Pay squeeze threat to public services

MINISTERS are set on a collision course with public sector workers as they attempt to hold down public spending and force low-paid staff to carry the can.

All the hollow boasts of multi-billion pound hand-outs to the NHS and education in Gordon Brown’s July spending review are now being revealed as nothing more than hot air. When it comes to the vital question of raising pay levels sufficiently to recruit and retain the front-line staff vital for quality services, ministers offer nothing more than the Tories.

But without urgent action to draw young people into teaching, nursing and other health professions, Tony Blair’s pledges to cut class sizes, improve education and reduce hospital waiting lists will be no more than a sick joke.

Despite dwindling numbers applying for teacher training courses, teaching unions are being told that the only increase they can expect is a miserable deal based on “performance-related pay”, which will leave most teachers struggling to keep pace with inflation (see page 2).

The shortage of nurses is if anything more serious, with thousands of unfilled training places, and thousands more vacant posts in hospitals throughout the country. A recent snap-shot survey by the Evening Standard showed that London’s hospitals alone are under-staffed by almost 5,000 nurses, with Trusts admitting that over 300 beds were closed for lack of staff.

This is almost certainly an under-estimate: there are similar desperate shortages of other NHS professionals, with salaries starting at a pitiful £12,500 after three years training – less than a shelf-staffer in Tesco!

The growing anger in the NHS was shown by the recent lunch-time protest at Kingston hospital, where over 100 nurses came out to show their anger at staff shortages. Union leaders may not want to challenge the government, but a fight has to be waged to prevent low pay and rock-bottom morale driving away the staff we need for health and education.
Teachers reject Blunkett's Performance Related Pay

Keith Sinclair, delegate, Hull NUT (personal capacity)

DELEGATES at a special one day National Union of Teachers (NUT) conference have firmly rejected performance related pay. The conference had been called by the leadership of the NUT in order to gain support for changes to the long standing pay policy of Britain's largest teaching union. The debate at the conference was heated and occasionally acrimonious. The President of the union closed the conference before any final decision was taken on an action strategy that could have produced pay increases for teachers. The leadership was defeated on all the key votes.

The left won the idea of a flat rate plus cost of living claim as opposed to 10 per cent for all which would have given bigger increases to the highest paid teachers. Conference also rejected explicitly any direct or indirect link between appraisal and teacher pay.

The key debate was over the issue of 'recognised competencies'. The leadership wanted teachers to accept that teachers would only get annual pay increases if they were deemed to have passed annual 'competencies'. New Labour proposes to make annual guaranteed pay rises for teachers a thing of the past.

NUT General Secretary Doug MacIntyre believes that New Labour wishes to introduce performance related pay and therefore thinks the union should agree to a softer version to thwart the government.

But any system of conditional pay rises is unfair. For example, teachers at an inner-city school have to cope with social problems that leafy suburban schools rarely come across.

Who is more competent? The teacher with the best exam results? With the best record of student attendance? No system can cope with the massive disparities between schools and the circumstances of an individual school at any particular time.

The government is committed to maintaining Tony’s spider leading legs by making the impression of providing more for less, thus enhancing its political health. To give all teachers a decent rise would increase educational spending significantly.

Given their unwillingness to spend more, the Government is faced with options such as Advanced Skills Teachers who will be paid up to £40,000 a year. Their pay levels will attract the headlines but big rises for a handful will only store up resentment amongst the mass of teachers.

Attempts to link pay rises to performance are an attempt to drag teachers into the Government’s attack on alleged weak and incompetent teachers. The NUT sees no next remains to be seen. No formal decisions will be made to the consequence as it was closed down before the key final votes were taken. Activists may use the arguments around pay increases are often made behind closed doors by the dominant forces – the Socialist Party and the ex-Stalinscl-Labourite ‘Bloc’. This tendency is greater within depart-

mental Groups. In the Employment Service (ES), a majority of the Left Unit-led GEC agreed to accept and work with the ‘New Deal’, in defiance of national NUT policy.

Candidates

The minority Socialist Caucus group’s decision to oppose the sell-out by standing its own candidates against the ‘official’ slate has led to calls for Caucus members to be expelled from Left Unity. But the majority of Left Unity-led GEC agreed to accept and work with the ‘New Deal’, in defiance of national NUT policy.

No excuse

Even if there has been ballot-rig-
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EDITORIAL

Campaign for a fighting leadership for rail workers

Greg Tucker, RMT Executive member

RMT stewards and workers in the RMT continue their campaign of industrial action for decent pay and conditions around the country. London Underground members continue to press the case for a halt to the privatisation of their jobs. Behind the scenes, though, there are problems which are affecting the RMT's ability to address.

RMT members must seize the chance to build a fighting, democratic union through the campaign for the reinstatement of victimised members and the current elections for the union's President.

Steve Hedley, key local representative at Euston depot, was sacked and now faces criminal charges for supposedly attacking a workman. His only defence is to be an effective picket organiser. It is quite clear that the charges are ridiculous – his only offence is to be an effective picket organiser. The Union has quite rightly refused to continue negotiating with his bosses, GTRM, until he is reinstated.

The recent events following Hedley's victimisation have shown serious weaknesses in the union. Immediately after his sacking, fellow workers at Euston took unofficial action. Instead of offering support, the general secretary, Jimmy Knapp, wrote to all GTRM members repudiating the action. The Euston workers have now been balloted and are taking official action.

The national leadership must offer backing – by attempting to draw out the political lessons involved, linking the campaign for Steve's reinstatement with the campaign for the repeal of the anti-trade union legislation and fighting the real weaknesses of Labour's "Fairness at Work" proposals. Instead, though unofficial action has been helping Steve financially since his dismissal, the Executive refused to fund his travel to win support for the strikers.

With the election of RMT President under way, some members of the Executive have decided that it is in their interests to moderate their actions in order not to damage their electability. They have also dodged confrontation with Knapp on internal issues, particularly on financial questions, and gone along with his views on political matters. Decisions were fudged before Labour Party conference so as not to embarrass him too much in front of the Labour leadership.

The left needs to campaign in the President's election for the one candidate, Mick Atheron, prepared to stand up to Knapp and to put forward a program to organise the members in defence of the union. Mick Atheron, currently on the Executive representing north west England, was the force behind the infrastructure dispute. His platform is one of building a fighting democratic union – to mobilise the membership to campaign for re-nationalisation of the railways and stop Tube privatisation, halt the deregulation and defend our shipping members from union-busters, the likes of P&O.

In particular, he has argued for the need to sort out union finances and rebuild union organisation to secure the union's survival. This will involve organising to confront Knapp, who has been prepared to allow a continual slow decline in the union's fortunes rather than upset his base in the bureaucracy.

Mick's campaign is complicated by the fact that, despite the fact that he is open about his SLP membership, it is other SLP members on the Executive who have been behind the backsliding, and who have decided to support another candidate.

While their action has found little support among other left activists in the Union, it is important that the SLP gets its act together, especially as soon as the President's election is over, the position of Assistant General Secretary and General Secretary will be coming up for election.

How the left responds will determine the future of the union, even its survival, for years to come.

For further information on Steve Hedley's and Mick Atheron's campaigns or to arrange for either of them to come to address a local meeting contact me at RMT Head Office on 0171 387 4771.
4 SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

Labour Conference: victory or farce?

Neil Murray

Labour Party conference was a strange affair, with the "Partnership in Power" changes having left the structures very barren.

Few decisions were taken on key policy areas. Most policy resolutions are forwarded to the National Policy Forum (NPF) which produces lengthy reports differing little from government policy.

The four slots for "contemporary resolutions" were not filled with relatively uncontentious issues through the manoeuvres of "left" friends in the trade union hierarchy. "The real question was whether to continue the debate on the basis of the need for a disciplined campaign."

But what other resolutions such as on the loss of manufacturing jobs, the new "anti-terrorism" law, the Asylum White Paper and the U.S. bombing of Sudan and Algeria were not discussed.

Controversy was stifled by a combination of these restrictions on policy debate and the unwillingness of most trade union leaders to use the remaining opportunities for policy-making to criticise the government. Little disagreement with the government was expressed, let alone voted for.

Only two resolutions contested with the leadership made it on to the agenda. The RMT resolution calling for renationalisation of the railways and opposition to the privatisation of London Underground was overwhelmingly defeated, but it was in favour of a bland TGWU resolution in support of government policy.

The composite opposition to the referendum motion which the leadership committed the Party to defend First Past the Post for Westminster elections, essentially arguing that we should oppose any change which might lessen the chances of Labour winning elections. It looked as though it might embarrass the leadership until the AEEU leadership agreed to remit at the end of the debate.

Against this, the election of four "dissidents" to the NEC on the ballots of the left Grassroots Alliance slate was an incredible achievement.

The Alliance won 4 of the 6 places elected by CLP members. Dennis Skinner was elected within 20 votes of winning one of the places elected by MPs (in NE6). The Alliance also won all the places it stood for on the Conference Arrangements Committee, and now has 30-40 supporters on the National Policy Forum.

However while the election results may make the Left feel stronger, conference clearly showed that the leadership call all the shots. The danger is that the Left will lose sight of this in election year.

It has won 4 seats on an NEC of 32 which is no longer responsible for policy, only nomination. The new NEC members have committed themselves to fighting for democracy on the NEC and to regular report backs to those who elected them. NPF members will fight for the right to take minority reports to conference so that there can be real debates and votes.

They should be supported in this, but it falls far short of what is needed.

If the Left is to achieve these democratic victories, let alone change or defeat the government's right-wing policies in practice, it needs to make itself an effective force in the Party. It needs to be part of campaigns and struggles which reach beyond the Party alone.

This requires a major debate involving the widest layers of the left in the party. Even to maintain our election year's result will be hard – the Blairites will learn from this year and organise far earlier and more effectively. The best way would be for all the activists supporting the Grassroots Alliance to jointly call a conference for support.

Such a concept of organising democratically is a long way from what has happened so far. The candidates and platforms of the Grassroots Alliance were elected by the desire of the Campaign for Labour Party Change (CLPC) to keep out the "ultra left" and keep Labour Reform on board at all costs.

In fact the candidates were elected despite being denounced as troublemakers or scapegoats of the Blairite taupe. Labour Reform showed itself to have very little on the ground to win nominations. Many on the Left were wary of voting for their candidate, Andy Howell, because of his record of voting for cuts on Birmingham Council.

Other Labour Reform supporters have been equally prominent in pushing through cuts. Howell got half the votes of the left candidates.

Despite these problems, Socialist Forum campaigners on the NEC were successful on the basis of the need for a disciplined campaign.Labour Reform supporters have been nothing wrong with an election platform primarily around defence of party democracy. But for this to work the need is to widen layers of Party members, let alone those outside the Party, to make key policy issues central.

As Liz Davies says, the Grassroots Alliance is the start of something big and exciting.

It could develop into an effective force.

The danger is that this opportunity will be squandered.

"What we were saying struck a chord" – Liz Davies

The Grassroots Alliance of Labour and Centre-Left candidates won four out of the six places on Labour's National Executive Committee elected by the membership in a One Member One Vote ballot. Mark Serwotka, Editor of Tribune, received 56% of the votes cast and Liz Davies, from Labour Left Briefing, 46%.


SO: Congratulations on your election to the NEC. Can you tell us about the election campaign?

LD: Thanks, it went very well. We were initially worried about getting nominations given the bizarre rule requiring 3 nominations from different regions. In fact we got far more, we got at least 30 nominations.

What were we saying struck a chord. We spoke at a lot of meetings and a head of steam built up. Activists everywhere did a lot of phoning, leafleting etc. This was extremely successful. We got 20% of the members.

SO: What were you saying?

LD: We were saying the NEC should be democratically elected. The NEC should be responsible to the members and to the Party. We were calling for a NEC functioning in a democratic way.

SO: What were you saying to broaden and deepen the Alliance?

LD: We need to bring in the concerns of the grass roots members of the Labour Party.

SO: If you were writing today, what policy areas would you campaign on?

LD: If we were writing today we would be campaigning on questions of unemployment, low pay, privatisation, public services and public ownership, health services, education, the environment. These are the areas where we would be campaigning.

SO: What would be the impact of this?

LD: It would be a massive impact. The NEC would be a truly democratic body and it would have a real impact on the Party.
Local campaign to fight council house privatisation gathers pace

Glenn Voris (North West TUC Executive, in a personal capacity)

Socialist Outlook supporters initiated a local fightback against St. Helens Council plans to privatisation 800 council houses in July. The campaign has rallied, the council, who are now worried that they may lose the vote to transfer the estate to a Housing Association.

The transfer of housing stock involves giving away over 800 houses tax free to Maritime Housing association.

To promote privatisation the government has given the council a £2m grant which would then be given to the Housing Association if tenants vote ‘yes’ to the transfer.

The government has allocated £12m of this to be used by the council to print leaflets to sell their line to the tenants. This also covers employing ‘tricks of the trade’ to talk to tenants, by constantly knocking at their doors. With this high level propaganda machine the policymakers thought the vote would be cut and dried.

The ‘vote No’ campaign quickly gained the support of the local Direct Works Joint Stewards Committee as their jobs were directly threatened. The Council plans to privatise a further 2,000 council homes next year. Since July the campaign has produced 6 leaflets explaining why tenants should vote ‘No’, combined with public meetings, mobile loud hailer and local media coverage.

Our first protest was linked to the People’s March 9th marching through the estate, cheered by 80 tenants outside Maritime’s Show House. This display of support by tenants showed that the ‘vote No’ campaign was gaining ground.

A further protest on October 5 saw 40 tenants burning glossy press releases on a bonfire in the lobby outside the Show House. This was to coincide with the tenants receiving their ballot papers to vote on the transfer. A hard core of 25 of these have started regularly attending weekly vote ‘No’ meetings.

If the campaign is successful it will only emerge from the long list of 62 national transfer votes. The result of the ballot will be announced on the night of November 7th.

St. Helens council’s attack is part of a national plan by New Labour to eradicate public housing. Councils including Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and many others are attempting to offload their entire housing stock.

There are three main reasons for this.

Councils were starved of cash to upgrade council houses under the Tories leading to massive disrepair. The Tories would privatise social housing, give the Authorities to re-invest money, borrowed through the right to buy. Around £8 billion has been earned by the social housing sector, mainly released only realised £3.5 billion, well short of what is required.

The campaign has continued with Tory spending plans, linked to Blair’s wish to meet the criteria for the Single Currency. This requires slashing public sector borrowing – including money for upgrading council houses.

Blair wants to privatise council houses so that borrowing can be drastically cut. Public housing must be off-loaded to the private sector.

Housing Associations are seen as a soft option, as the government argues they are part of the public sector.

To fight off the whole scale privatisation of social housing a national campaign must be waged uniting tenants and council workers.

The People’s March to the Labour Party Conference linked up with tenants as it passed through St. Helens. Successful meetings were also held in other towns and cities along the route.

A SMALL but important demonstration of about 200 people assembled at Hillingdon hospital on Saturday October 3rd to mark the third anniversary of the Hillingdon hospital workers’ strike. Led by a full contingent of the women on strike, the demonstration marched to a rally at Uxbridge town hall with a range of speakers including a delegation of Tamworth care workers.

The achievements of the strikers are all too noticeable. Not only have they stuck unflinchingly to the struggle and become an inspiration to other groups of workers, resisting the attacks of the employers, but they have reversed, at conference, their nightmare decision of UNISON to deprive them of membership of the union. The strike, however, has still not been carried out, and they are not yet reinstated.

At the same time they have made a notable success through at Their Industrial Tribunal hearing when their previous employer Pall Mall (which no longer operates on the site) admitted unfair dismissal.

The women were sacked for refusing to sign a Pall Mall contract that drastically reduced their wages and conditions.
GREATENESS Bastards’ declared John Edmonds, of overpaid (sic) company directors, opening the 1984 TUC.

Just the sort of people we can do without, he hinted, might have added, as the General Council continues to push its theme of partnership between bosses and workers. This theme was taken to its logical conclusion later in the week by Peter Mandelson, addressing the TUC for the first time, twenty years after he had left employment at the TUC (pushed out because he wasn’t up to the job).

“No union benefits by harming the companies their members works for. In the private sector that means actively working for rising wages and welcoming profits,” he said. “It means sharing in the company’s success. It means a clear expectation of wage demands and flexibility in pay levels in times of economic difficulty.”

Striking Tameside care workers were lobbying the Congress could give some lessons in where that policy gets you. Having taken pay flexes and cuts in the past they were then rewarded with a kick in the teeth.

Their situation summed up the two key debates of the week — on the minimum wage and on ‘Fairness at Work.’ Labour ministers came to Blackpool to expound on what a good job they were doing. The government’s policies were welcomed by the TUC leadership. But, despite all the guff, they will go down as a small way to meet the needs of poorly paid and badly treated workers.

Congress delegations were clearly fed up with the way that their own union members were being treated. Union delegations were prepared to vote for critical resolutions in their own field, reflecting the pressure from their membership.

The Congress overwhelmingly rejected calls for the nationalisation of education through Education Action Zones, communications workers demanded that the Post Office remains in public hands, hospital workers demanded an end to public sector pay freezes.

And — in a card vote supported by the GMB and UNISON — the Congress voted to campaign for the ending of the Private Finance Initiative. But generalising that feeling, recognising that overall government policy was at fault, was a step too far. You will have to wait a long time for the TUC to bounce back.

Indeed, trade union action Stalinist industry, and the General Council continues to run the government just in case Man

The way forward for Socialist Alliances

John Nicholson (Convenor Greater Manchester Socialist Alliance, Joint Convenor of Network of Socialist Alliances in England)

THE RECENT meeting of the “Network of Socialist Alliances in England” (working title) spent much time and energy debating a future structure. This was in an attempt to unite more formally a wide range of Socialist Alliances, individual supporters, related groups and activists, including the Socialist Alliance, trade unionists and industrial struggles.

The timing of imposing a constitution from on-high without consultation and then declaring that all members have already agreed it and that all future members must sign up to it explicitly before joining.

On the other hand, most people felt that something clearer and more positive was needed now that more groups and individual members were showing an interest in working together.

This is not least because the liberal “work with anyone” approach forces us to allow the movement of those who don’t actually want to work with anyone else!” inevitably the process meant taking one foot forward and half a step back.

We therefore plan to move forward and half a step back. We’re still here and there’s a clear commitment to move forward.

But we can’t minimise the problems involved. Constituting generally want a mass working class party with a central committee. Some view it as a “broad based campaign,” a “UK State”, and do not recognise parallel developments in Scotland or Wales.

We propose a structure similar to the 6 Counties in the North of Ireland).

Socialists working with campaigners from different backgrounds think that a looser federal structure, based on networking and mutual respect, is a more likely and more desirable future. Language varies from the Leninist and its historic truth to the broader demand for dropping words like “socialist” from the “community” focusing instead on “social justice and ecological sustainability”.

The question of orientation is the major fault-line running through the debates. And it’s political, not organisational (even if it is true that one form of structure would favour some groups more than the other). So it has to be tackled politically.

Subordinate to it are questions of affiliation. Should any structure be individual only, should it guard against a “group” or an “alliance”? Should it just be simpler in any case?

And there’s the question of approach. Is it acceptable to be able to join someone simply for the purpose of exposing it as not the something that you want? If you remain in a “Committee” about which you can plan for its failure to “lead”, why not join an organisation which gives you this, rather than seeking to promote discord amongst comrades who clearly don’t want to be in that sort of organisation ever again?

We have all been at meetings which progress very well while we’re considering practical action to carry out supporting industrial struggles, fighting against racist deportations, campaigning for civil liberties. They then fall apart at the end when people start bickering about who to elect to whatever “committees” are being set up.

We must support the anti-nuclear missile campaigns and oppose Clinton for dropping bombs on the developing world. This means clearly challenging Blair, who is Clinton’s leading fan, by putting up alternative pro-Soviet candidates.

Making a difference

The way forward as sought in Alliances and similar groups everywhere. Socialist Alliances can make a difference, and are already doing so.

But the secret (not very secret) of the left’s inability to unite in this country is its willingness to go into terminal fragmentation and internal division just at the point where unity on practical action could take place.

Socialist Alliances haven’t necessarily got the answer to overcoming this — yet, but we are still here and we are moving forward. We urge everyone who wants to see Blair’s Bubble Burst to start work with us — to begin to overcome both the ruling exploiters and the possible damage of splitters in our ranks.
Cashing in on another injustice

Terry Conway reviews A Chronology of Injustice - The case for Winston Silcott's conviction to be overturned (Legal Action for Women, £6).

INSTITUTIONAL racism has been born in the wake of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry. That was an opportunity missed to put an end to the culture of racism in our society. Winston Silcott's comments on institutional racism prominently printed in The Observer.

Winston Silcott became infamous when he was arrested in 1985 after the Inchicore Farm rebellion and charged with murder. He and his co-defendants were later cleared after evidence proved that his statement had been tampered with. Silcott remained in prison for 10 years, following the conviction of another murder after Anthony Smith died in 1984. This is the latest chapter of how the two cases interwove, how Silcott became the subject of not one but two investigations into the justice system.

He was dehumanised by the press during the coverage of the Inchicore trials, and the possibility of his release was never seriously discussed. Silcott was the target of this vitriol, and the police's treatment of him could not have been more contemptuous. He is the credit of Legal Action for Women and International Black Wages for Workhouse (who are also associated with the book) that they have worked round the clock when many others have forgotten it.

The strength of the book lies in the clear explanation of the complex chronology and in some of the testimonies it brings forward. We have contributions from Winston himself.

"Innocence is determined by decisions which depend on the look of the accused, skin colour, these are never discussed. The present criminal justice system can only be described as a major tool that offers to cut corners to gain guilty verdicts instead of finding out or searching for the truth."

Winston's mother Mary also writes powerfully: "From the age of 14 the police started on Winston's life. He was regarded as a bike thief, a robber without lights - from that day on they never stopped. They told me that if a pin dropped anywhere in Tottenham they would come for Winston. It wasn't only the situation that was locked away, it was the whole family."

In its presence there is damning evidence of police racism in the state that officials made in and around London. We should learn the tragic story of how Silcott was let down by a lawyer he trusted because he was black. Sadly however the book is marred in other ways. There is a section in which the absence of the chapters in support of Silcott which wrongly implies that the forces involved in the book are the only people who have any support.

The book's structure is somewhat disjointed. It jumps between pieces which focus on the case itself and others that are used to put forward the general politics of wages for housework.

This is problematic not only because I profoundly disagree with the basic tenets of these, but because they are rather gratuitously introduced into Silcott's story.

In the end the whole thing seems less substantive than is inferred either by the price or, more seriously, by the campaign that needs to be waged to win justice for Winston Silcott.

Ibrahim Sey:
The killer cops walk free

Simon Deville

THE SAME day that Metropolitan Police Chief Sir Paul Condon was testifying in the Lawrence inquiry that the institutional racism does not exist in the Police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) decided not to press charges against any of the officers responsible for Ibrahim Sey's killing.

In March 1996 Ibrahim Sey, a Gambian asylum seeker, was arrested by police at his home in Forest Gate, East London.

He was taken to Ilford Police Station where he was sprayed with CS gas whilst lying face down on the floor, with his hands cuffed behind his back. Within minutes he was dead. The jury at the inquest ruled last year that he had been unlawfully killed at the hands of the police.

The CPS decided that there was insufficient evidence as to the cause of death, particularly whether or not "excited delirium" on its own could cause death.

Excited delirium is a condition that many black people who die in police custody apparently suffer from. It is claimed that people go into a mad frenzy and take on super-human strength, leaving the police no option but to use excessive force to defend themselves.

Effectively what has happened in the Ibrahim Sey case is that the courts have ruled that Ibrahim was killed illegally by the police.

To deal with this the police have spent thousands of pounds of tax payers money flying in "experts" from around the world to argue that Ibrahim wasn't really killed but died of natural causes.

Since the inquest ruled out the police version of events, the CPS have dropped all charges on the grounds that the "expert" testimony paid for by the police conflicts with the findings of the inquest.

How many other jobs can there be when you can illegally kill someone, get your bosses to pay you to say that you didn't get the state to say that it can't really do anything because the events are too confusing, and not even face a disciplinary?

How much institutional racism can get away with?"
The world economy in crisis
Could 'it' happen again?

NEWSPAPERS and political pundits have begun to talk about the worst economic situation since the 1930s. Politicians like Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, who only a year ago praised globalisation and claimed that international economic developments were outside the control of national governments, now argue for worldwide financial reform.

How serious are the problems of international capital? Will the crisis of the 1930s happen again?

ANDY KILMINTER reports.

The current crisis is actually the result of a number of different developments, each of which affects the others. Three are particularly important.

First, and probably most serious, is the continuing slump in Japan.

This is due in part to the size of the Japanese economy and because of its international links. Japan is a key trading partner with China and South East Asia and the leading investor in the region. Any recovery in Japan depends to a large extent on an upturn in the Japanese economy. Japan is also important because of its trade with the European Union (EU). The demand for Japanese goods has decreased the Japanese trade surplus has grown dramatically. So has the yen trade surplus.

In this way the problems of Japan threaten continued US growth. Not only this, but international investors and policy makers increasingly fear that the unstable Japanese banking system and financial infrastructure may collapse altogether, triggering a catastrophic recession and threatening existing and new Japanese investment abroad.

The second problem lies in the major capitalist economies of the US and Europe. US growth has shown signs of slowing and is expected to be much slower than expected.

The likelihood is that the American economy will `overheat' and that inflation will rise. If the US Federal Reserve acts to stop this, then the economy will slow down and could enter a slump.

This dilemma has provoked a continuing argument among American policy makers. On the one hand some argue that deregulation and technological change have changed the structure of the economy so that the old pattern of booms and slumps no longer holds.

They claim that increased international competition has fundamentally lowered inflationary pressures, so that interest rates can be cut and growth maintained indefinitely. On the other hand though, other observers point out that US investment in recent years has yet delivered major productivity improvements and that today's high US investment in the US are at record levels.

In short, it seems that the US economic cycle has long been recognised to be highly overvalued. Set against this, the decision by the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates in early 1995, despite the fact that US growth is still strong and the trade deficit in the US are at record levels.

The near collapse of the ludicrously named "hedge fund" Long Term Capital Management a fortnight ago underlines this point.

What the US would like to see is interest rate cuts and growing demand from Western Europe. But this is not happening because of the project of the single currency. European governments will not deflate their economies for fear of making the problem worse.

The third issue is the continuing wave of currency speculation which is sweeping the globe. This ultimately rests on the lack of productive investment opportunities in the industrialised economies.

It is important to understand just how this can feed into the developing global crisis. In theory a currency collapse is redistributive. If one country's currency falls then the speculative funds buy another. So currency speculation does not on its own cause a problem for global capitalism, only for individual countries or regions within it.

However, in practice things are not so simple. Currency crises can cause deeper problems in a number of ways. Firstly, this happens through their effect on debt repayments. If a country's debt is measured in, say, dollars, then as its currency plummets in value the debts become impossible to repay. This is what happened to South Korea in 1997 and to Russia this year.

This then threatens to bankrupt the banks and other institutions holding the money, and transmits the crisis across the rest of the world.

Secondly, the fall in currency values cuts incomes dramatically. If workers resist this, or companies try to recoup their profits by raising prices, then hyperinflation can set in and threaten political stability.

Thirdly, the sheer instability of the global financial market disrupts trade and investment. Fourthly, if currency values fall then foreign investors, both in financial assets and in productive activity, can lose substantial amounts of money. If this then affects their lending elsewhere or causes them to go back to their home countries again, this is the ultimate international.

Each of these problems individually would be unlikely to cause the panic of the last few weeks. Collectively, one of the three which raises the possibility of a major crisis. How likely is it such a crisis to occur?

In the short run the two key countries which global investors are nervously watching are Brazil and China. Brazil is important both in itself and because of its influence in Latin America, a region which takes about 20 percent of US exports (as compared to Russia's 2 percent). The Brazilian government budget deficit, widely believed by institutions like the IMF to be a key predictor of currency crises, is at a level of 7 percent of GDP (even if one calculates it by the traditional convergence criteria) and foreign exchange reserves are dropping fast.

A collapse of the Brazilian currency would have very serious implications. It would be likely to lead to a general currency crisis in South America and this is the region in which is key to the global strategies of many US corporations.

This would then probably cause a major decline in the US stock market, which is already swinging the US into recession. A US recession would remove any possibility of recovery for Japan and the rest of Asia.

Small wonder then that the US is currently organising a $30 billion rescue package for Brazil. China is far by the largest recipient of foreign investment outside the industrialised economies. The growth rate is slowing rapidly there, and exports are facing massively increased competition from the rest of South East Asia following their devaluations.

In certain Chinese regions, notably Hong Kong, the situation is even more worrying. In Hong Kong unemployment is rising fast and the stock market has been saved from collapse by huge government purchases of shares. The Chinese banking system is extremely fragile with high levels of bad debt.

A Chinese devaluation would probably trigger a further round of currency speculation in Asia and would write billions of the value of investments in the Asian debt market and could be a trigger for a wave of bankruptcies and a stock market crash which could be equally destabilising.

In the medium term each of the three main areas of the industrialised world faces major challenges. The issues in Japan have been widely discussed, as have those around EMU in Europe.

But the US faces equally searching questions: US households and stock market investors have been involved in a huge gamble over the past year, building huge levels on the US dollar and US continued FT good growth. If it does not prove correct a US financial crisis could be central to global economic stability.

There are two dangers facing socialists as we try to analyse the current international turbulence. One is to minimise the difficulties facing capitalism on the grounds that, with the exception of Japan, the major industrialised countries continue to grow.

Not only does this ignore the hundreds of millions already facing destitution as a result of the crisis, for example in Indonesia, it also oversimplifies the stability of growth in Europe and the US. However, it is also important not to view the current situation inevitability leading to either for that of the 1930s or the 1970s. Much of the current turmoil is rooted in the financial sector. Financial crises and financial capitalism have important effects, but only threaten the system as a whole if they are large enough to tilt the whole global economic equilibrium.

That may well happen in the present crisis but it is by no means inevitable. One reason is that the capitalists have learned from the past. The crisis has been centred on a region of the world - East and South East Asia - which is currently working through a process of adjustment, with the exception of South Korea, has been weak.

It has also happened at a time when the working class has internationally been pushed under the defensive. However, this has not changed very much in reality. The debates among imperialist leaders shows the seriousness with which they regard the situation.

The problems of the last two years have caused significant divisions within the international financial and political system. The IMF has tried to use the crisis to reassure the role of US style free market capitalism and to break up the networks of influence which characterised Asian capitalism, notably in South Korea.

Some people like World Bank Chief Economist Joseph Stiglitz increasingly favour some kind of capital controls, or a tax on international financial transactions. They look to Chile, where capital controls appear to have insulated the economy to some extent from speculative crises since 1985, as a possible model.

At an extreme in these debates the Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has rejected the IMF strategy of global free fall and imposed sweeping controls on currency movements.

This has fed into and helped to internationalise a financial and political crisis in Malaysia based on disagreements between Mahathir and his former deputy Anwar Ibrahim, an advocate of greater integration.

The Malaysian government has long argued for tighter regional co-operation and less reliance on relations with the US. South East Asia. The Keynesian strategy of government intervention in the international financial system is now under threat. A whole group of underlying problems which currency and stock market movements reflect.

A national level it will simply postpone the development of such problems into fully fledged crises.

Neither is economic nationalism a solution in a world dominated by multinational corporations and international financial institutions. The Asian crisis is being played by the British government in these debates.

The proposals being put forward by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown for reform of the international financial system are exceptionally reactionary. Essentially they are calling for a 'new' IMF which would deal with the same issues rather than trade issues.

Such a body would replicate the policies of the old IMF but with potentially even more power. The kind of 'structural adjustment' programmes which we have seen used against countries with trade deficits or debt problems, reducing public expenditure and wages and increasing privatisation, would now be used against countries in danger of currency crises.

Which countries faced this danger would be dictated by the international financial markets. The 'agreements' which have been imposed on Russia, Indonesia and South Korea (and the one which is in preparation for Brazil) would be replicated on a global scale.

Socialists must expose and criticise the agenda being put forward by Brown and Blair. We must remain vigilant and look for alternative approaches for tinking about the future of the global financial system.

A real alternative means putting on the table the resistance of those affected by the current crisis. The Asia, Russia and Latin America resistances are still in its early stages and by no means certain to succeed. But solidarity with it is vital. It is not just a matter of coming to terms with the current crisis and whether it challenges or reinforces the role of capital over the global economy.
Germany (hardly) turns to left
End of old king Kohl

Pete Firmin
ON SUNDAY, September 27 the German electorate replaced its Christian Democrat-led government by a Social Democrat-led one, ending Helmut Kohl’s 16-year reign as Chancellor.
The post-war German electoral system has rarely resulted in one party government, and before the elections, one were questions as to who the SPD, if it emerged as the largest party, would approach to form a government.
Possibilities ranged from the ex-communist PDS through the liberal FDP (almost permanently in opposition) to a repeat of the ‘grand coalition’ of a CDU/SPD government of the 1960s. But right up to the last minute it was uncertain that Kohl would lose his majority.
In the event, the SPD did better than predicted, and the PDS improved its position, but the SPD leader Gerhard Schröder opted for a Red-Green coalition. Germany’s Green Party, one of the largest and longest existing in Europe, was already part of several state governments together with the SPD.
The SPD caught the election on the issues of unemployment and Kohl being ‘yesterday’s man’. Although Kohl achieved the popular re-unification of Germany, 10 years on this is not seen as such a great success. Unemployment stands at 4 million, and is particularly high in the East, where much industry has disappeared.
The SPD’s policy for tackling unemployment, however, consists mainly of attempting to reduce the ‘non-wage’ costs of German industry.
While cutting income tax will be a part of this, it also signals a further assault on the ‘social wage’ itself. Unemployment benefit, which have been under attack for several years.
The Greens would like to cut labour costs through environmental taxation but are unlikely to get anywhere on this, especially given the importance of the motor industry in Germany.
The SPD made it known in advance of the election there would be little change.
The SPD is strong on the West. But the difference between Western Germany and the Anglo-Saxon EEC countries was significant and the SPD was, and is as willing to support NATO intervention in Kosovo. The only issue on which a clear indication of a change of policy has been made is on Germany’s outrageous racist nationalism law, which prevents children born in Germany of immigrant families from obtaining German citizenship.
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Sweden - Left Party gains in elections

Peter Lindgren
THE EX-COMMUNIST Left Party (Vänsterpartiet) are the most impressive winners of the recent Swedish parliamentary election. They are now the third largest party in the country’s parliament. The Social Democrats and the Left Party are one vote short of forming a majority in the 349-seat assembly.
The Social Democrats, still Sweden’s dominant party, have been forced to start negotiations with the Left Party and the Greens about a “long-term cooperation” agreement to cover the four-year term of parliament.
In elections between 1948 and 1994 the Left Party seemed stuck at 3-4%. This time they won 12%, with 20% of the vote among young first-time voters, and about 27% of unemployed voters. Among members of the LO trade union confederation, which organises 85% of all union workers, over 30% supported it.

In Stockholm, in 1996, a Social Democrat-Left Party-Green coalition cut US$400m from the health budget

Stockholm, in 1996, a Social Democrat-Left Party-Green coalition cut US$400m from the health budget

Veronica Fagan
On Friday, October 9 the Italian ‘Olive Tree’ coalition lost a confidence motion in parliament by one vote, throwing the government into disarray. It is not yet clear if and when there will be new elections because of complex rules about presidential terms.
This has attracted some comment in the West, but with a suggestion that it could threaten NATO intervention in Kosovo. This seems unlikely as there is a clear majority for intervention. Threats to the left given general economic reasons are better supported.
The trigger for the confidence motion was the government’s budget for next year. The Peronist Rifondazione Comunista (PRC) decided it could no longer support the government. They voted 188-112 on its central committee to break with the government. The majority around Fausto Bertinotti was supported by the left minority of which Fourth International supporters are a part.
Fondazione had previously debated whether it should break with the government and its austerity budgets even more. These debates saw not only the left within the party, but at times Bertinotti and his secretaries as the basis for sticking with Prodi. They drew comfort from the fact that the last time a break was proposed, it was apparently unpoplar. In fact it is likely that these statistics were manipulated because the right was better organised.
However, when it came to the vote on continuation in parliament a majority of the PRC’s MPs voted with the government against the parity majority of MPs, together with a small minority of the PRC under the leadership of party chair Armando Cossutta, who have announced they are forming a new movement.
This time it was not Cossutta who argued that anything would be better than letting in the right, raising the spectre of television magnate Silvio Berlusconi. At the party’s political committee on October 3 he argued there is a need to defend the interests of the workers and not go “some wild adventure” and that this budget was more socialist than the last.
However, an opinion poll in Italian paper Corriere della Sera on October 11 shows that more people support Bertinotti’s stand (5.3 per cent) than Cossutta’s (4.5 per cent).
Clearly the situation is evolving as we go to press. Livio Mattia will be speaking about these developments at Socialist Outlook event on November 14 (see p17)
In the 20th century the rise of the women's liberation movement has reinforced the tendency witnessed in previous centuries - for women to come to the forefront in battles against exploitation and oppression. This has reflected itself in all three sectors of the world revolution. MARIAN BRAIN has been looking back in admiration.

Women have played a remarkable role fighting for democratic rights against our own oppression but also identified with the struggles of the so-called third world, anti-racist struggles, struggles for lesbian and gay rights and ecological struggles. One of the dominant features of the 20th century has been the uprisings against colonialism, and women have played an indispensable role in these armed struggles.

Internationally the same pattern has been seen across North America, and Western Europe. The women's liberation movement in America is a shock wave throughout the whole world and affected the language and attitude of many layers.

One of the main gains in the 1970s was around the abortion issue. This was a development from early in this century, when women gained rights for contraception.

Women now make up more than 50 per cent of the workforce. The development of defensive actions has led to a beginning of changes in women's status.

The rewriting of history has been pushed into understanding the centrality of the struggle for women's liberation to the project of socialist revolution. An slogan that I remember vividly from my early years of involvement is: "No women's liberation without the socialist revolution. No socialist revolution without women's liberation."

It is just as relevant today.

Perhaps one of the most impressive expressions of women's self-organisation in Britain was the development of women's support groups during the miners' strike. These lessons have been built on in recent disputes: the dockers, Burnsalls, Hillington, Maginn and Crochley labels.

In recent years there has been a major ideological attempt to turn this back. There have been set backs too on affirmative action and as a result of individual terrorisation by the right wing against abortion clinics in the USA.

In reasserting that we will not post-feminists until we live in a post-patriarchal society, women and men can draw inspiration from the struggles of our sisters throughout history. Indeed rediscovering our history which had been hidden from us has been one of the crucial gains of the modern women's movement.

In 1848 Flora Tristan was on an organising tour in provincial France to promote the ideas of an international association of workers. Harassed and exhausted, she fell ill and died. Her name became a legend in the French working class.

Shortly before her death she summed up her fate in a letter to one of her friends and comrades. She wrote: "I have nearly the whole world against me. Men because I demand the emancipation of women, and the owners because I demand the emancipation of wage-earners." Seven years later at a Women's Rights convention in Ohio, the former slave Isabella, who is better known as Sojourner Truth, took the floor. She rose to answer a preacher who had ridiculed women as weak and helpless and therefore undeserving of the right to vote.

In a stirring speech that turned the entire convention around she declared: "The man over there says women need to be helped into carriages and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages or over puddles, or gives me the best place - and ain't I a woman?"

"Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns and no man could head me - and ain't I a woman?"

"I could work as much and eat as much as man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman?"

Between these two events came the historic year of 1848. This was the year that women gathered in Seneca Falls, New York, to adopt their own Declaration of Independence and to launch a conscious, organized movement of women against their oppression as women.

It was also the year that the Comitee Mifiseto was published, proclaiming to the world the birth of scientific socialism. This marked the beginning of the working-class movement as a self-conscious, political movement of the majority of humanity in the interest of the majority.

This coincidence of dates is no real coincidence at all. Both movements came onto the historical stage with the rise of industrial capitalism. Both were generated by the changes that capitalism brought in the social relations of production and reproduction.

The twin pillars of all human societies. The oppression of women did not begin with capitalism. On the contrary, it extends back to the dawn of recorded history. But it was the advent of capitalism with its continuous, revolutionary development of productive capacities that made women's liberation a realisable goal.

Just as capitalism itself organised the working class as a whole - increasing its size and concentration, skill, educational level, and political consciousness it also transformed the conditions of women. It brought millions of women out of the countryside, and out of the home and into the labour force.

But began the process of socialising the chores of the individual family - "women's work" - such as baking, weaving, and making clothes. New social and political horizons were opened for women.

Not only did mass of women begin to become conscious of their oppression, but more importantly they began to see a way out of that oppression. They fought to raise demands, formulate a programme and organise themselves for struggle.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of the Paris Commune in 1871 was the formation of mass independent all-women organisations which fought for women's interests and mobilised them in
defence of the commune. Separate women's organisations first emerged during the siege by the Prussians, and there was considerable discussion then about establishing a separate women's battalions. A number of women's organisations came together and won mass support and important gains for women. These included equal pay for teachers, and pensions for any women who asked for a separation even if it was a common law marriage.

Pensions were given to women and children of National Guardsmen killed defending the commune. The hated Morality police, used to hunt down prostitutes, were abolished, and technical and professional education for women and free compulsory and secular education for everyone were introduced.

The women's organisations enforced the latter demand by forcibly removing priests, nun and mother-superiors from the schools when they refused to comply. Women participated in the six-person 'Society for New Education', which in five days drew up a new educational programme for presentation to the Commune. The women's clubs usually met in churches they took over for the meetings. They discussed childcare centres and nurseries, divorce laws, and many other topics.

The extent of the reforms was limited by the harsh military necessities of defending the Commune, in which women played a heroic role.

Not only were they nurses and canteen workers, many of them were soldiers on the front line. There was a separate women's company, commanded by women officers.

Louise Michel, a leader of the First International and one of the most important figures of the Paris Commune, remarked: "The army fraternised with the people instead of shooting them down. That triumph of the people over the army, was perhaps chiefly due to the intervention of the women, who covered the artillery with their own bodies, and even placed themselves at the muzzle of the guns, to prevent the latter being fired."

She also argued that "in the last desperate battles within the sectors of Paris itself, the women 'fought like nothing. They reckoned themselves much more steadily to the inevitable'." It took Thiers's troops another week to break the resistance.

The history of the Commune illustrates that Andre Leo was right when she wrote during the Commune, pointing out that women "are not the intellectual 'decreasers' the Emperor and God' simply to let the fallen class re-establish power."

"The Revolution means - since we must take its side - liberty and responsibility for every human being, with common rights as their only limit, and without any prejudice of race or sex."

The experience of 1871 showed the world the power of women, organised and ready to throw off their yoke of oppression. As Louise Michel noted, "I believe women will sooner or later rise in rebellion."

I would now like to look at the struggle in China in the early 1930s. Through the eyes of Chen Pi-lan we can see how the struggle for women's liberation from feudal traditions developed into a struggle for socialism.

Chen Pi-lan was a leading member of the Chinese section of the Fourth International, having originally been recruited to the Chinese Communist Party in 1922. A party leader came to her girls' boarding school and gave a speech on "women's position in society." Li Han-chun described the different positions of women in different societies, beginning with primitive communist society, through feudal society, capitalist society and finally the future socialist society. He concluded that if women wanted equality they must have economic independence.

The prerequisite for achieving complete liberation was a change in the social system. Only after the proletariat had been freed would women have their liberation. He had used Auguste Bebel's Women and Society as his text.

Li Lan describes how they went on to organise the girls' school, demanding the right to cut their hair, to have education, to hold discussion circles on questions such as freedom to love and freedom of marriage. They later participated in strikes, May Day demonstrations and formed working women's clubs.

In an article in International Socialist Review September 1976 she states: "In describing my experiences in the revolutionary movement, especially my activities and role in the women's movement, I cannot separate it from the earlier history of the Chinese Communist Party, because the women's movement was part of CCP's work, and the women's movement in each period has its different historical and political background."

One of the highlights of the Russian Revolution was the role women played in the February revolution. Women from the textile industry went on strike and held demonstrations, and marched to the Dumas demanding an end to the war and the fall of the Tsar. Petrograd women

Free abortion on demand meant that for the first time women had some control over their fertility, instead of being bogged down by unwanted pregnancies. Women for the first time could plan their lives.

In order to remove the economic chains of dependency that form the basis of the patriarchal family it is necessary to replace the family with an institution that can provide the valid functions of the family even better. Nurseries and socialised kitchens were developed.

Government agencies and women's commissions were set up as a way of reaching out to women in the remote rural areas. This was crucial as the Bolsheviks and socialist ideas were less strong in these areas and the legal order was weaker.

In 1917 when the All Russian Congress of Soviets convened in Petrograd on the evening after the fall of the discredited Kerensky regime, Lenin went to the tribune and announced quite simply and with an acute sense of history, "We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order." Over the next weeks, months and years ahead, in our battles to free the world from barbarism and in our struggle to construct a socialist alternative, we know that women will play their full role.

Without women's liberation there can be no socialism and without socialism there can be no women's liberation.
UNNATURAL DISASTERS

Veronica Fagan

MORE THAN 300 million people in Asia alone have seen their lives and livelihoods destroyed by floods over the last three months. An area the size of Europe has been affected. Floods have also occurred in places as diverse as Chiapas in South West Mexico and in Belgium.

Other weather related disasters such as hurricanes, droughts and forest fires have been prevalent. In Indonesia in 1997 two million hectares of land burned mainly by plantation companies and loggers, recent figures from the Kali- mantan and Sumatra leaving an incalculable human, animal and ecological disaster in its wake. This year new fires have been detected and old ones restarted. The causes are the same and the damage if anything worse. Meanwhile in West Papua famine is killing hundreds of thousands. The El Nino driven drought destroyed crops and dried up rivers. Those who do have access to the famine are likely to fall prey to malaria.

These tragedies are not however the result of ‘freak’ weather conditions. Climatologist Mick Kelly of the University of East Anglia explains. “There is a long-term underlining trend of climate change but no great increase in extreme weather or greatly increased severity.” Instead he points out, “There is a greatly increased vulnerability of people following over-exploitation of resources, the clearing of forests and changing of river courses.”

Disasters mainly hit poor people in poor countries. In Japan the average disaster kills 63 people. In Peru the average death toll is 2000.

This summers floods in China and Indonesia and the Indian sub-continents have been directly blamed on massive deforestation in the uplands. Forest cover slows or prevents the run off of water. The issue is not so much how much forest is cut away as how much remains. Flooding affects more people than any other disaster other than drought, but they occur much more frequently.

Now the Chinese government have declined to make any reforestation will begin after this summers disasters. In the case of Bangladesh the most recent deforestation took place outside the countries lowland border. More than half the forest cover, about 25% now at only 5 metres above sea level and three quarters within the largest delta in the world. At the same time the Ganges has been diverted from its course into the Hoongy Channel for irrigation purposes. This means that a great deal of river sediment that used to pour into Bangladesh does not do so. The country is effectively sinking – a fate it can definitely not afford.

These examples demonstrate graphically that ecological issues around need to be based on an international basis just as issues around the ozone layer and global warming are taken up.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed pointed out, “This kind of flood never happened in Bangladesh,” although flooding is very common in our country. Had it been a natural flood, we could have faced it.

But Bangladesh’s own development has also contributed to the problem. During the 1980s some 100,000 tube wells and 20,000 deep wells were sunk into the delta to provide drinking water for the rapidly growing population. More than 110 million people live in 149,000 sq km – the world’s densest population. The wells have altered the water table to such an extent that they added to the country’s subsidence at an annual rate of 2.5cm.

Global warming itself contributes to the rise in sea level – threatening the country and its mangrove swamps and fisheries still further.

Modern methods are not necessarily the best way to cope with floods. The Flood Action Plan funded by the World Bank and Western governments set out to build embankments along all the major rivers in Bangladesh to contain the floods. This has not helped, as the floods have been so fierce that they have swept away the embankments or have diverted water to other parts of the country. There is an urgent need to return to widespread low tech irrigation canals and dykes which provided ample flood protection prior to colonisation.

Peter Walker of the International Red Cross states that one third of all disasters today are weather-related as distinct from 5 per cent only 5 years ago. The agency has appealed for funds to deal with situations in more than 25 countries.

“Governments are increasingly unable to support large-scale projects like embankments and flood control,” he says. “Private capital has flooded into many poor countries but it is after the quick buck. It is not interested in public works, social-welfare projects and small projects which can increase people’s abilities to cope in crises.”

Existing flood protection systems are old and the cost of repair or replacement is mounting. At the same time the IMF and the World Bank insist that governments invest in commodities for export - if there is anything left after debt servicing.

Kevin Watkins, senior policy advisor at Oxfam points out, “They tightly control public expenditure and in many countries have slashed preventative health and welfare programmes which would help people cope with disasters.”

For more people will die of disease as a result of flooding – from water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera, typhoid and from malnutrition - than from drowning. In Bangladesh alone 668,529 hectares of crops were destroyed by the floods – over one third of the country’s annual food production. In Vietnam epidemics of dengue fever followed the floods, killing 1,500.

Unnatural disasters are increasing in number and in effect. In the 1970s six times more people died as the result of weather-related catastrophes than in the 1960s, but the number of disasters went up by only 50 per cent. The capitalist system misuses the environment in ways that makes it more prone to disasters and makes poor people more vulnerable to its effects.

The greed for profits is polluting our water, our food and destabilising our weather systems. Socialists have every interest in raising these issues and working around them. It is our planet too!”

THE US House of Representatives just three weeks last week to start impeachment proceedings against Bill Clinton – only the third time such proceedings have been used in the history of the United States. The decision, taken by the Republican majority, will have to be endorsed by the full House of Representatives, which also has a Republican majority. Clinton will be charged with perjury, obstructing justice and abusing the office of President. Although Clinton is clearly guilty of some of these charges it is dubious whether the prosecution will succeed in convicting him. The charges are political and not legal.

Clinton is charged with the most serious of the charges – the perjury committed while under oath in the Lewinsky Affair when he denied to the October 1998 grand jury testimony of G. Gordon Liddy that he had given a now disbarred attorney an order to obtain evidence by force. The grand jury, which was investigating perjury, obstruction of justice and evidence destruction charges related to the affair, said that Clinton had lied.

The House of Representatives voted 228 to 206 for the impeachment resolution. The 218 required to win, 112 of those votes were cast by Republicans and 106 by Democrats.

His motives for bombing Afghanistan, Serbia and Sudan are being questioned.
End scandal of British support for Kurdish slaughter

A DELEGATION from the Turkish Confederation of Public Employees (KESK) visited Britain in September to meet British workers and campaign against the British government's struggle for workers' rights and democracy, and against the vicious war in Kurdistan. Sefik Türk, a primary school teacher from Diyarbakir, spoke to Socialist Outlook about this struggle.

KESK was established in 1985. Its founding principles are members' democracy, workers' rights, equality, and peace. From 1990, government workers had previously been fighting for the right to join a union. Although this has now been granted, and about 500,000 workers in 22 different unions are now active within KESK, it is not recognised by the government. Since 1990, over 200 trade union members have been murdered by government forces while carrying out trade union activity. Other union members have been relocated from their homes to distant parts of the country; often, they are relocated with a strong fascist presence.

KESK currently seeks to achieve two goals: to restore the right to strike, and to end the war in Kurdistan. As Sefik stressed, until the war ends, there will be no workers' rights and no democracy in Turkey. The government is spending $40 billion a year on the war, which is thus a main cause of the low wages. Inflation has been over 100% over the past year, but public sector wages have risen by only 25%. Some 12 to 15 million workers are unemployed, nearly 60% of the workforce.

The repression, the lack of recognition and the denial of the right to strike mean that many workers see no point in joining unions; many civil servants are not in a union, while millions of workers have been threatened with the sack if they join.

Teachers' strike

Despite this, workers continue to strike. Last year, for example, 4000 teachers in Diyarbakir went on strike before the January wage round. This brought no results. A subsequent union meeting in March in Ankara was attacked by police with dogs and tear gas. On 28 August, the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) announced a unilateral ceasefire in its war with the Turkish state, and called on the government to open negotiations. KESK welcomed this step, and took part with others in rallies in Ankara and Diyarbakir calling for a positive government response.

Hundreds of demonstrators were arrested. If the government refuses to talk directly to the PKK, says Türk, then they should talk to the legal - but severely repressed - HDP party. However, the banning of a rally planned by HDP in Diyarbakir on 27 September shows that the government has no intention of accepting the ceasefire.

No freedom

Although millions of Turks would support a ceasefire, there is little prospect, says Türk, of mass political change. There is no freedom of association, speech or publication, human rights offices have been closed by the government, and peace activists are under constant attack. PKK President Abdullah Ocalan has warned that, if the government rejects the PKK's offer the war will spread throughout Turkey.

In this war, Turkey will continue to gain the support of the western and other western governments. Despite all the furore about an alleged indoctrination, the western leaders continue to sell arms to Turkey, its NATO ally mortgaging 800 armoured personnel carriers.

These arms are used directly by the Turkish government's near-genocidal activities toward the Kurds, who form some 20% of Turkey's population. In the course of the war, more than 100,000 Kurds have been killed, and the government has burned 3000 villages to the ground.

Thousands of Kurdish refugees have fled Turkey and are now living in Iran. In an attempt to prevent them entering Western Europe, the EU is establishing internment camps under Turkish military control, according to "Statewatch" magazine.

Despite its alliance with NATO and the EU, Turkey has application for admission to the EU being delayed. Officially, this is because the EU is committed at civil rights in Turkey, and its role in the Cyprus conflict. Although this may be part of the reason, it is clear that the real concern is the possible admission of a state with such huge unemployment, which could lead to large-scale immigration to Western Europe, and capital transfers to Turkey from the EU budget. At present, such transfers would merely subsidise the war in Kurdistan, rather than developing the Turkish economy.

A new and disturbing factor in the Turkish crisis is the deepening alliance with the US, based on a treaty signed last year enabling Israeli pilots to conduct "training flights" in Turkey. These flights are thought to be training for US-led attacks on Iraq. Meanwhile, the Spanish government has agreed to allow US military planes to fly over Spanish territory, opening the way for an attack on Afghanistan.

Turkey's workers are paying the economic price of what the trade union movement in Britain must extend its full solidarity to trade unionists in Turkey.

Britain continues to sell arms to Turkey in the most recently, 800 armoured personnel carriers.

Why NATO bombs will not rescue Kosovo

Geoff Ryan

NATO threatens air strikes against Serbia. Richard Holbrooke continues the UN resolutions and NATO statements that military threats are not excluded. The UN is frozen in a regional war.

These two courses of action are inextricably linked. Both are drawn from the international policy on Kosovo's Albanian majority a long way short of self-determination. Socialist Outlook is totally opposed to NATO attacks on Serbia, despite our hostility to the brutal Milosevic regime. NATO is an imperialist and political and military alliance. Its role is to make the world safe for capitalism. It has never been, and will never be, an agency for 'peace' or 'democracy.' Opposition to 'repressive' regimes has never figured high in NATO's aims.

We understand why many Kosovars, who have suffered the brutality of Milosevic's troops, would like NATO air strikes on Belgrade, and even why many supporters of the Kosovar struggle in the west support this. However, they are profoundly wrong.

The Kosovar question whether military or political is directed primarily against the major demand of the Kosovar Albanian people - the right to independence.

This is demonstrated by Richard Holbrooke's "peace plan" for Kosovo, which would give Kosovo's less autonomy than they
Republicanism's blinkered vision of Irish boom


In August 1994 the American investment bank Morgan Stanley published a landmark study about the southern Irish economy comparing it favourably with the Asian Tiger economies. The Irish government was so chuffed by the praise that ever since its agencies have sought to promote the country as the Celtic Tiger.

In these days of collapsing capitalist confidence, southern Ireland with its six per cent annual growth rate is increasingly being heralded as a model economy that others should imitate.

The SNP leader Alec Salmson recently explained that Scotland would seek to follow the southern Irish example if and when it became politically independent. It is timely then to have a book that casts a critical gaze over the life and times of the Celtic Tiger.

O'Hearn's book deserves to be read, but not welcomed unconditionally. There are major faults with his analysis.

O'Hearn pulls together much previously scattered information, that is essential, but only projects a chapter on the southern economy in our own 'Promise of Socialism'. That chapter was conceived at a time when the Irish economy was in crisis, when the State Treasury was close to the point of bankruptcy, unemployment close to 20 per cent, resulting in a massive flight of people from the country.

Giddy with success

Today things have turned around. Instead of feeling a deep gloom about the present and fear for the future the Irish capitalist class is giddy with the feeling of success. Conspicuous consumption is the order of the day. There has never been a boom like it — housing prices are heading for the stratosphere.

On the surface everything looks wonderful. Since 1992 the economy has grown by an average of six per cent per annum and the bourgeoisie now believe they can sustain a high growth low inflation economy into the future. Some pundits believe that they are about to surpass the British in productivity and average living standards. The poets are instructed to compose in praise of the Celtic Tiger.

O'Hearn essentially warns them not to get carried away. He punctures the idea that the southern economy is a Tiger economy by pointing out that the Asian Tigers experienced three decades of annual growth rates of around the 8 per cent mark — and are now in crisis.

For us though the key question is: has the economic boom transformed Ireland from a semi-colony into an advanced industrial nation?

The evidence amassed by O'Hearn suggests not. The recent boom, he maintains, is but more evidence indicating just how dependent the Irish economy is on foreign capital. In the period of the crisis foreign capital deserted Ireland; its return has induced the upturn.

He argues that it was not the rapid influx of foreign capital that has caused the boom. He gives the lie to the Irish government's view that it has put in place the ideal macro-economic (neo-liberal) conditions.

O'Hearn shows that American owned Trans National Corporations were directly responsible for 15 per cent of Irish GDP in 1996, and that 60 per cent of them have a staggering 24 per cent. Government figures for 1995 and 1996 suggest that 60 per cent of all new fixed investment in Ireland came from a handful of American TNCs.

American-run

Since 1988 Ireland has attracted 40 per cent of all the American electronics investment streaming into Europe. O'Hearn believes that at a minimum, 45 per cent of the growth that has occurred in the Irish economy since 1990 has stemmed directly from American investments.

It was the arrival of Intel that made the big difference. "Ireland captured a crucial segment of foreign investment into Europe during a time when such investment was agglomerating in fewer locations following the global restructuring in the 1980s."

In 1991 Intel made a $3 billion investment in Ireland, which was followed by another $3.75 billion investment in 1996.

O'Hearn argues that the Intel investment caused a sudden agglomeration of investment in a number of areas: computers and electrical engineering. With Intel's lead, other multinationals have followed and a whole new economy has been created around Intel.

Through Irish Eyes

The left republican is a nationalist first and a socialist as an afterthought

The leader Salmson hopes to cash in on a similar flour of capital investment. There is a question as to what extent the Irish economy is on foreign capital. In the period of the crisis foreign capital deserted Ireland; its return has induced the upturn.

The Irish economic miracle is in fact in the hands of a handful of American TNCs. O'Hearn's main worry is that what they have so quickly brought they can just as quickly take away. Ireland remains a privileged semi-colony.

O'Hearn has certainly brought much useful information together. He explores why almost uniquely the Irish GNP statistics are 14 per cent below those for GDP.

Incredible figures

He raises questions as to the credibility of the economic statistics i.e. how come Ireland's dynamism is accompanied by the lowest investment in the means of production in Europe, and how is it that American firms in Ireland are able to declare such fantastic profits – five times larger than anywhere else in the world? The case that massive tax fraud and transfer pricing must be occurring is well made.

He proves that the most trumped Irish-owned software industry is still very much small change, subordinated to the American giants and accounting for only 3 per cent of exports.

However his book ultimately disappoints. This is a lot to do with O'Hearn's politics.

Although not an overtly political book, nevertheless his left republican political credentials shine through.

There is a world of difference between a left republican and a socialist. The left republican is a nationalist first and a socialist as an afterthought: as egalitarian nationalists, they are not in principle against capital. So is principle in favour of the political independence of the Irish working class.

What O'Hearn is criticising is not the inherent tendencies of capitalism (for its political form of regulation. This limitation badly skews his whole analysis.

He grates to see the dependence of regulation, the more productive Japanese organised one that assisted the development of the Asian Tigers as a template with which to test and criticise the American or "Western" policies.

"Thus the Japanese model is more constructive to development strategies of lesser nations, the Asian model is more employable and adaptable than the Irish model and the Irish model is the one that is imposed on countries like Ireland" (p147)

Because of this favouritism the crisis in the East has to be explained bizarrely as a crisis of global liberalisation, indeed as a crisis caused by American mismanagement of its domestic economy.

"Asian producers by and large, depended on the US as the major market for their expanded manufactures. By the 1990s however American consumers could no longer purchase what Asia produced."

Foreign capital

O'Hearn is against the market limitations of export-led development or industrialisation in a liberalised global economy. It is a repackaging of the traditional left nationalist dislike of "foreign capital."

He consistently plays down domestic Irish class exploitation and capitalist class domination.

"The main recipients of the fruits of economic growth are a foreign capitalist class rather than a domestic one" (p137)

What is essentially wrong with capitalism in Ireland is its mode of political regulation – a useful argument for republicans, which allows them to sound radical while not calling for a break with capitalism.

In his concluding chapter O'Hearn advises an economic campaign against any "super bubble" that does not put all of our hopes in one basket i.e. depending on "TNCs."

He calls for "movements of the periphery to organise to demand a political revaluation that allow their states to implement development policies that are currently disallowed, just as peripheral regions worldwide urgently need to unite to reverse their exploitation."

"Moreover such peripheral movements need to pressurise the EU for a new technology policy where major innovative research and design projects would be located in the periphery."

This is pure new Sinn Fein speak, after all, based on its former anti-imperialist anti-EU stance.

What could best develop the Irish economy is "the removal of the economic partition of the island and an Irish economy would substantially reduce tax action costs and enable Irish producers to be competitive on a scale economies that would derive from an enlarged Irish market."

A certain confidence, and a long way from being what most Irish workers would need, but it is certainly in line with current Sinn Fein orthodoxy.
The first revolution the Zapatistas provoked and experienced was among women.

Zapatistas on-line
Electronic sites which contain information about the Zapatistas and Chiapas are a rapidly growing and diversified medium that can be found at:

Gopher
- eco.utexas.edu/edumailinglists/Chiapas/95
- http://www.eco.utexas.edu/90/Homepages/Peatley/Chiapa95.html
- http://www.eco.utexas.edu/90/Homepages/Peatley/Chiapa95/index.html
- MxNews and Mexico Update are news services on Mexican politics, economy, and the situation in Chiapas which are posted in English among other languages. Information can be obtained from co-ordinator Jose Arriaga.

Join the Mexican Support Group
The Mexican support group fights to promote the interests of the people of Mexico and in particular the poorest sectors by increasing awareness in Britain, promoting self-determination of the indigenous peoples and highlighting human rights violations, promoting support for Mexican groups which represent nationals, particularly British business in the Mexican economy and trade.
Trotsky’s ‘Transitional Programme’ and its value today

John Lister

The problem, Trotsky (and the new FI) insisted, was not the strength of capitalism, which he believed could be defeated by its “death agony”, but the fact that workers were prevented by their bureaucratic leaders from feeling and using their strength as a class in order to sweep away this wretched society and lay the basis for socialism. The very first sentence of the Transitional Programme begins with these words: “The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat.”

In less than 50 pages Trotsky manages to set the revolutionary commitment which helped drive through the vicious Stalinist policies, contrasting this with the bankrupt policies and actions of the various leaders of the working class – the timid trade union bureaucrats, the cowardly demonstrators and May Day speakers. Trotsky’s speeches on socialism while seeking only reforms within the capitalist system, and the Communist Parties which, under Stalin’s control, had no other ambition than to restrain the strength of the working class, and tools of Kremlin foreign policy.

The Transitional Programme is even more remarkable than this, not only does it give the theological divide between the sectarians of the Fourth International and the bureaucrats and mislabeled “internationalists” within the sect, setting out a series of slogans and demands aimed at mobilizing and raising the maximum strength of the working class, popularizing the basic notions of the party and putting into wide sections of workers to recognize the need for socialist revolution.

The notion of “transitional demands” was not new: the Third and Fourth (pre-Stalin) Congress of the Comintern had discussed ways of enabling the new Communist Parties to reach and mobilize wider layers of the working class, winning them over from social democratic leaders.

The Theses on Lenin in the Theses on Lenin in the Congress of the Comintern in the (1921) Congress urged party members to “put forward demands whose fulfillment is an immediate and specific working class need, and they must fight for these demands in mass struggle, regardless of whether they are compatible with the profit economy of the capitalist class or not.”

“Transitional demands, anchored in the needs of the working class and to be put forward by the Communist parties in a way which not only leads the masses to struggle, but by its very nature also organizes them… It is not a question of proclaiming the final goal to the proletariat, but of intensifying the practical struggle which is the only way of leading the proletariat to the struggle for the final goal….”

These methods had long been rescued by the Stalinist leaders of the Comintern, who directed CPs to abandon even the minimum reformist demands in the search for “popular front” alliances, in the interests of “liberal”, “democratic” or “anti-fascist” capitalists.

Trotsky not only revived the method of transitional demands, but expanded them and brought the slogan for them up to date. There was, he argued, a glaring contradiction between the fact that objective conditions were ripe for revolution, while the working class was not equipped politically in a wage revolutionary struggle: “It is necessary to bring masses in the process of the daily struggle to the bridge between present demands and the goal of the revolution.” This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, and in this way in which the enormous productive force of capitalism could be unleashed: “Thus workers’ control becomes a school for planned economy … If the abolition of business secrets is a necessary condition to workers’ control, then control is the first step along the road to the socialist guidance of the entire economy.”

Trotsky argues that the generalised socialist programme of expropriating the capitalist class should not be allowed to stand in the way of demands for specific firms or branches of industry to be expropriated.

He draws a line between the reformist approach to “nationalization” – in which lavish compensation is paid and the nationalised industry remains part of the capitalist economy (as in post-war Britain) – and expropriation with no compensation in the case that ever more openly and decisively they will be fighting against the very foundations of the bourgeois regime.”

The scope of the transitional demands was wide indeed. The most simple was for the defence of working class living standards through the protection of wages against inflation, with a minimum scale of wages – a demand which nevertheless challenges the right of employers to protect their profits at workers’ expense. A more obvious challenge to the very logic of capitalism’s viability is the rejection of employers’ claim at all. There is a sliding scale of hours (popularised as “work sharing on full pay”) to show workers what work within the working class raises also the issue of who should organise the system, and the question of workers’ control. Other transitional demands take up the question of the right to strike for the political demands of the working class, which can only be fought for against the social democracy, to be used as “an antibourgeois and anti-bureaucratic weapon”.

“Trotsky’s Transi-Individual programme is therefore just the tactical electoral call for a broad front fight for the political recognise the need for socialist revolution.

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The sections of the Fourth International should critically examine the role of the October Revolution on the political stage, and advance such slogans as will aid the striving of the socialist revolutionaries, deepen the class character of these politics, debate and pacify for political debate across a town or city club, and often emphasize the extent to which such bodies, at a time of rising struggle, represent the counterrevolutionary danger of the capitalist state and its machinery of repression: “Dual power in its turn is the culminating point of the transitional period. Two regimes, the bourgeois and the proletarian, are irreconcilably opposed to each other. Conflict between them is inevitable, and it will continue to depend on the outcome.”

So despite the limited number of members of the Trotskyists at the time of the formation of the Fourth International, the founding programme set out a bold series of slogans, with the declared aim to win wider support among sections of the working class.

The Congress laid down the essential principles spelled out in the Transitional Programme – setting out the case for a broad front of resistance to the counter-revolutionary onslaught from the social democratic and Stalinist leaderships, and going on to state that the political revolution to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR was the only way to halt the nationalised property relations.
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60 Years of the Fourth International

Trotsky would draw upon experience of revolution

Tomsk in 1917 — has proved to be an abiding strength of the Transitional Programme.

Some of the demands seem very advanced in their revolutionary content: but Trotsky was being on them the outlines of the struggle for the mass of workers, and their governments, in the USA and elsewhere, did not respond to his call.

It was Trotsky's recognition of the need to find ways to strengthen and develop the profound revolution that had been established in the USA and Japan in order to lead the emphasis on a programme of transitional democracies that could popularize socialist ideas among the most non-political layers.

Many of the 1938 transitional demands retain their full force sixty years later, and there is no mention of the continuing struggle for women's liberation, which receives only a passing mention in the 1938 programme.

The post-war Trotskyist movement has also responded to the struggle for the liberation of women by supporting campaigns such as the one in support of women's rights in New Zealand.

The 1938 programme was not written as a Bible of unalterable and fixed pronouncements, but to be dusted off and quoted: it was a guide to action for the newly-founded FI and its sections.

Today we want to amplify the section on the imperialist countries, to include defence and expansion of the welfare state provisions, and to oppose the privatisation of nationalised utilities and industries.

The massive numerical expansion of the working class, and the increasingly capitalist character of agriculture and the post-war period also mean that it is not inappropriate in many imperialist (and even some less-developed) countries to maintain the slogan of a workers' and farmers' government.

In the post-war Trotskyist movement, there have been few serious attempts to reassert the role which Trotsky took on in 1938, of putting forward a programme to contain and defeat the right wing of capitalism.

The 1938 programme would begin from the same premise as in 1938: the crisis is the result of the upsurge of nationalism and the growth of capitalist states.

The "destruction" of capitalism has been artificially prolonged by the ability of the Stalinists and social democrats to contain and defeat the struggles of the working class. Trotsky and Lenin had both warned that no crisis would lead automatically to the end of capitalism rule as long as workers could be forced to pay the price.

But the crisis is entering a new, dangerous phase with the collapse of the Asian "tiger" economies and the panic on world markets.

The task of Trotskyists and the Fourth International today is still, unfortunately, limited to putting forward a programme to contain and defeat the right wing of capitalism. The 1938 Transitional Programme offers a priceless starting point for the development of policies, slogans and action to that end.
Remembering Paul Wozny
Comrade and class fighter

IT IS WITH sadness that Socialist Outlook has to report the death of Paul Wozny, his untimely support- er and militant labour movement activist on September 28 in Southampton. He was 44 years old.

Born Pavel Wozny, Paul was brought up in New Jersey, USA, before moving to Eng- land in 1970. Paul's political upbringing was heavily influ- enced by his Polish father, and subsequently his mother who was active in Solidarnosc.

Paul will be remembered as an active trade unionist. He first got involved with the NUS (RMT) on the Harwich ferry. He was a full-time UNISON convenor when he died. He was also an active member of the Labour Party. Paul's funeral took place on September 28 in Southamp- ton and was attended by nearly 100 people, his family and friends, and many stran- dards of his political life. Labour Party members, sis- ters and brothers from UNI- SON and the Trades Council and members of every differ- ent section of Paul's life were present in the city he had made his home.

If one thing stands out in the many tributes we received – only a sample of which we are able to print here – it was Paul's non-sectarianism.

While always defending his own deeply-held views, Paul never let this stand in the way of working with those he disagreed with. He was looked to for guidance by many of his former col- leagues who valued his ideas and experience. He was the back- bone of everything that hap- pened in Southampton and played a broader role in the left of the UNISON.

He will be sorely missed.

Simon Letts
(Southampton Campaign Group)


It was attended by nearly 70 people and it soon became clear that they divided neatly into two groups. Paul was one of the more vocal members of the smaller of the two groups, as he was for the majority of his political career.

Even those who were opposed to him didn’t see him as a wor- thy advocate for principled red blooded socialism. I met Paul on many occasions in the years that followed, at constituency meetings or at the various events against the Poll Tax or pit closures, but I only got to know him well just after Terry Morris was elected leader of the party, when many of us on the left in Southampton came to

Paul Wozny (right) in characteristic relaxation at this year’s Outback Summer School with Glen Norris and Steve Hall (my favourites) and then Joe Hill. In the words of the later I can’t do his tribute to Paul’s work, to what he did so well and how I will long remember him.

“Where working folk defend their rights, it’s there you’ll find Joe Hill.”

Rod Marshall
National Secretary CEDU

On behalf of the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic UNI- SON National Committee I wish to send our sincere condolences to Paul’s family and friends at this time of their tragic loss. Paul had been a member of the CEDU National Committee since its inception in 1991 and was always an ardent defender of the need for socialists within the union to organise themselves, and to mount a campaign not only to force the union to fight for its members but to win the union to socialist ideas.

Our memorial to Paul must be to continue that fight and to organise the left unity within the union that Paul always held so dearly.

Jonathan Joseph
(Workers Action)

Paul will be remembered as a great class fighter and comrade of the highest integrity and principles. There was no messing around with Paul. He meant what he said and then did it.

In this respect he was the best militant activist that I have ever come across.

But it wasn’t just activism for the sake of it. Paul was always clear about what he was doing and what he aimed to get.

Paul always knew the battle- line. The right in the Labour Party and unions were running scared of him because he could always turn their arguments round or quote facts back to them.

Paul never compromised his principles. However, he was always concerned to build as broad an opposition to the labour movement as he could.

It is a testament to Paul that in Southampton he has helped to build probably the biggest Campa- gnia Group branch, one of the most militant UNISON branches (solidly supporting the CFDU) and one of the few func- tioning Trades Councils.

When I first met Paul I was demoralised and my politics were ill informed and wildly ultra-left (very funny – I know theycall me lefty!). I was introduced to the labour movement. Along with Nigel we worked together as Socialist Out- look supporters. We argued out our differences until we devel- oped joint positions.

Paul was angry when I joined what became Workers Action. He explained to me the reasons and his arguments never became better.

Paul was a typical day involved working full-time for UNISON, going to political meetings, then going down the pub. He drank and smoked more than at any other time. Was all hours of pre-recorded films and US sit coms, kicked out, went to bed and read his books.

He identified with the Muddy Waters’ line, “I live for comfort not for speed.” (I was one of the few who could get away with playing his doggy music too.)

Unfortunately comfort can be just as dangerous if it involves lots of smoking, junk food and beer. He would tell people off if they offered him things like low tar cigarettes!

Paul’s aggression at meetings was his way of overcoming nervess. If people asked for some detail at meetings he’d tell them about his own fears to try and make them more open. Paul would speak with a loud voice but his hands would be shaking.

If Paul shouted or got shouted at in meetings I would wind him up by telling him how soft he really was. He’d do all kinds of stupid things like sending chocolates or flowers.

For the three years I was in Southampton he was my best mate and biggest influence. But this is something that many oth- ers might also rightly claim. His tragic death is a huge loss to the labour movement and the revolutionar- iety left. The class struggle will be worse off without him.

A trust fund has been set up which will be used for educational purposes. Cheques should be made payable to Hamp- shire BERNICO at St Thomas’ Centre, Southgate St, Winchester SO23 9EF.

A memorial meeting is being organised for Paul, probably at the end of October. Call Socialist Outlook to confirm details.
Clinton's real crimes

The MEDIAs are raising a hail of calumny. Clinton, President of the United States, the most powerful man in the world is facing impeachment and the end of his political career.

Why? Because he conducted himself in an inappropriate manner with a young woman in the White House and then lied about it.

That at least is the official version on which the hypocrites in Congress - not many of whom could stand scrutiny of their own sexual escapades - are threatening him.

Of course we do not condone his conduct, using the boot- underlying relationship to obtain sexual gratification. This is only too common in many commercial and industrial enterprises. It has even been known to happen in the police force, the armed services and government departments.

But Clinton's real crimes are much more serious than these:

He has sold us out to the industrialists of the world-wide multi-national corporation, the Fourth International. We stand for the revolutionary transformation of society and a socialist, pluralist democracy worldwide.

The overall goal which we pursue is the emancipation of all human beings from every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation and violence.

Socialism must be under the control of ordinary people, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist, ecologist, anti-imperialist and internationalist. It cannot be a national or sectional interest.

The working class is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed. The working class and its allies must uncompromisingly fight against capitalism and for a clear program of action in order to gradually acquire the experience and consciousness needed to defeat capitalism at the decisive moment of crisis.

The movements of women, lesbians and gay men, and black people to fight their particular forms of oppression make an essential contribution to the struggle for a different society. They are organised around the principle "None so fit to break the chains as those who wear them".

The whole working class needs to fully commit itself to these struggles. Furthermore we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these organisations - an alliance which respects their legitimate autonomy.

By building simultaneously revolutionary organisations in each country and a revolutionary International, we are able to guide and encompass the global interests of the workers and oppressed. By building a united struggle against exploitation and oppression we aim to ensure the survival of the human race.

If you are one you are fighting for: and you like what you read in Socialist Outlook, why not join us? Drop a line to the address on this page, and we'll be in touch.

What's on

October


November

15 Sunday 9th Annual Community gathering. Come to the Church of England in the London area. 2.00 p.m. Our Church. London N7. Speaker: John F. Ambassador for the Americas.

December

5 Saturday 9th Annual Community gathering. Come to the Church of England in the London area. 2.00 p.m. Our Church. London N7. Speaker: John F. Ambassador for the Americas.
IS IT A SLUMP, a downturn or a recession? Day after day the pundits debate the scale of the crisis spreading through the capitalist system since the collapse of the Asian “Tiger” economies.

One corporation publishing local newspapers in Britain has now banned its journalists from using the word “recession”, for fear of its impact on advertisers! Bankers, who neither foresaw the present crisis, nor have any idea how to resolve it, manoeuvre as best they can to safeguard their profits, as their weaker rivals and whole sections of manufacturing industry collapse.

But the people with nowhere to run and no power to influence events are those hardest hit by the crisis – the millions of workers in Thailand, Indonesia, Korea, Japan and in Russia who have already been thrown out of work, with no prospect of getting their jobs back.

Thousands of workers in Britain are now facing the same problem as the microchip industries which were supposed to represent the future lead the way in slashing back production and sacked staff.

When the system bares its claws in this way, ruthlessly seeking its survival, all the pretence of “partnership” is thrown immediately out of the window. There is no “third way” out: only the first way – a frontal challenge to capital and the governments and state forces which prop it up across the globe.

The solution is not for workers to accept ever lower wages, or more “flexible” and exploitative working conditions; these “beggar your neighbour” tactics might appear to offer security in the short term at the expense of workers elsewhere, but they simply start another round of worldwide wage cuts, speed-up and rationalisation.

The key is class action: strikes, occupations and international solidarity against the bankers and corporations which have grown fat from decades of exploitation. Unless there is resistance, the misery will increase. It’s time the victims began the fight back.

See our economic analysis, inside page 8

1,000 unemployed workers in the queue for work in Morocco

60 YEARS

60 Years of the Fourth International
1pm-6pm, Saturday
NOVEMBER 14
registration bookstalls and meet speakers from 12 noon
FULL DETAILS inside, page 17

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