Bitter fruits of New Labour:
- Poverty rate for minimum wage
- Bosses call shots on union rights

HOW LOW CAN THEY GO?
New Civil Service union must break with the past

Darren Williams (Branch Secretary, POS ONS, Newport, personal capacity)

ELECTIONS are about to take place for the National Executive Committee (NEC) of Britain's newest - and sixth biggest - union.

The Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) came into being on 10 March following the merger of CPSA and PTC. With 250,000 members, POS represents the vast majority of trade union members in the civil service, covering all grades from low-paid clerical and support staff to middle-management.

Clearly such an organisation could potentially be a formidable force, capable of ending and beginning to reverse the long series of defeats inflicted on civil servants since 1979. The record of deep-seated and treacherous leadership in the civil service unions suggests, however, that any such advantages are likely to be squandered unless there is a complete change of political direction.

The potential for a militant stand by civil service workers was demonstrated in the final months of the Thatcher government. A sustained campaign of national industrial action by CPSA and the SCPS (an ancestor of PTC) forced the Government to back down from its incomes policy and honour previous agreements to maintain the real value of civil service pay.

As the Thatcher government went on the offensive against both the public sector and the trade unions as such, however, the response was less than resolute.

Throughout the 1980s control of CPSA's NEC alternated almost annually between the National Moderate Group and the Militant-led Broad Left. The latter's defiant words were not always translated into deeds when the opportunity arose, while the moderate renounced industrial action altogether as the preserve of unrepresentative extremists, preferring instead to rely on a passive lobby.

After 1988 the uninterrupted control by the right-wing ensured the consistent sell-out of members' interests, as the Government's onslaught intensified. Tens of thousands of jobs were cut. Some departments - like HMIS - were sold off altogether while others experienced partial privatisation of services, by means of market testing, contracting-out and PFI.

Performance-related pay was gradually introduced, steadily encroaching upon - and finally replacing, altogether cost-of-living increases.

National pay bargaining was abolished altogether in 1996, eliminating the possibility of legal industrial action across the civil service in defence of pay.

This provided a protest from the right-wing leaders of CPSA and PTC, despite the dire need for a determined campaign in defence of members' living standards following the introduction of the public sector pay freeze.

The continuation of such treacherous policies was facilitated by the bureaucracy's blatant disregard for conference decisions, persistent lying to members, and general abuse of the union machine. When the constitution of the merged union was written last year, activists were dismayed to find that it was designed to institutionalise bureaucratic privilege, and prevent members from holding their elected representatives to account. In defiance of both CPSA and PTC conference policy, elections and conferences were abolished and a legion of officials were given well-paid jobs for life, and major decisions were to be made by easily stitcheted-up referenda.

Unfortunately, the Left has proven somewhat wanting in presenting a clear alternative. The Militant-led Broad Left has maintained a resilient opposition to the right-wing and has been relatively open and democratic, in comparison to other union left. It has however relied far too heavily on the parliamentary lobby, growing its energies into winning control of key positions, and slipping backwards into sectarianism once the election and conference season was over.

The smaller Socialist Caucus has the best record for campaign organising - in defence of members. It has recently organised a cross-departmental forum in defence of pay, and made pay claims, helping to plug the gap left by both the bureaucracy and the executive left leadership.

The unification, since the merger, of all the CPSA/PTC left groups under the banner of Left Unity has potentially created the basis for a strong challenge for control of the new union. While the initial signs are promising, it remains to be seen whether the left will provide clear and consistent leadership, or slip into its old bureaucratic ways.

PCS members should support the Left Unity slate in the May NEC elections, and should build the Left Unity group to ensure that it functions as a full-time organised leadership for all those civil servants who are sick and tired of being walked over by departmental management and by the government. They should demand that Left Unity makes the following its priority:

* Fight for action in pursuit of pay claims, building solidarity outside individual departments;

* Prepare for united campaigns with other public sector unions, in defence of jobs, to break the pay freeze and oppose initiatives like PFI;

* Return the union to control by the membership, making full-time officials subject to election and accountable to conference, and cutting down their fat-cat salaries and perks;

* Ensure that the left wins the argument among the membership about the link between union democracy and the effective defence of members' interests.

A PCS under fighting, democratic leadership would have a major role to play, not just within the civil service, but in leading back the bosses' offensive which has been instigated by Blair's pro-capitalist agenda.

Striking care workers stand firm against scrooge employer

Adam Hartman

We reported last month on the strike by Tameside care workers against cuts in their already low pay. Care workers in Tameside's eleven elderly persons' homes were now entering their third month of strike action.

Tameside Care Group (TCG) threatened to sack the strikers on May 3 if they refused to sign new contracts. The Group extended the deadline by a month, clearly shaken by the determination of the strikers and the magnificant support for them, and embarrassed by their public exposure as a Victorian scrooge employer.

However, they have kept the homes running with scab labour supplied by both Allied Medicare and other agencies. Regrettably, the GMB branch leadership has recommended that its members accept a deal which delays most of the pay cut until next year; some GMB members have resigned in protest. UNISON members, over 80 per cent of the strikers, remain solid.

UNISON's national leadership has so far supported the strike. However, its sellout of the Hillingdon hospital strikers doesn't inspire confidence. They may well try to negotiate an unacceptable deal over the heads of the strikers. In this case, the role of the anti-union laws in limiting the effectiveness of industrial action, and the capitulation of the national leaders in the face of these laws, would be exposed yet again.

It is therefore clear that branches of UNISON and other unions maintain and extend their solidarity for the strikers, in the form of solidarity greetings, donating the Careers' Quod and attending the mass pickets and demonstrations. This will give the national leaders a clear signal that they will pay a high price for selling out the strike. Labour Party members and affiliated unions must highlight the role the Labour Party in the dispute. To be nominated by trustees, including local Labour MP Andrew Bennett, a local NUT branch secretary and a solicitor who does case work for trade unions. Tameside's Labour council has a 20 per cent gold share.

TCG says that cuts of £300,000 are needed, because the council is cutting its funding for resident places. But the 'non-profit making' trust made a £750,000 surplus last year which the Royal Bank of Scottland claims was allegedly fraction.

Managing Director Alan Firth tried to justify the pay cut by claiming that the market rate for care workers locally is around £2.80 per hour. Meanwhile, his market-based salary has increased by a handsome £9,000 to around £60,000 per year.

Nationwide, cash-starved local authorities are transferring care homes to semi-pri-vatised trusts at the expense of the workforce, and increasing the role of private finance. The strikers have called for a public inquiry both into the running of TCG and the funding of care for the elderly.

Don't support the strikers hardship fund. Send cheques payable to "Tameside UNI-SON" to: 29 Booth Street, Ashton under Lyne OL6 7LB.

Take out a standing order to the Carers' Quod, forms available from same address. Send or phone through messages of support on 0161-308 4552.

The next demonstration is on Saturday June 6 in Stalybridge (Askey Rd 1.00pm).
Fairness to whom?

Socialist Outlook 3

Fairness, freedom, families, firms - somehow along the line the government's White Paper "Fairness to Whom?" seems to have got confused with an advertising slogan.

The aim of the White Paper has been clearly set out by Blair: "It seeks to draw a line under the issue of industrial relations law". Even after the changes we propose, Britain will still have the most tightly regulated labour market of any leading economy in the world.

Trade unionists will welcome some of the measures in the White Paper that will help change the balance of forces in the workplace. But there has been a massive retreat from the promises made before the General Election.

For the Liverpool Dockers, Magnet and Critchley workers the White Paper will look to be much like the GNP, with not a great deal of difference. For many millions of low paid, unorganised workers it offers little or nothing whatever.

Activists must now demand that the Government meet its promises for TUC and Labour Party policy to be implemented in full - no more compromise - at the same time as arguing for complete repeal of all the anti-union laws and then replacing them with a new charter of union rights.

EDITORIAL

Proposals to outlaw blacklist ing, stop gratuitous violence against union members and allow sacked strikers to picket are all to be welcomed, as is the reduction of the qualifying period for unfair dismissal cases at Industrial Tribunal to one year.

But this is a far cry from John Smith's cleardemands of full protection from day one. Even with the removal of the maximum limit on awards for unfair dismissal, the refusal to make reinstatement of sacked workers a default position.

As the White Paper spells out the laws on picketing, secondary action, ballots and notice before striking, the obstacles to unofficial action and interference in trade union rules will remain.

Instead we are thrown a crumb - simplified strike ballot - for which the TUC and generally endorsed by Labour prior to the General Election. Yet at the special TUC conference, now to be held on June 24, John Monks and co. will no doubt be calling for critical endorsement of the government proposals. This is not good enough.

We must demand that the TUC abandon its hopeless search for a compromise and actually call its policies implemented for full legal protection from day one of employment, for the right to reinstatement of those sacked in lawful disputes, full rights to recognition without having to jump through hoops, the right to take secondary and solidarity action.

The call by the GMB's John Edmonds for a demonstration to equalize the countryside alliance march must be taken up - the rhetoric turned into reality.

The problem is that the government and the TUC share the same underlying philosophy. They believe that it is possible to "resolve the notion of conflict between employers and employees" with the promotion of partnership.

For them "Fairness at Work" is a way of building harmony and thereby strengthening the competitiveness of "British Industry". With one eye over their shoulder watching how their members react, the TUC will be calling for critical endorsement of the CBI as an end in itself.

Is it really all change in Ireland?

David Coen

About 85,000 people in the South of Ireland voted against the Stormont Agreement, a surprisingly high figure given the fact that all the main parties including Sinn Fein supported it.

A vote against by Nationalists, north and south presented in the media as a vote for war, even though the "No" campaign in the South had been mainly maintained by the 1994 ceasefire. Clearly there are still a significant number of people in the South who want to see the British concede the right of the British to rule a part of Ireland and who don't believe the Agreement will bring peace.

The scale of the defeat of republicans radical forces in Ireland should not be underestimated.

Of course Sinn Fein will continue with its political manoeuvres to divide the Unionists and Sinn Fein will be the eventual beneficiaries. But there will be a long and arduous fight there.

The Agreement simply cements in place sectarian divisions. The problem for Sinn Fein is that the new Stormont has almost nothing to offer Sinn Fein's working class base.

Relief, at least disembarkation, of the RUC is unlikely. Orange parades will still go through nationalist areas, and the much discussed all-Ireland bodies which Sinn Fein pretend are a bridge to union unity will be replaced by Sinn Fein as the tanker brought by the Unionists veto.

Nationalist and loyalist workers may find themselves fighting over the crumbs which fall from the Stormont table. Sinn Fein, in the meantime, is ensuring they are likely to a huge inflow of funds to buy off opposition; in fact the British hope to save some of the cost of maintaining a presence in Ireland.

All that is on offer is an appeal for investment by transnationals.

The TUC's rotten compromises have led to the proposals on the minimum wage being set so low - it is clear they are also prepared to compromise over trade union rights.

For us things are different. We know that "partnership" is a farce - a war is going on. We want to see legislation not as an end but as a beginning, to change the balance of forces and encourage workers to fight back.

While even the smallest steps are welcome because they indicate that the tide is turning after years of Tory rule, we recognise that compromise is doomed.

The right to organise is fundamental. We should be fighting to dismantle all the anti-union laws - replacing them with a series of positive rights - as a start redressing workers' movement's ability to take on the bosses.

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EURO WRTHDYSTIAD CAERDYDD, 13 MEHEFIN '98
Organise fight for a living wage

Simon Deville

The LOW Wage commission has finally made its proposals for a minimum wage - a pitiful £3.60 an hour with an even more disgraceful £2.20 an hour for under 21 year-olds.

At the announcement of the figures some "left" trade union leaders such as John Edmonds complained that the figure was too low and that it discriminates against young workers. Such public statements however, are simply a sop to union members across the country who will be quite rightly outraged at these proposals.

From way before the general election all trade union leaders have fought tooth and nail against their membership committing the union movement to a living wage for the TUC many union leaders completely ignored their own fighting for a minimum wage that will afford their members a decent standard of living.

It is extremely unlikely that the Labour leadership will introduce minimum wage legislation that goes against the proposals of the commission that they set up, unless they are faced with a mass campaign over the issue. If the TUC are serious about their claims to want to be a single, strike-breaking, strike-making voice that must be made to put their money where their mouth is and start to organise such a campaign.

Rank and file trade unionists must not let the leadership get away with rhetoric and sound-bites. We must start to organise a campaign now that involves the whole trade union movement and that demands no discrimination against younger workers and a minimum wage set at least at half male median earnings.

London yes to a mayor: but who will get the job?

LONDONERS voted yes on May 7 to Tony Blair's scheme for a directly elected mayor and a small largely powerless London Authority.

Despite the claims to it being a revolutionary initiative, it clearly didn't enthuse the voters. Only about 30% bothered to vote and 25% of them voted no, despite the absence of a no campaign.

Under Blair's union recognition proposals this would mean the scheme had been rejected, but no such thought crossed the government's mind.

On the contrary, not only are they planning to introduce similar proposals for other cities, but Hammersmith and Fulham Council has already announced, without any kind of voter endorsement, that they are moving to such a set up.

Socialists need to learn the lessons of the Londoniasco and ensure they get their opposition to such proposals in early. Unions and Labour Parties should commit themselves to opposing their introduction, and if necessary mounting a substantial campaign against them.

In London the debate moves on to questions of how the mayor and assembly will be elected and precisely what they will be able to do.

London Labour Party members, refused any say in whether the capital should have such a mayor by the manoeuvres of the national party, now have to address the question of how the Party's candidate for mayor will be selected.

The hierarchy are making it as clear as possible that Ken Livingstone (and possibly even the galloping Tony Banks) will not be allowed to stand for selection if they can help it.

Having forced through the proposals for a mayor with super powers, they now want to ensure that the person who holds them will not challenge the government in any way.

Articles are being encouraged in the press publishing the record of the Greater London Council under Livingstone acting as a way of undermining his campaign.

If Party members (and this includes trade unionists) are to have a proper choice of Party candidates for the election, then the procedure has to be built up now, without waiting until the leader presents a sanitised list for members to choose between.

Unions and Parties have to demand a democratic selection procedure in which all candidates nominated by a certain minimum number of members are placed on the ballot paper without preconditions.

Islington council's "equal right" - to be sacked?

by Elkie Dee

ISLINGTON Council sacked twelve striking workers on May 27, signalling the determination of management and the Council's leadership to go all out to break the strike. Workers and the unions which represent them.

The strikers are Housing Needs Officers who work with homeless people and deal with rehousing applications.

The strike was in response to the dismissal, under cover of a restructuring of the Housing Needs Section, of eight workers.

All the Housing Needs Officers had been made to repudiate for their own jobs, and put through interviews and written tests, including the UNISON branch secretary, Rob Mitchwitals, who is blind.

He refused to sit the test on the grounds that it would put him at a serious disadvantage. Under disability discrimination legislation, disabled workers should not be required to sit such tests.

Initially, UNISON members within Islington went on strike because of the selection procedure, and tests and interviews were postponed, but it eventually took place.

A number of jobs within the section were advertised in the Guardian but the procedure had been completed, and in the light of what has occurred since, this suggests some anticipation that there were going to be dismisals. This is all the more so at the point of action of strike action against the restructuring.

Equal opportunities

Eight workers, mostly black and ethnic minority women, were handed letters at work telling them that they had been found unpromotable to their own jobs. One was handed it in the middle of an interview with a homeless family.

On the same day, the result of the selection ballot was announced - a unanimous vote for action.

Licensed by their treatment, the strikers walked out on Monday, May 18, without giving the Council the 7 days notice required by law. Some returned or told managers of other reasons for not being at work on Tuesday. The union told the Council that the strikers would return to work. On Wednesday, 12 of the strikers received letters at home informing them that they had been sacked, with no right of appeal, for taking part in illegal industrial action for breaking their contracts of employment.

The branch is now planning to ballot all its members for action in protest at the sackings, and there is a protest meeting on Saturday June 6.

This dispute must be seen in the context of the determination
Fighting Labour's racist laws

A PRESS CONFERENCE and a lobby of Parliament were held on April 29 by the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns, as the "New" Labour government digs in to defend the racist laws of its Tory predecessors. Among those on the platform of the press conference were Abdul Onibayo — a victim of deportation after the Tories whose genuine status as a political refugee was belatedly recognised after a bitter campaign — and Bayo Omiyosa, a Liverpool City Council housing officer who also faced deportation to Nigeria. The lobby was supported by a number of campaigns, but still needs much stronger backing from the wider labour and trade union movement to force a change in government policies.

Labour's NEC election

Use campaign to build the Left

Pete Firmin

ALL SIX candidates on the Left/Centre-Left slate for election to the Constituency section of the NEC received at least the requisite 3 nominations from different Party regions. Several have received many more. The leadership has also put up a slate of the great and the good — Council leaders, media stars and the like. They are rumoured to be organising a team of students to use the phones at Labour's headquarters to call members, encouraging them to vote for the favoured candidates.

A further indication that they are prepared to pull out all the stops is shown by the fact that MPs have been handed ballot papers for their section of the NEC with the leadership's candidates' names printed on them. A substantial vote, or even victory for the Left in the election, may well bring about significant change — it is only for a section of an NEC, which has always been hopelessly small in terms of its ability to take decisions in favour of the Joint Policy Forum with an inbuilt leadership majority. Such a result would, however, indicate a growing rejection of the government's policies.

The task for the left in the next three months is to ensure the biggest possible campaign for the candidates. This does not simply mean a drive to get members to vote in the one member one vote election for the candidates, but to use the election to organise the opposition.

The election of several, or even all six, candidates will not mean much if the campaign is not used to organise their support.

Weak platform

The political platform on which the six candidates are standing is very weak, but they should be encouraged to speak out on their own views which go well beyond this.

The Network of Socialist Campaign groups will be producing leaflets spelling out the key issues in the election.

Emphasis needs to be put on linking up with those involved in the unions and single issue campaigns around key policies.

Several campaign groups and other left bodies around the country are already planning meetings with candidates and supportive MPs in July. (precedent suggests ballot papers will be sent out towards the end of July.)

These need to be organised in all towns and regions to widen the audience for alternative policies.

Local Elections

Labour maintains its hold, but left vote has risen

Neil Murray

Despite the many attacks meted out on people working since last year's General election, local election results on May 7 in general confirmed Labour's hold on local government and continuing popularity among voters. Blair will undoubtedly be pleased that May continues to be a month of celebration for him.

The low turn out can be put down to several factors. As the powers of local government diminish more and more, fewer and fewer voters see much point in turning out to vote. Central government determines more and more what local government can do and its spending powers, so the cynical don't see much point in voting.

While Labour's proportion of the vote held up, there was obviously no great wave of enthusiasm to turn out. Disillusionment with the government is setting in, without people particularly turning to the Greens or Liberal Democrats, or as yet, seeing a credible left alternative.

Where councils and seats did change hands, this was often due to local factors. The Liberal Democrats often very active on local 'bread and butter' issues tended to gain where Labour had been discredited locally. The Tories are held in contempt and the morale of their local activists remains at all time low.

The changes in control were certainly not uniform even in London. The Tories increased their hold on Wandsworth regaining the benefit of exceptionally low council tax. The Liberal Democrats nearly took Islington Council from Labour because of the high council tax combined with poor services. Labour hung on to control purely by the casting vote of the outgoing mayor. But were from an overall control (a Lib/Lab coalition) to a 20 seat Labour majority. In Hackney, which has seen a major split in the Labour group with defections to both the Tories and Liberal Democrats, Labour kept control of the Council, but the outgoing leader lost his seat to the Greens Party.

Elsewhere, Labour didn't make the gains it had hoped for (though some of this might have been due to high expectations), and lost control of Sheffield to the Liberal Democrats. Here again, the Labour leader of the Council lost his seat. The Liberal Democrat gains seem to be due to disgust at Labour's cuts in council services and privatisation policies.

As far as the Labour leadership is concerned, there are no real lessons from the election results other than complacency. They claim, contrary to much evidence, that 'New Labour' candidates did better than 'Old Labour' ones.

The gimmicky attempt to boost turnout by putting a polling station in a supermarket was a dismal failure (turnout was no higher than at traditional places). Already, within weeks of the election, Labour councils are saying they will be making further cuts.

The votes of left-of-Labour candidates varied enormously, but some of them got a significantly higher proportion of the vote than was the case in the general election a year ago.

Most noticeably, Dave Nellist, ex-MP and Socialist Party candidate, got elected in Coventry with 55% of the vote. Ian Dryden, a former Labour councillor who joined the Socialist Party, got 58% of the vote in a Lewisham ward in South London. Other candidates got highly respectable results. Others, however, got derisory votes.

While these results also vary with local circumstances (thus, the SLP got some of its best results in Newham, where Labour holds every Council seat, and was therefore not under any kind of threat), overall they indicate that some space is opening up for socialist candidates critical of the government's (and local council's) policies.

But this can only really be seen as a tactical gain where a radical campaign is built and the candidate is well known.

For instance, in Leeds, the Socialist Party candidate who is part of the campaign against the stadium development did better than the others.

Many left-of-Labour candidates who simply put out one leaflet (if that) got tiny votes. The space is there to build a left opposition to the government, but it has to be worked for, not assumed.

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**6 SOCIALIST OUTLOOK**

**July 5 anniversary looms**

**IHS: a birthday or a funeral?**

John Lister

ON THE EVE of its 50th birthday, the National Health Service is under massive pressure.

As health authorities and trusts grapple with the cuts in spending required to balance the books by April 1999, indications from around the country suggest a new, concerted management drive to reduce the number of front-line acute beds and slash the number of general and community beds all together.

Health Secretary Frank Dobson’s obvious embarrassment at the government’s breach of its health promises is far from ambitious promise to cut waiting lists for hospital treatment; the leaked papers of mutually incompatible and increasingly impossible demands on NHS Trusts.

On the one hand he has insisted that they prioritise emergency treatment, and the new government’s allocation of £300m last winter was specifically targeted in this direction.

But with ever fewer beds remaining open in hospitals, priority for emergency admission necessarily means delaying the admission and treatment of “elective” patients on the waiting list.

Now ministers have thrown in another lump of money, with orders that it should be used to reduce the numbers waiting: but with only peanuts to spend – insufficient to open extra beds – this must mean that the extra patients “cleared” from the waiting list will be only the cheapest and most minor cases, who can be treated as day cases and sent home to nurse themselves.

Meanwhile health authorities seeking to minimise the size of waiting lists are resorting to other, more covert measures, including the wholesale exclusion of certain types of treatment and imposing strict limits on the numbers receiving certain types of operation.

Dobson’s attempts to resolve the problem of “bed blocking” by giving extra cash to social services to arrange the discharge of frail elderly patients to nursing homes is also riddled with contradictions. Lack of suitable places, social service budget cuts and the weakness of GP services are leading to ever more elderly patients filling the beds which Dobson’s cash emptied last winter. Meanwhile the NHS has increasingly abdicated any responsibility to provide continuing care for the frail elderly – the generation which built and paid for the NHS.

While this represents a major change in the NHS since the time of its foundation, one area which has been constantly neglected is mental health care. Since 1981 successive governments have spoken of the advantages of community care – but failed to deliver the cash required to make it work.

New Labour is no exception and campaigners are furious on the campaign trail: 12,000 marched through Kettering to demand their hospital against closures as Wrexham’s EAH seeks to axe over 300 beds.

That the £500m they had been led to expect for mental health services over the next few years will not be available: only a fraction of this amount will be grudgingly handed over.

The carefully leaked rumour that tight-fisted Gordon Brown was about to come up with a £150m or £200m handout for the NHS should also be taken as a shoe-box of salt. Such sums would be significant if provided over and above inflation; but if NHS spending is to be cut by only £5bn in cash terms over the next three years, this would represent a bigger cut than the Tories ever made.

The heat is on. Labour wants health authorities to balance their books by next year so that they can persuade increasingly sceptical GPs to take over a growing responsibility for purchasing services. But the desperate measures required to cut around £500m from spending during a single year has triggered angry campaigns across the country, while it threatens to lose more health workers. As NUS student reps round the vol-au-vents and sing hymns in the church services to mark the NHS birthday, they will be keeping their calculators warm for the NHS: anything less will be another miserable betrayal of Labour’s mandate for change.

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**EAZs: a Trojan Horse for privatisation of schools**

Gill Lee, Officer, Lewisham Teachers’ Association

EDUCATION Action Zones threaten to undermine teachers’ national pay and conditions; introduce market pressures and the profit-motive into the running of state education; and increase social inequality in education.

On May 9 around 80 activists gathered in London to build a campaign against the EAZs. Those present recognised that the EAZs represent a ‘Trojan horse’ which, in the name of tackling social disadvantage, will actually ensnare inequality while introducing business interests directly into the education system.

The Campaign is a response to the defeat on EAZs at the National Union of Teachers Conference at Easter which failed to adopt a strategy of all out opposition to the Zones. Followed the Broad Left (ie right wing) Executive’s ‘new realist’ policy of ‘constructive engagement’ was adopted.

Delegates were told that Blair was set on education, too determined, and had too much international prestige to back down under union pressure, and that total opposition to EAZs would leave the union marginalised.

Many of those present on May 9 were from areas which have formulated bids and a number of key features have become apparent. Many of the bids have been formulated in secret, with parents and teachers in EAZ schools often unaware a bid had been placed at all.

Business interests in the Zones are aiming to make independent schools, the EAZ area, take on the characteristics of private sector EAZs. The PFI bid for Pimlico School in Westminster is to replace the current facility with a new £26m contract is for 25 years. The winner of the bid will take over cleaning, dinner staff, IT, CDIT, Art, school keeping and other jobs; everything except teaching itself.

All the existing staff will lose their jobs, and have to be reemployed. In exchange for the investment, between 35% and 40% of the school playground will be sold off for luxury housing.

In Lewisham catering firm Charwell’s is about to take over the management of school meals and will spend £4.5 million upgrading run-down school kitchens and canteens. In exchange they would like to introduce outlets for Kentucky Fried Chicken and Taco Bell in schools.

In Ealing repairs to buildings are under a PFI contract which allows only one firm to repair school buildings, reputedly for exorbitant fees. The battle of the Hillingdon workers with PIMM and others should tell us the conditions and pay that workers can expect once private firms are allowed to take over what have previously been publicly run for the public sector.

While the EAZ initiative at least recognises a responsibility on the Government’s part that social deprivation and educational achievement are linked, the Zones look for the solution in the wrong place – private industry – and through the wrong prism.

The solution offered is for working class pupils to spend more time in school (as extra 2 hours in many bids) and less in their homes and communities, since these are seen as the barriers to achievement.

In so far as the Bids address the nature of education, they ensnare social inequality rather than challenge it. Each EAZ will contain a specialist school. Those proposed so far seek to specialise in sports or performing arts.

This narrow, skewed notion of the value of working class pupils is reinforced by the power of the EAZs to displace the National Curriculum and the proposal in many Zones to substitute a narrow vocational curriculum of extended work experience, literacy and numeracy.

In a context in which the majority of middle class pupils receive the ‘gold standard’ of the National Curriculum, pupils receiving a reduced curriculum will be less likely to find jobs or further educational opportunities.

The danger is that in using the rhetoric of deprivation, in promising some extra money for EAZ schools (which will largely be swallowed up in extra salaries for superheads and the provision of services “in kind” by the private sector partners) and in promising a work-based curricula to parents who fear unemployment for their kids, Labour is driving a wedge between teachers and parents.

In building opposition to the EAZs teachers should be ready to engage in a debate with parents about why the current education system is failing working class pupils and why the EAZs are no solution.

Activists at the May 9 Conference agreed a series of measures to draw attention to the EAZs, including local public meetings, a national demonstration and a fringe meeting at Labour Party Conference.

A revamped steering committee will be held on June 13 in Manchester Mechanics Institute at 1.30pm.
Rail: on track for June offensive

Greg Tucker

TRACK engineering workers in several companies spanning the country have overwhelmingly voted for industrial action.

As we go to press, the ballot results from workers in three other companies are expected to see similar endorsement of the RMT's campaign for decent wages and conditions.

A special Engineering Conference on 6th June will discuss what action should be taken.

At the same time a ballot of RMT members on LUL will conclude. The time has come to start to fight back against privatisation.

The RMT has already notched up one major victory this week. On Crewe South West Trains were facing the introduction of Driver Only Operation which would have resulted in the loss of some hundreds of jobs, with worse conditions for those left to pick up the work.

Rail engineers signal new militancy

by a Shovel Hand

THERE IS no doubt that the experience of two years plus of privatisation has moved the eyes of most of our members to the realities of the situation.

The dawning universal consensus of steward blandishments in the form of so-called "suitability", asset-stripping activities, victimisation and harassment of elected union representatives and rank and file overwork and price erosion and attacks on rights at work, transport and allowances generally.

The restructuring plans of the privatisation companies are little more than a sick joke. All documents have presented to RMT a farewage of assaults on sociable working hours, hard-won allowances and transport to work facilities and financial losses in take home pay to the tune of a hundred pounds plus.

So our members are faced with a prospect of losing out in every area that makes life worthwhile or at least bearable and getting a de facto pay cut on top, just to rub insult into injury.

RMT's counter-proposals, known as "The Blue Book", seek to put the skills under such propositions.

Our members are sick of the constant refrain of threats to pull out and lose contracts as if they themselves would be to blame if this should come about. Outside agency labour is already being used to undermine our members. The RMT's counter-extension of the TUC and Labour leadership under the spotlights of the media has a great deal of public sympathy for workers in conflict with privatisation cowboys.

A direct confrontation is in the offing with the privatised companies and a consequent indirect one with Labour generally. It will be the first national rail stoppage since the signalworkers humiliated the Tories in 1994 and is thus of great significance. All socialists, trade unionists, trades councils and everyone sympathetic to us must organise and rally to us in the current dispute.

Additionally, from the recent development of left wing advances within railway trade unionism (eg the recent election of Dave Rix of the SLP in ASLEF) there is a good prospect of forming a strong industrial union uniting all grades of railworkers for the first time ever in history, thus ending the endemic sectarianism that has hamstrung our movements for so long.

How Adams cooked his own goose

A Brighton Aslef member

THE RECENT General Secretaries election at ASLEF saw Mr Adams defeated by SLP supporter Dave "(Mike)" Rix. This opens up opportunities for the left as a whole.

For many members, the race started with the 1995 pay deal. A series of one-day strikes for a "substantial pay increase" after the last chance nationally before privatisation, were called off after two days, for a rise below inflation and a promise of restructuring.

On Connex South Central (London suburban and Sussex coast) Adams called off a one day but lost summer, despite overwhelming support, on flashy promises from Connex management.

As this was during ASLEF conference, he needed their agreement to do this. He told them that Connex had "totally surrendered", that their negotiations had been replaced and their proposals for restructuring improved.

The representatives for the negotiations were not even consulted. The next week, when they went back, they found business as usual.

Adams' closeness to the Labour leadership did not help him either. Despite widespread anger at Labour's plan, for privatising London Underground, he has equívocated. He also ditched ASLEF's demands for decriminalisation of BR, at Blair's request, and sat on disputes in the run up to the general election.

Indeed, in such disputes that have taken place, he sought to direct anger away from management and up against BR.

At times this was just ignored, but at others he has created an atmosphere of blaming recruitment that promised to lead to all-out war, with ASLEF taking a right-wing company union role.

Mick Rix, to his credit, has opposed this, and the SLP will hopefully capitalise on the anger at privatisation, restructuring and Labour's record.

TUBE PRIVATISATION - INDUSTRIAL ACTION THE KEY

THE TORIES may have privatised British Rail, but privatising London Underground is all New Labour's own work. For all the talk of a "Third Way", it is clear that John Prescott's plans are no different than the Tories'.

When BR was sold off, Knapp led the RMT into a dead end - with a policy of holding back on any action, waiting until Labour is in office and hoping everything would be put to rights.

The reality is that such a strategy is now obvious to all. This time round there can be no excuses. The only way to defend tube workers is through industrial action.

The RMT will announce the result of a ballot of its LUL members on June 3. A positive result will mean an all out attack.

The task of winning the ballot has been made harder by Prescott's strategy.

Instead of a clear sell-off he opted to focus on the first instance on privatising the LUL infrastructure workforce. Train crew and station staff are being fed the lie that their jobs will be protected.

But leaked documents from LUL management show that all staff will ultimately be affected, and that even in the short term they have been given the green light by the government to launch an attack on all tube workers' jobs and conditions.

Every tube worker is threatened by privatisation. RMT activists have pumped that message out over the last week. But a successful ballot is by no means the end of the story. LUL management, with government support, are talking of a legal challenge on the grounds that any action against privatisation is by definition a political strike and thereby unlawful.

Whilst the RMT leadership is confident of its legal arguments it must be prepared to stand up to any such challenge by organising action in any case.

The RMT has already prepared to sponsor campaigns against the Tories (and new Labour) anti-union laws and has long had policy to oppose them in action. In this instance it has no alternative.

Knapp's strategy of quiet lobbying of the government has clearly failed: not even one of the RMT's sponsored MPs was prepared to come out in support of Prescott's plan.

Industrial action co-ordinated with action by the BRC can ensure that workers gives the best hope of success.

Whilst it will not be easy, postal workers around the country have already shown that it is possible to organise effective action outside of the legal framework.

Indeed, in the recent LUL Northern Line dispute the RMT picked up none other than tube workers who were thereby technically in breach of the anti-union laws. Part of the settlement of that dispute was an undertaking from LUL that all disciplinary action against any such tube worker would be dropped.

The RMT rally against privatisation on April 30 was used by Knapp to try to defuse tube workers' anger. A sorry affair it saw MP speaker after speaker tempting to bore the RMT membership into submission.

On June 11 the RMT's LUL Regional Council will be holding its own rally. This will be a different affair. It must be used as a springboard into action, defying the law if necessary.

Remember when Labour leaders marched with the rail workers?
Not peace, but imperialist pacification!

Through Irish Eyes

A column from Socialist Democracy, Irish section of the Fourth International

PEACE AT LAST! That's the promise of the Stormont agreement. Tony Blair, walking on water across the Irish sea, persuades the warring tribes to shake hands.

But the old racist stereotype of the Irish question that's because it is the old stereotype of the setting up as cover for a policy as reactionary as any in the new labour arsenal - the pacification-unions.

The problem for socialists is that the outcome of the Irish referendum is, as they say, a triumph for imperialism and a massacre of the working class to support its own interests through the political collapse of the republican movement.

The central element of the British triumph is the return of Stormont, "improved", by a promise that some elements of sectarian privilege will be reserved for the nationalists and that they will have a protective veto.

The second element is that the British will become invisible. The Stormont shield will disguise the fact that they retain direct control of the sectarian state through security functions.

The third element is the global acceptance of the unionist veto on democratic change on the island which the British can now argue represents the exercise of Irish self-determination and removes that issue from political discussion, as happened in the history books.

The bourgeois nationalists get stability, an advisory role for Dublin and a junior partnership for the SDLP in the running of the sectarian northern assembly.

The unions get a restored veto on power and increased sectarian privilege.

We are welcoming a lesser level of sectarian privilege for the SDLP in the new North like the SDLP in the old North like. They have, incidentally, ratified this.

The promise of a lesser level of sectarian privilege is the SDLP's St Patrick's Day gift to us all. It is enough to ensure that the bigots get almost 100% of the unionist voice on the deal. The deal is so embarrassing of the pro-unionists that Paisley was reduced to complaining about prisoner release and the fact that Sinn Fein was likely to be a very junior partner in the executive.

For the republican movement, their endorsement of the deal was a clear indication of what the whole peace process had been for them - a gradual process of assimilation by the politics of bourgeois nationalism.

This means participation in a process of re-establishing British institutions around a promised "equality" agenda as vague and ambiguous as the proposals on Stormont are sharp and unambiguous.

On the back of the republican collapse has come a whole tide of revision. The Women's Coalition, a post-modernist feminist organisation that has dispensed with the need for a programme, has, with the help of the Communist Party, established itself as the "left" of the peace process.

Together they are helping to give a loop-the-loop to the representatives of the "left".

Offering nothing to nationalists. Militant and Tribute

British strategy had been all along to get moderate unionism to accept some sharing of sectarian privilege so that it could continue with a mass loyalist base to support its occupation and still draw upon the support of the Catholic middle classes and the Dublin government.

One of its problems was that unionist "modernisation" was represented by the hero of Drumcree, Trimble, in the end the British spread the Orange card, publicly endorsing the unionist case during a spate of loyalist killings and forcing Dublin to accept Trimble's "heads of agreement" as the basis for settlement rather than the original framework deal.

Paisley and the others who could not be reconciled wasted the old unionist programme - military repression of all nationalist opinion and a full and undiluted expression of their sectarian privilege.

Loyalist consent

The problem of a settlement based on loyalist consent quickly became evident. The fact that imperialism was assured of a majority 'yes' on both sides of the border was not enough.

The only democratic mandate that would count would be a majority 'yes' in the Protestant/unionist community. The campaign became a mass intervention by the British government to conciliate the bigots without actually conceding to them.

Blair bent the agreement inside out to assure the far right that Sinn Fein would be humiliated and when it tried to enter the executive, interpretation was that Sinn Fein in the North is not easy. There was no reason to believe electoral wards and only the overwhelming age was recorded. However the overall vote of just over 71% indicates success for the British, with a slim majority of unionists supporting the deal.

The difficulty in winning unionist support is an indication of the overall instability of British rule, but in the short term divisions within the "no" unionists should erode their effectiveness. They will however have the potential to wreck the agreement if they achieve a high assembly vote so the British now need more conciliation of the bigots, more sweetness for Trimble and so on through the election, the setting up of the assembly and indefiniately into the future.

The nationalist vote in the North was overwhelmingly in favour, with a vote of 60% on a high turnout. This indicates that Sinn Fein has managed to dump its programme and bring its base with it: the republican opposition is small and isolated.

In part this is because there is a "new" Sinn Fein that offers a material base for reformism in a large community and voluntary sector funded by British and European money.

There are however many problems ahead for Sinn Fein. The base for reformism is not as far as reform and there is no way that the needs of their working class supporters can be met in the sectarian hell-hole the North is re-inventing.

At the moment pragmatism (in reality opportunism) rules all, with Gerry Adams telling the Ard Fheis to vote "yes" (for the leadership) and "whatever way you like" in the referendum. The belief is that a growing Sinn Fein vote will destabilise unionism and force the British to step in and improve things. A drop in the Sinn Fein vote would tend to destabilise this, and this is a possibility with "old" Sinn Fein, who provided the base of the machine, quietly retiring.

The vote in the South to amend the constitution and recognise Sinn Fein's "alliance" would vote routinely in the high 80s or 90s, appears overwhelming and will be used by pro-imperialist forces to argue that the Irish working class were given their right to peace and reconciliation and chose to negate it.

It's important to remember that the media parties in the South, including Sinn Fein, united to tell workers that the yes vote was a vote for peace.

In these circumstances, with northern nationalism appearing to endorse the vote and in the absence of struggle what’s on offer is the low curve of just over 60% and the fact that nearly 10% voted against.

In the same poll, on an issue on which many workers had a clearer view of their own interests - the Amsterdam treaty - the yes vote was down to 60%.

When Bernadette McAliskey (IRA) offered the Stormont deal she was asked by US socialists what could be done now, the answer was: "Two things. We have to look for opportunities to engage people on specific issues, even limited ones.

Analysis

"We also try to engage in politics of the left"...

We encourage people to examine the basic realities of the relationship between Ireland and England. We need analysis as a new thinking. It has been a problem in the Irish movement for some time that there has been little study of history or political discussion. This has got to be a priority.

"The deeper the understanding that people have of the basic issues, the less likely they are to be misled. This is the first step that has to be taken before we can start to move forward again."

Socialist Democracy will be part of such a reengagement. We will bring to it a class analysis that enabled us to understand correctly the evolution of the peace process from the Hume-Adams talks to the political collapse of republicanism.

Socialist Democracy will be part of such a reengagement. We will bring to it a class analysis that enabled us to understand correctly the evolution of the peace process from the Hume-Adams talks to the political collapse of republicanism.

We will struggle for the independence and self-organisation of the working class and we will be from the beginning try to root out the illusion in militarism and nationalism that is the source.
Arms race to secure right wing rulers

Terry Conway

Those who failed to understand the significance of the recent Indian nuclear tests should be forced to pay attention by the rush to nuclear testing first by the Indian government and then in its turn for Pakistan. Historically, India always cited the moral factor as a reason why it would not behave like nuclear states elsewhere. Following the installation of the BIP government, and the Communist programme but without any serious attempt to limit the war in Afghanistan, the very concept of nuclear deterrence has been rejected.

The Indian response is to use the old card of war-mongering - especially Pakistan to bolster support for the illusory and reactionary dream of a 'superpower.' When India has initiated tests, the ground was certainly laid by previous Congress governments and, as our Indian comrades explain below, the tests have had wide support across the political spectrum.

Indian socialist Ashok Varsak explained after India's tests:“There will now be tremendous domestic pressure on Pakistan to follow India's course of testing and installation. If this happens, which is much more likely, the pressure on India to go slow further and openly deploy nuclear weapons will become intense. Once this happens, Pakistan will follow suit and the regional nuclear arms race will begin. In Pakistan, too, support for the tests has come across the political spectrum. At a press conference, Asif Ali Zardari said that the country is ready for war at any moment, and openly deploy nuclear weapons will become intense. Once this happens, Pakistan will follow suit and the regional nuclear arms race will begin.

In Pakistan, too, support for the tests has come across the political spectrum. At a press conference, Asif Ali Zardari said that the country is ready for war at any moment, and that Pakistan is fully prepared for any future conflicts. The government has also announced that it will increase its military spending and develop new nuclear weapons to counter India's capabilities.

The Indian government has been quick to respond to Pakistan's tests, announcing that it will develop even more advanced nuclear weapons. The government has also stated that it will continue to test new nuclear warheads in order to maintain its nuclear deterrence capabilities.

The Chinese government has also expressed its concerns about the development of new nuclear weapons in the region. In a statement, the Chinese foreign ministry said that the development of new nuclear weapons in the region is a cause for concern and that all states should work towards a nuclear-free zone in the region.

However, the Indian government has been quick to respond to China's concerns, stating that it is not interested in developing new nuclear weapons and that its current nuclear arsenal is more than sufficient for its security needs. The government has also stated that it will continue to test new nuclear warheads in order to maintain its nuclear deterrence capabilities.

In conclusion, the development of new nuclear weapons in the region is a cause for concern and all states should work towards a nuclear-free zone in the region. The Chinese government has expressed its concerns about the development of new nuclear weapons in the region, and the Indian government has been quick to respond, stating that it is not interested in developing new nuclear weapons and that its current nuclear arsenal is more than sufficient for its security needs.
Inflation rises sharply
Stormy times ahead

ANDY KILMISTER looks at the latest evidence on the state of the British economy. THE MOST recent economic figures show clearly that despite government and employer rhetoric about the productivity gains of British capitalism remain unsolved.

The annual inflation rate currently stands at 4%. This is higher than any of the rich industrialised countries, about three times the level in the USA, France and Germany and double that of Japan. Wages and profits are also higher in Britain than in comparable countries and is accelerating.

As a result the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England has talked of the possibility of a further rise in interest rates, although the rate of growth is growing sharply and manufacturing output is hardly growing. Indeed, the last three months actually saw a decline in British industry. In the previous quarter, whereas comparable production in Germany, France and Spain grew strongly.

The relative calm of the British economy since the exchange rate crisis of 1992 has already lasted longer than most expected. The combination of fairly steady growth with low inflation was always dependent on a particular set of circumstances: the weakness of the labour movement, the face of mass unemployment, and the amount of spare capacity in the economy and quite strong export growth as sectors of the world economy boomed. Now exports are dropping back dramatically, to a large extent because of the crisis in Asia. Weak investment over the last five years means that the economy is now operating close to full capacity. While the level of industrial action remains low, falling unemployment has given workers some confidence to demand higher wages and have left them unprepared to make some concessions.

The main reason that this has not fed into higher inflation levels earlier has been the very high level of the pound, which has kept import prices low. In the last few weeks the pound has fallen — but not directly into an increase in the inflation rate. But at the same time the interest rate rises which have already occurred are hitting investment, while leaving consumers spending relatively unchanged as incomes rise for some — and as those who live on interest income (mainly the wealthier section of elderly people) benefit.

With consumer spending still growing fast and investment stagnating, the trade deficit has opened up quickly. Over the last year, Britain ran the biggest trade deficit in the European Union, at over £15 billion, with only Spain coming close. The British economy continued to decline and the A recent report showed much of British industry with productivity levels well below other EU countries.

The last six years represent one of many attempts by both Tory and Labour governments to achieve that elusive goal that "welfare and industry" can be achieved without imports. The country's trade performance is deteriorating. Britain now has a smaller share of the world market than it had in 1992.

Faced with the possibility of increasing inflation and a growing trade deficit, the government and the Bank of England are moving towards slowing the economy down. But with manufacturing so weak this risks tipping the whole system into recession. A return to recession would not give any reduction in inflation if the pound continues to rise.

The root cause of the economic dilemma is the collapse of the British pound. For Blair's talk about the virtues of flexibility is nonsense. In Britain a recent report by the National Institute on Economic and Social Research painted a picture of large sections of British industry with productivity levels well down on other EU countries, notably those in the south.

This situation, primarily the legacy of the possibility to stall a re-examination of low investment, leaves the British economy chronically vulnerable to cycles and instability.

The last six years represent one of many attempts by both Tory and Labour governments to achieve that elusive goal that "welfare and industry" can be achieved without imports. The country's trade performance is deteriorating. Britain now has a smaller share of the world market than it had in 1992.

The British pound, which has been so much the symbol of British capitalism's ability to compete in the world market, is now a poor imitation of that role. The British pound, which has been so much the symbol of British capitalism's ability to compete in the world market, is now a poor imitation of that role. The British pound, which has been so much the symbol of British capitalism's ability to compete in the world market, is now a poor imitation of that role. The British pound, which has been so much the symbol of British capitalism's ability to compete in the world market, is now a poor imitation of that role.

The referendum result was a victory for the government. It has given Parliament an opportunity to consider the options of a single currency. A few weeks later, a majority of workers rejected the tentative agreement proposed by union leaders and the employers' federation, and went on strike demanding a full sixth of weekly pay.

After 10 days, the government, together with the right-wing opposition, decided to call the strike. Despite widespread union disagreement, the strike was a defeat for the government, mainly because of the absence of a left current inside the unions. However, the new political tensions will come up. The government, not based on a majority, operates inside a majority. It will have to negotiate with opposition parties in every major issue. The government will remain at the centre of the political debate and will be forced to take difficult decisions because of attempts to abandon the anti-inflation policy.

The Maastricht treaty is a formula for the socialist movement. It implies the common currency, the signing of a new treaty with countries of a "no" majority. The socialists argue that the Maastricht treaty would be a disaster for the working class. It would be a catastrophe for the working class. It would be a catastrophe for the working class. It would be a catastrophe for the working class.

In Denmark, the left, which has always been a part of the trade union movement in Denmark, has split. The Socialist People's Party, which has a long tradition of supporting the movement, is split. The Socialist People's Party, which has a long tradition of supporting the movement, is split. The Socialist People's Party, which has a long tradition of supporting the movement, is split.

The government of the European Union tends to replace workers and social interests. It is mainly workers, who would normally vote for the Social Democrats, who go against the party recommendation and vote yes. In 1993, it was other Social Democratic voters; and in 1997 even more, with a 45% yes. This shows that the general tendency remains, even though the nature has changed slightly. Right-wing and nationalist forces played a significant role in the campaign against the treaty.

The Danish People's Party, emerging as the main opposition during the last year, tried the streets with posters saying "No, Danes, vote No!". The biggest daily newspaper, Berlingske Tidende, built an aggressive "no" campaign on a very narrow-minded basis.

At the same time, part of the left intelligentsia has abandoned its opposition to the European Union and turned to a "progressive" policy inside the Union framework.

These trends are reflected inside the Socialist People's Party, which has been divided in recent years. By a majority and without any public debate, the Danish government agreed to the Schengen agreement only one month before the referendum. However, since it is included in the new treaty, the Schengen agreement and the question of border control seem to be a very important issue during the campaign. The left argued against the creation of supranational bodies without any democratic control, eroding the role of the nation states, the "suspicious citizens", and against the enlargement of a European Union directed against immigrants and refugees, while the right wing focused on the defence of the Danish border.

Another important issue has been the enlargement of the European Union, towards Eastern Europe. The government and the "right-wing opposition parties", which are the only way to continue the process has failed — and to lose this "historical chance to help these states in their liberation from the Soviet empire", as Mr. Schumann said. On the one side, most people support the perspective of integrating the former Soviet states inside the EU (except Estonia), but argues that the Amsterdam treaty is not a final step for them but rather an obstacle to a fair and full enlargement of all applying countries.

Finally, much discussion focused on the possible consequences of a "no" majority. The socialists argue that the Maastricht treaty would lose influence or even be more or less excluded from Europe, which would be a disaster for the working class. The government, on the other hand, argues that the Maastricht treaty would be a catastrophe for the working class.
have their funding phased out over six years; those that lose Objective 2 status over four years. The document is committed to promoting labour flexibility, in line with the decisions of the Luxembourg Summit last November, stating that "a key task of structural policy will be to underpin the reform of labour market policies and practices". The convergence criteria are also invoked, in that control over the allocation of cohesion funds will be "strengthened to prevent excessive public deficits in the context of the stability and growth (sic) Pact".

With the current summit being held in Cardiff, it is appropriate to take Wales as an example of the effects of Agenda 2000. Under the current system, most of the country is covered by either Objective 2 or Objective 1 status. This has resulted in an annual funding of around 100 million Ecu (£150 million) a year for the period 1994-99.

This is indeed a small amount of money, compared to the British state's allocation of over 7 billion to the Welsh Office budget. But most of this is set to disappear by the year 2005, since Wales does not currently qualify for Objective 1 status and only small parts of the country will qualify for Objective 2.

The proposals have predictably raised a storm of protest from governments and politicians across the Union, worried about the effect that such drastic cutbacks will have on their electorates (11). The response in Wales, which mirrors that in Britain as a whole, has been predictably:

・ To argue that using unemployment rates to establish Objective 2 status does not take account of the real poverty of a nation or region.

・ This has some justification, since the claimant unemployment rate in Wales is below the EU average, while the average household income is the lowest in the British states.

・ Pragmatic efforts have been made to re-draw the "poverty maps" prepared by the EU statistics agency Eurostat, so that smaller sub-regions can qualify for Objective 1 status, or at least be guaranteed Objective 2 status.

・ An intensification of the long-standing argument that Wales must become more efficient and effective in its lobbying and bidding operations (12), through improved professional support, better co-ordination between local authorities and an enhanced role in Europe for the new National Assembly for Wales (13).

Each of these approaches, in their own way, misses the point.

The key issue is that regional funds were inadequate to begin with. The cash pot has suddenly got much smaller, any argument to redefine criteria or redraw maps will only result in a smaller regional cash pot at the expense of others.

This much-needed support and effort is already spent by poor regions in competing for scant EU funds: to intensify this scramble will result in a desperate lunacy.

All of the approaches accept the logic of taking part in an enormous competition among states for a shrinking pot of EU assistance. A competition both within the existing member states and between the poorer regions, East and West, within an enlarged EU.

The starting point for the left must be to reject this whole approach and in so doing, to reject Agenda 2000 as a basis for enlargement.

The Marxist left has generally given insufficient attention to the regional dimension of EU policies (14). This reflects, perhaps, its concentration in the metropolitan centres, where regional aid is less of an issue. And yet at present, 51% of the EU population lives in areas covered by regional programmes.

The funds involved are indeed small, in financial terms, but their real importance lies in the ideological gloss and justifi-
cation which they provide for social democratic and left politicians to support the Maastricht process. Hence, the visible outrage and thinly disguised hypocrisy in response to the current proposals.

It is clear that the European left needs a wide ranging discussion on how to respond to Agenda 2000. It is perhaps useful to propose at the outset some general points on which the discussion should be based:

・ The left should not oppose EU enlargement to the East. We must stand for an inclusive Europe and mount a struggle over the social and economic basis on which such a Europe is constituted.

・ We should, however, oppose Agenda 2000 as a basis for enlargement. We should demand that all social democratic and left parties vote against this proposal in the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.

・ Pro-Maastricht politicians of the left have in the past hidden behind the excuse that the EU is dominated by right-wing governments. There are now social democratic governments in both France and Britain, with the prospect of a third in Germany. The time for excuses is over, we should demand that they formulate a Europe-wide plan to tackle unemployment.

・ We demand a massive increase in regional aid, both from state governments and the Union, to fund regional development and enlargement. Regional spending should not be restricted to infrastructure projects and promoting small and medium sized enterprises but predominantly aimed at directly creating jobs through a programme of public works.

・ Any moves towards further privatisation or erosion of the welfare state must be opposed.

・ These measures must be paid for by direct progressive taxation across the whole EU and a European wide tax on foreign exchange transactions unrelated to the current proposals.

Of course, none of these demands will be won, or even forced on the agenda, without a concerted effort. It is time that the leaders of our trade unions and the left parties gave some real content to their talk of a social Europe, by mounting active campaigns on demands such as those above.

It is also vital that we continue to develop the existing Europe-wide campaigns on these issues, such as those which have successfully mobilised for the Summits in Amsterdam, Luxembourg and Cardiff.

The Single European Act, the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam and the Dublin Stability Pact were each, in their own way, blows against the workers and poor of Europe. Agenda 2000 threatens to further reinforce a "Europe of the core regions" at the expense of an impoverished peripheral to its south, west and east. It must be opposed.

Notes
3. Group delegation product (GDP) is a mea-
sure of the total goods and services produced in a given year.
4. For a more detailed discussion of convergence in Europe, see James Faure, "Wales is Europe the poor relation?", Centre for Policy Studies, and a Welsh Assembly.
5. 8. Catherine Saunier, "Can the EU altered the east?", International Geography, No 218, June 1994.
8. "EU" Deontal, 4.45 British pounds, 6.79 Irish pounds or 11.80 Danish crowns.
9. "The EU is about" 11.80 Danish crowns.
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15. "The EU is about" 11.80 Danish crowns.
16. "The EU is about" 11.80 Danish crowns.
Why women won’t be conned by EU propaganda

The Equal Opportunities Commission (Wales) held a conference in May about the new equality provisions of the European Union – The Part Time Work Directive and The Parental Leave Directive. Through the development of equality provisions such as these, and the provision of social fund money to retrain women, the EU has promoted itself as a positive force for women’s rights, reports Cath Larkin.

EU PROPAGANDA claims that the Treaty of Amsterdam places employment and citizen’s rights at the heart of the Union.

The treaty also contains a specific commitment to equality between men and women and to fight discrimination on other grounds. These fine words are belied by the economic policies that are written into the same treaty and by the ineffectiveness of rights that ignore fundamental economic disparities along the lines of class and race.

The process of Economic and Monetary Union across the EU demands that labour is “flexible”.

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This is an acknowledgement that industrial restructuring has led to the decline of secure full-time employment.

Rather than trying to improve the employment opportunities of workers, the EU promotes economic conditions that lead to low inflation as a priority above employment.

The Maastricht Convergence Criteria, reiterated in the Treaty of Amsterdam, ensure that EU economic policy is committed to low inflation as a priority above employment.

The effects of this policy can already be seen in the drive for industrial competitiveness across the EU, inherent in the process of economic convergence, which has lead to a squeeze on wages and redundancies. These hit hardest at low skill occupations - the low-paid, mostly working class women.

In this context the Part-Time Work Directive seems particularly inadequate. Clause 4 of the Directive provides that “part-time workers should not be treated less favourably than comparable full-time workers, and that the pro-rata principle should apply”. These rights are only available to employees - agency workers and the self-employed are excluded.

Working class women, who still constitute the majority of casual labourers, are thereby excluded from the employment protection they are most in need of.

The provision of rights through the EU regularly ignores the economic imperatives which make rights inaccessable as The Parental Leave Directive also demonstrates.

This Directive requires employers to introduce a minimum of three months parental leave for male and female workers, to be taken before their child’s eighth birthday.

Dutch home helps (above), soaked. Renault workers (left) and women all over Europe are against EU austerity

It also provides for the introduction of family leave for working parents, in the event of sickness or accident and protects workers against dismissal on the grounds that they have taken parental or family leave.

Although these rights are welcomed by feminists as a step in the right direction, they are a tiny step. Consultation with businesses has ensured that the EU parental leave provisions, according to EOC predictions, are only likely to cost business £5 a year per employee.

This is because parental leave does not have to be paid. As the Maternity Alliance have commented “hardly anyone will be able to afford to take it... unpaid parental leave will be beyond the wildest dreams of most parents”. Employers also have the right to deny parental leave when it is not convenient for their business.

The final EU sop towards women’s equality is also under attack at the Cardiff Euro Summit. Agenda 2000, the proposed basis for enlarging the EU towards the East of Europe, will be debated at this summit.

The proposal is to enlarge the EU by an additional 6 member states and to divert 15% of EU structural funds towards improving the economies of these new members.

Agenda 2000 redefines the objectives under which structural funds are allocated. Although there remains a commitment to funding projects that promote training for women and that combat social exclusion, there is less funding available overall.

The EU commitment to women’s rights is selective. It provides the right to parental leave from employment but not the right to employment. It provides the right to ask employers to give consideration as far as possible to requests from full-time workers to work part-time but not from part-time workers to work full-time.

Although women and men are treated equally by these directives they ignore the fact that some (well-paid, securely employed) women are better able to access these rights than the women who are economically insecure.

The underlying trend of European economic convergence is to attack the welfare state and job security.

This constitutes an attack on the services where women are the primary users and the majority of employees.

It also constitutes an attack on women’s employment as women constitute up to 80% of those in low paid insecure jobs in EU member states. An understanding of these economic realities behind the EU rhetoric of equality is leading women across Europe to join the Cardiff EU Summit Demonstration.
SOCIALIST OUTLOOK II

New Labour heads for EMU

Turning point or stumbling block for EU?

Cardiff, Blair and the drive for EMU

As we approach the end of the British presidency of the European Union, it is necessary to take stock both of where the project of unification has reached and what Blair has achieved here in Brussels. Blair’s main concern at a European level is the success of the EMU and the introduction of the EMU. He is proud of his Union at a European level. Last year’s Luxembourg summit set this latter process in train, and Cardiff will consolidate it. Protesting against this will be key for those concerned with counter-summits and demonstration in the Welsh capital.

At home, Blair will be pleased that recent opinion polls show that opposition to joining EMU has fallen. While there is still a majority against, New Labour has not really started its campaign for the forthcoming referendum. This is likely to be stepped up after the Cardiff summit and we can expect to see more glossy stump the Ulrike Johnson with a lot of broadcast on the joys of EMU. Activists in Britain must ensure that Blair is in the campaign in bringing thousands to Cardiff to support a ‘no’ campaign, a vibrant and internationalist ‘No’ campaign.

Here we reproduce sections of a new Socialist Outlook pamphlet: The Case Against EMU which analyses why European integration is so central to the European ruling class.

Why bosses want a European super-state

EUROPEAN integration, through the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties, is the central political project of the European Union today. It is the biggest single issue in Europe and continues to dominate the political terrain in all the member states.

The implications of the Europe of the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties are clear enough. It will be a neo-liberal, monetarist, Thatcherite Europe, designed to increase profitability for the employers, for the maximum GDP flexibility, and run down the welfare state. It will be a Europe controlled by un-elected bureaucrats by the so-called Stability Pact, which will keep government borrowing permanently below the 3% of GDP ceiling set by the convergence criteria.

So why is integration so important to the ruling class?

Today, the EU, with 15 member states, represents the largest single unit in the world economy. It has a GNP of about six trillion US dollars against five trillion for the USA and three trillion for Japan.

The EU has a total population of about that of the USA and Japan combined. However, as a trading block, in a highly competitive world, it is inadequate against its main rivals North America and Japan.

The technical questions can be solved, but how to launch it as a stable currency, rather than into a crisis.

This is a major problem given the turbulence in the currency markets and the crisis in the Asian economies. It could be a disaster to launch it just before a recession, which may well happen. But the huge expenditure of political willpower which has driven the project this far remains in place.

Despite the determination of the key governments, there are serious problems with EMU.

Beyond economic stability. Public opinion remains deeply divided in all the main countries of the EU, as can be seen once again by the relatively narrow result in the recent Danish referendum on the Amsterdam treaty.

From the point of view of its key backers however, EMU cannot be allowed to fail. It is a crucial tool for showing in practice the possibility of transcending the established nation-states and creating a truly European ruling class with its own institutional framework – or at least EMU therefore represents a watershed – a turning point or a stumbling block for the future of the EU.

But there is more than that. The European Union is an integral part of an increasingly globalised world economy which has given renewed impetus to the formation of large, competing trading blocs. Intensified global competition between ever larger multinational companies has resulted in a desire to secure larger home markets, common currencies, and for an institutional framework for the concentration and rationalisation of capital.

The restructuring is to be fully realised it requires federal institutions through the introduction of EMU.

Globalisation is leading to greater integration within the European Union on the one hand and the emergent economic power blocs on the other.

The EU is a preparation for the more effective competition with the economies of the Pacific rim (dominated by Japan) and a North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) dominated by the USA.

It is an integral part of a world increasingly dominated by international capitalist institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

These institutions are the driving force of the world-wide neo-liberal offensive against the working class promoting economic and financial deregulation and labour flexibility.

This is the "internationalism" of the capitalist class: it must be challenged by a new level of working class internationalism and solidarity, glimpses of which we have begun to see in recent European strikes and campaigns such as the Euro-marches.

It is unable, for political reasons, to punch its economic weight. The US and Japanese ruling classes have advantages which the multi-national classes within the EU cannot match: they have a single leadership, totally dominant currencies, lower social spending, and multi-nationals on average bigger and more competitive than Europe.

Tokyo and Washington dominate and politically lead their power blocks – even a unified Germany and its powerful currency cannot do this in the EU.

The EU at its present stage of development is a poor imitation of the logic of Maastricht and Amsterdam, is a common market with many (and increasing) features of a nation state. For these reasons the deepening competition between the power blocs within the global economy is not a battle of equals at the present time.

It is the need to resolve these problems which lie behind the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties and the drive for a European superstate. The successful introduction of the European Monetary Union (EMU) – the single European currency – is a prerequisite for that.
What price a Europe of the Regions?

THE LATEST summit of European Union leaders will take place in Cardiff, the capital of Wales, on June 15-16. It is no small irony that this summit is being held in such a poor and peripheral nation, at the very time when the European Commission is proposing huge cuts in regional aid. Hare Eleri Evans examines these plans and offers some proposals for a left response.

The regional policy of the European Union (EU) was grandly designated in the Maastricht Treaty as a commitment to "economic and social cohesion and solidarity among the member states". The two main mechanisms proposed to facilitate this cohesion were the structural funds and the cohesion funds. Structural funds were directed at poor regions across the whole of the EU, while the cohesion funds were specifically targeted at the four poorest member states – Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Greece.

And yet, despite many years of funding, the EU's own figures, published earlier this year, show that enormous inequalities still exist (1). GDP per head ranges from nearly twice the EU average, for the port of Hamburg, to around half the average in regions of Greece, Spain, Italy and eastern Germany (2).

The poorest regions in Britain are Merseyside and South Yorkshire, which stand at 70% of the EU average. Wealth remains concentrated in and around state capitals, with Greater London enjoying a GDP per head at 139% of the average.

Indeed, it is possible to talk of a "golden banana" for wealthy regions, stretching from London, across to Brussels and Paris, down through the Rhineland of western Germany and into northern Italy. Of the poorest states, which have been receiving the additional cohesion funds, only Ireland has made significant progress. The position of both the Spanish and Portuguese states has only slightly improved, while Greece has actually declined.

The Irish experience is held up as a model by many in Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party, with regard to benefits of statehood and a seat at the Council of Ministers. Suffice it to say that while Ireland has enjoyed a mini boom in the last few years, the need for matching funding for all EU grants has meant cuts in many other areas of government spending. And the benefits of the cohesion fund bonanza have been very unequally distributed, contributing to a deepening of inequality within the country.

The central approach has been to use spending on infrastructure and significant corporate tax breaks to attract inward investment – hardly a model of equitable and sustainable development which other small nations could or should try to emulate.

Thus EU regional policy is condemned as a failure by its own figures. There has been no fundamental change in the pattern of regional inequalities since the early 1970s, when regional funds were first established. In fact, the situation has deteriorated. And the concentration of wealth and investment in the core regions of Europe is set to continue, facilitated by the free movement of capital and labour enshrined in the Single European Act and the shake-out of less profitable branches and enterprises under the impact of the euro.

More far-sighted observers warned of these trends when the Maastricht treaty was first drafted (4). Indeed, even some supporters of Maastricht, such as Wayne David, leader of the British Labour group in the European Parliament, had acknowledged that such trends are inevitable (5).

According to an analysis common to many social democrats, Maastricht contained two trends. The first was a move backwards in concentration of ownership and the centralisation of production in a few core regions, driven by economic and monetary union. The second was a process of decentralisation towards regional decentralisation, facilitated by regional funds, the creation of the Committee of the Regions and the principle of subsidiarity.

The funds have clearly failed, so what of the political manifestation of this approach, the Committee of the Regions? This body was established by the Maastricht Treaty and first met in 1994. It is composed of 222 delegates from regional and local authorities across the EU and must be consulted by the Council and Commission on certain areas where regional interests are deemed to be involved.

It can also deliver opinions on its own initiative, but has no powers beyond this. However, the real problem with the Committee is not only that it is powerless but, the wide, and sometimes contradictory, interests which it represents. It is only necessary to consider the diversity of small nations and regionalist politics across the EU to appreciate this point. At the risk of being schematic, the small-nation nationalism of poorer nations is most often to the left, such as in Wales, Scotland and the Basque Country. This is not least because it is often in direct competition with a more centralist social democracy for working class votes.

On the other hand, the ascendant nationalism of more prosperous small nations – Catalanis and Flanders, are predominantly to the right, though with an important left-wing component. The relatively new phenomenon of right-wing regionalism is most spectacularly illustrated by the Northern League in Italy, but also by significant votes for the Republican Party in Baden-Wuerttemberg in the early 1990s.

It is inescapable that right-wing politicians from Europe's richest regions, which benefit from the current inequalities, will find common cause with those from the poorest, who are obliged to support a more redistributive approach.

The dilemmas and contradictions of EU regional policy as we approach the creation of a single currency. Since the current means of regional aid is aimed at reducing regional assistance have clearly failed and the existing centralist economic tendencies in the EU will continue, it might be expected that an increase in regional funds would be in order. In fact, the opposite is the case, as regional funds are to be reduced in order to release funds for EU enlargement to the East.

These proposals are contained in a document from the European Commission entitled Agenda 2000 (6) and have serious implications for regional policy and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The reform of the CAP is outside the scope of this article but while the present system cannot be defended, the alternative being proposed – opening EU agriculture to the "free" market, will be equally detrimental to small farmers, rural workers and the environment (7).

The terms of enlargement are also likely to be detrimental to the workers and poor of the new member states to the East. Existing Association Agreements between the EU and the eastern states already work to block EU exports to those countries, while restricting the import of textiles, coal and steel into the EU (8).

The continued imposition of austerity measures is also a precondition for EU membership, which will cause further erosion in social protection and an increase in unemployment. Despite this, the new elites in Eastern Europe express an almost desperate desire to get on the right side of the EU and its borders of "Fortress Europe" as laid down by the Schengen agreement.

In the words of Igor Bavcar, Slovenia's minister for European affairs: "I'm afraid that there will soon be no room for Slovenia in Europe. It will be the Schengen line, and there is no line harder. But then, that's life."

The budgetary framework for Agenda 2000 has been set by the Council of Ministers, which has fixed the total EU budget at 1.27% of Union GDP for the period 1999 to 2006. This figure has been described as "woefully inadequate" by many commentators.

The no significant increase in cash will be available after the year 2000, the money for enlargement has to come from the existing regional funds and the breakdown of the regional budget for the period 2000 to 2006.

Under these proposals, the present five categories of regional assistance will be reduced to two:

- OBJECTIVE 1 – The poorest regions, with GDP less than 75% of the EU average.
- OBJECTIVE 2 – Industrial and rural areas with unemployment above the EU average.

- OBJECTIVE 3 – replaces the European Social Fund, aiming to tackle high unemployment, combat poverty, anticipate economic change and promote opportunities for women.

Funding at pre Agenda 2000 levels will be maintained for Objective 1 Areas which lose Objective 1 status will
Pete Firmin for Socialist Outlook interviewed JEREMY CORBYN MP on May 14.

"Pressure is the key"

SO: What do you think is the government’s programme?
JC: The government is trying to maintain the low corporate income tax base and attract money in through high interest rates and a fast growing market economy. It says unemployment will fall through the down' trick. The reality is that the over-valued pound is raising unemployment in manufacturing, and it will get worse.

Then there are the long term effects of the South Asian col-lapse. The majority of inward investment in recent years has been from South Asia, and this will retribut to its home base and cause problems.
The welfare state should be a universal safety net - the Tories cut holes in it (low pension benefits, boarding allowance and so on), which Labour has carried on.

Blair is reported to have sent back the initial report on the state pension because it is not so radical enough, i.e. there is not a high enough level of compulsion for private schemes. The Tories never went as far as a compulsion, only Chile under Pinochet did that.

In the absence of a decent national minimum wage the welfare to work strategy is an opportunity for unscrupulous employers to bring in people on lower wages and get rid of long-standing employees. There are to be large amounts of money on offer to the employers for training, but I doubt low effective the monitoring is.

That, together with the national minimum wage and trade union recognition bring in an element of compulsion, with the young forced into low paid jobs.

SO: What do you think of the TUC's approach?
JC: I don't know why the TUC got into this ludicrous debate about percentages of the work-force for recognition. It should be right to a member of a trade union and have it represent you.)

A surprisingly large number of MPs are agitated about this issue. 140 attended a meeting with John Monks this week, and 120 sent apologies. They were having a go at Monks for accepting the threshold, although things might change with Prescott’s mediation. The Cabinet may agree the White Paper shortly.

There is no news on the proposed level of the national minimum wage. The legislation has been passed at the last minute. The House of Commons would have to explicitly vote for any exemption for under-25s.

The trade unions as a whole have allowed the discussion on recognition to carry on in a vacuum. Discussions are purely through the General Secretaries to Monks and on to the government.
The TUC has been more effective than the unions. There has been no mobilisation by the unions.

Prescott’s proposed exemption of small firms would exclude many workers from the legislation. There has been a lack of activity by the unions as a whole.

Current union members are more concerned with pay and conditions than recognition. Recognition should be a major issue for the left at union conferences.
The trade union leaders have kept quiet on everything else saying that recognition is the priority but have not mobilised even on this.

SO: How do you see the response of the Left to the government’s programme?
JC: The question is, to what extent do left parties challenge the mixed economy. Many have given up since the end of the Cold War.

In the 1970s they pursued a planned economy: now they sign up to the World Trade Organisation and MAI. There are disparate global movements on trade, child labour, poverty etc. Demonstrations at the G8 and Kyoto summits bring people together on a global level. There is an arrogance on the left that all good things stem from Europe.

The Campaign Group has grown a bit. Alice Mahon was elected to the National Policy Forum through the Parliamentary Labour Party. Concentrating on the welfare state is important for the left in the Party and unions. The MPs are doing fringe meetings at all the trade union conferences.

The Left in the Labour Party is trying to campaign on several fronts – the Gulf War, education, welfare state and so on.

The Left should concentrate on issues of the welfare state and overall expenditure. Otherwise at the end of a Labour government we will have a low, compulsory pension.

The leadership need our support. The arguments over lone parent benefit held up a lot of other things and sent out the message that there is a left in parliament too.

SO: What are Blair’s plans with the Labour Party?
JC: Democracy in the Labour Party is central to a lot of things. The centralised membership system is not about greater efficiency but centralising opinion. The membership will be last to be involved in the selection of candidates for the European and Scottish Parliaments and the Welsh Assembly. The NEC is told who to select.

The next stage – Westminster selection – is not clear yet. One suggestion is that there would be a mandatory panel – the NEC would interview before anyone could be selected.

This would destroy accountability and ensure that the first loyalty would be to the leader. This year’s NEC elections are the first under the new system of non-MP CLP representatives. We have to campaign strongly for the slate. We have to replace Dennis Skinner with Liz Davies and so on.

On the London mayoral contest, I would probably back an NEC panel and exclude Ken Livingstone.

The leadership hasn’t thought out its strategy on the Left MPs. I’m not sure if it will go for a purge, although some around Blair want clones.

There is an important left platform in parliamen-

t – it is important to stay in and defend what we got. What will happen with the Labour Party will reflect how people in society at large with opposition to reform of the welfare state.

Even before Partnership in Power it was difficult to reverse govern-

ment policies. In that sense little has changed.

Increased pressure is the key. In my view the average Labour Party member has not changed much. A certain drift out by the Left is regrettable. Most Party members are not wed-

ded to the New Labour project, although many thought we shouldn’t rock the boat in advance of the election.

Ken Clarke was wrong to give up the game in the Party. There are significant changes for the worse, but the Left must carry on.

The need for comradely behaviour among the left is important.

SO: The single European currency has now been launched, what is your attitude?
JC: European Monetary Union is about handing control to the bankers and calling it a Euro. Bankers raise interest rates and cut spending. Britain is not yet in the EMU – but it has fulfilled the criteria.

Opposition to the criteria is strong and some countries which claim to have fulfilled the crite-

ria probably haven’t. The poorer European countries like Spain will be hit hardest.

“European Monetary Union is about handing control to the bankers and calling it a Euro. Bankers raise interest rates and cut spending. The poorer European countries like Spain will be hit hardest.”
Debate inside the Socialist Party: Time for a new workers’ party in Scotland?

A contribution to the discussion by Dave Hudson

The Socialist Party and Scottish Militant Labour, its Scottish organisation, are engaged in a major discussion about launching a new workers’ party in Scotland. This discussion is important for the whole of the socialist left in Britain, including the revolutionary Marxist organisations.

Socialist Outlook comments on this discussion because of the important issues it raises for the left within a perspective of recomposition of the workers movement. Also, because the outcome of these discussions will in the short term materially affect the development of the class struggle not only in Scotland, but across the British state.

The controversy in the Socialist Party (SP), concerns the proposition made by Scottish Militant Labour (SML), that under today’s conditions, with the present development of the Scottish Socialist Alliance, a new mass workers party to the left of Labour is both needed and can be built (“a small mass workers’ party”). This is presented as a qualitative development which would supersede the present collection of organised left groups and tendencies in Scotland.

The political framework of the Scottish Militant Labour comrades is determined by three features: First, is the existence of a right wing, bourgeois, Labour Government and Labour Party, both dominated by Blairism. “The Blairite phenomenon represents for them a sharp break from social democracy, and has transformed the class character of the Party from one based on and closely linked to the working class to one based directly on the bourgeois and petty bourgeoisie. The comrades of the Scottish Militant Labour sometimes say that this process of bourgeoisification is already complete, although this is sometimes left unclear.

The second feature they raise is the Scottish National Question and devolution, and the preparations for elections by PR to a Scottish Parliament, scheduled for 1999. This scenario, argues SML, represents a significant political opening if a credible left party existed that could seize the opportunity.

Third, there are higher levels of class consciousness and mobilisation in Scotland than exist in England. This is in part due to the entwinement of socialist issues and the struggle for national self-determination. Linked to this are the more advanced levels of socialist organisation, particularly through the Scottish Socialist Alliance.

A breakthrough in Scotland?

The specific combination of these three features (to which the comrades would add the global crisis of both Stalinism and social democracy) creates the opportunity for a new breakthrough in Scotland.

The SML had some preliminary and informal discussions about launching a new party, possibly called the Scottish Socialist Party, with various prominent individuals and tendencies within the Scottish Socialist Alliance (SSA).

They say in their text, “Initial proposals for a new Scottish Socialist Party, (p.1) that there are other socialist organisations they would like to approach for discussions about the formation of a new socialist party. These include the Communist Party of Scotland, the Socialist Labour Party, the Communist Party of Britain, the Socialist Workers Party, and socialists within the Labour Party, the SNP and the Green Party.

They are prepared to dissolve SML into the new party, making its present offices and apparatus fully available to the new party, including handing over their newspaper. They do not demand that the new party is affiliated to SML’s international organisation (CWI), although some mechanism is proposed to maintain some kind of link. These proposals have the full weight of the existing SML leadership behind them, but are completely unreserved with the SP leadership.

They write that: “The stakes are high, if the socialist left in these elections fails to make a breakthrough, the advance of socialism could be slowed down. On the other hand, if socialist victories in the local elections – particularly if accompanied by the achievement of a constitutional breakthrough, even a toehold in the new Scottish Parliament could dramatically accelerate events... A breakthrough of anything like that magnitude (the 15% vote for the Green Party in 1989–90) for the socialist left in Scotland would have earth-shattering repercussions – not just in Scotland, but three-guishes Britain as a whole.” (Ibid., p.1.)

SML argues that after several years of political difficulties the decision to launch the SSA as a campaigning and electoral alliance is vindicated. The tide is now beginning to turn. They conclude that today in Scotland, there are only two serious contenders that offer an alternative to New Labour and the SNP. These are the SSA and the SLP. They also point to growing ferment in Britain as a Scottish Labour Party among the ‘nationalist’ left and the possibility of breakaways in the summer.

The comrades therefore argue that, unlike with the southern Irish system of a single transferable vote, where multi-party systems are liable to flourishes in Scotland, where the additional member system will operate, “there is absolutely no room or political justification for two or more socialist parties to stand in opposition to one another”. The Scottish system only requires a party to get 5-6% of the vote for it to get a seat in the parliament. It is clear that the new electoral possibilities have focused the comrades’ minds.

We in Socialist Outlook are fully persuaded that the situation in Scotland is more politically advanced than in England or Wales, and with greater opportunities for socialists to extend the same reasons that the SML outline. Allowing for some exaggeration by the comrades, we also believe that a serious electoral challenge by a class-struggle or revolutionary party would be very significant and would underline the changing the political terrain on the left across the whole British state.

What kind of Party?

The problem for revolutionary Marxism, which needs further discussion, is whether socialists envisage the political character of this new party will be, and what is the precise role of the Marxists? This is not simply a question of whether the new party is formally a left reformist or the new party is a new Marxist party. The comrades are right to insist it is more complex than this.

The experiment of a workers’ party out of diverse leftist moving forces, as history has shown, will often be more dynamic and complicated than abstract formulae allow. A recomposition of the workers’ movement and revolutionary regroupment require a greater conceptual refinement than general principles presented in a lifetime fashion, even if formally correct.

In this respect we would be critical of the Bolshevik-Marxist approach which, although making many very astute criticisms of the SML proposals, fails to provide a concrete analysis of the situation in the situation or provide much positive advice.

On the other hand when we read formulism in the SML text such as: “Not only in Scotland, but internationally, the traditional ideological battle lines which divided the left have become blurred” (Ibid., p.4), we find ourselves as startled as the Socialist Party EC.

Like them we feel it is necessary to ask if the comrades themselves have a vision that is not too blurred? Clearly the collapse of Stalinism and the crisis and weakening of social democracy has led to a blurring of differences between the mainstream of reformism. But the comrades are not referring to this.

Some old divisions on “the left” may take on less significance, but the fundamental divide between reform and revolution has not come down. The historic divide between reformism and revolutionary Marxism is not between those who wish to wage the class struggle against capitalism and those who don’t. The Marxist understanding of the united front is based on revolutionary collaboration. Nor is it the desire to extraplate the capitalists. Nor was it ever simply between Stalinism and Trotskyism and the crisis of the Soviet bureaucracy.

The fundamental divide is encapsulated in works such as Lenin’s famous State and Revolution or the Transitional Programme drafted by Trotsky. The divide between adventurism and Marxism is parliamen
tarism versus revolution.

Encapsulated in the Marxist programme is a perspective of a revolutionary over the class struggle and the bourgeois state power.

Some examples of blur might be found in SML’s reply to the British SP EC’s statement:

“Bolsheviks were always engaged in delineating the forces of revolution from reformist currents

“Yes, paradoxically, the task of organisation and ideologically delineating the forces of revolution from other socialist currents was, in the period 1919-1920, much a more crucial task than the task today?” (For a Bold Step Forward. A reply from the Scottish EC to the British EC, p.3)

Larkin, quoting a previous ‘name change’ debate:

“Trotskyism’s main task was to differentiate itself from reformism and Stalinism... how have they managed this? ‘The main task facing us now is to win support for a socialist programme and for socialist revolution’” (James Larkin Debate Change Debate, Page 3, Socialist Party Scotland).

The debate that faced the task of building a revolutionary party; however in all of the written and verbal discussions during this debate, the task of rehabilitating the basic programme of socialism was correctly given prominence” (Ibid., p.4)

The first point, and we are sure the comrades will agree, is that the Bolshevists were always engaged in delineating the forces of revolutionary Marxism from reformist socialist currents, not just in the most revolutionary conjunctures.
The fight for the revolutionary programme

It is not at the level of political analysis or an understanding of the need for a socialist programme that the comrades are on weak ground, but in the area of revolutionary programme. The question of how to construct a revolutionary programme is truly revolutionary in character. In their reply (For a Bold Step Forward) to Trotsky's text from the British SP Executive Committee the SML comrades provide many good historical examples from the Trotskyist tradition for flexible tactics in party building.

You can't just follow any mechanistic application of organisational ‘principles’ and be summed up by the phrase ‘organisational orthodoxy’. However, the comrades emphasise the former and hastily skimp the latter, the meaning of ‘orthodoxy’ (which of course requires Marxism).

The Trotskyists say you can't just formally counterpose “the concept of a revolutionary party to the idea of a broad socialist party” (ibid., p. 8). And that “there can exist transitional forms’ in the feature of a revolutionary party and those of a ‘broad socialist party’ coexist side by side” (ibid., p. 9). But in such matters, as the Trotskyists themselves provide they show, the two polarities are in constant struggle for dominance. The revolution of this strategic period of the conflict may, at any decisive juncture in the class struggle, result in a split. This question is the example of the political instableness of the Trotskyists. The crucial point here is that both the reformist and the revolutionary wings of this party can be organised as far more clearly early – in reality as public factions.

The ‘minority’ Bolshevik faction was openly a party within a party long before the final rupture with the RSDLP in 1912. There is of course dynamic, a dialectic, involved here. However, the question that must be answered clearly is the following: Do the SML comrades recognise explicitly that this new party will not be a revolutionary faction, a ‘party of proto-party’? In other words, if the SML comrades are founded on an Action Programme, of a type discussed by Trotsky in 1935, but with the aim of its transitional form, their party-building, struggle and debate over a short period, into a revolutionary party? Or, do they think the new party, which they hope will include the broad forces listed above, will be a revolutionary party from its foundation?

If it is the former, then it seems to us unjustified on the revolutionary Marxism to maintain some organisational and political independence within it, to wage the necessary political struggle. If it is the latter, then it seems to us unjustified on the revolutionary Marxism to maintain some organisational and political independence within it, to wage the necessary political struggle. If it is the latter, then it seems to us unjustified on the revolutionary Marxism to maintain some organisational and political independence within it, to wage the necessary political struggle.

This is the scenario in the USA in the late 1930s. If, on the other hand, the basis of unity of the new party is a more ‘broad socialist programme’ of the type of the 1938 Transitional Programme, then it seems most that the new party remains essential. To genuinely dissolve under these conditions would be nothing less than the liquidation of the Marxist programme.

Organisation within a broad left-wing party could take the form of a ‘recognised tendency or faction, legitimated by the party constitution. Office resources could still be handed over to the new party as a gesture of goodwill, but the Marxists must retain the capacity and the right, if it becomes necessary, to transform themselves into a faction to fight for the leadership of the party – with the recognition that if it fails, the party can split, taking what it can wish. This understanding should be transparent and above board in the negotiations.

Is the SSA really revolutionary?

Fed with sharp criticism of their proposals and reply in For a Bold Step Forward, the SML comrades are now presented as a revolutionary party. It will adopt the existing programme of the SSA, which is ‘the ‘full-blooded socialist programme’.

Taken together, all of the programme documents of the SSA constitute nothing less than a detailed transitional programme for the overthrow of capitalism. This is an example of the “perfect form updated and applied to the concrete conditions that exist in Scotland” (ibid., p. 5).

But the problem is that the programme of the SSA is neither a revolutionary programme, nor a transitional programme like the 1938 Programme, it is an ‘Action Programme’. This is fine as far as it goes, and as long as revolutionaries do not confuse it with the Marxist programme of socialist revolution.

The SML comrades complain that the British SP EC misrepresented the political programme of the SSA and gave “a misleading and distorted version of what they are proposing. They quote from the main programme documents of the Scottish Socialist Party.”

The SSA stands for the socialist transformation of society. To replace the free market capitalist economy with an economic system based on democratic ownership and control of the key sectors of the economy. A system based on social need and environmental protection rather than private profit and ecological destruction.” (Statement of Aims, Policy 7).

On the other hand, the SML comrades actively promote the International solidarity of the working class and the oppressed to defeat capitalism and the SSA will build the strongest possible links with socialists in other parts of Britain, across Europe and the world. The SSA stands for a limited socialist society, where poverty, starvation, environmental destruction, exploitation, war and national hatreds are not tolerated (Statement of Aims, Policy 6) (ibid., p. 4-5).

These and many other demands and political programmes, including the demand for majority rule, the right of accountability and financial conditions upon public representatives: but they do not contain a programme of the socialist revolution. In other words, the programme of the SSA is a programme which, if adopted, would be a significant step forward for the Scottish working class.

Nonetheless, the SML comrades are entitled to play a potentially historic role in the struggle for socialist society, but they can only do so if they succeed in continuing to function as a distinct tendency within the socialist movement in order to transform it into a revolutionary party.
The question is what kind of revolution will it be and how far can it go? The current manoeuvres of the ruling clique of military generals and civilian leaders, with discrete sections of the IMF and the World Bank, with a counterattack is being prepared. The threat of a mass revolt, replace Suharto, former vice-president Habibie, is of course promising elections, democratic and social reforms and legal challenges to the Suharto family empire, but these are a smoke-screen. His real objective is to divide the opposition, dampen down the flames of revolt, and stabilise Indonesia, for big business - with a little help from the IMF. Sending troops into the parliament building to remove the students there shows his true colours.

The generals who promoted Habibie, now with smiling faces, were the same men who only a month ago were organising the kidnappings and torture of political opposition of the regime. Imperialism too is quick, if reluctantly, washing its hands of Suharto, but to continue in the regime, or it was still turning a blind eye to his re-election fraud. No real solutions, no matter what offers from any of these quarters and parties, is the class, which is in any case global in scope, can only deepen. Unfortunately for Asia and world capitalism, as Alex Brummer writes in The Guardian, (30.5.98), it is "too late to re-bot-
tle the globalisation genie", and like its neighbours in East Asia, the Indonesian regime remains in deep financial, economic and political turmoil. "The new world order trumpeted by George Bush at the start of the 1990s - as global capitalism and the forces of democracy marched on tri-
umphantly - is looking extremely fragile," he writes.

But it was always a myth. The collapse of Stalinism and the Gulf war were never enough to estab-
lish a new imperialist order. Indeed the war successfully alien-
ated the Arab masses from Amer-
ican and British imperialism.

Recession

The recent economic problems in the Hong Kong economy, which is heading for recession, with output fallen by 2% in real terms in the first three months of 1998, threatens a fresh wave of collapses in the Asian financial markets.

The South Korean bourgeoisie, mired in its own protracted crisis, is now faced with major strikes from a militant trade union movement, while Japan is continuing to crack open at the seams, with a rising unemployment - the worst since the second world war.

Debt, deficit financing and cor-
rup- tion are not peculiar to Asia's "crony capitalism", but a growing feature of late capitalism on a
global scale. The crisis has spread geographically to Russia, whose corrupt, chaotic and paralysed capitalist regime is in tui-
umphant and is looking extremely fragile," he writes.

It is a tragedy of history that the Russian proletariat, still the biggest in the world, is having to learn the lessons of capitalism the hard way.

In India the rupee has hit a
to the working class and the po-
vertiestricken masses.

Everybody has heard about the taxi companies and luxury hotels, owned by one of his sons but they also feed off the state sector as well. The state oil and gas company, Pertamina has 120 comp-

nies and contractors among its clients, owned by the Suharto family in a system of corruption. His sons have a monopoly of all crude and product exports, worth £1.8 billion in 1996. One of these companies alone netted £30 mil-

lion profits last year. Altogether 1,247 separate, active companies have been identified to date! Then there are the huge charita-
table foundations... It is like the Mafia with state power.

Mass movement

Today, the mass movement is temporarily at bay, but none of the problems which led to the anti-Suharto revolt are being solved. The movement will surely reorganise itself on a more clear political basis. However, there are big political weaknesses on the side of the existing opposition parties and groups.

A few Islamic organisations have a mass following such as Nahdlatul Ulama which claims 14 million supporters. Their con-

servative business leaders were also reluctant to see the end of Suharto.

The Indonesian Association of Muslims Intellectuals also had the ear of Suharto. There is the main national chauvinist organi-
sations which consciously scape-
goat Indonesia's Chinese minor-
ity, helping to fuel the outbreaks of anti-ethnic violence against some of the urban poor.

Amin Rais is the most promi-
nent opposition leader. He is a free marketer who seeks US backing to replace Habibie as president.

He was responsible for calling off the massive demonstration in Jakarta last week - although over 700,000 people demonstrated and over 300 were killed. He has been called for mobilisations against Habibie, preferring to wait for promised elections even though they will probably be fixed. Worse, he has also called for anti-

Chinese policies.

There are 20 million workers in the cities and in recent years, trade union activity has suc-
ceeded in building independent unions. They remain fragmented but have waged some important struggles. This process of organi-
sation, combined with the pressure of the mass movement, opens up the possibility of socialist ideas getting a foothold.

It is essential that the mass movement remains vigilant and the struggle continues. The continuing struggle is the main threat to US and Habibie's regime, which has a mass of enemies.

The struggle could open the way for a move-
ment which could not only overthrow the Suharto regime but which could become the lead-
er of the power of the military, but also abolish expropriation and poverty by challenging the political and economic power of the bosses.

At a broader level, Suharto's fall shows the world once again the power of the masses when they are mobilised and determined. It shows that the reform programme is a dead letter, and the governing elites are capable of changing things through organisation and collec-
tive action.

It also shows that without an mens' programme for change, which has the ear and the confidence of the mass move-
ment, any programme for change can snatch victory from the people's grasp.
The Communist Manifesto 1848-1998

Why bosses still fear communist revolution

Charlie van Gelderen

A HUNDRED and fifty years ago, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels began the Communist Party with the words: “A spectre is haunting Europe...the spectre of communism.” When the founders of scientific socialism wrote these words, there was no communist party anywhere, nor any other mass organisation of the working class. Their nearest approximation was the trade union movement in Britain, at that time the most advanced capitalist country in the world. This was the model on which Marx set out to build his analysis of the development of capitalism – an analysis brilliantly outlined in the Manifesto and eventually elaborated in the Grundrisse and the three volumes of Capital.

Suddenly everyone is talking or writing about Karl Marx. Despite the collapse of the totalitarian “communist” system, academics, historians and economists are vying with each other to argue the relevance of Marx today. There is almost unanimity in the tributes to Marx’s genius in his development of capitalism, his remarkable diagnosis of the revolutionary character of “bourgeois society.”

Globalisation

Perhaps this is not surprising. After all where can you find a better description of globalisation as we know it today than the following passage from the Communist Manifesto?

“Threatened by a constantly expanding market classes the bourgeoisie over the surface of the whole globe. It must settle everywhere, establish connections...through its exploitation of the world market [it has] given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country...it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are being destroyed. They are displaced by new industries, whose introduction becomes a frequent and necessary conjuncture and death knell for all civilised nations, by industries that no longer work any indigenous raw material, but raw material, drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose productive power has in itself increased the demand for them. It has reduced industry to a common power of the world.”

All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are being destroyed. They are displaced by new industries, whose introduction becomes a frequent and necessary conjuncture and death knell for all civilised nations, by industries that no longer work any indigenous raw material, but raw material, drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose productive power has increased the demand for them. It has reduced industry to a common power of the world. In place of the old needs, satisfied by the production of the country, find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations...”

liberal and reactionary academic, acquainted, perhaps, only with the sterile sterilised version of Marxism that bourgeois communism offered in 1848 Marx could draw such a vivid word-picture of the capitalist system. While they grudgingly give them the opportunity for their presence, they fail to grasp the revolutionary content of his teachings, that the specter of communism which will one day face the ruling classes in 1848 and in every succeeding epoch.

By the temporary apparent success of the market economy and the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellites, they refuse to accept that the self-destructive forces built into capitalist development must reach a point where “modern bourgeois society, has jettisoned up such gigantic means of production and exchange, is like a man seen from behind. He who is no longer able to control the powers of the world which he has call’d into being, is himself no longer able to pass over thethreshold created by him. By the way...”

The revolution of 20th century capitalism, the revolution of 20th century capitalism, which has created a world where the old rules of production and exchange no longer apply, has created a world where the old rules of production and exchange have come to be defined by the new rules of production and exchange.

States conceals the reality of an unprecedented lowering in worker's real income over the past quarter of a century. In 1980, corporate executives had earnings 30 times higher than the average of their employees. By 1990 this had increased to 130 to 140 times higher.

Production was moved to Taiwan or Mexico or Haiti, to exploit cheaper - often child - labour. People in blue collars, mid-dle-class jobs were robbed of their pensions. Other employee benefits were reduced. Far from being dead, there is a revival in the class struggle. According to Gallop, the proportion of voters who believe there is a class struggle in Britain rose from 60% in the 1960s to 81% in the mid-1990s. (The Economist 27 Sept 1997).

There are a growing number of reports of strikes across the globe; in America, Canada, South Africa, South Korea, Mexico, France, Germany, Here in Britain, the Liverpool Dockers, the workers at Magnetic, Crichley, Hillington, Noun and elsewhere, have brought home the message--the class struggle is not dead.

Of course, such strikes do not represent the revolution which Marx and Engels anticipated, the final battle for the conquest of power. But they are powerful steps along the way, and Marx and Engels by their close collaboration with the Conservative British Trade Unions showed their recognition of this.

From the start, however, the founders of scientific socialism realises that something else was required. To achieve the ultimate goal, workers' power as the route to socialism, Marx and Engels, and Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg and Gramsci after them, realised that the working class needed the leadership of revolutionary parties.

Marx and Engels tried to steer the bourgeois social democratic parties along Marxist lines. With such participation, the class struggle will not move forward to socialist revolution.

Today's Marxists can best commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Manifesto by uniting to build such a party - a party firmly grounded in the working class, nationally and internationally; a party which will not learn from and try to avoid the mistakes of the past.

In Marx’s day, and again, in the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution, the cry was raised: “you communists want to introduce community of women and Engels gave a scathing reply to this in an earlier draft of the Man-

What influence will the communist order have on the family? It will make the relationship between the sexes a purely private affair, which concerns only the persons involved, with no interference from society.

It is able to do this because it abolishes private property and educates children communally, destroying thereby the two founda-

...the spectre of communism...
Building a genuine united front against fascism

Dave Landau

The EPPs have been the decade of fascist revival on the continent of Europe. We had a brief period in which a fascist party, the Alliance Nazionale, was part of a coalition government in Italy. In France, the electoral strength of Le Pen's Front National has grown by leaps and bounds throughout the decade. After the reunification the Republican Party in Germany became a significant force. There were mob attacks on hostels for asylum seekers with fatalities in some cases. Republican collapsed, but organised racist and fascist violence has continued to grow and whole swathes of Germany are no-go areas for all the communities threatened by the new right.

In Belgium the Vlams Blok became the strongest party in the local elections in Antwerp and has held on to that. Probably over half the police force are Vlams Blok supporters in that city.

In Austria there is a groundswell of support for the fascist Freedom Party and it is one of the strongest parties in Austria. This is a realisation that it's leader, Josef Haider could win or come second in the next presidential elections.

In Eastern European countries, gangs of skinheads patrol the streets in search of Gypsies, Jews and other minorities are fair game.

In the early 90s Zhirinovsky, who has a record, was one of the centres of political activity in Bradford, and a regular target of fascist attacks. The fascists had a particular hatred for Reuben, as an anti-fascist, socialist, Jew. Despite bomb threats, physical attacks and continuing harassment, the police failed to take any action until a Special Branch officer checking out the shop was himself assaulted by a fascist.

Reuben Goldberg

Roland Rance

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK readers and supporters, together with many others, took part in memorial meetings held in London and Bradford for anti-fascist and socialist activist Reuben Goldberg, who died earlier this year.

Reuben was a member of the International Marxist Group, then the British section of the Fourth International, during the 1970s. At the time, he was President of Bradford University Students Union, and one of the founders of the Bradford Ad-Hoc Committee Against Racism and Fascism. In 1975, the newly formed Asian Youth Movement was able to mobilise and prevent the National Front from marching through Manningham, the heart of Bradford's black community. Reuben was central in this mobilisation, and contributed work of the AYM and its successor groups for the rest of his life.

Reuben worked for many years at Bradford's Fourth Idea Community Bookshop. This was one of the centres of political activity in Bradford, and a regular target of fascist attacks. The fascists had a particular hatred for Reuben, as an anti-fascist, socialist, Jew. Despite bomb threats, physical attacks and continuing harassment, the police failed to take any action until a Special Branch officer checking out the shop was himself assaulted by a fascist.

A CATTLE dealer once drove some bulls to the slaughterhouse one night with his sharp knife. "Let us close ranks and jack up this executioner on our horns", suggested one of the bulls. "I'm the butcher; why in the world should you be the butcher any more than the dealer who drove us hither with his cudgel?" replied the butcher. "You received their political education in Manuisky's institute."

"But we shall be able to attend to the dealer as well afterwards," Manusky is supposed to have said. And it was precisely this which led to the necessity of articulating the explicit idea of the United Front, because the Communist Party of the United States had finally realised that, in most circumstances, the Communist Parties could not unite the working class in struggle.
They had to fight for unity in action with social democrats and other proletarian forces.

The Communist Party and the rise of the Nazis

Whatever ideas the Western Communist Parties had developed about the role of the United Front, particularly the lessons from the victories of fascism in Italy, had been completely lost when faced with the rise of the Nazis in Germany. Stalin and the German Communist Party had developed the idea that fascism was not another form of bourgeois rule. We communists should not take sides between one form of dictatorship and the other. They were all as bad as one another—Fascists, Liberals, Social Democrats. Indeed the Social Democrats were better because they incorporated the proletariat into their formations. They were 'Social Fascists.'

You knew where you were with a Fascist, you knew where the power would polarize class forces and prepare the way for revolution. This framework was carried through to the letter by the German Communist Party, leading to one of the greatest tragedies in human history.

Trotsky

A minority of Marxists saw the disastrous consequences of this policy. Two of them were Leon Trotsky and Georgi Dimitrov, but they both dealt with it in different ways. Trotsky and his comrades wrote pamphlets after pamphlet, article after article, letter after letter, advocating the policy of the "United Front Against Fascism." Yet there was no question of bourgeois rule but it was a particular form which had, for Trotsky, the most crucial aspect. It was committed to violently annihilating enemies—on the streets where out of power and once in power—destroying all working class organisations.

The second was the method of building a mass movement amongst the petit-bourgeoisie who felt crushed between the forces of capitalism and the workers movement. The small matter of anti-Semitism wasn't a crucial factor in Trotsky's understanding at this time. He would return to this later.

Trotsky therefore argued that it was not the form of bourgeois rule that was the crucial factor. With the fascists in power, fighting back would be virtually impossible. We would be reduced to a police, in prison, or dead: there would be no working class parties or unions.

Saying that fascism was worse did not mean taking sides with one section of the bourgeoisie when faced against another. None of them could be trusted not to turn to the Nazis if the chips were down. No, it was independent united working class action which Trotsky advocated. Between them the German Communist and Social Democratic Parties commanded the support of millions and millions. Between them they could crush the Nazis before they became real threats—"crush them in the egg," he said—on the streets, in the ballot box, in the war of propaganda—everywhere.

Even when the Nazis had grown very strong by 1933, this was still possible. A united working class movement could bring the little ones back behind it, taking it away from the fascists.

Dimitrov

Georgi Dimitrov, Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party, also understood the threatened pose by fascism. He managed to write about it without attacking Stalin. He was in the leadership of the German Communist Party. Much more careful he wrote followed the same conclusion as Trotsky, except he slipped in the idea of making alliances with the international bourgeois against the fascists. This became the touchstone of the policy of the Popular Front which Stalin and the third international turned to after 1935. In this perspective the working class school would sacrifice its political and organizational independence to making deals with the capitalists.

This policy would eventually prove to be the petit-bourgeois line which put up a token resistance.

Racism and self-organisation

The big gap in the Trotsky's understanding of fascism was the role played by racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-fascism in the case of the German Nazis, and also sexuality, and the family.

Mussolini may be an exception, but certainly for Hitler and the Nazis and for modern fascist movements, being a particular form of bourgeois rule is just not what fascism is about.

The motivation from top to bottom of fascist movements is about the domination of the White Aryan over everyone else.

Much of what the Nazis did in power was not expedient from a capitalist point of view. On the contrary, however, it served the bourgeoisie well enough, but they wouldn't have chosen if they had not established a momentum in its mass movement.

Fascism cannot be eradicated without defeating the racism that underlies it. Fascism appeals to the bully and the coward. It plays to people's sense of powerlessness and alienation in our society by saying, "You can become powerful relative to that group—be they Jews, Black people, Gypsies, or homosexuals. You can smash those up and, with you, you will give you a new identity as part of the master race, no longer the little alienated one."

How are we to break this? Self-organisation of the communities under attack is a key to this. If those Jews, Black people, Gypsies, Gays, and women stand up with pride as communities, this challenges the bullies and the cowards.

We need to bring together progressive and militant forces amongst the labour movement and the communities under attack. But we also need to make demands on the trades union bureaucrats, labour leaders and the traditional conservative leaderships of communities.

Why? Some people say to expose them. But I would argue, much more importantly, to bring a far greater number of people into effective action who would be prepared to take action. The traditional leaderships were supporting it.

We need to break up the first from above and below, the second a united front from below. If there had been one united front from above and below, it would have been seen by everyone as an undivided call to effective action and we may have seen 200,000 marching on the BNP HQ in Welling.

Racial and self-organisation

The classic Trotskyist writings on the united front refer to the need for a united front from above and below.

We need to bring together progressive and militant forces amongst the labour movement and the communities under attack. But we also need to make demands on the trades union bureaucrats, labour leaders and the traditional conservative leaderships of communities.

They say 'Some people say to expose them.' But I would argue, a much more importantly, to bring a far greater number of people into effective action who would be prepared to take action. The traditional leaderships were supporting it.

Some movements sound like classic united fronts but in fact are not. They insist on "Black leadership" and have a "labour movement orientation." But if their orientation is primarily towards the trade union, labour and community bureaucracies they will, in practice, only be a united front from above whose policies will be dictated by the needs of those traditional leaderships.

This was illustrated starkly in 1995. A Unity demonstration was called to march on the BNP headquarters in Welling, in the aftermath of the Steven Lawrence murder. There was a call for the TUC to support this.

However, another "Black-led" organisation called an alternative action in Downing Street, which got the support of the TUC, Labour Party and traditional community organisations.

As a result a 50,000-strong demonstration was brutally stopped from going to Welling by the police while a 6,000-strong rally took place in Downing Street. The first was a united front from below, the second a united front from above.

And just workers? No. My paternal Grandfather was a small business man who voted for all his life, ignored his leadership, the Jewish Board of Deputies, and followed the working class and turned out to fight on the streets.

Welling and the united front from above and below

The classic Trotskyist writings on the united front refer to the need for a united front from above and below.

We need to bring together progressive and militant forces amongst the labour movement and the communities under attack. But we also need to make demands on the trades union bureaucrats, labour leaders and the traditional conservative leaderships of communities.

They say 'Some people say to expose them.' But I would argue, a much more importantly, to bring a far greater number of people into effective action who would be prepared to take action. The traditional leaderships were supporting it.

There were three movements.

1. Protest in Downing Street.
2. March on BNP HQ.
3. March against the government in Welling.

The first was a united front from below, the second a united front from above, and the third a united front from below.

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Time to get trespassing

Freedom to Roam now!

Dave Bangs

President Michael Meacher’s proposal for a “freedom to roam” on certain cate-
gories of public land represents a tremendous political opportunity for the countryside access move-
ment. Whether activists or their allies on the left are strong enough to
grasp it is an open question.

The proposal is, in itself, a mod-
est one. Mountain, moor, heath, down and common land will be
open to public access on foot as
usual, thus giving access to around
10 per cent of the land area of
England and Wales.

Other types of “open land”
which are arguably a greater
resource to the mass of urban
dwellers – woodland, lake and
river, cliff and flower, are not
included in the proposals, but
will be considered by the year
2000, so it is said.

The proposals thus sideline
the simple and obvious route of creat-
ing a general right to roam at will,
and subjecting this right to com-
mon sense exclusions – such as over
standing crops, buildings and gardens and other “developed
land”.

Such a right of “Allemanzotten”
already exists in Sweden and other countries as part of a
more democratic rural culture.

The way is thus set for exhaust-

ing and destructive arguments over definition of categories of
access land – does “moor” refer
only to those areas with a natural
vegetation (of moor grasses, heathers and so on) or does it
include fertilized and reseeded
areas; does “down” include areas
used as horse gallops and pony
paddocks?

But the most negative aspect of these proposals is their retreat
from Meacher’s earlier clear
and unequivocal commitment to legis-
lation.

In place we now have a 3
month consultation period in
which the landowners’ organiza-
tions are challenged to come up with volun-
tary solutions.

The Countryside Landowners Associa-
tion well know how to use such opportuni-
ties. Without a consider-
sable show of strength and broad
support, the access movement may
now be cheated yet
again, as it has been on
four major occa-
sions already this cen-
tury by governments backing away from
clear legislative pro-

poses.

yet the campaign for
access rights is worry-
ningly narrow and asymmetrical. The actual cost is borne by the
Rammers Association
and its wide net-
work of local groups,
often with an older
profession and little experience of political activity. Other local con-
servation groups are often timid and
dependent on public protection.

Red Rope, the socialist rambling
and mountaineering group,
appears to be completely passive
on this – the very issue which
should be at the heart of their
existence.

Outside its ranks, the Rammers
Association can rely on only a
small number of black and brown
people in the Ron-2

dependent groups, like SCAM, the
Sheffield Campaign for Access to
Moorlands, and the network of
“The Land is Ours” and “Earth
First” to put some backbone into a
campaign threatened by the “politics of reasponsibility.”

The government proposals cor-
rectly link rural access rights with
the defence of threatened wildlife.
In Sussex last year, successful cam-
paigns against habitat destruction
at the Ophir Down and Marsh
Sites of Special Scientific Interest
(SSSIs) would have been greatly
facilitated if the public had known
such damage was in preparation.
Yet the sites were completely off
limits to public access, and some
wetland damage was not detected
by biologists until a year after it
took place.

Wide appeal

The access movement must build a combination of technical argu-
ments and a campaign of mass
trespass to appeal to the whole
range of countryside users.

We must use our local know-
ledge to rebuff the claims the
landowners’ propaganda machine – a task given five years ago to the
Rammers Association activist great headway
over the more footloose and
migratory audience in “The Land is
Ours” and “Earth First”.

The practical programmes of
trespass will highlight the problems
walkers face: habitat destruction,
game rearing, route blocking
and, indeed, landowners hiding
them, from us.

Provided our numbers can guarantee ramblers’ feelings of safety, it will
be possible for such trespass to
gather support from many countryside
lovers and attract broad public
backing.

Campaign activists are organizing a number of research projects and at least two mass trespasses – on
14 June and 5 July. We are able to utilise the network of activists already created to fight for a South
Downs National Park and to oppose habitat destruction and local authority land sales.

We cannot watch the great tres-
pass traditions of past the District
Park and Kinder Scout, but that is our
model.

For 50 years – since the half-
completed voluntary measures passed in the 1949 National Parks and
Access to the Countryside Act – the concept of freedom to roam has lain dormant. It is ironic
that its general revival should be the act of the Blair government, which, on so many fronts, has
 proved such a straightforward tool of private capital.

Decades of demoralising defec-
tion across the countryside campaigns have meant the movement is ill-
prepared for this major battle.

The recent improvements in bio-
diversity and historic rural land-
scapes by conservationists has left the countryside open to a
deeply defensive culture – fighting hard for tiny victories and with lit-
tle faith in their own ability to
grip major opportunities.

Our challenge is to turn this around.

We cannot afford to wait any
other 50 years.

Marian and Pat Brain

IT WAS with much regret and
depth sadness that we learnt of the
death of fellow campaigner and
good friend Frank Lovell, who died on
May Day of a heart attack at his
Manhattan apartment. He was
84 years old. All his political life
he was a fighter for working people,
army socialist writer and author on
trade union issues.

Born on July 24, 1913, he went to the University of California’s
radical campus, gaining a degree in
Philosophy.

He was attracted to the social-
ist movement just after the San
Francisco general strike, joining
the Workers Party of the United
States, led by James P. Cannon
and A.J. Muste. In 1933. He
consequently became a seafarer
and an organiser of the Sailors
Union of the Pacific.

In 1939, Lovell was a founding
member of the Social Democratic
Party and, for many years played
a leading role in that organisa-
tion. He was also a trade union
activist. He was the long-term
labour correspondent of the Mil-
gate, and later, IWPR’s newspaper.

For many years, he partici-
pated in the influential Friday
Night Socialist Forum (later
called the Militant Forum), a
weekly series that drew a broad
range of prominent trade union
and working class politicians,
civil rights and black liberation
activists, scholars, intellectuals,
students and others.

The SWP ran openly socialist
candidates in elections. Frank
ran for Mayor of Detroit in
1953. This showed the character of the man. At the height of the
McCarthyite witch hunt when many socialists were being

He was also on the ticket
for Governor of Michigan in
1954, 1958, and 1964. In the late 60s Sarah and Frank
moved to New York City,
where he served as the SWP
trade union director.

As a young person Frank was
attracted to some of the histori-
al militant working class strug-
gles led by Eugene V Debs, a
leader of the American Socialist
Party and the militant Interna-
tional Workers of the World.

He was also inspired by the
ideals of the early Communist
movement.

He joined the small interna-
tional movement led by Leon
Trotsky, the Fourth Interna-
tional, which led a campaign
against Stalinist degeneration
both in America and interna-
tionally.

He lived to see all the theoreti-
cal battles against Stalinism vin-
dicated by history.

Frank’s political commitment
and analytical insights were
widely appreciated in left wing
and labour circles, as were his
warmth, avid intellectual curios-
ity, keen sense of humour, and
an engaging interest in people
of all ages and backgrounds.

Marian first met Frank in
1990 when she went to New
York. Both Sarah and his late
companion Sarah, made her feel
at home, and introduced her to
many legends of the Trotskyist
movement.

Perhaps our greatest
disappointment was
her inability
to meet better people
anywhere.

Frank and Sarah were among
the few who stood firm for revo-
lutionary Marxism during the
years of Stalinist domination of
the radical movement.

Perhaps it was even more
crucial that at the time of
the degradation of the
American Socialist Workers
Party Frank was pre-
pared to begin once again
the indispensable task of
the building of a revolu-
tionary Marxist cadre.

In the early 1980s, Frank
and Sarah, along with hun-
dreds of others, were expelled
from the SWP, when the group
was taken over.

Its new leadership was intent
on replacing the historic Trot-
skyist programme with a closer
alignment to the orientation of
the Cuban Communist Party
leader Fidel Castro, who had
made adaptations towards Stali-

The key debate was on the
question of the theory of “per-

dent revolution, developed by
Trotsky in continuity with Marx, which the leadership of
Jack Barnes was prepared to jett-
ison. In December 1983 Lovell init-
iated the publication of the Bul-
letin in Defence of Marxism,
serving as its first editor.

Later he continued on its edi-
torial board. Before her death in
1994 Sarah Lovell played a cen-
tral role as the magazine’s trea-
surer and chief copy editor.

In Frank’s last year he was also
active in the Metro New York
Labour Club and worked effec-
tively to secure financial support
for the Ernest Mandel Institute
in Brussels, and the Leon Tre-
sky Museum at Coyocan in
Mexico City.

His memory will not be forgotten.
The revolutionary movement will
honour comrades like him, who
fought for a mass movement of
marxism in periods of great diffi-
culty, holding the line until a more favourable opportunity of
working class forces can develop
that will ensure our victory.

At the height of the McCarthyite witch hunt, when many socialists were running for cover, Frank worked on television and radio and ran a high profile campaign for Mayor of Detroit.
Reclaiming Europe!

Cardiff June 12-14

In addition to other alternative events around the EU Summit in Cardiff, the counter-summit was set up to meet the needs of campaigners affected by and/ or campaigning on the EU. The weekend will offer the opportunity for international campaigners to meet, discuss and formulate strategies for a better Europe. The structure of the event has been kept very simple. It aims to enable campaigners from a variety of backgrounds to meet with others in their particular field, as well as to hear and share experiences with people in other areas of campaigning.

This format allows both issue-specific discussions and information exchanges between different fields. We hope this will satisfy everyone!

Programme Reclaims Europe! Counter Summit / Fri 12th - 14th:

TWO DAYS of discussions and workshops on the leading role of the EU as an example of economic globalisation - a space for national and international campaigners to discuss strategies and actions on the themes of military, employment, trade, democracy, peace, arms control, community, etc. and the critical importance of a European trade union movement.

FRI 12TH (afternoon): Arrival of participants, programmes of all successful campaigns.
SAT 13TH: The EU and the consequences of its present agenda! Speakers panel followed by workshops/workshops. Finish as 3pm to join start of demonstration.
SUN 14TH: Alternatives to the present EU and campaign strategies. Themed workshops followed by closing plenary.

Field area of workshops:
- Women (Cardiff, Wales)
- Employment
- Agriculture (CAP)
- Peace and Security (confirmed)
- CEE Enlargement (confirmed)
- Development (international)
- Environment (confirmed)
- Nuclear power
- Fortress Europe

We have space for up to 28 different workshops (14 on Sunday morning and 14 on Sunday afternoon) so please contact us if you know that a workshop that isn’t already mentioned above will attract enough participants and we will add it to the list.

Please keep the subject as broad as possible so as to include enough people.

In addition, Friday evening will allow participants to share their latest successes in their specific campaign or country with others present. We hope for example to hear reports on the French unemployed workers movement and the latest updates on the MAH and other agreements.

Reclaims Europe! will do its best to provide or direct people to food/cheap accommodation and food. Please contact the Cardiff office NOW if you require a bed.

For more information and a registration form for the weekend counter summit, Reclaims Europe!

- Cardiff: Temple of Peace, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF1 1AP Tel: 02922-220347 / Mobile: 0116560507 / Pager: 07766783299
- Reclaims Europe! @bseinternet.com
- London: 1 B Waterlow Rd, London N19 SM Tel: 0207-372 9333 Fax: 0207-561 0800
- Email: europe@globalnet.co.uk
- europa@meta.globalnet.co.uk (both please)

Web site: http://www.geocities.com/Rainforest/5581/

Eileen Gersh
MEMORIAL MEETING
Saturday July 4
6-10pm
Brockway Room
CONWAY HALL
Red Lion Square
London WC1

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WHAT'S ON

JUNE

Saturday 6
Real People’s Europe, conference promoted by Capital and Class, 10am-4pm, University of London Union (Room 3S), New St, London WC1.

Monday 8
Student Week demonstration
Cardiff Arena (see this page)
Tues 10-Friday 12
Common Ground alternative summit
Friday 12 - Sunday 14
Race: Europe counter-summit

JULY

Saturday 25 - Friday 31
International Youth Summer Camp

What's On

Common Ground/Cynofyn y Weirin A Welsh Alternative to the Euro-Summit JUNE 9-12 At the Tabernacle, The Hayes, Cardiff
Exhibitions, stalls, information meetings, workshops, street theatre, street food, radical cake sale.

Common Ground has been organised by Welsh organisations campaigning on international issues, relating the solutions and successful outcomes to the agenda of the Euro-Summit’s peace, justice, cooperation and human rights. These include: Workers’ Rights, the environment, agriculture, green energy, women’s rights, developing countries, jobs and environment in a sustainable European economy, radioactive material, internationalisation and its effects, the arms trade, community union, Care and health.

Contact 01222 892259 or email bemisia@wpe.org.uk for more details.
LAST MONTH thousands of people joined lively protests in Birmingham outside the G8 summit demanding cancellation of the debt of developing "Third World" countries.

Incensed by the 'new slavery of the twentieth century' which condemns millions of children to die of malnutrition to pander to the whims of the World Bank and the IMF, they demanded the leaders of the world's eight richest and most powerful nations show some compassion. Sadly - if predictably - their voices were ignored.

On June 13, building on the success of last year's massive demonstration in Amsterdam to greet the European Union Summit, activists from all over Europe will converge on Cardiff to demand an end to unemployment, cuts in welfare spending and deteriorating conditions at work.

The moves to European integration and monetary union are being pushed through by a continental attack on the living standards and rights of ordinary people.

Demonstrate against EU austerity! CARDIFF June 13, Assemble 1.30, Sophia Gardens

NAFTA, EU, NATO and so forth, and impose their will through a series of treaties and agreements. Their latest plan, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment seeks to dismantle barriers to investment all over the world - riding roughshod over democratically elected institutions, workers rights, the environment, and small farmers.

The poor and the dispossessed have only one weapon - that of solidarity.

In the last 18 months we have seen the first signs of Europe-wide campaigns and strikes linking up working people against the common enemy.

This kind of solidarity is mighty powerful. Let's use it!