Labour tightens Tory racist laws

Throw out Straw's Asylum Bill!

Less than three years ago the Tories introduced the racist Asylum and Immigration Act, which aimed at curbing the numbers of people entering Britain to flee persecution and repression. Labour now intends to build upon the Tories' shameful record, by introducing legislation that will mean:

- Asylum seekers being sent to live wherever the immigration authorities choose,
- no asylum seekers will be entitled to benefits,
- strict limits on the right to appeal against decisions
- giving police and immigration authorities numerous new powers of arrest and surveillance
- those who are thrown into destitution will be forced to live on food vouchers.

The newly formed Coalition for Asylum and Immigration Rights (CAIR) have called a national demonstration to defend asylum and immigration rights and oppose this Bill.

The demonstration in London on 27 February must be used to start to build an ongoing campaign to get rid of all racist legislation.

Anti-racists must oppose this Bill and demand that Labour repeals the previous racist legislation, and guarantees equal rights for all, rather than creating a category of second or third class citizens who can be locked up indefinitely without committing any crime.
Motor industry bosses on war path

A Rover worker

The beginning of February sees the start of lay-offs at Rover's Cowley plant in Oxford. The two day week is part of the "banking hours" agreement that was voted through at the end of last year. Already its bitter fruits are evident: Longbridge was laid off at Christmas and Land Rover at Solihull has just announced that the same fate awaits its workers. The aim of the company is to engineer a situation where every worker has 200 hours, so that when they require it they can use that amount of overtime — unpaid of course.

In this way the company is already making big gains from this agreement. The previous agreement, superceded by the latest deal, would have meant the workers had to be paid lay-off without having to pay the hours back.

Meanwhile workers at Ford Dagenham are facing a three week shut down at Easter on top of the present four day week. Under their present agreement, they are paid. But the company has already indicated that they want a Rover-type agreement. Stewards are clear that they will oppose any attempt to introduce "banking hours".

The biggest danger is from the national officials of the union. These include Tony Woodley of TOWU who pushed through the Rover agreement, arguing that it was necessary in order to "save Longbridge".

In reality the future of the site is still in question, despite the agreement, as BMW has threatened to build the 200/400 replacement in Germany unless they get £300 million in government grants. Indeed there is much speculation about the whole future of Rover.

Both of the national union officials covering Ford are saying that it is necessary to do something to safeguard the long term future of Ford in Britain. This is the same language that was used both in Vauxhall and then Rover before the earlier "banking hours" agreements were brought in.

The only way to save the long term future of the motor industry is by uniting workers to fight the employers' offensive. By offering concessions, we lower standards, getting worker against worker.

So far, this view has once again been underlined by the fact that it is the employers who have grown in confidence since the banking hours deal at Rover, not the workers.

### Attacks on UNISON democracy continue

Fred Leplat

UNISON branches have now received a letter from the General Secretary about the 1999 conference.

"This regrets the relatively small number of branches submitting resolutions, and urges branches to submit some for this year in line with the union's 'priorities' — implying that they are determined by someone other than the union's sovereign body. The circular goes on to state that Conference should be a 'showcase'."

This circular is opening in a roundabout way a debate on the role of the Conference. Some NEC members and senior officials have complained about the expense of Conference and the allegedly limited accountability of delegates.

Some are raising again the view that UNISON should be member centered (and officiated) rather than "member led".

Even though last year's UNISON conference clearly voted to maintain the right of branches to campaign inside the union to change policies, this change is already under attack. Branches are now being advised that if they want to organise a meeting at which other branches are invited, they must now seek the agreement of the regions concerned.

Branches and stewards committee leaders who sponsored the call from the University College London Hospital branch to lobby the Labour Party conference for the Ninth World Peace service have been requested to submit details as to which body took the decision and of the money spent.

Branches were instructed not to attend a conference on Private Finance Initiative initiatives organised by the UCLH branch.

Five motions regarding UCLH submitted for the next London Regional Council have been ruled out of order because of UNISON's High Court appeal and internal disciplinary investigation.

Even though the NEC did not refer to either the appeal or the investigation.

### Sky Chef workers fight unfair sackings

Susan Moore

The 300 workers sacked by airline catering company Lufthansa at Sky Chefs are continuing their battle after being dismissed for taking unofficial industrial action. This is the real face of supposed Fairness at Work. It is being covered by the Labour government.

A mass meeting on January 7 resolved to step up the fight for support from the broader labour movement as well as pursuing a case for unfair dismissal.

Stewards are pleased that Bill Morris has regularly visited them on the picket line, but frustrated that all donations to the strike go into the T&GWU's coffers, while the strikers survive on a meanly £50 strike pay. This is obviously insufficient to live off — especially more than one person may be dependent on it — and also leaves the strikers no resources for publicity and campaigning.

Tom Devine of Sky Chefs is one of the world's biggest airline catering companies, supplying food to Air France, American Airlines, Cathay Pacific, Olympic Airlines and Iberia.

It is positive that a mass picket has been called for February 1 but the pressure needs to be stepped up to demand that T&GWU workers, whose organisation remains strong at Heathrow refuse to handle food produced by scabs. Whether the Sky Chefs support groups also be launched or also be launched on February 1, seemingly under the close eye of regional union officials will help in this direction remains to be seen.

### Get your copy!

**Get your copy!**

**INSIDE TOWLEY**

Alan Thompson's first account of trade union struggles in the car industry in the 1970s, with serious lessons for trade unionists today.

448 pages, illustrated. £11.95 plus £2 post and packing, from Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1100, London N4 2UU.

---

**2 SOCIALIST OUTLOOK**

**WHAT'S ON**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 5</td>
<td>MAUS Survey of the Department of Transport, the Environment, Brussels 10:30am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 19</td>
<td>SOCIALIST Chairman: &quot;[speech]&quot; and official opening of the Socialists'ovie Screen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 18</td>
<td>London Socialist Defence Meeting. Call on to London TUC and NEC to take action against cuts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 27</td>
<td>NATIONAL Demonstration to defend civil rights and against racism. Meet 12 noon at Finsbury Park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 21</td>
<td>BREXIT - World organised by the Socialist Network. Thelaunch of Civil Rights' big rally in support for the solidarity March of Britain's People's Rights in London. 12 noon. Meet 10am at Finsbury Park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 26</td>
<td>CNL INSIGHTS Congress London Town Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 10</td>
<td>MASC CHARITY: for a living wage. Reverse apartheid. Support an end to racial and gender violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 17</td>
<td>MASC BALI2 for Asia and Africa. &quot;AIDS 1999 — August 1999&quot;. No more violence! Call on the western powers to stop the destruction. Pass a petition 500p in a poster at the meeting. Meet 7pm Hackney United.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday 24</td>
<td>NATIONAL demonstration against racism, organised by the Black Youth 200th Anniversary Committee, Kampilan 30p, Sheffield Park, Sheffield.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 29</td>
<td>CNL INSIGHTS Congress London Town Hall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Note:** Ford and other bosses want to copy the BMW deal...
A formula for even more unfairness

EDITORIAL

Morris, for example, that this is the beginning not the end—despite the fact that Tony Blair has made it clear that there will be no further legislation on this subject. The CBI are apparently complaining—so the Bill must be a good thing, musn’t it? Such a knee jerk reaction tells us more about how much the employers have come to expect from New Labour than about the fact of the proposals.

The proposals for “family friendly” policies may be in line with the European Convention on human rights, as Stephen Rivers tells us, but they will be of no use to low and even middle income households, because the extra leave entitlements are unpaid.

There is a whole raft of data to demonstrate that existing provision is not used because people can’t afford it. Christine Gowridge, director of the Maternity Alliance, which is leading the parental leave campaign has said that most new mothers already opt to return to work rather than exercise their existing right to take more time off with age.

On trade union rights as such, the Bill’s provisions are toothless.

The clause which has had most exposure is the so-called “automatic” recognition of trade unions—if more than half the workers in a bargaining unit are union members, the employer must recognize the trade union. However what has received much less publicity is that the Central Arbitrations Committee (CAC) may decide, at its sole discretion, to reject any ballot anyway if it decides that such would be “in the interests of good industrial relations”, or if they have evidence that significant numbers of union members do not wish the union to represent them for collective bargaining purposes.

The CAC will be appointed by the Secretary of State, and while the legislation sets out that in each of its panels, must include representatives both of employers’ and employees’ interests, experience of such bi-partite bodies like Employment Tribunals does not give much confidence.

Recognition will not be enforced, much less serious negotiations. But even if it were, it is not in these terms of the Bill’s provisions alone that serious trade union rights rests.

As Greg Tucker, candidate for RMT General Secretary said: “When it comes down to it, what is offered in this legislation is pretty meaningless. All labour movement history demonstrates that it is only through strong collective action that trade unions can win victories against employers, who are driven by the relentless search for profit.”

That is why Socialist Action took strong action with the Reclaim Our Rights campaign and the call to make May Day 1999 a real workers’ day by building a mass demonstration to demand our rights.

On trade union rights as such, the Bill’s provisions are toothless.

We must fight on, demanding the repeal of all anti-trade union laws not touched by this Bill.

The early hopes of pro-reform forces have been dashed as collective action that trade unions can win victories against employers, who are driven by the relentless search for profit.”

That is why Socialist Action took strong action with the Reclaim Our Rights campaign and the call to make May Day 1999 a real workers’ day by building a mass demonstration to demand our rights.

After Mandelson, Ashdown goes:
clear out all the coalitionists!

Tony Blair seems to have been one of the first to know Paddy Ashdown’s retirement plans—before the rest of the Liberal Democrats. This is a sign within this parliament that Ashdown’s priorities are changing. There has been much press speculation about who will succeed him. Blair is said to have stated his preference, learning nothing from his failed attempt to influence last year’s Labour NEC elections.

In a Liberal Democrat Party not entirely convinced of Asdown’s policy of co-operation, any intervention by Blair is bound to produce a backlash. The debate about contenders for the succession has not been surprisingly focused on their attitude to the project. It seems to be the most hostile, like Simon Hughes, have tempered this. Maybe the opportunity of a seat at the cabinet table has changed some minds.

The Blair-Ashdown co-operation did not go down too well with other parliamentary parties. Ashdown had a hard time winning over his party over their joint statement last year, and Blair recently had to give an undertaking to the Parliamentary Labour Party that there would be no extension of co-operation without consultation with senior Labour figures. Beyond parliament the hostility is clear.

With Mandelson temporarily out of the picture (although no doubt advising behind the scenes), Blair has lost his most vociferous advocate of greater co-operation. The eventual merger with the Liberal Democrats.

Ashdown was apparently lined up for a Cabinet place before the General election. This only shows how indefensible (not to the Labour Party) in the light of the scale of Labour’s victory. Instead he was given a seat on a Cabinet committee on electoral reform, since extended to cover defence and other matters. Blair has obviously been hoping to gradually draw the Liberal democracy so far from government that they would barely be a parliamentary opposition, be part of a formal coalition after the next election and eventually be subsumed into “New Labour” (or whatever else it would be called), to keep it (and Blair) in power for many years to come. Whether that strategy unravels with the departure of Mandelson and Ashdown (and the hostility of much of the Labour Party to the Jenkins proposal on voting reform, essential to keeping the Liberal democrats sweet) remains to be seen.

There is another strand to Blair’s love of the Liberal Democrats. As the exposure of Derek Draper and the power of the lobbyists became known, and Paul Foot has continued to expose in Private Eye, Liberal Democrats and ex SDPers have immense say in government. This goes well beyond the large number of them working for Westminster lobby firms who have the ear of government to those working in government policy units.

Former SDP and Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidates advise Blair on economics, Europe, defence and education. This is of course in addition to the Liberal Democrats, SDPers, businessmen and now even Tories who have been appointed to countless posts by Blair.

While Blair has been working to draw the Liberal Democrats overtly into government, the policy advisors have been working with Blair to ensure the government follows the neo-liberal path, whatever the muted objections of the likes of Prescott.

Socialists should use the demise of Mandelson and the pending departure of Ashdown not only to campaign for the end of the informal coalition at leadership and Cabinet level, but also for the ejection of those still working to keep alive the SDP project of turn- ing the Labour Party into an out-and-out capitalist party.

Tony Blair seems to have been one of the first to know Paddy Ashdown’s retirement plans—before the rest of the Liberal Democrats. This is a sign within this parliament that Ashdown’s priorities are changing. There has been much press speculation about who will succeed him. Blair is said to have stated his preference, learning nothing from his failed attempt to influence last year’s Labour NEC elections.

In a Liberal Democrat Party not entirely convinced of Asdown’s policy of co-operation, any intervention by Blair is bound to produce a backlash. The debate about contenders for the succession has not been surprisingly focused on their attitude to the project. It seems to be the most hostile, like Simon Hughes, have tempered this. Maybe the opportunity of a seat at the cabinet table has changed some minds.

The Blair-Ashdown co-operation did not go down too well with other parliamentary parties. Ashdown had a hard time winning over his party over their joint statement last year, and Blair recently had to give an undertaking to the Parliamentary Labour Party that there would be no extension of co-operation without consultation with senior Labour figures. Beyond parliament the hostility is clear.

With Mandelson temporarily out of the picture (although no doubt advising behind the scenes), Blair has lost his most vociferous advocate of greater co-operation. The eventual merger with the Liberal Democrats.

Ashdown was apparently lined up for a Cabinet place before the General election. This only shows how indefensible (not to the Labour Party) in the light of the scale of Labour’s victory. Instead he was given a seat on a Cabinet committee on electoral reform, since extended to cover defence and other matters. Blair has obviously been hoping to gradually draw the Liberal democracy so far from government that they would barely be a parliamentary opposition, be part of a formal coalition after the next election and eventually be subsumed into “New Labour” (or whatever else it would be called), to keep it (and Blair) in power for many years to come. Whether that strategy unravels with the departure of Mandelson and Ashdown (and the hostility of much of the Labour Party to the Jenkins proposal on voting reform, essential to keeping the Liberal democrats sweet) remains to be seen.

There is another strand to Blair’s love of the Liberal Democrats. As the exposure of Derek Draper and the power of the lobbyists became known, and Paul Foot has continued to expose in Private Eye, Liberal Democrats and ex SDPers have immense say in government. This goes well beyond the large number of them working for Westminster lobby firms who have the ear of government to those working in government policy units.

Former SDP and Liberal Demo- crat parliamentary candidates advise Blair on economics, Europe, defence and education. This is of course in addition to the Liberal Democrats, SDPers, businessmen and now even Tories who have been appointed to countless posts by Blair.

While Blair has been working to draw the Liberal Democrats overtly into government, the policy advisors have been working with Blair to ensure the government follows the neo-liberal path, whatever the muted objections of the likes of Prescott.

Socialists should use the demise of Mandelson and the pending departure of Ashdown not only to campaign for the end of the informal coalition at leadership and Cabinet level, but also for the ejection of those still working to keep alive the SDP project of turn- ing the Labour Party into an out-and-out capitalist party.
**SPECIAL OUTLOOK**

**Tube workers vote to resume action**

Neil Murray

RMT members on London Underground have voted by over 5 to 1 for further strike action over the effects of privatisation. The ballot result, announced on Friday 29 January, showed 2,489 for strike action, 436 against and 3 spoiled papers.

John Leach, RMT executive member for London Underground, told Socialist Outlook, "This is a better result than previously, and although it was a relatively low turnout of 49%, this was about the highest of the four held over a short period of 3 weeks in order to have the option of 3 days action of the first handover of tube workers to a private company on February 14.

"Although no date is yet set for action, there is a mass consultation meeting set for Wednesday 3 February, and the Executive will be taking a decision on the afternoon of Thursday 4. We have also informed LUL management that we are available for talks.

"The need for a further ballot came about because the courts declared action planned for early in the New Year illegal. Despite opposition from the left, the RMT executive caved in and called the action off.

It is possible that management will now get to an injunction against further action, on the grounds that the strike action would be against a future employer not LUL. If this happens, the Executive and membership will face a choice with the giving up of the fight or going ahead with illegal action. Greg Tucker, left candidate for General Secretary, points out, "If the courts declare this ballot illegal, there will be no basis for re-balloting and we will have to take illegal action."

Under President’s “Public Private Partnership” scheme those who maintain the automatic ticket gates will be handed over Westinghouse on February 14, to be followed later by most non-train crew staff. Although the deals are not finalised, different companies will have responsibility for different sections of the Underground, a re-run of the privatisation of the railways. In theory it will all be handed back to LUL after 30 years and massive investment by the private companies, but no-one is holding their breath. Rather late in the day public campaigning around the issue has taken off, in an attempt to link other trades unionists and users with RMT members. A central Campaign Against Tube Privatisation meets regularly, and leafleting of tube stations has met a good response.

Brent Trades Council, together with local RMT branches and Brent East Labour Party held a public meeting against the privatisation of the railway which about 100 people attended, including many RMT members.

Bob Crow, General Secretary of the RMT unveiled the plans for the privatisation which will mean for both users and workers. Greg Tucker pointed out the parallels with the disaster of railway privatisation and the need for railworkers to draw lessons from their failure to prevent it.

Ken Livingstone put the whole issue in a political context. Steve Hedley, RMT member criticised during the rail privatisation strike, also drew out the need for fighting trade unionism.

From that meeting a Brent Campaign against Tube Privatisation has been set up. The campaign will be leafletting several local tube stations just before the first handover and on any day of strike action.

It is also organising a lobby of the surgery of local MP Paul Boateng, a member of the government, on February 20 and a street stall on Saturday 15. It will also be supporting the mass lobby of Prescott’s office on Friday 5 February and turning out on local pickets at Queens Park and Neasden Depot.

A similar campaign has also been set up in Lambeth, which is holding a public meeting on Monday 15 February with Bob Crow, Greg Tucker and John McDonnell MP.

---

**Fight council house privatisation!**

Glen Vorris, Secretary Merseyside TUC, (in a personal capacity)

SOCIALIST Outlook supporters have taken the lead in resisting privatisation of council houses across the North West. This is after organising a successful ballot against tenants on the Wargrave estate in St Helens in October - the first and only victory in the region so far.

St Helens Council is going ahead with the privatisation despite the 65% of 1500 responses to a survey which said they do not want to give up their council owned homes. There are plans to carve up the estate in totally underheaded way which guts the purpose of the ballot results. The ballot prevents the council from forcing tenants to transfer for at least three years. This new plan involves: asking tenants to transfer voluntarily to a housing association. Allowing tenants to stay with the council if they wish, but suggesting there will be no repairs or for at least 10 years.

Selling off around 1500 houses to private companies who will bulldoze them and build private homes.

A successful meeting of 50 tenants was held on the estate on January 26 to discuss the council's plans. After a lively discussion tenants formed a local UNISON branch, who are resisting every attempt to build unity. The attempt to organise a leading UCATT shop steward who has consistently fought privatisation to get him out of the way.

However the successful ballot result in St Helens has sparked a real mood of militancy across the region. The NW Region TUC decided to organise a conference of tenants and trade unionists in March to co-ordinate the fight back. However, the secretary of the TUC is downplaying the conference and appears to be trying to reduce the chances of a national battle.

The conference is being used for a dual purpose: to galvanise the movement in the two main areas around an action plan to resist privatisation and to use as a lever against the NW TUC bureaucracy.

The Merseyside conference already set up on January 14 and a Support Action plan.

A real fighting action plan needs to be agreed at the conference in order to turn the first ballot result into a national campaign. This should include:

- To organise a well planned series of meetings in all areas of the region where privatisation is ear-marked to galvanise tenants/trade union committees on a local level that can plan local meetings, leafleting, elections. Local action could be the springboard to force the bureaucrats of NW Region TUC into action and will go a long way to fighting off privatisation.

---

**Socialist Outlook in cyberspace**

SOCIALIST Outlook is more than just a newspaper. It also has a growing presence on the World Wide Web. The newspaper itself has a dedicated website, and now supporters in West Yorkshire have launched their own local site.

West Yorkshire’s site provides an introduction to the programme and coverage of Socialist Outlook. It includes links to make it easy for readers to go to the national site and those of the four other national sites. It also promotes policies, events and activities “of socialist activists and campaigners with whom we sympathize or agree”. So far this coverage includes material about the Leeds Fighting for Labour Network and an “unauthorised noticeboard” for the UNISON branch at Leeds Metropolitan University, covering the censorship of their noticeboards at work.

Socialist Outlook’s main site includes links to all of the newspaper, details of events, and other documents. For example, it carries information about trade union struggles and links to the web sites of these and other campaigning groups. It gives access to an archive of articles from the paper, items from the most recent issue go up soon after publication.

These developments give an opportunity to promote our ideas to people who might not come into contact with supporters in trade union meetings or at other local events.

The sites are also a resource for supporters and sympathisers to promote our activities and support our efforts to argue for socialist ideas. Web sites and e-mails will not replace all the ways fought for revolutionary socialism in the past.

However as young people come to take these means of communication for granted, and more and more workers have access to the web through work, their unions, in libraries or at home, they are likely to become more important.

The Socialist Outlook web site can be found at: www.labournet.uk.org/york

The West Yorkshire supporters site is at: www.outlook.legend.org.uk
Campaign For A Living Wage
Demonstrate in Newcastle on 10 April

Fred Leplat London Regional Committee, UNISON (personal capacity)

Not since the fight against council rate-capping in the late 80s, has there been a national demonstration called by major national unions on a central issue facing all of their members.

The demonstration for a Living Wage called by UNISON in Newcastle on Saturday 10 April offers a welcome return to high profile campaigning with serious national union support.

Socialists in the unions and community organisations must start building now as widely as possible for this demonstration.

We must use the fact that national unions have been forced to give official backing to make this the biggest protest yet against the failure of the New Labour government to meet the needs of working people who voted for them so overwhelmingly.

UNISON's Campaign for a Decent Living Wage is to protest at the government's miserly offer of £3.60 an hour, and £3 if you are under 21, as the Minimum Wage from 1st April.

The call for the demonstration is simple: "March for a Living Wage. The Minimum Wage at £3.60 an hour isn't enough". UNISON's own policy is for £6.61 an hour, two thirds of male median earnings, without exemptions. Even that would mean only an £184 for a 40 hour week.

A particularly objectionable aspect of the government's minimum wage is the exemption for those under 21. It is a ridiculous idea that someone under 21 is less productive than a 30-year-old or needs less to live on. A decent Minimum Wage can easily be afforded in a rich country like Britain where there is still money for nuclear weapons and where the top rate of income tax is the lowest in Europe.

Twenty national unions and the British Youth Council are now backing this demonstration. It will be the first open break by the unions with the Labour government.

UNISON is beginning seriously to mobilise for the event which is two months away and has already produced leaflets and posters. Activists on the ground must use this opportunity to create the broadest possible discussion in their workplaces.

Leaders from unions like UNISON, the GMB and even the CWU, but noticeably not the TGWU, are indicating through this campaign that they want something more from Blair in order to head off possible rank and file anger against New Labour's Tory policies.

The demonstration has been called in Newcastle to cause less embarrassment than it would if it was held in London.

The demand for this demonstration was won by Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic UNISON supporters at last year's annual conference.

Prior to the opening of conference, the Deputy General Secretary made it clear that the NEC did not want any National Demonstration.

The call for the demo was contained in an amendment to the NEC's report, but the leadership were so determined to stop this move that they organised to lose the vote on their own resolution.

Eventually, after some last footwork by the left, another motion was prioritised which again called for the demonstration in an amendment. This was overwhelmingly supported by conference.

If militants are successful in responding to this call, a sizeable demonstration will be evidence that there is widespread opposition to New Labour's free market economic liberalism.

No one voted Labour for the continuation of privatisations, cuts in public services, redundancies and low pay.

A massive demonstration could give confidence to union activists and socialists to fight other attacks from the Labour government.

Tenants are fighting the privatisation of homes; London tube workers are preparing for action against the selling of the underground; Students are angry at tuition fees and the abolition of the grant; and pensioners are still waiting for change under Labour.

All these sections of the community should also be on the demonstration to make it clear that alongside trade-unionists, we all want a stop to Tory policies.

Organise now for the Newcastle demo!

- Make sure 10 April is on the agenda of your next meeting. Book your transport now with other local unions, and pensioners, tenants or community groups.

- Leaflets and posters are now available. UNISON branches and stewards should rush their order to UNISON Communications on phone 0181-854 2344 or fax 0181-316 7770.

- Call the UNISON freephone 0800 096 76 00 for information about the day.

- London UNISON has booked a train which leaves King's Cross at 7am on 10 April and returns at 11pm. Tickets are available to branches for £10 each.

- Organise local demonstrations before 10 April against low paying health and local government employers. For example Redbridge (Labour-led) council is paying some of its manual workers £3.20.

- Demonstrate outside local private low pay earning boisse such as supermarkets or pizza restaurants, and check out the rates for jobs in the local dole office.

- Join the London UNISON events: a demonstration outside the Low Pay Commission (ironically located inside the Dept of Trade and Industry) and a rally with UNISON-sponsored MHP.

- Backing this demonstration: UNISON, ASLEF, AULT, AMO, BFAWU, BECTU, BIFU, CWU, Equity, GMB, GPMU, NAPO, MSF, NATFHE, NUJ, PCS, TSSA, UCATT, NUS, Society of Radiographers, Chartered Society of Physiotherapists.

Thumbs down to Labour's latest public sector pay foul-up

IT IS TYPICAL of the current government, which has deliberately set out to cock a snook at traditional labour movement values, that even when claiming to remedy long-standing problems they do so by increasing inequality and cultivating elitism.

Last year came the daft, divisive notion of the "super-nurse" and the "super teacher" as a means of giving extra pay to a tiny handful from each profession, leaving their hard-working colleagues aggrieved and alienated.

Now, with the unveiling of the Pay Review Body recommendations, ministers are floating another package of policies that will leave the majority of teachers and nursing staff fuming.

The decision to award head teachers more than double the feeble increase allotted to classroom teachers will exacerbate the problems of recruiting new entrants to the profession, worseing the current 15,000 shortfall.

The plan to offer an increase of more than 11% to newly-qualified nurses will benefit just one in twenty of the nursing workforce. The remaining 95% of qualified nurses, who are already slogging their guts out for pitiful pay, are promised only a 4.5% pay increase.

The half-baked plan to entice young entrants to the profession runs alongside the much-vaulted £5m advertising campaign which seeks to persuade trained nurses to return to the NHS and help fill the estimated 13,000 vacancies -- but few if any of these will benefit from the 11% bonus in pay.

The biggest losers are the nursing staff on the lowest grades -- nursing assistants and health care assistants, many of whom earn less than £5 an hour, and for whom a 4.5% increase will barely buy a bag of peanuts.

Half a million other health workers are also likely to face a pitiful increase in response to their claim for 10% or £1,000.

To compound the misery it appears the under-funding of the pay awards will leave Trussel and education chiefs imposing cuts to balance the books.

Wong again - Doham
New Health Bill will marginalise hospital workforce

Harry Sloan

NO LABOUR MPs have had any priority opportunity to discuss the implications of the government’s sweeping reforms in the NHS, which are already being implemented, and will be lifted from April 1, even before Parliament’s endorsement of the new Health Bill.

The new scheme will place GPs – the least accountable of any group of health professionals – in the driving seat of policy-making, with a token involvement of nurses working in primary and community services.

But despite the fact that hospital staff at all levels are to be systematically excluded from any voice or involvement in the planning of services, while having to suffer cuts and changes imposed by the PCGs, the plan has been “welcomed” by public sector union UNISON – most of whose NHS members will be stuck on the outside, looking in.

The positive side is that under the new system, GP Fundholding and many of the trappings of the old ‘Tory’ internal market system will be scrapped.

The negative side is that it will be replaced by a system of 481 ‘Primary Care Groups’ (PCGs), which will cover all of the GPs in their locality of around 100,000 population, and increasingly take over the task of planning and commissioning the full range of health services.

GPs have been guaranteed that they can take a majority of the seats on the board of each PCG, as well as the chair, if they choose. Also on the board will be two token ‘nurse’ representatives – a district nurse manager, a health authority member, and an “independent lay member” as well as a chief executive on upwards of £40,000 a year. Most will have budgets in the region of £10 million a year.

PCGs open up yet another 3-tier system, with primary care nurses as, but hospital nurses left out.

New Health Bill will marginalise hospital workforce
Outrage not enough to beat Brent Cuts!

By Mark Findlay and Peter Firmin

The government has recently been under pressure to increase the grant to communities where councils have not provided funding in increased poverty. However, they have done so at the expense of some of the poorest boroughs in London.

One of the biggest problems is that 89% of local authority income is from central government grants (this being mainly Council Tax). The government has said it has no intention of reintroducing local business rates which might begin to shift this.

Instead, it is sticking by the Tory system of crude Standard Spending Assessments (SSAs), while making it clear that it does not trust local authorities with decision-making, and is taking as much as possible away from them.

Brent Council in North West London is faced with a grant cut of £17.4 million in its 2019-2000 budget if the final grant allocation from central government, to be announced on February 4, is the same as the provisional figure.

This despite the fact that as well as a Labour-run Brent, Brent has a Labour Council, 3 Labour MPs, and the MEP for the area is also Labour.

Grants scrapped

There are several causes of this crisis. In its wisdom, the government has decided that while the proportion of ethnic minority children under a council will continue to warrant extra grants for education, they have cut it completely for children’s personal social service grants.

This, despite all the evidence that language, health and other factors contribute to increased spending.

This cut particularly hits some London boroughs (and areas like Leicester), with Brent, Hackney, Lambeth, Haringey and Newham accounting for a total of £40 million cut from London grants for this reason. Brent alone is losing £8.2 million, a 30% drop.

Other problems stem from the fact that when the Tories controlled Brent Council (until a Labour-Lib Dem coalition took over in 2011-12), the council’s strategy was to keep down spending, sell off council assets and keep the Council Tax as low as possible.

Apart from appalling services, one result of this is that Brent has spends well below the government’s Standard Spending Assessment, supposedly what the government considers it necessary for a council to spend to provide services.

However, the government is proposing a new scheme whereby Council Tax benefits subsidize clawed back from authorities which increase their Council Tax by 4.5% or more than their cash increase in Standard Spending Assessment, whichever is higher.

This penalises any low-spending council which attempts to bring its spending up closer to the average by raising its council tax by more than the government’s cash increase.

The main gainers are, incredibly, the wealthy Tory strongholds of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, and Wandsworth.

While Brent council is too big and has a high proportion of people on council tax benefit, which penalises it, the government has given a £13 million cut in Brent’s government grant.

Over 200 people crammed into Willesden Library to hear representatives from the Brent Law Centre and council leader and cabinet member, Jamie Ritchie from Brent Community Law Centre, give a graphic account of how the new cuts will come on top of years of low spending from the Tories, resulting in already appalling services.

A desperate housing shortage, reduced services, and the reduction in housing on Chalk Hill and Stonebridge.

Ritchie said that there is a council to cut in children’s personal social services grant what it is, a racist cut.

Paul Daisley, leader of Brent council, spoke next and naturally defended the Labour council’s record (to howls of rage from the audience). He described how the Tory council ran the reserves run down, closed high rents and sold some £9m worth of assets. Their general expenditure was below even the mean spending limits set by Tory government. However he did outline the devastating effect that the further cuts would bring.

He also stated that the main gainers were, incredibly, the wealthy Tory strongholds of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, and Wandsworth, although there has been a general shift of expenditure to the North and Scotland.

Riots of disapproval, (and his deputy) stated their absolute intention to set a legal budget.

Speakers from the floor raised the possible cuts to come — hitting the library service, youth service, mental health and more.

Peter Firmin from Socialist Outlook called for a march to Whitehall, and unity with the other affected boroughs.

There was a large and militant pensioners contingent at the meeting, as well as numerous trade unionists and users’ groups.

The meeting overwhelmingly agreed a motion put by the Law Centre condemning the government’s cut and calling for a rethink and agreement that would be a demonstration to Whitehall.

Brent’s Labour councillors have made it clear that this is what “their” government is doing to them.

“Fall-back”

They have been protesting and lobbying ministers, putting forward a “fall back position” which would mean that the money is cut in stages rater than all at once.

They have even called on all three MPs not to support the grant settlement if it comes to a vote in parliament, which has caused a stir because one, Paul Boateng is a minister.

However, they are beginning to put cuts through committees in preparation for the budget-setting meeting which will include closing libraries, cutting home help, making 500-500 staff redundancies, and making substantial reductions in grants to the voluntary sector.

There have already been sizeable lobbying of committees discussing cuts, and the Trades Council and Law Centre have called a lobby of parliament on Monday 1 February and a demonstration has been called for Saturday 6 February. An anti-cuts committee is being set up to co-ordinate the activity.

Between now and 8 March when the council sets its budget for the year the demand has to be for the councilors to refuse to pass on the government’s cuts — and if the councilors or a commissioner step in to do so, then the government should lose the fight against the cuts.

Maximum support has be requested for the workers and users of the services to prevent any cuts going through, including strike action by council workers and occupation by users of facilities being closed.

Oxford protest at social service cuts

A SIXTH successful year of cuts imposed by Oxfordshire County Council is due to reinvigorate the local anti-cuts campaign (DSTCC). A demonstration has been called to take place on February 6. The local share of this year’s cuts, arising from Labour’s decision to give Oxfordshire the lowest grant settlement in England, will fall on social services, which are already struggling to meet the £25m compulsory spending cut for the current financial year.

A vocal group of social workers have been attending DSTCC meetings, and spelled out their concerns in a statement to the press: “The proposed Social Service cuts in Oxfordshire will cause severe suffering to very disabled children and to frail elderly people, and make life impossible for their families.”

The council is considering the closure of day centres for the most disabled children and young people in acute distress. The removal of social workers supporting families and caring for children will also be very damaging.

"Frontline social workers hope that the people of Oxfordshire, having learned the effects of these cruel cuts, will agree they simply cannot be made.”

Three UNISON branches – Oxfordshire Health, County and Oxford City – have joined forces to back the February 6 demonstration, which is also supported by the Trades Council, and by City Panter, who will chair the concluding rally in the Town Hall.

Hammersmith, UNISON members staged a one-day strike as part of the day of action, with 100 jobs in the housing benefit office.

Sheffield council, which has been an active member of the campaign, has banned union meetings on council premises.
8 SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

AWL's blatant hi-jack of broad campaign network

This is no way to build left unity!

Jim Beagle

ONG before the Lewinsky scandal hit the headlines, Bill Clinton was neatly described as someone who would “smile in your face while he pissets down your leg.” In the small world of British left politics, the equivalent is the Alliance for Workers Liberty, whose long and grimy track record of failure to work for any length of time and with any consistency with other currents is matched only by its succession of proposals for “unity” and for new “broad” organisations.

The one organisation which appeared to represent an exception to the rule of AWL sectarianism was the Welfare State Network. For over four years the WSN managed to operate as an organisation linking activists and campaign from a wide range of political organisations and backgrounds – including the AWL, Socialist Outlook, Socialist Labour Party, Labour Party, and others who simply wanted to fight back in defence of health and education services and benefits.

Although there were a number of political – and even some more major programmatic – differences between the various component currents of the WSN, we found in practice that these could easily be contained within a common organisation which remained focused on the unifying issue of welfare state campaign work.

Indeed it was not differences over political line, but the collapse of trust and the eroding of internal democracy within the Network which eventually brought it down as a broad campaign.

The WSN itself staged successful lobby’s, marches, meetings and protests as well as conferences, and it launched a newspaper, Action for Health & Welfare, which produced with substantial resources from the AWL, but with a degree of “power sharing”, with John Liston from Socialist Outlook elected as joint editor, and initially open access to a wide range of contributors.

The newspaper was a considerable degree of respect in the wider labour movement, and helped the WSN develop a base of affiliations in the trade unions.

However this open regime suffered a setback last year, with the decision to move from monthly to fortnightly publication – one forced through the WSN Steering Committee on the insistence of the AWL. Although the newspaper still professed the same objectives, the frequency of publication was clearly intended to meet the needs of the AWL rather than match the pace of any of the other campaigns.

Fortnightly publication made Action for Health & Welfare much more reliant on financial, organisational and political input from the AWL, which narrowed the range of contributors, and led to the paper being increasingly filled not with the specific campaign-oriented material which had been its early strength, but with general “lefty” political articles on topics unrelated to the Welfare State, largely written by AWLers.

Many of these extra-nous articles were written in themselves politically contentious, and divisive because they dealt with issues on which there was no basic unity of agreement.

The WSN Steering Committee, too, dwindled both in size and in regularity of meetings, with over few non-AWL delegates attending. By November, the WSN Steering Committee in Liverpool was attended by just seven people – five AWL, plus the Chair, Alec McFadden (SLP) and John Liston from Socialist Outlook.

That meeting heard Cathy Nugent, the AWL joint editor of Action for Health & Welfare, outline a series of proposals to change the paper, including a return to a monthly publication which would focus more closely on welfare state campaigning issues.

She appealed for greater practical involvement in editorial and production work and financial input from the other currents. An AWL comrade also stated their wish to launch a new, broad newspaper of the left. It was agreed that after the various participatory organisations had been able to discuss these proposals, a meeting of the four WSN officers would be convened in Birmingham in early January to decide any changes.

The January meeting was cancelled at the last moment by the AWL, with the hope of attempting to fix a new date, and has never taken place. This meant that the decision taken in December by Socialist Outlook to respond positively to the proposed changes, and to inject additional funds and human and political resources to the WSN and Action for Health & Welfare, could not be reported to the WSN.

However the AWL was clearly working to a very different agenda. Even while they were cancelling the WSN officers meeting, their comrades were preparing an operation to hi-jack the WSN and its newspaper, to transform it into their so-called “broad” newspaper.

They were ringing round seeking sponsors for the new paper – but consequently not asking the WSN’s other officers and Steering Committee.

In mid-January, a new publication, “Action for Solidarity”, plopped through mailboxes of WSN affiliates and subscribers, accompanied by a letter from WSN National Organiser Jill Mountford – on WSN headed notepaper, carrying also the name of Alec McFadden, who knew nothing of the letter or the new paper – asking people to “reaffiliate to the campaign and subscribe to Action”.

The letter went on to stress the alleged continuity between Action for Health & Welfare and the new (and unilaterally-launched) AWL newspaper:

“We hope that you continue to support our campaign and Action. We have over the years developed a broad layer of contributors and readers. You will see that the first issue of 1999 is redesigned, there will be a number of new columns, extra pages and the paper is now called Action for Solidarity. We believe that this best sums up the most fundamental principle of working class organisation...”

As Tony says in the joke as he and the Lone Ranger are attacked by marauding Indians you can do mean “we, palface?”

The newspaper and the letter are a transparent political fraud. The renaming and redesign of the paper are unilateral decisions not of the Welfare State Network, but of the AWL and its political leadership.

As John Liston, announcing his immediate resignation from the WSN – having been named as joint editor by the AWL coup – commented:

“Jill Mountford’s letter was a sectarian master-stroke. It simultaneously seeks to annex the resources of the WSN for the latest AWL publication, while making it impossible to relaunch Action for Health & Welfare as an independent publication.”

At no point has the AWL attempted to secure agreement to these changes with the elected leadership of the WSN. Nor have they made any honest approach to other left wing organisations to invite their involvement.

The new paper is not a broad publication, nor any serious effort at left unity “broad”, but a cynical hi-jack carried out by an organisation which specialises in such manipulation.

As John Liston comments “This latest, absurd, manoeuvre may in the short-term secure the mis-guided affiliations from union branches and individuals who foolishly cherish the illusion that Action for Solidarity is still the paper of the WSN.

“But it will NOT build a broad campaign, and it has effectively sealed the WSN, which can no longer operate in the absence of any basis of trust.”

But over four years’ collective work in building a serious attempt at a broad campaign, the AWL has now – as many sceptics predicted from the start – reverted to types, contesting itself once more with another front from the welfare state campaign organisation pliable to the whims of AWL guru Sean MacEntee, now superintending any attempt to link up with wider forces in the real world to resist cuts.

It is a special irony, therefore, that this blatant and destructive move by the AWL, which is a showing of the AWL’s publication of a special issue of their magazine Workers Liberty, with a screaming headline “UNITY! How do we get left unity?”

Here’s a hint, comrades. Start with honesty, transparency, democracy and integrity. If none of these qualities had informed your organisation’s recent antics, we could still have a functioning broad campaign in defence of the welfare state.

John Lister’s verdict sums up the demise of what could have been a promising campaign.

“It didn’t have to be like this. This is a pointless and a-political manoeuvre.”

Unfortunately it shows that the AWL comrades still prefer to pursue their political phony advocation of “solidarity” and “unity” – and spend their time denouncing or belittling other work in the WSN – rather than to work constructively or consistently for principled left unity...”
Campaigns 99 - a welcome opportunity

CAMPAIGNS 99 CONFERENCE
Hosted by Greater Manchester Socialist Alliance
Saturday 13th February, 10am-4pm
Mechanics Institute, Princess Street, Manchester
A conference open to campaigners across all issues - workplace, immigration, deportations, low pay, PFI - as well as socialist, green and trades union organisations.
CAMPAIGNS 99 Conference is a contribution to the growing opposition to free market ideology and to the demands placed on people by global capitalism.
Workshops have been arranged under the broad headings: Workplace, Welfare State, Environment, Transport, Refugees, Anti-deportations, Civil Rights and International.
Opening Speaker: Dave Nellist, Socialist Councillor in Coventry.
Registration: £5 organisations
£1 unfunded campaigns
Sponsors: Kenji, Coventry and Liverpool Selective Services, Scottish Socialist Party, Socialist Outlook, Leeds Independent Labour Network, Metrocentre Port shop stewards committee, TGWU 9999 branch, Workers Aid for Bosnia.

Terry Conway
THE DEVELOPMENT of Socialist Alliances is something that Socialist Outlook supporters have welcomed - as our participation has demonstrated. Within the Alliances we along with many others have argued that it is important that these Alliances, together with other comparable bodies like the ILN need to promote active campaigning and organising solidarity with struggles. We do not underestimate the difficulty of doing this - particularly in a period like the current one where activity, particularly that with national resonance has been patchy to say the least. There is no dispute at present which carries the authority and weight of the miners or the dockers strikes, around which people are coming together spontaneously up and down the country. Struggles are going on of course. At an industrial level there is better - and often long standing dispute - at Tameside, Critchley. Hillingdon and Sky Chefs. There are local fights in defence of the welfare state - over health and education, particularly - and

Hillingdon strike: over jobs and NHS against privatisation.

Local battles against deportations and immigration detentions continue, and the Lawrence inquiry and the surrounding publicity has given a new spur to those organising for justice in the wake of racist murders - whether caused by the police and compounded by their indifference.

Lesbian and gay activists celebrate what looks like being set to be a final victory over the age of consent and continue to organise against Section 28 and for rights at work.

Ecological campaigners continue to protest at the destruction of the environment through the reckless search for profit.

But most of these, and many other campaigning targets to numerous to mention remain isolated from each other. The movement has its own dynamic just because lack of information prevents more people getting involved - though that is a real drawback.

More importantly our isolation makes us less confident of the possibility of success - and that is the biggest barrier to much greater mass movement.

There is no doubt that many of those who voted Labour at the last General Election did so hoping that a new government would lead to a let up in the relentless attacks they had endured under the long years of Tory rule.

Unfortunately on many questions New Labour has continued and even deepened Tory policy which has served to further dishearten many whose organisations had been battered by Thatcher. Campaigns 99 cannot on its own solve this problem, but it can begin to turn the tide.

That is why it is vital that it is attended by as many activists as possible - but also why it is even more important that all of us make sure we bring with us those involved in the struggles which are going on.

“We'll fight every inch of the road!”

For nine months protesters have been organising to stop Britain's first toll road, the Birmingham Northern Relief Road, which is unlikely to bring relief to anyone other than the companies who will cream off a substantial profit from its users.

Terry Conway interviews Bobby Macintosh, road protestor

SO: Why do you think this road is being built?
BM: As Britain's first toll motorway, someone somewhere is going to make big money here, mainly Kvaerner and Aasenstra, the two private companies that will be building and running this road. Even though this is a private road, much of the cost (£750 million) will be funded by taxpayers.

SO: What will be destroyed by building the road?
BM: This road is to be 27 miles long, much of it countryside, some of it in green belt (you know, the thing that holds up John Prescott’s house).

Two sites of special scientific interest will be extensively damaged and destroyed. The impact on wildlife through loss of habitat will be enormous and irreparable.

41 homes are going to be demolished - people are being forced to leave them for the benefit of a private company.

SO: What have you learnt since you have been involved with the protest?
BM: Through being on site, I have learned a lot about self-sufficiency and survival. At first, I was hopeless. I couldn’t even light a fire. I’ve also learned a lot about squatters’ rights, our main weapon being Section 1 of the Criminal Law Act 1977, which applies to dwellings. After 48 hours in occupation, we are in legal possession and have certain rights.

There are 27 miles of this proposed road, and we plan to fight every inch, our site motto being "if it's got a floor, we'll tunnel under it". The local media described the eviction of the Moneymore squats in December as our "final fight". Far from it! SO: What do you say to people who argue they have to be cut off by the road for public transport and that they are fed up with sitting in traffic jams?
BM: We do not have a problem with cars as such, only with the way that people use them. We can understand that there are problems with public transport being inadequate, overpriced, and with congestion on the existing roads, but building more roads that will become giant car parks and cause pollution is no kind of solution.

It's important to realise that we are not just tree-hugging hippies (honest!) but that ultimately it is the health of future generations that is at stake. Ashma is one obvious problem, along with cancer and other respiratory diseases and problems.

SO: How much local support do you have and how is it expressed?
BM: This particular protest has a lot of local support. I have yet to meet someone who is in favour of this road.

It is expressed mainly through donations of food and clothing, provision of safe bail addresses, and taking us home for a bath occasionally.

SO: What can people do to help who can't get to visit you?
BM: People who cannot visit in person can show their support by raising awareness of the campaign - it's important that people know we are still there fighting. A final decision on the road will be made at a High Court appeal hearing on 23 February. Although we are all hoping for a ruling against the road, we know that there is little if any chance. We are prepared for a long battle.

The site is at: The Spinney, Turf Pits Lane, Roughley, Nr Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands. Tel: 07970 301978 or 0831 190825.
No Justice - No peace

"Peace is not just the absence of conflict - without justice there can be no peace." - Martin Luther King

The law inquiry has marked a turning point in British policy on racial issues and enhanced a deepening self organisation of black people.

Certainly across London, the campaign of the Lawrence family, and other similar organisations fighting for justice in the face of racial attacks, have called meetings in packed rooms. People have turned up to demonstrate their determination to fight injustice who have had no previous involvement in organised politics.

The intervention of the black community in organising to support the Lawrence family has forced the police onto the defensive.

Of course some of the consequences of this have been further racism - as in the demand from the Police Federation that Doreen Lawrence apologise for her remark that perhaps the police didn't give Stephen first aid because they did not want to dirty their hands with black blood.

It is unlikely that when Sir William MacPherson's report is published it will answer more than a tiny proportion of the legitimate demands of the movement.

But the pressure can and must be maintained. There is a real opportunity to go forward, which has not only from the family campaigns, but behind them from monitoring groups which have worked on issues of racial violence both from the police and others for long years.

It is a moment that may not come again for many decades if we let it pass by.

Surely Grover of the Monitor Group, which has worked not only around the Lawrence Inquiry but around other racist murders such as Michael Menson and Ricky Reel argues: "The inquiry has opened many people's eyes to the reality and extent of police racism. We now have to build on this awareness and develop a civil rights movement which will work together in a united and non-sectarian manner. We cannot expect the Lawences to lead the movement for another five years."

The development of such a civil rights movement is not separate from the other main task of combating racism today - that of confronting the racist asylum legislation that this labour government is again in the process of strengthening.

Unfortunately some in the Afro-Caribbean community in particular have been slow to recognise that such laws increase racism against all black people - even those who have families who have lived here for generations.

But a strong civil rights movement with a genuine base across the black community and support from white activists would be a proper forum to debate this issue and develop sustained action against all forms of racism than anything that exists today.

The Colour of Justice

Susan Moore reviews
Richard Norton-Taylor's play about the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.

IT IS NOT often that even the most devoted political activists continue a formal political discussion until 11.30pm on a Friday night. It is even more unusual when such a discussion should take place at a theatre performance - even a theatre that has seen many a spectacular show as the Tricycle in Brixton, North West London.

After most performances of The Colour of Justice, there is a panel discussion in which the issues raised in the play are examined further. When I visited, this allowed the audience to discuss what they had seen unfolding on the stage, but also to exchange information about anti-racist campaigning.

When I arrived at the theatre I didn't quite know what to expect. I had followed the Lawrence enquiry quite closely and knew that the play was entirely based on the transcripts from the 69 days of public hearing. I had wondered if an attention would be held by a performance of more than 2 hours.

During the first ten minutes my doubts grew. The first few presentations seemed somewhat that did slow, and I didn't hear anything I didn't know. There was little warmed up to. Neville and Doreen Lawrence were the only characters on stage who didn't have access to the huge computers on which all the relevant documents were called up - they had to learn awkwardly to see what was being

Stephen Lawrence, considered a bright and promising young man, was murdered on April 22, 1993. TheColour of Justiceby Richard Norton-Taylor, a play based on the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, explores the issues surrounding the murder and its impact on the victims' families. The play delves into the complexities of the case, highlighting the systemic failures within the police and the broader context of institutional racism.

The Colour of Justice presents a vivid portrayal of the struggle for justice, examining the role of the law, the media, and the public in the aftermath of such a tragedy. It raises questions about accountability, the treatment of black lives, and the broader implications of systemic racism in society.

The play, directed by Richard Norton-Taylor, runs until 25th March. It is a powerful reminder of the ongoing need for justice and a call to address the systemic issues that continue to affect communities around the world.
Who killed Michael Menson?

Terry Conway

Two years ago on January 28, 1997, Michael Menson, a 30-year-old black man, was brutally murdered by racists. He was set on fire by four white youths in Edmonton, north London. Passers-by contacted the emergency services who took him to hospital. Michael suffered 80% third degree burns on his back. He remained conscious for almost one week — and lived through a massive heart attack from which he never recovered. Michael died on February 13, 1997.

On the night of the assault the police were contacted immediately. But during the first week while Michael was still conscious in hospital, they failed, despite constant threats from the family, to take a statement from him. It has sustained campaigning over these long months by his family and friends to force the police to begin to admit even some of the truth about the circumstances of his murder.

Only last week did the police acknowledge for the first time what supporters have argued from the beginning — that Michael's death was a racist murder.

Instead, despite massive forensics evidence to the contrary, the police at first argued that Michael may have died of a heart attack. This is despite the fact that four expert witnesses — including two fire experts and an ex-forensic scientist — have confirmed that in Michael's case this would not have happened.

As Mike's sister Essie explained the behaviour of the police added to the already intense grief of the family: "the hardest thing to bear was the overwhelming feeling that it didn't matter."

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Grieve, who heads the Racial and Violent Crimes Task Force set up in the wake of the Lawrence Inquiry tried to assure The Guardian: "There is clearly a racial motivation. There are four people involved in the attack on Michael Menson. It is a 'brown' crime, and we know people have been talking about it. We know a number of witnesses have been trying to get in touch with us."

Police have also discovered in recent weeks that an accident was used to ensure that the burns to Mike were more damaging.

It has taken all this time for the police to own up to basic facts which were known in the days after the attack. Campaigners are aware that Grieve's new unit is desperate to put the Lawrence inquiry to bed and so the reason that may now try to solve the Menson case. Only continued scrutiny will prevent further blunders which will deny yet another family access to the truth.

The anniversary of Michael's death was marked by an impressive public meeting in Tottenham organised by the Menson family campaign, addressed by members of the family, Sukhdev Reel (mother of Ricky Reel), a representative from the Stephen Lawrence Campaign and Michael Manfield QC.

The meeting listened attentively to contributions from Essie and Kweisi Menson, Michael's sister and brother who both gave those present a flavour of who Mike was and urged us to fight for justice in his memory.

Kweisi explained that when Mike was in the hospital he asked his brother "Why have they done this to me?"

While many of us have answers as to why racism is endemic in our society, many of them all seem inadequate when faced with its brutal and murderous consequences.

But as the past is not just to understand the world but to change it, a more meaningful answer can be given to Mike's question by organising to ensure that the litany of racist murders and police indifference cannot continue. As Essie Menson told us "Black people will not be victims and will not give up."

Scotland Yard has been forced to admit in a letter to the family solicitors, that senior officers made fundamental errors in their investigation. Not only did they assume when they first found Michael that he was suffering from mental illness and had set fire to himself, but that his injuries were not life threatening. They failed to seal off the scene of the incident, losing vital forensic evidence and witnesses, and then took weeks to launch an "investigation."

Eliakim's death has been covered by police officers in Tottenham, North London, which provoked great anger amongst the local black community.

His family called a demonstration from their home in Somerhill Road to the police station on January 21, intended to be a quiet candlelight vigil. However, the police armed with 4 cars and a helicopter which drowned out the worries of the family's pastor, making it clear how they viewed the event.

Nearly one thousand people carrying in police officers, including many local residents and workers from Brixton Councel, where Roger Sylvester was an administrative assistant in a day centre was a member of the UNISON branch.

Police were called to Roger Sylvester's home in Somerhill Road by a woman reporting a disturbed naked man outside the house.

They decided they needed to be of him to over-power him, and threw him to the floor, shutting him in the hospital, St. Ann's, sectioning him under the Mental Health Act and then not being able to deal with another crisis and the police were left alone.

They launched a callout to send a police officer to deal with the incident in another area.

The Lawrence Inquiry has highlighted police racism and led to a renewed interest in other racist murders and deaths of black people in police custody.

Tottenham: anger boils over death of Roger Sylvester (see below) Group told the public meeting in and around the site of the Stephen Lawrence case. To find the truth about Michael's death, his family and friends and the Monitor Group have set up "the Roger Sylvester Family Campaign."

The campaign wants the police Secretary Jack Straw to intervene in this case by holding a fresh team of police detectives to investigate Michael's murder. The campaign needs funds, including for payment of legal costs and publicity.

The campaign is looking for donations, especially in these next few weeks. Volunteers who have been talking to people in the area over the last week have killed have uncovered disturbing facts in just a few days work.

One of the lessons of the Lawrence campaign is that the search for witnesses is too important to be left to the police.

[For further information and to send donations contact: The Michael Menson Family Campaign, c/o SMG Unity, PO Box 94, Southall, Middlesex, UB2 5YR. Telephone: 0181 843 2333, Fax: 0181 813 9734]
International conference launches campaign for Cologne protest

Alan Thornett

OVER 500 activists from across the European Union attended the opening session of the European marches held in Cologne on 23 and 24 January.

The conference — called to plan a series of marches, a mass demonstration, and a counter-summit during the first EU-German Government conference in Cologne this summer — was the biggest and most representative yet to date by Euromarch networks, and shows that interest in its campaigning continues to grow.

Whilst virtually every country of the EU was represented, nearly a half of the conference came from German organisations and the German Euromarch network, the biggest international delegations coming from France and Denmark.

The British Euromarch network had only three delegates present, but were joined by delegations from Reclaim the Streets, the Campaign for Free Education and the Socialist Party, the latter being organised as part of a new group, Fairer for Workers International (CFI) delegation.

The discussions at the conference revolved around four “big ideas” and a series of workshops covering a range of related subjects. The four main themes were:

- A mass-international demonstration in Cologne on 29 May having forward a week because of the change of dates of other official conference.
- Marches from various parts of Germany to Cologne.
- An international march from Brussels to Cologne.
- The occupation of trains to get to the official demonstration.
- The aim is for the Cologne demonstration to be as big and of the same character as the 50,000 strong international demonstration in Amsterdam in June 1997 - this time in Germany the most important country in the EU.
- The marches through Germany will start from Prague, Basel in Switzerland, Berlin, Berlin and Hamburg. International delegations will be encouraged to join them wherever possible.

It is hoped to have between 1,000 and 1,500 people on a march from Brussels to Cologne setting off on Tuesday May 25. The Spanish Euromarches have already pledged to send 100 marchers on it.

The occupation and requisitioning of trains to get to Cologne is seen as a major feature of the campaign - on the lines of the trains that were successfully requisitioned by over 1,000 Italian unemployed people to get to the Amsterdam demonstration.

- It not only provides free transport to the demonstration but makes the point about the rights of free transport for unemployed people.
- The stress on this aspect however, was controversial with many delegates (mostly from Northern Europe, doubting that it could be done on a big scale.

Plans were also discussed for a ‘Balkans’ (paid for) train to start in Northern Greece to travel through Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Austria and into Germany - although the logistical problems in doing this seem far from resolved.

There is also a strong “global” dimension to the campaign in the sense that the conference was broad enough and representative enough to make the campaign a big success.

In Britain the Euromarch liaison committee will be taking early steps to bring together all organised parties to discuss how to make the campaign a big success.

Youth fighting austerity mobilise for Cologne 99

Veronica Fagan

ONE of the most successful features of the recent European conference to build the May 28 demonstration in Cologne was the major participation of young people - this time much more significant than at previous events organised by the Euromarches.

Perhaps this is not surprising with increasing mobilisations of young people to defend education in places like France and Greece.

There was a particularly sizeable delegation from the French students but there were young participants from most EU countries including from the Campaign for Free Education here in Britain.

After a lively workshop young people decided to support the general call for the demonstration but also to organise around there own specific demands. Below we print the draft resolution, which we will follow up.

"Young people are one of the social groups who suffer most from unemployment, flexibility and social exclusion. Today right across Europe, young people are systematically attacked in relation to their right to a decent job through short term contracts, undeclared work, undeclared employment, and so on. This is why we fully accept the demands of the general platform calling for the demonstration in Cologne on May 29th: reduction of working time without reduction of wages and without flexibility; massive creation of seasonal jobs; minimum income enabling everyone to a decent standard of living.

In addition as young people we put forward our own demands:

- The right to education and training for men and women without discrimination
- Against privatisation and the destruction of public education which has ignited student strikes all over Europe.
- For a more rational allocation of public education that necessitates free access to education; a massive financial investment by the states to allow every one access to free education, a greater participation of the students to the life of the schools and universities.

- Social right to autonomy of every man and woman without discrimination
- Right to decent housing
- Free access to culture
- Free access to public transport
- Free access to health care

- The right to choose freely his/her sexuality and against discrimination on the ground of sexuality.

On the basis of these demands, we appeal to all young people, all youth organisations, associations and students-trade unions to fight for a social Europe based on solidarity, anti-racism, anti-xenism, anti-fascism, ecology, anti-militarism and therefore to mobilise for Cologne on May 29th 1999."
Murderer Milosevic is still NATO’s preferred partner

Geoff Ryan

THE MASSACRE of 45 Albanians in Recak by Serb security forces confirms there is only one way to bring the war in Kosovo to an end: recognition of the right of the Albanian majority in Kosovo to independence.

Socialist Church has, in the past, argued for a solution allowing Kosovo to partici-

pate as an equal part-

ner with Montenegro and Ser-

bia. The unity of dif-

rent nationalities within a freely agreed con-

Confederation would obviously help to rebuild unity amongst the South Slav peoples. There is, however, a world of difference between a Confedera-

tion and a real solution to the crisis.

A 'solution' in western interests. To avoid any misunderstanding we are not advocating, totally opposed to NATO: it is a creation of the Cold War aimed at preserv-

ing capitalism. It is looking to extend its role as a US-loyal world policing force.

We do not support any actions by this imperialist military machine. On the contrary, we warn against any action that would be a mistake in history, a setup for a Serb military disaster in the region.

And what would be the effect of such actions? Hundreds of Serb civilians would be killed — perhaps many more. Barring Milosevic accidentally being hit by a stray missile, he would remain in power after any air strikes. In fact his power would be greatly strengthened, as Serbs rally round his regime against what they will rightly see as NATO aggression.

This process is already under way. Vuk Draskovic, the one time Serbia's foreign minister, has recently become a Vice President of Yugoslavia. Both the 'liberal' Draskovic and the hard line nationalist Vojislav Seselj now sit side by side in government with Milosevic.

Pressure

Air strikes are designed to put pressure on Milosevic, not to remove him.

There are difficulties even in doing this. Milosevic can only go so far in resigning to the more nationalistic elements of his armed forces without leaving himself open to attack from Serb separatists.

For that matter, Draskovic has in the past shown himself quite capable of trying to outflank Seselj as the champion of hard line Serb nationalism.

In any case it is absurd to believe that Milosevic personally controls every action by Serb security forces. Even if be were pressured into withdrawing further Serb forces from Kosovo, the logic of the war there means it is likely further massacres of Alba-

nian civilians remains will be car-

ried out.

The KLA has taken advantage of the Holbrooke agreement to rebuild and reorganise its forces.

Behind the war in Sierra Leone

In the wake of the arms to Sierra Leone affair, the ten years of conflict in this small country has been getting considerably more coverage in the British media than hitherto.

BOB WOOD looks at the underlying causes of the war.

In EARLY January, the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) occupied the centre of the capital Freetown. The population, not surprisingly, was terrified as the most heavily armed group in the country invaded. However, by mid-February the rebel forces had been pushed back to the outskirts of the city and the government forces in control.

If we are to believe the reports, then a desperate band of terrorists and drug-taking boys/soldiers somehow managed to overpower the town. 15,000 strong Nigerian peace-keeping force has been sent in. The truth may be somewhat different.

Atrocities have undoubtedly been committed by both sides in the conflict, but a rebel force not possibly take a city the size of Freetown without some sup-

port from the civilian popu-

lation.

The Nigerian army, together with much smaller contingents from other West African countries, are in Sierra Leone to offer support to the unstable government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

The rationale for Nigerian intervention is that the Kabbah government is the legit-

imate democratic ruler of the country, under threat from a combination of undisciplined rebels and dissident armed forces.

Nigeria, notwithstanding the irony of a military regime act-

ing as the defender of democ-

racy, currently seems to have the West African francophone bloc as its ally. This is a great shame for Africa as a whole and the liberation of the RUF will further strengthen the regime.

The democratic credentials of some of the former regime are now open to dispute. When the general election was held in 1996, the northern half of the country was in rebel hands, and the election was openly rigged.

In the wake of the Freetown conflict, the rebels have been able to capture some towns in the north. This could put the government in a bind as the rebels make some progress.

Sierra Leone is rich in mineral resources including diamonds, bauxite, platinum (for titanium) and iron ore, together with gold and plati-

nium. Over the years since independence, these resources have been raped by foreign mining companies, devastating the countryside and bribing successive government.

Nearly all the wealth created by the mining activities has been siphoned offshore, or used to line the pockets of a few individuals in Freetown — none of it has reached the ordinary people. The trickle-down effect has been as notable for its absence as it was in Thatcher’s Britain.

Secondly, the civil war in neighbouring Liberia (which ended only recently) undoubtedly helped to undermine peace in Sierra Leone, not least by making arms more readily available.

The Sierra Leone government has accused Liberia of aiding the rebels, and accusations are strongly denied by the Liberian government.

A group of Sierra Leonean exiles in the UK, the Alliance for Peace and Democracy in Sierra Leone, has called on Britain and America to end their one-sided approach to the conflict and for dialogue between the Kabbah government and the rebels.
Warning: privatisation approaching!

C


t to the private sector, Irish Sugar, Irish Life, Irish Steel and B&I Ferries. However this is all about to change big-time.

The Fianna Fail-led government intends to sell off Telecom Eireann this summer and has also ordered the sale of Gable Link. A plan to sell off Aer Lingus, one of the giant multi-national airlines is well under way, Aer Rannafast the airports authority has been instructed to draw up a privatisation plan and Team Aer Lingus has just been sold to the Dutch company FLS.

The state run Irish Ferrolus Industries is up for sale as is the state owned bank ACC, the likelihood is that CIE the bus and rail company will follow suit. The national electricity supplier ESB is to face private competition.

The sale of the state sector is being justified on the basis of the usual ideological neoliberal cant, to improve service, to enhance the performance of the state sector, to raise money for the exchequer and to widen share ownership.

In theory an Irish left should not find it too difficult to shout down the arguments now being touted as an entail of privatisation. There exists, for example, a welter of evidence in relation to the British telecommunications industry to show that it has not been a thrilling economic success and certainly not a model of improved services (Martin and Parker's recently published study of 11 privatisations).

The problem is that the official leadership of the Labour and Trade Union movement is so enthralled by the hyperbolic tale of a Celtic Tiger and so wrapped up in the ideology of social partnership that left criticism of the privatisation programme has so far been minimal.

Privently wearing their social partnership badges leading Trade Union officials from the CFWU, CSUICP and IMPACT have joined with the government in promoting the idea that the selling off of Telecom Eireann will be in the interest of the common good. The company is to be sold in stages, stage one to be a 35 per cent or £2 billion flotation on the Dublin, London and New York stock exchanges.

Even though the privatisation programme includes a proposal to loose 2,500 jobs, a new six day week and an 8am to 8pm working day the union officials are busily trying to find ways to persuade workers to go along with it.

To win over the work force they have negotiated a deal with management which involves the workers being offered an Employee Share Option Plant ESOP. Workers are being asked to take up the offer of control over a 14 per cent per cent stakes share in return for their co-operation in the privatisation process.

Telecom workers are being offered the bribe of a 2.5 per cent gift of free shares and the setting up of a trust with a £60 million loan to buy a further nine per cent of share as a 20 per cent discount. Similar ESOP schemes are being negotiated in other privatisation deals.

For those workers not impressed with the union's dealing skills the top officials have been using two other ploys to bring them into line. Union officials have made it known that if the workforce votes against the deal at the end of February a 3.1 per cent pay rise for the coming year will be.

Another spin is that the privatisation process is inevitable whether work or not as it is in line with the Irish government's fulfillment of an EU directive which is legally binding.

Last week Minister Mary O'Rourke, in efforts to raise potential investor confidence in the privatisation, sacked the company board on the advice of investment bank Merrill Lynch.

The new chairman is to be none other than Ireland's foremost advocate of neo-liberal policies, Fiona Faller Ray MacSharry. In a laughable gesture to the feelings of the workforce, Dick Spring was appointed to the new board "to look after the best interests of Telecom's workers." Spring has lost no time in acquiring for himself a string of such boardroom positions.

Workers resistance to the privatisation of Telecom will probably follow the way of Team Aer Lingus.

On several occasions workers at Team voted against privatisation, in response the union officials cut back slightly altered proposals for a yes vote until eventually they got what they wanted.

Shay Cody Deputy General Secretary of IMPACT, a key player in the negotiations is sounding confident. This wearing down of rank and file morale by the union bureaucracy in the interest of the plans of management is what social partnership is really all about.

Whilst it is difficult to fight the ethos of social partnership in today's climate, a passive acquiescence in the face of the privatisation programme should not be encouraged or condoned.

Socialists can use such occasions to relate to those workers who continue to vote against the advice of their union officials and to intensify the wider political campaign against another instalment of social partnership.

Although the Irish state sector is not a bastion of socialism against capitalism it nevertheless came in to being because the Irish capitalist class was unwilling to risk their own capital in building up essential national public utilities, preferring to invest abroad.

The state sector was paid for by the Irish working class. It belongs to them, it has over many decades been a haven for tens of thousands of workers against the insecurity and anarchy of the market.

Today it is as essential as ever to defend the principle of common ownership from the attacks of possessive individualism.

United in betrayed: the Labour Party and Democratic Left

When the leaders of the Labour Party and Democratic Left first floated the idea of a fusion there were still a few newspaper columnists around who said it would probably never happen.

It was felt that the past record of the political leadership of the Democratic Left, ex-socialist and Euro-Communists was so tainted with political corpses that the respectability of class leader of Labour would want twice about admitting them into 'their' party lest they bring into being yet more sectarian turmoil.

No political faction in Ireland can match the extraordinary ideological circumstances that has been the life of Prionsias De Rossa and friends.

From IRA inmates in the 1950s (Sina Fein) to ultra Provo opponents in the early seventies/Sinn Fein Workers Party (SFWP), close friends of Moscow in the eighties (the Workers Party) to left alter- eator, the Labour Party in the eighties, to brokering with the Workers Party in the nineties, to government coalition partners with the traditional right wing of Irish politics, from the mid-nineties and into Labour.

So the ideological gymnastics of Irish politics have pulled off yet another somersault. On Monday January 5th, it was announced that the four remaining DL delegates are to take up front bench positions within the Labour Party. De Rossa himself is to be the opposition spokesperson on foreign affairs.

One of the biggest surprises must be the fact that 90 per cent of the Labour Party membership voted in favour of taking them in, only two prominent members so resented in protest.

The DL's vote collapsed to 3 per cent in the last election and for them this looks nothing more than a last ditch attempt at personal survival, one of a handful of career politicians.

What really explains the willingness of the Labour Party to take DL under their wing is their own dismal record of political betrayal of their working class constituency.

Ten percent support

In the 1997 election the vote of the Labour Party/Partei in Brussels 10 per cent from an historic high of 19 per cent in 1992.

What happened in between was that the party, elected on a set of programme for a radicalising of the real interests of the working class, betrayed the trust of those who believed in the party by entering into an unprincipled government coalition not with just one right wing party but with two, Fine Fianna Fail and then with Fine Gael.

When the party leader Dick Spring was campaigning in the 1992 election he pledged his support for the Labour Party's fight for social reforming, his responsibility was that of his coalition government oversaw a thousand redundancies.

The Labour Party was in office at a time of unprecedented economic growth, but its reforms were non existent. Tax on company profits were cut by 4 per cent, a tax amnesty for the wealthy was introduced as was the selling of passports to the rich.

After R. Quinn's first budget the Sunday business post ran a front passage with the headline 'Pensions are being cut'. In 1997 thousands paid Labour back by not voting for them.

The Labour Party is now saying it is aiming to get between 20 and 25 per cent of the vote at the next election. As the Labour Party has the smallest Labour vote in the EU (3%)

An obvious question is: Has the Labour Party learnt nothing from its previous electoral failures, taking a claim on 9 per cent per centre of its own support held by DL does not even begin to retrieve the working class vote that left them with just 1% of the right wing policies.

A basic requirement should have been the Labour party that was preparing a modern left programme and was one of the most right wing leadership the party has ever had.
Stop “sanctioned mass murder” of Iraqi people!

Roland Rance

A ir raids continue nearly every day against Iraq, leading to further casualties. The US and the UK have also targeted civilian areas, claiming that these actions are necessary to protect themselves.

Many diplomats in Baghdad, however, have confirmed that any non-compliance with the UN resolutions is marginal and technical, and has been seized on by the US and Britain as a pretext for their continued occupation of Iraq, which they were already determined to carry out. Meanwhile, it has become clear that many of the targets were identified by these same inspection teams, who were acting as agents for the US as well as reporting to the UN.

Since the Gulf War of 1991, the Iraqi infrastructure has been devastated by both bombings and sanctions. Iraq, previously a country with a strong economy, good nutrition, near-Western levels of child mortality, and relatively high standards of education and welfare provision, has been reduced to a subsistence economy.

The sanctions are now even more devastating than the bombings, leading to a far higher number of deaths. Yet, until recently, the official reports of the war only mentioned the bombings, with many opponents of military attack supporting sanctions as a means of imposing Western demands on the Iraqi government.

Last year Irish diplomat Denis Halliday resigned as UN Humanitarian Co-ordinator for Iraq, describing sanctions as the so-called “oil-for-food” policy as “illegal and immoral”.

In a packed meeting at London’s Conway Hall in January, Mr Halliday pointed out the consequences. While 5,000 children die every month of malnutrition and preventable disease, UNICEF reports that 39% of Iraqi children suffer malnutrition, 20% chronically.

A study by Dr Richard Garfield, an epidemiologist at Columbia University, shows that the death rate for children in Iraq has tripled since 1990, a phenomenon unprecedented in the modern world. Other speakers at the meeting included Tony Benn and former Algerian president Ahmed Ben Bella. A particularly moving speech was made by Sukhdev Reel, mother of murdered black youth Ricky Reel, who spoke of her grief as a mother at losing a son, and of her empathy with the thousands of grieving Iraqi mothers.

In an interview with the Independent last year, Dennis Halliday described the “oil-for-food” policy, which he used to administer, as “band-aid”. The British and US governments regret this policy as proof of their concern for the people of Iraq. In November, Iraq was told by Parliament in November that it allowed Iraq to sell over $1 billion of oil every year to pay for food, medicine and other humanitarian goods — implying that this money was being diverted by Saddam Hussein for his other purposes.

In fact, as Cook well knows, 30% of the national income is diverted by the UN for its own operating expenses and for war reparations. In addition, the fall in oil prices, and the embargo on supply of spare parts for Iraq’s oil industry mean that the available income is far less than Cook has claimed. Even if the entire $1 billion was available, this would not be sufficient to rebuild Iraq’s shattered economy.

Cook further claimed that sanctions had never covered food and medicine. But food exports from Iraq were banned from August 1990 to March 1991 while many of the products, such as sugar and PAE, are actually sold.

Adenosine therapy, a combination of sustained bombing and the ban on exports of pumping gear and other essential equipment has caused a drop of 50% in the quantity of available water. In some regions, as much as 35% of this is contaminated with sewage and uranium-tipped artillery shells. Water-borne disease has become rampant, while the lack of drugs and medical equipment means that treatable conditions now lead to hundreds of deaths every week. Iraq’s children and poor, of course, suffer disproportionately from this.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization in 1995 about 7.9% of the population was thriving on trade, while 70% was in precarious conditions. Dennis Halliday commented at Conway Hall that members of the United Nations Security Council do not continue to punish the Iraqi people, including thousands of children every month, simply because they were unable to communicate with Saddam Hussein.

Whatever the crimes of Hussein against the people of Iraq, they are a fraction of those committed by the US and Britain. These states, who colonised the Middle East, who drew up the post-colonial borders, who built up Saddam Hussein in an attempt to defeat the Iranian revolution, and who continue to support Israeli 50-year war of dispossession and cultural genocide against Palestine, have no right to intervene in the affairs of Iraq or any other state.

Protests against the sanctions have been growing in the US. The Chicago-based Voices in the Wilderness group has a huge line from the US authorities for travelling to Iraq and distributing literature around.

The academics and activists Noam Chomsky, Edward Herren, 5000 swept, and Howard Zinn have described sanctions as “sanctioned mass-murder that is near holocaust proportions.”

In Britain, Voices in the Wilderness plans a National Day of Action Against Sanctions on 27 February, and the Campaign Against Sanctions and War on Iraq plans a national demonstration on 17 April. Tony Benn and Ahmed Ben Bella will be among the speakers. All will be expected to press to support this demonstration and its demands; all CPs should be calling on their MPs to denounce the criminal sanctions and demand that they be dropped.

Voices in the Wilderness, 12 Trinity Road, London N7 8JI. voices@rivuwk.freeserve.co.uk

Campaign Against Sanctions and War on Iraq, 2966, London WCIN 3XX.

Women’s protest fights Turkish butcher state

Women are frequently the least and most active campaigners against wars and repressive regimes. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, and the Women in Black in Israel and Belgium are among the best known groups.

A less well-known group is the Turkish Mothers of School, who, gather every week to protest at the disappearance, and presumed murder by the Turkish state, of their relatives.

A delegation of British women visited Istanbul in January to show solidarity with the Saturday Mothers, who face constant harassment from the Turkish authorities. JAMES KAFKA reports.

MEMBERS of the delegation, Palestinian Prime Minister’s Committee Against Disappearances, gave moving accounts of the torture during detention with mothers and wives of the disappeared.

The protest, in which the women place flowers in Istanbul’s Galata Tower, was prevented by police - about 300 armed police surrounded two mothers of disappeared and right support groups, and five British women.

On previous occasions, women who have been arrested because the protest was declared illegal last August. In one occasion, the women were held on a bus, which was then filled with tear gas. This repression may have deterred some women from joining the protest, but it has strengthened the resolve of those who continue, week after week, to demand the return of their loved ones, or their bodies.

In the course of Turkey’s war against the Kurdish people and Turkish socialists and human rights activists, some 2000 people have “disappeared” since 1993. The government and military have denied any involvement. But their responsibility is proved by the evidence of one of the few to reveal, revolutionary activist Ahyan Uzal, who was held from 29 November to 18 December 1995, beaten, threatened with execution, and interrogated about the Communist Party of Turkey (Marxist-Leninist). Ahyan’s speech to the second international conference against disappearances is published in Disappearances: Never Again, published by the ICAD.

Harassment

The war against the Kurds has spread inexorably westward, and hundreds of Turkish human rights activists have been harassed, including Turkey’s leading novelist Yasar Kemal. Leading sociologist Dr Ismail Basci and Kurdish MP Leyla Zana have received long political sentences for legal professional activity. Many members of the local political party HDP have been arrested, and several newspapers have been closed.

The army, which claims that it is protecting Turkey’s secular constitution against a threat of “Islamic fundamentalism”, has intervened in the country’s nominally democratic processes, insisting that they will prevent an Islamic party from forming the government should they win the forthcoming general election.

Indeed, the Islamist Welfare Party, which won the largest number of votes, has decided not to join the government, was subsequently banned.

Turkey is a key element in the Anglo-American system of control in the Middle East. Its recent military pact with Israel ensures that Syria, Iran and Iraq face the possibility of a concerted attack from two directions.

Although human rights violations may be used as a means to exclude Turkey from the EU, the British government continues to prop up the Turkish regime.

Despite the Labour party’s much vaunted “ethical foreign policy”, Britain’s Aerospace and British Leyland still arm the Turkish military, while British police help train the Turkish police. Meanwhile Kurdish and Turkish asylum seekers face continued harassment in Britain.

Labour movement must act in support of those facing Turkish repression.

Self-determination for the Kurdish people! Freedom of political activity in Turkey! Stop the harassment and imprisonment of asylum seekers! No arms sales or military support for Turkey!
Brighter prospects for Sri Lanka

SRI LANKA'S ruling People's Alliance (PA) has inflicted an electoral defeat in the North Western Province on the United National Party (UNP) who previously held the province. Elections took place for the provincial council at the end of January in this Sinhala dominated part of Sri Lanka. The election campaign saw a marked increase in accusations of violence over the last local government elections in 1997, according to the interim report on election violations. P. Sandanam reports.

One of the noticeable things about these elections was that the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) stood for the first time in a provincial council election and came third behind the two main parties.

The JVP, a Sinhala radical petty bourgeois movement, previously opposed the formation of provincial councils (PCs) in 1987 as a method of devolving power to minority Tamils. They launched a campaign of violence against the PCs in 1987, and then the government used state terror against them killing or disappearing, at least 6,000 people and destroying the leadership.

The chauvinist forces which won in the PC's left and today joined hands with the mili
tarist forces within government which are led by Deputy Anurad-
da Ratwatte and formed a so
called 'anti-terrorist movement' which campaigns for war against the Tamils and against all provin
cial governments.

Under new leadership the JVP have made a sharp turn to the left, demonstrated not only by their participation in the provincial elections but by the fact that they are closely allied with the New Left Front in all types of strug
gles against the onslaught of neol
ternal dominance. The newly formed New Left Front (NLF) comprising of the National Front for New Democracy (NFP), Leftist United Socialist Party (USP) - a party affiliated to Militant - and the New Democratic Front (NDF) managed to get a signifi
cantly increased vote. The total percentage of votes for the NLF was remarkable as the present government had come into power in 1994 as a coalition with the support of the Com
munist Party and the Lanka Samasamajpa Party (LSSP) - centre left - a defeat for the Sri Lankan left.

The blow was heavily felt in the NSSF as their popular leader, Vunodera Nanayakkara, split away from the group and joined the coalition to create a 'left' within the forces of the PC's. The PA claimed that they would be able to reach a just settlement of the Tamil question. Of course they have completely failed in this, and explained that the bour
ggeoisie would not be able to carry out their market-oriented policy.

In this election Vasu made a per
cussion statement asking the voters to vote for candidates who are campaigning for the progressive ideas that the PA supposedly stood for.

VOTE FOR LEFT

Asked by the media whether he saw anyone in the PA who fitted his criteria, he was forced to answer no. He had to passively say that the Left should be given a vote. Today the Left which stood to build its forces from ele
ments who are disillusioned with the PA can rejoice about the out
come.

The Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) - a non-governmental organisation - has shown that there were 675 reported incidents of violence in 45 days of the campaign and the main culprit was the PA.

The UNP certainly don't have liberalism in Sri Lanka. The UNP has a radical Muslim leader, the leader of the NLF, and this was a massive demonstra
tion of the capital in the western province, attacked by nearly 4,000 people.

The majority were in the UNP. Their demand was that the election result should be declared null and void. The UNP's main issue was violence and ballot rigging. The CMEV and the UNP have also come out with similar demands. In the united event of the NWP being dissolved and fresh elections being held, the left is sure to capture a better share of votes. According to a ruling by the Supreme Court, the government should hold elections in five other provinces.

These elections were won in keeping with the government on supposed "secu
rity reasons". The deputy defence minister is a key member of the chauvinist bloc, and said that elections will be held once the LTTE's People's Liberation Tigers (LTTE) is won.

The government is at a stale
mate. The Supreme Court has ruled against them over the post
government of local elections.

The LTTE is one of the other provinces, particularly in Western province, and is a major force in Western and Colombo. Once these elections are held, the Left is sure to gather more momentum and win a far more significant number of votes. The ruling coalition showing its complete inability to deliver and resorting to violent means of gathering votes clearly exposes its oppressive character.

Vickramabahu Karunanithi of the NSSF explained: "The Left within the PC coalition that planned to wage the day by day has failed utterly. The remnants, tight lipped while all these atrocities were committed.

Losing one of its significant strongholds will add to the decline of the UNP. Both the major parties pumped a massive amount of money into the elec

tions. The forces of dissent gained a 5 per cent vote in this election which started with violence, ballot rigging and state terror clearly shows that the Left wing forces in Sri Lanka are making their way to the forefront."

You've seen some articles: now buy the magazine!

International Viewpoint offers special low rates (for new sub
scriptions only)

- UK £20: cheques to Outlook International, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU
(Also available in USA $5: Canada $40: Aus
tralia $30: NZ $25: South Africa R90: Sweden 330 SEK: Denmark 300 DKK
(please send to: International Viewpoint, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU: other addresses on request).
A Socialist land reform programme

Making the Land ours

Dave Bangs

The issue of land reform is back on the public agenda after being largely ignored for 20 years. With the huge crisis of the farming industries, both here and in the rest of the world, the Scottish land reform proposals, and the international examples of the Zapataists, the Brazilian MST, and the Indian anti-GATT farmers, a political space is being re-created for a radical countryside politics. It seems like another world — though it is still within living memory — that Lloyd George could call at a meeting of 25,000 rural workers for the state ownership of land. Only 15 years ago back then (Right livelihood) could support, through the Labour Land Campaign, “the socialisation of all land owned.”

Despite half a century of the most brutal destruction of our biological and cultural resources and the wholesale elimination of rural land-based labour, any political challenge to the structure of land ownership has until now been effectively marginalised. Indeed, while we are in the post-war period, been a considerable re-legitimisation of big land ownership and the belief that social land politics will not be possible.

The legacy of Liberalism and Landbourism

A combination of the post-war structural changes in patterns of tenure and the breakdown of anti-socialist conceptions of land has contributed to our defeat. In the late nineteenth century debates on land were surrounded by the political supporters of Henry George’s Land Tax, it was the Georgists who were the true “free traders” that the solution lay in attacking the perennial problem of poverty. The idea of land rent and site development value has been deeply troubling the market economy.

The so-visible results of rural and urban landlordism brought them thousands of working class supporters, and the formal adoption of much of their policy by both Labour and the Liberal/Democratic parties.

Yet the progress of post-war productivity has broken up the old tripartite structure of rentier landlord, tenant farmer and waged worker. At one end of the scale land-based labour and small farming have been largely eliminated. At the other end the landed and tenant roles have been cut off. The agricultural process has been automated.

Pundits like George Harvey (“The Killing of the Countryside”) call for farmers to become entrepreneurs again, free from the straight-jacket of subsidy and state control.

A passionate and powerful polemic against agri-business is entangled in a confused attack on any state control, and an advocacy of a small farming agriculture in a liberalised market which looks back to a non-existent golden age.

The new land rights organisation The Land is Ours, which seemed to offer such promise at its inception, continues to operate at the margins of the debate rather than at its centre. It does have many strengths. It understands that the issues of urban and rural land are linked, and it operates across both environments.

It uses direct action as a key weapon, and it encompasses a whole range of anti-development, access, biodiversity, and sustainable farming campaigns. But its vision seems heavily “back-to-the-lambda”, and too much of its energy goes into endorsing utopian and escapist initiatives whose history of incorporation and marginalisation is almost as old as capitalism.

The debate in Scotland seems to have progressed furthest, with formal proposals published by the Scottish Office provoking broadsheet headlines like “Clearing the Lairds” (Daily Telegraph), and “As Last: an End to Feudalism” (The Independent).

Yet the proposals are anything but radical. They offer the possibility of a community right to buy only at the point of sale. They offer no new resources, and they apply only to “undeclared” remote fragile communities, and they do not even promise the abolition of agricultural rent. Furthermore, the suggestions on wildlife protection may leave Scotland with a weakened system, given the developmentalist thinking behind it.

For a Socialist Countryside

A socialist politics of the countryside must be based firmly on two principles. Firstly, that the forces for progressive social change lie overwhelmingly in our towns and cities, not in the countryside itself. Even the days of Joseph Arch’s Agricultural Labourers Union (in the 1870s) the support of urban workers was crucial to the new union’s survival. Nowadays rural working people are marginalised by middle and owning class in-migrants, and are without an independent political voice.

Secondly our socialist demands must be based on democracy and self-management. The countryside needs to be managed by the collective of all its users, both urban and rural.

So what should our programme include?

- Maximum size limits

- Presently, huge local monopolies exist. Strict ceilings should operate, related to the quality of the land - as they already do in many other bourgeois democracies.

- The socialisation of all land holdings above the maximum size limits.

- Our demands for socialisation are based on a highly capitalised modern industry with a global division of labour and a highly skilled workforce, not on a peasant economy of hard-worked smallholdings (like Russia in the 1920s). Our problems are with over-production, not under-production (as in Stalinit Russia).

- The forms of social ownership will vary considerably, with cooperatives, local authority and neighbourhood management, and a strong central state sector. Already a significant socially-owned sector exists in some areas, though much of it is a “sleeping giant” in terms of its progressive potential.

- Demarcation of land management

- The high technical and cultural level at which many user groups operate (farm and forestry staff, conservation and recreation managers and others) would enable a rapid development of good self-management practice.

- In Brighton the Keep Our Downs Public Coalition proposed such a new accountable structure for the borough’s 11,000 acre estate.

- Supervisory structures also need to exist for those areas not in public ownership, and only partial models exist for such bodies. User groups would automatically have the right of representation proportionate to their social weight.

- Socialisation of all development rights

Modern planning law has created a complex system of negative control of change of use and development, which is ameliorative and reactive, and, at worst, a mere facilitator of private profit.

It does not tackle the main anti-social dynamics of the market economy in the countryside: the creation of mega-cities, the destruction of natural and cultural resources, the elimination of land-based labour or the development of unsustainable transport systems.

We must elevate the community and the state to the role of sole developers. Built development should be based primarily on local and national development agencies, direct labour organisation, social co-operatives, and the central state.

- End all production subsidies and means test all conservation and employment subsidies.

- Production subsidies are a tool for capitalist agribusiness, and for the destruction of the environment. Conservation subsidies will lead only to the government serving to re-legitimise big land ownership. It is crazy that single parents with housing benefit means tested to the hilt, while producers of luxury food are paid for every cope they replant.

- Democratic access to land as a right

There are few farmers of working class origin, few from city areas, few women farmers, and virtually no black farmers. On the Labour-controlled 11,000 acre Brighton Downs estate one extended family controls a quarter of the farmed land.

The case for the hereditary ownership of land

Hereditary ownership perpetuates not the conditions that underlie the cultural power of landed wealth by its constant engendering of image, status and tradition (as though only ruling class people had such things).

Land-based occupations need to be normalised by acquiring the character of salaried jobs — as secure and well remunerated as all useful jobs deserve to be — rather than as rights to the total control of fractions of the land.

The issue of land tenure is not some sideline to the issues of healthy, sustainable food production, biodiversity, or access rights. Ownership is power, and the countryside needs that power to be socialised and democratised.

From our towns and cities we will reclaim our countryside.

- Sunday March 21: the Sussex group St George’s is having an important trespass walk to bolster support and publicity for the Keep Our Downs (Prentice’s Right To Roam Bill on March 23rd). We urge all socialists to attend this struggle for “Leisure Nec- cesity”. Meet Brighton Station 10:00 am sharp. Wrap up warm. Wear good boots. Bring packed lunch. Sorry no dogs. Walk up to 6 Contact Brighton (01273) 620 815.
Socialist Outlook

Marxism: key to the national question

Paul Flannigan

It is often asserted that the Marxist tradition has made little contribution to an understanding of the rise of national struggles in the modern age. But this is an assertion that does not apply to any modern work of the genre.

One Marxist in particular, Lenin, actu- rally predicted that the desire for national independence would become an arena for explosive revolutionary activity in our century.

From the time of Lenin until today, the Marxist position on the national struggle has included an attempt to inter-link three concepts: the understanding of imperialism, the concept of self-determination, and socialist revolutionary strategy.

A distinctively Marxist thesis can be succinctly formulated in the epoch of capitalist imperialism: national independence takes on a new importance and socialist support for democratic self-determination becomes a central element of socialist strategy for winning large sections of the exploited to the cause of internal national social revolution.

For some it may come as a surprise to discover that it has been Marxists who, if nothing else, have had the courage to disown the idea of national self-determination. After all, isn’t this supposed to be a socialist principle? Isn’t it American President Wilson who turned this idea into the highest principle of international law?

Lip service

The answer to that was explained by Lenin in 1916 in his pamphlet on imperialism; in the era of imperialism the great capitalist powers would only pay lip-service to the demand for self-determination. On most occasions, he predicted, the capitalist states would disown their own principle.

It didn’t have the same logic as Lenin’s prediction proved itself sound in practice. In 1918, shortly after he had outlined his programme, Lenin advocated on the basis of the revolution in favour of self-determination for the colonies. Lenin’s government, which was in favour of self-determination, was only in the Government of the Soviet Union.

Lenin was the key leader who forged our thinking on the national question because his theory of imperialism showed us how to combat the capitalist bourgeoisie and its allies.

Lenin, in 1876, made a fundamental point to which we have come back ever since. He was clear that the trend towards capitalist world power was the result of the exploitation of the many for the few. Imperialism at the level of the world economy was about exploiting the actual production of what was called the world market.

It was Lenin’s thesis that the super-profits extracted mainly by Russian capitalists and especially the Russian bourgeoisie, played a crucial role in saving advanced capitalism from potential social crises. They shored up the entire world system, to such an extent that capitalists were even afforded the richer to pay off certain layers of privileged workers.

Lenin drew two political conclusions from his analysis.

The first was that imperialism had no interest in spreading its own democratic ideals across the world: “both in foreign and home policy, imperialism strives towards violations of democracy, towards reaction. In this sense imperialism is indis- pensably the negation of democracy in general, of all democracy, and not just of one or its own demands, national self-determination.”

The second conclusion was that if the imperialists denied access to super-profits in the colonies and neo-colonies, the whole capitalist chain held the potential to be politically undermined.

During periods of crisis the fomenting of anti-imperialist movements based on the right of self-determination would effectively undermine the whole capitalist world economy. Lenin therefore urged socialists not to shy away from fighting for the capitalist demand for national self-determination, but on the contrary to fight hardest on its behalf. Writing in defence of the Irish 1916 insurrection Lenin declared:

“Self-determination is a political revolution is conceivable without revolts of the small nations in the colonies and not in Europe. The utmost it can achieve is the stupefaction of the bourgeoisie and the semi-bourgeoisie masses against oppression by the latter.”

Lenin’s theoretical position was that “out of the church and the monarchy, against national oppression... to imagine all this is to repudiate social revolution.”

Strategy

Lenin’s determination to uphold this right had as much to do with rev- olutionary strategy as political principle. His understanding was that capitalism had entered a new stage of development, which he termed imperialism. Lenin outlined five principal features of imperialism as:

1. The concentration of capital into monopolies and cartels.
2. The merging of banking capital and industrial capital into finance capital.
3. The new importance of capital export as opposed to trade.
4. The domination of the world between international monopolies.
5. The territorial division of the world between the big imperialist powers.

For Lenin the bottom line was that capital- ism had entered an imperialist stage which brought with it an even greater level of exploitation for the many and privileges for the few. Imperialism at the level of the world economy was about exploiting the actual production of what was called the world market.

Marxism is the only school of political theory that actually forewarns us of what to expect from the great capitalist democracies.

Marxists always expect imperialist solu- tions which favour big business instead of democratic ones that might help free producers to overthrow capitalism.

Without such a theory we are easily led into an empiricism which is always left dis- tumbled and unable to deliver on its fine-sounding democratic ideals.
Letters

Too harsh a review of Brenner?

I’M SURPRISED there has been no comment about Andrew Klimmer’s hard-hitting review, recently reprinted in International Viewpoint, of Robert Brenner’s special issue of New Left Review. Brenner is an editor of ‘Against the Current’ the magazine of the revolutionary group Solidarity, within which most US supporters of the Fourth International can be found.

Brenner’s thesis is that the long economic boom, which WW2 was ended mainly by inter-capitalist competition. Most British leftists argue otherwise, suggesting that whereas wages decline, squeezed profits and triggered the recession of the 1970s.

Socialist Outlook’s article was an especially harsh criticism suggesting that Brenner’s views opened the door to reformism. I wonder if the criticism went far.

We need to be rather cautious about the ‘back to the 1930’s economic perspective that most British left groups are developing.

Brenner’s analysis seems to counter not only those who anticipate a recession like the 1930s, but also those who think world markets can develop even grow worldwide.

The revolutionary left needs a reasoned debate about the world economy.

Generally, I think it mistaken to argue that Brenner’s view cuts against revolutionary socialism. There are some serious problems with Brenner’s article. However his historical and political grasp are excellent.

The main problem as I see it is that, because of his neoclassical theory of value, Brenner dismisses the falling price ratio as an operational fact.

I’m sure this would be an interesting debate for Socialist Outlook to explore further.

Chris Brooks,
Reading

Look north for action on Section 28

MARK LEWIN’S article on the anti-gay Section 28 of the 1990 Local Government Act (January 1999) rightly notes that the repeal of Section 28 seems to have fallen off the agenda of some London based “campaigning organised groups”. Had he used his web-browser to look a bit further than his local group, he would have found a different story.

Campaign against HIV voluntary organisations such as George House Trust in the North West, or the AIDS Richards Trust in Bristol have never forgotten that Section 28 exists and have continued to campaign for its immediate repeal.

Section 28 theoretically outlawed the “promotion of homosexuality” by local authorities. But one of the indirect effects has been to frighten schools from offering sex education for both Jews and gay men. Is it any wonder that HIV infections amongst young gay men continues to rise if sex education is denied. Section 28 is costing lives.

Surveys of MPs (by George House Trust and Stonewall) show there is no significant support in the House for maintaining this law. A one line Bill could scrap it.

It is not acceptable for the massive majority new Labour Government to use any excuse, including that of an un-elected House of Lords, to mean that legalised discrimination continues and the desperately needed sex education remains missing for another year.

For further details of the campaign against Section 28 contact George House Trust. (www.georgehousetrust.org.uk) Text of an open letter from GM, ART and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on AIDS can also be found here.

Tim Pickstone,
George House Trust

Time to get good guys together?

FRANK Wainwright (Letters, Dec 1998) is right on the subject of revolutionary regroupment: “it seems there is a spirit of rapprochement in the air”. The event in November reminded me of the Workers Press/WRP sponsored event in November 1986 on the Hungarian Revolution which Bob Pennington, Balazs Nagy, Cliff Slaughter, Peter Fyer, Bill Hartley and myself addressed an audience of several hundred militant students from across the far left.

The fact that some previous attempts at political fusion between supporters of different left papers should not deter us from trying to rework the dispersed forces of the revolutionary left today.

One spectacular failure was that of the weekly Socialist Organiser, which came from a fusion between two papers, Socialist Press and Workers Action (no relation to today’s publication of the same name). The former supporters of Socialist Press were expelled from the ranks as the others politically degenerated into the current now known as the Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL), known for their controversial views on international questions like Ireland and Israel/Palestine.

At a recent debate between the AWL and Alan Thornton on the European Single Currency, AWL supporters layed like a pack of wolves and abused Alan, equating his opposition to Maastricht with the views of the Tory right.

Whatever my personal disagreements with Alan over European, there is no basis for political degeneracy of this nature.

The major problem today is that many comrades are becoming demoralised by the low level of class struggle, writing contributions in What Next? and New Interventions arguing for ‘rebuilding it all’.

This is a cover for dumping all the theoretical baggage which differentiates Trotskyism differs to other left wing political philosophies, that is, defence of the permanent revolution, the transitional method, the Marxist theory of State, our understanding of the degeneration of the formerly Stalinist state, and the confidence that the working class is the only class capable of seizing power from the hour.

Michael Calvert, London

More confusion on Zionism and Palestine

STEVE COLLINS seems to get the question about the eleventh anniversary of the Zionists state since 1998 has continued to defend the illusion of an imperialist position” (Jan 99).

First we have the hot air about left Zionists and how some of them were pro-Moscow. Well, the record of Stalinism in supporting the state of Israel is well documented, and for us, is neither here nor there - except that it confirms our view of the rotten upstarts who used to run the Kremiln.

Then we have the real howler, “What do you think Israel should have done in the face of the gaussian/Ira/jordan/syrian/Arab League armies?” It’s hard to believe that a Marxist

would pose the question in such a way! (And I have it on very good authority that Steve is indeed a marxist.)

The facts are: if we need to restate them that the very nature of the Zionist project in Palestine.

- is racist, based as it is on the idea of building a racially exclusive “Jewish state” (the point here, of course, is not whether Jews are “a race”, but that they’re seen as such by the Zionists - see, for example, the so-called “right of return”)

- is based on the idea of a “land without a people for a people without a land”. Well, that land had people who had their land stolen from them

- denies the possibility of Palestinian self-determination - there is no “right of return” for them!

- creates a “little Jewish Ulster” in permanent conflict with its neighbours. Can anyone doubt that this is why the US so heavily bankrolls (the Israeli state?)

This situation is the main obstacle to the unity of Pales.

tin and Israeli workers. When some can only wring their hands and see a tragic “no solution” some who see the only choice as being between bourgeois nationalism and Zionism, between the PLO and the Israeli state, socialists have an alternative - a class alternative. We defend the fight for a bi-national, secular worker’s state, as part of a socialist Middle East - the only solution for both Palestinians and Israelis.

Jim Padmore, Spain

New Labour summed up

Margaret Cook says that Robin sold his principles in favour of power. Tony Blair says Robin is superb. Enough said.

John Nicholson, Manchester

You get a better view with

SPECIAL OFFER (UK only): One year of Socialist Outlook, PLUS one year of International Viewpoint (Fourth International magazine) for only £30.

PLEASE send me:
12 issues of Socialist Outlook
12 issues of Socialist Outlook, plus International Viewpoint. I enclose £...

Name: 
Address: 
Post Code: 
Phone: 
Age: 

SEND TO: Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU
As ministers pass the buck with under-funded deals for teachers and nurses...

Pay up for public service staff!

Public services under the cosh: SEE INSIDE, pages 5, 6, and 7