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London's Mayor — Party choice or Tony Creny?

Pete Firmin

HAVING IMPOSED a directly elected mayor on Londoners and the London Labour Party, Blair is now intent on ensuring that the most popular candidate — Ken Livingston — does not get a chance to stand for the post.

He and Blair are rumoured to prefer a ‘non-politician’ like Robert Ayling of British Airways, a steamroller of a former supporter and basher of unions.

Every opinion poll taken shows that Livingston is the only Labour candidate who could stand a chance of beating the likes of Jeffrey Archer.

This doesn’t seem to worry Blair. As far as he and his coterie are concerned, Blair will be in for the next 12 months, this would not make him acceptable to them. While Livingston has many faults (a lack of consistency being one), he is clearly on the left and no one on the left is a candidate of winning the Labour candidacy or the election.

Other potential Labour candidates include Glenda Jackson, Tony Banks and Pauline Green. MFF Banks may even claim to be the left candidate if Livingston is included. Blair knows that none of them is likely to beat Liv- ingstone in a membership ballot, otherwise his solution would be simply change Livingston and Living- stone loses, end of story.

Greater London Labour Party conference in June voted overwhelmingly (400-2) that Labour’s selection should be made by a one member one vote ballot, and that any candidate nominated by a minimum of 10 CLPs should be automatically shortlisted.

When the regional executive (now called the London Regional Board) met to consider the procedure they even had to be reminded of the mandate.

The regional board has now forwarded new proposals to Labour’s NEC which include allowing individuals to put themselves forward, and a selection board, with representatives from the region and NEC to consider candidates.

This mechanism would be similar to the one used to sift out unwanted candidates as was done on the previous occasion — with explosive consequences — for the Scottish Parliament and European elections. This would allow the NEC to claim that the board rejected Livingstone as ‘unsuitable’.

The regional board did also, however, agree to ‘re-forward’ the regional conference resolution to the NEC. This means the regional board fudged the issue, leaving the decision about procedure entirely up to the NEC.

The NEC will consider this issue at its meeting on January 26. The intervening period should be used to put as much pressure as possible on NEC members to back the original decision of London Labour con- ference.

Union representatives, for instance, should be called upon to support this policy, pointing out that a system of nominations is the only one which allows any input from the unions through the NEC delegates, and that two of those NEC members would be turnout with the attempt to get the NEC members to rise up and reject Blair’s determination to centralise control.

Blair’s (poor! deal) was so hurt by press allegations of ‘control freak’ that he would not even deny them at the NEC meeting on the day after, explaining that if the decisions are made by the NEC membership, not him (I).

The course of rubbish and, too many of those NEC meeting were taken up with the attempt to get 4 members elected on the chance Grassroots Alliance steered through the proposed ‘Code of Conduct’. Some NEC members have even argued that there should be ‘cabinet responsi- bility’ on the NEC. Clearly, even if downgraded to ‘guidelines’, this may be used in an attempt to discipline the NEC members at some time in the future. The new draft will replace General Committees by policy forums, heralded in the press the day the Council didn’t even mention at the NEC.

On top of the attacks on democ- racy, we have the so-called front attacks by the government on those it was elected to support — whether it is the Iraq Bill, the squeeze on public sector pay, the privatization of everything possible or the renumbering of one of the already awful ‘Fairness At Work’ proposals. The government has also made new attacks on Tony anti-union laws, preventing the Prison Officers’ Association against the prison service.

However, dissent is beginning to find a voice, with the formation of

Campaign Group Network conference December 5

Build the Labour Left!

Pete Firmin (officer, Network campaign group, in personal capacity)

THE NETWORK of Socialist Campa- gning Grassroots (SG) AGM on Saturday 5 December to discuss key issues and campaigning work for the year ahead. The conference came at a time when dissatisfaction is growing in the Party, with government policies, but particu- larly with Blair’s determination to centralise control anything and everything.

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However, dissent is beginning to find a voice, with the formation of a Welsh campaign for Labour Party Democracy and the NEC election results as well as protests over the procedure for selecting Labour’s candidate for mayor of London. While the Labour Left is cur- rently very weak, it could capitalise on this situation if it is willing to campa- gning vigorously.

The growing levels of dissatis- faction mean that members are willing to listen to alternatives.

One of the major debates at the AGM will be about the future of the Grassroots Alliance. While the NEC members should be given all the support possible they are iso- lated on the NEC and marginalised

when it comes to policy. If the sup- port shown in the elections is to be built on, supporters have to be drawn into discussion of the key issues and the possibility of cam- paigning both around democracy and government policy.

While local Campaign Groups should take the lead in this, a major advance would be made if the Grassroots Alliance called national or regional meetings for its supporters.

Unfortunately, the newly elected officers making up the alliance do not see the need to move beyond studying candidates and local elections and providing (important) reports from the NEC members. The NEC will have the chance to express its view.

Don’t let our trains go down the tubes!

Veronica Fagan

THE FIGHT against the privatisation of London Under- ground continues. On Tuesday 37 November over 100 reps met to discuss the next stage of the cam- paign. With the London underground around the New Year is under serious consideration.

Measures adopted by activists have beenleafletting many tube stations at peak times, explaining what the effects of the government’s propos- als will be on service users.

They have also been lobbying on the privatisation of the British Rail has been a disaster - something that no committed trade union persuading of.

On 21 November, the privatisation of the tube will cost £1 billion more than the service retired to the public hands. That is the breath- taking fact about which the Labour government is keeping very quiet. And these extra costs will inevitably be borne by both workers and users. Safety standards will fall fur- ther, faster, faster and service will be cut.

It is vital that activists across London should call in a pro- test campaign. Invite speak- ers to any meetings you are involved in and have access to

Contact : Campaign against tube privatisation, Flats 2, 235 Queen Lane, London SE7 074 Fax: 0181 442 0276

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No to war in Middle East!

AS WE GO TO PRESS (November 23) it seems likely that the US will authorize air strikes against the Iraqi people from US, imperialist and its European allies, most notably our own Tony Blair are on the back burner.

However the situation could hot up again at any moment and reports have asserted that they need no further mandate for action which could murder many thousands of civilians.

Of course whether they actually do act, without the backing of the Security Council, will depend on whether not on formalities but on whether they feel the balance of forces is sufficiently in their favor to permit this.

What may have as much long term significance as the threat of further bombings is the fact that the removal of Saddam Hussein is now an explicit part of US policy. Clinton has now signed the Iraq Liberation Act 1998, under pressure from the Republicans in Congress.

Military aid

This allows the administration to release $27 million (€44 million) in military aid to the Israelis as well as allowing them to train and equip an opposition army which would invade the country with the US military afterwards.

In a statement on November 14 Clinton stated that the US intended to "intensify" support for the "forces of change" in Iraq. Blair has echoed support for this position in Parliament and discussions are underway in the EU groups based in London. During the Gulf War there was much more ambivalence on the question of unseating Saddam Hussein but also replacement was not sure it could find a replacement that was any more reliable. After all, Saddam was initially seen as a creature, and considered an ally until after the end of the Iran-Iraq War. Now it seems that there is a recognition that a better replacement might emerge.

The basis of this change of heart lies not in changes in the Iraqi opposition in larger geo-political issues in the region.

The signing of the Oslo accords was a crucial factor.

The mobilisations of Palestinians and others across the Arab world were important in putting imperialism under pressure during the Gulf War. Today Afarot is politicizing the Palestinians more effectively than the Israelis were able to.

Nor has the settlement only had an effect within the boundaries supposedly controlled by the Palestinian authority but more generally throughout the Arab world as an effect of demobilisation and realisation after the promise of the Intifada.

In retrospect, while it was always clear that Brazil's interest in Kuduside was not based on a new found and short lived belief in freedom of speech, the larger picture comes even more clearly into focus.

Settling this long-running dispute with Iran was not only useful for it on Italy over this in order to try to bolster the modernisers against the fundamentalists in Tehran, but to hopefully establish stronger ties in any future conflict with Iraq.

At the same time, another key player in the region, has interests at stake.

It would dearly love to see the coming together of Kurdish groups from Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan between whom there has been little love lost. To isolate the PKK based in Turkish Kurdistan.

Turkey's determination to step up the offensive against a people whose existence it does not officially recognize has been illustrated by its attacks first on Syria and now on those areas controlled by the PKK. The latter is opposed to any imperialist offensive against Iraq and continues to support demands for the lifting of sanctions which have led to death and disease being rife throughout that country.

We also warn that the 'Pax American' under discussion today would have repercussions way beyond the borders of Israel.

The attempt to redraw the map of the Middle East which is being considered in the White House and in Downing Street is an attack on Palestinians, Kurds and all the oppressed and exploited peoples of the Middle East. It must be opposed.

No so much a straw in the wind as more wind from Jack Straw ...

It's “Back to Basics” II!

NO MATTER how much Jack Straw may protest, those who are effectively deemed “non-people” by the Government, who are on family policy are clear that they are being labelled second class. Even the practice of helping women and men who are in the process of having children, has fallen foul of New Labour's latest proclamation that “marriage is for adults.”

The core of the document is as firmly based on Back to Basics ideology as anything put forward by Blair's hypocritical, moralising predecessors in the Tory Party. The strongest support for the document so far seems to have come from the Archbishop of Canterbury — hardly an indication of progressive nature.

This overall trajectory was further underlined by the Home Secretary using the launch of the document to make clear his own opposition to the services for the lesbian and gay men to adopt or the right of lesbians to have access to IVF treatment.

His “argument” for this was that he had to respect the rights of children being treated as ‘trophies’.

How dare he suggest that the motivation of the vast majority of parents wanting children are any different from anyone else’s.

However, the Liberal Democrats the perfect opportunity to point out that these proposals could only discriminate against children not from “government approved relationships” — somewhat ironic really, given the

put US on your xmas gift list!

YES, IT’S THAT time of year again, when every relative and every good cause seems to be laying claim on your generosity. So we decided Socialist Outlook should not be left out — and here is our heart-warming Xmas Appeal for Socialists in Need.

Our picture editor has advised against any dramatic shots of our lean, hollow-eyed and hungry editorial team — let alone our production editor, who has to go for painful surgery soon (no violins, please). But you wouldn't want the socialist cause to be made of resources over Christmas, now would you? And if you saw us in a pub, and it was your round, you’d probably buy us a drink. We’d do the same for you, too, if we were a little better off.

So please put us on your Christmas list, send a present to help us develop and expand the paper in 1999. We’ll do the rest, working over the holiday to prepare our next issue, for publication in the first week of January. Then, while you watch all those old Xmas movies, you can sit back and enjoy that warm glow of having contributed to a worthy cause.

Send donations to us at PO Box 1105, London N4 2UU.
New Labour = Neo-Liberals

Haringey's schools for sale?

Doug Thorpe

EARLY this year Haringey Council in North London decided to find out whether it could use funds from a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) to build and refurbish buildings to create a new school. They were then told by their consultants that no company would be interested in a PFI for one school because they would have to turn over the management and servicing of all nine of the Borough's secondaries for 30 years In other words, to make business to finance the new school. Winning a ballot of allied or consulting any parents or teachers the Council decided to do just that - sell off all Haringey's schools.

The implications are a loss of control of the education and school buildings and worse conditions and pay for school workers. There is no part of the immediate sell-off but a bid is being prepared for an Education Action Zone next year.

A group of Haringey socialists met with school and community activists (including School Action groups and supporters) who had met to discuss solidarity with RMT members fighting privatisation on London Underground. They previously understood the significance of the PFI and launched a community campaign, "Haringey against Privatisation to keep schools in public hands."

The campaign has grown and, in early November, it called a public meeting together with the local UNISON branch. The platform of the meeting, which ranged from Keith Sonnet, UNISON's National Head of Local Government, to Graeme S. Brookman National Vice-President of the NUT, to local school governors, parents' representatives and Paul Foot.

Over a hundred local people attended the meeting, and not one showed any support for the PFI. Such was the concern of the national trade union officials to be seen to be supporting the fight against PFI that when Tony Brookman at first refused to speak on the same platform as Paul Foot, (who he dubbed a "fascist"), he was told to appear by NUT General Secretary Doug McBoyle.

The inconvenient fact facing the council is that they have to persuade their governors of each school to vote for the PFI for it to happen.

To date they have not taken a single vote, but have still spent £250,000 on consultants. Most governors are against the scheme, but there is no room for complacency.

As the money is spent, the Council will become more desperate to force the project through. The pressure will be on governors, particularly Labour Party appointees.

To counter this, as well as addressing governors directly, the campaign must build up a counter pressure from parents, teachers and other workers. Only in this way will governors have the confidence to vote the proposals down.

The next step is a programme of public leafleting outside schools to build a demonstration and a lobby of the Council. There will also be stalls outside Wood Green Library every Saturday morning.

We will stay away - our schools are not for sale

Haringey against Privatisation on 6 December at PFI points to be set up at P0 Box 8446 London N17 6NZ.

Demonstration Saturday 5th December at 5pm at Greenwich Common (Tuplke Lane Tube) Lotty Haringey Council Monday 14th December 6pm Civic Centre Wood Green London N22.

Footnotes:

Temper run high as Birmingham City council considers handing over hundreds of houses to a new Estates Renewal Challenge Fund, which will mean higher rents.

Housing battles hot up

Elkie Dee

BEHIND Tony Blair's pronounce- ment that sink estates should simply encourage the privatisation of Council housing all over the country. Tenants are offered incentives to vote for privatisation of their homes. The finance, and investment, so long as they agree that housing associations will take over the management of stock and estates. The housing associations "buy" the housing with huge loans from banks. To borrow for rent increases set above the rate of inflation. Capital gains are springing up all over the country against this underhand privatisation, developing links between tenants and affected workers.

On the Lee Bank Estate in Erm, Birmingham, tenants and Unison members talked about how to campaign for estate renovation funds to be given without the strings of privatisation. The meeting was organised by the Birmingham Community Foundation.

In Camden, tenants have demonstrated against the threat to build two row down blocks in Kentish Town. The last local government elections, privatisation proposals were withdrawn in the face of opposition against the borrough. A housing strategy document published in August indicates that the Council is now looking to through privatisation plans and on tenants into acceptance of stock transfer or private finance initia- tion/partnership deals, again through arguing that this is the only way to fund improvements and repairs. Activists in tenants' groups and across the city have now united to defend public services against private profit.

St Helens Council opposed to tenancy reform

Glenn Varis, Secretary of Merseyside TUC (in a personal capacity)

THE CAMPAIGN against the transfer of 500 council houses on the Wargrave Estate in St Helens gained an important victory on October 26 when tenants rejected plans to privatise their estate by a margins of 41 votes to 39.

This result is the only victory so far in the North West against any proposed transfer and has started a determined campaign across the region to fight off privatisation.

Glen Varis reports:

Fury as Straw strips school assets

A. Teacher

PRIVATEATION of education came a step closer with a press conference on November 12 at Westminster City Hall.

In his last act before retiring as Chair of Governors of Pimlico School and Leaving Joint 1997/98, head 23 per cent of the prime SW1 site is to be built on.

The privately owned luxury apartments alone could be bigger than the cost of rebuilding the school, and the developers will still be paid, on top of that, an annual fee for providing the new school building.

The governments will be locked into a 35 year commitment to pay the developers to provide the school building. But OFSTED inspectors, so popular with New Labour, have denounced it since the existing space was "hardly adequate" and is in fact below PFI guidelines.

The press conference was originally called simply to announce the sale of the school and was only moved to City Hall at the last minute - a wise decision since the government refused to return to lessons after morning break in protest against PFI.

Governors have been opposed to the conference, and several parent governors who turned up at City Hall were excluded.

The narrow majority of governors in favour of PFI has now changed, after one of Straw's allies retired and took his child out of the school, so those of no confidence votes by teachers and parents.

It is plain that Council's promises not to go against the wishes of Governors or Straw's own pledge, when standing for election as a parent Governor, to respect the wishes of parents, are - like all Straw's Labour promises - used to get elected and then thrown away. Opponents of PFI have three main points.

Firstly, the school building is good, though years of neglect by Westminster Council (the Tories flagship) has meant there is a backlog of repairs. But repairs wouldn't interest the developers who require big sweeteners.

The cost to the public of using PFI to re-build the school will be bigger than if the State itself borrowed the capital. The only way the capital cost can be kept down is to give public assets - in this case nearly a quarter of the school site, to the developers.

Finally, this would be a big step towards privatisation of education because once you accept "market logic" in providing school buildings and services (like schoolteachers, security and cleaning) then it's a very short step to handing the hiring of teachers over to them as well.

Of course Blair's New Labour is based on an old idea - that the market (by which he means capitalism) will provide better services at a lower cost than the State. This is not true of course, but opponents of PFI at Pimlico recognise that even if Straw should PFI was more expensive, New Labour would still go ahead with it, because they have the side of capital.

Knowing that, and what it means for working people, what fuels the anger of so many parents and teachers is that the government (and the Capital) to afford a good education might get it. The majority will have to try their luck with the market and their limited supply of labour. And that's not very new either.
"John Prescott, an RMT member, is dishing out worse conditions than those imposed by the Tories"

Over the next four months the Rail & Maritime workers Union (RMT) will be holding elections for its General Secretary. We are facing growing problems for the union and its members.

Socialist Outlook interviewed RMT National Executive member GREG TUCKER about the issues at stake.

SO: What do you think is the key challenge facing the union over the next few years?
GT: The core of our members' work on what was British Rail. They are now divided up into over a hundred demoralized companies. And what we are facing is a developing industrial strategy that re-unifies rail workers and builds real participation in the face of this attack.

We have attempted to do this over the last few months in one sector with a series of linked infrastructure company disputes. Rather than wait for the inevitable attacks on our members' jobs and conditions we have put forward our own demands and mobilised our members around them. We have been successful in some companies our fight has shown just how poorly organised we are in others. It is clear that, with a firm display of leadership, our demands are prepared to stand up for. But as a Union we have failed to deliver to our members.

Far too often our representatives have been cautious and bowing to management pressure. Members have realised this and reacted accordingly. Without confidence in their leaders they have lacked the will to risk a battle. Elsewhere, on the buses, among lorry drivers and our catering members we face a range of threats, from de-recognition of the Union, personal contracts and the introduction of self-employment. Some areas have been seriously neglected. Red Star members, for instance, have had a wage freeze for some years and pay cut this year. Their jobs have been franchised off into a myriad of small independent units. A strike this week has just gone unreported because there was no union member taking action.

SO: What changes do you think are needed to make the way the union functions to forward these battles?
GT: A fundamental change in the way that the union operates requires a root and branch reorganisation of the Union.

We need a national leadership prepared to throw its weight behind members' aspirations. Far too often national officials are content merely to contain the members' wishes. They want an easy life, safe to enjoy the provi- sions they obtain from members' subs.

This is partly to be addressed by putting all officials' positions up for election every five years. But it also needs a fundamental change in the political climate inside the Union.

In each company we need to ensure that our members have the representatives they deserve. Not ones that just bow-down to management, but reps prepared to organise resistance.

This means instituting a more thorough democratic process to ensure the members can choose those who want to represent them - and a rigorous education process so their reps have the necessary tools to do the job they are entrusted to do.

In the face of new privatised companies trying to undermine our organisation it means finding resources to ensure we recruit and organise an absolute majority of transport workers. This is not just about gimmicks such as trade union credit cards - but a serious approach to involve every worker that being a trade union member is in their direct interests; that our collective strength can deliver real victories.

SO: So what stance do you think the Union should take towards the government?
GT: However well we organise the shop floor a range of problems can only be resolved with government intervention.

For instance, our shipping members are fighting to protect Time and again RMT members have shown they are willing to fight management, particularly from ruthless employers such as P&O. A political solution to the problems of the maritime industry is necessary. But the government is busy cowering up to the same employers, offering them subsidies, grants etc. even while they make the working man's job more difficult.

Our industrial strategy has to be linked to a broader political strategy for dealing with the transport industry. RMT members had great hopes for the new Labour government. Whilst they had few illusions that our problems would be solved overnight they expected to see progress on bringing the rail industry back into public hands, that a priori- sated integrated transport policy would deal with the effects of bus de-regulation.

Instead, they have seen Tony Blair favering over Richard Branson and other private com- panies who want to privatise London Under- ground as well. To their horror, LUL members are discovering that John Prescott, an RMT member, is dishing out worse conditions than imposed by the Tories on British Rail.

Whilst Prescott likes to talk about introducing a new tougher regulatory regime for the rail industry it is clear that the government will be content to allow the operating franchises as it sees fit. Progress on a dramati- cally watered down transport White Paper has been delayed in case it upsets New Labour's Tory constituency.

RMT members rightly feel let down by the Labour government - but we have no excuse when we play down any on the government to act any differently.

Despite clear Union policy on these matters, very little has been done nationally to press our demands.

We have been left to the local LUL leadership to develop any strategy against privatisation. Ken Livingstone refused to do anything that might upset his rela-

SO: What do you think will happen if there are no changes in the direction of the union?
GT: At the moment, it appears obvious that the small, fragmented nature of Union membership means that the Union is less co-ordinated than the Tories. The Union will look to their friends in the leadership of the Labour party to do what is necessary. That cannot be allowed to continue.

Years of decline under the Tories have taken their toll. The RMT is far weaker than it was, with only a third of the mem- bers it had in the 1970s. It is not only because of drastic changes in the transport industry; we no longer have a closed shop delivering 100% membership for us. In some areas we are now a minority union. We have been fighting a clinicians' battle against privatisa- tion, so delivering a poorer service to members.

The survival of the Union is still threatened by financial problems. Despite irrational disputes we have been forced to do a deal with the TUC and the government, giving the TUC the power to decide if and when we can go on strike.

Some members think we should just make do and mend. Rather, we need to be mobilising our members to make the government clearly aware of the price they will pay in ignoring our wishes.

SO: What are the key issues the TUC should be fighting around? What role do you think the RMT should play in assisting this?
GT: In as much as the Left in the Union has been able to develop Union policy, we have been one of the few Unions present- ing any sort of fight.

But we cannot continue to fight alone. It is important, as a Union that we work to forge the whole of the movement to stand up and fight. The TUC must be pushed to oppose all anti-union laws, not just to accept what crumbs Peter Mandelson is prepared to offer as part of "Fairness At Work".

The Liverpool Dockers and others over the last years and the Jubilee Line electricians today have shown that it is possible to fight, irrespective of the legal restraints. Instead of repudi- ations and sell- outs we need a movement pre- pared to fight to defend all its members from attack, whether their disputes are "legal" or not. Instead of having to "negotiate" some improvements to govern- ment policies on such items as a minimum wage and continued privatisation we need a TUC pre- pared to mobilise the strength of our movement in the interest of the interests of working people.

SO: What do you think will happen if there are no changes in the direction of the TUC?
Public risk and private reward: Leeds leads the way

Even the best political programme is of little value unless it is connected to grassroots activism. A major report on a campaign in South Leeds over a proposed major redevelopment at Elland Road shows how the Labour Party is trying to learn about New Labour.

The traditional working class game of football is currently changing dramatically with the construction of new all-seater stadiums and the increase in ticket prices. As a result, the passion for the game is no longer a universal activity. The rise of replica strips at absurd prices has left football fans with little choice.

Leeds United, in conjunction with the council, is about to build a new stadium. It proposes to increase seating at Elland Road by 5,000 to 45,000 and add an area to the ground with a capacity of 16,000, as well as a hotel and other leisure facilities.

The idea for the arena came originally from Leeds City Council. As an aspiring European city, Leeds desperately needed a concert arena. In order to compete successfully for inward investment, Leeds wants facilities comparable with other cities. Sheffield and Birmingham have arenas, and so does Manchester. Leeds' rivals across the Pennines.

The City Council owned the site of the stadium and the land around it, but it was not clear who would develop it. A media group of local businesses bought the club two or three years ago, probably because the investment opportunity they saw waiting. In competition with other development companies, Caspian (now in their new guise as Leeds Sporting plc) was awarded the contract to build the arena by the City Council.

In a complicated deal, Leeds Sporting acquired the site from the council for just over £1.5m, although it was independently valued at around £2.5m. The council agreed to pay in stages, partly in cash and partly in shares.

Free tickets
Ownership of the arena site remains with the council until completion of the development. As well as an Executive Box, the council will also continue to get a share of the revenue from ticket sales.

Early this year, Leeds Sporting unveiled their planning application. As a land owner and a major shareholder in the developer, it seemed that granting the planning permission would be a formality for Leeds City Council, acting as the planning authority.

Consultation was kept to a minimum. Most local residents only found out about the proposals from notices on lamp posts. Given the failure of the council to explain what was proposed, the local Labour councilors decided to hold a consultation meeting for local people the following afternoon. However, only one of the six Labour councilors bothered to turn up. The meeting voted unanimously to oppose the application and also set up the South Leeds Action Group. This has continued since then to meet weekly and campaign vigorously against the development.

If it goes ahead, extra traffic congestion, pollution and disturbance will make living in this inner city area even worse than it already is. The area is surrounded by motorways, unemployment, poverty and ill-health. Asthma, respiratory and heart ailments, and cancer are all well above average.

One of the selling points of the project has been its job-creating potential. Yet these jobs would be available to local people even if the arena were to be built on an alternative city centre site. If built there, the impact on residents would be far less, and car usage would be reduced in keeping with the government's proclaimed transport policy.

Leeds Sporting's record as an employer is poor. Shortly after buying Leeds United, they closed the creche, only later agreeing to reopen it and offering the workers they had made redundant their jobs back at worse rates and conditions. When applications of this kind are submitted, and local residents object, councilors and MPs are normally quick to lend their support.

A proposal for a major leisure development on the Leeds ring road, including a cinema, a casino and a bowling alley, attracted opposition from councilors from all three main parties, and both local MPs. The contrast with the situation over the much larger development at Elland Road is stark.

In spite of widely published opposition by local people, only one local councillor had the courage to oppose the application. He has now been deselected, and there are strong rumours that his opposition played a part in this.

The Planning Committee has now said that it is "minded" to approve the application, although the final decision rests with John Prescott, the minister responsible. Most local residents think that permission will be granted. As one councillor commented in a local church magazine, it is difficult for a local Labour councillor to oppose the planning application impartially when it owns shares in the developer.

Suspicion

Even the Labour Party, on its own terms and standards in public life, recognized the problem. It reported last year that: "Doubtless the commission is created by the power of local authorities to grant themselves planning permission for their own land and developments."

The two inner city wards affected by the development at Elland Road are among the safest Labour seats in the city. And yet they are among the most deprived in the country. Labour Party activists have treated their voters with contempt. Protesters have been told that they are being "brainwashed by the presentational, vocal minority", and asked at councilors' surgeries: "Who sent you?"

The development has not yet been stopped. The South Leeds Action Group can claim a limited victory already, for construction was due to start in the summer of 1998 but work has already delayed by nearly a year.

Residents in these areas are expected to vote Labour loyalty at elections, and to be grateful for regeneration funds. But they have been denied control over decisions that affect their lives. The Labour Council in Leeds, as elsewhere, in a huge majority, would rather talk to big business than its natural supporters.

Millbank

As a spokesperson for the South Leeds Action Group said in an interview with Radio Leeds, "Whatever happened to democracy?"

No doubt he means to be repeated elsewhere. In mid-November, the local Labour councilor, Geoffrey Robinson, said: "We have made great strides with the Priory Road, but the problem continues in the past year. But we must continue to identify and develop partnerships and opportunities within the public and private sectors.

We need to exploit all commercial potential, not just leave assets through a sensible balance of risk and reward."

South Leeds means public risk and private reward!
As BMW milk “crisis” to dictate change s to hard-won agreements

No concessions on Rover jobs or wages!

by a car worker

OVER THE PAST 4 weeks there has been a crescendo of leaks to the effect that the Rover car plant at Longbridge, Birmingham will close, with the loss of thousands of jobs, unless the trade unions agree to vicious new attacks on working practices. BMW, the owners of Rover, have declared that because of the strength of the pound there has been a fall in sales, and claim Rover is losing vast sums of money, mentioning amounts between £500 and £1000 million. They say that they are not willing to accept this.

Management argue that because productivity is greater in Germany, Rover workers here will have to accept “banking” of hours - a system where you work extra when the company wants you, and are paid in hours in order to save overtime payments. The company says publicly that they see no future for their savings.

Rover management have been carrying out a series of secretive talks with a six-person sub-committee of the Rover Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) which has been reported to the JNC itself, but the content has been kept secret from the membership. TGWU General Secretary Bill Morris, who is supposedly nothing to do with the negotiations, has stated in an interview with The Savage on November 20:

"...we cannot be taken to reach an agreement. The consequences of not reaching an agreement would be too astrological in consequence. Both sides recognise the importance of an agreement to the company and to safeguard the interests of the motor industry...".

An agreement for new principles and new arrangements to carry workers Rower and its motor manufacturing industry.

He went on to admit that he would be prepared to see such agreements spread to other industries, openly identifying himself and the union in the cause of the company, saying “This will be seen as a winners deal, except for the transparent in middle tobe on the JNC. Our prize would be to nail our [sic] place as a motor manufacturer.”

Only last year management pushed through the first 3 year deal in Rover, arguing that they needed it to keep their “business”... and they had their plans, they said. They avoided negotiating the “banking” of hours then, though the May 1997 edition of their magazine “Rover” was merely the preserve being discussed with the trade unions included “flexible working”.

The 1997 review was supposed to settle all wages and conditions issues arising from the new agreement, as is the “Rover Tomorrow” agreement that is supposed to guarantee “jobs for life”. BMW are trying to use the pressure in the motor industry to force through things it always wanted, plus more besides. The company and its European union workers is quite sickening.

BMW workers are paid twice as much, are on a 35 hour week, have 6 weeks holiday (compared to 5 here), have 16 additional bank holidays, and many other benefits. Yet the whole of the British media presents the picture in almost daily articles that whatever the company says has to be accepted in order for the firm to be competitive.

By contrast, BMW’s chief spokesperson in Munich has stated: “It is almost a relief to employ people in countries like the UK where you are actually allowed to sack people.”

"The social costs of employing people and the cost of the company are high. You have no freedom to decide what you do with the workforce.”

What is clear from this statement is that the BMW are also using this situation to prepare attacks on their German workforce, by threatening to move production to “cheaper” plants in Britain if Bill Morris and the workers refuse to force through further wage cuts.

When a delegate con- ference was held of stewards from the whole of Rover on November 21 the details of the negotiations weren’t revealed, but was said the company was “looking at every single”, including the sick pay scheme - and virtually every benefit that is has taken the trade unions decades to achieve.

Morale is rising to the agreement of the trade union leadership, because the only other way to break signed agreements is to give 3 months notice of a change of contract, and on the day that it expires the workers have to come to work then they have won. But there is a strong chance that they won’t, and there will be a confrontation.

The response of the union leadership has been consistantly to play into the company’s hands. In the September issue of the TGWU Record, national official Tony Woodley argues that productivity increases have been big enough to keep firms that they should all be on a 35 hour week, and get wage increases above inflation, and he urges us to “look at the fat cats”. But he is now sat quite the job of reassessing which of his members’ rights can be given away. The term “negotiations” is used, but only one side is giving.

At the same conference as Woodley was speaking, Peer Unterweger of the International Metalworkers Federation (of which BMW workers are members), said we were going “a race to the bottom” that and we need “inter- national solidarity”. Not even a word of this has been offered.

The TGWU has participated in talks throughout the UK motor industry, in which “banking” arrangements have been almost always with the use of threats. This includes Vauxhall, typically every man that is in management, even, is saying that none of their UK plants are a safe — the future is always followed by a defensive. Car workers in the same union, Longbridge: lower pay, longer hours, less holiday than BMW’s German plants.

BMW are also using this situation to prepare attacks on their German workforce

Fight now to defend civil service jobs!

RIGHT WING “moderates” within the Civil service union, PCS, are wrong. New Labour is intent on salvaging the Civil Service rather than saving it.

A government bent on privatising the TCB and Labour will cer- tainly sacrifice civil servants to the speculators. The government’s reduction of the head of pay bargaining units we face, and the pay strategies it has designed for civil service negotiators, demon- strate that it seeks to further erode the trade union position.

In the merged union covering all civil service sections, it should be easier for co-operative pay cam- paigns and struggles against privati- sation, but the moderate National Executive Committee will not support such activity.

Left Unity, which controls many sections of the PCS, has promised to provide such a lead, but it has failed to deliver on this commit- ment.

Red action to the sell-outs of the majority of the Left Unity Execu- tive which included their support for the New Deal was the decision of Socialist Caucuses to electorally challenge them. This split is Left Unity in the Employment Service dominated proceedings at the recent Left Unity National Confer- ence.

The conference revealed the depth of crisis inside Left Unity, which is partly a reflection of the crisis inside the Socialist Party, the main force behind it.

The attendance was pitiful, and hardly any supporters of Broad Left, 84, one of the main components forming Left Unity, turned up. The Socialist Party and its allies did not, as expected, attempt to exclude Socialist Caucuses, probably realising they would spoil the deal of Left Unity.

No major campaigns were launched by the Conference, and without them, it will be difficult to heal divisions. The PCS conference offers the opportunity for a greater number of Left Unity supporters to discuss together the way forward in the union. An honest approach is needed to difficulties. At least that was the spirit of the debate on the ES Section at the LU Conference.

Whilst being critical of the Employment Service Executive, the Left Unity Benefits Agency Executive deservest some credit in the past year for their rejection of the pay level offered to their members.

The loss of the pay vote was mainly due to the interference of the moderate National Executive Committee, preventing them getting their messag- e across.

This example shows that Left Unity can work at Section level, and the necessity for it to work at a national level.

Even if the left cannot unite in the PCS, the PCS must begin to unite around a series of campaigns and struggles to stop Blair savaging the Civil Ser- vice.”
Why left must say no to Jenkins’ feeble PR fudge!

Neil Murray

The ONLY successful resistance to Blair’s centralisation at the recent election was coming from the arch reactionary Tory MPs in the House of Lords. At the time of writing they have blocked his European Parliament elections bill for the fifth time. This means it now needs to be re-introduced into the Queen’s speech on November 24.

Blair’s “closed list” system brought widespread dissent (but limited debate) in the Labour Party, where the ranking of candidates was according to a Blairite scale of loyalty. Voters would not have the right to vote for candidates of their choice, only for a Party list, and should reflect a real list of candidates.

The hypocrisy of the Liberal Democrats is shown by the fact that their peers are loyal voting for Blair’s proposal, despite it being against all they have argued for. Socialists and Socialists’ Outlook do not defend the House of Lords, least of all the hereditary peers. We are in favour not only of abolishing the House of Lords, but all the hereditary courts. We do not favour their replacement with friends of Tony Blair.

Jenkins’s fudge makes no attempt to reform PR, and those from the top up list. Of all the voting systems on offer, only a transferable Vote really offers anything approaching true proportionality for all parties which get above a basic quota of votes. Because this involves multi-member constituencies, there is no logical identification of an MP with a (relatively small) geographical area as for FPTP but this is a small price to pay for a fairer system.

The fudge which Jenkins has come up with seems based on the calculation of the Liberal Democrats would accept (given they have long campaigned for STV) and the most die-hards in the Labour leadership would accept. As with any such fudge, it has in fact satisfied nobody but those in the middle. The timetable for discussion of the Jenkins proposal is drawn out, probably in the hope of wearing down opposition. Labour Party conference won’t take a position until October 2000, with a referendum some time after that. It is unlikely a new system will come in before the next general election.

Activists should argue in the meantime that Jenkins is unacceptable, and STV should be adopted instead.

Blair hooks up with Paddy’s wagon

Both Jenkins and Blair are well known for arguing the split between Labour and the Liberals at the turn of the century was a mistake which they want to rectify. Jenkins, having failed to break the Labour Party as a class party through forming the SDP, has to seek other means. Moving towards a system which might mean merger Lib-Lab coalitions on a permanent basis and ultimately merger is one way of doing so. But there is more than one way to skin a cat.

Paddy Ashdown has been sitting on a Cabinet committee for the last 18 months and the recent statement from him and Blair shows a deepening of their collaboration. While the content of the statement was fairly hol- low, its meandering and very clear co-operation and two fingers to those members of each party who value their independence.

Those who might have hoped that the new Prime Minister Prescott, was not even told in advance. The direction is clear; the two parties will stand against each other’s campaigns ‘where appropriate’.

Blair’s vote on the back of the defeats inflicted on the Labour movement by Thatcher, Blair continues to erode Labour movement democracy while building on Tory policies. Assisted in this by the willingness of all the major union leaders to absorb everything they throw at them, Blair hopes to see an organisational realignment to their party on his political realignment of British politics.

The right for class independence goes on whether or not Jenkins’ plan or any other form of PR is adopted.
There can be Life after Blair!

Celia Foote explains how and why the Leeds Independent Left Network was set up

IN THE run-up to the General Election of May 1997, it became apparent to a number of Labour Party members that all was not as it should be in the Party. In the main these were members on the receiving end of the internal oppression exercised by Party officials and a select cohort of 'insider' members.

In Leeds North-East Constituency, Labour Party this took the form of paid Party officials filling the postal vote in favour of the Blairite candidate in the Parliamentary Selection procedure, and in attempting to hijack the following Annual General Meeting. When this failed they suspended the constituency and six leading members of the CLP. Following a hearing at which all the allegations the activists were demonstrated to be untrue, national officials put through an entirely new case of false allegations. Hearings were held in secret, at which all six were found guilty. Four were expelled, one suspended, and one given the task of healing the rift in the constituency.

Public activities fuelled by a sense of outrage and initiative, and a far degree of bloody-mindedness, never die, they reform. In the European Parliament, two MEPs had refused to sign up to New Labour's 'party orthodoxy', Ken Coates and Hugh Kerr were given the treatment by the Mill-bank People's Platform who wondered how such manoeuvring men had ever been tolerated, and what passes for civilised society.

Keen to continue promoting their campaign against Blair in Britain, the two MEPs established the Independent Labour Network. At its inception they were at pains to express their regret at being unable to work within the Labour Party, and to make it clear that the Network was not a Party, but rather a forum for like-minded members of several political parties and groups who could discuss and promote socialist policies, politics and politicians.

Activists in Leeds North-East saw the similarities in the experiences of the two MEPs and themselves, and were interested in discovering whether other links might exist. One year before the General Election our concerns were more than confirmed and indeed exceeded. The Blair Government has been proved to be the true heir of Thatcherism.

It is this view which this document advances: the wasting of 'loser's' and 'predatory' unions, but one need only examine the balance sheet of one year of the New Labour government to find the evidence for this position. Not mentioned in any manifestos, but carried out with astonishing speed nonetheless, was Gordon Brown's new and unregulated control to the unsolicited financiers of the Bank of England.

The surprises continued with the removal of single-parent benefit, abolition of the right to free higher education, refusal to increase pensions in line with earnings, and extending the privatization of public services, be it under the guise of 'best value', the Private Finance Initiative, or Education Action Zones.

Prisons are privatized, Legal Aid effectively abolished, and local authorities still starved of funds. 'Ethical' government has seen the continuing sale of arms and 'crowd control' equipment to repressive regimes.

This is in sharp contrast to New Labour's behaviour towards Big Business. Corporation Tax has never been cut and the bright young things who helped get the Leader and his ministers where they wanted to have acquired lucrative, influential jobs. Conversely, there is no minimum wage for the starving cats, and the trade union movement is marginalized.

The 1998 Party Conference saw New Labour in all its glory with Party members being used as human advertising hoardings for supermarkets, and ministers and MPs encouraged to use their bodies to wealthy winers and diners.

A significant number of Labour Party members believe that Blair is doing to the country what he has done to the Party. Essentially this is to destroy all democratic structures in the organisation and replace them with centrally controlled, unaccountable methods.

And in whose interest does this take place? As the list above demonstrates, very few of the people who rely on benefits will find their lot improved. Neither will the ever-expanding band of low-paid and part-time workers. Those who work in the public sector will be included in Mr Blair's Brave New Labour World - and definitely not trade union members.

In the realisation that the Labour Party no longer holds out any hope to the unemployed, the low paid, and believers in accountable and democratic government, members in Leeds North-East contacted Ken Coates and Hugh Kerr. In June 1998, over fifty people attended the inaugural meeting of Leeds Independent Labour Network. Ken Coates spoke of his belief in a just and equitable society based on socialist principles.

The Labour Party, much as at any time in its history, threatened by the forces of the right-wing, in the interests of the rich and powerful. It was resolved to establish a Leeds group of the ILN. It will hold regular campaigns and planning meetings, public meetings and social events, produce a newsletter, set up a website, and begin to support a supporter drive.

Other groups have been set up in Hull and Doncaster and in other parts of the country. It is intended to establish a regional forum as a co-ordinating way for a national meeting of local members. Many representatives of the New Labour government have office written to the whole content of New Labour, local and national level.

Independent Labour Party identify with socialist aims. As the leaders of New Labour continue to remodel the Party to serve capitalist interests, there is inevitably going to be more internal conflict.

The Party machinery has been developed to prevent socialism from influencing anything important. Some will lose, others may well be removed, but this will not prevent those who believe in socialism from being politically active.

The aims of the ILN are to battle on all fronts in the cause of establishing a just and fair society based on the principles of socialism. There is a lively debate as to whether the Labour Party ever can be reclaimed, or are the structural changes irreversible?

What is needed at this time is a 'politics of inclusiveness' to enable all socialists inside and outside the Party to make a difference. Leeds ILN is committed to helping bring this about.

Celia Foote was expelled from the Labour Party earlier this year. She is a former chair of Leeds North-East CLP, and now chairs Leeds ILN.

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Progress on joint platform

SOCIALISTS in London have been meeting over the last few months to discuss the possibility of putting together a common platform and list for the European Elections.

These moves, if successful, could represent unparalleled cooperation between left current groups. Supporters of the Independent Labour Network, the Socialist Party, Socialists in the Labour Party, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, Socialist Democracy and Socialist Outlook have participated in these discussions.

It is not yet clear whether agreement will be reached on a common platform or whether all of the groups involved will support such a list. The impact of a possible return to First Past the Post if the government's red lines win the Lords is a further complication.

Similar discussions seem to be developing in other parts of Britain. Below we print the platform currently under discussion in London: We are standing in these elections to represent the demands and interests of working and jobless people.

We call upon the government and the Party that by its support for the priorities of profit, official Labour has deprived its supporters of political representation.

We support the struggles of the working class and all the oppressed in defence of our interests.

We for massive public expenditure to defend jobs and services.

We support the struggles of the working class.

To ensure jobs for all

■ For a 33 hour week without loss of pay

■ For a minimum wage of £6 per hour

■ For an end to the use of zero hour contracts for all

■ Fight all closures and redundancies

To save our services

■ Tax the rich and slash the arms budget to provide for public health care, education, child care, public transport and other public services.

Blair is doing to the country what he has done to the Party: destroying all democratic structures.

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To ensure jobs for all

■ For a 33 hour week without loss of pay

■ For a minimum wage of £6 per hour

■ For an end to the use of zero hour contracts for all

■ Fight all closures and redundancies

To save our services

■ Tax the rich and slash the arms budget to provide for public health care, education, child care, public transport and other public services.

■ Restore and increase benefits and pensions to guarantee a decent standard of living for all.

■ Free access to high-quality education and training for all.

■ Publicly-owned, integrated, well-funded, cheap public transport in London.

■ For a Europe that puts people before profits.

■ For the public ownership and democratic control of industry and finance.

■ For the immediate return to public ownership of privatized utilities.

We are opposed to all privatization - private profiteers should not control public services.

Companies threatening closure should be taken into public ownership.

Profiteers should not be allowed to cut jobs.

Social control of industry and agriculture to stop the destruction of our planet.

A democratic Europe to end discrimination

■ For an end to discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, nationality, religion, age, disability or sexuality.

■ End the racism and corruption of the Metropolitan Police.

■ For the right to asylum. Scrap all racist immigration controls.

■ For the unity of workers and jobless for a socialist Europe.

We are for a democratic and accountable people's Europe, based on socialist, environmentally and inclusive policies, against the Europe of the multinationals and the bankers.

We reject the destructive monetarist criteria for European Monetary Union, and oppose the Maastricht Treaty.

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We reject the destructive monetarist criteria for European Monetary Union, and oppose the Maastricht Treaty.

We are for a nuclear-free and peaceful Europe.

We are for a nuclear-free and peaceful Europe. NATO divides Europe and threatens our security.

Cancel Third World debt.
DEBATE: What really IS new about New Labour

MARTIN WICKS, convener of Socialist Perspectives, replies to NEIL MURRAY'S article in September's Socialist Outlook: "Not so New Labour senses its weakness".

COMRADE Murray seriously underestimates the changes which Blair has made in the Labour Party.

Neil says you can only describe Blair as a Tory or a Liberal if you believe that there was "a golden age of socialism in the Labour Party". This is incorrect.

You do not have to believe the LP was socialist -- it has never been such -- to come to the conclusion that Blair is a more Liberal than Labour. He really does believe in a rapprochement between social democracy and Liberalism.

That was the significance of his comment last year about the 'tragedy' of the split in the ranks of 'progressives' at the turn of the century (i.e. the break between the Liberals and the setting up of the Labour Party).

Blair's policies are firmly rooted in the legacy of Thatcherism. His policies are not just "more right wing" as comrade Murray insists, they are about a government which is carrying out a policy of privatisation, whether outright, or through PFI. His government is systematically dismantling all the post-war reforms that social democracy introduced.

To assert, therefore, that there are limited differences between Blair and his predecessors as Labour leader is a touch extraordinary! This understimation of the change is also reflected by his identification of 'social partnership' with class collaboration which has always dominated the Party.

'Social partnership' is not just a modern form of class collaboration. It is an outdated strategy which completely subordinates the unions to the interests of the working classes. Blair has placed the whole of his programme and the acceptance of the 'global market' as a positive development, and one which demands of working people to work in harmony with their employers in striving for success in global competition.

Social partnership, in its many variants, was based on the idea of compromise between Capital and Labour, though this did not exclude the exploited interest. But 'social partnership' accepts the ongoing productivity drive to make competitive industry.

Indeed, the White Paper, "Fairness and Security", urges the "challenge of creating a 'partnership' in which the 'duty' of employees to enter into a 'partnership' with their employers!"

Murray says that "the most significant factor in determining the right wing character of government policies is the low level of class struggle, meaning that there is very little pressure to do differently."

I don't know if Blair's (or Brown's) policies would not be different if the level of class struggle were not higher. In fact, they could pull back under the pressure of the class struggle, or that members of the leadership could force them to.

In my view this is false. New Labour reflects the political evolution of social democracy produced by the end of post-war economic growth and the changes known as 'globalisation'.

It was only the fact that the Labour Party was out of power for so long, which slowed its evolution in the same direction as the European and Australasian varieties, which in the 1980s introduced a series of counter-reforms and privatisations.

Blair and his coterie have accepted the ideology of globalisation which they view (ironically, given the current global crisis) as a progressive force. They have abandoned traditional social democratic views on progressive taxation, on redistribution etc.

It likewise seems false to imply that there would be any significant change in their policy. While it is possible for any politician to tack course under pressure, even the Iron Lady did this, it is illusory to imagine that this government would change course significantly.

Murray says that "the Labour Party's nature has not yet changed". However, you have to examine that 'nature' as a living thing rather than a wooden category: "bourgeois workers party". New Labour is moving in the direction of being transformed into 'a bourgeois party sweet and gentle'. They have swallowed the 'social partnership' whole.

The unions have accepted much of Blair's neo-liberal agenda. Most of them have swallowed 'social partnership' whole.

More and more Labour Councils are attacking trade unions and carrying out privatisations, including Council Housing, which you might think is the very essence of social democracy and what was known as 'municipal socialism'. Can anyone show me a Labour Council challenging the government in any way? I see no evidence.

These are not just "more right wing policies". They represent a fundamental political shift by social democracy: beginning the process of overturning the post-war reforms and the workers who have benefited from them.

The new Labour is not necessarily better for the workers. Therefore it is necessary to concentrate on assembling the forces for a new party rooted in building the broadest possible alliance of those resisting the government's actions.

We are facing a huge task which is not only a question of the new party rooted in building the broadest possible alliance of those resisting the government's actions.

However, we are facing a road to a new Left. This is a question of the new party rooted in building the broadest possible alliance of those resisting the government's actions.

We are facing a huge task which is not only a question of the new party rooted in building the broadest possible alliance of those resisting the government's actions.

The real significance of the evolution of the Labour Party is pappered over by Murray's analysis.

(1) Issue 11 of Socialist Perspectives reports on a Training course on class reps involving the Liverpool Labour Party, TGWU, as well as the Engineering Employers Federation, which are working together and re-evaluating your role to ensure you are in line with current regulations. (Copies available for 75p from S33 Wesley Avenue, Park North, Swindon SN3 2PF)
Fight now to stop Labour's anti-refugee Bill!

Mark Jansen
WEN the Tory government introduced its Asylum and Immigration Bill, there were mobilisations across the country. Even Labour Back Benchers opposed the draconian measures it included. Unfortunately, rather than scrapping the previous legislation, Labour is planning to build upon it and worsen the situation for asylum seekers.

The Tories withdrew benefit entitlements from those who did not claim asylum on entry into Britain. This was partially overturned when the Lords ruled that local authorities had a duty to provide the necessaries such as clothing food and housing to destitute people, under the National Assistance Act and the Children's Act.

But this shifted the financial burden onto already overstretched local authorities and away from central government.

The chaos left from this has meant that most local authorities pay food vouchers rather than cash, allowing asylum seekers only the meagre existence, the worst housing and totally dependent on such pitiful "handouts".

As well as creating a desperate situation, the fleeing persecution this has also led to the whipping up of racism in the press because asylum seekers have suddenly become more visible. No one could think that the number of asylum seekers has fallen in the last few years, but this in fact, is the case.

The new Labour government has been under pressure from local authorities to remove responsibility for asylum seekers to central government. They do propose to do this in the White Paper but in a way that goes further than the Tories dared.

They propose to withdraw benefits from all asylum seekers whether they apply straight away or not.

They further aim to have a central register that will instruct asylum seekers where they must live. For many who flee persecution, one of the few comforts is to have some contact with people and organisations that have an understanding of their situation.

Labour plans will end this by dispersing refugees throughout the country where they will be far more isolated.

The white paper increases integration and forces into concentration camps. By using air-line staff as an additional arm of immigration control the government can cut down on asylum seekers leaving Britain. People fleeing from repression are unable to get the documentation they need.

As a means of cutting down on applications this is probably the best way. How it fits in with Labour's supposed ethical foreign policy isn't quite clear.

The white paper proposes streamlining asylum applications so that the whole process of application and appeal will last no longer than six months. It is unlikely that the government could deal with all applications within this time limit, but the 'streamlining' that has been proposed is to streamline the rights of appeal.

From the initial application asylum seekers will be given just five days to prepare all documentation (correctly they are allowed a month). If an application is turned down there will be just one appeal, after which they can then be detained and deported. Such streamlining will only prevent asylum seekers presenting their cases adequately.

These proposals are both firmer and faster than current legislation. They can only be said to be fairer in the sense that all asylum seekers will be discriminated against equally.

Despite the fact these proposals have been in the public domain for some months there is as yet no campaign to oppose them. This shows how much more difficult it is to mobilise under a Labour government. Many people have illusions that the labour leadership is somehow working for a fairer society - despite the evidence to the contrary shown by this Bill and many other measures.

The National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns and the National Assembly Against Racism are organising a public meeting to launch a campaign. This must be widely supported throughout the labour movement.

No more racist murders!
Simon Deville
If anyone believes that the police incompetence and racism revealed by the Stephen Lawrence inquiry was an isolated incident, they need only to look at the way the police have investigated any number of similar killings.

Recently two separate killings, that of Lakhvinder (Ricky) Reel, 19, and Michael Menson, have shown police refusal to admit that any crime had even been committed.

Whist the police have been forced to backtrack in both cases to a degree, the evidence would suggest that the colonial police have learned nothing from Stephen Lawrence's death.

Justice for Ricky
On 20th October 1999, 19 year old Ricky Reel and his three friends were attacked and racially abused.

They fled, and Ricky was not seen again. When Ricky's mother went to report the incident to the police, they dismissed her claims and said that he'd probably just run off and think that he was over 18 they couldn't do anything about it.

Recently she could not get any response from the police, Ricky's mother went to see The Monitoring Group in Southall, who started to organise a search party to look for Ricky. It was only after this, on October 21, that the police set up a serious incident room to look into Ricky's disappearance.

Even though the police found Ricky's body in the Thames. Even after this, the police still refused to admit that any crime had been committed and claimed instead that he must have gone to relieve himself and fallen in the river.

An independent pathologist report suggested that Ricky had fallen in, after moving back wards and that the police version just didn't add up.

Even if the police were not convinced about Ricky being murdered, the fact that he and his friends were attacked previously means that at least investigated the possibility. Instead they waited a week before doing anything, and then just dismissed any suggestion that there was a crime involved. It is extremely unlikely that the police would have had such an attitude if Ricky was white.

The Monitoring Group have set up the Justice for Ricky Reel Campaign, to demand that the authori ties look into this death, and into the police failures. For further information contact Surush Grover on 0181 843 2333 or write to Justice for Reel, c/o SMG Unity, PO Box 304, Southall, Middlesex, UB2 SYR

Michael Menson inquest
In January 1997 Michael Menson was attacked by a gang of racists in Edmonton, North London, on fire.

He received massive burns and died in hospital two weeks later. Michael gave some details of the attack to his brother, who reported it to the police. The police refused to act on this, so loosing any evidence that there might have been at the scene of the attack. They also failed to take a statement from Michael.

The effect of Michael who had a history of mental illness, had set fire to himself.

After more than a year and a half campaigning, an inquest into his death reached a verdict of unlawful killing.

Campaigned like that into justice for Michael and his family have long struggled to get a public campaign and determination of the Lawrence family and their supporters. Socialists need to ensure their voices are heard.

The Court concluded that Zoorah had "no honour left to salvage" because she had been involved in sexual relationships, ignoring the fact that it was her status as a divorcée, instead of her religious status that had soured a Muslim woman who made her vulnerable to sexual and financial exploitation by a series of predatory men.

The Court has discriminated against Zoorah because she does not fit the category of the 'fragile housewife' and is therefore deemed to be undeserving of justice.

The Courts have been rather more willing to accept cultural and religious factors used by Asian men to excuse the killings of wives and daughters, on the basis that 'their' wives or daughters' behaviour transgresses cultural norms, even in such men hold the balance of power in the family and community.

Zoorah, and women like her, should not be punished twice - first by their oppressors and then by the law. Zoorah Shah urgently needs your help to end the injustices she has faced at the hands of her family, the community and the law.

For further details contact Free Zoorah Shah Campaign, c/o Southall Black Sisters, 52 Nor wood Road, Southall, Middlesex UB2 4DW Tel: 0181 571 9359

Full background to the case can be found at:
http://www.nicad. demon.co.uk/ne ws/301/zoora.html

Susan Moore
On 30th April 1998, Zoorah lost her appeal to overturn her conviction for the murder and attempted murder of Mohammed Azam on the grounds that she had insufficient responsibility.

Zoorah's sentence, given for the first time - was dismissed as being "not capable of belief", mainly because she had "originally lied to the police. In effect, she is now serving a life sentence for lying rather than for culpability for murder.

The Court denied Zoorah the right to put forward her defence - a defence not available to her at trial because she feared for the future well-being of her daughters and because she did not understand the nature of her own dimensions.

The judgement suggests that if you do not put forward one of the defences to murder at trial, you can never raise such a defence again unless there are exceptional circumstances. There is no indication as to what constitutes "exceptional circumstances", but it seems to restrict the definition of circumstances to the narrow condition of severe mental illness.

The Court denied Zoorah the right to appeal, let alone a fair trial, and usurped the function of the jury, since no jury has been allowed to hear evidence first presented at her appeal; her own testimony and contemporaneous medical records.

The Court suggested that Zoorah had "no honour left to salvage" because she had been involved in sexual relationships, ignoring the fact that it was her status as a divorcée, instead of her religious status that had soured a Muslim woman who made her vulnerable to sexual and financial exploitation by a series of predatory men.

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Zoorah Shah: Life in jail...for lying!
Why we were right to launch the Fourth International

On November 14, CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN was among the panel of veteran Trotskyists who spoke at the London rally organised by Socialist Outlook to celebrate 60 years of the Fourth International. Charlie is the last living participant from the FI's founding conference in Paris in 1938. Here he reproduces his speech to this year's FI Youth Congress.

Future issues of Socialist Outlook will reproduce some of the platform contributions from the London Rally.

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."

(Karl Marx: *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*)

In September 1938, I was privileged to attend the Founding Conference of the Fourth International as an observer from the Fourth International Organisa-
tion of South Africa. It was not accidental that the conference took place at that his-
torical moment. The beginning of the second world war was a year ahead, but its threat was looming over Europe.

The international labour move-
ment was in total disarray, its Stalinist and social democratic leaderships unable and unwilling to organise working class resis-
tance to the coming catastrophe. Far from resisting the war, they were, in fact, vigorously at work mobilising the masses for enthui-
siastic support of the war.

It was against this background that the thirty delegates met in Paris last September. It is often said that the founding confer-
ence took place in Switzerland.

This was for security reasons.

We had very real reasons to fear the activities of both the police of the bourgeois states and the secret agents of the Stalinist regime, the GPU. Rudolf Kle-
mann, the secretary of the organi-

zation committee was, in fact, ab-
ducted and assassinated on the eve of the conference.

The conference itself was pene-
trated by a GPU agent, known to us as Engels, who attended as the Russian delegate. His real name was Mark Zborowski, and he had wormed his way into the confidences of Trotsky's son, Sedov.

When I look back, I am appalled at the almost complete lack of security. Paris seemed to be swarming with members of the youth organisation of the American section. They were all aware that the conference was taking place, and were frequenting cafes with delegates.

It was in this atmosphere that the man who was to drive an ice pick into the brain of Leon Trot-
sky was planning his murder. He was, as Jason, a Belgian sports jour-
nalist, was able to enter a relationship with Sylvia Agerolf, one of the young American com-
rades who were in Paris simply to have a good time.

He was, of course, a GPU agent, a Spaniard, Ramon Mercader. I saw a great deal of him and he was, apparently, not at all interested in politics. He seemed to have plenty of money, which he spent freely.

The control of the leaderships of the Second and Third (Com-
munist) Internationals in those fateful months leading up to World War II, was even more craven than that of the Second Internationals.

All the important parties of the Second International - the Ger-

man, the French and the British Labour Party formed a "civil peace" with their respective capita-
l groups in the overall war actually broke out.

But, before hostilities began in August 1914, they at least made noises, deceiving the masses that they were trying to stop the threatening catastrophe. They met in Brussels, to discuss what could be done to mobilise the workers, half-learnedly, it is true, and completely without convic-
tion.

The Noskes and Eberts were waiting breathlessly to join their Communist in singing "Deutschland, Deutschland Uber Alles".

In Britain Henderson was waiting to join the War Cabinet.

But even these hypocrit-
ical gestures were missing in September 1938. There was no meeting of the Bureau of the Socialist International to discuss possible action. When British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, departed for his meeting with Hitler, Mussolini and Daladier to sign the Munich Agreement, the Labour leader, Major Clement Attlee, wished him "God speed."

The leadership of the Third International differed from that of the Second only in their more rabid patriotic zeal.

They called for an immediate peace of the Democrats against the Dictatorships.

In Britain, the Communist Party organised demonstrations condemning Chamberlain for not immediately declaring war.

But, in Ireland, the so-called Communists were calling on all good Irishmen to rally in defence of British democracy.

It is in these circumstances, with the complete absence of revolu-
tionary internationalist lead-

ership from the two existing Internationals - leaderships which had become, in fact, counter-revolutionary that Trotsky was called for a new Interna-
tional, the Fourth Interna-
tional.

Trotsky had already condemned the Comintern as dead in 1933 when the German Communist Party, the strongest section of the Third International, who had won 6 million votes in the last general elections, failed to organise any working class resistance to Hitler's seizure of power.

The Socialists, with the support of more than 12 million votes, like the CP surrendered to a United Front, they could have stopped Hitler. There would have been no war, no concentration camps, no holocaust.

The historic conditions of the day were 1366 for a new international, a new revolution-
ary general command for the workers and the oppressed people of the world. It was in these condi-
tions that, urged on by Trotsky, we launched the Fourth Interna-
tional.

Now, sixty years later, can we look back objectively, were we right? Or were people like Isaac Deutscher, who thought it was premature and that there were still possibilities to work inside the Comintern? These questions have returned to us throughout our history, and I will return to them later.

The main task of the Founding Conference was to adopt the pro-
gramme "The Death of the Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International", perhaps better known as the Moscow Programme.

Trotsky, exiled in Mexico, was unable to attend the Founding Conference, but in the Spring of 1938, he prepared the draft of the Transitional Programme, which was discussed in all sections of the International Communist League, the forerunner of the FI.

He considered its adoption the "most critical conquest" of the revolu-
tionary movement since Lenin's time, perhaps a rather exag-
gerated claim, but its importance must not be underestimated.

The significance of the Transi-
tional Programme must not be judged by a pedantic study of its texts.

Many of its demands are no longer relevant but this is also true, of course, of the last section of the Communist Manifesto. It is in no way diminishing its historical importance. Those who come fresh to the document will probably be surprised by its fresh and modern much of it still is.

The高潮 of the conference was the thor-
ough and rounded analysis of the period in which it was launched.

It presented to the international working class, to the peasants, the poor and oppressed in the colo-
nial countries and to the revolu-
tionary of Bolshevism fighting the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, a pro-
gramme for immediate action on all the pressing problem of life and struggle which confronted them.

It differed from previous pro-
grammes because of its transi-
tional approach. The programme of the Second International was divided into two parts, independ-
ently of one another.

The minimum programme "lim-
ted itself to reforms withinbour-
group society" and the maximum programme promised "socialism in the indefinite future".

There was no attempt to fix the mini-
um and the maximum pro-
grammes, socialism was men-
tioned only in passing at May Day rallies.

The same approach lay behind the Stalinist revisionist theory of a "two stage revolution": first the struggle for power, then "beyond" - on to socialism. The lat-
est example of this is South Africa.

The Transitional Programme takes the struggle from where it is, from the concrete consciousness of the working class today to the con-
quest of power and socialism. It lived up to the prescription laid down by the great man himself.

Our whole programme would be a miserable scrap of paper if it were not backed by the concrete struggle, and to serve us by virtue of its theory prac-
tised and not by its being shelved.

Our programme is the his-
torical foundation of the historical development of society from cap-
itism to socialism, then obvi-
ously it must formulate also the transitional phases of this develop-
ment.

"It must contain them in their fundamental features and there-
fore also be able to indicate the path of the proletariat in this age of socialism in every given moment." From this it follows that for the proletariat there cannot be, in general, a single moment when it would be compelled to leave its programme in the lurch, or in which it could be left in the lurch by its programme.

Rosa Luxemburg would have approved of Trotsky's Transitional Programme.

In Britain we now have the Labour Party in power with the biggest majority a government has ever enjoyed. In France we have a so-called Socialist gov-

ernment. With all these signs moving toward socialism, they are busy dismantling even the nation-
analised enterprises still exist and employment, even greater, enthusiasm than their right-wing predecessors in office. Cove even left large chunks of their own reformist principles in the lurch.

Capitalism in China and Vietnam is a reality, a breakneck speed in which the world has witnessed the workers’ state’s development. Can’t serve by its own consciousness in the evolution of socialism in the socialist world?

The government in Beijing is continuing to develop socialism and higher technology. It is more important to develop Taiwan, as Marx and Engels predicted in the Communist Manifesto, that the capitalists have not lifted the benefits of the socialist mass of the socialist world. The industrial and high-wage are still very much with us.

As so, today, we cannot, we cannot fail to understand the conditions for every one, not only in industrialization, but also in underdeveloped countries such as China and Africa. We are working towards the socialist revolution. The workers who made the October revolution had been physically annihilated. The work of the Stalinist and the socialist movements of the world were imperialist, fascist and war. While these remain dangers as long as capitalism lasts, a new socialist revolution would embrace the issues of women and policy and right the revolution.

We must demand the abolition of the international debts of the oppressed countries of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. Capital, in its mad rush for profit is fast destroying the earth’s resources, regardless of the danger that this entails.

The assassination of Trotsky was also a powerful blow to the leadership at that time was crucial and irreparable.

And, of course, in a period when the working class was in retreat, there were many in our ranks and on the periphery of our movement who could not sign up to this, who identified the reactions of the - the campaign of the October revolution.

We miss the same symptoms today, with the apparent triumph of the so-called free market, which has even been described as the end of history).

The assassination of Trotsky was also a powerful blow to the leadership at that time was crucial and irreparable.

The programme, the Transitional Programme, laid a line of action for the working class from these chains. We need to learn how to break free from these chains.

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Counting the cost of Arafat's surrender

TIKVA HÔNING-PARNASS, from the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem and editor of News from Within explains why the Oslo accords are in the interest of Israeli big business, American imperialism and the IMF and World Bank. In the light of the recent signing of the Wye accord, such detailed analyses could not be more timely. (This article is based on the presentation given at the Socialist Outlook event, Fighting Neo-Liberalism worldwide, held in London on November 15.)

THE SYSTEM of globalization requires that the political and military structure in the Middle East remains intact to ensure American imperialist control of oil resources as well as its free access to cheap labour and unlimited possibilities for investments. The Zionist State, since its establishment in 1948, has continued to defend and uphold the imperialist position. Furthermore, together with other non-Arab states from the region, Israel was assigned the role to defend the Arab reactionary regimes (ascribed by Naomi Chomsky as the "local facade") from any uprising by their exploited people.

The local bourgeoisie in the Arab States is an heterogeneous class which combines pre-capitalist elements and local foreign capital. This feudal-bourgeois class is not capable of existing outside the imperialist framework, and is consequently not capable of implementing the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

Historically, the Palestinian question has been a source of instability in the Middle East. The continued Palestinian dispossession by Zionism, coupled with their struggle for national rights has maintained a situation with a high potential for turning the Arab masses against imperialism and their exploitative regimes, and thereby raising Arab nationalism.

Hence imperialism's support of the Zionist colonialist movement's aspirations to establish an exclusive Jewish state in Palestine. This goal was achieved during the 1948 Partition War, in which majority of the Palestinians were expelled from the area designated for the Israeli state, and those who remained were dispossessed economically and politically, rendering them second-class citizens in the Zionist Jewish state.

In the 1967 War, which was aimed at destroying the Egyptian President Nasser's nationalist project, Israel completed what it had not been able to achieve in 1948, by declaring all of historic Palestine. Israel thus won the status of "strategic asset" for American imperialism.

The US accepted the Israeli Labour Party's "Alon Plan", which has been directly translated into the Oslo agreements. This plan, which is version of a apartheid solution, was rejected and contrary to international consensus in the agreements prior to the Gulf War.

The Intifada, the Palestinian popular uprising which began in 1987, was directed against both the policy of surrender of the PLO leadership (which despite its official declarations, in fact, accepted the US-Israeli plan) and of course the Israeli occupation. The Intifada demonstrated the permanent threat to the stability of the region, and furthermore confirmed to the imperial powers the need to implement the Alon Plan.

The Gulf War of 1991 consolidated US hegemony in the Middle East and continued the policy of enforcement of its plan. The aim of this new agreement was to put an end in the Palestinian aspirations of the Palestinian people, and to ensure the continuation of Israeli rule in the 1967 occupied territories, with the collaboration of Arafat's PLO leadership.

Arafat, who succeeded in subjugating the Intifada, was the only potential partner who was willing to integrate into the regional "Pax Americana" and to accept the Oslo agreement and its apartheid solution.

Heading the PLO, which led the national movement, enabled Arafat to commit himself to the humiliating surrender conditions of Oslo, with the temporary support and trust of the Palestinian masses. However, a large portion of the leadership in the PLO as well as its institutions opposed Oslo from the beginning.

The PLO, which officially recognized the Zionist racist state, founded on the dispossession and expulsion of the Palestinian people - and has thus practically accepted the 1948 Partition and even the Nakba.

Israel, in turn, recognized the PLO, but as an organisation which did not represent the entire Palestinian people. Therefore, the Oslo agreements easily avoided recognising the right of return of the 1948 refugees. Moreover, the PLO has renounced the national struggle by accepting its definition of the national struggle as purely "terrortistic", and has promised to forgo it.

The PLO in fact gave legitimacy to an additional partition of historic Palestine by agreeing to Israel's pretensions to ownership rights on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which have now become "disputed territories." The Israeli withdrawal from these territories has become a matter of give and take in the future final settlement negotiations - which of course will be determined by Israel and the US alone.

However, the territories which are to be included in the Palestinian self-rule areas will only have limited sovereignty, and symbols of statehood can indeed may be granted to them. However, control of borders, foreign relations, security, and natural resources will all remain under Israeli control.

What is perhaps more important is that the territories under Palestinian rule are not at all contiguous. Instead, they consist of scores of tiny, isolated, enclaves, disconnected by the Israeli settlements and military checkpoints.

The bigger enclaves, which include Gaza, the northern West Bank, the southern West Bank, and Greater Jerusalem are also completely separated from each other. These enclaves are the pieces which will finally be granted statehood, are presently being turned into a caricature of the South African Bantustans.

The Palestinian Authority's collaborative self-defense, whose backbone is the repressive and corrupt bourgeois machinery of the Diaspora, are already replacing some of the tasks of the Israeli army in keeping "internal order." In cooperation with the Israeli security forces and the American CIA, any struggle against Oslo and the Israeli occupation will be repressed.

The political and military framework which was delineated by the Oslo agreement in 1991, determined economic agreements, sponsored and controlled by the IMF and the World Bank. These agreements aimed to create a unified and "open" economic system in the Middle East which would strengthen the infrastructure of the Middle East.

The political agreements aim at "normalisation" and the lifting of the boycott on Israeli goods. This is a necessary condition for opening the Middle East markets and serves as the "bridge" for the economic agreements. An Arab spring is not yet in the Arab hinterland for Israel.

In the division of labour designated for the "new Middle East," Israel was to be a regional economic power, concentrating on high-tech industry and technical advance knowledge. The comprador and Palestinian-Jordanian bourgeoisie were designed to become active agents for this penetration, and to collaborate in the exploitation of cheap labour resources, without the security risks inherent in importing Arab labour to the Israeli territories proper.

Indeed it was Israeli big business which in fact led the "peace" process towards the Oslo agreements, as a necessary step towards privatization and integration into the globalization system.

American economist Lester Thurow charted the division of labour designed for the Middle East economic system. Under this economic path Israel ought to take: "Those not producing oil in the Middle East, are the Middle East's customers for the products and services for those who sell oil. Israel should bring technology, middle-waged workers, and organisation abilities to the table. But none of that can happen unless there is a significant point of military and military disputes between Israel and the Arab World are settled." ("Head to Head," pg 216-7.)

The PLO leadership, which signed the agreement is simply a conglomerate of the corrupted bourgeois apparatus of the Israeli imperialism and its collaborators. Arafat's PLO leadership, which is a representative of the Palestinian capitalist in the territories, had no special interests in a national market.

The Oslo agreement, which denies any real sovereignty for the Palestinians, has instead designed the framework for the Paris economic agreement to consolidate the status of defender of the 1967 occupied territories on the Israeli economy. The Palestinians will be denied control of their own borders and of their national currency, including the authority to impose their own customs duties, along with severe limitations on their independent economic and foreign relations.

The principle of the free movement of goods and individuals, which is supposed to be the raison d'être of the neo-liberalism, and which of course was adopted in the Paris economic agreement, has been implement eradically for the benefit of Israel alone. The newly-developed industrial parks
which will be opened to Israeli labour-intensive industries and to Israeli, European, and US investment, with no connection to the domestic Palestinian economy, nor its development agencies. Having total control over the Palestinian economy, Israel is able to reward its own self-policing partners by granting the Palestinian Authority the monopolies which manage the basic sectors of goods bought from Israeli companies.

Thus we are witness to the growth of a corrupted layer whose interest is to preserve the repressive and exploitative situation. This layer is here to satisfy the main concern of the IMF and US imperialism, namely stability. However it is ironic that the Oslo surrender agreement and the repressive role of Arafat eliminate any prospects of the very stability which is Oslo’s rationale.

The Labour party, in Israel, Labour and Likud, do not differ in their positive position toward neo-liberalism (as well as towards Oslo). Beginning in the late 1980s, the Labour party started privatizing the huge public sector by distributing public property to multinational corporations and wealthy businessmen.

During the past two decades, many of the assets of the Histadrut (the only trade union in Israel) were privatized as well. This was part of a policy aimed at destroying the only industry that could compete with Israel’s foreign labour force. The Histadrut, the union, in its struggle against the Jewish working class, reduced wages and making cuts in social welfare.

Thence when Netanjahu from the Likud came to power in 1996 he in his own government, an economy which replaced collective bargaining with capitalist labour with out unified trade unions, and social services which had been destroyed. More than 15% of labour power is foreign workers brought in by the Smith Act, the same as the Palestinians from the 1967 occupied territories.

Nor is there a stronger support among both Labour and Likud to continue with the division of the entire state economy. This is a natural desire in a settler society such as Israel, which is characterized by a strong and continuing division between the Zionist, colonialist ideology and policy on the one hand, and economic liberalism on the other hand.

The consensus around the Zionist ideology as well as the national and religious element of Jewish identity of the state and its citizens is almost total. This creates a strong bias towards social peace. Thus the new aspirations towards a national leadership are compromised by traditional Jewish nationalism, which by definition requires the maintenance of the status quo in the management of the economy.

It is therefore impossible that the liberalization of the Politi-cal economy will be completed within the Jewish sector to the same brutal and unholy bounds which exist in other places. On the other hand, this full mobilisation and commitment to Zionist ideology which incorporates certain social defence mechanisms, is one of the central reasons why the Palestinian, intentionally blocked the radicalisation of the Jewish working class.

One of the necessary conditions in the pre-state period for the successful establishment of the Zionist-colonialist project was its capability to prove that it could be an effective servant of imperialism in the Middle East (first from the British and later with the Americans). In turn, the Zionist project was therefore dependent upon the success of harnessing the Jewish proletariat in Palestine to support the aims of Zionism and imperialism in the region.

The Histadrut, and the Zionist "socialist" labour movement which headed it, was the main vehicle used to mobilise the workers to the tasks of colonisation as well as to pacify their exploitation by emerging capitalism.

The Histadrut and the labour movement did not come to Palestine to build a "socialist" society. They did not for example attack the concept of private property. But they did adopt a discourse of socialism (using their local version of "national socialism") for it served as an effective myth in mobilising the workers behind Zionism.

However, it was the Stalinist Palestinian Communist Party which gave legitimacy to the combination of colonialist politics and socialist language which characterises the Israel left.

The Communist Party accepted the imperialist partition of Palestine, and has presented the 1967 War as a national liberation and anti-imperialist war. The positions of the Communist Party has made it difficult to separate the youth and the proletarian vanguard from Zionism and made it easier to divide the working class according to nationality. The Arab-Palestinians who remained in their homeland after 1948 (when approximately 800,000 of them were expelled) became "Israelis". They were dispossessed of their lands and were transferred into the Yishuv, for whom the village served as only a place to sleep.

But the policies of all Israeli governments have prevented the Palestinians of all nationalities from working in major industries as for example energy and arms, due to their "security reasons." They have been completely marginalised.

"Left Zionism" was born distanced within the colonialist framework. Nationalists and racists saw themselves as revolutionaries and humanists, settled on the stolen lands of Palestinians, and sang the Internationale.

The "Zionist left", still continues to view Zionism as a national liberation movement and totally accepts its colonial nature. Both Left and Right agree in principle on all of the fundamental issues of Zionism: Jewish immigration, "security" and the building of an exclusive Jewish state, as well as the Oslo agreements as the just solution to the conflict. This is a "Left" which sees the American imperialism as "democratic, human, and just allies!"

The Palestinian Left is now paying for its terrible mistakes. Arafat sabotaged the Palestinian Intifada, and took all measures necessary to re-establish his hegemony over the national movement in Palestine, which had liberated itself from him during the first months of the popular uprising.

The struggle, in all of its various forms, had the potential to prevent the Oslo agreements. Instead these deals culminated in the defeat of the national struggle against the occupation and the legitimation of the Zionist colonialist state.

From this point on, every purification of Palestinian struggle is key to imperialist strategy for the entire region.

Afraf: his policy of Palestinian struggle is key to imperialist strategy for the entire region.

Nor in the past did these parties condemn the PLO leadership which has forsaken this task and accepted the Palestinian partition and the idea of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. The Palestinian Left never adopted a policy of class independence, and could not adopt a class programme which connected the social, democratic and national demands. In short they acted within the narrow confines of petit-bourgeois nationalism: they were certainly radically anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist, but never anti-capitalist.

Thus, in the post-Oslo era, we are witness to the completion of the imperialist partition policy: Palestinian and Israeli working classes whose leaderships are captive under their own national bourgeoisie ideologies and policies. This is an achievement much more significant for the multi-national corporations, the IMF, and the World Bank, since it is a necessary condition for the stability of their direct profits throughout the entire Middle East.
Fighting neo-Liberalism in Ontario

Julia Barnett

The neo-Liberal/Neo-Conservative agenda did not emerge overnight during the 1980s in the Canadian state. It began to take shape in the 1970s under the federal government of the Liberal Party. It was manifested in moves to deregulate the public service and slash the social welfare state in the form Canada had possessed since the period after World War Two.

In the 1980s Brian Mulroney's Tory federal government came to power and marked a major shift in the structure of Canadian business, which demanded a comprehensive attack on social welfare. The Tories' main accomplishment was the severe cutting of the federal transfer payments to the social programmes of the provinces.

The provinces, like local governments in Britain, are very dependent on payments from the centre to provide the services that they are responsible for. The Tories also paved the way for cuts to unemployment insurance eligibility and benefit levels, lower taxes, low interest loans and handouts to private corporations.

The result of this is that the federal government now finances almost all of the social welfare programmes in the provinces, a change which comprises ten provinces (of which one, Quebec, is a nation in its own right). The provinces are directly responsible for health care, education, welfare and labour relations. Mobilisations tend to take place on the provincial rather than the federal level.

In the 1980s the federal government looked to the provinces for the benefits of the neo-liberal offensive, but did not have control over all the provinces. The New Democrats (NDP), which is supported by most of the unions, had control in the two most industrialised provinces with the biggest populations and resources: British Columbia and Ontario.

The NDP held office in Ontario from 1990 to 1995. Their election in 1990 was a great surprise to everyone. The union leaderships in the province were completely unencumbered and encouraged a total analysis or debate about how to relate to the NDP in power. The same held true for most of the social movements, with the exception of the pro-choice movement which still demanded greater access to abortion facilities for poor women.

In order to understand the context in which we have been organising it is necessary to note that we have had the greatest number of demonstrations and mobilisations in Ontario in the last two years than probably North America has seen in decades.

Two years into its term, the Harris government imposed public sector rollbacks that even the federal Tories wouldn't have attempted.

They implemented a "Social Contract" including wage freezes and mandatory unpaid leaves of absence. They prepared the elimination of thousands of public sector jobs. This is now being carried through by a Conservative government in Ontario.

While the NDP was introducing some of the worst austerity measures for years in the province, the Liberals came back to office in 1995. The main industry is fishing.

Eligibility for unemployment benefits and welfare has been cut drastically, worsening the already precarious conditions of the poor. One example is that recently the City of Toronto, the largest and most industrial city in the whole Canadian state recently declared bankruptcy, a national disaster.

The reason for this is that because of these cuts there is no money to build new housing. The federal Liberals recently closed 12 hospitals in Toronto — and now the City has opened up one of these as a homeless shelter! On a federal level, none of these drastic cuts has led to mass radicalisation or a political shift to the left. The Liberals won on the platform of cutting the deficit, while the Conservatives and the right-wing populist Reform Party fought amongst themselves over tax cuts for the rich and law-and-order rhetoric. The NDP talked about job creation, but it's vote only rose from 7% to 11%.

After the defeat of the NDP in Ontario's last election, Conservative premier Mike Harris declared the goal of a zero deficit, 30% reduction in taxes, workfare and cuts in all social spending. The same programme had been declared in Alberta.

In the name of the "Common Sense Revolution", Ontario has its own New Gingrichification. In 3 years, Harris has been able to make cuts matching anything Thatcher and Reagan did in their whole period in power. The cuts were sharp, swift and brutal.

However there has been more opposition to this government than ever before. Mass mobilisation have taken place including students, welfare recipients, trades unionists and teachers. Protests and demonstrations followed Harris wherever he went in his first year in office. This has occurred with a divided union leadership, a fragmented and small organised left and, for the most part, single issue social movements. The Ontario Federation of Labour put out a call to protect the new labour laws calling for "Days of Action". Large numbers were involved, climaxing in 200,000 on one occasion in Toronto. In London, Ontario, 24,000 congregated in sub-zero temperatures.

These days of action were inspirational to many sectors and movements. For the first time in decades, labour and community-based organisations worked side-by-side. However the union leaderships failed to take advantage and call a province-wide general strike.

This stemmed from their political failure to mobilise against the architects of NAFTA or neo-liberalism, or to examine the real divisions between organised labour and the bosses. This failure was due in part to the 1980s model of business unionism; they followed and partly to their view that a NDP government was the pinnacle of their ambitions.

The Days of Action were always limited and defensive in character. They were not strongly supported by the majority of the union leadership. There was no real strategy to mobilise a united fightback. The leaders would rather wait 4 years to re-elect the NDP.

Elections will be taking place later this month in Quebec and Ontario. I strongly believe that those that have not mobilised against the neo-liberal offensive whatever at the rank and file union level or through social movements will reap benefits more.

In Quebec the nationalist Parti Quebecois (PQ) have also implemented austerity measures in power. The majority of the PQ's opposition is the Liberals — they are arguing for a 50% reduction in the provincial deficit.

In Ontario the Days of Action have been called off. The electoral strategy offered by the union leaders is to vote Liberal or NDP to get Harris out.

The teachers went on a 3-week illegal strike, with 98% support across the province. However they were sold out by their leaders and face 230 school closures, with 30 in Toronto. Many are disillusioned both with the union movement and their ability to beat the Tories out of office which failed to establish the basis for a long term strategy to mobilise the working people.

At the same time our organisation, the New Socialist Group, has been able to build a new branch in Regina, Saskatchewan, of all places. We have certainly made up of people under 25. Indeed 85 per cent of new memberships is under 25, coming out of mobilisations against the Harris government.

Many have been active on campuses, in anti-sweatshop campaigns fighting the government on questions of immigrants and refugees. This is symptomatic of the significant number of people who are not disillusioned but rather have turned to organise beyond the limits of the old official organisations.

Revolutionary socialists and activists have the opportunity to continue to build struggles in united fronts.

We can look for ways to bring a range of forces together to make an impact both within the union movement and the various social movements beyond the upcoming elections.
5 years of International Workers’ Aid to Bosnia
A balance sheet of solidarity

Mick Wood

What did the first Workers Aid for Kosovo convoy reach the town of Mitrovica in Kosovo earlier this autumn I got a tremendous buzz. There is now a campaign running internationally very well supported in Tuzla by the unions and the municipality, to run further convoys to the besieged town and refugees in Mitrovica. If anything demonstrates the achievements of IWA and the other groups involved running aid to the workers of Tuzla it is that the workers of Tuzla are now taking the initiative to help their colleagues in Kosovo.

In celebrating the 5th birthday of International Workers’ Aid (IWA), I want to attempt to draw a short balance sheet of the campaign. It is crucial to ask why our efforts in supporting the multi-ethnic forces in Bosnia attracted as little support as it did, and why the groups which did support this political line were so apathetic, ineffective and unable to collabo­rate. I want to do this.

This balance sheet is critical if we are to learn anything from this campaign and to deepen our understanding of internationalism.

If the war in Bosnia was a test for the left, most of it failed. Some assumed that they were duty-bound to take the opposite side to the Yanks, and therefore ended up as apologists for the ultra-nationalist Milosevic and Karadi­jic. Others had a sort of mirror image analysis where they felt our duty was to combat the American imperialist plots to support Serb nationalism, when at the same time the Yanks were dropping bombs on the Bosnian Serb Army.

Reality in the Bosnian War was not volunteering to be easily shoehorned into any simple imperialist v anti-imperialist or fascist v anti-fascist scenario. Much of the left did basically agree with the analysis and efforts of IWA, but basically sat on their hands and did little beyond make occasion literary interventions. It actually demanded a high level of co-operation, flexibility, trust and discipline to make IWA work.

The nature of our activities meant that there was a lot of resources - and comrades’ lives at stake – not just squabbling over what goes in the next leaflet or what slogan we have on the banner.

For many of the left, I believe, there was simply a lack of feeling that this was a principled way and having to take real responsibility for things. It’s a damned site easy to play with slogans such as “arm the Bosnian resistance” to try and kick the rolling-convoy had spare parts and diesel to drive four up to Tuzla ten every day.

The failure of the British left to work together in one campaign led to two, almost identical, campaigns, both driving essentially the same goods to the same bloody city.

I mean OK there were political differences, a few shrillbobs and different conceptions of democ­racy and how to organise, but if we can’t overcome these and behave sensibly, as Mr Martin Luther King succinctly put it, “If we can’t hang together as brothers, we will surely hang sepa­rately as fools.”

A little anecdote might help to illustrate the problem. I was in Swansea doing an IWA tour in February 1994 just before I left these lovely sides for ever.

I drove with Brendan Young up the valley to Tower colliery to a lobby meeting. First we visited the lodge treasurer and showed him the video, then we went to the lobby meeting, where we were very well received and a large donation was received. Unfortunately it got sent to Workers Aid for Bosnia by mistake! If Branch secretary Tyrone O’Sullivan could get confused, what about the average worker?

When the first IWA convoy got to Tuzla on November 7 1993 we brought about 18 tonnes of aid.
How Brenner’s stripped-down view of crisis leads to reformism or reaction.


Reviewed by Andy Kilmister

And value. Technological change, by increasing the volume of such plant and machinery used by each individual worker, tends to drive the overall profit rate down, because capitalists have to lay out more capital for each worker they are employing. This mechanism is seen to be at the root of the collapse of profitability at the onset of the downturn in the early 1970s. The second major account of the transition from boom to downturn is the ‘profit squeeze’ approach. This sees the crisis as being caused by worker militancy which raised wages and led to profits being cut back. The third approach is the ‘regulation’ approach, originating in Frankel. This views the crisis as being caused by the exhaustion of the ‘Fordist’ approach to economic regulation, based on high productivity due to assembly line production coupled with high levels of demand stemming from wage growth and from welfare state expenditure. The crisis of Fordism, it is argued, is rooted in a decline in the growth of productivity, which results in a decrease in the rate of profit by production and consumption.

Brenner dismisses the theory of the falling rate of profit quite quickly. He treats the other two approaches as ‘essentially similar’, in that both are based on seeing the crisis as being rooted in the productivity of capital – either over wages or over productivity. In contrast, he asserts, it is the ‘integralist’ type of crisis, that is the crisis of capitalism that is key to the downturn, and relations between capital and labour follow from the way this crisis development has taken place. If Brenner had managed to develop a distinctive and convincing account of the boom and downturn, which was superior to the available alternatives, then that would have been a major development. Unfortunately, his analysis is not as different from existing views as he maintains, and in many ways it is actually weaker. To see this we need to consider some things, Brenner’s method, his theory of economic crisis and his account of the development of crisis.

Brenner does not really use Marx’s concepts at all. He simply analyses of the crisis by the rate of profit namely the distribution of the capital and the ability of capitalists to raise prices. There is nothing in this analysis which would be strange to mainstream economists. That does not of course mean it is necessarily wrong. But it does raise questions about the validity of New Left Review that Brenner’s work provides the basis for a renewal of Marxism.

More seriously Brenner presents a view of crisis as being determined essentially by the variance of one factor – inter capitalist competition. ‘Understanding the crisis’ is argued, is rooted in a decline in the growth of productivity, which results in a decrease in the rate of profit by production and consumption.

Brenner’s account of the crisis is not as different from the ‘profit squeeze’ and ‘regulation’ approaches as he hopes. There is nothing in Brenner’s analysis which would be strange to mainstream economists. That does not of course mean it is necessarily wrong. But it does raise questions about the validity of his work. More seriously Brenner presents a view of crisis as being determined essentially by the variance of one factor – inter capitalist competition. ‘Understanding the crisis’ is argued, is rooted in a decline in the growth of productivity, which results in a decrease in the rate of profit by production and consumption.

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profitability worldwide. The difficulty of this account is that, again, exchange rate changes are redistributive. They can explain the transfer of wealth between different national capitals but not a generalised crisis across the capitalist world. For example, the fall of the dollar opened up two possibilities. First, by raising incomes in countries like Japan and Germany it could have opened up new markets for US goods. Secondly, by lowering the cost of raw materials (for example, if oil is priced in dollars) it could have boosted profitability in the countries and helped them compete in the US and other markets.

It could also, of course, have lowered costs for the increasing number of US multinationals producing abroad. It is not clear why such exchange rate changes should have led to generalised crisis.

Actually, Brenner’s analysis of the link between exchange rate changes and crisis is spelt out by implication on pages 28 and 29 of his book.

**The basic argument** is that some of the gains of higher exchange rates in Japan and Germany went, not to capitalists, but to workers. Wages did not fall in those countries to reflect the extra purchasing power of their money. This leads to an imbalance of payments and - as a result - a German and Japanese company becomes uncompetitive.

But this means that Brenner’s account is not as different from the “profit squeeze” and “devel- opment” approaches as he hopes. They emphasize workers’ militancy and see restraints on capitalists in raising prices as a secondary factor. Brenner sees these restraints as central and workers militancy as a secondary factor. But both work in the same framework.

Even if we accept that capitalist competition may have sparked off the downturn, it is still hard to explain why it has persisted for 25 years.

Brenner has two further arguments here. First, he argues that the explosion of debt in the capitalist world has hindered the restructuring of capital. But he fails to put forward any detailed analysis of the case why financial capitalists should have been able to enforce restructuring.

Secondly, he argues that nationalization, by creating between such competition and other key areas, for example class struggle and technological change, is simplistic and misleading.

Politically, however, the book is even more perceptive. The Marxist conclusion that can be drawn from Brenner’s work is a reformist one that the USA, EU and Japan should jointly agree to co-ordinate their production and share out markets more equitably. The worst thought is a reactionary one - that the problems in each individual country spring not from the nature of capital itself but from the producers living and working in other countries.

Sadly, Brenner’s account may well turn out to be an obstruction to the forging of the international working class solidarity, which is the only solution to the current economic turmoil.

**Analytically, despite individual insights, Brenner’s book fails to help us understand the long boom and the following downturn, and to explain the economic crisis. He is certainly right to say that inter-capitalist competition must be a part of any explanation of boom and bust. But this is hardly a new insight, and the links between growing over-competition and other key areas, for example class struggle and technological change, are simplistic and misleading.**

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Marxism Today, the long-defunct magazine that once did so much to reinforce the right-wing policies of “new realism” amongst trade union and Labour leaders, publishing “WRONG” they are Tony Blair, has clambered temporarily out of the grave to stage a bizarre posthumous protest. ALAN THORNHALL takes a look at the special one-off issue, and wonders whether its publishers should be prosecuted under the Trades Descriptions Act.

**The Crisis in the world economy, the turmoil in the stock exchanges and money markets, and the rightward march of the Blair government has riveted the cage of the long defunct Marxism Today magazine. A one-off November/December edition has been published under the editorship of Martin Jacques.**

The magazine provides a useful inter- vention into current debates around British and international politics and the neoliberal offensive, even for those like myself who reject most of its conclusions.

Its contributors include Eric Hobsbawm, Stuart Hall and Will Hurton and David Held. Although they have their different angles on the issue there is clearly a common thesis.

They present a useful demolition of Blair’s claim “third way”, pointing out that Blair actually represents is continuity with Thatcherite and Reagonian policies. He is carrying forward US IMF/World Bank style neoliberal policies at every level, from his acceptance of Tony spending limits to his drive for a “flexi- ble” labour market. He talks a long in large letters on the front cover across a photo of Blair himself. They rightly point out that recent events pose a big question mark over the perceived wisdom since the fall of the wall — that the free market works.

Blair, they say, is not only wrong for throwing himself behind the neoliberal agenda, but he has missed the boat.

He has backed neoliberalism — the deregulation of capital and the drive for super profits — when it is not only out of fashion, but is in profound crisis and is coming to an end.

They argue that neoliberalism is de facto responsible for the interna- tional financial crisis. International capi- tal they say will be (and already is) forced to recognise this and respond accordingly. If you are in a hole, stop digging! This is an interesting but con- troversial view, which is repeated in the latest edition of New Left Review, in an article by Robert Wade.

It is true that the victory of the US model of raw unregulated capitalism over the Japanese more regulated model and it release over the world as at the core of the current world eco- nomic crisis, including the Asian crisis and the Russian crisis. This is what makes the current crisis something new and not an old style cyclical crisis (although there are cyclical crises within it at the national level).

Whether they are able to stop digging, however, is another matter altogether.

Certainly the bourgeoisie is split on what to do worldwide. Japan, already in deep recession, is advocating both Keynesian solutions (the government is currently going away free shipping vouchers and urging people to spend them!) and re-regulation of the cur- rency markets.

Malathir in Malaysia has reintroduced controls again IMF advice. There are calls for an Asian Monetary Fund (AMF) as an alternative to the IMF and based more on the Japanese model.

Some of the so-called “thinking capitalists” like George Soros have called for some re-regulation since, he says, unregu- lated capitalism will tear the world apart. In Europe, new German Chancellor Schroeder and French Prime Minister Jospin are trying to loosen the Stability Criterias to give them more room for Keynesian manoeuvre within the Maastricht Treaty.

This is a major debate, but is it likely that the neoliberal offensive will be brought to an end by a return to regu- lation and/or Keynesian pump priming? I don’t think so.

International capital does not sit down and work out its problems in that way. Each section of capital (and individual capitalists) acts in their own interest — not in the best interests of capital as a whole — even if re-regulation and a return to Keynesianism was capable of solving the problem.

Clinton made clear during his recent visit to Japan that in the USA’s view the answer to Japanese recession is not watering down the neoliberal agenda but stepping it up.

The current crisis has its roots in the failure of Keynesianism and de-regula- tion going right back to the ending of the Bretton Woods settlement and the free floating of currencies in the early 1970s. It is unlikely that all this will be thrown overboard now, even given the scale of the problem.

The most likely answer from the USA, the IMF and the World Bank will be more neoliberal policies not less, despite the political consequences in countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and South Korea. There will be no AMF, and moves to reintroduce controls will be opposed.

Marxism Today not only advocates a regulated, Keynesian solution, but has plenty of suggestions as to exactly what these measures should be: they include state holding, maintaining welfare, the strengthening of international agencies and their “regulatory” role, tightening banking regulations, putting controls on capital and reducing the markets.

It is hard to see, however, what scope there is for such solutions given the decline in profits and over pro- duction which exists in the world economy.

The Japanese govern- ment has been unable to make any headway despite huge cash injec- tions into the economy. As far as regulation is concerned, the IMF and the World Bank are unlikely to be impressed.

Marxism Today’s one- off edition has made a contribution to an important debate but their central thesis is flawed. Capitalism is not a rational system that can simply plan its way out of a crisis. The neoliberal offensive is likely to be deepened rather than reversed. As far as Tony Blair is concerned, despite divisions amongst the bour- geoisie worldwide, he stands unflinch- ing with neoliberal agendas, and sees his task as ensuring that its writ runs though the European Union.

We are not told what Marxism Today proposes to do about that. It is a prob- lem for us, the living Marxists, not those whose journal is long dead.

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No, not the Marxism Today issue! No, not the Marxism Today issue! No, not the Marxism Today issue!
A look into the eye of the tiger

BEHIND the recent confidence-boosting headline figures of a recovery in share prices in New York and London, (due, we are told, to Dr Greenspan's 'molecule' cure for lowering US interest rates, the serious financial press live in fear.

They fear the growing financial crisis that has spread to a world excess in productive capacity – and the continued failure of Japan to stimulate its domestic economy and home market. DAVE PACKER looks at the Japanese economy, and asks why this key player in the unfolding world economic crisis has a trade surplus up 45 per cent and a government which is giving money away.

THE SERIOUS financial press in Britain is not fooled by the temporary recovery of share prices to their August levels and fresh talk about overcoming the crisis. The Economist has been warning for months that much of the agony of Asia will move in due course to the rest of the world's economy. However, it does not blame the problem on overproduction or excess capacity in Asia, which it considers "mainly bank". As a champion of free market economics, it argues against the idea that "capitalism has somehow fixed things so that the world's capacity to produce has outstripped its willingness to consume" (Nov 15 1997).

As a newspaper, money supply, magazine, its editors consider that the Japanese crisis is mainly due to "bank lending that is incompetent, reckless or downright corrupt." It writes about a "mountain of debt" that "is already an ugly sight, and there is worse to come."[1]

The Japanese banks are certainly mired in a crisis of bad, unrepayable loans, with increasing numbers of its borrowers defaulting. The government stated the truth when it refused to reveal the result of a government audit into the state of its biggest banks.

These banks are sitting on suspect loans of between $37 and Y14 trillion (about $400 billion). The bulk of the collateral is land, and as land prices are still spiralling downwards, the amount the banks can reasonably hope to recover is following likewise. The National Tax Administration Agency revealed that land prices in Japan have fallen for the sixth year in a row.

Already almost one of the country's nineteen largest banks are probably insolvent. Controversial rescue packages for the Long Term Credit Bank of Japan, and other big banks, pumping in huge amounts of new capital, are seen as "staves to save wider economic collapse."[2]

This has heightened social and political implications for the Japanese bourgeoisie! The social conflict involving "jobs for life" in Japan still has a powerful ideological and material attraction; the class struggle might be unleashed if unemployment was allowed to reach its "natural" level.

In August the Economist reckoned that at least 15 of the 19 construction firms listed on the first section of the Tokyo Stock Exchange are bankrupts in all but name, because of the value of their land holdings, bought at the height of the bubble, which is plummeted and loans guaranteed to subsidiaries and property developers have been lost.

Big general contractors and huge employers, such as Fujits, Kawasaki, Nippon Steel and others, all have suspect liabilities, and things have got worse. Costly rescue packages, which eat into reserves and push up government borrowing are seen as the only way to hold the line.

However, Japan's disastrous problems are not just due to an expansion of a debt, rather, this is a symptom. The underlying crisis is to be found in the so-called real economy, in the crisis of over-accumulation.

Gretchen Morgan, editor of the New York Times reported as early as June 1998, wrote that "inventories in Japan's warehouses had risen to 50", the amount piled up in the recession of 1991-2, a recession from which Japan never really recovered."[3] (Quoted by Socialist Action USA).

By August, Japan's Economic Planning Agency reported that seven of the country's ten regions were officially in a slump, and two others were stagnant. The agency also found in a survey, 4,500 big Japanese companies and said they plan to cut foreign direct investments in 1999 by 7% to Y1.2 trillion ($8.3 billion). At its meeting in February 1999, investments reached Y1.42 trillion. (Economist August 22). All these figures are being continually revised downwards.

The end of the Japanese miracle can be dated as far back as 1985 when the US responded to its disastrous trade deficit with Japan, by imposing the Plaza Accord. This forced the Japanese government to raise the value of the Yen against the dollar. By 1990, this had led to a 40% reflation of the Yen against the dollar. Although this failed to solve the American trade deficit, it did precipitate a rush of capital out of Japan into the South East Asian dollar zone, to the tune of $15 billion by 1990. This stimulated a flood of new speculative investment into the region, resulting in overaccumulation and a stock market bubble, which eventually broke in the summer of 1990.

Stock markets collapsed, and there was a huge round of major currency devaluations, as the speculative capital outflow. This had the effect of pushing the Japanese economy deeper into recession and stagnation. Its economy staggered along with an average growth rate of only 1% p.a. from 1992 to 1997, when Asia crashed.

Since 1993, in response to this developing crisis and in opposition to current neo-conservative thinking, the Japanese governments have embarked on the biggest neo-Keynesian reflautionary, pump-priming programme in the history of capitalism: seven huge government spending packages, with the latest package announced this month of $12 billion, bringing the total cost to an estimated $760 billion! A large amount of cash have gone to construction companies to re-equip the country's infrastrucure (described as 'roads to nowhere'). However, the government underestimated the effects of the earlier packages by attempting to claw back part of the huge cost by raising taxes on the market, by boosting its interest rate deficit. Although these massive stimuli have helped to lift productivity levels up and avoided a full scale slump for the time being, they have not succeeded at the pump-priming the economy, even when combined with near zero interest rates. The large stimulus spending will fall in production of 3%, with unemployment rising.

In an otherwise globalised economy the effects of the Japanese crisis, the second largest economy in the world, is far-reaching, with repercussions on the rest of the world. Its impact on Russia and Brazil has been widely discussed, but the crisis is also impacting in Europe and America too. As Japan's markets, its huge foreign investments are halted or withdrawn, resulting in a liquidation of closures around the world. Worse is to come. Even more serious, as Japanese banks start to experience increase, so prices fall and inter-imperialist competition intensifies.

Although trade in the South East Asian markets is down by nearly a third, the trade surplus with the rest of the world jumped in September by 45.6%! Japanese exports which had continued to rise, up 3.9% year on year while US exports to Japan fell 9.3%.

In 1996 Japan took 44% of all US exports and the US today been significantly reduced because of the shrinking Japanese home market. A large amount of where they now hope to stimulate spending by giving money away! The trade surplus will have serious knock-on effects on the US economy and Europe and could lead to calls for protectionism.

The Financial Times (Nov 8 1998) reported the threats made by William Cohen, US commerce secretary, who told a meeting of US and European business leaders that Japan's growing trade surplus with the US had already been a major source of instability, which could create political and economic problems for weaker industries whose exports were targeted by Japan.

US imports of hot-rolled steel from Japan had increased more than five times this year. But Daley's warning was directed against the European Union, which he said had to open its markets and take a greater share of Japanese steel. Asians are in no hurry to run the risk of a protectionist backlash in the USA.

"We will not let the dumping ground for troubled economies... Unless Europe does more, there could be a huge public outcry that is loud enough to rekindle the fires of protectionism," he said.

Both Daley and William Cohen British warned that they would rigorously investigate any dumping policies against unfair trading practices from other countries. In the name of the US economy, the Economist, more rigorous in its neo-liberal ideals, does not approve of export-pumping policies, or excessive rescue packages.

The Economist is right when it says the bubble will burst and that neo-Keynesian pump-priming will fail to stop the inevitable as the Japanese experiment is showing us. But the idea of a free-market, de-regulated, crisis-free capitalism, properly managed through controlling the money supply, is also a dream.

The world has been travelling down this road for nearly 20 years and the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

That it is the neo-liberal dogma peddled by the Economist, a crisis of overproduction and falling prices is maturing. In Asia there has been a serious overcapacity of probably more than 30%, especially in computers, electrical consumer goods and motor vehicles, but not just in these industries.

World capitalism is actually producing far more goods than can be absorbed by consumers with money to buy them. Only a massive destruction of productive capacity and even higher levels of mass unemployment over the next few years will create a new recovery – that is if the working class and its allies don’t act and stop this rotten system once and for all.

But now we should fight for a fair deal with the neo-Keynesians for a massive programme of state expenditure on public works projects. We should demand that Brown breaks with Tory neo-liberalism and take his lead from the spending proposals made by Gerhard Schröder, German minister Oskar Lafontaine. But for this can only be a first step.

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[1] The Socialist Outlook 
[2] The Socialist Outlook 
"The most expelled man in Australian politics"

Red Hot. The Life and Times of Nick Origglass, by Hall Greenland
Reviewed by Alan Thorneett
HALL GREENLAND'S excellent biography of Nick Origglass is a useful edition to the early history of the Trotskyist movement. Nick Origglass was a central leader of the Australian section of the Fourth international for 30 years - from the mid 1930s until the mid 1960s - when he was expelled as part of a minority opposing the reunification which formed the United Secretariat.

After that he remained an active and campaigning socialist, mostly in local government, until his death in May 1996 at the age of 88. He was politically active for a total of 60 years. His case, Greeneland states, is "the most expelled man in Australian political history". He explains that he was 'expelled' from the Communist Party in 1931, from the State Council of the Unemployed in 1939, from his union in 1946 and 1955 (the first time by the Communists and the second time by the anti-Communists), from the Labour Party in 1955 and 1968, from the IF in 1965, and even from the Leichardt Council in 1969. And this isn't counting the times the bosses tried to sack him.

It's an interesting point, but his vascular history is quite a bit more complicated, in fact quite diverse events - although some of them close, and echo his prickly and uncompromising character. Origglass, however, was first and foremost a fighter for the rights of the working class: that is what shaped his life, and that is what comes through in the book most clearly.

His first battle was a beer boycott, in 1929 in Mount Isa, a mining town in the hot and thirsty Australian interior, which began in October 1929 and ended 10 months later in August 1930. Town mass meetings remained, and eventually got, a reduction of the price of beer from two shillings to one shilling and threepence a pint.

He left Mt Isa in 1933 to work in Brisbane and Sydney where he worked with Trotskyists, and eventually joined the Workers Party of Australia - the Australian section of the Left Opposition.

In 1937 he moved to Balmain, the industrial district of Sydney, and two years later started work as a blacksmith in Mort's ship yards - where he was to play a major role as a key rank-and-file organiser for the next 10 years. This is the most fascinating part of the book. For me it was the most gripping reading since the battles he was involved in at the shipyards in Sydney during the 1940s are a remarkable parallel with the battles himself and his comrades fought in the Cowley car plans 30 years later. In Balmain they faced not only management and right-wing union leaders acting together, but the industrial role of the Communist Party. Many of the measures taken against them then would be painfully familiar to Cowley car workers in the 1970s: ballot rigging by the right-wing, de-recognition of elected left-wing union reps, the expulsion of left-wingers from the union, the banding of militant branches of the union, and key union positions held by renegade Trotskyists who had moved to the right.

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Mort's yard did not survive very long into the 1950s, but those which did survive - with all its problems - and the workers movement has been much stronger as a result.

The book is a short history of the Australian Trotskyist and contains a reading for those interested in the history of the movement.

It is available from $11.50 including P&P from W. Greenland, 11 Temple Fortune Lane, London NW1 7UB. Cheques to W. Greenland.
The politics of cruising

Very few people are ever likely to know the truth about why former Welsh Secretary Ron Davies was on Clapham Common one cold October evening.

Behind the press innuendo however lay the suggestion that the full story was too embarrassing to be made public. This was despite the fact that Davies is not accused of committing any crime – if anything he is a victim.

No one should be under pressure to resign from their job because they have had or have sought gay sex. While we did not support Ron Davies’ candidacy for Welsh Secretary, this is irrelevant to our stance on this question.

Below MARK FINDLAY looks at the politics of cruising:

What is cruising?

Even today probably the majority of gay men are unable to be open about their sexuality. They remain within the closet and resort to secret means to meet each other.

Cruising is one of the terms used to describe this activity when meetings happen in places such as parks. Other common meeting places include public toilets – this is known as "catting" (a public toilet is a "cat".) Sometimes men meet and go elsewhere for sex; but frequently it happens there and then in the bushes.

"Catting" and other attempts at anonymous sex used to be unknown amongst lesbians. This is hardly surprising given women’s social position in society, and the fact that women are conditioned to have a less active sexuality than men. It is interesting to note that in recent years the growth of more developed lesbian commercial network has led to some changes at this level – although still mainly within the confines of known lesbian venues.

Why do gay men cruise?

Well - in many parts of the country there is little else. "Legal" gay meeting places like pubs and clubs are not big cities and some seaside resorts. In countless parts of the countryside there is nothing except roadside lay-bys (another common location for meetings to take place) and "catting".

Gay pubs and clubs are also expensive - drink prices are higher than in most "straight" bars, closing them off to many on the dole or low paid jobs. Such venues are also closed to anyone "illegally" young - under 18 in any case, even today gay bars that do exist outside big cities are prone to being raided.

However, this doesn’t explain the popularity of places like Hampstead Heath - and, let’s face it, Clapham Common, even though London is full of legal gay venues. Part of the reason is the prevalence of homophobia and harassment that makes it difficult for people to be open about their sexuality – "to come out".

Many apparently "family" men are in fact bisexual. They may resort to the anonymity of cruising to avoid exposure and rejection by family life and contact with their children that would result. Exposure may mean the sack and/or concentrated homophobia from work colleagues and exes/wife friends, particularly in small towns where "everyone knows everyone else".

But let’s face it, many gay men do it precisely for the immediacy, thrill and excitement of it. In one sense gay men are acting out stereotypes of male sexuality - in a situation of greater equality than is the case when heterosexual men act in a similar way in relation to women.

What does the law say?

All forms of cruising are thoroughly illegal. Sex in public places is proscribed as a "Gross Indecency" under the Sexual Offences act of 1956, which was definitely not repealed by the 1967 Sexual Offences Act which is generally assumed to have decriminalised homosexuality. In fact the Act only made sex between men lawful in some very specific situations.

The 1956 act provides that it is unlawful for a man persistently to solicit or importune another man in a public place for immoral purposes. In addition there are many more laws - and local bylaws - that make it illegal to cruise or catting.

"Acceptable" and "unacceptable" activity

What does this say about the attitudes of society to gay men?

We are "OK" if we have steady lovers - but a non-monogamous gay man is still regarded with suspicion. It is much easier to come out if one has a regular partner. This makes me an "acceptable", "good", "well behaved" gay man. Men not in this situation are regarded as "dangerous", or "pederasts" if they go out and search for partners in public.

The difference in attitude to 'promiscuity' amongst gay and heterosexual men is very stark. For 'straight' men, whether or not they are already in a relationship, multiple sexual encounters are seen as a sign of masculinity, as something to be proud of. For gay men the reverse is the case.

There are interesting parallels to the way women's behaviour is judged - they may well be regarded as "symptomatized" if they go out and seek male partners.

Gay men and lesbians are to be kept away from children. Even those in steady relationships are not thought suitable as adopters or foster parents - and even lesbians are likely to lose custody of their children if their sexuality is known. The old legend of homosexuality equating to paedophilia dies hard, and the fact that most sexual abuse of children is committed by heterosexual men within the family is ignored.

What is the response of the police?

Police raids on cruising areas are frequent. This may involve entrapment, where plain clothes "pretty" police pose as gay men waiting for sex (this is particularly the case around public toilets). It may involve the use of police cars charging around trapping men in their headlamps, use of dogs, etc.

Police policy has changed somewhat, however. A "gay police" society has been formed, there are "community liaison offices", there is increasing recognition of homophobia, and in a number of major cities gay police groups have regular liaison meetings with the police.

Arrests and harassment of men found in public areas continues, especially in smaller towns and cities. Queer-bashers who harass, maim and murder gay men in cruising areas are rarely prosecuted.

The attitude of the government towards gay sex "crimes" appears not to have changed either. In the recent "Bolton Seven" case, which saw seven men arrested for consensual sex, the prosecutions were sanctioned by Jack Straw.

Why it shouldn't be illegal

We are against all discrimination against gay men. The hounding of gay men who meet each other in public is a gross breach of their human rights. We are opposed to the criminalisation of any consensual acts – of "criminally about victims".

A complete ending of any legal justification for harassment of gay men is required. We are in favour of active anti-discrimination legislation and equal rights for lesbians and gay men.

Even in countries where more legal progress has been made such as the Netherlands, lesbians and gay men do not have the same rights to recognition of relationships and child care.

The heterosexual family is still a cornerstone of capitalist society, and the law in Britain, as Jack Straw's recent pronouncements bear witness.

The threat to this from lesbian and gay sexuality is real, and can be borne out by the hysterical reaction of the press. Gay and lesbian literature therefore has a revolutionary content.

A socialist society would abolish all discriminatory laws and substitude social rules based on consent. We are committed to fighting for a view of lesbian and gay sexuality as completely good and normal.

The role of the Blair government

A good start was made, with promises to equalise the age of consent and abolish Section 28 in the manifesto. But we have now seen the following:

- Failure to face down the Lords over the age of consent (although there are promises of separate legislation soon).
- Legislation banning relationship between workers and young people in schools, social work etc considered together with debates on the age of consent.
- While we accept there is a real issue here, the linking of the two issues tends to strengthen the gay sex equals paedophilia argument of the reactionaries.
- Abolition of Section 28 put on the back burner.

- No mention of repealing the 1956 act or the "protection clauses of the 1967 Act.
- Jack Straw's and Tony Blair's recent statements favouring marriage in bringing together the heterosexual family.

These alone should point out that the Blair government is to say the least not as "advanced" as some in the gay community think.

What we call for:

We argue for:
- Equalisation of the age of consent as a step to moving to consent to use the only criterion governing whether a sexual act is legal.
- All discriminatory laws, and clauses in other laws, to be repealed, notably the "Gross indecency," "importuning," "soliciting" provisions in the 1956 acts, and the "in private" provisions of the 1967 act.
- Removing all by-laws that can or are used to control use of parks etc by gay men.
- Repeal of other legislation used to harass lesbians and gay men such as "breach of the peace" provisions.
- Repeal of Section 28.
- Repeal of all legislation that discriminates over child care.
- Full anti-discrimination provisions; constitutional rights.
- Full recognition of all relationships, with the right to register any relationship with no waiting periods etc.
- No specific favouring of "marriage" for inheritance and child care purposes.
- The removal of the right of priests and other religious figures to refuse marriage.
- Specifically outlawing homophobic acts.

In the politics of cruising we demand full equality for all gay men, and the unconditional repeal of all discriminatory sexual legislation.
Back to the future?

I APPLAUD those of you who showed courage and foresight in organising the 60 Years of the Fourth International event at the weekend.

Placing such a grouping of veterans of the revolutionary movement on the same platform to discuss their experiences of building the movement in the 1930s was bound to make sparks fly, although I think that had Ted Grant been in attendance, it would have looked more flames still.

The presence of a latter day Lambertson, John Archer, and his entourage, a dissident Morenista, Bill Hunter, a veteran USC supporter, Charlie van Gelderen, and a veteran renegade "irrelevant revolutionary", Harry Ranier, provided positions for bringing all the old arguments from the 1930s back to the surface. Had Ted Grant accepted his invite, the battles would have raged.

It seems that there is a new spirit of rapprochement in the air - to mix a metaphor or three - with all the veterans commemorating 60 years together.

What is needed now is some way of progressing as a single united revolutionary Trotskyist group composed of Socialist Outlook, Workers Action, the two wings of Militant, the Lambertist, the Morenista and the Bob Archer/Dot Condis dissension is unlikely to say the least.

I would like to suggest the following:

1) The speeches should be made available to the socialist movement in the form of a pamphlet as soon as possible, together with an impartial introduction.

2) Some type of Trotskyist Study Centre or Institute/archive where leftist souls could come and research the ancient texts etc should be set up. This would be non-profit making and open to all. Problems to be tackled include where to put it and how to finance it. Perhaps a cafe/library could be included. It would be non-paranoid and not linked to any group. If the PTS in Argentina and CERMIH in France are viable, then we can do it too.

These are my suggestions for a first few steps forward, perhaps beginning with a meeting before Christmas convened by AlanThornton and those present on 14 November.

Yours for socialism,

Frank Walworth, Clapham

THE GROTESQUELY misnamed 'Campfieldhouse' in Kettlethorpe, just outside Oxford, is a five years old this month. It is a purpose-built prison for asylum seekers, run by a private security company, Group 4. It is, as full now, under a Labour Government, as it was under a Tory Government.

Some things, however, have changed. For most of its existence its most notable feature was that the asylum seekers detained in it were all black - reflecting the racist nature of the immigration controls of Britain and the EU. Now alongside the black faces there are 40 white ones. It is not that Britain no longer discriminates in its immigration policy. It does. But the 40 new faces are Kosovans, and the British government is not prepared to protect them against the repression ethnic cleansing to which they are being subjected.

After 5 years of consistent opposition to the Campfield detention centre the Close Campfield Campaign is calling a national demonstration on November 28 to mark its 5th anniversary. It should be given wide support.

Jeff Bridges, Oxford

Close Campfield!

We welcome readers' letters on any topic. Any letters over 400 words may be cut for space reasons.

Picket

Harmondsworth Detention Centre
THE CLOSE SO Down Harmondsworth Campaign are organising a Christmas picket of the Detention Centre, on December 12.

As Labour prepares to tighten the asylum laws even further, they are preparing to lock up even more asylum seekers who have committed no offence other than that of fleeing repression.

The Campaign is appealing for donations of funds and phone cards, to assist detainees in keeping in contact with friends, relatives and solicitors. Please bring them along to the picket or send cheques to 'Sough Trades Council', c/o SBS, 52 Norwood Road, Southall, Middlesex UB2, indicating whether cheques are intended as an affiliation or a donation to the campaign.

Oliver New, Southall

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WHAT'S ON

November

Thursday 26
BRINGHAM Socialist Outlook public lecture, 'Too many words! Too little power? How to write the world革命', 7.30p.m., The Church Club, 273 Preston Rd, Bury Park, St Albans

Saturday 28
CLOSE DOWN CAMPSFIELD! 5 Years Too Long: Demonstration of Action 10.00p.m., Longford Lane, Cambridgeshire

Saturday 26
OPEN LONDON 2000 meeting of the Socialist Campaign Groups. AGM 10.00a.m., Caerphilly Arms, London E7. The Socialist Campaign Groups join together to respond to the anti-censor laws. Speakers: Belinda McDonald MP, Bob Crow, Jan Claxton, Shirley Mair, Jemima, Bev Bevan, Andrew, Mandy, 12.00p.m., Newenden House, Kent. The Socialist Campaign Groups campaign against the anti-censor laws. Speakers: Belinda McDonald MP, Bob Crow, Jan Claxton, Shirley Mair, Jemima, Bev Bevan, Andrew, Mandy, 12.00p.m., Newenden House, Kent.

December

Tuesday 1
LONGSTABLE Left 'Preparatory for the General London Authority', 7.30p.m., Camden Town 5, House of Commons.

December 5
Socialist Outlook public meeting: "Longstanding Fight for the non-Aqueduct Hill" Speaker: Shridha Bhatia (Bhajana anti-Aqueduct campaign) 7.30p.m., Camden Town 5, Camden Town 5, Camden Town 5.

Saturday 5
NETWORK of Socialist Campaign Groups AGM. Speakers:include Ken Liveley, Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, Liz McDaid, and Christine Shawcroft 11.30a.m. 5p.m.

December 2
MORNING WORKSHOP: "The Greening of the Workplace: Summary" 10.00a.m., The Camden Town 5, Camden Town 5.

Saturday 7
NETWORK of Socialist Campaign Groups AGM. Speakers:include Ken Liveley, Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, Liz McDaid, and Christine Shawcroft 11.30a.m. 5p.m.

December 12
NETWORK of Socialist Campaign Groups AGM. Speakers:include Ken Liveley, Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, Liz McDaid, and Christine Shawcroft 11.30a.m. 5p.m.
No more private profits from public money!

Anger is growing across the country as the New Labour government indulges in an orgy of privatisation at the expense of public services.

- Hospital schemes to be funded under the Tory-inspired Private Finance Initiative will run up bills for 60 years into the next millennium, while slashing the numbers of beds available, often "centralising" services on remote greenfield sites, and stripping the NHS of some prime property assets.
- Schools, too, face asset-stripping and costly PFI schemes which hand control of new school buildings to private firms.
- Housing estates are being handed over by Labour and other councils to private, profit-hungry firms, which threaten to jack up rents, evict hard-pressed tenants, and sack council workers.
- Road schemes, too, are being turned into money-making ventures for city fat cats, whose profits are guaranteed. Privatised rail companies cream off billions in subsidies for the franchise holders, while working people face rising costs of travel and dwindling public transport services.

However the fightback has been gathering pace as the numbers of schemes proliferate.

UNISON has consistently campaigned against PFI, and TUC policy, too, is now opposed to Labour's approach.

There are signs of growing resistance at local level (see p4).

This is a fight we must win if growing amounts of public money are not to be funnelled directly into the pockets of Tony Blair's unsavoury business friends.