How we can REALLY beat the Tories!

Tony Blair's New Labour leadership team have stuck up the proverbial two fingers to almost all those who should be the Party's bedrock support at the next election.

The sick, the pensioners, the homeless, the poor, the jobless, students, school students, five million public sector workers, Labour councillors... the list is endless of those who have been wilfully insulted or attacked by Blair's team, their needs and demands repudiated for fear of increasing public spending and raising taxes.

Conservative

More conservative than the Tories: less liberal than the Liberal Democrats, Labour has indeed been single-minded in courting the "dubious" votes of the affluent middle class, promising them concessions at the expense of the most deprived.

Despite this, Labour's poll ratings appear to be riding as high as ever - clear evidence of a mass public mood of revulsion against the Tories, a craving for a real change, for something different and better.

Labour's leaders have a historic opportunity to unite millions of the downtrodden and oppressed behind a package of policies that would swiftly change life for the better for the vast majority.

Instead it is promising to keep Tory policies largely intact for two years!

The last time Labour went into an election with a policy which was such a carbon copy of the Tories was under Gaitskell in 1959: they lost.

It doesn't have to be this way. Socialists must organise now for the fight to come to ensure a Labour government is not allowed simply to impose Tory policies which will alienate and demoralise Labour supporters and pave the way for another spell of Tory rule. We offer our five points as the starting point for a programme that could beat the Tories for good!

Cut out the five points and keep them for reference. We will be fighting, alongside many more trade unionists and campaigners for these whoever wins the election.

Five points to start the fightback

1. A minimum wage of at least £4.26, moving towards a target of two thirds male median earnings.
2. A 35-hour week without loss of pay, to create new jobs for the unemployed.
3. Abolish the Job Seekers Allowance, Project Work and all forms of workfare.
4. Scrap the anti-union laws.
5. A crash programme of investment to rebuild the welfare state, halting cuts in education, the NHS and social services, and restore the value of the state pension slashed by the Tories.

These policies are to be financed through the imposition of steeply progressive taxation on top incomes, big business and City speculators.

Fighting Fortress Europe - Pages 6-7: Trade unions Pages 9-12
One lecturer at an old university told Socialist Outlook, "The pressure on staff is incredible. We work 14 hours a day and weekends, and then we are told by our managers that we are not publishing enough academic papers or that teaching quality is not as high as it should be. We are expected to work harder and harder and further and further to agree to a pecuniary pay rise", Managers in higher education awarded themselves a 5.5 per cent pay rise last summer.

Some staff in the universities may look at the new offer and decide that as it is an improvement it should be accepted as the best that may be offered this year. But the UCAS stated last summer that 1.5 per cent was their final offer. The industrial action last term clearly had an impact.

Rod Marshall, branch secretary of NUTFE at Buckinghamshire College, commented that "some staff feel ground down but have started to learn to fight back again. The strike last term was a massive show of strength that frightened the employers. The offer of 2.9 per cent over two years will see our salaries continue to fall while our workloads will continue to increase. We should respect ourselves and our students and reject this paltry two year offer."

The higher education dispute has shown the need for an "open action". Proposals for an escalation of the action, including exam boycotts and further strikes, should be put into practice.

Student unions, whose members are also suffering the effects of government policy, should be involved in the campaign, which goes beyond the pay levels of staff. The squeeze on higher education reflects the overall funding situation in the public sector.

A Labour government is likely to be at least as tough on public spending as its Conservative predecessor. Public sector workers must unite in campaigning for substantial increases in funding. Demands for increased taxes on the rich and the scrapping of the wasteful nuclear weapons programme and stock exchange need to be raised.

Cuts in HE staff also hit students

Simon Deville

OF THE THREE candidates standing in the Newport Central seat last month, both the Conservatives and the British National Party called for the council to withdraw funding from Newport Monitoring Project.

Unfortunately for them, Newport’s Labour council had already beat them to it and cut NMP’s grant funding.

An unprecedented "review" of NMP criticised the project for its involvement in anti-racist campaigns, its support for the Ibrahim Sey campaign (Ibras hima was killed in police custody last year), and criticised its collective nature and modes of organisation (apparently there was insufficient distinction between management and full time workers). The bulk of the report of the review body merely simply lists a number of minor quibbles, for example, what people where the review investigated alleged financial mismanagement, it pointed to two VAT receipts in a 3 year period which had insufficiency details and the fact that staff members bought tea and coffee from the shop next door when they could have saved money going to a supermarket.

The council had seven different measures they could have taken to address any problems, the last of which being the complete withdrawal of funding. There is no evidence that this response was to opt for the latter. Under their contract when funding is withdrawn the council is obliged to allow NMP a 3 month winding down period. Cuts in the council is trying to withdraw even this.
Labour embraces Tory economic policies, leaving millions Browned-off!

The Labour leadership has declared war on the Welfare State. Gordon Brown's speech of January 20 in which he pledged that Labour would freeze public spending for three years and stick to the departmental limits set in Clarke's last budget was a decisive moment. The drastic consequences for already crumbling services if this road is stuck to are spelled out elsewhere (p 8).

Blair's attacks on single mothers back up this stance, not only in the emptiness of their content but in the determination to paint 'welfare' as a dirty word. His arrogant disregard for the reality of real people's lives ignores both the lack of affordable, decent child care provision and the absence of real jobs at a decent wage.

**Policy Bill**

Labour's overall support for the Police Bill will, as we point out (p 4), reduce the number of childminders. Nor does it answer why single parents and those deprived of choice as to whether to spend some of their weekly benefit bringing up children if this choice is available to those parents with partners. Single parents are often too much scape-goated by the Tories — now Blair takes the call.

No single sector will fare no better. Brown has made it plain that a Labour government will refuse to implement pay review body proposals for public sector workers if they exceed Tory spending limits.

To make sure public sector workers put up with whatever Brown offers them a Labour government will retain every single peice of anti-union legislation introduced by the Tories.

When these laws were being pushed through Parliament, Labour MPs, including the front bench, correctly denounced them as attacks on the unions. Today Labour's front bench refers to them as 'reforms'.

Of course Labour had previously made fairly evident that it would do no favours to public sector workers or those who rely on the hospitals, schools or benefits that have been ravaged by the Tories.

The idea that Labour was the party of 'tax and spend' — ludicrous anyway that Callaghan and Wilson brought in cutting cars had already been laid to rest. Despite this the unofficial election campaign mounts and the Tories continue to foundle, the leadership clique want to present themselves as completely different from their predecessors.

New Labour has nightmares about the 'Winter of Discontent' as the media constantly reminds us. So they are determined as never to eradicate any vestige of expectations from working people that their lot will improve under Blair — that there is any point in organizing or demonstrating let alone striking.

**Pressure**

The pressure that has built up for years where trade union leaders and politicians have told those who have argued for action against the initiatives of the Tories that they must wait for a Labour government means that this target is probably impossible.

So the message of Brown and Blair is not only addressed to the floating voters and the city but to Labour's working class base. Workers should expect nothing from Labour that they are not already getting from the Tories. Even Labour's enthusiasm for England hosting the 2006 football World Cup finals - hardly a vote winner in Scotland and Wales anyway - involves a bi-partisan campaign with the Tories!

But this desire to appease the pressure of fiscal prudence may well turn out to be self-defeating. There is a danger that their refusal to raise the top rate of tax or announce any other measures to rescue the wasteland of Britain's towns and cities will demoralize those who did believe that Labour would be better than the Tories. This is already evident in the NH.

A recent ICM survey for Nursing Times revealed that 78 percent of nurses believed there were already serious staffing shortages, and two thirds of those thought that patients were being put at risk. Hardly surprising therefore, given Brown's support for Clarke's policies, that 41 percent of nurses trusted no party on the NHS.

At best Labour may offer 'jam tomorrow' - or more likely, in a few years time - 'Brown decides the country can afford it' - as Chris Smith repeatedly does in a soon to be made speech. But even 'jam tomorrow' is not going to reverse swinging cuts in the welfare state and stop the loss of desperately needed staff.

The need to step up campaigning in defence of existing services and to demand the rebuilding of the Welfare State has never been more urgent.

**Labour NEC plans to neuter Party**

Noll Murray

On January 29 Labour's NEC endorsed proposals which could turn the party into a rubber stamp for the parliamentary leadership.

The prime aim of the measures contained in the 30-page document "Labour into Power — a framework for partnership" is to ensure that the party can no longer call a Labour government into account. In the words of the report "The NEC is clear that neither it nor the party should operate as a kind of shadow cabinet or watchdog of Labour in power, seeking principally to police the operations of the elected government."

This, for this current, house-trained NEC, a Labour government should not be accountable to the party. The report explains "with these reforms the Party will be able to support a new Labour government effectively and ensure its re-election and policy.

The purpose of the party is not to decide what policy is in the best interests of the movement and then ensure a Labour government carry it out, but to support it and ensure its re-election whatever it does."

Demands that the proposals are designed to neuter Party conference ring hollow. It is argued that conference will remain the sovereign policy-making body, with both constituents and unions retaining the power to submit resolutions. In fact CLPs would make submissions to the National Policy Forum rather than conference.

Conference would discuss and vote on reports - but reports drawn up by Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet members rather than discrete resolutions from component bodies. The National Policy Forum would be slightly enlarged, but there are no plans to make it more accountable or democratic. The move to make conference a 'preservation' by the leadership is obvious.

At the same time other clauses will weaken the NEC - turning it from a body which, at least at times, however much they are the parliametary leadership to account between conferences, into a support group for the leadership. It would meet only every two months instead of monthly as at present, giving less opportunity to shadow the government's programme. Its sub-committees, which deal with issues such as organisation, finance etc would be abolished and these, together with 'campaigning' (for which read electioneering) would become the main business of the NEC rather than policy. Policy would be shunted off to a joint committee drawn from the government and NEC, but with an inbuilt leadership majority.

On top of all that, proposed changes in its composition are designed to prevent any of the 'awkward squad' getting elected.

While trade union representation would be retained, the constituency and women's representatives would be replaced by representation for local government, the Cabinet, constituency members and MPs elected by their fellow MPs.

This would ensure that popular MPs, such as Dennis Skinner, who have widespread support among the rank and file membership, but who are out of tune with the majority in the PLP, could not get elected.

Many will claim these proposals are nothing like as bad as a simple severing of the Party-union link or those flagged up by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. Nothing could be further from the truth.

They are likely to be the first slice of a salami tactic and considerably reduce the ability of the unions (and CLPs) to affect policy.

They would begin to turn the party into the election machine which uncontrollably supports a Labour government with a once-a-year showpiece conference for the leadership to present themselves in front of the media.

They must be fought at every union conference and a major war waged against them at this year's Labour Party conference.
Scrap Project Work - Stop the JSA

Geoffrey Thompson
The Tories' efforts to con the electorate their policies are boosting employment are backfiring, as revealed by a news story that saw the JSA and the Home Office hit the headlines.

Although there is a fall in the unemployment rate, the cause of the draconian measures the government is using to drive people off the register.

The jobseekers allowance rules on availability, a crackdown on lone signers and home visits to new claimants are all contributing to strip the unemployed of their right to benefits.

The introduction of Project Work into many areas in February will force people to accept another 100,000 from the official statistics.

The failure of compulsory training schemes like Project Work have been outlined in a recent TUC report which states the only 4% of people on schemes actually work afterwards. Project Work is being marketed as a 'job in a job' and to make bosses a quick profit for employing claimants at £10 a week.

Many trade unions have recognised that JSA and Project Work will force the unemployed into their jobs and drive down the wages of all workers.

In areas where Project Work is being introduced, unions are already organising to make their employers buy back their schemes. Such action must be combined with a fight in the workplace for employing wages for the lowest paid employees.

A statement by TUC leader John Monks condemning Project Work as 'rotten' was encouraging, but we need more. National trade unions need to be exerting pressure on Labour councils to resist and publicly condemn Project Work.

Labour must state it will scrap Project Work if elected to power the go-ahead of the work placement schemes at the end of the Blair 'Moderate'.

Benefits lost

For the unemployed and civil servants the end to the JSA and schemes like Project Work cannot come soon enough. Many unemployed workers have been left hungry and hungry looking for work as a result of the JSA. Workers' lives are in danger, as they are an easy target for claimants anger at the new benefit laws. In many areas unity has been achieved between civil servants and the unemployed and this should be built upon.

The role of the CPSA leadership in striking action against the JSA and Project Work has not helped such a relationship. Left Unity in the CPSA must continue to build campaign against conditions irrespective of whether they can win a strike like the Blair 'Moderate'.

The creation of an unemployed movement is still in its infancy. Yet there are opportunities now to develop it.

The Eurocrash for full employment in June can play an important role. With a victory, it will be easier for a Blair government to keep elements of the JSA alive and drive yet more young people into poverty.

Today we must fight the Tory schemes; but tomorrow we should be ready to defeat Blair's Project Work.

Defend Brian Higgins

Mark Jason

Brisa Higgins, a leading activist in the rank and file Building Workers Union, is in court today accused of theft. He was standing for a high court injunction from Dominion Hehir, a full time official in his own union, UCATT.

Higgins has a long record of opposition to the building industry. He faced death threats following his active support of the Langloix case at the British Library ten years ago.

Despite being blacklisted throughout the industry he is still secretary of Northampton branch of UCATT and a successful campaign in defence of 12 UCATT workers at Milestones last month.

The threatened injunction is unprecedented. Higgins was told by Hehir that case and that of John Jones, one of two workers sacked by the Work Council Direct Labour Organisation for refusing to accept a transfer to a private building employers called Cotes. Jones was sacked alongside a plumber in the EPJ at the time the council used the TUPE legislation. (European legislation that supposedly protects workers' rights, doing so the council refused to honour previous grievance procedures agreed with Higgins.

No support

Hehir took the side of South- west Council Direct Labour Organisation which he formerly he said against Hehir in a pamphlet on rank and file trade unionists published by the Collier Bay Roll Back Beach and a letter in the Irish Post last year.

The threatened injunction was announced to the.colleagues at a meeting on which he said he was standing for re-election to his full time position, a meeting he had convened and authored his photo referring to a recent successful industrial action which he said "made a decision right from the start to defend our rights". Higgins wrote a letter to the Hehir based in the National Union of Construction Workers.

Today we fight the Tories: but we should be ready to fight on against Blair's Project Work.
Magnet attracted to EuroMarch

350 striking workers at Magnet in Darlington, Teeside, have joined the Liverpool Dockers in their support for the Euro-March in defence of jobs and welfare. The strike, at Magnet's fitted kitchen factory and now entering its seventh month, began when Magnet's parent company, Bertsford announced cuts in wages of £35 a week and the axing of bereavement and paternity leave. In September the strikers were sacked and the company hired unskilled workers at lower pay. Bertsford boasted they had saved £3.5 million which has been wiped off the company share value.

Enthusiasm

Strikers' leader John Cory is enthusiastic about what they have learned from the magnificent struggle of the Liverpool dockers and following their successful lead, plans to internationalise the dispute. EuroMarch campaigners are now hoping that workers at Ford's Halewood plant will be the next group of workers under attack to take up support for the march. Nationwide leafletting of Magnet showrooms on Saturday 8 February, 12 noon. MASS PICKET, Friday 14 February, assemble outside Magnet Factory, Allington Way, Darlington.

Requests for speakers - 01253 282839 or picket mobile 04030 72766.

Come to Brussels!

On February 22-23 in Brussels there will be a major conference designed to launch the Euro-marches on a continental level.

Delegations will be present from all the countries participating: France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Ireland, Luxembourg, Austria and Britain.

The conference begins at 12 noon on Saturday and will conclude at 2pm on the Sunday, with a social on the Saturday night. Accommodation and food provided.

A large delegation will be going from Britain, including a coach from the north of England.

For details and tickets contact: (North) Glenn Voris 01744 - 756889 or (South) Pete Cooper 0171 - 7383362.
Hunger strikes expose scandal of racist Tory laws

It seems likely that during February a large number of asylum seekers detained at Rochester prison will continue their hunger strike in protest against their treatment by the authorities. Their persistence has forced the national media to highlight the issue and campaign groups are mobilising in support of them. Bill Mackie examines the background.

THE USE of Rochester prison as a place to detain refugees seeking asylum has caused controversy even within the liberal establishment.

Some of the detainees hold the view that they are treated far worse than those convicted of crimes and that they are kept in conditions that would be unacceptable for a prisoner from eight in the morning till eight at night and the diet is appalling.

One of the detainees went on an indefinite hunger strike, by the end of last March he had developed anemia and was rushed to hospital, but his blood tests were repeated and he was told that he was continuing to lose weight.

Hunger strikers are demanding that their requests for political asylum be formally heard by 'an independent body and judicial committee'. Some of those involved have been detained for over two years. All are detained without charge or time limit and without proper legal and medical provision.

The protest movement points out that out of 45 per cent of detainees have been diagnosed as suffering from mental disorders and trauma yet they continue to be held under a prison regime.

Demonstrations in support of the strikes demands took place outside Rochester throughout January. On Saturday February 1, approximately one hundred demonstrators stood outside the prison and when the detainees heard their chants they shouted back. Demonstrators are demanding to continue their support and will maintain a presence every Saturday at Rochester, while the strike continues. At the same time they will be picketing the Home office every Wednesday evening. Any death occurring as a result of the strike would result in a further campaign of mobilisation outside the Home Office.

Campagners outside Campfield, the purpose-built detention centre for victims of the Asylum Act

Those campaign groups for the closure of detention centres and those of refugees have found it easier to mobilise support when those that have been detained have been prominent political figures. On May 2 1992, 500 people marched through London in support of Kurdish nationalist leader Kazi Yilmaz, detained since November 1991.

On International Refugee Day in June, 200 gathered at Winston Green prison in Birmingham demanding the release of Raghbir Singh and other detainees, Singh, a Sikh newspaper editor has been held since March 1995 as 'a threat to national security'. As well as support from his local community and anti-racist activists, Singh also won backing from his union, the National Union of Journalists.

Released

Both Kazi Yilmaz and Raghbir Singh were released in November 1995 following a judgement by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The court found that Karamjit Singh Chabah, a Sikh separatist, was being denied his legal rights and would be in danger if deported to India. He was freed after being held in Bedford prison for six years and three months without charge. More re-leases of those who pose a threat to national security are expected.

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Regular protests have been organised by local campaign groups outside a number of detention centres. November 1995 was the occasion when the regular 'last Saturday at Campfield' demonstration at Campfield detention centre near Oxford marked 'three years too long' of detentions at the site. Over 150 people attended the subsequent conference on detentions organized by the Asylum Rights Campaign.

December 1995 saw the latest protest by the Chase and Harrowsworld Campaign outside the West London detention centre, bringing Christmas puddings as well as solidarity to the detainees.

These types of actions are particularly important for those refugees who were detained immediately on entering Britain and who therefore have few if any friends and supporters to highlight their particular case.

The situation facing refugees in Britain is now worse than ever. The new Asylum and Immigration Act is now wholly in force.

Last week saw the introduction of the measures contained in the act requiring employers to check the immigration status of employees. Despite considerable criticism from Home Secretary, Michael Howard, and other immigration experts, the act is expected to succeed in creating a climate of fear amongst the British-born and the British-born Asian community.

Furthermore, the act has been interpreted to mean that all asylum seekers are now subject to the 'enjoy of the Western World'.

Not only those on the left but also employers organisations believe the new measures will lead to an overall drop in the employment of Black people and those from ethnic minorities.

But following Howard's statement, in a hypocritical speech to business leaders, Employment and Education Secretary, Gillian Shephard, declared that in order for Britain to maintain a competitive edge in the 21st century, it would be necessary 'to draw from the rich seam of talent and knowledge of Britain's ethnic minorities'.

The debate before this Home Office Minister, Ann Widdecombe, stated that the detention of asylum seekers at Rochester was wholly in keeping with Christian doctrine and immediately criminalised one refugee being held as a child abuser.

Since changes in regulations last year, Social security and housing benefit have been denied to 80-90 per cent of all detained asylum seekers. Local authorities, strapped for cash after government cutbacks, are having (with varying success) to take the edge of the consequent misery of destitute refugees.

To top it all the government has said that from March 1996 it will cut the grants to bodies such as the Refugee Council - a prominent opponent of the benefit cuts - from £3.4 million to £1.5 million per year.

The detention of those whose only 'crime' is to seek a safe haven in this country has reached unprecedented depths. On October 1 1995, 864 people seeking political asylum were being detained in the UK. Of these, 81 were women. This is three times the number being detained in the early 1990s: the average length of detention has also doubled, to nearly three years.

Of the 864 imprisoned refugees, 666 had been detained for over 6 months and 158 for over a year. Of the total, 364 were held in prisons around the country, in breach of a UN Refugee Convention rule that detained asylum seekers should not be held with people charged with conventional crime. The High Commission for Refugees guidelines reject such detention in principle, and allow that in exceptional cases should refugees be detained for a maximum of 48 hours.

Detention centres

A further 33 asylum seekers detained in October were held in police cells. The great majority (90%) were held at detention centres including Campfield (up to 200), Harrow, North West London and Uxbridge (House at Camden, opened last summer). Where Harrow prison, at Gosport, near Portsmouth - long used to imprison refugees - filled its quota, the government statistics is not yet clear.

The nationality of detainees reflects the denials of human rights at home. Of 864 people detained in October 310 (nearly 30%) came from ten countries, Nigeria, Somalia, Algeria, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Zaire, China, Turkey and Pakistan - all on the so-called 'white list' of allegedly 'safe' countries, from where those fleeing will be denied asylum. At any one time in 1996, over 100 Nigerian and 100 Indian asylum seekers were detained and over 40 of the other 8 nationalities.

It is no surprise that so many refugees are looking for asylum in countries with undemocratic, corrupt military and dictatorial characters. The reason for the 'white list' is not on the basis of any human rights criteria but that arms exports and other trading relations with these governments are vital to corporate profit.

It is a no-win situation for a refugee arriving in Britain: if you don't show papers at the port of entry then you lose entitlement to benefits. If you do, you may well be jailed for your trouble. 63 per cent of those detained had sought asylum within six months of arrival.

Out of the Campaign in support of the hunger strikes at Rochester is showing, some possible tactics and how to start an ongoing Campaign there. The existing groups at Campfield and HMP Bermondsey should communicate to need support - and additional personal power. A hunger strike must be setting up a closure campaign around the Gwent郡 - with a view to closing down HMP Bermondsey in order to force the government to rethink their policy. All these groups have to work closely with detainees, refuse to allow gagging orders to detaining justifications and detainees support groups.

Network

Not everyone can - or wants to - visit detainees - but this is a key element in building the anti-detention movement. Anyone interested in attending a re-launch of the Anti Detentions Network to pursue these aims should ring 01865 316657.

In the past two years three national unions - the PCS, TGWU and ASLEF - have agreed policy calling for an end to immigration detention. A level of support was relatively easy and used more and more could need to be done. Even in unions where winning the policy may prove more difficult, raising the demand may be very effective in undermining the bipartisan policy of Labour and the Tories on the question. The demand has been raised at the past two Labour Party Conferences but has never been done before. With a Labour government likely to be in office it is vital that the issue is once again raised.

90% of those detained are black. The imprisonment of innocent people, especially if they are usually picked by country of origin, is an act of state racism, an incitement to further racist thinking and an attack on the freedoms of all people. There can be no holding back the protest in the political 'leaders' and demanding an immediate end to it.

* A widely backed conference on detentions in Europe, called originally by Federation des Associations des Travailleurs Immigrants (FAATI), was rescheduled to take place in Paris on April 15-16. (Further information from JP Ferrin-Martín, 11 rue Poisson de Terre, 75450 Orleans, France or call 01865 538415.)
MURDER AT SEA!

But who cares? It's only illegals

B.Satiram

IT WAS the headline in The Observer of January 12 that caught my eye. I've stopped buying a Sunday paper you see. So much bulk and so little substance.

"Murder at Sea" it read. I half remembered the story from an agency report and felt so guilty as to how easily I'd forgotten it, bought the paper.

280 South Asian migrants died on Christmas Day 1996 off the coast of Greece. Correction; they had been murdered. One of the survivors recounted the mind-numbing events. "They forced 318 of us at gunpoint to climb down with ropes from the big ship to the smaller one. The small ship could only take about 100 people. People jumped overboard in rough water."

Ahmad Shahab then described how the larger ship realized that its human cargo was drowning deliberately rammed into the smaller boat wrecking it. "People were desperately screaming for help. I saw my brother's face, I said "please, please, he can't swim". It was too late.

Those details sounded so familiar to me and then a friend brought it home. "This is the modern slave trade", she said.

This story broke the same week when there was wall-to-wall media coverage of the rescue of a lone yachtswoman on whose self-published Richard Branson balloned his way onto our screens both trying to break records. But who cares? The migrants were non-white and breaking the law. No one asked them to take the journey after all.

Ordinary

There was an ordinariness about the whole episode. Even its revelation met with disinterest. No one believed the survivors' tales. Most of the press ignored it, even after The Observer's coverage.

There was an ordinariness; back to me, "About suffering were never wrong The Old Masters; How well they understood/In human position"

The migrants had paid agents in their own countries anything between US$5,000 and US$8,000 for passage into Europe as undocummented illegal workers. The ship captains and crew fear imprisonment and heavy fines if caught with their merchandise. So sometimes the would-be immigrants still change ships several times to avoid attention. For most of the journey, the migrants have no roof above their heads, no deck anyway. Penned in cramped accommodation, eating gruel and scraps, sleeping, defecating, humping and praying. Suffering the indignities and fear together. The riskiest part are when they approach the coast of a European country.

Usually the ship keeps a distance to avoid the authorities, then they load people onto life-boats and tell them to make their own way. If they reach the coast without detection, another set of agents will be waiting for them to guide them to their destination.

How do I know this? Well, because two weeks before a cousin had taken the same route as the one that ill-fated journey. Happily he survived and is now in France.

Once upon a time people from the Third World were encouraged to migrate to the First. That was when they needed cheap, semi-skilled labour. Now the requirements have changed. "Give us your teachers, doctors, scientists and professionals whose upbringing and education we did'nt pay for". Two-thirds of Ghanaian doctors who graduated after 1980 have left that country in the brain drain.

As Western Europe teeters down the walls between its countries it erects new ones around it. The bricks in this wall are laws like the Immigration and Asylum Act in Britain which criminalise non-white people and make employers, health workers and school teachers into immigration officials.

Once upon a time, one would take a simple but safe boat journey or fly directly. Today, even an asylum seeker needs a visa and airline companies are fined for carrying passengers without proper entry papers.

It makes that more difficult to name the West but still not impossible.

There is an elaborate network of airport officials, ship captains, travel agents and racketeers who profit from the desperation of a few to leave their homes and communities. Western governments are also culpable in these manoeuvres.

The migrants aren't the poorest of the poor. If they were they couldn't afford the cost of the journey. Many have some assets which they sell or mortgage for cash. Others borrow money from relatives and strangers. This all of has to be repaid with interest. If they make it to their destination, they hope to find work. They are as The Observer editorial noted, "officially non-existent, but unofficially hired for the jobs no one else will do at wages no one else will take".

There are push and pull factors at work here. They clean our homes, they guard our work-places, they prepare and serve our food in canterens and restaurants, they are petrol station attendants and fast food workers. But they aren't welcome here. They work for peanuts and survive on peanuts too. There are debts to repay, for their fares, for loans taken by the family. Siblings whose marriage expenses have to be found, school fees and medical bills to settle. Wages in poor countries haven't kept pace with the cost of living. Job-security is a thing of the past. Farmers are pushed off the land and into debt through cash crop cultivation and trans-national intrusion.

The new jobs are for women. The factory owners provide their "fumbling fingers" and their socialisation into titling and repetitive work. They get paid less, but are made to work harder and they aren't allowed to join unions.

They call the migrants 'economic refugees' but as A. Sivamandan remarks, "that is to miss out on a whole series of steps in the process of how economic refugees become political refugees ... your economics is our politics ... refugees are made, not born".

Some flee discrimination and oppression in their own countries only to be confronted by caste racism and racist violence in the West. Some will study and train themselves for better jobs but most will remain doing the shit jobs for shit wages. Still it will be better.

You know us from news bulletins and travel books and novels. We know you from colonialism and popular music and Hollywood. We are your bastard children born in a loveless, subtle imperialism. We know how to make a swear word for us, nor is it a meta-physical spiritual. We know it. We live it.

We just want a better life than the one we left, We want a taste of that fruit that everyone promises their "childhood". We want to claim our birthright.

"And the ship sailed calmly on".

Solidarity with those with no papers

TEN MONTHS ago, three hundred African men and women began their struggle for the right to live and work in France. In August 1996 they were violently removed from a church - St Bernard - which they had occupied.

In response to this, some of these men and women began hunger strikes. In one instance, the hunger strike lasted for more than fifty days.

Every week the Authorities are expelling more people without regard for human rights.

Thousands of 'Sans Papiers' from 40 different countries have joined the struggle since August 1996 and have received help from a coordinating group based in Paris. The 'Sans Papiers' movement became national when local groups, throughout France, decided to unite and combine their actions. They began their own campaigns and raising awareness with the aim of enabling the 'Sans Papiers' to obtain residency permits for all.

The supporters of the 'Sans Papiers' movement include trade unions, left wing organisations, community groups, people committed to democratic rights and artists. This struggle is becoming a central issue in French politics and life.

The 'Sans Papiers' movement are now in need of international solidarity and contact with other groups and movements around the world.

Immigrants in many European countries including those from the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany and the USA can all benefit from sharing information and support. They also need the active support of organisations, groups and individuals who are willing to show their commitment to freedom.

We urge you to send a letter of protest to the French government and to the president to demand:
* Residents permits for all of the 'Sans Papiers'
* The immediate release of those currently imprisoned
* To immediately suspend all deportations
* The return of those who have been deported

* A repeal of anti-immigrant legislation

Protest

Send your protest urgently to:
* M, le Premier Ministre
56, rue de Varenne, 75007 Paris
Fax: + (33) 4 45 44 15 72
* M, le President de la Republique
55, rue de l'Hay, St Honore, 75008 Paris
Fax: + (33) 47 42 24 65

Please send a copy of your letter to us at the address below.

For further information contact: National Coordination of 'Sans-papiers' 22, rue Pajol, 75018 Paris, France
Fax: (33) 46 07 16 19
E-mail: pajo@bok.net
Education and social services under the axe as

Councils face the crunch

Budget-setting meetings will be taking place throughout February as councils try to build their 1995 budgets. But the real budget for local government was fixed by Kenneth Clarke last November. The Tories have decided to make more cuts onto councils mainly run by Labour and Liberal Democrat parties. JOHN USTER looks at the scale of the crisis, and the silence of the unions.

The Savage cuts in local government spending which are convulsing council chambers across the country, and forcing campaigners and trade unionists back onto the streets in lobbyists and representatives are the latest of a series of cutsbackwards seen in the history of council services.

Two years ago, councils faced cuts of £1.5 billion to meet government spending limits. In many areas, education bore the brunt of the cuts, and over 5,000 teaching jobs were lost, while angry parents and their children continued to be the latest of a series of cutsbackwards seeing in March. Against Cuts in Education (FACE).

Schools defended

The heat was felt by Tory ministers. They recognised that education cuts were a hot potato, and the cuts in council spending limits for the same period were targeted to avoid hitting schools.

The national spending limits for education were slightly increased, leaving more money available for the bruts. But in real terms many councils were still looking at cuts, and many teachers were left to fend for themselves. Social workers and staff from other services.

FACE and other education campaigners battled on, winning concessions from the education unions, which resulted in the NUT's demonstration last October, and the forthcoming National Education Week, supported by all the main teaching unions and campaigners, on March 10-11.

While schools were too exempt protected, the Tories focused the 1996-7 cuts on social services, giving councils a total increased allocation of less than 1% - which is below inflation. 70% of authorities had to make cuts in services, scrap developments, and increase charges for social services: many still face a shortfall.

From this April, the squeeze will be even tighter: Kenneth Clarke's budget, as given councils only had the 5.1% overall increase they need to maintain existing services.

Welfare state cuts

Welfare state cuts are also large cuts. The 1995-6 cuts are likely to cost 15% of social services' core budgets. In 1997, 15% of council spending on education is to go to £516m to stay at or below inflation. After imposing the cuts and increased charges totaling £2.3bn in 1995, councils will need to spend on education for 1997-8, 7% by up to £516m to stay at or below inflation. This is why the government has given councils only £26m in current funding. What is needed.

As the Association of Metropolitan Authorities warns, many vulnerable people will be excluded: 'Failure to provide additional resources will lead to a loss of and unacceptable tightening of eligibility criteria for people who need community care services'.

The final elderly cut caught a win in the�

movements. Many have been excluded from NHS care by new, rigorous criteria imposed by health authorities last April: now they could also be denied help from social services and left to fend for themselves.

It's not just the elderly who are denied services. 45% of social service spending on goes on care for and young people. Several councils are warning that the cuts could leave them unable to guarantee statutory levels of care for children.

Instead of butting their lips and hoping for the best, it's time national union leaders headed up the fight for council services, with action between now and May including local, regional and national stoppages and demonstrations, pointing the finger of blame at Westminster.

The AMA has listed up the size of the cuts that councils have agreed to as the additional responsibilities imposed upon them for a wide range of vulnerable people: costs of the Carers Act are estimated to £137m; Mental Health Services £22m; the Children Act £26m; Refugees and Asylum Seekers £50m: in total these extra costs add up to £814m next year.

Meanwhile building projects have ground to a halt, with a massive £307m worth of capital schemes deferred for lack of cash in 1995-6. This is equivalent to a year and a half of social services capital expenditure at current levels, creating huge problems of backlog maintenance.

In total, councils estimate they need a £1.25 billion increase on social services budget of £8bn (15%) to cope with the new pressures. This is why a growing list of council and metropolitan councils are considering massive cuts.

But local authorities have gone beyond the cut in community care limits to £1.25m - 45% of what is needed. The Association of Metropolitan Authorities warns, many vulnerable people will be excluded: 'Failure to provide additional resources will lead to a loss of and unacceptable tightening of eligibility criteria for people who need community care services'.

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Devaluing

But Kent tops the league with a massive £23.7m (10.7%) projected cut which will devastate social services, forcing the council to provide the widespread privatisation of services to save money.

This is no accident. The Tories are cynically applying the squeeze in order to press-gang councils to spend fewer of their own money, with a total of £5 billion they have pleaded from councils to spend on education for the elderly, and to transfer 30% of additional funds from social work to education.

In 1995 it was estimated that £611m was needed to repair Britain's crumbling libraries and buy new books. Instead many councils began to close them down, North Yorkshire is again swing the axe, threatening to close 20 of their 45 libraries to help cut £3.6m from education and library spending. SDP Evans' report in July included total closure of the county's adult education and youth service, and cost up to 1,000 jobs.

Housing

Housing budgets are also being clobbered, and housing departments reduced. In 1995 it was estimated that council estates needed up to £200 million in repairs. Since then allocations have been frozen, and the rate of cutsbackwards is now averaging 7.8%.

But the Lord ministers continue to apply ruthless "capping" limits to local spending - restrictions which Labour councils described as "absurd". The withdrawal of a quarter of general government spending.

Now councillors and council bosses are more determined to work out the precise combination of increases in council tax and cuts in services.

Kirklees council is warning of a 6% hike in council tax. 35% of authorities have already announced spending cuts of 3%. In Oxfordshire, the Tory group is advocating the council should set a budget £8m above John Gummer's "cap" of £393m, financed by a hefty increase in council tax. In Scotland, council tax rises of 3% to 35% have been predicted, with West Dunbartonshire warning of an increase of up to 12%.

Missing link

But where are the organisations that ought to be leading the resistance? As the councils across England unroll the weekly plans to balance the books, and ad-hoc campaigns of parents, councillors, social workers and voluntary sector groups and their clients battle to save front-line social services, there has been a deafening silence from the public sector unions, as thousands of council workers' and council members' front-line services face the sack, wage cuts or privatisation.

Since Gordon Brown's bombshell on public spending, the union leaders have been silent. The only mention of a Labour government riding to the rescue. The current crisis is a dress rehearsal for even bigger cuts to come if Brown sticks to his threats and upholds Clarke's budget limits on spending for two more years.
TRADE UNIONS

Labour set for collision with unions

Harry Sloan
A LABOUR government elected in May could be facing major clashes with the public sector unions by next winter, if Gordon Brown sticks to his line of enforcing Kenneth Clarke's brutal stranglehold on public sector spending.

But it could all go pear-shaped much sooner - as early as the autumn - if Labour ministers attempt to carry through their refusal to give 1 million NHS nurses, soldiers, doctors and other NHS professional staff the pay increases recommended by review bodies.

Brown's belligerent stance on these issues, coupled with Blair's assurance to business chiefs that Labour would leave the Thatcherite anti-unions law intact, and the public rebuff to union leaders who have suggested a new 'social partnership forum' involving TUC and labour chiefs, all fuel growing suspicion that Labour's strategy involves providing a rapid clash with the unions, in which the virility of New Labour as a legitimate tool of the bosses could be undermined.

On every front the party is taking its distance from the unions, with its attention focused exclusively on the 150,000 floating voters in the key marginal seats which they want to win. In London, Blairites even stepped up in to veto attempts to launch a Trade Unions for Labour campaign.

In announcing his plan to freeze public spending to the existing projected levels for two years, and renouncing any increase in income tax - even on top earners - for the lifetime of the next Parliament (five years), Brown clearly wanted to send clear signals of friendship to Blair in the party and to the boot in to campaigns that are building against cuts in schools, social services and other council services.

This warning not to expect any concessions from a Labour government has been reinforced by Frank Dobson's blunt statements to council leaders, who are wrangling with massive shortfalls and looking for relief from central government.

Labour will maintain the Tory cap on spending, warns Dobson, so ensuring that thousands of jobs and vital services will get the chop.

Growing gap

But it is certain to get worse: Clarke's limits on spending apply an ever-growing gap in the funding of public spending - a £35bn cut - which authorities and armed forces to pay the full increase without triggering another round of cuts in jobs and services.

The proposed increases (3.25-3.4%) are marginally above inflation. For NHS staff there is the added bonus of scrapping the discredited system of local pay bargaining which has deadlocked the 1996-7 pay review in most Trusts, and offered only puny increases in many more.

Even UNISON's Rodney Bickerstaffe, who has kept his head well below the parapet on earlier Labour pronouncements, and done nothing to campaign against council cuts - and whose leader Doug McAlroy has spoken out in opposition to Labour or the Tories phasing the increases - but they must do more. They must spell out what workers want from a Labour government, why they pay the political way to Labour, and that if the Blair government will not give workers what they need, there will be a fight. Inside the unions the left must prepare. That's why the link-up of union Broad Leaft (pl1) is such an important initiative.

The danger is that Labour's leadership is tolerating a massive confrontation at the same time as it prepares to give the NEC - and possibly for or between the unions at this year's Party conference - the union leaders are keeping their heads so low they cannot see what's happening.

International solidarity boosts dockers' fight

Pete Firmin
THE LATEST international day of solidarity with the Merseyside Dockworkers - January 21st - got a magnificent response from dockers around the world.

Dockers in 27 countries took solidarity action in 105 ports and cities. Highlights included a demonstration in Tokyo and action in all 50 Japanese ports, and total strikes of the West Coast ports of the USA - which got a 13 minute slot on CNN news.

Mexico
Port workers marched to the British Consul in Mexico and unions representing 70,000 port workers in Brazil are calling for a boycott of all Liverpool ships. Strikes and boycotts took place around the world, and the dockers received 200 fixed messages of support.

In Montevideo the action spread beyond the port workers to seamen and transport workers and all Montevideo ports were occupied for 24 hours. In Los Angeles all ships stopped for 24 hours with no-one trying to push the pickets. In some countries support has extended beyond strike action. In Montevideo all port workers are now contributing $5 each a week to Liverpool and support groups have been set up in Northern France.

In Liverpool itself the port cranes and’gray were occupied for 8 hours by Reclaim the Streets activists in support of the dockers. They intend to occupy the port for a solid week soon.

All support was reported to a mass meeting of 450 dockers and their supporters and has given the dockers a real boost as they enter another year of struggle.

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Why the Euro-March is so important

Pete Burnett takes up the debate with the TUC unemployed centres combine.

The decision by the North West Regional TUC to back Euro-march 97 is a real breakthrough. At a meeting in Manchester on February 1, seventy delegates voted overwhelmingly in favour of supporting the British plans as part of a European wide demonstration.

Participating in the key debate, march organiser Glenn Morris said "Euro-unionism does not stop for elections."

The decision in Manchester is very significant. Local TUC support opens the way for a major appeal to unions in the region and will make winning support elsewhere more possible. It gives the lie to the claim, constantly made by the Eurocrats, that the Eurocrats are isolated from the working class movement.

It sharply focuses attention on the politics of a small grouping around the TUC. The vote in Manchester is a downer for those behind the Eurocrats who are bitterly opposed to British plans for the Eurocrats.

Formed in the late 1980s, to fight for a strong campaigning role for the centres, the Combine were led by the Liverpool and Newcastle centres have largely abandoned it. They say that there is no enthusiasm for marches and that there has been such a down-turn they are no longer possible.

More tellingly they argue that their decision is in line with the British council campaign to get Blair into the EC. They suggest a program of local "resistance" to be staged when the election is over.

The Combine have held a series of meetings in the Midlands and Wales to promote the roadshow idea as well as fighting a rearguard campaign to reverse support for the March, using their bureaucratic positions and special relationship with the TUC. The most detailed defence of the Combine position is contained in a detailed analysis by Kevin Flynn, Co-ordinator of the Newcastle centre, against unemployment and Vice-Chair of the Combine.

Writing in the Newcastle based journal Trade Union Review, Flynn starts from the fact that there has been a downturn reflecting "major defeats, 20 years of mass unemployment" to argue a steady reaction in the size of and enthusiasm for marches. From this he draws the conclusion that the Eurocrats campaign, at least here in Britain is up-and-coming.

The real heart of the case comes latter. "The election" he writes "will have some implications for the labour movement. Everybody in the labour movement wants the Tories out and, in the absence of anything better, Blair's New Labour in. The trade union movement and the Labour party will pull all their energies into that election and will regard anything else as best a diversion and as worst opposition". In other words, don't upset the Blair's election campaign.

However while Flynn is correct to say that there has been a downturn since the early 80s when thousands could be mobilised it certainly doesn't follow that the Eurocrats are doomed to failure.

**Elections**

Elections are times of heightened political awareness. What better time to raise demands for full employment and an end to the social scrap heap. What better opportunity to take forward the debate on the consequences of European integration than by engaging in a continent-wide campaign involving workers and activists in countries such as France and Greece who have taken inspiring actions over recent months?

The political rhetoric of the Combine lies the anxiety of the Blairites and their relentless pressure to close down independent activity right across the labour movement. Such pressure must be resisted and can be resisted.

Flynn accuses the Eurocrats of sectarian hostility towards "others in the movement" attacking "left and right opponents of their march proposals for being either splinters of Blairite traitors"

This is simply not true. Indeed the opposite is the case. The campaign around the marches in Britain has been marked by a continuing struggle to include all forces including the TUC and the Combine itself.

Letters were sent by march organiser to the Combine secretary, Ijamsid Ahmedy inviting his organisation to participate in the recent national organising meeting in Sheffield. That meeting kept a vacant seat on the national committee for a nominee of the Combine, who at the previous meeting in Manchester last year had also done. Attempts to integrate support for the marches with roadshows have been rebuffed by Combine spokespeople.

Kevin Flynn's argument that Labour Party activists and those in other parties contesting the election would regard the Eurocrats as a diversion have been proved wrong by events. Constituency parties such as Leeds Central and Brent East have joined many ward branches in supporting the march.

Some are distributing literature. Many of the trade unionists and other activists who have backed the call in their organisations will be actively fighting for a Labour government.

Both the Socialist Labour Party and the Socialist Party (formerly Militant Labour), which Flynn and the Combine predicted would be hostile to the march have also registered their enthusiasm.

The attitude towards the Combine of unemployed centres remains the same. We call for them to join the Eurocrats, to combine support for the march with a series of roadshows and other events instead of counterposing the two. In taking this step they would be returning to their own militant traditions.

Support for the march is building every day. Over thirty trade unions, country associations, the TUC Joint Co-ordinating Committee and twenty Labour members of Parliament in London and Strasbourg are already on board as well as countless union branches. Deepening and widening that support is the best possible answer to the myths of Flynn's argument and give us the best chance of persuading the Combine to come on board.

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Terry Conway

**Build national education week**

**Terry Conway**

**Terry Conway**

AT LEAST one primary school in seven and one secondary school in five have not enough accommodation.

As a consequence, 11,000 children over the next five years just to keep existing buildings open.

Over 600 primary schools still have outside toilets.

Well over 35,000 classes are taught in temporary classrooms every day.

For 765,000 children school is a hot or a mobile classroom.

Germany, Greece, Denmark, Norway, Finland, France and Scotland all have maximum class sizes set out in law, between 23 and 25. England has no maximum class size.

**Vouchers**

Nursery vouchers will take £6 extra 20 million in administration and inspection costs — approximately 1,000 extra qualified teachers.

These are just some of the reasons why the fight against Cuts in Education (FACE) campaign is organizing a national education week from March 10-14.

The purpose of the week is to argue with Clarke and Paul Graham of the National Education Committee is "to say loud and clear to all leading politicians — whoever forms the next government — that state education needs proper funding. That means more funding than it gets now. Longer or harder homework isn't enough!"

**Themes**

Each day of the week will have a special theme. Monday will take up the question of buildings, Tuesday, Nursery Education and Wednesday Class Sizes. Thursday will focus on Special Educational Needs and Friday will culminate on Friday with action on the general crisis of education funding.

Local activists will decide on which day(s) they can organise something focusing on the main local issues of concern. FACE have produced a campaign pack bursting with suggestions to help.

The campaign also hopes to organise a number of imaginative national initiatives to complement what is going on locally.

With the election campaign hotting up and politicians trying to out do each other in arguing how much they see education a priority, it ought to be relatively easy to get publicity locally and nationally for how different the reality is in our schools.

We are committed to defend and rebuild the welfare state, never a more urgent task after Blair and Brown's latest attacks, should make sure they take part in these activities.

For further information contact FACE: c/o St Giles School, Hayes Lane, Ealing, Coventry CV7 9NS fax or phone 01203 311 013
Union lefts prepare the fightback

Greg Doherty

Just under 200 trade union activists from 13 different left formations met in London on 1 February to discuss co-ordinating a fightback against the government and employers' offensive, overcoming union leaders intent on sell-outs and compromises, and building support amongst rank and file members.

Large delegations attended from the NAU, Union and CPSA in particular. The conference heard reports from the Liverpool dockers, Hillingdon workers and from the High Wycombe strikers.

Etienne Adam from Tous Ensemble (the left opposition in the French CGDT union) brought greetings from French lorry drivers, and reported on their recent victory.

He explained how reps used mobile phones on the barricades and daily conferences to assist the democratic functioning of the strike, and how they had massive support from the local community, with unemployed people donating food parcels to the strikers.

Too much!

Indeed the strikers faced the problem of having too much food for them to cope with and ended up donating food to charity at the end of the strike.

He explained how their fight for a shorter hours and retirement at 55 (many drivers are deemed unemployable after that age) not only broke from the argument of market forces but inspired widespread public support in the process.

Tory laws

Delegates attended workshops on the anti-union laws, defending the union-labour link, full employment and the minimum wage. Europe and employers offensive, building the broad lefts and trade union democracy.

The lefts involved in the conference come from a number of widely different traditions and formations and the fact that the conference took place was in itself of great significance.

The test will come in what action it is possible for the new co-ordination to develop - with the question of the minimum wage being posed as a key priority.

A way forward for militants

Trade Unions in the Nineties: A Strategy for Socialists, by Andy Kilminster and Alan Thornett

Published by Socialist Outlook

Reviewed by Keith Sinclair

THIS PAMPHLET is directed at trade union activists. It examines and provides an analysis that explains clearly the current state of the British trade union movement.

However, the pamphlet is not simply to describe. It also aims to help build a fightback against the employers and the government.

The pamphlet starts with a sober analysis of the state of the unions to-day.

The number of trade unionists has declined to 9.9 million and the number of strike days at a hundred-year low. In addition, there has been an important change in the make-up of the members of the British trade unions.

Public sector workers are now far more likely to be unionised than those in the private sector. In 1994 only 23 per cent of private sector workers were unionised.

However, the pamphlet is quick to reject the idea that the days of trade unions are definitely over.

The authors explain that there are no easy answers, that those who look to the European Union as our salvation are badly mistaken and that the ideas of the vast majority of union leaders and the TUC offer no hope to workers whether organised or not.

The role of the anti-union laws is outlined and its impact on unions shown clearly. The authors point out that many union leaders assume that actions are illegal even when it is not necessarily the case. Examples where the law has been successfully defied are highlighted particularly in the Postal Service.

New management

The authors point out the structural significance of the various New Management techniques that abound in the private sector and have increasingly crept into the public sector.

The need for a united front approach is spelt out. The importance of placing demands on union leaders is highlighted as is the need for a consistent fight at all levels of the unions, against the union bureaucracy.

The struggle within unions is not helped by the poor state of the organised left within individual unions. In some, the organised left consists of a secret caucus, in others competing left formations fight for support.

Only in a handful of unions are there left organisations with a membership in the hundreds let alone the thousands we would want.

The pamphlet concludes by outlining the way forward for socialists in the unions. The need to return to young workers and to promote the role of women and black workers is explained.

Examples of the type of campaigning which will attract members are explained, such as support for the Euro-March.

The need to build fighting, democratic, internationalist political trade unionism is the core message of this pamphlet.

It should be essential reading for all trade unionists and socialists.

OUT NOW!

Trade Unions in the Nineties

A new 68-page pamphlet giving a comprehensive review of the impact of the Tory years on the trade union movement and a perspective for the left in the 1990s.

£2 including post and packing

From Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU
Teamsters’ election: what Carey’s victory means

Susan Moore
RON CAREY’S reelection as president of the 1.4 million-member International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) was an important victory for rank-and-file Teamsters and for the entire American working class.

The narrow 51.5 to 48.5 per cent victory by the Carey slate over the old guard, led by James Hoffa Jr., shows that American workers and unionists have nevertheless retrieved a tight rope on a ship threatened with disaster at the local and regional level.

A unusually close attention was paid to the election by the capitalist-controlled mass media. They did their best to portray the Hoffa Jr. gang as the protagonists of today’s rank-and-file trade unionism, and the Carey faction as mere fighters against corruption. They gave condescending praise to the Hoffa gang’s claim to the militant reputation of the original James Hoffa, the candidate’s late father—widely rumoured to have been murdered by the mob.

As important as the fight for union democracy is, it is the Carey side that proved in action that it represents militant trade unionism as well as reform. It is the Hoffa Jr. side that stands for subordinating workers’ interests to profit, as well as for corruption and top-down control over the rank and file. Carey, early in his first term in office, called a national strike against the United Parcel Service (UPS) in defiance of a federal anti-strike injunction. The bureaucratic officialdom represented by Hoffa Jr. ordered UPS workers to cross their own picket lines.

The New York Times was at the forefront of the media campaign against Carey. Labor Reporter Tom Hamburger in a piece written on December 22: “In the teamsters’ rank and file... appreciated Mr. Carey’s battle against corruption. But the [Hoffa] forces had a persuasive appeal, saying that membership and power had dwindled under Mr. Carey and contracts he negotiated were deeply flawed.”

The reporter doesn’t mention that Carey left nothing on the bargaining table that he was strong enough to take and that the contract was approved overwhelmingly after a 24-day strike—the first national freight strike in 18 years. Neither does he say that most of the weakened contract language had been previously incorporated in contracts by the old guard when they were in charge.

Carey indicated in a recent speech that there has been a sea change in his thinking about the Teamster bureaucracy. He intends to open a necessary new stage in the fight to democratize the union.

In November, Carey said, “At the 1992 inauguration I offered an olive branch to the officials. It didn’t work. I was wrong and I am naive. At the next inauguration, I’ll be carrying a two-by-four”.

**Politics**

Early in Carey’s first term it was clear that he didn’t want so-called political considerations to disrupt the already functioning of America’s largest private sector union, now at 1.4 million members.

Then his opponents successfully defeated Carey’s proposal to create a large strike fund by raising dues, publicly attacked him during national freight negotiations and blamed on the UPS strike.

Carey then took a historic step to strip the bureaucracy’s leadership of $15 million in bribes, kickbacks, pensions and perks.

Even so, Carey keeps on or appointed many of the old guard’s supporters in important positions in the apparatus. Despite this, many of Carey’s appointees straddled the fence during the fierce July convention fight, disappeared into the woodwork during the bruising election campaign, or openly attacked him. One Carey appointee even joined the Hoffa slate.

Carey has encouraged the rank to join in the union’s organising drives. But he weakened his own program by leaving much of the campaign to the local union officials, who have a vested interest in not mobilising members.

An important next step would be the creation of an internal Teamster organisation of activists that can’t be sneezed at by any official opposed to rank-and-file activity. Such an organisation must be democratic and open to all Teamsters.

When the capital involved in the Teamsters through the Racketeer-Influenced and Corrupt Organisations Act, they never expected that someone like Ron Carey could win the resulting elections, overseen by federal agents. They thought a more pliable representative of the old guard would win.

Even then, the powers-that-be were not overly worried. They assumed that the new leadership would play ball with the bosses like other top AFL-CIO officials.

The Hoffa Jr. team were radio silent. They said nothing.

RICO and other seemingly benign legislation and the boss-controlled government behind it, are a real threat that Carey and other progressive officials and organisations must be prepared to confront. There’s no way around it short of capitalisation.

Ron Carey has shown by his record that he strives to serve his members and understands that bosses give workers only what they’re strong enough to take.

He has pledged to find a way to mobilise the ranks in every local union for an effective fight for class interests and against all opponents, inside and outside the union.

When Trotskyists led Teamster struggles

SOME OF the most dramatic and inspiring events in the history of American trade union movement are contained in the history of the Teamsters’ union from the 1930s to the mid-1940s.

Farrell Dobbs, then a member of the Trotskyist Communist League, played a leading role in those battles in 1934 and was elected as secretary-treasurer of Local 334 in 1934 in recognition of his key contribution.

As well as going on to become a leading member of the American Socialist Workers Party, Dobbs made a lasting contribution to labour history not only through his role in the battles themselves but in his graphic description of them in his important and powerful book, Teamster Rebellion, Teamster Power and Teamster Bureaucracy.

Dobbs tells us that the purpose of these books “is to place the reader in the position of the revolutionists who guided the union ranks—retrospectively looking over their shoulders, so to speak—as they struggled to achieve a new stage in the class struggle and decided how to deal with it.”

“My purpose was to help find clues to ways and means of transforming labor’s potential power into a class weapon in the continuing struggle against the capitalist exploiter.”

In this ambitious and valuable purpose, Dobbs succeeds with his simple but graphic prose.

During the course of the three books, Dobbs’ Teamsters strikes in 1934, marital law was declared and the National Guard sent in.

Two strikers were killed by the local police on July 20 1934. Bloody Friday, the number of strikers numbering up to 40,000 were regularly held. The strikers set up their own hospital, produced their own daily newspaper and dispatched flying pickets throughout the city.

Dobbs chronicles the violence of the police campaign that was aimed at shutting off workers and facilities. He points out that even a commission set up by the state governor after Bloody Friday found that “Prison Labour” was institutionalised, but not stopped.

“Physical safety of the police was at no time endangered...No weapons were in the possession of the police in the trucks.”

These strikes resulted in a tremendous victory for the labour movement. Together with the Toledo Auto-Lite and San Francisco Longshore strikes, the Teamsters inspired workers throughout the country.

Dobbs argues that key to what made the strike possible and led to its victory was the presence of a layer of revolutionary socialists who were able to lead the dispute and play a key role in the broader labour movement. The advantageous position of communists in Minneapolis was however unique; they were not able to repeat these successes elsewhere.

After the 1934 strikes Dobbs went on to lead a major organising campaign—the sleeve state over-the-road campaign which transformed the Teamsters into the largest and most powerful union in the country, bringing in tens of thousands of new workers.

The Teamsters had to combat powerful enemies fighting to defend their democratic rights against frame-ups by the FBI and defeating an organising drive by the fascist Silver Shirts as well as working for independent trade unionism, the Teamsters, Farmer Labor Party and helping the unemployed movement battle against the repression meted out by Roosevelt at the US prepared to enter the Second World War.

The war was to bring a decline in radicalism and consciousness of the union officials with Roosevelt lead to support for the war and a no-strike pledge. Revolutionary socialists in the leadership of Local 544 fought to preserve the traditions of militancy and democracy against both the Teamster leadership of the Internation Brotherhood of Teamsters and the state apparatus lead by the FBI.

The culmination of the confrontation was to come in the infamous series of trials of 28 socialists and trade union leaders which opened on October 27 1941 and is not counted in detail in Teamster Bureaucracy.

At the core of that trial by the question of the war and the union bureaucracy and the state determined to gag Local 544’s opposition to the US entry to the imperialist conflict.

While the trial was to result in guilty verdicts, Dobbs documents the sentences for the socialists, Dobbs argues that this was only the loss of the immediate battle.

“Our exemplary fight in Minneapolis will be transformed into a fundamental education of the workers. Before we could have forced the demagogue Roosevelt to openly display his anti-labor stage, thus exposing the capitalist government’s true role in the war, we almost inevitably would have faced the clash with Team, that was the treacherous role of union bureaucracy, in contrast to Carey, was a typical example of the breed.”

James Ramsey Ullman, the Wednesday’s defendant, served as an organizer under Dobbs and went on to become director of the executive general president. Hoffa said of Dobbs.

“I wouldn’t agree with Farrell Dobbs political philosophy or his economic ideas. He had a vision that was enormously better than the current government. Beyond any doubt, he was the master archivist of Teamsters over-the-road operations.”

Today’s fighters for militant action and democracy in the Teamster and other union movement can learn many lessons and take much inspiration from the stories told by the book, Teamster Rebellion, Teamster Power and Teamster Bureaucracy.
Chinese puzzle for Hong Kong workers

On July 1st, the Chinese Army (PLA) will march into Hong Kong, formally ending 156 years of British imperial rule. MARK THOMPSON reports.

While European and North American tourists are block-booking hotels to watch the spectacle, the vast majority of residents of the territory, when asked, said they would not be treating the day as anything special.

While there is no love lost for the British, and a general recognition that Hong Kong is a part of China, the lack of democracy, abuses of human rights and corrupt business practices worry many people.

The Chinese government points out that the British only started experimenting with democracy in the 80s, political parties were non-existent before that, and Triad gangs are a serious problem in Hong Kong, not China.

Chinese official representatives and “red princes” (offspring of senior officials) are already common present in the territory. Hong Kong businessmen know how important clientelism and corruption is in China and are busy ingratiating themselves with key bureaucrats.

For the rich in Hong Kong (with the greatest number of Rolls-Royces per head of population of any country in the world), the transition to “communism” is certainly not a cause for apprehension. The “One Country, Two Systems” policy, the Chinese have promised not to interfere in Hong Kong’s economy for 50 years.

Actually they would like the Hong Kong success story to be replicated throughout the rest of China, but there are some serious obstacles to this, not least that Hong Kong achieved its success by:

a) being a safe haven for Chinese capitalists, and several million despoilers workers, after the Communist victory in 1949,

b) being the main point of contact between China and the outside world, particularly Taiwan, after 1979.

Until recently one third of China’s foreign trade went through Hong Kong.

Instead the ruling elite see China’s strong state apparatus and lack of concern for human rights as useful for removing awkward trade unions, environmental activists, etc. Just in case things go too well, they all have foreign passports lined up, mostly for the US or Canada but also Panama or the Bahamas.

While theoretically autonomous, the “Special Administrative Region” will have less power than other major Chinese cities like Shanghai or Chengdu, where powerful party cliques are entrenched. Worryingly, Tibet is also a Special Administrative Region, and is treated quite brutally.

The Chinese have already named their replacement for governor: C.H. Tung, a previously insignificant millionaire. He was “elected” by the 600 strong Preparatory Committee - all hand-picked by China. This then elected the new legislative council which will make laws, run the economy and appoint judges. It is also packed with time-servers and yes-men - much as the British ran the place.

One of the first decisions has been to restate the draconian colonial laws repressing the right of assembly and association that were dropped after the Tiananmen Square massacre.

Many socialists will be wondering what attitude to take to this. Obviously colonial rule cannot be defended, but can rule by the regime responsible for the massacre in Tiananmen Square be considered an improvement?

China’s 1949 revolution reversed a parasitic landlord class and subsequently expropriated the capitalists they were selling China to, allowing for an enormous improvement in the living standards of ordinary people.

But Mao’s Communist Party never allowed the working class or the mass peasants to feel power in their hands. The regime followed a Stalinist model, establishing a deformed workers’ state, not socialism.

Power, both political and economic, was transferred from the men with money and land to those who worked their way up the Communist Party hierarchy. This is still pretty much the situation today, but is changing rapidly.

In 1978, small-scale capitalist operations were allowed. In 1988, a law was passed ending the limits on the number of employees a capitalist could have. This sector has grown rapidly, mainly composed of foreign companies and party bosses using state capital to launch themselves into business.

Building and cooperative enterprises have struck rich by building factories and paying poor peasants from the interior to work in them. For this and other reasons, the size of the capitalists sector is difficult to determine.

One thing is sure, though: it is the capitalists who are the masters, and it is defined, which is booming, not the state sector, and power goes to those with the money.

It may be some time before China is able to meet the entry criteria for the WTO because of its state support for industry and protectionist measures (although Japan joined its predecessor, GATT in the 1950’s in a similar situation), and any attempt to rush things would result in massive social destabilization.

But this does not mean it won’t happen - the situation is like Russia, where, despite the desire for capitalism by the rulers, it won’t happen because there is no capital. Investment capital is pouring into China, mainly from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea and Japan.

The domestic stock market is rapidly expanding, and in the Shanghai and Canton areas (100 million people), the old state industries are marginal. It is the old industries in the North which are the obstacle, like Beijing Steel, which employs 100,000 people in a company town, providing schools and health care.

The booming “new” industrial regions of the southern and central coastal areas are holding back their taxes, preventing restructuring or investment in new technology in the north. The government knows it has to stop subsidising loss-making industries, but is unwilling to do it directly.

Many workers are officially “on extended holiday”, but spend all day trying to sell a few shabby consumer goods in the market. Others move to where the work is - it is estimated there are 150 million migrant workers in China.

There was a wave of trade union militancy in the late 1980’s, but this was crushed in Tiananmen Square. Now even individual activists who have been silent for years are reportedly imprisoned. Most are in exile.

While the Stalinist faction in the CP, which opposes the marketisation and privatisation of the economy, could make trouble, they are unlikely to make a bid for power unless the economy stagnates and massive social unrest arises.

The level of investment in China by Hong Kong capitalists has been estimated at US$80 billion (of which 40% comes from local subsidiaries of foreign multinationals) and it is thought they employ 4 million Chinese workers and represent 20% of China’s GDP.

In the other direction, Chinese enterprises and state holdings have invested US$42.5 billion in Hong Kong.

In 1999 Macau, a Portuguese enclave across the Pearl River delta, returns to China after 405 years. The Chinese government has made it clear they think the reunification of the Chinese family should be made complete with the return of Taiwan, and they are prepared to invade if necessary.

Leaders of the Democratic Party in Hong Kong (which won over half the directly elected seats) have promised civil disobedience to the new law. While the party includes some who were content to be appointed legislators under the old system, it also includes some radical activists who have already come into conflict with the ruling elite.

To their left, and cooperating on many issues, are small groups of feminists, environmentalists and supporters of the Fourth International. These people will need our support in the coming years.

To the bureaucrats and new rich in China, this is a serious nightmare. But all the contradictions and tensions which produced Tiananmen Square remain, and as class distinctions become more apparent in the big cities, a new militancy is forming, and it will eventually break out in the form of strikes.

Many plandiks say the people of Hong Kong aren’t interested in politics, just business, but in a 1989 one million people demonstrated in support of the students in Tiananmen Square, in a country of just 1.1 billion.

The workers of Hong Kong have a history of sporadic but often violent strikes, and a well educated, politically aware generation has grown up and expects to keep all its current freedoms. The coming period is likely to be an interesting one.
Bulgarian right takes populist revenge

OPPOSITION demonstrators have forced the ruling Bulgarian Socialist Party to bring forward the next election. This is however no victory for the working people or for the fight for democracy, DUNCAN CHAPPLE reports.

The right-wing Union of Democratic Forces copied the recent tactic of the opposition and launched its own demonstrations outside parliament. But in contrast to the ruling party's campaign of re-election, the opposition, led by the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), was democratically democratic.

Despite its "socialist" label the BSP of today has a long tradition of dealing with workers and property back to the reigns of pre-war capitalists and landlords.

It gained a parliamentary majority in 1991 having won the powerful position of president the year before. However its preoccupation with restoring land, homes and factories to the old ruling classes meant it was indifferent to the needs of society and the economy. Following a vote of no-confidence in 1992, the UDF were replaced by a broadly-supported technocratic "government of experts".

Attempting to press ahead with austerity policies and privatisation, the new government met with strong working class resistance. By 1994 the rate of inflation was 96 per cent and unemployment hit 13 per cent. Over 800,000 took part in four days of general strike action led by the CITUB union federation.

As the crisis developed the UDF started to boycott the parliament, believing it could distance itself from the crisis. The UDF-backed President, Zheleznov, started to frustrate the government's plans and in September 1994 is resigned.

New elections led to a three-party coalition comprising the Agrarian Party, Ecoglossary, and the BSP as the senior partner. The new government attempted to pursue the rapid privatisation programme demanded by Bulgaria's western creditors.

Centre for privatisation

Following the visit of a top level US team, headed by President Clinton, early in 1995, the BSP announced the creation of a "socially oriented market economy". A "Centre for Mass Privatisation" began to organise a carrot-and-stick giveaway of state assets with the government retaining a third of all shares. Simultaneously, spending on defence was increased and social spending cut.

The BSP's initial success in developing the capitalist sector was not inconceivable. During 1995 growth increased by 50 per cent; exports grew by 80 per cent while unemployment fell by 18 per cent. But pro-US forces were alarmed when the BSP began to move away from the goals of the west and develop stronger links with other Eastern economies. The coalition developed plans for an oil pipeline to the east and for co-ordinated defence production with Russia.

The popularity of these policies was confirmed in 1995 with a reounding victory for the BSP in local mayoral elections. Out of the 255 mayors elected, 195 were BSP. The UDF won only 26 positions but this included the capital, Sofia.

The confidence of the people has not been shared by Western capital. Aid has been cut from $5.6 per cent of imports in 1994 to 3.7 per cent this year. Inflation soared in 1996 as the economic crisis deepened. When the IMF refused aid the coalition was forced to increase the pace of unpalatable privatisation and closure plans. As a result the BSP's support fell away.

In December last year the the UDF retained the presidency with a new candidate, Peter Stoyanov. In the BSP document has come to a head. A triumphant opposition allied itself to the trade unions is preparing to stand in parliamentary elections scheduled for next year.

The UDF's presidential victory allowed it to build January's demonstrations, calling for the BSP-led coalition to resign. In all likelihood the 60 per cent vote for the UDF in the presidential elections does not translate into a majority in its middle-class base. Face with the BSP's austerity policies the workers and farmers turned to the only credible alternative. However a UDF government could only be worse.

Bulgarian trade union opposition rests on the demands of the privatisations and prevent workers being ejected from their homes, factories and farms. By leading the struggle against this legal corporatist politics, the new left can win majority support.
Can playing the Kosovo card rescue beleaguered Milosevic?

Geoff Ryan

THE WHEEL has come full circle. In 1983 the Serbian Academy of Art and Sciences published its virulently nationalist Manifesto denouncing opposition of Serbs in Kosovo to the Albanianization programme. The Academy has now become the last of its erstwhile allies to dump him.

In March 1991 Borislav Jovic, then President of the 8 person Presidency of Yugoslavia, browbeat the other members into sending tanks on to the streets of Belgrade to crush student protests against Milosevic. Today the army refuses to suppress demonstrations.

Denounced

Late in January 1997 Jovic denounced Milosevic's undemocratic methods within the ruling Serbian Socialist Party (SSP) and threatened to form a rival party of 'the left'. Those who saw the television series 'The Death of Yugoslavia' will remember that Jovic managed to make Milosevic seem a reasonable human being. His left credentials are thoroughly bogus. Working throughout the former Yugoslavia certainly have nothing to gain from him.

As a form a new party is, however, a recognition that Milosevic's time is running out. In new elections Jovic would quite possibly beat the SSP, thereby hastening Milosevic's departure.

Whether or not Jovic could find enough support within the rump moribund coalition of liberals and Serb nationalists leading the current protests, is another matter. Zajedno leader Vuk Draskovic in particular may be too enthusiastic about welcoming the man who had him severely beaten and then thrown into jail by Gnjidza published on the streets of Belgrade in March 1991.

Recognizing he is under pressure, Milosevic is returning to the issue that first gained him power anti-Albanian nationalism. Albanians have been blamed by state run television for fuelling the current protests. On January 16 a car bomb seriously injured Radivoje Papovic, Serb chancellor of the university of Pristina in Kosovo. The Serb chauffeur was also injured.

Milosevic and his henchmen in Kosovo have blamed the bombing on Albanians fighting for independance. The sophisticated nature of the remote controlled bomb suggests, however, that it may have been planted by Milosevic supporters in the Kosovo police.

Up until recently most Kosovo Albanians have adhered to a policy of peaceful resistance to Serbia's domination. They have organized their own schools, hospitals, welfare services independently of the Serb authorities. They do not challenge Serb rule, they simply ignore it.

More militant

However, more militant currents are emerging in Kosovo, determined to put an end to Serb rule. Support for them is growing and they are expected to win a majority in the elections for Kosovo Albanians planned for May.

The rise in tension gives Milosevic perhaps his last chance of survival, though it entails enormous risks. Anti-Albanian sentiment remains strong in Serbia - not least among those protesting against Milosevic. However war's attractiveness is still strong. War in Kosovo would almost certainly lead to new economic sanctions against Serbia, exacerbating already bleak economic problems.

Milosevic has had to downplay nationalism and increase 'socialist' rhetoric to retain the passive allegiance of Serbia's working class. His already far from successful efforts at ensuring workers are paid regularly would be undermined by a new war.

On the other hand war in Kosovo could possibly help to isolate Zajedno. The opposition has certainly been imaginative in finding ways to get around Milosevic's ban on demonstrations: convoys of cars, all breaking down at the same time, dog drivers all taking their pets for a walk in the same place. A religious procession on the Serbian Orthodox Christmas Eve attracted over 500,000 people - the biggest protest so far.

Despite determination and imagination, Zajedno have still not attracted active support from the working class or peasantry. Protests remain dominated by students and intellectuals.

This lack of working class and peasant support may push Milosevic into a gamble in Kosovo.

War in Kosovo would also help push Veselin Seselj and Arkan off the fence. In last November's elections Seselj's Serbian Radical Party won 18 percent of the vote. Seselj was elected mayor of the Belgrade suburb of Zemun. Significantly his election result was not challenged. Both have remained aloof from the protests, as Jean Marie Le Pen discovered on a recent visit to the Serbinated Sevojno on the border (error) he believed his fellow extreme right-wing was playing it. Le Pen's visit was all the more strange since he supported extreme right-wing Croatian militias in Croatia while Seselj (and Arkan's) paramilitaries were conducted a reign of terror against Croats. Arkan and Seselj are undoubtedly enjoying Milosevic's predicament - not least since Mirjana Markovic (Milosevic's wife) has been using the privileged position of her tiny United Yugoslav Left (ULJ) to grab some of the profits from their trading interests.

They also harbour grudges against Milosevic for being pushed out of coalitions with the SSP when Milosevic decided he no longer needed their support.

A return to anti-Albanian campaigns could see Seselj and Arkan back in favour, with their paramilitary groupings once again enagaged in the terrorist activities they previously practised in Croatia and Bosnia. It may take the steam out of anti-Milosevic protests.

However this would be a last desperate gamble for Milosevic. War in Kosovo may not attract support, Seselj and Arkan are by no means reliable allies. They may decide to throw in their lot with Zajedno, who are more consistent nationalists.

That is no doubt why Milosevic has already arranged a bolt-hole in Greece and reportedly transferred large amounts of stolen cash out of Serbia.

Ireland: The promise of socialism

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Albania regime lashes out at left parties

PRESIDENT Sali Berisha has launched a crackdown on Albania's left opposition parties as a response to the growing protests that have wracked the country.

The general secretary of the Socialist Party, the leader of the Social Democrats and a top leader of the Democratic Alliance were all arrested this morning. The government took sweeping powers to use the army to put down demonstrations and attempted to blame "red terror" for fuelling the protests.

As afterthought, the ruling Democratic Party pushed through legislation banning the pyramid savings schemes whose collapse has triggered the mass protests, with hundreds of thousands facing the loss of their hard-currency savings.

Two pyramid scheme organisers have been arrested, and future schemes will lay their organisers open to 20 years in jail. But the question on the lips of protesters is how such a massive financial scam, embracing an estimated $250 million - one eighth of Albania's 1993 GDP - could have flourished without government connivance or one of the most repressive regimes.

So massive is the crisis, with so many individuals demanding compensation, that it is likely the losses could trigger the total collapse of the economy.
At the sharp end

Women are chief victims of assault on Welfare State

Gill Lee, President
Lowisham NUT
(personal capacity)

AS THE ELECTION campaign continues, Labour and the Tories try to outsell each other in trumpeting the welfare state. Each week brings a new pronouncement of how they will attack welfare in a bid to keep public spending in check.

First we had John Major's January speech attacking the 'banny state'. These were quickly followed by Brown's announcement that an incoming Labour government would freeze public spending for at least the first two years of its administration because it has "run out of control". And in an echo of Brown's explanation that he would not engage in redistributive taxation of the rich "because of the value I place on work", Blair called four days later, for an end to the 'passive' welfare state and unveiled plans to get single mothers on benefit and in work.

The Tories have unleashed such a crisis within the education, health, and social security systems that a radical programme of investment and rebuilding, and a massive change in how welfare is delivered is needed to rescue millions of working class people from misery.

There is nothing to suggest that Labour's pledge on spending will be quickly reversed in office - despite the pressure from public sector workers that will surely emerge.

Labour's policy of entering the European Monetary Union will tie it to the Maastricht convergence criteria that limit the public sector deficit (the excess of public spending over income from taxation and the accumulated debt) to 60 per cent of GDP. Attempts by other European Governments to prepare for EMU have led to huge attacks on the welfare state across Europe (see extensive coverage in last issue of Socialist Outlook).

Alliance

Defence: The welfare state must not be left to those who work in it, to local struggles of those who use its separate services. Only the broadest possible alliances of the working class and the oppressed - welfare state users and welfare state workers, the unions and unorganised workers - will be sufficient to defend the welfare state from the forces that wish to destroy it.

The increasingly bipartisan development of family policy is tied into the assault on the welfare state. One on the one hand this aims to buttress the institution of the family, while blaming individual failures; rather than the way society is organised - for social problems.

The post-war welfare state represented some partial 'socialisation' of the burden of families. A huge burden of care was lifted off the private sphere of the family and off the shoulders of carers, and shifted into the public arena.

Workers - often women - were then paid to do what had previously been done for free in the home. Releasing from the overwhelming responsibility for the private care of the elderly, children, those who were sick or had disabilities, allowed a whole generation of women to get jobs and attain a measure of economic independence.

From the increased confidence and combative ability of a generation in women in work and higher education, the women's liberation movement of the 60s and 70s was born. In combination with a labour movement that had awakened to women's interests, this movement won such victories as the Equal Pay Act, the Sex Discrimination Act, the Abortion Act and a whole raft of other equal opportunity legislation.

The offensive against the welfare state is in a very direct way an offensive against women. It seeks to use the burden of care back into the private realm of the family, and onto women's shoulders. It also attacks women as a very central part of the workforce of the welfare state.

The offensive against the welfare state has been carried out in a myriad of different ways. The government has imposed massive cuts in public funding and introduced privatisation.

They have changed the way revenue is collected to construct a more direct link between local levels of service and local revenues (e.g. marketisation in the NHS, Local Management of Schools in the education sector).

New management techniques have been brought into the public sector. The whole ethos of public service and public vision has come increasingly under attack and local authorities are increasingly the enabling authorities for private companies to find clients. Many of these changes are carried out in the name of so-called 'client choice'.

Women have been particularly affected by both as workers in the welfare sector and as users of the welfare state.

Welfare state users have been hit by rising prices, closures of services in education, health and social services. Women local authorities that scorned Liverpool and Lambeth Councils for contesting the Tories and preferred the politics of "deficit balancing" and then "the denied shield" have ended up imposing massive cuts on the Tories' behalf.

Devastating:

Kent county's Labour and Liberal Democrat coalition faces a £79 million shortfall in its funds. In January it formulated its solution: rating charges for domiciliary services by up to 40 per cent, closing ten old peoples' homes and cutting eighteen hundred and two thousand jobs.

"The impact of the savings which I recommend in this paper will be felt particularly by the many of the department's service users and their families," said Kent's director of social services.

Kent is also pre-empting the Tories' plans to use ombudsmen to contract out most social services on the basis that they can be more cheaply provided by private companies. Stephen Dorell, increasingly to the fore as a spokesman for the Tory party, has made it clear that he believes the proper job of local council social services departments is as commissioning social care service providers. He has said that the government's new White Paper may even propose that all 32,000 field social workers and managers be privatised.

Combining with their recent announcement that they will effectivly abolish local education authorities and end local control of schools, the Tories intend for local authorities to be left with little direct role in service delivery and instead be reduced almost solely to a role as commissioning service providers provided by private companies.

Low pay:

Privatisation is cheap because the service is of poor and the workers, who are often on temporary or part time contracts, are poorly paid. By forcing the burden of care back onto the family, the offensive against the welfare state in itself creates the conditions for workers to be super-exploited in this way.

One thing: Europe's part time workers are British and the vast majority of those are women. Women often work part time because it is the only way in which they can meet the demands of the family and child care in particular.

Nursery provision in Britain is among the worst in Europe and is of course itself a benefit of privatisation through the government's nursery voucher scheme.

Cuts to health funding have been accompanied by increased marketisation and competition within and between services for a slice of an ever diminishing cake. Even once the slices have been allocated, competition continues - between wages and job losses, and between conditions for one service and another on other resources. In announcing that any increased pay in the public sector would have to be funded through efficiency savings, Labour is set to continue this policy.

Privatisation, fragmentation of services and competition have an impact on the ability of workers to organise, creating smaller and separated workforces.

Theísated union organisation in many areas, for example the destruction of the Inner London Teachers' Association with the breakup of ILEA, and the widespread contracting out of NIHE support services to private companies (such as at Hillingdon Hospital).

Unionists have been slow to respond to the changes in the work force, with some local union activities (e.g Labour Research Department June 1996) suggest that union density is falling. More rapid identification of the new management techniques. A number of Labour councils, including Lewisham, have introduced or recommended new work practices.

Slow unions

Unions have been slow to respond to the changes in the work force, with some local union activities. "Appraisal" and individual pay bargaining may also open new up sexual harassment or the perception by fellow workers that sexual favours are the basis for wage increases.

In the name of "flexibility" workers are required to be available for work at all times, day or night, weekend or holiday. "Care in the community" has been overwhelmingly an excuse for a relaxation in services to those in need of them and for job cuts. It has also meant the disengagement on health care workers, social service personnel and teachers of the need for "multi-skilling" often without any extra training.

For example teachers are now meant to provide a range of skills of a much broader range of pupils than previously have been the case. General assistants have replaced individual support teachers at the same time as the needs of
pupils in mainstream school teaching are more likely to be made up of special units in the name of "integration". All this adds to the stress experienced by young people and they find that they cannot deliver the service users require.

Increased levels of stress among care workers have been found in poorly designed TUC surveys. For example among kitchen staff and home helps, predominantly women, one in three reported feeling worn out and harassed and suffering sleep deprivation. Men, as a group, report higher stress levels than women and are less likely to leave their jobs if alternative employment was available. (Survey conducted by UNISON by Professor Tom Cox, director of the Centre for Organisational Health and Development.)

**Retirement**

Teachers have lobbied and demonstrated in their thousands in deference of their right to early retirement. Education is the second most stressful sector of employment after the NHS. Referring to a TUC survey, this has been made hugely worse by the Tories. The survey says the professional status levels of deprivation experienced by many teachers as a result of Tory social policies.

In 1978 26 per cent of teachers took retirement pensions at 65 or 66 per cent continued teaching until they were sixty. By 1996 these proportions had also completely reversed - with 80 per cent of teachers retiring early - 30 per cent on the grounds of ill-health.

The drive for a 'market' oriented education sector, strict budgets and harsher management regimes hits particularly hard workers, such as teachers. Their training and ethos is based on the quality of the service they tailor. Labour's announcement that it will channel money from the assisted places scheme to reduce class sizes for five and six year olds will do nothing to change the overall conditions for educators.

As the Labour leader of Gloucestershire council said in response to Brown's announcement: "We need millions of pounds just to fix leaky roofs in our 'Excellent' schools and buildings". An end to teachers' ability to get early retirement is expected by many parents to be just one of many other things, to increased numbers being sacked through capability procedures and cuts to the teacher's role so that they can claim their pension.

Pensions have themselves been the focus of a long period of discussion, both through the raising of women's pensionable age to 65, and through breaking the link with retail prices. The position of older women will also worsen as the switch in pensioners' income between state and occupational pensions increases, since a state for percentage of women have occupational pensions, even where they do.

Nearly 90 per cent of all full time male workers are in pension schemes and only 40 per cent of all full time women, who make up just over half of all women workers. Poverty in old age has been rein-

**Discharged**

"Stabilised patients are increasingly discharged, to rely on stress tested social services for which fees are charged - like home help."

The replacement of contribution based benefits by means tested benefits presents huge potential to those who want to impose cuts on the welfare state. The Job Seekers Allowance replaces the second six months of traditional unemployment benefit with a means tested benefit and is therefore expected to "save" some £400 million in the first two years.

Claimsman with partners may lose benefit completely, and it is expected to cut the official unemployment count by tens of thousands in the first week. Women will lose out as their partners are more likely to be in work, and women with children will find it harder to show they have been actively seeking work and work, the majority of women now do paid work for a substantial part of their lives, though often in part time or temporary jobs.

Women increasingly work even when they have dependants. Working rather than just starting their families or after their children have left home.

Changing patterns in industry and the changing organisation of employment mean that full time permanent and male jobs are being replaced by part time, temporary and female work. Half of all women now do paid work, 6 per cent more work full time than in 1987, while below half the national average. By 2026 per cent of women are carers, and the estimated savings to the state of that unpaid caring is £2.4 billion, all of which represents unpaid wages to the working class. Cuts in health and social service care mean a disproportionate weight being placed on women who are expected to take on, unpaid, the 'carer' role the state is no longer willing to perform.

But this means the family that could take on the burden of all this unpaid caring is one that is increasingly less fitted socially. Rather than the Tories' ideal in which women stay at home to do the caring while men go out to earn a living, they are increasingly unable to do so.

For example, one in six families have no one-earner - three times as many so in 1973. A growing percentage of families have both parents working, and one fifth of all full time women work more than 48 hours per week.

While some of the media have reported this as the current 'time poor' and 'the money poor' many working class families are in fact both. Two million children in Britain are estimated (by the ONS January 1994) to be malnourished, and as a result of undernutrition and fat and below average height. Nearly two million people are on income support while one quarter of the population live on incomes below the national average. By giving up the redistributive power of changes in direct taxation levels.

**WOMEN 17**

Women have consistently been at the forefront of struggles defending health and welfare services.

Single mothers are branded as 'reckless', the long term unemployed are 'work shy'. Blame is put on the 'welfare state' to blame for the problems created by the way society is organised.

At the same time we must not forget that the family is the site of women's oppression because it privatises the care of workers and the raising of children and relies on women's unpaid and 'hidden' work to do so. The only alternative for working class people to this traditional form of the family is for society itself to take on the work collectively.

The demands of the Women's Liberation movement around issues such as free 24 hour nurseries, free abortion on demand, equal pay and financial independence remain as relevant today as when they were first raised in the 1960s. We need to fight to rebuild the welfare state and transform it so that it is controlled by all those who work in and use it.

**Europe-wide**

The stakes are high in the battle over the welfare state. Across Europe the organised workers are taking up the fight through strikes, demonstrations, road blocks, and occupations.

In Britain the legacy of eight year of Tory attacks, the
The dream of freedom

on a woman. Carla is a pariah in the conflict, a strong supporter of the Nicaraguan revolution, who has suffered herself, but perhaps more importantly witnessed hideous acts being carried out on her and her family, Antonio.

Loach has sometimes been criticised for his portrayals of women and certainly despite her centrality to the film, Carla doesn't break the mould. When Carla and George travel in Nicaragua in the second half of the film we are struck by the warmth of her connection with her female family and friends "not least in the waterlessly tangible shots of their first embraces. While still in Glasgow, we are treated to one important glimpse of a strong female character. George's youngest sister is questioned by him about Nicaragua, so that he can cover his own ignorance in front of Carla. Fresh from her Modern Studies class - which had me wondering if Scottish education had escaped from Thatcherite reform - she explains the basics of the revolution, the civil war launched by the Contras against it and the opposition of America to the Sandinistas. Robert Carlyle, as George, engages in a glorious piece of bare devilish defiance in stealing the bus he is employed to drive and taking Carla up winding muddy lanes to the shores of Loch Lomond. Complete madness this may well be, particularly when the bus becomes irretrievably stuck in a bog, but we are captivated not only by the breathtaking scenery but by George's fantasy adventure.

As Carla and George become more involved following her suicide attempt, George persuades her that the only way she can achieve peace of mind is to return to Nicaragua and find the elusive Antonio, her former lover about whom she has repeated nightmares.

It was in this section of the film that I expected political incisiveness from Loach. Carla's character has already told us of her dedication to the revolution, and certainly as we move to Nicaragua, we see the barbarity of the Contras tearing down the houses the Sandinistas had fought for so courageously.

In one of the strongest scenes, ex-CIA man turned human rights worker, Brian, explains to George that the devastation he has just witnessed to the Carla's family. George's fantasy adventure.

While this is powerful - and accurate stuff, the film stops short. It has been criticised elsewhere as overtly polemical, but this is to miss the point. As In Land and Freedom, Loach is strong in showing how ordinary people can and do organise and sacrifice much to combat oppression.

However, part of the significance of the previous film was to show the political debates and weaknesses amongst those who fought Franco in a graphic and accessible way.

Carla's Song has no answers for those who ask why the Sandinistas are no longer in power other than to point to the undoubtedly important role of American imperialism.

In backing any analysis of the politics of the routine, he weakens the film - and ironically leaves it open to accusations of being overly polemical. Wherever its failures, Carla's Song remains a remarkable and fascinating film. It is packed with scenes of great tenderness and warmth, with a magnificently somber and interesting, which enhance the mood of the action.

While not matching the promise of Land and Freedom, it remains one of the most politically powerful films available. The sight of George driving the stolen number 72 bus up winding country lanes to Ben Lomond will stay with me for a very long time, and make me smile.
Lottery madness

Why are there millions of pounds tied up in lottery funds, yet people are still dying from cancerous diseases, including young children? This is a shameful criminal act, perpetrated by a totally uncaring government who are still lining their own pockets! ideological projects into which this cash is injected are ludicrous! This is an indirect tax, taken from people who can least afford it, brought about for the reasons of a state carrying carcasses, making the general populace believe that they become millionaires overnight.

working on the relative kindness of individuals. Yet again, it is a question of taking money from the poor to give to the rich. For health managers to make a decision to offer no further treatment to patients while all this money simply floats around is in itself a crime. Okay, it is said that their hands were tied, but why should they have been?

I really believe that it is about time that communications were opened up and spread across the board allowing this money to be put to better use!

Christopher Smith, Stockport

Missed opportunity

I was disappointed to see that Socialist Outlook was prepared to drop into the style of reactionary tabloid journalism in discussing Jerry Hayes ("They're on his wagon", January issue).

The article, reported, without comment, that the Tories refused to support Mr Hayes, who denied that his relationship with the then 18 year old was anything other than platonic.

Surely socialists should be supporting anyone's right, even that of a Tory MP, to have a gay relationship? The fact that the article did not make any mention of the treatment of Hayes by the media made the article resemble the same reactionary piece of the Tory press that it was reporting.

I'm sure this is the same piece that commented on Hayes' support for "gay rights" as if this was extra cause for speculation.

Socialist Outlook correctly supported the attempt to equate the age of consent, whilst realising that this is only a small step in the struggle to eliminate the oppression of gay sexuality that is institutionalised under capitalism.

Jerry Hayes' support for this campaign was therefore to be welcomed, despite the incongruity with the rest of his politics, which is actually shared by many politicians, including Chris 'no more money for the health service' Smith.

The people who whitewash Hayes are the same bigots who fought the attempts for an equal age of consent. They should be condemned by socialists and the piece on Hayes missed an important opportunity to do so.

Ricky Paul, West London

EDITOR RESPONDS: It was certainly not our intention to imply that Hayes position on gay rights has made him 'unsuitable', but rather to point out that this is what it made him harder for recalcitrant to attack him.

Don't overstate European bosses' unity

I CANNOT recall ever having felt impelled to rush to Chris Harman's defence before, but frankly I thought that you dis- torted his article (Reviews, Sep No.1), and I think there is an issue of journalistic standards here.

You argue that: 'Harman's view deeply underestimates the multi- lateral relationships that are developing between capitalist classes ... he puts over the way that invest- ment moves increasingly between capitalist classes within these three areas (Japan, North America and Western Europe).'

Yes on page 7-8 of Harman's ar- ticle this is exactly what he argues: "The largest multinationals do not invest evenly across the globe. Most trade and investment is between advanced countries ... nearly three quarters of the world is virtually written off as far as direct investment is concerned."

Harman then produces figures derived from Hirst and Thompson showing that US and Japanese multinationals are still mainly based on their home markets (US 70 per cent of manufacturing as- sets, Japan 97 per cent).

While European ones with smaller home markets are more "globalised", British multinational- als are the least national with only 30 per cent of manufacturing assets in the UK.

In this sense Harman's comment that "Talk of Europe as an economic power is ... in the realm of fantasy" is correct.

If you had then gone on to com- plete his quote, you would have shown that it said: "Europe is not one entity, but a squabbling coalition of rival states, whose capitalis- ts confront one another as well as those of the US and Japan."

This is quite true.

In fact I think Alan Thornett's article "From Maastricht to Amer- sterdam" almost implies that an European superstate is already an agreed policy among the capitalists class. Far from it, as the divisions on this issue amongst the ruling class show.

The acuteness of these divisions in Britain, and the prospect of a Blair government, which does not actually have a clear policy on them, places great responsibility on the forces of the socialist left. It is important to oppose the efforts of Maastricht and the Dublin summit and to campaign against them at an European level. The whole left should be involved in this. However, I think it is equally important to defend the idea that there are solutions prior to a Socialist United States of Europe which the left can propose.

Such solutions include local and industry-wide strikes against cuts, reviving the idea that energy and services and the key sectors of manufacturing should be publicly owned and policies directed, and nationalisation of financial institutions. Fighting Maastricht with purely democratic demands is not going to work. If we're going to argue at this level then I think that the defenders of the British monarchy might win over those arguing for a European Con- stitution Assembly.

The point of your review seems to be that the SWP may be dragging its heels over supporting your "Euro March" initiative. Well, perhaps so but scoring a factional point should never be an excuse for distorting what someone has written, especially what you can so easily be found out by people who bother to read the original article.

John Laurence

What's On

WHAT'S ON

FEBRUARY
Sat 8th Liverpool Dockers' rally
Sat/Sun 22/23 Brussels Eurocamp Conference
MARCH
Saturday 1 National Assembly Against Racism One-day conference, Theatrinity, Ely Cathedral, Cardiff, Red Lions Square, WC1

10-15 National Education Week, orga- nised by FACE (Fight Against Cuts in Education), and supported by teaching unions and education campaigns.

Saturday 15 National Conference against the Job Seekers' Allowance, organised by the National State

Network is in conjunction with the Unemployment Unit and the Institu- tute of Employment Studies.

APRIL

Saturday 12 March for Social Justice, Central London, 1pm, Speakers Corner, Hyde Park.

Tuesday 15 European day of action to mark start of Eurocamp

MAY

10-14 June British legs of Eurocamp

JUNE

Saturday 14 Amsterdam demonstration in lobby EU summit conference.

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Revolt in the belly of a Tiger

B Skanthakumar

ROARS from the belly of the ti
ger in recent months have in
spired workers and activists
worldwide. South Koreans will
resume their general strike on
February 18 unless the govern-
ment relents on its vicious anti-
union laws.

British workers have been told
for years now that ‘working smarter’, non-unionised work-
places, flexibility and so on are the
key to economic growth and job secu-
rety, and that they have to learn
from the East Asian example to compete in the new global econ-
y.

South Korea’s Kim Young Sam
cites “globalisation” (segmenta) as
justification for his labour law re-
forms. Britain’s industrial relations
legislation is his model. Margaret
Thatcher’s confrontation with or-
ganised labour is his inspiration.

The South Korean National As-
sembly met in secret session at 6am
on December 26 to hastily rubber
stamp the passage of two laws - the
Labour Law reforms and a dracon-
ian National Security Act. Oppo-
sition members of the National
Assembly (142 out of 299, equaling
47 per cent) were not invited.

The National Security Act gives
the state more authority and easier
grounds to deny on and imprison dis-
sident and radical social move-
ments.

Business groups, particularly
the Korean Employers Federation
(KEF), had pressed the regime to
deregulate the labour market by

making it easier to hire and fire
workers, sanctioning the use of scab
labour during disputes, and canni-
salisation

South Korean workers have the
longest hours and the highest rate of
industrial accidents in the world.
Workers do an average of 44.7 hours
a week, usually with up to another
ten hours overtime.

The law allows only one union
per workplace. The legally recog-
nised Nkong, the Federation of
Korean Trade Unions (FKTU), is
pro-government and is seen as a
management puppet. Many com-
panies have collaborated with the
FKTU to form an enterprise union
to prevent the KCTU doing so.

The illegal Nkong, the
Korean Confederation of Trade
Unions (KCTU), with 500,000 mem-
bers, campaigned for the
overly pro-employer reforms to be
boycotted by reforms allowing union
pluralism in the workplace and un-
ion rights for teachers and civil ser-
vers.

The government agreed to union
pluralism but only three years from
now. Anti-labour provisions come
into force immediately. The gov-
ernment’s so-called concessions
might never be implemented.

Prime Minister Yi Soong in-
cluded “the new labour laws are not
aimed at lowering wages, worsening
working conditions or helping to
restore the economy by permitting
businesses to lay off employees en
masse. They are laws legalized out
of sincere agency to promote the in-
terests of all - businesses, workers
and the entire people”.

No one believes him. Korean
workers know that any apology will
be thin, because exports have to be
priced ‘competitively’ in the world
market.

In response to the new law the
KCTU called an immediate general
strike, the first since 1948, demand-
ing its immediate repeal.

Workers in car factories and
shipyards took the lead, shutting
down the chaebols or conglomerates
which dominate the economy.

Hyundai estimates its losses in pro-
duction from these strikes at US
$73 million. Health workers, trans-
port workers, the un-unionsised and
students joined in demonstrations
and rallies. Over 200,000 workers

were on strike and tens of thou-
ands more took unofficial action.

Meanwhile, the FKTU with its
official membership of 1.2 million
surprised everyone by declaring
that it too would go on strike, though
at that stage separately from the
KCTU. There was pressure from
the base to join in the action as
they did so to maintain credibility.
However, the FKTU leadership
soon back-tracked and called for
walkouts instead of indefinite strikes.

The first phase of strikes lasted
until New Year’s Eve.

Disruption

The KCTU needed to cause
maximum disruption to the chaebols
and the government, while main-
taining and extending alliances
with the people who had taken to

the streets in solidarity. It knew it
could not prolong a general strike
without losing even core support-
ers. So it tried to vary the tempo and
intensity of action, using strikes,
walkouts, in-house meetings, ral-
lies, demonstrations, mass presi-
dions, and at staggered intervals
allowing those exhausted or water-
ning to resume work and be replaced
by other groups of workers.

Strikers ensured that emergency
total hospitals were maintained,
and workers on the subway (under-
ground) returned to work at a

time when snow made using roads diffi-
cult.

President Kim Young Sam’s ad-
ministration used every trick in the
book to turn public opinion against
the strikers. They suggested that
the KCTU were North Korean
agents in an unsuccessful attempt
to whip up anti-Communist hysteria.

The second phase of the strike
began on January 3, with an empha-
sis on the participation of public
sector workers including those
from state broadcasting and other
white collar unions. Even banking
and finance workers were solidarity

behind the strikes with daily walk-
outs. In disgust at the FKTU lead-
ership’s abstention from strike
action, at least 37 enterprise unions
have disaffiliated, and most will
join the KCTU.

Government threats against the
KCTU leadership became more ex-
plicit. Arrest warrants were issued
against twenty of them, including
union president Kwon Yong-Gil.
The leaders had already sought
sanctuary in the grounds of the Ro-
nan Catholic Myongdong Cathed-
drall, knowing that their

headquarters would be raided and
they would be imprisoned if found.

The cathedral itself became a fo-
cial point for press conferences, ral-
lies and demonstrations in solidarity with those besieged
inside.

The strike movement entered a
drist phase on January 15. The
FKTU President visited the KCTU
leaders at the Cathedral and issued
a joint statement confirming that this
was a common struggle in which
they shared identical demands. Re-

cord numbers were now participat-
ing in the strike, over 350,000
members of the KCTU and over
370,000 members of the FKTU ac-
cording to Labour Ministry figures.

On January 17, the general strike

was suspended. Instead, the lead-

ership called one day walkouts on

half day every Wednesday, combined with mass
rallies and demonstrations every

Wednesday and Saturday. The walks
were called off on January 28, when
the KCTU leadership said it was concentrating on preparing for

a national general strike.

The KCTU was responding to
the fact that union members in

heavy industry were returning to

work partly in response to pleas
from the management. Many see

the struggle as one against an unjust
law rather than against the chaebol


goal of a socialist state.

Capitalism’s gravedigger isn’t
dead as some argue. It has only to
discover its historic role.