THREE WHEELS ON HIS WAGON

AFTER two years of seeming to walk on electoral water, Tony Blair and his team are showing themselves to be fallible. The European elections saw Labour voters stay home in droves, most conspicuously in areas with safe Labour seats. This has allowed a limited revival of the Tories, though they remain discredited on many key issues where Labour has not stolen their policies.

Blair will be pleased that the far left, with few exceptions, has failed to win over disillusioned Labour voters to its candidates, and will claim that in a general election they would have "nowhere else to go" but vote Labour.

But New Labour's links with Murdoch and the press are under strain; there is no short-term chance of winning support for the EMU project; the Irish "peace" process is on the edge of crisis; John Prescott's transport policies are a sick joke; scandals are still brewing over GM food; and the full cost of the bombing of Serbia is still to emerge.

So there is still scope for things to go horribly wrong for Blair. His solution to the dip in the Party's poll ratings has been to emphasise again his New Labour credentials, step up the offensive on welfare rights and asylum seekers, and focus his attention on winning well-heeled middle class support. It is not clear whether Blair even realises a wheel has come off his bandwagon. But New Labour has no way to repair the damage.

EDITORIAL – page 3
EURO-elections p.10-11
Tameside Strikers - still fighting for justice

AFTER 14 months on strike, more than 20 Tameside care workers are still continuing their dispute in the industrial tribunal. They are asking the trade union and company for better support and, issued the following statement on June 2.

"We are writing to extend your support to our just cause because over 20 of the strikers are continuing a campaign for justice against all odds.

We do not feel what we have been offered by the Tameside Care Group is a just settlement. The offer was made ten days before the industrial tribunal and was accompanied with a biased letter from the solicitors acting for UNISON in the Tribunal. Some strikers felt that they were being railroaded.

The offer was described as 'fair and substantial'. But the offer of £500,000 was to be split between 200 people. Therefore, we feel the offer was neither fair nor substantial.

The offer was based on redundancy terms, and did not include pension protection or any amount for damages for financial difficulties the strikers have found themselves in after 14 months on strike.

All those who had Industrial Tribunal cases were balloted (ie 187 people), regardless of the length of time they were strike. 85 of the original strikers were still on strike. 63 of those balloted voted against the offer, several strikers did not receive ballot papers, and others did not get their ballot paper returned within the short period allocated.

The ballot papers were sent out by UNISON on a Tuesday and had to be returned by 5pm the following Tuesday. 39 ballot papers were not returned. Some who never came out on strike were also ballot.

We do not think the ballot process was democratic, since it has come to light both UNISON and Tameside Care Group are aware who voted for and against. After the ballot those who voted against have been sent letters and been telephoned in an attempt to apply pressure on them to accept the offer.

We are now preparing our case for the Industrial tribunal. A new date for the tribunal will be announced in four weeks' time.

We will be using the Tameside Care Group strike fund in any legal action, but will not use it for any other purpose.

We would like to thank all those who have supported the strikers, and we will continue to fight for a fair settlement for all the strikers.

Stop Prescott's Tube hike-off

JOHN PRESCOTT'S announcement that sub-surface London Underground lines will be given to Railtrack marks a further step down the road of privatization.

In separating them into 'deep lines', to be offered to other companies, Railtrack has been rather clever in picking the economically safer lines. Despite much talk, before the General Election of standing up to the fat cats Prescott has once again given into Railtrack. With Railtrack already making £1bn a year profit every day from the ex-BR railway, sharing their share price rose over £1.5bn at the expectation of even greater profits. Prescott continues to present his "Public Private Partnership" as some kind of short term leasing arrangement. After all everything will revert back to public ownership in the end. But this is a sick joke.

For Underground workers involved it means immediate privatization, with their jobs being transferred to Railtrack subcontractors. They won't even have the safeguards that we BR workers received under the Tory privatization, losing pensions and travel facilities if their new bosses transfer services from Underground work to other areas.

For Underground users the plans will inevitably mean massive hikes in prices. And despite the promise of investment in upgrading track and in new lines no guarantee of improvement in the rapidly deteriorating service.

The House of Commons Transport Select Committee has published a damning report on the proposals. They point out that PPP is the worst financial option possible, costing up to £1 billion more than the (non-privatization) alternatives.

But of course, as well as helping their business off the hook, the scheme has the (one) advantage of keeping the Transport Secretary in a job "by removing requirement" down. A con- sideration much to be valued in meeting the Euro-convergence criteria.

Underground workers' trade unions had been pressing the government for a response. While the RMT has organised strikes against the privatisation, last year the ASLEF welcomed Prescott's plans. A reality of a threat to all tube workers has become apparent this has not changed. At an important rally to mark the reorganisation of the campaign against privatisation Dave Rix, ASLEF General Secretary joined with Jimmy Knapp of RMT to condemn the move. This is a major step forward and must be welcomed. The prospect of united action of RMT members must be encouraged.

As Prescott heretofore has seen the three hundred or so tube workers who came to the rally. Speakers from the floor loudly urged the unions to call joint industrial action in defence of their members. After Prescott and Knapp tried to duck out of any such commitment, pledging only to produce some joint propaganda. But with ASLEF reps no longer able to argue that this is an issue which does not affect these opportunities to build unity of purpose in the depth of the recession, it seems that both unions must not be missed.

Jimmy Knapp has never wanted to take the action necessary to win this campaign. On the one hand, the union has refused to allow any public criticism or calling to account of RMT sponsored MPs, despite RMT policy specifically allowing it annually.

On the other he did his best to frustrate the industrial campaign last year. He tried to fizzle out this spring when some Left members of the TUC and Regional Council took flight at wavering support in some depots.

The Campaign Against Tube Privatization needs to be supported with local campaigns built right across London. Everyone can demand for the London Mayor (Tony, Lib-Dem and Labour), with the exception of Trevor Phillips, has already denounced Prescott's privatization plans.

The whole issue must be made Prescod's part of the London Assembly elections. An industrial campaign must also be reactivated. RMT tube union reps have shown they are prepared to fight. ASLEF is not known in as well. Above all, it is important that the rank and file is in control.

Tube workers know that united action can be effective in bringing services to a standstill. In days many ASLEF members honed RMT picket lines despite advice to the contrary from their reps.

With both unions standing together the campaign is unstoppable. Encouraging such joint action must form a central part of the strategy for the next months.

July 10: Defend Public Services!

THE SACKED Tameside strikers have called a conference in July on Saturday July 10, on the second anniversary of their local election campaign this year, defending public services and opposing privatisations in all its forms.

They found themselves on the sharp end of privatisation when they were sacked for defending the public service, the privatised company which had taken over the running of the care homes where they worked.

The strikers want to work with all those coming into battle: fire fighters, council cleaners, community campaigns against hospital closures and housing sell-offs.

They are invited to the conference from trade unions and community campaigns around the country fighting similar battles in many forms: Best Value, the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), Trusts, redundancies, housing and school closures, local government nationalization and so on.

The conference will be sponsored by Banner Theatre, FBU District Committee, Greater Manchester Trades Union Council, Tameside Strikers Support Group, TGWU 8389 and others.

Conference: 11.45 am - 4 pm Saturday July 10 Mechanics Institute, Princess Street, Manchester

A Conference No: 86 7/1/98 £50.

Cost: Unemployed/employed £1, waged £3, delegates £5, disabled access.

While tube staff fight privatization, RMT rights singers are fighting the left

Crash helmets may be needed all round in the Tube!

At the time of writing, the latest ASLEF report gives 743 tube workers off work, the tube staff campaign for a crash helmet" July 10: Defend Public Services!

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Sacrificing Labour’s core support

The Honeymoon is ending. After two years of seeming to walk on electoral water, Tony Blair and his team are getting increasingly damp, and showing themselves to be fallible. Although the clearest warning sign came in Labour’s feeble showing in what might be seen as a special one-off event – the European elections – it is not to be dismissed because Blair has a tendency to miss wider implications. Despite leadership contender Rhodri Morgan in union law of those who have warned that the results reveal structural failures in the way the party project itself and its strategy of securing a majority by implementing conservative, right-wing policies to draw in middle class floating voters. In the Euro-elections, Morgan pointed out, the turn-out in Labour’s traditional “core” areas – the inner cities – was generally as low as 10 per cent; in the north west, Gordon Brown’s area, the turn-out was 20 per cent, while in the most prosperous Tony-voting areas the turn-out was closer to 30 per cent.

Although there are obviously more people on the lower income scales, Morgan points out that Labour paid the price for not listening to too few of its core voters at a point where the Tories were having some success in this quarter. New Labour has offered too little to galvanise the enthusiasm of low-paid working class voters, who were not consulted when the Liberal Democrats and disappointed have so far largely rejected the option of voting for alternative left wing candidates. Blair is quite audible if these core voters decide at the next election not to vote at all. The are not enough middle class voters to be won. The government has propped a drop in its heartland vote on the scale of recent local and European elections. All of a sudden, with the shattering of the Tories beginning to reawaken and regroup, the previously unthinkable prospect of Blair – like the Wilson government of 1966, which lost to Ted Heath in 1970 – going from a large majority in one election to defeat at the next, has become a tangible danger.

The blundering of the TUC to its members trying to defend their interests by the statements of the National Automotive Officer, Tony Woodley, in the Birmingham Evening Mail: “People should not lose sight of the big picture. This agreement was voted is by over 72% of the workforce for the sake of the future of the whole company.” “Make no mistake about it – we have got an agreement that is needed to secure the longer-term future of the company. That democratic decision will be honed.”

Labour insiders The “big picture” ignores the affect on workers’ lives of longer hours, and underpayment. The same goes for the whole of Rover: the workers at Cowley will soon be on a 41 hour working week, but only paid for 37. There is to be no rise in Rover wages for the next two years. If the workers did not know what they were voting for when they were blacked out, they do not have a right to resist and look to resist the issue of banking hours. Instead of being heard by the Government, management, Rover and BMW-workers should be brought together in order to plan a joint campaign to银河社区公司的“productivity” offensive.

GMB plucked up courage to criticise the feeble £33.60 level of the minimum wage, while still leaving room to argue that the problem was the “presentation” of policies. There is no sign that Tony Blair and his inner team of modermisers are prepared to bring back the black pit. New Labour’s electoral strategy, Peter Mandelson, to instead of a public meeting with Labour MPs that Blair himself and his cabinet were the “trend-setting” government, New Labour. There is talk of a reshuffle to purge the few remaining ministers associated with “old Labour” – sympathetic Labour’s brutal attack on welfare rights for the disabled, for single parents and for refugees is to be stepped up by the arrogant Alastair Darling. Within the party itself, the inexorable logic of New Labour dictates a further dismantling of the local party apparatus.

A secret internal report leaked to the Independent suggests New Labour is setting up a system of warnings and sanctions that effectively obliterating the distinction between members of the party and members of the public – and abolishing the local CLP committees in order to reduce even further the influence of “activists”. Instead there would be formal meetings of members to discuss policy issues. This suggestion – already implemented by one CLP in Kelving – raises other interesting questions. Of course, if the party works hard enough to do so, it can eventually drive away its remaining activists: but then who will want to work of getting out the vote, and who will organise it?

The Blair project still has important facitrs helping it along. The utterly spineless Labour Party, dominated by careerists, philistine Blairite droids with neither roots nor scruples, is his big asset: the cowardice of the union bureaucracy and low level of strikes and rank and file union activity another. Blair will be pleased that the Tories remain discredited on the key issues where Labour has not stolen their policies: and that few exceptions, has failed to win electoral support. But with New Labour’s links with Murdoch and the press under strain, the Irish “peace” process in the edge of crisis, John Prescott’s transport policies a sick joke, scandals brewing over GM food, and the full cost of the bombing of Sarajevo still to emerge, there is still scope for things to go horribly wrong for Blair. His reforms have cut off the mechanism for democratic debate within the Party, neutral the Party conference, gagged the activists and surrounded himself with a cabal of sycophantic doctors. So it is not clear whether he knows: a wheel has come off his bandwagon, or has any idea of how to repair the damage. And to win back labour’s core support means adopting radical policies and a whole of new rhetoric to Blair, Brown and the New Labour team. Will any leading figure in the trade union or Labour movement have the courage to get up and fight on this platform? • See centre pages
Civil service
union bureaucrats
stitch up ballot

Darren Williams, Branch Secretary of PCS in DWS Newport (personal capacity) THE NATIONAL Executive Committee of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), which represents 250,000 mainly civil service members, has recently announced the outcome of a crucial ballot of the union’s membership.

The ballot-paper asked five questions: three on the union’s constitution, and two on PCS campaigns against privatisation and the anti-union laws.

Of the PCS members who voted (less than a third of those eligible) overwhelmingly supported the union’s proposed decision to reject the proposed changes to the running and policy of the union. So it is an inspiring demonstration of democracy in action, and an convincing endorsement of the NEC’s leadership.

Far from it. Not for the first time, PCS’s national leadership has secured members’ support by presenting them in a deliberately misleading manner. In so doing, they have stolen the last attempts by activists to turn PCS into a democratic, fighting union.

Lancashire: The asylum

The latest developments are in keeping with the recent history of civil service unionism. The record, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, has not been an impressive one.

Key to this has been the bizarre approach of the political factions which have “led” the main unions over this period (called the “Moderate” in CGB and “M” in NUPE/PCT, in defiance of the Trades Descriptions Act). Faced with the most anti-union, anti-public sector government in living memory, they quickly decided that they wouldn’t get anywhere by justifying the government’s attacks on their members’ interests and rights.

While they did resist those attacks in public, they also engage in a “constructive dialogue” with the very people looking to slash their members’ jobs, pay and conditions.

They therefore concentrated their flak on those who argued for a different approach — particularly if this involved industrial action — characterising them as a sinister lunatic fringe probably in the pay of the Kremlins.

While the Thatcher and Major Governments cut tens of thousands of civil service jobs, sold off whole departments, introduced performance-related pay and ended national collective bargaining on pay and conditions, they met no more than a show of resistance. Successive conferences condemned this and passed resolutions insisting that the unions take a real stand — so the leaderships simply ignored the resolutions.

Then the merger of CPSC and PTC gave the bureaucracy a chance at getting on the agenda, and for all that, they could go on running things their way. They drew up the constitution of the new union in a way which gave them greater powers than ever before, at the expense of democracy for the members.

Conferences and NEC elections were to be held every two years instead of annually. Sovereignty was effectively transferred from conference to the NEC, which was given the power to make policy, provided it then held a ballot of the membership to confirm its decisions.

The merger process itself gave a foretaste of the way this would work in practice. Having drawn up a rulebook which ignored conference decisions, the NEC then proceeded to completely mislead way; unprepared for the NEC.

Meet the new boss, same as the old boss

The first conference of the new union, in Brighton in November 1994, was billed as a great opportunity for moderate optimism than might have been expected.

The new NEC president, Peter Donellan — a member of the ex-PTC Membership First group — chaired in a relaxed manner, even his most aggressive, ironically causing pleasant surprise among his colleagues for the way among many of his supposed allies.

No doubt for reason, conference managed to get a reasonable amount of business done, passing many worthwhile motions. Some aimed to restore the comparatively democratic practices of CPSC and PTC, others committed the union to serious campaigns on pay, jobs, privatisation, and a range of other issues.

Early post-conference circulars suggested that the NEC might be thinking of putting some of the decisions from the last conference into practice. Reports from NEC meetings also gave the impression of a leadership for optimism: although the new committee was packed with the same people who had run CPSC and PTC, differences between the Moderates and the new NEC groups started to emerge, with the latter sometimes taking a slightly more militant and principled approach, successfully opposing some of the Moderates’ more cynical proposals.

The first real test of the new NEC has, however, been this ballot for a new constitution. Spectacularly failed, as the dominant factions have reverted to type. In a cynical move, the NEC issued a conference required the NEC to ballot members and to ask them to agree changes to the constitution and direction of the union, in an attempt to repair some of the damage done by the incumbent leadership.

Rather than carry out conference decisions in good faith, the NEC, looked for a way to hijack the ballot and ensure that members would not stand to carry on as before.

Ballots in Wonderland

Each of the resolutions passed by conference required the NEC to call for a ‘yes’ vote. It did this — but only by changing the interpretation of what was at stake. As it was, the NEC was making a positive proposal, instead of simply opposing initiatives which had been democratically agreed at conference.

Thus, instead of asking “Do you agree with conference resolution A560, that PCS should campaign for the repeal of laws which curtail the rights of union members?” the ballot-paper asked the bizarre question, “Do you support your NEC’s recommendation to keep members’ rights under existing trade-union laws, and therefore to reject conference resolution A560?”

By asking leading questions like this — and by abusing the union’s resources to bombard members with propaganda, in the form of letters reminding “members” to vote, etc. — the NEC has achieved its objective of ensuring that it can continue to do the bare minimum to defend members’ interests, without worrying about any comebacks.

The link between constitutional issues and day-to-day concerns about jobs, pay and conditions need to be made clear by the left. Without a democratic structure to ensure that they act in members’ interests, the NEC cannot be relied upon to fight for anything other than its own power and privileges.

Activists have a responsibility to do the work of creating a new democracy in the union, with members making informed decisions after collective discussion, instead of voting in isolation on the basis of the NEC’s mendacious circular.

The current right-wing leadership have demonstrated that they can’t be trusted to defend members’ interests — or even to carry out conference decisions.

PCS members who recognise the need for a change in direction will have to mobilise to secure the election of an alternative leadership — in the form of the Left Unity slate in the national elections, next year.

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**Fighting the far right**

**Ending the Nightmare**

Socialists against racism and fascism

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**Boost needed for union rights campaign**

Neil Murray

THE CONFERENCE of Reclaim Our Rights, the TUC and Trades Union Congress’s Campaign for the Repeal of the Anti-union Laws met in London on June 21, attended by about 80 delegates.

New affirmations from unions that national and local level are welcome the latest national union to affiliate being MSIP. So is winning the argument against the anti-union laws at least.

Chairman is reported to have called for their repeal. But the campaign itself has been losing in line. Many regional committees of the campaign barely function, and the attempt to make May Day this year into a national demonstration in favour of trade union rights faltered.

Partly this was in co-ordination with local May Day events and difficulties with the run-in to May Day conference but the campaign has been unable to mobilise people as well as other resolutions passed. Yet the meeting was defiant and acknowledged this letter.

While this is partly attributable to the extremely low level of trade union struggle, with the result that workers come up against the laws in practice, it is also down without many of those involved see the campaign. Moving away is seen as sufficiently to automatically mobilise the membership rather than as a step along the campaign.

This confusion was shown by the mickeying of the political constitution which would have allowed left formations within the TUC to present the ground that the campaign did not want to support ‘fac- tions’ within the unions.

While this is not the biggest issue facing the campaign it does show a reluctance to reconcile the split of union leaderships even when they support something on paper. Many people complained that much of the left will not get involved in Reclaim Our Rights because they see it as a SLP campaign. While many (by no means all) of the leaders are SLP members, this becomes self-fulfilling if others stay out.

The conference heard several good speeches, including from John Foster, General Secretary of the NUJ about the difficulties of organising in the media and Shirley Winstan of the joint Netwes Support Group, reflecting on the fight against compulsory facing the movement and way of fighting back.

On the basis of a statement from the committee and a resolution from Waterford Reform the conference also attempted to address the future of the campaign. The test will be if they can be put into practice.
Left revolt stems
offensive by
UNISON right wing

Fred Leplat, Islington
UNISON (personal capacity)
DESTRUCTION with the Labour
government was the dominant
mensuration at the UNISON
conference in Brighton.
Fifteen hundred delegates repre-
senting 1.3 million public sector
workers gave only a polite recep-
tion to government minister Mo-
hammad Hamid’s address at the
conference. For her part she made lit-
tle attempt to defend the
government’s record, instead spent
time telling amusing personal
anecdotes.
UNISON leaders were prepared
to rise to this mood in their
rhetoric.
NMC secretary Jean Geldhart,
out to keep the right sector con-
cerred by saying “we have a govern-
ment prepared to subsidi-
ize the providers of public
services and their users to a market
eco-
omy. We expect them to deliver what
many of us campaigned for 2 years
ago.”
In the main debate conference
on privatization, General Secretary
Robert Bickemstauffer repeated a
theme often used expression during
the week when he said that “if millions
could be saved by closing a base for
that war (in the Balkans), then
millions could be found at the
drop of a hat for that war on poverty and
unemployment”.
Delegates understand that the only
option by the platform in terms
of action was to support another
campaign next year for a decent minimum wage.
The national demonstration in
Newcastle last year on 10 April had
attracted 20,000 people and the
harnessing could hardly be seen to
drop the Campaign for a Living
Wage so soon after this success.
However, on other issues which
affected members, such as privatiza-
tion and the anti-union laws, the
leadership staked the conference to
prevent it adopting policies which
might lead to conflict with the
government.
The NEC supported co-operation with
Best Value, and opposed an
amendment which simply described
as worse than the Tories’ Compulsory
Transfer. Delegates knew better, and on
a card vote the amendment was
abandoned.
In the debate against privatiza-
tion in education, the NEC intro-
duced an amendment to omit
Education Action Zones from a list
of forms of privatization. Again,
delegates knew better and defeated
this amendment.
Although the NEC and Rodney
Bickemstauffer declared their support
for teachers’ branches such as
Selton taking action to protect jobs
and conditions, they were opposed
supporting national campaign and
privatization and other government
taxation.
The NEC also stopped debate
of resolutions on the anti-union laws,
including those that stated the
idea of using the law as a weapon at
illegal.
Conference also upheld policy
on the only other area of difference
UNISON has established with the
government, its opposition to the
Maastricht convergence criteria
and joining the Single Currency.
UNISON was the only national
union to vote against the Town Hall
Marches demonstration in Cologne.
The disaffection of delegates with
the NEC’s stance on the New Labour
government must also have
influenced the major rearranging
theme of recent UNISON con-
cerns the defence of democracy
and opposition to the witch-hunt against
left activists.
The first test (and first card vote)
was delegates voting for the refer-
nence to the NEC’s Policy
Committee Report ruling out of
order emergency resolutions
demanding the reinstatement of
the suspended Birmingham
branch. Unfortunately, the Stand-
dards Committee ended re-
affirming their position and this
second report was carried narrowly by
delegates.
However, amongst dele-
gates against attacks on democracy
was so widespread that 400 of them
attended a protest meeting on
this issue. It was addressed by London
convener Geoff Martin, as well
members from Sheffield, Birmingham,
Liverpool and Leeds, where disciplinary
actions against left activists are taking place.
This large meeting (a third of the
delegates) made a commitment to
convene enough delegates to stop
new disciplinary rules being intro-
duced.
Conference also voted against
the introduction of a £25 fee for branch
elections. This was seen as a means to
prevent branch activists from being
informed by the NEC speaker on the
issue con-
formed this by implying this would
make it too expensive for SWP
supporters in UNISON to attend.
The NEC has also been able
to make a subsum after the left
making it known to dele-
gate to NCPD union officials
has probably one of the best in
domestic policies on offer anywhere:
trade unions, bringing in a cut for
every year of service and statutory
redundancy.
Conference was however able
to stop the closure of the union’s
central office.
The broad left in UNISON, the
Campaign for a Fighting and
Democratic Union, was represented
by a large meeting of 160 delegates on
Singh’s motion. At the meeting,
branches recognised that the
warnings of the GUDU that Single Status was being
used to attack conditions had
come true. To obtain the GUDU
helped organise a meeting on
Kosova and the large meeting on
democracy.

Trade Unions for
Kosova

Eddie Dee
TRADE UNION ACTIVISTS in the
country have launched a campaign to
assist the Kosovar trade unions and
and trade unionists in Kosova.
The aims of the Trade Unions for
Kosova campaign, discussed at an
initial meeting in May, are to:
- assist the Kosovar trade unions
and trade unionists in sustaining
their work in refugee camps and
amongst their people in temporary
camps.
- assist the Kosovar trade unions
and trade unionists in rebuilding their
organisations and social infra-
structure of their country.
- promote human rights abuses
and discriminations committed in
Kosova.
- develop where possible con-
solidation of trade unions in Serb,
Montenegro and Kosovo, including
the basis of opposition to ethnic
cleansing and the promotion of working
class solidarity.
- campaign in the British trade
unions and labour movement, and
where possible internationally, for
the recognition of the rights of the
Kosovar people to self-determina-
tion.

Campaigners organised a successful
fringe meeting at UNISON confer-
cence, Harrow, last week attended by
journalists’ Union in Kosova, though
to delegates about her experiences in
Kosova as one of a group of who
ried to continue the near impossible mission of producing an English
language daily newspaper in constant
danger.
The campaign has collected £3,500
in donations to send to the Educa-
tion Workers Union in Kosova, and
is now trying to re-establish contact
with other unions such as the Min-
ers’ Union.

Clearly, after the war and the
bombing, Kosovar trade unions
still need help to get up and running
again, and to give their members
financial and other assistance as
refugees return.

Contact the campaign, invite
speakers to union meetings and send
donations (make cheques payable to
Trade Unions for Kosova c/o
Camden UNISON, 59 Bell Place,
Phoenix Road, NW1.

UNISON’s April 10 demonstration for a Living Wage: if bureaucrats had their
way, the “campaign” would have ended there.

RMT witch-hunt deepens
Kangaroo court attacks leading left winger

THE CAMPAIGN to halt the pri-
vatization of London’s tube sys-
tem is not helped by the deepening witch-hunt inside the
rail union RMT.
This is aimed at the Left in gen-
eral, and Pat Sorkins, key Secre-
tary of the London Underground
Regional Council, in particular.
Standing in the Assistant
General
Secretary elections, Pat got
45% of the vote against the right
wing incumbent Vernon Hince.
In response the Executive have
proposed that Pat be “suspended
from holding any office in the
Union for five years — implementa-
tion to be suspended for a three
year period”.
In addition he is to be denied
any union benefits for six months.
This is a clear green light for
LUL management to attack Pat,
as they have done in the past.
Ostensibly Pat’s “crime” was to
distribute unofficial election mate-
rial. But in practice his real crime,
 apart from giving Hince a
close call, was to expose the fact
that the election was being organ-
ised in breach of Union rules, and
to have forced it to be re-run
properly. It is a blatant case of
“shooting the messenger”.

There was a travesty of an
“investigation”, which included a
questionnaire to all RMT branch
members asking loaded questions
about any contacts with Pat (all
this taking place during the elec-
tions itself and clearly designed to
discourage support for him).
After this the Executive decided
to punish Pat without any hear-
ing — giving him no notice of
charges, no interview or right to
make representation, no notifica-
tion of sentence or right of appeal.
The fact that this process was
supported by members of the
Socialist Labour Party (Pat’s own
party) on the Executive only makes
the matter worse.
In addition it is also proposed to
give the Executive the right to
remove from elections any future
candidate deemed to be in “breach of Rule”.
This would give the Union lead-
ship unwarranted powers to
interfere in the electoral process
to safeguard “their” candidates or
seriate personal grudges against anyone whose face did not fit.
The witch-hunt has provoked
deep concern across the RMT. As
we go to press the RMT AGM
(annual conference) is just start-
ing.
Delegates will have a chance to
call a halt to this particular
attack. But whatever happens at
the AGM, RMT members will
need to organise, more than ever
before, to ensure the rightward
drift in the union is brought to an
end.
For many years, key figures on
the Left have argued against
building a rank and file move-
ment inside the RMT. Their
arguments are looking increas-
ingly thin.
Whilst it is necessary to be sen-
sitive to the historical organisa-
tion of the union and also to
avoid getting caught up in sterile
arcane theoretical debate, it is
clear that a new rank and file
movement does need to be built.

UNITE! the new journal for Rank
& File transport
workers, is available now.
Send donations to
Triple Alliance Box at
46 Denmark Hill, London,
SE5 8RZ.
“Victory” in Kosova: but who really wins after NATO blitz?

NATO never expected that the war in the Balkans would last more than a few days. A quick display of US air power would bring Milosevic to heel and force him to accept the Rambouillet “agreement”, they thought. But it did not work out that way.

Within weeks they had more than trebled the number of aircraft originally deployed (from 300 to 1,100). After seven weeks of the most intense bombing the world has ever seen, they got a deal which they could probably have got at Rambouillet.

Those talks broke down over Western insistence on two conditions which were virtually impossible for Milosevic to accept: that NATO should have free run of not just Kosovo but all Serbia, and that there would be referendum on independence for Kosova after three years. (These conditions were now dropped.) But although the KLA would still be disarmed the whole of the Serb military and police would have to leave Kosova.

By the end of the bombing the economic and social infrastructure of Serbia (including Kosova and to a lesser extent Montenegro) was smashed up, the reason destabilised, and nearly a million Kosovans driven out in an orgy of ethnic cleansing the intensity of which would not have been possible if the bombing had not taken place.

A war which was launched ostensibly to stop the ethnic cleansing of the Kosovars, which had been on the increase in recent months ostensibly in an offensive against the KLA, escalated it many times over. Instead of the grizzly 240,000 of the previous two years over a million people were displaced (internally and externally) in the course of a few weeks. Ethnic tension which had been deliberately fostered since the rise of Serb nationalism 10 years previously, intensified massively as the first bombs fell. Once the war started the ethnic Albanians were a vulnerable minority who were held responsible for it and persecuted as a result. If a policy could be devised which would ensure that ethnic tensions were driven as deep as possible, such bombing was it.

Many of the massacres now being discovered in the aftermath of the war were committed in the backwash which took place in the days following the start of the bombing.

This does not at all excuse them — they are brutal crimes against humanity — but it does put them in context. Milosevic was not about to miss the opportunity nor were the various Serb nationalist and fascist paramilitaries who arrived on the scene to vent their racist hatred.

But it was not just them. The bombing whipped up hostility between Serb and Albanian communities which had been living together for generations many of them right up until the bombing started. Now it is hard to see how they can live together in the short term without some serious safeguards in place.

The 19 NATO governments hold together, with some divisions and difficulties, in order to carry out an extraordinary (NATO) casualty-less war, conducted from 15,000 feet up.

But there was never an agreement reached on the ground invasion being advocated by Tony Blair and new Labour in Britain.
Clinton always ruled this out, as did a number of the European members of NATO. A bombing war was the only tactical approach open to them and they conducted it to the full, increas-

ingly smashing up the economy of Serbia.

The results are shown in the casualty fig-
ures. NATO zero. Serbian soldiers maybe four or five thousand. Serb civilians over two thousand dead, many more wounded. Certainly tens of thousands of Kosovar dead, maybe many more. To this must be added the refugees, tens of thousands inter-

nally displaced and 80,000 driven out of the country.

Many of these may never go back, despite the current rush, if only because there is not much to go back to. Others will be driven back into intolerable conditions to escape the conditions in the camps.

Then there are the casualties which will follow the war, from the destruction of tanks, shells and unexploded bombs and land mines to health problems caused by disease and famine.

Much of this is the responsibility of Milosevic. His regime (about 3000 had been killed in Kosovo before the bombing), but NATO created the best conditions for an escalation of his slaughter.

Not that creating this kind of mayhem is in the best interests of NATO and US imperialism, which provided most of the hardware and resources for the war, any less of a victory. Or at least not much less.

The war may not have been planned, but it fitted into the general geo-politi-
cal aims of US imperialism. NATO needed a new role after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the USA needed to reinforce its global hegemony as well as its role in Europe and in the region. These goals have now been achieved in a way which exceeds their expectations.

NATO has been reborn with a new authority and US imperialism and its main supporters like

new Labour in Britain have been strengthened. Sections of public opinion, particularly in Western countries, have been further desensitised to this kind of action.

Bombing people - particularly with zero casualties for those doing the bombing - is now more publicly acceptable and easy to carry out in the future. At the same time the anti-war move-
ment was marginalised and the left who opposed the war defeated.

The war caused tensions within the EU, although in the end there was no breaking of ranks. The war gave a new impetus to the drive for a common defence poli-
cy and common military capac-
ity in order to be able to conduct wars without such reliance of US hardware, but the problem is too big to be tackled with the current EU financial structures.

Fortress Europe held the line against the mass of Kosovan refugees. The policy of keeping them in tents to ensure that they went back when the time came was perhaps an unmitigated disaster.

From the point of view of the Serbian people the war has been an unmitigated disaster. Not only has the country been devastated, but in Serbia and Milosevic is still in power. The bombing drew most of the Ser-
bian opposition, many of whom are nationalist anyway, towards Milosevic. How soon the Serb dead will now under-
mine Milosevic's position is very hard to say, although eventually it may well do so.

Currently, as NATO forces deploy across Kosovo, the Serbian and Kosovan populations are being driven out, their property destroyed, and dozens of them killed. We condemn this unequivocally.

A multi-ethnic society has to be defended in Kosovo and the urge to blame all Serbs for the actions of the army and the paramili-

taries strongly opposed. It is true that NATO has exacer-

bated the problem and certainly has no solution. At least initially (until it became politically indefen-
sable) NATO was in favour of doing

The damage done by exploding bombs and missiles is now compounded by unexploded bombs, pollution and radioca-

within is, the SWP collapsed into

this position.

The campaign against NATO, though correct in itself, was used to subordinate the rights of the Kosovans which, at best were rel-

egated to a subordinate position.

With the inevitable discovery of mass graves on a grand scale since the end of the war it is time for all those who denied or played down the ethnic cleansing and atrocities by Serb forces to put the record straight and accept that they were wrong. The experience of Serbroma and the Bosnian war should have been enough to show them that the Serb army and the Serb paramili-

taries were capable of doing.

Others on the left went in a completely different direction. Ken Living-
stone and others sup-
ported the bombing, whilst the AWS, stopping short of that, were ambiguous (even neutral) on the role of NATO and held the view (for exam-
ple) that once the bombing had started it would have been a disaster for the Kosovans if it "had stopped after the first few days". They deny that US imperi-

alism had any strategic interest in the war at all.

Socialist Outlook, throughout the war, opposed both the NATO intervention and the oppression of the Kosovo's by Milosevic. We were for getting NATO out of the Balkans and Milosevic out of Kosovo.

We fully supported the right of the Kosovans to determine their own future including the right to

an independent state. We were for the defeat of the NATO military intervention and for the defeat of Milosevic in his war against Kosova. And we were for the arming of the KLA, with all its political problems, as the means by which the Kosovans could pursue their own future.

We recognised that the KLA was created as a response to the ethnic cleansing of Milosevic, and to defend the Kosovan Alban-

ians against it.

So what is the future of Kosovo? If there was never an easy road to Kosovan independence, there is certainly not one now. Kosova is now a UNUNATO protectorate - and as such to remain a part of Serbia.

Hostility between the different communities has been massively compounded by the bombing. The KLA is being disarmed by NATO.

Yet their remains no solution other than self determination for the Kosovan people, with all rights for minorities, if they choose an independent state.

The compromise agreement with Milosevic is not a solution, it is a means of preventing a politi-

cal solution. It leaves the key political problem - the denial of national rights - completely unresolved.

There is no other solution in the region. Dayton remains a NATO protec-

torate in the way that Kosovo is becoming a protectorate.

The starting point for a political solution in the Balkans is the right of all the peoples of the region to determine their own future, free from outside interfer-

ance.
Labour strengthens state racism

Simon Deville
ANYONE not yet convinced of the racism and hypocrisy of the parliamentary Labour Party should only look at the despicable role it has played over immigration and asylum legislation over the last few years.

In 1996 when the Tories introduced the Asylum and Immigration Bill, many Labour MPs actively campaigned against those racist laws. Even at that time, however, the Labour leadership refused to condemn the bill outright, hiding behind some wellestablished formulation of opposing the "racist aspects of the bill."

Labour did make two pre-election pledges that it would remove the requirement for employers to carry out immigration checks on their employees, and that it would restore benefits to all asylum seekers if it could be shown that the cashless system was more expensive. Having conceded that the voucher system is more expensive, Labour has subsequently reneged on both counts.

The running of the current legislation's passage through parliament seems as if it were planned to highlight the racist hypocrisy of the Labour leadership. The second reading of the bill went through parliament without a single Labour MP voting against, just as the MacPherson report (the inquiry of Stephen Lawrence was published.

Tory and Labour leaders all denounced the "institutional racism" that the MacPherson report acknowledged, whilst arguing for a strengthening of Britain's racist immigration laws, and for increased powers to lock up and harass those fleeing persecution.

The third reading of the bill went through on the eve of a war that Blair and co have claimed was in defence of those facing persecution and ethnic cleansing.

It is clear that the Labour leadership have decided to spend billions of pounds bombing Serbian civilians, but are not prepared to spend a fraction of that in offering those fleeing persecution a degree of dignity when they arrive in Britain.

Miloradovic closed down all the Albanian language schools in Kosovo in 1998. The home office response has been to lock up Kosovan children in detention centres on the basis that they must be lying about coming from Kosovo as they couldn't name the school they attended.

Although the threatened rebellion of some MPs forced Jack Straw to make some minor concessions, the bill as it stands is still an appalling piece of racist legislation that is far worse than the Tories thought they could get away with just three years ago.

All asylum seekers will be forced to live wherever the government tells them to, regardless of what support structures exist on a local level, in fact the legislation specifically states that an asylum seeker's preference must not be taken into account when deciding where they will live.

Anyone who has tried to live on the meagre housing benefit still offer will realise that it is not enough to live on. Asylum seekers are entitled to housing that is equivalent to a measly 70% of benefit levels, and even then more often than not in the form of vouchers.

Whilst the government has fact that they are allowed a fairer, more streamlined process in which cases are dealt with quickly, this is in fact a further attack on asylum rights, with a more limited appeals procedure and less time given for asylum seekers to obtain necessary documentation for their case.

As if this isn't enough, Immigration Officers are to be given police powers to monitor, harass and arrest asylum seekers, without even the limited accountability that exists under the Police Complaints Authority.

There are two worrying aspects of the current legislation.

Firstly, this is simply an attack on the Blair government, but is part of a concerted effort on the part of all EU governments to create a common framework of racist legislation based on the worst aspects of each individual member state.

The second aspect is the absolutely abysmal level of opposition to the current legislation. The fact that only seven Labour MPs voted against the bill at its third reading isn't simply a matter of having the wrong individuals in parliament. It also reflects the lack of pressure that the rest of parliament feels it is under to oppose these laws.

On one level, anti-racism has been given an enormous boost over the last year with the inquiry into the Stephen Lawrence inquiry. This has not, however, translated into a mass anti-racism movement that can challenge racism on all levels.

Nor have demands for immigration and asylum rights yet reached the mainstream of the anti-racist movement. These weaknesses can assist anti-racists to find out how we can start to build an effective anti-racist movement: one that aims to mobilise all anti-racists, one that sees immigration and asylum rights as central to its programme, and that builds beyond national boundaries, and that makes links throughout Europe and beyond.

Straw's feeble bill would strengthen state secrecy

AFTER the Asylum Bill, Jack Straw's latest draft legislation, on freedom of information, is based on the being the next example of denying Tory clothes.

In a letter and in the white paper, 'Your Right to Know', Labour promised to open up and democratise the running of the country. From being one of the countries with the least transparent and accountable government, Britain was going to be at the forefront of opening up to scrutiny.

Yet Straw's draft bill reverses all this. While it does open up new areas to transparency in a few areas, huge areas of exemptions - up from seven in the white paper to 21 in the draft bill - allow public authorities which have a discretion to withhold information to do so without challenge.

Instead of the bodies concerned having to show that release of information could cause "substantial harm", they can merely decide to restrict access.

The information can take up to 40 days, those seeking information can be asked for their reasons and can be asked to keep secret what information they are given.

The indication of how little would change under Straw's proposals is shown by the fact that the "Change of policy" which the Tories made in order to sell parties to Iraq would be just as difficult to uncover as it was under Thatcher.

While the bill opens up new information to the public on education, health authorities, the prison service and the administration of the police and provides for public authorities to be held in contempt of court if they refuse to cooperate, the list of exemptions is rather extensive and the effect of this.

The 21 exemptions include national security; defence; policy advice; international relations; relations between the parliament and assemblies of the United Kingdom; the economy; police investigations; court records; commercial information and information provided to the government in confidence.

Hostility

Straw, having fought tooth and nail in Cabinet to secure the watering down of the proposals and secured the backing of David Clark, the minister responsible for the original white paper, has found his bill met by universal hostility by a whole series of organisations concerned with public information.

He has begun to make noises about concessions, but like on the asylum bill these are more likely to be about defusing parliamentary opposition than changing the substance of the bill.

Freedom of Information is important to all those who want to hold the activities of those who run the country to scrutiny.

The left must support moves to stop Straw in his tracks and amend the bill to lift the shroud of state secrecy.

Labour's secret record in government - page 18

We are not criminals - we are victims!

Susan Moore
THE REALITY facing asylum seekers - even before the draconian measures in the new legislation come into force - has been highlighted yet again by detentions at Campsfield detention centre, Oxfordshire.

Protests by those held at the centre have been a regular feature of campaigning against immigration detention over the last several years and have also found echoes in other centres such as Rochester.

While the early protests did receive a fair amount of national media coverage this has become harder to obtain since Labour's election victory.

Refugees in Kosovo are now - those imprisoned by Labour's immigration regime are not.

Detainees at Campsfield staged an eight-hour detention strike against the Asylum Bill which ended on June 18.

The largest group of strikers were Algerian, while most of the rest were from Eastern Europe. There were three suicide attempts during the protest - one by hanging and two by the cutting of wrists - a graphic illustration of the desperation of those imprisoned for the "crime" of seeking refuge in this supposedly civilised society.

"We are not criminals - we are the victims! Why are we treated like animals?" asks an appeal signed by 18 detainees.

One of the last hunger strikers, a Pole, was deported as the hunger strike came to an end. There was better news when two Eastern European detainees managed to escape the Group Four-run camp.

This was welcomed at June's monthly demonstration by supporters of the detainees which assemblies outside the jail. Protesters also saluted the hunger strikers.

An earlier protest by Campsfield detainees led to a frame-up trial in Oxford
Swedish peace activists freed

Fisher Gate
THREE Swedish peace activists were released on bail after a jury at Preston Crown Court failed to convict them of conspiracy to cause criminal damage to a submarine carrying Trident missiles.

The three - Annika Spalde, Ann-Britt Sternfeldt and Stellan Vitiainen - had entered the VSEL submarine base in Barrow in September 1998 with the intention of 'disarming' Trident missiles.

They were imprisoned for nearly eight months undergoing the two week trial in May. But in a decision described as a 'betrayal and a disaster' by being heavily directed by the Judge about the legality of weapons of mass destruction, the Preston Jury were unable to agree a majority verdict and the three were set free to face a trial in the autumn.

The three protesters were members of the international 'Swords into Ploughshares' movement which believes in non-violent direct action against nuclear weapons, under the slogan 'Bread not Bombs'.

During their trial dozens of support from all over the world converged on Preston - travelling from Sweden, Finland, USA, Australia and many other countries.

A week long festival of Peace and Resistance was held with a daily vigil outside the Court and socials, a well-attended rally at the local University and other meetings in support. Members of the local peace movement, Labour Party and church groups provided accommodation and assistance.

The protesters were invited to address and join the local May Day rally, organised jointly by Preston Trades Council and the Radical Preston Alliance, sharing a platform with international trade union speakers and local Labour MP Audrey Wise. Local Labour MP Michael Hindley, supported the campaign.

Supporters from Merseyside peace and church groups and East Timorese refugees regularly attended events, though the leadership of the Labour, Trade Union and CND movement kept their distance. Four Swedish activists were arrested and held overnight by police, ironically for 'breach of the peace', in a protest at Barrow during the trial.

International solidarity

In addition to campaigning against Trident missiles, the protesters raised many other peace and international campaigns in particular opposing NATO's war in the Balkans and solidarity with the people of East Timor.

Particularly significant was a joint 'Ploughshares' meeting with the Radical Preston Alliance, where a US Gulf War veteran presented a slide show about the devastation caused by UN sanctions against Iraq.

Closely criticising those who argue for a UN intervention in the Balkans, the speaker explained how economic sanctions could be just as violent and destructive as bombing, as he outlined the death and devastation unleashed on ordinary Iraqis, including the Kurdish and other opposition to the current Iraqi government.

The Gulf War veteran is touring Europe to campaign for the breaking of sanctions and solidarity with the Iraqi people.

Remarkable

The jury decision was quite remarkable in a town and region that is heavily dependent on the armaments industry.

It follows the earlier decision of a Liverpool jury to free peace activists who caused damage to a Hawk aircraft, based near Preston, in a protest against the war in East Timor.

The Ploughshares activists served nearly eight months on remand before being released on bail to face retrial. Also remarkable was the complete lack of UK press coverage of the events.

Local and national media in the UK completely ignored the trial as it unfolded, despite the Swedish national media giving it extensive coverage, including a full page report in one of the leading Swedish daily newspapers.

It must be suspected that the British media is so overwhelmed in support of NATO's war in the Balkans that it would embarrass them and the Blair leadership if opposition to imperialist war is highlighted in their news reporting.

Mass campaign

The individualistic 'direct action' tactics of the 'Ploughshares' group are not shared by Socialist Outlook, which believes in building a mass campaign based in the labour movement against imperialist war, but no-one can fail to be impressed by their determination and willingness to confront the armed might of the imperialist state.

For this they deserve to be defended by much wider forces in the British Labour and Trade Union movement.

Internet contacts: plowshares@hotmail.com, http://www.plowshares.se/hen/english/

Kashmir: deadly duel of the fundamentalists

Terry Conway

THE DANGER of an all-out war between India and Pakistan over Kashmir is greater than it has been probably since the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war.

This is the bitter fruit of the nuclear false peace promised last year both by Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif.

Yet again those who argued in both states against the oblacency of testing have been proved right, nuclear disarmament is not a guarantor of peace but a barrier of war.

But the very climate whipped up by the escalation of conflict in Kashmir makes driving this lesson home to a wider audience more difficult as chauvinism and jingoism are on the rise.

Indeed it is with more than a glimmer of irony that both nuclear testing and the escalation in Kashmir have been carried through by those two governments.

For Vajpayee and his Bharatia Janata Party (BJP) the general election campaign this autumn will be fought, as all its political campaigns have been, on the basis of a strong Hindu state - where mobilisation against the supposed Muslim enemy outside is a crucial counterpoint to the deepening communalism at home.

Meanwhile in Pakistan Sharif, who is gaining a near dictatorial hold on the economically crippled country with one of the most corrupt elites anywhere in the world, Kashmir may be a useful pawn in the domestic game.

The electoral verdict within Pakistan itself will, he hopes, be aided by his championing of Kashmir to placate militant Islamists at home.

He also hopes his destabilisation of Indian Kashmir will bring popular and wider layer, who may be distracted from the problems at home by militant action against the increasingly communal Indian state.

As those who have fought against communalism and fundamentalism in both states have long argued, far from being real antagonists in fact Hindu and Muslim fundamentalism within the sub-continent have a deadly symbiotic relationship.

They feed off each other while undermining the prospects of organising against the poverty and corruption that blight the lives of the overwhelming majority of people in the sub-continent.

International Youth Summer Camp

July 24-30

600 young revolutionaries from across Europe will gather for a week of partying and politics in the French Massif Central.

As well as the regular streams of education and discussion on ecology, feminism and lesbian/bisexual/gay liberation, the theme of this year's camp will be 'Fighting for change - against the bosses Europe against the NATO bombs and Milosevic's ethnic cleansing, self-determination for the Kosovars - for a different Europe of popular and socialist democracy'.

For more details contact 0181 800 7460.

Anger and arrests mark marchers in Kashmir protest at Indian rule
European elections expose cracks in New Labour

Voronica Fagan
THE EUROPEAN elections in Britain delivered the first serious questioning of Blair's supremacy and also confirmed some of the important new trends that began to unfold in the elections to the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament.

Turn-out is always low at European elections, both here and across the continent but this election plummeted new depths in both cases.

At home it also comes after the worst-ever turn out in the local elections. Indeed there is a long term trend, which certainly has not yet reached the depths of the USA, where elections are seen in an irrelevant by increasing sections of particularly inner city populations.

This generalised long term trend was hardly likely to be backed by such a lacklustre campaign.

Mythology
Since the election results came through, New Labour spin has tried to minimise its effects with the usual series of myths.

Everyone has always accepted, they reminded us, that the Tories would do better under PR. Well, while it is true that it probably gave Hague victories in Scotland and Wales, in fact Labour would have done even worse under First Past the Post. Margaret Beckett, the all woman in the studio as the results came in, was quick to point out that the results would be "baked in the long term" for the Tories.

Certainly Hague's subsequent shadow cabinet shuffle has further strengthened the voice of Euro-sceptics within his party. But the success of the UK Independence Party as well as the Conservatives, alongside the Greens, has clearly taken a step further which was demonstrated there by Senior's victory.

Left divided
In England on the other hand the SPA and SDP had a similar维持 the division with New Labour.

It is true that Christine Oddy, the West Midlands MEP initially allowed onto the ballot paper but then dropped on the supposed basis of not campaigning hard enough, made a credible showing with 36,049 votes and 4.34 per cent of the poll.

Her fellow MEP Ken Coates however in the East Midlands polled less strongly — with only 17,409 and 2.41 per cent (probably a verdict on the way Coates alienated many potential supporters with his high-handed behaviour and the electric nature of the rest of his slate).

Oddy's candidacy also coincided with one of the most credible far left slates. Certainly the West Midlands Socialist Alliance headed by Dave Nellist would have expected to do rather better if Oddy had not been standing.

Overall the lesson is clear. If the far left is to get a significant foothold with those voters — whether those that stayed at home, or voted Green or nationalist, or oh so reluctantly voted for New Labour — it needs to get its act together in the way that the Scottish Socialist Party has begun to do.

Left MEPs will reach out for mass support

Alain Krivine, newly elected as an MEP in France on the joint LO/LCR left slate, draws a balance sheet of the electoral campaign. He also discusses the plans of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire over the coming months in relation to the left within the European Parliament.

Rouge: What is your assessment of the LCR's campaign?

Krivine: This was the first time that we led a mass campaign with such appeal and resonance. We learnt a great deal from it.

On TV we addressed millions of people, and tens of thousands in meetings. The campaign's credibility was a valuable tool for our activists to talk to people at work.

The whole Ligue was mobilised not just to organise joint meetings with Arlette and Lutte Ouvrière, but also in their other political work, and was able to break ground.

Over the course of several months, many new people discovered the Ligue and we set up a number of new branches around the country. The general impression is that the LCR made a big impact on the political landscape.

Finally, the joint meetings with Lutte Ouvrière allowed us to reach a different audience, who do not usually meet together. This reciprocal discovery benefited everyone.

Rouge: What will be the axes of intervention for the Ligue now?

Krivine: I would define four trends which go hand in hand:

1. The first is that we will seek to have debates and organise joint work with LO wherever possible, particularly in campaigns around the joint platforms in Europe.

2. For example, in the last few days we have worked with Lutte Ouvrière in support of the "sans-papiers" [paperless residents] and the homeless. I hope we can continue working together on the question of the 35 hour work or for example.

3. Second, we must use this lever to address all those on the left and ecologists who want to change the policies of government, and reach out to mobilise them into united action.

3. Third, we must continue to build a new political movement, a new party that is not simply an electoral group, and which is not the LO — that is not on the agenda today.

There are many activists in left parties, in the trade unions and in various organisations such as Ras L'nfant (anti-racist organisation), DAI and AC! etc, who feel like orphans of a political crisis and wish to direct their activities towards building an anticapitalist alternative.

These activists, from different backgrounds and traditions, are ready to get together in a common project of social transformation, on condition that there is a real unifying dynamic and genuine need for this.

Certainly our success in the last elections was not strong enough to push forward this recomposition quickly. Again, it is difficult to foresee, for example, what splits may develop in the PCF [French Communist Party] or among the Greens.

So events in the period ahead of us may or may not accelerate the development of class struggle. But it is important to start to popularise the project of a new party as an indispensable element to avoid all the phenomena of demoralisation.

Finally, we must now more than ever continue the battle begun at our last congress to develop the LCR, to open it up, to rejuvenate and feminise it.

Rouge: What is your assessment of the LCR's campaign?

Krivine: We are going to intervene first and foremost as militants, with an extra place to intervene in. We need to know how to cross the street after the demo of unemployed people to make their demands heard in the belly of the parliament, and then to come back into the street with the political means to build a better basis for the next demo. In this parliament we will try to draw on the information which will interest the social movements, and we will also put forward proposals putting every MEP and every party on the spot.

We will use every means at our disposal to advance the social movements and assist the development of these mobilisations on a Europe-wide level. With a regular bulletin, we will be accountable for our actions.

Whatever our stance, as an independent group or part of an existing group, we will do all we can to maintain the unity and identity of the LO-LCR bloc.

An interview with Alain Krivine

Alain Krivine, newly elected as an MEP in France on the joint LO/LCR left slate, draws a balance sheet of the electoral campaign. He also discusses the plans of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire over the coming months in relation to the left within the European Parliament.
Red faces in Millbank as Left makes new gains

Pete Firmin

THE LABOUR leadership broke another promise on 22 June when it failed to reverse its decision to hold the general election to the Constituency and other sections of the Party's National Executive Committee, as voted for by the NEC. On the ballot papers it had declared that the result would not be announced until September, always a rather silly suggestion. The leadership, through the press, has trumpeted the results as a setback for the left, since the Centre Left Grassroots Alliance won places three rather than the 4 last year. However, in addition to winning the elected place on the National Constitutional Committee overwhelmingly with Teresa Pearce, the results show not only that the proportion of votes won by the CLG increased (from 46 per cent to 48 per cent), but the Left clearly improved its position within the NEC, which in turn means that the fourth place is to be regretted, lessons can be learnt from it. The leadership, elected to the CLP's section of the NEC were Tom (now Lord) Sawyer, ex-General Secretary of the Party, finally a leftist NUPE official, now a director of an anti-union company, Mark Seddon, editor of Tribune; Liz Davies, disallowed candidate for Leeds North-East in the general election and supporter of Labour Left Briefing, Christine Shawcroft, ex-network under-5s and campaign of Socialist Campaign; and, strangely, and to a lesser extent, the ex-GLC's actor and now MEP, and Diana Jeuda, sitting member. Ironically, it was Tom Sawyer who, when introducing the reorganisation of Party structures, said that this section of the NEC was for 'non-parliamentarians', to exclude the left MPs. This structure obviously doesn't include himself as a member of the House of Lords. suspiciousness remains that the real reason the election was brought forward to enable Michael Cashman to stand (just) before being elected is to MEP. The only Blairites the CLGB could secure half of the NEC places was to stand these high-profile candidates and with the US embassy union hierarchy taking Diana Jeuda. Even then, the voices of Cashman and Jeuda fell considerably as compared to last year, and Jeuda only beat the next-placed CLG candidate by a margin of 2,000 votes (47,000). The leadership hoped that by having a low-profile campaign they would indeed a 'victory'. Sawyer worked for Sawyer, who did not even campaign for nominations, and achieved top place due to name recognition as retiring General Secretary. Yet even his 49 per cent is not that much more than the 46 per cent given he only got 1,000 more votes than Seddon and Davies. It did not work for the others: not only did Cashman and Jeuda's vote fall, but the other 3 Blairite candidates came behind all the CLG candidates. The other side of this calculation was that far fewer members would vote, increasing the proportion who voted for the Blairites. Yet the numbers voting, esti- rated at 110,000, was not signific- antly less than last year (133,000). For the second year running the leadership's strategy has failed, both high-profile and low-profile. All they are left with is continuing to downplay the NEC elections and the role of the NEC itself. Among the CLG candidates it is clear that after name recognition (Seddon's strong factor), the level of campaigning was probably the biggest single factor in how candidates fared. Liz Davies' vote fell by only 1.5%, whereas Williams' fell by over 6%. Liz Davies is known to me, all the votes there are going for the left and the need was to bring on more 'centre' candidates. The result is a slap in the face for this strategy, and shows that it is possible to win even with a strong campaign for the Left with the right candidates and serious campaigning. The result shows that it is possible to win new support for the Left with the right candidates and serious campaigning
12 SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

EURO POLL: Irish left "nul points"...

Dana leads the reactionary charge

The continued existence of a confessionalist state in the South of Ireland was graphically exposed by the Euro-election victory of Dana (Rosemary Scallon), former Eurovision song contest winner and born-again Christian.

It's easy to dismiss this combination as an eccentric offshoot of real politics. (In her spare time Dana speaks in tongues.) Yet this is no joke. Dana links a traditionalist, anti-Catholic layer with the organizational and financial power of her contacts within the US Christian Right.

She is moving towards an alliance with the "official" Catholic establishment to form a new referendum on abortion rights - an issue that has not been decisively resolved despite protestations that the confessionalist state has been banished by the forces of internationalism.

While abortion has come to the fore after the vote, during the campaign there was an almost complete absence of any political debate. Yet the previous period had seen a ferment on a whole range of issues.

Europe itself, the movement towards links with NATO, a mass privatisation of the Eire Telecom arising directly from the Maasbracht terms, major corruption scandals, a total collapse of the IMF credit and the imminent collapse of the deal with Britain, all North, had all been in the public eye.

Getting away with it: Berita Ahern

None of these made an impact in the election, because on the fundamentals the issues the major parties have been singing from the same hymn-sheets for many years, taking their turns in coalition governments that apply largely identical policies.

The consensus between left and right in support of largely unrestrained capital for rule extends beyond the parliament to "partnership" between government and business.

The European elections could have provided real issues for progressive candidates. Following the privatisation push around Telecom further threats are being made to other state companies. These threats are all part of the state's obligations under the Maasbracht treaty which itself is a logical part of the European Union.

These attacks were not mentioned at all by anyone. The nearest we came to a criticism of EU policy was on the issue of fishery quotas - and raised by Fianna Fail. West Cork rather than by left candidates. There was no debate, because no candidate explicitly rejected the EU integration and the Maasbracht treaty. They accepted it and campaigned within its parameters.

Within this context the main capitalist parties, Fianna Fail, was able to hold its own despite overwhelming charges of corruption.

The main gains were by Dana and the Centre party and the main losers were the "left" supporters of the "third way" who had hoped to gain from the absorption of the former Stalins of Democratic Left.

What of the local government elections? These should give a good indication of a smaller and more radical parties to mount a challenge.

The Euromodel of this sort of approach were shown in the same elections by Democratic Left, winning its long 30 year journey form revolutionary nationalism by joining the Irish Labour Party. And today's Sinn Fein don't even have the advantage of a left rhetoric or any orientation to the trades unions!

The Socialist Party vote quite clearly shows a more class-conscious layer, but it is handicapped by confusion on major elements of the capitalist offensive around the Northern peace process and its understanding of the national question generally. So it lacks a realistic project for rebuilding the working class movement, and veers wildly around the political spectrum, from the spokesman of the PC to the tireless remnants of the Communist and Workers Parties.

Overall the elections showed that there is a lack of a clear alternative and very little debate on the left about what the issues facing the Irish working class.

Irish elections historically have been about the economy and the working class are always ready to punish the parties of government.

The left needs to engage this, link up with the whole range of struggles that the elections managed to avoid. It must begin to discuss seriously the issue of political programme as a way of breaking out of its present sterile political sectarianism and leading the battles that are to come.

No surprises in the North

Sectarianism 3

Democracy 0

ELECTIONS are often a good measure of society - as the European elections were this time.

It didn't matter who won because the party in real control doesn't have to stand. Whichever party of imperialism wins is a victory for imperialism, whatever loses doesn't require the fascist mandate. It can lecture about its commitment to democracy without being put to any democratic test.

The election was another sectarian headcount in a gerrymandered constituency that guarantees victory for the unionists. The only concern was the possibility of demoralisation leading to a fall in unionist participation.

This in turn feeds the republican dream of Catholics outnumbering the unionists and voting for a united Ireland. This unlikely scenario in a very distant future would have to rely on both the British and unionists holding their hands up and declaring it a "fair cop."

The election showed the hollowness of this dream. Sinn Fein ran a sectarian campaign for a second nationalist seat, relying on a unionist division so deep that they would rather see a Sinn Fein elected than a unionist rival. Never was and never will be any likelihood of that.

The reasonable vote for the Ulster Unionist Party's Jim Nichol- son and the transfers that finally got him elected reflected fear of a republican victory, both among anti-agreement Official Unionists and "non-sectarian and terribly nice middle class" Alliance party supporters.

The election was also a series of separate section contests.

John Hume's ridiculous claim to be campaigning on European issues was parroted without the slightest hint of derision but even the dogs in the street knew that the key issue was sectarianism.

Paasiley demonstrated his status as number one rottweiller in this sectarian dog fight. His election marked a consensus that 60 per cent of unionists now oppose the Stormont Agreement, undermining the moral legitimacy of the new deal.

Hume and Sinn Fein both argued this didn't matter - there was still an overall 70-30 majority in favour. But the rotten, sectarian framework they now so vigorously support will kill any nationalists because it also gave one to unionists.

Were the Assembly to reflect the European election nothing would happen without Paasiley's prior approval. This is the potential future of the peace process.

The British will do all they can to shore up Trimble's wing against such an outcome, and Nicholson's election holds off the complete victory of Paasiley's raw sectarianism, and spared Trimble an immediate challenge to his leadership.

But unionism is demanding that republicans not only vote for the unionist veto in the south's constitution, accept that self determination means partition and sit in Stormont, but completely surrender. This is the programme of all unionists, not just Paasiley.

This election also demonstrated Paasiley's weakness. His post-election rant appealed to the British to respect his mandate. The UUP Assemblyman Eamund Birvia ridiculed the Democratic Unionist Party's participation by wondering how they were defending the union by sitting on the Assembly's gift shop committee. Paasiley clings to the Assembly that the Agreement gives him but the case is that he has not been Trimble repeatedly points out his lack of alternative. If the deal collapses so might the football storm.

Paasiley's only hope is to put pressure on the British by destroying Trimble. His other hope is Drumcree and a victory for the most rationally sectarian forces that will establish "facts on the ground" that the nationalists will have to accept, powerless or not.

In this framework the increased vote for Sinn Fein is no more than an advance in narrow party terms that clouds the underlying reality of the collapse of the political programme. The Irish Times quoted Sinn Fein saying that their good result should give heart to Tony Blair. This says everything about the current process and republicans' support for it.

There was no working class vote in this election. No one proclaiming solidarity to this sectarian deal and to the new Stormont. No one advancing the case for working class independence. The analogy of a football match in which sectarianism wins is inappropriate, for at least football there is an opposition.

Our task now is to create one.
No Drumcree 5!
Time to stop sectarian intimidation!

THE PEACE process is dead — long live the peace process! That’s the reality. The British pacification process is about to collapse, but the British will remain in charge — and will continue with the same strategy, no matter how disillusioned and dis- contented many of its formal supporters become.

As the tap rises, and the deadline of Wednesday 30 June approaches, Blair is desperate to stop the Drumcree and Sinn Fein is desperate for the new executive to be formed with them taking up 2 places.

Blair has made clear he has no ‘Plan B’. It is reported that Sinn Fein may be willing to accept that decommissioning of IRA weapons must occur by May 2000 as a condition for forming the executive.

If that were to be true it would be likely to presage a major split in both the IRA and Sinn Fein, who could not accept this ultimate capitulation, particularly at a time when loyalist intimidation is on the increase.

The promise of the referendum whenever they wish while opposing the right of anyone else to exercise their democratic rights.

The Nationalist Family

When nationalist workers in the North try to organize in their own defence, they find that the elements of the defence contain fatal flaws. The ‘nationalist family’ of the Dublin government, SDLP and Sinn Fein suffers one absolutely fatal flaw as a weapon against Orange intimidation. The majority of the parties have made it perfectly clear that they have no intention of opposing the Orange mob.

SDLP leader Seamus Mallon went to the Garvaghy Road last year to call for agreement to an Orange demonstration. Bertie Ahern has made it clear that he would like to see capitulation. He failed to answer numerous calls for observers from the Dublin government to be present at the Drumcree demonstrations. Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams recently indicated that there will be no deal linking the overall peace process to a capitulation at Drumcree.

This statement was made necessary by the suspicion of many Sinn Fein supporters that such a deal was on the cards. The former republican leadership see no alternative to equalizing politicalising around the peace process.

They bought into it because their military strategy was running into the ground and can’t realistically present a return to arms as a way forward.

British influence

Even if we accept the good faith of the nationalist family we have to ask what likelihood there is that a strategy of persuading the British to stand firm against sectarian bigotry will work.

The blunt reality is that it is not the bigots who represent the major problem but the British state forces themselves.

Orange gangs march not as a result of a battle between themselves and the nationalist residents, but because the RUC and British army assault and imprison the local residents. Of over 3600 sectarian parades, less than a dozen face any serious restrictions.

When the British do restrict a march they base their strategy on dividing the Orangemen into moderates and extremists and appealing to the moderates. As a “moderate Orangegan” is a contradiction in terms, and as they all want to march, the usual outcome is that they are supported in their sectarian intimidation.

The government blocked last year’s march down the Garvaghy Road, but it has legitimised the sectarian siege of the area by allowing 170 parades to the edges of the area. All of these have involved sectarian intimidation and RUC collusion.

Peace Process

The campaign in defence of the Garvaghy residents constitute and rightly draws attention to the section of many Good Fri- day agreement that promises freedom from sectarian harassment. But can this be a strategy for resistance?

Is the marching season simply a hiccup in a process that will eventually lead to the suppression of all sectarian intimidation? The answer is quite clearly ‘no’.

At the centre of the peace process is the concept of cultural division and “equality of the two traditions”. It is therefore the job of the state to seek equality of the two traditions and to constantly drag residents to proximity talks and blame them for refusing to agree to their own harassment.

It is this policy that the British have applied and the SDLP and Dublin government endorsed.

The settlement involves not just sectarian marches but a sectarian society and police force — as it has to be, to the sectarian peace process, in the North for the continued British military occupation which is also a part of the agreement.

The alternative

Part of the offensive is the constant refrain that there is no alternative. We are offered a limited choice: whatever the British can persuade Orangeism to accept in an increasingly discorded peace process; or a return to a republi- can war that was going nowhere.

The leadership of the workers’ movement, so vocal and visible in backing British plans, become invisible when it comes to opposing oppression.

Yet there is an alternative.

We can break with capitalist passivity and determined to sell us out. We can expose the silent voices in the workers’ movement.

Working class militants are politically disarming themselves by investing in a corrupt peace. Peace and justice isn’t going to come from the British process. If we want a real solution we should say ‘No’ to the process and reject the capitalist leadership that asks us to buy partition and institutionalised sectarianism.

We should turn to the Irish working class and begin to mobilise the only force available to us with the potential to face down British manipulation and coercion. We can begin the building of a mass, democratic campaign opposed to sectarianism just like the original civil rights campaigns and the H-blocks campaign.

We can begin to discuss alternatives to the British peace process and begin to build a broad democratic workers’ movement in all 32 counties. We start by say- ing ‘No’ to Drumcree! No to sectarianism! No agreement that embraces sectarianism! Build a Workers’ alternative!

Blair: “No Plan B”

on the peace process was very simple. It was that we would move into a new era where human rights would be respected and sectarian provocation outlawed. Yet now, like the sequel to some bad movie, we are facing into Drumcree 5.

Many commentators despair of putting any sort of positive spin on the Orange mob. They dis- count the marching season as symbolic. It doesn’t feel that way on the receiving end.

The Drumcree battle is simply the most visible aspect of a loyal- ist offensive. It can’t be separated from the house burning, intimi- dation, assaults, sectarian murder, RUC collusion and British cover- up that mark the steady, low-level ethnic cleansing that is a feature of life in the North.

When not transported by seizures of sectarian hatred the Orangegans say their central demand is, “The right of loyal subjects to walk the queen’s high- way.”

That means their right to engage in sectarian provocation whichever they wish while opposing the right of anyone else to exercise their democratic rights.

A “moderate Orangegan” is a contradiction in terms, and they all want to march.

WHAT'S ON

July

THURSDAY 8. Troops Out Move meeting: The Ruth First Rule in Ireland 1960-1999: 30 years Too Long’. Speakers: Ian Bailey (else) and a Sinn Fein representative. 7.30pm-9pm, Reform demonstration, London WC1 (Holborn under- ground).

SATURDAY 10 Defend Public Services Rally. A campaign by sacked Tameside strikers. 1-11pm, Mechanics Institute, Princess St, Manchester (see p5).

WEDNESDAY 14. Socialist Alternative pre-meeting for the meeting “Fighting Back Across Europe: a meeting of the MEPs of the Ligue Communiste Revolu- tionnaire, French Section of the IV Internationale. 7.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Euston.

TUESDAY 20. Committee for Peace in the Balkans public meeting: “After the bombing — Stop NATO’s economic war against the peoples of Yugoslavia”. Speakers include Alice Mahon MP and Tam Dalyell MP. 7pm to 9pm. St Anne’s Room, House of Commons.

SATURDAY 24. Network of Socialist Campaign Groups conference on a socialist approach to making policy in the European Parliament. Speakers include John Cryer MP, Liz Davies, Ann Black and Christine Shawcroft. 2.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn under-ground). Registration £5.50, includes copies of policy document and all advertised submissions. To register write to NSCG, 1 Malmaison Lane, E16 4TR or call 0171 731 3868.

July 24-30 International Youth Summer Camp. 600 young revolutionaries from around Europe and the US meet for a week of partying and politics in the French Massif Central. As well as the regular streams of education and discussion on ecology, feminism and anti-imperialist solidarity the theme of this years camp will be “fighting for change against the EU and Europe, against the NATO bombs and US-led war plans”. Information for a 14-day stay can be obtained by postcard to ‘Koolards for a different Europe of popular and autonomous movements’ for more details contact 0181 800 4760.

August

SUNDAY 1. Re-launch London Socialist Alliance Conference. Speakers include a representa- tive of the Scottish Socialist Party and Danny Thomas, Centre 23, George Lane, SE13.

FRIDAY 27-MONDAY 30 Socialist Alliance conference in joint celebration of the 5th anniversary of the British and 1st anniversary of the Irish chapters of the Socialist Alliance. Info. 0181 440 7070.

VISIT THE SOCIALIST OUTLOOK WEBSITE AT www.labourmagnet.org.uk/soc
40,000 on Cologne Euro-march demo

Alan Thornett
40,000 people from right across Europe turned out, on a very hot day, to demonstrate in Cologne on June 29.

The mobilisation was aimed at the EU heads of Government meeting held under the German presidency of the EU. It was another remarkable success after the demonstration of a similar size in Amsterdam two years earlier.

Both demonstrations were protests against unemployment, social exclusion, poverty, low wages, racism and the drive towards the single European Currency. Given that the war in the Balkans broke out during the campaign for the demonstration opposition to the bombing and to NATO were added to the demands of the demonstration.

Like Amsterdam, Cologne was a clearly internationalist mobilisation with the majority of the demonstration coming from outside of Germany, although the German delegation was at least 10,000. In the demonstration represented a vast coalition of groups and organisations from across the continent: organisations of the unemployed, political organisations, anti-racist organisations, feminist organisations and trade unions. The composition of the delegation was different to Amsterdam, however.

The core of this demonstration this time was the left trade unions from across Europe. The big union delegations were from France, Italy and Spain from where some of the union delegations were huge. There were 300 from Greece made up almost entirely of official trade union delegations (most of which came on a chartered aircraft). Off the political delegations the biggest was Rifondazione Comunista (RC) from Italy which looked to be well over 1,000 but contained union banners connected to RC. The PDS from Germany had a large delegation.

The Fourth International (FI) had the strongest contingent of any group left towards and marched behind the banner of the Communist Revolutionary League (LCR - French Section of the Fourth International). If all those in the country the many FI members marching with other delegations the size of the mobilisation became even more impressive.

The Committee for a Workers International (CWI) delegation, led by the Socialist Party in Britain, was well organised. Workers Power's International grouping had a delegation of about 150 from half a dozen countries.

There was also a very large contingent (several thousand) of German anti-fascist youth surrounded in the most provocation way by huge squads of riot police.

The delegation from the French unemployed action organisation ACI amounted to several thousand. There was a big delegation from the World March of Women and another from the anti-racist current.

The event was very well organised and had a good carnival atmosphere. A main city highway was closed for the day and filled with stalls and meetings and demonstrators for several hours before the demonstration and into the evening with entertainment afterwards.

There was a ridiculously large police presence, thousands of police with hundreds of armoured vehicles, which caused some problems on some parts of the demonstration but it did not mar the overall event.

Five coaches went to the demonstration from Britain; one from Leeds, one from Newcastle, and one from London.

The fact that this is quite a good mobilisation in British terms reflects the very different political conditions which exist here as opposed to most other European countries.

Unlike Amsterdam (or even Cardiff last year) this particular summit had a lot of publicity prior to the event.

Although the agenda covered issues such as the relationship of the EU to the east and the introduction of "flexible" employment conditions to make the EU in the event it was turned over to back up NATO over the war, trying to cut a deal with Milosevic and discussing the implications of the war for the EU.

Thus the key discussions were around the stepping up of moves towards a common foreign and defence policy and the "problem" of relying on US military hardware in order to fight such a war. Resolving that one, however, is a big one.

The idea that the EU could get itself in a position to put as many war planes in the air as the USA without completely resolving the financial basis of the EU was a problem which was unresolved.

However these discussions will now continue with Blair on side for the first time in supporting these moves rather than parading as usual the voice of the USA in Europe.

The next targets for the strengthened Euro-marches movement across Europe will need to be discussed over the next few months.

Certainly in Britain the need for an internationalist campaign against both the single currency and the effects of European integration have been strongly demonstrated by the results of the European Parliament elections and one way we can measure up to the task by building on the strengths of Cologne.

General Strike in Euskadi demands 35-hour week

Jim Padmore
The Basque Country came to a standstill in a general strike on Friday May 21.

The strike, which was supported by the Basque trade union federations (CC.OO, UGT, ELA, LAB), demanded the introduction of a 35-hour week.

The struggle for the 35 hour week has in recent years been an important objective of European trade unions, with the French and Italian governments being forced to agree to its introduction.

The reason for its importance is clear: today in the EU we have 20 million unemployed, with 5 million in Germany, 3 million in France and 3 million in Spain.

The left must demand the immediate introduction of the 35 hour week with no exceptions and no loss of pay.

The Spanish employers say they "can't afford" such a measure. This is in a situation where they've been making record profits and where, since 1993, the stock market has gone up by 125 per cent.

As Friday morning dawned, it was clear that not many people were heading the office to "work as normal". Although the media did their best to find some reminding any shops and bars that they had little success.

By 6 am thousands of pickets were in place, not only outside the factories and offices, but in all the main roads across the city. In San Sebastian, Vitoria, Bilbao and a dozen smaller cities, workers were seen directing traffic and communicating with each other by mobile phone.

The response of the Basque police, the Errenteria, varied a lot from area to area. In some places, they more or less stood by, knowing it was after all only one day. In other areas, they were locked up and looking for a fight, and at least 20 pickets needed hospital treatment.

By 10 am, picots were doing the rounds in the city centres, reminding any shops and bars that had opened that they should be closed. At 12 o'clock, the demonstrations started, with more than 50,000 people taking part in demonstrations throughout the day.

One of the most positive things about this strike was that it was supported by all the trade union federations.

This greatest source of weakness in the Basque trade union movement is the chronic division between the nationalities, ELA and LAB, and those that exist in the whole of Spain, CC.OO and UGT.

Disgrace

In this context, it is disgraceful that the trade union leaders refused to hold joint demonstrations, preferring to maintain this division.

In Bilbao, for example, both demonstrations assembled at the same time and at the same place - CC.OO and UGT on one side of the square and ELA and LAB on the other. Both demonstrations then set off to march, by different routes, around the city.

Despite this, May 21 can only be seen as a big success. It is only the first step in what will probably be a long fight against government and employers, in the Basque Country and across Spain.

The trade unions should set a date for a general strike in Spain as a whole.

New! Your Money or Your Life!
The Tyranny of Global Debt by Eric Toussaint
The origins and development of the crisis in global finance.

Published by Pluto Press
£17.99 plus post & packing
Eric Toussaint

G7 to cancel debt? Don’t believe all they tell you!

Have those measures improved the circumstances of the populations concerned? They have not. The World Bank itself admits this, and advocates patience.

If the standard of living hasn’t improved, there has at least been an improvement of the economic situation of those countries that are paying out less in annual debt repayments.

No again … on the contrary, those countries have to repay more than they receive.

In 1997, the rich countries lent $8 billion to the poorest countries, while those countries repaid $8.2 billion, i.e. 200 million dollars more.

The BIRD (the International Fund for Reconstruction and Development of the World Bank group) and the IMF get more in repayments from the poorest countries than they lend.

For the future, the World Bank has just announced that despite the promised debt reduction measures, the amounts to be repaid will not decrease. Worse still, some countries (for example Mali and Burkina Faso) will have to repay even more than before.

The G7 has put the IMF and World Bank in charge of overseeing the implementation of adjustment policies. According to the G7 countries, those plans should bring about improved health care and education.

Yet from such improvements be envisaged within the narrow framework of austerity budgets?

Economic debt reduction, Mozambique will still have to devote over 40% of its budget to debt repayments. In such conditions, how can there possibly be improvement in the provision of health care for the population?

It is time to stop plundering these countries.

Public Development Aid has reached an all time low. It has dropped by 33% since 1993.

It is alarming that for the entire Third World countries have to repay a whole 250 billion dollars, whereas Public Development Aid barely scraped past the $30 billion mark.

This means that the Third World transferred eight times as much to the rich countries as it received from the so-called generous Public Development Aid.

The results are there.

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According to the World Bank, between 1987 and 1997, worldwide, the number of people living below the absolute poverty line (less than a dollar per day) increased from 1,200 to 1,500 million.

In fact, as is shown annually by the World Report on Human Development produced by the United Nations Development Programme, the North is not helping the South.

Instead the population of the South is transferring considerable wealth to the holders of capital in the North, at the cost of intolerable suffering and sacrifices.

This transfer is effected through two basic mechanisms: debt repayment, and unfair trading.

At the time of writing, a new debt crisis has erupted, as prices of products sold by the Third World on the world market have dropped considerably while the interest rates applied to service debts have risen.

In other words, the Third World countries are earning less and repaying more. On the other hand, the leading industrialised countries are making savings on the cost of importing raw materials from the Third World and the interest rates on their own public debts have dropped since the current crisis.

The Third World populations have already repaid more than enough. The public debts of the Third World countries must be totally written off.

To prevent corrupt and dictatorial regimes in the South from taking advantage of this cancellation, their holdings in rich countries must be frozen, and after due investigation, returned to the populations of the Third World countries via development funds run democratically in each country.

Other complementary measures must be taken including the cessation of structural adjustment plans, and the introduction of taxation of financial transactions (the so-called Tobin tax).

To prevent the recurrence of the mechanisms leading to indebtedness from resuming after debt cancellation, further steps must be taken, by laying the foundations of a new, fairer economic and human order.

The refusal to cancel the external debt, and the continued imposition of demonstrably damaging adjustment policies must be branded for what it is: a refusal of the bourgeoisie in the wealthy countries to come to the assistance of endangered populations.

Eric Toussaint is President of the Committee for the Cancellation of the Third World Debt (COCAD) and author of Your Money or Your Life, published in English by Pluto Press, London, 1999 and Vbk, Bombay, 1999.

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(1) US $2,030 billion (not including the former Eastern block) according to the latest World Bank report (Global Development Finance, April 1999).
(3) Only seven of these would actually qualify for debt reduction according to the present criteria laid down by the HIPC initiative: Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guyana, Mali, Mozambique, and Uganda.

Jubilee South: credit crunch is an opportunity to take control of our own future!
British government keeps quiet and passes the ammunition for anti-Kurd onslaught

NATO backs Turkish repression

Sheilia Malone

THIS MONTH, a Turkish court will probably condemn to death Kurdish activist Peter (PDK) leader Abdullah Ocalan, hunted down and kidnapped last autumn with the aid of international security forces.

The PKK has been waging a 15 year struggle against the Turkish state's savage repression and refusal of recognition to its 14,000 strong Kurdish population. 40,000 people have been killed, 3,000 Kurdish villages burnt and 3.5 million refugees driven from their homes. Organisations and parties supporting Kurdish interests have been continually banned and intimidated, and activists harassed, arrested, "disappeared" and murdered by state-sponsored death squads.

The trial of Ocalan, begun last month, seeks to show that an organisation for freedom from such oppression constitutes treason against the state, and is punishable by death. The aim is to destabilise, discredit and demoralise resistance movements by executing their leadership.

However, the kidnapping provoked massive and world-wide protests, and Ocalan himself remains a symbol of continued struggle. The trial itself has been widely condemned as unfair due to intimidation of defence lawyers, the presence of the military and a vicious "trial by media" vilifying both the PKK and the Kurds generally.

In his defence, Ocalan has repeated previous PKK offers of a cease-fire and readiness for a negotiated peace involving international mediation. Turkey, however, continues to reject such proposals because neither it nor the "international community" have any interest in a political settlement to the Kurdish issue. Why is this?

The US and its allies (who call the tune here) are well aware of NATO member Turkey's repression of the Kurds. They know, for instance, that it is far more extensive, longer lasting and bloody than even American military forces in Kosovo, which they used to justify their interventionist war against Serbia. It is also know that they (especially Britain) play a shaming part in this repression by arming the Turkish military to the teeth.

However, Turkey has always been seen as a strategic ally to upset, and especially right now. In the words of US ambassador Markarris last month, it is "...a country that can make, and is making daily, a unique contribution to the peace, stability and prosperity of a region extending from Europe to central Asia and the Middle East."

The prosperity refers here, of course, predominantly the huge profits for multinationals from the Caspian Sea oilfields newly opening to foreign control. These are, however, not to the advantage of the UN, and requiring pipelines through Turkey and the surrounding region.

The state and stability is Turkey's guarantee to contain any unworkable forces that threaten to emerge from the extraction and exploitation of these and other resources, by keeping the lid on any Kurdish aspirations to nation or statehood within Turkey itself.

It also means denying the rights of more than 20 million Kurds elsewhere in the region (especially in Iraq, Iran, Syria and the former Soviet Union). Struggles for Kurds in these different states could begin to pose the question of a united Kurdistan - anathema both to Western powers and the states in the region.

Until now the PKK had hoped the US and European powers would press Turkey to negotiate with them for an end to the oppression and for some form of self-determination. Their main strategy recently has been to increase diplomatic pressure towards this end. But it is clear, especially from the collision in Ocalan's arrest, that any Western "solutions" to conflict in the region falls short of such demands. Instead, a cosmetic clean-up of Turkey's abysmal human rights record, some involvement in the cash-starved Kurdish south east of Turkey, and some regional concessions on cultural autonomy are being considered sufficient to stay critical sections of the Kurds and allow Turkey to remain a respectable and highly useful ally.

Most importantly, these limited palliatives do not require direct peace talks with Kurdish resistance movements which could be marginalised.

An independent voice for the Kurds has also been stifled by attempts by British and European governments to silence the Kurds in the diaspora. Med- TV was recently shut down by the ITN in Britain in alliance with the 'Ortagu Politika' newspaper threatened with banning in Germany. British support for the Kurds is now more vital than ever to the Kurds' long and hard fought struggle for self-determination. The immediate aim is to stop Ocalan's execution by demonstrably an end to the present unjust and politically motivated show trial, and for his immediate release, together with many other political prisoners in Turkish jails, both Kurds and Turks.

We can further build on the support that has united campaigners against the Ocalan case and the right of Kurds to decide their own future through their own democratic representatives. Only a political solution which recognises this can secure freedom and an end to the senseless conflict in Turkey and in the surrounding region.

Contact: Freedom for Ocalan
c/o ICAD PO Box 8446, London N17 6NZ.

Preliminary results of a Commission for Gender Equality Report show that less than one in four jobs in the private sector are held by women. Black empowerment initiatives have done very little to improve the lot of women in the workplace.

The study showed firmly entrenched racist and cultural stereotypes, such as "black women can only do domestic work as they are always having babies", and "men are the heads of households and therefore should be in higher positions."

There are other challenges for the Mbeki-led administration including, among others things, the problem of unemployment. In the small towns and hinterland of the Western Cape, economic desperation is such as to make some people actually sell their homes and sell their country, little seem to have changed, especially for farm workers.

South African wines in British super-markets are competitively priced. The unseen element is that wages range between £3.60 and 1160 (£5.25) per week.

There is great frustration about housing and unemployment. White farmers carry on as if nothing has changed. They do not really care about the labour laws. There are still some who think they can hit and intimidate as they please.

The ANC have received this overwhelming vote. Now the people have to find ways to fulfil their promises. They do not want to wait their turn to farm, decent housing, piped water and electricity. They want an end to poverty now.

If the ANC's pro-capitalist policies continue to leave the majority of the country no better off, the space for a political alternative may begin to open up again.

After Mandela, will the ANC deliver?

Charlie van Gelderen

SOUTH AFRICA's second election on a full non-racial franchise has resulted in an overwhelming victory for the ANC slate, led by Thabo Mbeki, achieving an even bigger victory than Mandela's. The ANC, with 66.6 per cent of the vote, fell short of its target of a two-thirds majority. That would have constituted a constitutional change, which Mbeki has stated that he had no intention of doing.

The minority opposition parties fared very badly. The former ruling National Party, the beggar of apartheid, got only 7 per cent of the votes. Four years ago it received 20.7 per cent. The majority of white voters deserted it, voting instead for the racially-tainted right-wing Democratic Party. This party fought on the slogan 'right Back', which its supporters interpreted as 'Fight Blacks'.

The main beef of the whites is the affirmative action legislation, that they argue has been enacted in South Africa for more than 300 years - in favour of whites, of course. A white farmer who was found guilty of killing a black child was sentenced to a fine. The judge who sentenced him was not appointed to the judiciary because he was the best person for the job. He benefited from affirmative action because he was white. Today, nearly 60 per cent of black senior judges are appointed by black senior judge.

Undoubtedly the election result is a vote of confidence in the ANC, but it is more than that. There is also great disappointment that all the hopes engendered by the end of apartheid has not been realised.

As Winnie Mandela put it in one of her campaign speeches; "The people did not fight against apartheid just to be able to go to the polls and vote. They want to see a redistribution of wealth which is still overwhelming in the hands of the whites."

Thabo Mbeki mildly echoes the same sentiments. "Wealthy whites, he said, can afford to make a greater financial sacrifice. But how does he hope to achieve what he says? In the same speech, he said his government would continue what is called the "market led economy". He also says nothing about movements, which could be marginalised.

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Zionist policies survive Israel's election "landslide"

Roland Rance

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VEN as Israeli PM-elect Ehud Barak begins his consultations with the three political entities with which he signed the Oslo Accords, the new Prime Minister is already seeking to form a new government, including a new Knesset. The first step in this process is the establishment of a new government coalition.

The process of forming a new government in Israel is a complex one, involving both political and constitutional considerations. The new Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, is expected to seek the support of other political parties in order to form a coalition government. This will involve negotiating with a variety of political parties, including those that are traditionally opposed to his policies.

The process of forming a new government in Israel is also subject to constitutional constraints. The Israeli constitution requires that a government have the support of a majority of the members of the Knesset, the Israeli parliament. This means that the new Prime Minister will need to secure the support of at least 61 members of the Knesset in order to form a government.

The establishment of a new government coalition in Israel will have significant implications for the country's political landscape. It is likely to result in a shift in power dynamics, with new political alignments and alliances emerging.

The process of forming a new government in Israel is also affected by the ongoing conflict with the Palestinian Authority. The new government will need to address this conflict, which has been a major challenge for Israeli leaders in recent years.

The establishment of a new government coalition in Israel will also have implications for Israel's foreign policy, particularly with respect to its relationship with the United States. The new government will need to work closely with the US government in order to ensure the stability of the region and to advance Israeli interests.

The establishment of a new government coalition in Israel is a significant moment in the country's history. It will involve a complex process of negotiation and compromise, but it is essential for the country's stability and future.
ABC of Labour's love of secrecy

John Lister

LABOUR governments have always been craven servants of the State capitalism they claim to guard. Among the guardians of the secrecy of its state machine, Jack Straw's feeble "Freedom of Information Bill" actually offers today's campaigns even fewer rights on some issues than they had under 18 years of Tory rule. This is despite the fact that New Labour: the same case under "old Labour", too. Straw's Labour's bold promises and fob off critics with meaningless "consultation" is a latest-day echo of the inglorious efforts of the Wilson and Callaghan govern- ments to gag anyone seeking to investigate or expose the powers of the state. Two noxious measures sum up this long-running saga of reformist deference to a system designed to subordinate, stifle and - if necessary - repress any serious challenge to capitalist rule:

The first was the decision by Home Secretary Merlyn Rees in November 1979 to strip two American journalists, Philip Agee, a former CIA agent, and Mark Hosenball, as investigative journalist, "in the interests of national security".

The second was what immediately became known as the "ABC" case, the arrest, prosecution and trial of Crispin Aubrey, John Berry and Duncan Campbell under the Official Secrets Act. Aubrey and Campbell were journalists for the Daily Mail, an ex-British soldier who had worked in Signals Intelligence, believed he had a responsibility to uncover the level of state surveillance.

The trial lasted ended late in 1978 in what was widely seen as a defeat for the state and a moral victory for the three defendants.

Agee, who had worked with the CIA in Latin America had been closely watched by British secu-
rity services from his arrival in Britain in 1972, and during the three years in which he worked on his book Inside the Company,
lifting the lid on the activities of the then country's employer.

But what drove the British and American secret servicemen from anger to apoloogy was when Agee then turned to active cam-
paigning to promote his book and the information it contained, throughout Britain and western Europe, from his home in Cam-
bridge.

The final straw seems to have been his visit to Jamaica in September/1979, in the midst of the CIA's efforts to "destabilize" the socialist democratic govern-
ment of Michael Manley. Agee confirmed in public meetings that the pattern of events during the stormy election campaign was typical of CIA operations, and named CIA operatives active in Jamaica.

Perhaps Agee was naïve or ill-
formed: he did not appear to be aware that a CIA operation of this type in an ex-British colony would have required at least tacit involvement of the British M16.

Although no details were ever given, and none had to be proved or tested in court, it seems that this intervention into British and US efforts to control the Jamaican government was what tipped the balance and persuaded Rees to invoke a clause of the 1971 Immigration Act to deport Agee on grounds of national security.

Hosenball's deportation was ordered the same day in 1976. He had worked since 1974 on the staff of Time Out magazine, spe-
cializing in stories about the British and US security agencies.

In 1975 and others had collaborated on an article listing 50 CIA agents based at the US embassy in London. And in May 1976, working with Duncan Campbell, he had written a Time Out article, "The Eavesdroppers", which was the first to detail the work of what was then the little-
known GHCQ listening post in

Cheltenham, key to the British Signals Intelligence operation (SIGINT).

The Eavesdroppers showed the scale of the interception and monitoring of military and diplomatic communications not only in Eastern Europe, but throughout much of the Third World. It also described the scale of the US National Security Agency and its bases in Britain.

Pedaled into action by back-room briefings from M16, M15, the defence intelligence Committee and other highly-placed reactionaries, Home Secretary Merlyn Rees obediently invoked the controvers-
yal "Star Chamber" provi-
sions of the 1971 Immigration Act to deport Agee and Hosenball. And, using the provisions of the Act, he refused to tell the accused or anyone else any of the specific accusations against them.

Despite a vocal defence cam-
paign, and opposition from almost 100 of his own back-
bench MPs, Rees stuck to his guns.

Agee and Hosenball were allowed to appeal, but only to a hand-picked team of "three wise men" - one of whom was former politician Sir Richard Hayward.

The Agee-Hosenball Defence Campaign of which he was a part - and its leaders in turn were soon subverted, and immedi-
ately fell under surveillance from Britain's secret state machine.

Given his formidable skill, it was perhaps unwise for the Department of the Prime Minister to have appointed Hosenball as principal an- nouncer, but it is the lack of any substance in the allegations against him that is the crucial issue.

A man who has written authoritatively on the subject of the secret agencies, Hosenball has never been caught in the act, and has a solid reputation for integrity.

The Eavesdroppers showed that the British government had failed to stop the tide of information which is pouring into the public domain, and the public is being able to judge for itself the nature and extent of the surveillance to which it is subjected.

The scandal is not confined to those who work directly for the state, but is endemic in all areas of society.

The government's cover-up of the affair has been a total failure, and the attempt to silence the voices of those who are speaking out is a transparent attempt to silence the truth.

The time has come for a thorough investigation of the affair, and for the government to take action to prevent similar abuses in the future.

The campaign for Hosenball's release must continue, and the government must be held accountable for its actions.
Remembering Paul Wozny
RUSKIN COLLEGE in Oxford have agreed to set up an annual student award in memory of Paul Wozny, UNISON activist and Socialist Outlook supporter, who tragically died last year. The decision was announced at a small ceremony on Friday, 1st June, at Ruskin, at which Paul’s mother Cecilia, sister Kristy, and brother Bernard were present, along with College officers.
Also present were close colleagues and friends Mike Arthur, (Hampshire UNISON Branch Secretary at the time), and UNISON member Graham Clifford. Representatives from the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic UNISON, in which Paul played a leading role, and Socialist Outlook were also invited.
Explaining the decision, family members emphasised Paul’s eagerness to acquire knowledge. Paul was a passionate reader who believed that education and knowledge were essential tools for social progress. He was involved in so many issues that to give the money to one instead of another seemed churlish. It was more appropriate that individuals from a work that was backgrounded be given an opportunity to study.
It is obvious from the words of those present that Paul is greatly missed. His family are determined to do something to honour both Paul and his principle.
The rest of us can help by supporting the award fund. Please send contributions to: Ruskin College, Walton Street, Oxford. Specify that the money is for the Paul Wozny fund.

Why Clinton was so ready to bomb Serbia

BOB WOOD reviews
The Twisted Road to Kosovo, by Peter Gowan
Lightning Focus on Eastern Europe No 62

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the changes in Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War, it seemed that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation no longer had any role to play. NATO’s reason for being, the alleged threat from the east, no longer existed. Peter Gowan’s analysis goes a long way to explaining why NATO has re-emerged to play a major role in the Kosovo war.
Finding a new task for NATO and re-establishing American control of Europe has been at the centre of American strategy for the last ten years. In the aftermath of 1989, there were three possible scenarios for the immediate future of Europe, east and west, Gowan argues. First, it was possible to envisage a single Europe, stretching from Russia to the Atlantic, with a single security system. French President Mitterrand favoured this solution, but lacked support from Moscow and also faced the active hostility of the United States.
Secondly, the European Union could extend its influence eastward, combining the move to a single currency with an independent foreign and defence policy, making NATO on the east, no longer exist. Gowan argues, convincingly enough, that events in the Balkans following the break-up of Yugoslavia can only be properly understood in the light of the determination of the United States to ensure that the project to transform NATO was successful.
In the early nineties, the US repeatedly scuppered European initiatives in which David Owen played a leading part, by suggesting to the Bosnian government under Izetbegovic that by waiting they could get a better deal. In the event they probably got less, but importantly the agreement was finally reached at Dayton was brokered by the USA.

Then, over Kosovo, clearly unacceptable demands were placed on Milosevic at Rambouillet, excluding free access for NATO forces to all parts of Yugoslavia, not just Kosovo. It does not seem to me to be stretching the truth too far to suggest that this war was deliberately provoked.
The Americans needed to tie western Europe firmly into NATO, not just in theory but in practice. The new NATO has now been blooded.
Gowan’s argument is not without its weaknesses. He suggests that Serbia was targeted because Milosevic was opposed to the new global order and non-liberalism. The privatisation of much of Yugoslav’s industry (remember ‘Doughnut Hole’ involvement as an adviser?) must make this doubtful.
On Gowan’s own evidence, Milosevic is a familiar type in eastern European politics since the fall of the wall, opportunistically abandoning any residual linguistic socialism, and playing the nationalist card.

In peeling away the humanised veneer, to reveal the cynicism, duplicity and callousness of American imperialism, beneath Gowan has done us all a service.

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G7 debt relief fraud

The majority of the world’s poor live in India, Indonesia, Brazil, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Mexico. None of these countries is affected by the debt reduction measures announced in Cologne. The ‘cancellation of debt’ agreed by leaders of the seven wealthiest countries will consolidate and even deepen the exploitation of the majority of the world’s population. The deal – endorsed by the British Labour government – has been widely condemned by campaigners. It is a recipe for increased misery and intensified repression across the world.

Only international solidarity and the mobilisation of the working class can stop the capitalist machine grinding more profits from the world’s poorest people.

See INSIDE, page 15