trebled in two years.

AGAS reports demonstrate the decreasing success of recognition drives even where ballots record high levels of support and in an increase in victimisation. In the public sector less than 20 per cent of the workers in enterprises opened over the last decade are members. The current dispute at Chirklet labels evokes the period we are living through. BT sells off the business to a thirsting, profit hungry, anti-union employer. A weak, insecure workforce accepts a freeze on wages, the sacking of half the membership, the removal of an established bonus scheme, a reduction in holiday entitlement. The bosses want more.

They increase vigorously stewards and when members are successfully balloted over strike action they derecognise the union and sack 500 of the strikers, replacing them with agency labour on lower wages.

The very resilience of trade unionists like the Chirklet workers demonstrates that the game is not up. We can still come again. But with present policies? With current leaders?

As new challenges and possibilities presented themselves, as we entered a new period in the run-up to the general election with the installation of Blair as Labour leader and the relaunch of the TUC in 1993, we have witnessed crucial failures of policy and leadership.

As the centre of this has been renewed emphasis on partnership.

(Continued over, pages 10-11)
**IO SOCIALIST OUTLOOK**

**Why are new laws important?**

Remember recent and current disputes

**Magnet Darlingston:**
Workers vote to go on strike in a ballot which meets the requirements of the Tory legislation. They are immediately sacked. Though their strike is lawful they have no legal remedy, no rights to compensation or reinstatement against their boss.

**SOLUTION:** A new legal right to reinstatement if sacked for taking industrial action.

**Quadrant Catering:**
Members of the Communication Workers Union vote to overwhelmingly take industrial action to stop Blair selling off 49 per cent of Quadrant, the Post Office catering provider. Union officials are advised industrial action is unlawful to be "political" and falls outside the definition of a "strike dispute".

**SOLUTION:** An amended definition of a strike dispute to reverse the Tory changes in their 1982 Act and protect grade unions when they strike against privatisation.

**Cricket, Tennis Labels:**
Members of the CWU are sacked after their union is derecognised and they go on strike. Cricket's main customer is BT.

The CWU leadership supports the strikers but refuses to organise a boycott of Cricket's products as the CWU laws prohibit secondary action.

**SOLUTION:** New rights to recognition and protection for trade unionists and union leaders when taking secondary action.

**Novel's Products:**
Gullan Novo refuses to recognise the CWU when they win a ballot even though a majority of workers have joined the union and elected shop stewards.

The workers are not on strike. But they are suffering harassment.

**SOLUTION:** New rights to recognition, a duty on the employer to bargain, protection for union members and facilities for shop stewards.

**Liverpool Dockers:**
Sacked female workers picket out Mersey Docks and Harbour employees. All are sacked. They have no legal remedy. Bill Morris claims solidarity action cannot be fought for or the unions will lose support.

**SOLUTION:** New rights to reinstatement to take solidarity action for trade unionists to make their own balloting rules. Solidarity has been a successful solution. Countries like the USA have had rights to recognition claiming the majority of American dockers at 17 per cent is less than half that in Britain.

Whatever the law, it is unlikely "Bank of England" Bill would have found solidarity action in support of the dockers legal. Solidarity can be a useful weapon. But legal support by bosses, and aggressive rank and file action.

with employers, embrace of Human Resource Management (HRM) and new production techniques - at the very time employers' rejection of any role for unions was in the ascendant.

The TUC put the case against the new techniques incisively: "There are many of these who trade unionists, ERM is about nothing more than implementing redundancies, casualisation the workforce, reducing wages and reasserting management's right to manage. It is often associated with a sanitisation of work and a deliberate strategy to deregulate or limit the influence of trade unionists. They then advised trade unionists to accept HRM, even to urge its introduction.

This new collaboration was accompanied by talk of the opened up by key leaders with some left tendency to follow the TUC's lead. Moderate unions, embracing Blairism as New Labour repositioned itself as the open party of global capitalism. From 1994, the UNISON leadership sought to remove power from the branches and lay activists and increasingly blocked action likely to embarrass Blair. In the TUC's 1998 Left was converted to the concept of partnership, ERM and hostility to strikers. In 1994 Bill Davies and Morris - albeit with limited conviction - voted against the removal of Clause Four. In 1997, like the turkeys voting for Christmas, they had earlier used to ridicule the idea they would support their own union from the inside. The TUC, both voted for the 'Party Iaco Power' proposals.

By the election they were firmly if critically in the Blair camp. In the Hillingdon Hospital dispute, the UNISON leaders went beyond compliance with the anti-union legislation, suppressing discussion of the dispute and sustaining support without a ballot, refusing to allow the strikers full membership rights. Morris's behaviour over the dockers needed little extra encouragement. A small number of small unions, the RMT, FBU, NUM remained isolated on the left. Despite positive initiatives, such as the Trade Union and Social Alliance, the serious left remained weak, divided, unable to influence the rightward trajectory of union leaders. In some quarters illusions in Bickersstaff and Morris were painfully slow to dissolve.

Today, with only minor contradictions, the TGWU Broad Left is the General Secretary's organisational arm in the union. Its supporters on Labour's NEC have accepted every single Blairite innovation. The existence of three competing lefts in UNISON and the confident initiatives of the leadership to suppress opposition affirm our current weaknesses. What remains encouraging is the increase in the strike figures in 1996-97 and the underlying power and vitality demonstrated by the strikers in the Royal Mail during the new round of redundancies.

**The argument over recognition rights**

The TUC argues

A UNION should be recognised for collective bargaining by an employer when a simple majority of those voting in a ballot so vote.

Disagreements about the 'bargaining unit' should be included in the group of workers to be ballots should be resolved by a new Independent Representation Agency.

Recognition should be widely defined. It should cover the right to bargain over pay, hours, conditions of employment, holidays, lay off, shift alterations and other issues. All employees should be covered. Small companies are often amongst the worst employers. There should be no exceptions. Independent representation to secure recognition should be protected by law after ballot. Those dismissed should be able to claim reinstatement.

Legal rights to recognition are a means of building independent workers' power in the enterprise. They are no substitute for it.

The CBI argues

The EMPLOYER should decide which workers are to be balloted. There should be support from at least 50 per cent of workers in the proposed bargaining unit before a recognition ballot is held.

Companies with fewer than 50 workers should be excluded from the legislation.

Unions should be recognised only if more than 50 per cent of workers eligible to vote, vote for recognition in the ballot. Recognition should only be guaranteed bargaining over wages and hours - not issues like training.

Strikes over recognition should be barred unless once a statutory procedure is in place.

Employers should still have the right to negotiate with individual workers and secure a derecognition ballot if 30 per cent of the relevant workers favour this.

We say

The debate over recognition legislation has obscured many important details. For example, if recognition legislation is to have any impact unions need

1. Clear cut rights of access to non-union workplaces, facilities to discuss with prospective members and protection against victimisation.

2. A strong positive defence of recognition so that employers refuse to abide by the law and a bargaining in good faith action is speeded and punished. This includes sequestration of assets.

The last election campaign for recognition rights in Britain - between 1975 and 1980 - they achieved very little. The poor record of recognition rights included the Black Cab drivers in 1980.

We need a law on recognition. We need to pay attention to its detail. But we need to remember that legal rights to recognition are a means of building independent workers' power in the enterprise. They are no substitute for it.
TUC with commitments restricted to the minimum wage fight and recognition and the Social Chapter.

The commitment to recognition was discussed by the main unions at the National Times on April 7, 1977. A slow recognition in a number of months later it was claimed that recognition would depend on a vote by a majority of workers to be represented by a union, or an alternative by most of those voting.

No figure was set for the minimum wage. Blair personally assured employers that he would seek clarification of the position to introduce a Bill in his first year of office and legislate for employment protection rights from day one.

In the SW he submitted: "We will not be held to ransom by the unions. We will stand up to strikes. We will not cave into unrealistic pay demands." This was followed by his now infamous assurance that Britain would no longer have the worst working conditions in the western world.

Once in Downing Street Blair's back-peddling continued. There has been a dripfeeding of small changes mixed with promises. The introduction of a Bill to a Bill to the unprecedented speed of the document by the MP in exchange token and then "in the first" of 1998.

Blair's strategy of rigorously limitation of the scope of the debate about change and cutting down the area of what union leaders conceive as politically possible has been dramatically successful.

After 12 months of New Labour we have no debate on the Social Chapter - but the Prime Minister encouraging the CBI to refuse to sign EU directives on workers’ consultation. There has been restoration of limited rights for GCHQ workers but refusal to lift the ban on union membership for union officers. A minimum wage bill has been introduced but the government instructing the Low Pay Commission to consider exemption of young people and supporting a figure under £4 (see Box). Then there is the 'promise' of a White Paper on recognition and employment protection rights due anytime now.

In recent months the government's approach has changed. The attention has focused almost completely on recognition - a key, but minimal demand. John Smith's famous promise of an extended programme of employment protection for '97's' has fallen by the wayside.

Labour suggest that the White Paper will propose is cutting the qualification period for rights such as holiday pay: from two years to twelve months. Workers will be worse off for two years in 1998 than they were last year. The period of qualification was only 6 months.

The handling of recognition affects the support for global capitalism whatever was agreed between Blair and Rupert Murdoch, and the hardening of capital against state regulation, however limited.

Whilst the Financial Times calls for the CBI to calm down - there are recognition laws in numerous havens of neo-liberalism such as the USA - the CBI includes on its committee the main anti-union warriors such as News International, Associated British Ports, BT and the Midland Bank.

In the face of such employer insincerity, the CBI's formal position remains one of opposition to any legislation on recognition - Blair at the 1997 TUC urged union leaders to negotiate a framework for legislation with the CBI. This has now failed (see Box) and the final decision on the form the legislation takes lies with Blair. Amongst all the fury over recognition the massive effects of anti-union legislation, unremarked by the TUC, continues to impede union resurgence.

We need an immediate decision on political action and unilateral strike. The 1997 Congress passed a resolution calling a campaign to remove the law on solidarity action. Not a peep out of Movement on this.

Bill Morris has devoted his time to telling us howwe current laws on solidarity action. Not a word about getting rid of them. The misrepresented Tony Commission for the Rights of Trade Union Members continues to disfigure the industrial land.

Union rights are needed as a starting point in the fight against low pay and exploitation. A strong law on recognition is important. If the CBI persuade Blair to support their position it will be a blow for trade unionists. But the fact remains inescapable: a myopic focus on recognition leaves discussion of the rest of the Tory laws and their repeal and replacement in limbo. It reinforces the position of Blair: they are sacred and untouched.

The TUC's convening of a special conference of union executives on May 6 to discuss the White Paper is welcome. So too is GMB leader Edmonds' call for demonstration if Blair does not come through. And Morris's call for a special TUC. The TUC's lobbying has been useful in ensuring the issue of recognition is taken up in the ranks of New Labour.

But, as with Edmonds trailing in the wake of the Countryside demonstration and Morris's assertion that if there is not a strong law on recognition such a demonstration will carry strike (and will support them?) - there is a lot of rhetoric.

Fundamentally, we have to separate out lies from the content of the union leaders when they say "we want recognition to improve competitiveness and profitability".

We have to take up and argue the issue of recognition as a means of disproving not extending partnership with the bosses. We have to support and extend the TUC campaign and build a lobby of the May 6 conference on this clear basis.

We want a good law, a strong law, pro-union law. Statutory trade union rights are fundamental human rights.

But we know the beginning not the end of it. We must use the legislation on recognition and the minimum wage to launch a crusade to build union membership and combat low pay and insecurity.

Recognition and the minimum wage are fundamental rights recognised across the world. We need a right to organise. But we need the right to strike and take solidarity action every bit as much. We need a new charter of workers' rights to replace the Tory laws and create a new vibrant democratic unionism for the 21st century.

The Bill introduced into Parliament late last year provides the framework for the National Minimum Wage. The key issues at the level at which it will be set and which workers it will cover, will only be settled after the Low Pay Commission reports in May.

A lot will depend on what the Commission's report has to say. It will provide an important platform for mobilisation by the left to ensure that the final legislation is as favourable as possible. The Commission consists of three bosses, three academics, Bill Callahan of the TUC, Rita Donaghy of UNISON and Paul Gait of GMB, the footwear and clothing union.

Final decisions on the legislation will be taken by the government i.e. by Tony Blair. And on the 'small track' principle adopted by New Labour, the minimum wage will not become operative until 1999.

Key issues are:

Level: TUC policy requires that the wage should be at present a minimum earnings - around £4.60 an hour. This would cover over 4.5 million workers.

But unless it was accompanied by changes in tax and welfare it would have only a marginal impact on poverty. In practice TUC members continue to refer to a figure around £4 an hour, having fought strenuously at recent Congresses to avoid any figure at all.

The CBI are offering a magnanimous £3.20 an hour. And Blair on his munificent salary favours a handsome £3.50 an hour. Three times the minimum wage.

Firstly, if the figure is set at under £4 it will be a waste of time if the low pay would have to work more than 70 hours a week to be free of dependence on benefits.

Secondly, the benefit must be on a figure of less than £4.

And thirdly, union leaders on £70,000 a year will urge patience if it is left. After all it is a start, its the principle that is important, I've got it right, I've got it right for the Bank of England.

Coverage: The Bill states that the government will not have powers to vary the rates by region, employment sector, occupation or the size of the enterprise.

But the armed forces will not be covered. And employers are frantically lobbying for workers under 26 years of age or under 21 years of age to be exempted on the lines suggested by Peter Mandelson.

This possibility is left open by the Bill. If workers under 26 were excluded then this would hit around 2 million young people. We can't have more young people in the homeless, in big shops and hotels and catering, retail, clothing, manufacturing and cleaning where they make up the majority of the workforce.

Enforcement: Bosses will have to keep records and provide workers with statements of their entitlements under the legislation.

Workers will be able to sue bosses who break the law in industrial tribunals and the county courts and be protected against harassment and dismissal if they so do.

Failure to pay minimum rates will also be a breach of the Criminal Law. Department of Trade and Industry inspectors will be able to take companies to court. But the minimum fine for each offence will be a miserly £3,000.

Workers Action: We should curb our instincts towards abstract militancy and join with quite moderate people willing to fight for £4.60 an hour as a start.

This would give limited help to around 6 million workers around two-thirds of them women.

We should hammer home the fact that those who earn low wages work long irregular, inconvenient hours in appalling conditions in insecure jobs. And emphasise that the national minimum wage and its enforcement mechanisms will always be inadequate to a real break from poverty.

We need to use the legislation on the minimum wage together with that on recognition as a springboard for organising drives to unionise Britain's traded estates.
Elkie Dee

INDEFINITE strike action has dismantled most Camden libraries for over a month. On March 20, a meeting of 105 strikers voted unanimously to continue until a satisfactory settlement is reached. They marched to their UNISON branch AGM shouting "No more shushing, no more quiet, these librarians want to roar!"

Camden Council in north London plans to impose a new management structure in its libraries. This involves an increase in management posts of 30 per cent, a decision from front line library assistants who work at the counter and do a lot of the backroom admin work of 26 per cent. It will mean redundancies and down-grading, forced changes in part-time hours which may mean loss of pay and other conditions.

The strike has been solid, with many strikers2 continued their campaign to open 2 out of 13 libraries. A threatening letter from management has only made the strikers more determined.

The appeal of the bus being used to smuggle scabs into St Pancras Library near King’s Cross station refused to drive the others up to West Hampstead after he was told who he was driving. They had to go by taxi. Strikers commented "Can’t they go by train like the rest of us?"

The staffing structure proposed for Camden libraries are not just an attack on jobs and conditions for workers there, though. They are clearly part of a planned attack on Camden’s library service, as the Council plans to implement the recommendations of management staffs KMPG made in a recent review.

Some cheaper services existed - but these would have been in running out of the house, or off the streets, to somewhere warm and dry. Students and people who use the computer facilities. All this needs people to help fill the gap between the service and demand, do backroom admin work for reservations etc.

Many of the additional services are provided for a fee, but until now, the principle of free lending has remained. We should defend this principle, and seek to extend it to other services such as access to information technology, rapidly becoming a new class divide in society.

The Tories wanted to introduce fees, and KMPG’s proposals would pave the way for charges, always a temptation when councils are constantly told they have to cut costs and generate income.

This struggle from Camden UNISON members to defend their jobs and local service is supported by UNISON and UNITE.

Send messages to the strikers and donations to the strike fund, invites speakers to meetings, send postcards to picket lines. Contact: Camden UNISON, 59 Phoenix Court, Brill Road NW5 1LH (office tel: 0171-911 1633 for details)

KMPG’s view is that Camden has too many libraries. They suggest closing most of them down and selling off the buildings and land, and running the service through a few big libraries with other access points situated in supermarket kiosks etc. If such ideas are implemented in Camden, other boroughs are likely to follow.

Of course, this would mean job losses and downsizing - why pay decent wages just to stamp a few books?

This rigours the point of what library services are about, and the jobs their workforce do.

Public libraries started in the 19th century and developed in this one as a means of making books and education available to working class people. Previously libraries were the preserve of elites - those in universities and those who could afford to subscribe to services to borrow the latest books.

Partial victory for victimised UNISON rep

Susan Moore

VICTIMISED British Gas activist Bernie Hynes won a partial victory at his Industrial Tribunal hearing on March 2. An ITU member, he made that he be reinstated as a Health and Safety Represen- tative at British Gas’s Leicester office.

This was not surprising as the law states that only trade unions have the right to nominate a Health and safety nominee - though the legal team for the employer did not seem aware of this fact!

The law on union recognition is hallowed, but different as it is perfectly legal to derecognise a union or its repre- sentative if employers have done so. Bernie made a further claim to the Tribunal that the derecognition act as a steward. He lost this claim as the tribu- nal ruled that action short of dismissal of a lay union officer did not count under a protection which applies to individual union members. While they agreed that Bernie had been derecog- nised because of his union activity, they then applied the test of ‘reasonableness’ to the employer's action. They agreed with British Gas that their action was ‘reasonable’, as it was claimed that Bernie’s criticism of man-agers had ‘escalated’ to what they viewed as an unreasonable extent.

While the implications of these judgements remain study they underline the fact that there is no legal protection for trade union activists. A campaign for positive rights is urgently needed.

At the same time it is nec- essary to fight trade union leaders who are more inter- ested in fighting the left in the union than the employers. UNISON’s leadership are pre- pared to spend vast sums of members’ money on barri- tors to attack the CFDU, but resisted obtaining one in Bernie’s case against British Gas.

It seems that Don Johnson the Deputy Head of Energy had been involved in discus- sions with the employer lead- ing to the derecognition. At the same time he is leading Gas North up the garden path on other issues such as a pay freeze and performance-related pay.

As well as fighting to main- tain branch autonomy and for trade unions to do their job properly, UNISON needs to campaign for full time officers to be properly funded and have control of the membership.

UNISON branches organise to defend union democracy

300 attend Newcastle conference

Fred LePlat

THE PUBLICATION of the preliminary agenda for UNISON’s national conference this June is a clear indication of what most concerns branches: defence of public services and the welfare state against attacks from the New Labour government, and defence of union democracy against the attacks from the bureaucracy.

The topic with the highest num- ber of motions is the Welfare State review with 32 motions. Then comes union democracy with 18 motions, and close behind trade rights, PFI and privatisation, the minimum wage and public services.

The democratic principles of UNISON have slowly been eroded through the power given to the bureaucracy by the anti-union laws. They have also been under assault from the leadership - including general secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe. This unswayable crew have used barricades to produce a report on the Campaign for a Fighting & Democratic UNISON (a Broad Left in the union) and to press disciplinary charges against individual union activists in a number of branches - Liverpool and Leeds in particular.

The attack on individuals and the CFDU confirms that the bureaucracy have whole-heartedly taken up Blair’s call at the TUC for the unions to "modernise their political structures as Labour has done". Getting rid of the left, if necessary by ditching union democracy, is now the pri- ority for the employers’ statutory and his 13 regional secretaries.

The December NEC adopted a report which demotes the left by describing the CFDU as an organisation “external” to the union, as it seeks to interfere into the affairs of the union by attempting to get UNISON to adopt its policies and get its candid- dates elected! The CFDU is composed only of UNISON members and its activities are those of any union broad left.

The trade union solidarity conference was attended by nearly 300 activists from across the country. The purpose of this meeting, attended by nearly 300 activists from across the country, was to plan a common approach in defending branch autonomy and the right to camp- aign.

Most of those attending were supporters of CFDU, SWP or UNISON Labour Link. A few independent union activists also attended.

The concerns of branches are clear. Branch autonomy and the right to campaign inside the union to change policy must be defended if UNISON is to be able to fight for its members and for public services.

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Voters desert French mainstream parties

Move to the left! or else!

The recent French elections have received a fair amount of coverage in the British press. However, those reports have mainly focused on the impact of Le Pen’s National Front and the crisis this is provoking for the traditional right. The problems faced by the centrist government, the rise in votes for the far left and the overall decline in the numbers voting have been largely ignored. Below we reprint an article by Christian Picquet from May 1997, the second paper of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), French Section of the Fourth International.

France’s political elite is in crisis. Only 38 per cent of voters participated in regional elections in March. An unprecedented number of those voting supported the parties of the current government (Socialist, Communist and Green) in opposition to the conservative opposition (UDF and RPR).

In other words, only one in three registered voters went to the “mainstream” parties, including the Communists and the Greens. Of course, there was enormous variety in the motivations of those who didn’t vote, or who supported one of the minor parties. But there is clearly a suspicion, even an open defiance, of the political system.

Twenty years of crisis and unemployment have been marked by popular frustration with the political parties and the elections, and support for an alternative to the “mainstream” parties, including the Communists and the Greens.

At each election, the challenge is clearer: either the left responds to the urgent social situation, and gives the victims of neoliberalism hope in politics, or there will be a further decline in civic participation, mixed with rejection of the existing political parties.

All to the benefit of the extreme right, of course.

Little victories for the government

Takes together, the left and the left parties scored 40.7 per cent, rather than higher than in the 1992 regional elections. But the composition of the governing coalition (Socialist, Communist and Green) did change.

The main victims of the people’s historic anti-

The “social radicalism” has existed in France for some time. What is perhaps new is the reduced capacity of the “green” parties to capture these votes, now that they are locked into the “pluralist parliamentary majority.”

The Trotskyist group Lutte Ouvrière (Workers Struggle, LO) was the main beneficiary of this political realignment, winning 4.8 per cent of the vote in those regions where the group presented candidates. This impressive performance is the result of the group’s tradition of electoral participation, and its leadership and organizational skills it devotes to elections. Lutte Ouvrière also has, in Arlette Laguiller, a well-known and popular representative.

Unusually, this latest Lutte Ouvrière campaign was less focused on characterisation of the Socialist and conservative parties as two sides of the same coin. With 19 elected members of the new regional assemblies, LO has made significant step forward in electoral support, and its online support is nationwide; it is particularly strong in the declining industrial areas of northern France—clear proof that there is something authentic in the left’s ability to win over working class people.

To stabilise this vote, unique in Europe for a Trotskyist group, LO needs to build and develop with those engaged in the struggle against social struggles at a local level. Can LO work to build and win a majority on the basis of its electoral strength? Will or will its elected representatives see themselves only as public spokespeople for their own group?

The LCR’s new challenge

For the first time, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Communist League, LCR) also benefited from this people’s historic anti-

Only one in three registered voters is somewhat represented by the “mainstream” parties... 20 years of unemployment have converged with popular frustration with the identical policies of left and right governments.

The radical left

Radical and far-left candidates won almost one million votes (20% per cent), and implemented themselves as a newfundamental element on the political map. This is partly the result of the 1997 radical far-left re-mobilisation which started in winter 1995, and partly a reflection of growing uneasiness with the persona and policies of other political parties, whatever they are.
Relief for Roisin

Paul Flannigan

T

hese are growing indications that layers of Irish workers are decamping, often in companies, to break with the ethos of ‘social partnership’. Social partnership is the latest version of the type of collaboration that has characterized Irish politics for decades, with workers physically and symbolically separating from their employers in order to go their own way based on mutual respect and partnership. So far this month we have witnessed two different workers’ revolts: employees or businesses spontaneously ramp up to open class confrontation.

Building workers in Dublin have just won a significant victory over their employers. Cúmpions have been joined in the city by workers in other industries who have also been smart enough to understand that breaking the system of subcontracting (a practice which forces building workers to work for employers while still exploiting them) is a pathway to higher pay, pension and rights. And often those workers are black sheep of the economy.

The dispute began when workers at the<br> Christ Church Barrow Park site in Clonskeagh asked to be employed directly by the company. They were told that they were locked out. The workers were forced to break with their unions and contract workers, and after months of protest and negotiation, they were able to win a hard-fought battle for fair pay, benefits, and a union contract. The victory is a testament to the power of solidarity and the strength of the working class. It is a win for all workers, and a step forward in the fight for a fairer, more just society. The victory is a reminder that workers have the power to win their battles, and that when we stand together, we can overcome any obstacle.
**Cook's tour ends in shambles**

Roland Rance

FOREIGN Secretary Robin Cook was barred during his visit to the Middle East, and Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu sent him to bed without his supper. This, at least, was how the media presented the diplomatic row caused by Cook's visit to the proposed Israeli settlement in the Palestinian village of Jabel Abu Ghusin.

It is a measure of Israel's propagandistic success that this village is now better known by the name of the architect, who approved its building, Has Homa ("Mount Wall").

Israel has also succeeded in convincing most of the world that Jabel Abu Ghusin is part of Jerusalem. In fact, it is less than a kilometre from the heart of Bethlem, and until 1967 was part of the Bethlem District. In 1967, Israel annexed the whole of east Jerusalem and its surrounding areas.

Since 1967, Israel has expanded the area of east Jerusalem from 612 to over 70 square kilometres, annexing lands from many West Bank villages with excluding populated Palestinian areas. Almost all the land acquired since 1967 was privately owned by Arabs. Some 38,000 housing units have been built on this land, all of them for the Jewish population.

No one housing unit has been built for Palestinians. A ring of exclusively Jewish settlements isolates Jerusalem, the main city of Palestine and capital of the state which the PLO hopes to establish, from the rest of the 1967-occupied territories. Since Jerusalem is also a major communications centre, this effectively cuts the West Bank in two, preventing access from Hebron and Bethlem to Ramallah and Nablus.

Has Homa, with its planned homes for a further 50,000 Israeli Jews, will complete the last gap in this ring of Jewish settlements. The site itself is a largely abandoned, unpopulated area, with several ancient Christian sites, including Byzantine monasteries.

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Kosovo: the cauldron bubbles over

Geoff Ryan

Socialist Outlook has argued several times in the past that a renewed explosion in Kosovo was on the cards. Kosovo was at the heart of the first struggles in post-Tito Yugoslavia when, in 1981, the Albanian majority took to the streets to demand that Kosovo be granted the status of one of Yugoslavia’s constituent republics. The street protests were met by fierce police and military repression.

The response in Serbia to demands for republican status was a key element in the break-up of Yugoslavia. The repression of dissent was not simply a typical example of the way in which Stalinist governments suppress all opposition. It was on an altogether different, more sinister, dimension.

In 1985, at the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences published its infamous Memorandum which, for the first time since the formation of the second Yugoslavia in 1945, put forward an openly Serbian nationalist agenda. The Albanian population of Kosovo was presented as a threat to the Serb nation and Kosovo became the centre of the most strident Serbian nationalists. At various times extreme right-wingers such as Seselj and Arkan have represented Serb constituencies in Kosovo.

Slobodan Milošević rose to prominence in this Anti-Albanian Serbian chauvinism expressed by the Academy. The main difference was that the Academy attempted to cover its views with some intellectual fig-leaves: Milošević expressed his hatred of Albanians in more crude language.

Kosova was central to the whole Milošević project, which was to end the federal structure of Titoist Yugoslavia and replace it with a more centralised state - a state dominated by Serbia.

Autonomous

Up until 1989 Milošević was an autonomous province, though nominally part of Serbia. In practice it enjoyed virtually all the rights of a Yugoslav republic other than the name. In 1989 all that changed.

Despite a lengthy struggle by Kosovars’ miners, who occupied their pits, the Kosovas Assembly accepted incorporation of Kosovo into Serbia and abolition of its autonomous status. Since the Assembly was surrounded by Yugoslav Army tanks this was hardly a free vote.

Earlier in 1989 Milošević staged a massive rally in Pristina, capital of Kosovo, at which he declared ‘No-one will ever again best the Serbs’. Milošević was surrounded by leading figures from the Serb Orthodox church and no-one at Pristina could be in any doubt that he was preparing to give full support to a Serbian nationalist project that would destroy the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Kosova was the first step to the wars in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia.

Of course Kosova is a vital part of Serbian nationalist mythology. The rally in Pristina was to mark the 600th anniversary of the defeat of the Serbian empire by the Ottoman empire at the Field of Blackbirds. While it is perhaps a strange sort of nationalistic glorification of military defeat (though some similarities can be found in other nationalisms, not least Irish) Kosova clearly has a significance for Serbs that cannot be simply wished away. Any solution in Kosovo has to take that into account.

At the same time there is the problem of the liberation of the Albanian nation which has never been united in a single state. It remains divided between Albania, Macedonia, Greece and Kosovo. In Macedonia there have been attacks on demonstrations opposing Serbian repression in Kosovo while in Greece Albanians are being blamed for a rising crime rate.

Or, more accurately, recent Albanian immigrants are being blamed - so far the indigenous Albanian population has largely escaped these allegations, but it is surely only a matter of time.

Dayton failure

The current upsurge of Albanian opposition to Serbian rule in Kosovo is a product of the failures of the Dayton peace process that was supposed to end conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Dayton could only work if Milošević was given a key role. To some extent he was able to buy Karadžić to be pushed out of office in the so-called Serb Republic in Bosnia.

He has also faced a challenge from the far-right in Serbia itself. Seselj was only prevented from becoming President of Serbia by dubious electoral practices.

To head off this threat Milošević has been able to use his differences with Seselj and arikan to ring him into the cabinet.

For the Albanian population of Kosovo, Dayton appeared to give carte blanche to Milošević. Their previous tactic of refusing to recognise the existence of the Serbian government - by running their own schools, hospitals, welfare organisations etc - had both failed to move Milošević or win international support. Hence the emergence of the Kosova Liberation Army and the adoption of more militant tactics.

While Western governments and, to a lesser extent, Russia have criticised the brutalities of the Serbian army and police in Kosovo and denounced massacres of civilians they have no solution to offer. They may criticize Milošević but they still need him to implement Dayton.

Moreover, by refusing to support the right of the Albanian majority to secede they accept, however unwillingly, that Kosovo is a purely internal matter for the Serbian government. Allegations of hypocrisy by various Serbian officials against Britain for its claim that repression of Republics in the North of Ireland is a 'purely internal matter' are not without foundation.

Clearly the only easy solution in Kosovo for both Serbs and Albanians Kosovo has such an amnesty that non-violent change can be easily reconciled - any more than one can reconcile the views of Republians and Unionists in Ireland. Ultimately, however glib may sound, the only solution is Socialism, in which the national rights of all the different nationalities in the Balkans can be respected within a common framework.

To take sides

Unfortunately such a solution does not appear to be on the immediate agenda. In Kosovo and the rest of the Balkans socialists have to take sides.

We the right of the Albanian majority to secede and form their own state or to become part of the existing Albanian state if they so wish - but we also defend the rights of all non- Albanian minorities in any state that emerges.

Of course secession or becoming part of the other will not solve the problems of the working class in Kosovo - or anywhere else in the region. Class organisation for that matter. Only socialist revolution can start to do that. But to take the side of the Albanians or the Serbs. The Albanian majority to secede in the name of some abstract concept of socialism or working class unity is criminal sectarianism.

News from the Fourth International

Left coalition wins seats in Amsterdam elections

A coalition of Greens, the SAP (Dutch section of the Fourth International) and a number of independents have just won three seats (with 14,800 votes) in Amsterdam’s municipal elections.

One of those elected was a member of the SAP.

The coalition campaigned on a programme opposed to the big infrastructure projects in the city, against the privatisation of public transport, for a shorter working week without loss of pay and for an increase in the minimum wage.

The coalition consists of a broad range of activists from environmental campaigns, trade unions involved in the recent dock strike, organisers of last year’s European Counter-Summit anti-racism and other.

Overall there are now 13 of the 45 seats to the left of the Social Democrats, and potentially a new alignment in the overall control.

Danish Election results

On March 11 Danes re-elected the centre-left government of Social Democrats and Social Liberals, despite opinion polls and political commentators predicting a victory for the right and their policies of austerity and tax cuts. In the end the Government’s vote actually increased slightly, with the traditional right-wing parties losing 11 seats.

The government and the left opposition parties successfully confronted the right’s autoritarian and tax-cutting proposals by focusing on the defence of social rights, despite the outgoing Social Democratic government’s record in removing taxes on capital and reducing unemployment benefit for youth.

The Red-Green Alliance was formed in 1994 by the SAP (Danish section of the Fourth International) and a number of other organisations. Their vote fell slightly, as many people voted for mainstream parties to oppose the right, though they have maintained much of their base of support.

The election campaign was a success for the Alliance, with more people active than ever before, and they have won a total of 17 seats. During the 2 1/2 week election campaign the Alliance signed up about 100 new members.

Secret Service Infiltrates Danish Section

During the recent Danish elections a former intelligence agent admitted in a national television documentary that the intelligence services had infiltrated the Socialist Workers Party (SAP) to monitor the activities of its militants.

Their activity included copying the 20,000 signatures the SAP collected in order to stand for elections and spying on trade unionists and activists in international solidarity campaigns.

They seemed particularly interested in the SAP as part of the Fourth International.

SAP militants have pointed out that they always thought the state was watching them. However as the revelations have caused widespread discussion on these issues, they have become less interested in talking more about how the state works.

Since the documentary has also been revealed that the intelligence services of a fascist plot to attack members of the International Socialists (inter-organisation of the British SWP)

The intelligence service never informed the IS of the conspiracy, but a member of the IS was killed in a bomb attack against their headquarters.

The SAP is carrying out a public inquiry into the role of the intelligence service.
Ontario's student occupations

Elkie Doe

A WAVE of student activism in Ontario, Canada, focused on tuition increases linked to cuts on campus. In January 1995 and February 1996, tens of thousands of students mobilised for shutdowns and marches. In 1996-97, smaller numbers at various campuses occupied key sites to protest against tuition fee rises and spending cuts. At Guelph, students occupied the President's office, sat in at the University Centre, and shut down a Board of Governors meeting.

The university management responded by bringing charges against 37 individuals, in an outrageous attack on students' right to protest, perhaps setting a precedent in stifling campus dissent not seen in Ontario since the early 1970s.

When Campus Renten: The Politics of Space, Power, and the Culture of Resistance in the Guelph Occupation is a collection of documents and analyses of these struggles. In Ontario, a "how-to" guide for those planning occupations, and a propaganda tool for the defence campaign for the Guelph students, raising money and awareness.

This book gives the real flavour of occupation, from great images in the University President's selling through his office door to reflections on stir-craziness. It claims "this move towards occupations, a political response to the perceived inefficiveness of previous protest, marks an increase in the intensity of student resistance". There is another reading of the Guelph protest between the more militant student activists and many others on campus who had no contact with the protests and were cut off entirely as early as January 1995 or February 1996.

The more isolated activists were actually more radical than before, while the rest did not feel it was possible to fight and win. The radicals had no confidence that it was possible to mobilise greater numbers of students.

Students at Windsor, Ontario, in 1996, invented chants and designed posters about the need for political action. They also discovered that the world and the occupation agenda in new ways.

We need to figure out why these protests ended so suddenly with such a limited role of radicalisation. Students are pissed off by closures and cuts. They know they job market upon graduation is tough. This can lead to radicalisation, or to narrow horizons and a competitive attitude, combined with acceptance that cuts, tuition hikes and the corporate agenda are inevitable.

The books reveals the central dynamic in student protest should not be to expose and challenge the power relations in education. The goals are student power and education for freedom.

But power relations in education are not simply produced on campus. The capitalist education system's goal is training for relations in the workplace and society. Potential workers are conditioned to show up on time and accept authority. Women and men learn gender roles, while people from different ethnic backgrounds are assimilated or marginalised.

We are currently seeing a real shift in capitalist education priorities, to fit the neo-liberal corporate agenda. Employers believe that the schools, colleges, and universities are pumping out too many graduates with high expectations who don't take well to the low-wage, part-time, or temporary jobs that are out there for younger people.

Students know this. They are concerned about the relationship between the university and the rest of society, looking for a change.

The student movement needs to transform this knowledge into an activist movement that builds solidarity with workers and others fighting the corporate agenda, a student-worker alliance.

Adapted from a book review in New Socialist magazine.

The Butcher is coming

Veronica Fagan

He's BROKEN the laws of UN resolutions. He has murdered hundreds of thousands of people. He has invaded neighbouring countries and is armed to the teeth.

He is General Suharto, the butcher of Jakarta, the dictator of Indonesia for the last 33 years.

Is the UK about to declare war on him? No. In fact, he's coming to Britain in April for the Asia European Summit Meeting (ASEM), which will focus on trade and investment.

It is doubtful if humanitarian matters will be on the agenda.

Suharto is responsible for:

- the deaths of up to a million members and sympathisers of the PKI (the Indonesian Communist Party) in a state-sponsored massacre, after he came to power through a military coup in 1965;
- the deaths of 200,000 East Timorese, a third of the population, after the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975;
- 150,000 deaths in West Papua (New Guinea) following the Indonesian invasion in 1963;
- imprisoning thousands without trial for political and religious beliefs;
- logging and mining huge tracts of tropical rainforest;
- lining his own and his relatives' pockets with the proceeds.

All is not rosy for him, though. Commentators describe the current Indonesian situation as "one of political, social and economic freddoi".

The rupiah is less than a quarter of its value a year ago.

Bankruptcy affects 90 per cent of Indonesian companies, leaving tens of millions out of work. There is widespread unrest, with food riots in East Java and daily demonstrations.

What's the difference between Saddam Hussein and Suharto for Britain?

Simple. Indonesia is one of the main markets for British arms, exports. Although Suharto's future is uncertain, the Indonesian military, thoroughly armed and trained by the UK, will maintain real power in Indonesia, with a major say in who runs the country.

Contact 0171-729 3201 for news and actions etc.

Saturday April

Demonstrate near the QEI Centre where ASEM is taking place - assembly at Jubilee Gardens 18-19 April in Oxford

Ploughshares are holding Hammers & Spanners event. Call 0161-226 2996 for details.

Putting the fun into canvassing

EACH YEAR hundreds of young militants from across Europe and beyond gather for the Fourth International Youth Summer Camp, this year's camp will be in Denmark.

The camp offers a unique opportunity to meet socialists from other countries to discuss the differences of our struggles, to better equip ourselves for future struggles and equally as important – to have fun.

The theme of this year's camp is 'reclaim freedom'. The theme runs through the camp on a number of levels, from the content of discussions, workshops and forums, through to the very organisation of the camp itself.

We see lesbian and gay liberation, feminism and black liberation as central aspects of the struggle for socialism. We will integrate aspects of all of these into the whole of the week, organising discussions on how young militants are fighting oppression across the continent, and how we can work together.

The development of a capitalist EU threatens to drive back the struggle for liberation, with the destruction of workers rights and a concerted offensive from the ruling class. We aim to develop our understanding of how to deal with the banks, the multi-nationals and the various governments in the light of the increasing integration of capitalist Europe.

Overall we will discuss our perspectives for bringing about revolutionary change in society, how we can link up across national boundaries, across different social movements, the trade unions and the labour movement and create a dynamic mass movement that can create the kind of society we want to live in.

Whilst we are all working hard to make this an interesting and funful political camp, we will also make sure there is plenty of time to enjoy the social and cultural aspects of the camp, with a socialist cabaret, exhibitions, numerous sporting activities and parties throughout the week.

Join us in building the biggest delegation from Britain yet, and help us to create a socialist world, free from exploitation and oppression.

Fourth International Youth Summer Camp

Denmark, 25 - 31 July

IT WILL COST about £250 per person to get to the camp and to pay for registration and meals at the camp.

Socialist Outlook will be trying to raise money to help young people who want to go but can't afford it themselves. Contact us if you are interested in fundraising or would like more information. If you do want to donate, you should start saving now and send cheques made payable to 'Liberation' to the address below. - it will make it much easier when it comes to July.

For more details contact Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU
Health campaigners raise the heat

John Lister

10,000 angry protestors took to the streets of the small Worcester- town of Kidderminster on March 31 to oppose the threat- ened closure of their general hos- pital.

The turn-out was boosted by an energetic campaign headed by the local press, which had earlier attracted 66,000 signatures on a protest petition to Kidderminster Health Authority.

Just a few days earlier a massive turn-out of 1,300 opponents of the closure packed a Health Authority public meeting in Kidderminster.

Health Authority plans would close all but 30 of the local hospi- tal's 300 beds, leaving what man- agers cynically describe as an "innovative ambulatory care cen- tre" -- in other words clinics dealing with only minor injuries and day surgery, with a handful of beds for frail elderly patients.

Those with more serious health problems would have to travel a minimum of 21 miles to the nearest hospital. With plans like this, and contro- versial plans to "rationalise" services in Herefordshire, Kent and Essex triggering massive opposi- tion, the Labour government seems set on a collision course with defenders of the NHS.

Gordon Brown's feeble budget gesture, handing an "extra" £500m to an NHS facing end of year debts in excess of £600m, falls far short of what is needed. Labour's first two years in office have so far yielded NHS cash increases below the average over 18 years of Tory rule.

With less cash, fewer beds, and fewer hospitals available, there is little scope for any magic solution to the crisis in the NHS created by Tory cuts -- and worsened by Labour.

Fighting health cuts -- French style

AN OUTBREAK of strikes and local protests is sweeping through hospital in France, as spending cuts, rationalisation and staff shortages lead to cuts in services.

There have been strikes against general and geriatric hospitals in Paris and in Cler- ment Ferrand, while hundreds of health workers have joined trade union-backed demonstra- tions against cuts in Thionville (Moselle) and Dinan.

In Moselle, thousands of voters took the opportunity to "write in" their support for local hospital services on their ballot papers in the local elections.

In 1938, the year of the founding of the Fourth International, Eileen moved to the United States.

"We were not talking seriously about the Fourth International when I left Britain - everything seemed up in the air." But once in the United States, she went to see US Trotskyist leader James P Cannon.

"Cannon told me about the founding of the Socialist Work- ers' Party, coming out of the Socialist Party and about the founding of the Fourth Interna- tional."

Eileen remained in the United States for forty-seven years, where she taught law sciences at university. But for a period dur- ing the war, she managed to get involved politically. But then in the late forties I began to get involved in the anti- nuclear movement in Chicago, which developed since the war.

"When my daughter was seven, she went to the University of Pennsylvania and met up with the Young Socialist Alliance [the youth organisation of the Socialist Workers Party]. She brought home The Militant for me to read. I recognised it, of course, and got in touch!"

Vietnam

Eileen joined the SWP working particularly with the Women's National Action Action Com- mittee and the anti-Vietnam War movement.

But the SWP was in internal difficul- ties by this time. Along with many others, including most of the long standing cadres of the party, she was bureaucratically expelled in 1964.

"They instigated new practices for the SWP. They did everything they could to avoid us, even with those who opposed them in the party, and then finally expelled us."

She fought unsuccessfully for readmission, but following the death of her husband, she returned to England in 1965.

In England, both supporters of the Fourth International were in turn over at the time. Eileen worked for several decades in London, but as a result of dis- puats with supporters of the American SWP who were moving away from a revolutionary posi- tion, in 1988 she and many others left to join the other groups who had recently started to produce Socialist Outlook.

Eileen was an active member of the Labour Party in Hackney, and continued campaigning for abor- tion rights, international solidarity, and increasingly on environmental issues.

She became involved in local campaigns against the construc- tion of further urban motorways, and used her scientific back- ground to expose the health haz- ards -- especially the rise in asthma -- resulting from excessive road transport.

As a seller of Socialist Outlook, Eileen had few rivals. A small, frail looking woman, she would hold the paper proudly above her head, and patiently explain the arguments and positions in it.

She was always measured and mild in her tone, but there was nothing wishy-washy about her politics. However, she remained confident that reasoned argument would prevail over hostile demun- cations.

Socialist Outlook supporters were saddened when she left the Fourth International to join the Workers International League. We remained in contact with her, hoping that the relatively minor disagreements between us could be resolved. On essential issues, we were at one.

Eileen Gersh was a committed revolutionary and a warm and generous friend. Her life and work will go on and I'm sure that many, I will keep in touch with her, hoping that the relatively minor disagreements between us could be resolved. On essential issues, we were at one.
CHARLIE Van Gelderen says in his review of Bill Hunter's book *Lifeguard Apprenticeship: The Life and Times of a Revolutionist*, "because of his long and active participation in the movement, this book is almost a short history of British Trotskyism, its triumphs and failures." (SE No. 13). The review begins, but does not continue, in a promising way.

One of the points Van Gelderen ignores is the important question of the Fourth International and the Italian revolutionary situation at the end of the 2nd World War. There was a revolutionary upsurge in Italy; "The problems which Trotsky had been trying to answer were posed immediately before the leaders of the Fourth International", Hunter.

However, the points, which Goldman and Morey (chapter Hunter quotes) raised about how the transitional programme was to be developed in relation to facing tasks of leadership in Italy were answered with generalisations.

Van Gelderen was in Italy during the war with the British army and worked with US comrades and others to help re-establish contacts with revolutionaries there and develop the Fourth International, so he must have some thoughts on this central question.

Van Gelderen agrees that 'British Trotskyism' is an important question for the Trotskyist movement in Britain, that is the refusal to carry through the International struggle of Trotsky above purely national considerations. However, his review gives a different meaning to that which Hunter was discussing. Perhaps because of this Van Gelderen mis-informs the reader, "It is a pity that Bill did not perceive that this weakness in the Workers International League’s (WIL) refusal to participate in the unification which preceded the founding conference of the Fourth International in 1938."

Charlie ignores Chapter 5 of Hunter’s book - called the “Formation of the WIL” yet this deals with this question and in fact takes up those who said that the WIL should not be called anti-internationalist.

Bill Hunter quotes from Rae Hunter’s notes in the chapter: "The Fourth International conference condemned the split and the non-attendance of the WIL as "anti-internationalism"."

The split was not on political differences but on a subjective basis of personal attacks that had been made on Ralph Lee (which were unfounded). "In fact, international relations and the first Congress of the Fourth International assumed less importance than the relations between the WIL and the leaders of the Revolutionary Socialist League. Therein lies the anti-internationalism of the split of 1938."

Because of space, I cannot give all the details but the chapter should be read - although it seems Van Gelderen did not do so. It appears the reviewer is trying to make Bill out as a follower of anti-internationalism because he does not write from Charlie’s particular viewpoint of what internationalism means, he does so by ignoring large chunks of the book.

He says “Pabloism was not born with the Rise and Decline of Martín Ralph

WHAT'S ON

APRIL

SATURDAY 4
POCKET President Sublime. Parish against landscape, 1p.m. to 6p.m. £1. Ansemble 11c. Jaki Eley, Camden. Cloth. Called by the Campaign Against the Arts Trust and others.

WEDNESDAY 8
SOLDIERSHIPS with the Wellington Hospital Citizen. Pickets outside Queen’s (Potters Fields) Hospital 12 noon-2p.m., Golden Lion, off Piccadilly, Camden.

SATURDAY 10/11/12/13
EUROPEAN Women Coordinating Meeting. Details from Andy: 0171-272 417.3.

SATURDAY 18
MANCHESTER Concrete Against War in the Gulf. Coordinated against sanctions in Iraq. 1p.m. to 6p.m. 1p.m. to 6p.m. Meeting House, Aeston Street (near Albert Square) Manchester. Spokes include Kevin Markham WNBC, Chris (Catch of Manchester WNBC) and Greater Manchester Socialist Alliance. Meeting to elect officers and a central campaign organizing committee for the anti-war move. Other groups also to be invited.

THURSDAY 20
MEETING TO DISCUSS the possibility of speaking at the National Conference of Anti-Deportation Campaigns held at the Methodist Hall 1p.m. Public meeting 3.30p.m.

MAY

FRIDAY 1
LONDON MAY DAY march. Ansemble 12 noon Highgate Fields for march to Trafalgar Square. Speakers include Brian Gatch (President), Ursula, John Edwards (General Secretary GMB), Jeremy Price (General Secretary UNET) & representatives of the French CGT and from the Turkish and Kurdish communities.

SUNDAY 3
BUDDHISM May Day demonstration ‘No to Benefit Cuts! Defend the Welfare State’. Ansemble 10.30a.m. Champions Square, offly 1p.m. Tooting Bec lido.

INTERNATIONAL Evening for May Day. Conway Hall, 7d Bloomsbury Square, off 7p.m. Spokes include John brothers, Mike and others from around the world.

WEDNESDAY 6
SPECIAL OFFER (UK only): One year of Socialist Outlook magazine for £20.

JUNE

SATURDAY 16
GREATER MANCHESTER Socialist Alliance Annual General Meeting.

SATURDAY 20
SOCIAL JUSTICE demonstration, London, supported by the Liverpool Dodgers.

SEND TO: Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

SociAlist Outlook 19

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STalinism, which was written in 1953", implying that this is what Hunter says. Actually, Hunter says that Pablo and Mandel changed their position around 1948-50. It is also interesting that he makes no comment on the observation in the book that Mandel boasted, at the time of drafting the above named document. This information is all in the same chapter.

I do not agree with his assessment of Pablo and he ignores Mandel’s close support for Pablo which is shown in the book. He just implies that Mandel carried the struggle forward for the Fourth International and therefore helps to prevent a critical re-examination of more than just Mandel.

The question to answer is why the reviewer does give such a one-sided interpretation of the book, and of history. This way of writing history and reviews is something Hunter shows he is strongly opposed to.
NEXT MONTH’s local government elections will be the first major test at the polls of Blair’s New Labour Party since its triumphant victory just one year ago. It seems certain that they will not repeat the overwhelming successes of the General Election.

Local government elections are rarely kind to government’s of course and the anti-Tory factor that was so important last year will not operate in the same way. But there are other factors too.

Millions voted for Blair in the belief that he would deliver them from the Tory nightmare but instead the same policies have been followed.

This has had its impact locally as well as nationally as local councils have continued to slash public spending, squeezed between lack of central government funding and their own unwillingness to mount a political fight. At the same time most have continued to levy high levels of council tax, rents and other charges.

Across England we are likely to see a rise in the Tory and Liberal Democrat vote, while in Scotland the SNP are likely to do much better than last year. With the Scottish Assembly achieved, voters north of the border are determined to make clear that they are not content.

In one area of England there is another crucial issue at stake on May 7. In London there will be a referendum on regional government – with a massive and poisonous sting in its tail.

The dismantling of the GLC was one of the most unpopular acts of

Thatcher for voters in the capital. But Blair is determined that there will be no restoration of democracy for Londoners.

Instead after a sham consultation period London’s voters are presented with a take it or leave it package of a presidential type mayor and a weak assembly of 25 members with no real power.

All real decisions will be made by the mayor, the assembly will just rubber stamp them. Nor will there be any power to levy finance to deal with the desperate problems the city faces. This is no way to reverse the years of Tory decline.

Voices that have called for a different model of government have been ignored. The London Labour Party Special Conference on this issue was not even allowed to vote because it was clear that it would oppose the leadership’s plans.

Labour’s sick slogan for the referendum is “Let’s get London moving”, but their package will do nothing of the sort.

Given all this, Socialist Outlook adds its voice to those in the labour movement who are calling for a ‘no’ vote in the referendum.

A sizeable ‘No’ will be the best basis for the campaign that will need to be mounted after May 7 to achieve real democracy and effective control for the people of London.

It is also the best way to make it more difficult for Blair to carry through his other plans for local government reform, which include the introduction of powerful mayors into other major cities.

Vote No in London on May 7 – and fight for real democracy.