The London dockers’ support committee, with the support of the Liverpool docks shop stewards have called a march for social justice on April 12. This second London demonstration in the 18 month dispute will be led by the striking Liverpool dockers.

A wide appeal for support is going out. The organisers are confident that it will exceed the previous successful demonstration.

The dockers’ support group has also forged links with the Euro-March campaign. April 12 is the Saturday before the start of the furthest leg of the Euro-March in Tangier, Morocco and Marbella, Spain.

The Moroccan leg of the Euro-March is an important reminder that the marches are international in character. They will protest about unemployment and exclusion wherever it exists. The decisions of the Intergovernmental Conference of the EU will have an impact far beyond the member countries of the EU.

The support of the dockers themselves for the Euro-march is a natural extension of the tremendous internationalism they have displayed, and which in turn has helped to sustain them with solidarity action by dockworkers throughout the world throughout their dispute.

The decision that publicity for April 12 will include coverage of the Euro-march gives that campaign an important new opportunity to reach campaigners and activists who have not heard of this initiative but who support the dockers’ struggle. This is vital to ensure that the important work done to build the Euro-march amongst the unemployed and trade unionists is complemented by reaching into new networks amongst the homeless, environmental activists, anti-racists and all those wanting to fight for social justice.

12 noon, Kennington Park (Oval Tube), Sat April 12
Anti-racism after the election

Bigger Assembly sceptical of 'new Labour plans'

Simon Deville reports

THE THIRD annual meeting of the National Assembly Against Racism on March 1 was larger and more upbeat than previous years, with around 200 participants.

The reason for this was obvious from most contributions from the platform and in the workshops: cautious optimism about the change in the political situation following the forthcoming general election.

**Influence**

Recurrent throughout contributions was an understanding that it will not be sufficient to simply elect a Labour government, but that the anti-racist movement will be far better placed to influence a Labour administration.

The Assembly was entitled Fighting Racism - What the next government must do. But the extent to which the Labour leadership can expect a honeymoon period amongst black communities was questioned, as speaker after speaker discussed what we should do if Labour fails to deliver anything.

**TGWU affiliation**

Bill Morris announced the affiliation of the Transport and General Workers Union. The central importance of the Assembly is that it has by far the widest support among the official Labour movement.

A joint statement agreed by the NAAE, TUC, National Black Alliance, the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns and others addressed asylum rights, deportations, stop and search, exclusions from schools, racist attacks and unemployment.

The hunger strikes by asylum seekers locked up in Rochester meant that the repeal of the Immigration and Asylum Act and the closure of detentions were placed high on the agenda.

The widespread publicity around the murder of Stephen Lawrence had the effect of not only highlighting racist violence within the police and the legal system, but had quite clearly pushed many people to the left.

In the workshop 'Confronting Racial Violence - It Must Be a Crime', the overall consensus was that the central problem was not insufficient legislation but the lack of political will to pursue the perpetrators of racial violence and its legitimisation.

**Experiences**

A number of participants related their own experiences of appalling levels of harassment and how the police, Crown Prosecution Service, the courts and local authorities had refused to act. Mal Hussein told how a solicitor had told him in court "If you are racially abused occasionally you might take offence, but if you are racially abused every day you become accustomed to it and can't take offence." Despite the decline in the fascist BNP, the assembly acknowledged the urgent need to organise anti-fascist campaigns around the elections in every seat they contest.

The level of official labour movement support, the broad agreement around central aspects of racism and the positive nature of the Assembly place is on a firm footing to become a central force in anti-racist struggles after the election.

**To develop tactics and strategies of how to take forward the struggle against racism will require the establishment of an inclusive and democratic structure through which all opponents of racism can unite - this is an opportunity that must not be squandered.**

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**Citizens Advice urge rights for everyone - except your staff!**

Jennie Twydell, Secretary MSF St Pancras branch

The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux - well known for its championing of rights at work - has sacked Glenn Sutherland, a leading trade unionist who has worked for the organisation for 19 years.

Union members at NACAB believe that Glenn has been victimised because of his union activities over the years. MSF, the union which represents staff at NACAB, is organising a ballot of members with a view to taking industrial action.

Glenn Sutherland, branch of which Glenn is Chair, has unanimously passed a motion of support, as has the MSF London Region. A spokesperson said: 'All staff are disgusted by the way Glenn has been treated and there is no doubt that there will be an overwhelming vote for strike action.'

People are fed up with the hypocrisy of an organisation that preaches to others about how to behave and then does this to someone who has worked for them for 19 years. This is the first time there has been a ballot for an official strike at NACAB - that shows how strong the feeling is. We are all very pleased that MSF is giving Glenn their full support.'

**No notice**

Sutherland was sacked without the twelve weeks paid notice his long service as NACAB had entitled him to. NACAB management said that they could do this because he was guilty of 'gross misconduct'. His 'offence' was that he had used a photocopyer to do some personal photocopying - union and other political material - without asking for permission.

As the disciplinary hearing management admitted that they did not have a policy on personal use of photocopyers. One manager described personal photocopying as "a free for all."

MSF conducted a survey to find out what current practice was and every single respondent said that they had used photocopying facilities for personal use. NACAB management has decided to ignore this and to single out Glenn. This is one of the reasons why his colleagues believe that he is being victimised - punished for his union activities at NACAB.

The costs of the photocopying was £12.48 and Glenn had offered to pay this. What price 12 years service?"

Chris Smith - Glenn's MP - has expressed concerns to NACAB officials and said that he is taking the matter up with NACAB's Chief Executive.

Letters of protest should be adressed to Ann Abraham, NACAB Chief Executive, 115-123 Pentonville Road, London N1 9LZ.

Copy of this appeal to The Secretary, MSF St Pancras Branch, 80 Pembroke Street, London N1 0DP.
Post-Wirral syndrome

THE WIRRAL by-election has sounded Major's death-knell. The wake on May 1 will be deserted, as his fellow Tories gear up for the next stage of their already open battle for his successor.

Stephen Dorrell's breach of party line in condemning Britain will definitely not join European Monetary Union in 1999 is the latest salvo in that war. He demonstrates a disregard for the impact on his party's electoral showing, despite the fact he is supposedly the Prime Minister's favoured successor.

Major himself has publically admitted that 'if opinion doesn't change in phase-in, I have few plans for Labour government'. The official party line is that the 1.7 per cent swing to Labour was the result of 'tyranny culture', but the desertion of some Labour supporters suggest they don't believe this.

They know full well that the elections in Wirral have delivered a guilty verdict against this government which will be repeated across the country come May.

While Labour certainly cannot count on the same margin of success in the General election itself, their victory does seem a foregone conclusion. Of course Prime Minister Major and the others tell us not to be complacent but the champagne has already been popped by those who were there.

**Summer budget**

Major's attempts to point out supposed differences between Blair and Prescott, and his focus on Gordon Brown's intention to hold a summer budget seem fated to be little impact as the expensive Tory poster campaign attacking Labour tax plans had at Wirral.

It is not easy to imagine Major pulling a Falklands war rabbit from his sleeve at this stage in the proceedings.

If the Tories' fate is sealed, what then have we for a look forward to under a Blair government?

The negative Labour campaigning in Wirral gives us little hope for optimism. The gymnastics over grammar schools - with Labour pledging that abolition would only go through if existing parents with children at those schools wanted it – gives the lie to the idea that Blunkett and his team care even one hoot about the future of education.

We have also been told that assisted places won't be phased out 'straight away'. If this is a priority for Labour it is not one in which the reality of working class children's lives can expect much improvement.

This pathetic performance on education mirrors so much that has been spewed out by the New Labour machine. In every area of life, over jobs, benefits and services the Labour leadership is in open on making clear that Blair in Number 10 will be exactly as Blair was.

Despite the fact that there is little or no indication that the Millbank crew will reverse the ravages of the seemingly countless years of Tory destruction, the need for socialists to actively support the election of a Labour government remains vital.

Those in the trade unions and the party who have opposed struggles, holding behind the flag-leaf of arguing that all struggles must be subordinated to that goal will be disarmed in the face of real attacks that will then follow.

Those that have been conned and connived into following them will be much more open to discuss new ideas and strategies for defending their interests both at work and in the community.

Despite Blair's successes so far in taming the party, the key battle over the NEC proposals to further neutral the party and unions – and behind that, the even more crucial war over the whole existence of the trade union link – remain to be decided.

**Hated**

Wirral demonstrated the hatred of millions of people for the Tories. Small left parties, like the Socialist Labour Party, who made a rather poor showing in Wirral, are likely to be very squeezed in this climate.

Only where they have a genuine and significant local base will they be able to achieve the task that is vital along with the election of a Labour government – the preparation of the basis for a real fightback against the new attacks that we will face.

Over the coming weeks in the run up to the election, Socialist Outlook supporters will do all in their power to build those campaigns and actions that can best fulfill this task. We call on all socialists to join us in that fight.

A humiliation too far?

Labour plans provoke public sector union fury

AS THE seemingly inevitable Labour victory looms closer, it is becoming ever more obvious that the new government will be locked from day one in a conflict with the trade unions, most notably those in the public sector.

The Labour response to Tory plans to phase in 'inflation-busting' settlements was predictable, if Gordon Brown, as on almost everything else, will stick to Tory policies.

This announcement produced the first sign of any resistance from an otherwise supine trade union leadership, who have for several years (it seems decades) abandoned any other policy but waiting for a Labour government.

They chose their words carefully, but had already known UNISON national officers and General Secretary Bickerstaffe made it clear that they will be demanding a full settlement of the review body increases regardless of which government gets in.

The only concession that has been offered to the NHS unions by New Labour is the scrapping of the costly and ineffective system of local pay bargaining Trust by Trust. But it is clear that one of the main reasons for this policy switch has been pressure from the unions, which pay millions each year to sustain the Labour Party, but by the right wing Royal College of Nursing, which is not even affiliated!

Councils

The same union leaders are under pressure in local government, where cuts totalling hundreds of millions are being pushed through by Labour-led councils obediently following orders from Frank Dobson and Blair's merry Millbank crew to keep their heads down and wait for the election.

But they also know that Dobson has not been forcefully that Labour will stick to Tory 'capping' limits on council spending, and will carry through with Kenneth Clarke's cuts for the next two years.

This means thousands of jobs will face the axe in the next two years, which should be the 'honeymoon period' for a Blair government.

Worse still, one of the consequences of the spending cuts, if Ken's Labour-led council is anything to go by, could be a growing drive towards the privatisation of social services, implying a massive loss of public sector jobs and a wholesale reduction in the range and quality of services for the most vulnerable people.

Add to this the shameful Labour U-turn over the Tory Private Finance Initiative which could result in mainstream NHS hospitals being owned and run for profit by private firms (see page 6), which reveals New Labour as a matter of touch for profit-seeking City investors even than the Tories.

Rumour has it that Shadow Health Secretary was less than happy at being called upon to ditch the Party's principal opposition to PFI but this is little consolation for leaders of unions such as UNISON, which has just reinforced its line of opposition to PFI – encouraged in this stance by the alysimal failure of the scheme to deliver any of the promised new hospital buildings.

Smith personally may not like the new line on PFI, but his views don't really matter. He appears to be just the latest in a succession of Shadow Health Secretaries who didn't want the job and doesn't want to take over from Dobson after the election. Again the rumours are that the job might go to high flying Blairite Tessa Jowell – who is sponsored by the RCN!

Ridiculous

On every front, the public sector union leaders are being made to look ridiculous by Blair's team in front of their members and the wider public. They clearly don't like it. Never before have national union officials been so sanctimonious about the prospects on offer from Labour in the run-up to an election.

They also have a sense of real foreboding. They know there is a good chance that their humiliation will be compounded at this year's Labour conference, which is expected to strike while the electoral iron is still hot, and cut the party's links with the unions.

As UNISON's London Convenor Geoff Marlin has summed up "The 'give and take' relationship between the party and the unions means that the unions give Blair the money and Blair takes the piss.

Although they may be excluded by New Labour, sooner or later the unions will have to face up to the need for their own political voice. The millions in political funds offer the opportunity to fight politically for the interests of union members, irrespective of the pressure from Blair's barmy army in Millbank. Among the policies that will demand attention is a turn back to socialism – a socialism more scientific and serious than Clause Four.

The expected Labour honeymoon has not yet been completely written off, but it has already been scaled down. It is vital that this year's union conferences keep the heat on the bureaucrats who have been so publicly shifted by Blair, pressing for policies to defend job and union rights and living standards.

That, after all, is why millions will be voting to kick out the Tories.
An ideal time for a fighting lead from Women's TUC

Marlen Brain

LIKE LAST year's Women's TUC, this conference will be split into two parts, one in which affiliates submit resolutions and amendments for voting, and the other with a free discussion.

Last year's discussion was around how unions recruit and organise women workers. Following on, this year's discussion is on how, having recruited women, unions can become more relevant to them, and on what ways can be used to make them more effective. Although in theory it is a good idea to have some free discussion, it would have been better if the conference had been extended by a day, rather than restricting the resolution based part of the conference.

There are resolutions on most of the main issues facing working women, including:
- equal rights at work, childcare, bullying and violence at work, workloads, working hours, the balance between work and family life, homeworking, the recruitment of agency workers, feminism of the teaching profession
- women's representation at the Trades Union Congress
- women's rights at work
- the disregard of disabled black women
- disability
- the welfare state, benefits, the NHS, women's health, transport, pension rights for women and casualised workers
- domestic violence, child abuse and protection, women's experiences in the criminal and family courts systems
- fair trade, internationalism

NUWITE has submitted an important resolution opposing the "family values" moral postures adopted by both major parties, and the repercussions this could have for women workers, and also lesbian and disabled women.

Single mothers

The resolution opposes policies which attack single mothers, assert the superiority of the heterosexual monogamous nuclear family at the expense of all other alternatives, and undermine women's rights to full-time paid employment.

It stresses the need to campaign for properly funded nursery education and after school provision, the implementation of TUC policy on careers, to resist attacks on abortion rights, and to campaign to simplify, strengthen and extend equality legislation and to outlaw discrimination against women on grounds of their sexual orientation.

There are also resolutions on the welfare state and education, but what is lacking so far is an understanding that if we are to be able to defend and extend the welfare state, we need to develop a different line than that of the TUC leadership towards Maasricht and the single currency - acceptance of the Maasricht process and the convergence criteria for the single currency means acceptance of cuts in the welfare state.

The Women's Committee report to Women's Conference mentions a 1996 resolution noting the increasing dependence on casual, temporary and freelance contracts, it also states that the TUC has made job insecurity and employment rights priority issues for campaigning, and highlights the 1996 TUC labour market report "Future of work on the Edges."

The TUC's document on how to maintain women's trade union membership and encourage women to be active stresses the importance of campaigning around issues relevant to women, e.g. defence of hospitals and other social services, and opposition to closures.

Yet the current TUC leadership has opposed the European Marches, and supported the Maastricht process and the moves towards a single currency.

The Europe of the bosses is imposing huge cuts in welfare and job losses, with a damaging impact on women's lives. Defending women workers' rights means opposing the offensive of the capitalist class.

Straw of comfort to lesbians and gays

Peter Purton, Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (personal capacity)

Jack Straw, shadow home secretary, has delivered an important speech on Labour's pledges on lesbian and gay law reform to a cross-party meeting called by Stonewall to commemorate the third anniversary of the vote which came close to equalising the age of consent for gay men but instead reduced it to 18.

On February 20 Straw promised that Labour would repeal Section 28, which would hold an early free vote on the age of consent and would in effect destroy the European Convention on Human Rights into British law as a vehicle for tackling discrimination.

For lesbians and gay men, the first step on the road to equality is a legal system which consciously and deliberately discriminates against us in almost every sphere of life.

Under the Tories, government action has made the position worse. The infamous section 28 of the 1988 local government Act, introduced to ban councils from promoting "homosexual activities" by enshrining our second-class status in law is only the worst example of many.

The new Sex Offenders Bill will unless successfully amended - place a gay man 'guilty' of completely consensual 'offences' with another man of 17 on a register of dangerous sex offenders. This legal oppression both results from and reinforces the social oppression of homosexuality. Challenging prejudice and discrimination goes hand in hand with changing the laws which encourage them.

For the lesbian and gay community, the question is who of those who form the next government and which they will do when they are elected is more than usually critical. For the first time in 18 years there is a chance of light.

Welcome

Welcome though these commitments are, they would still leave many discriminatory laws and practices in place. Labour retreats on many other previous pledges give further cause for concern. By contrast the Liberal Democrats have far more comprehensive platform of reforms and they have a wide following amongst our constituency as a result.

The level of political consciousness among lesbians and gay men is not very high as a result of the absence of significant progressive struggles in recent years and the barrenness of parliamentary politics.

For socialists to argue then that despite greater benefits promised by the Liberal Democrats, lesbians and gay people should vote Labour "because it is the party of the working class" is a vain approach doomed to failure.

Yet the need to elect Labour is pressing and the commitments made by Straw do offer the platform for winning this approach.

The Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights on this issue have been responsible for winning far more advanced and detailed commitments from Labour Party conference resolutions (five times since 1985) running an election campaign around these pledges.

The key is the motivation offered by Jack Straw and on other occasions by Tony Blair himself.

Straw said in his speech that with the new Clause 4 New Labour was committed to oppose prejudice. Coupled with the detailed policy which has been argued and won across west London of the Labour movement in the last fifteen years, the door is open to push a Labour government to broaden and develop these basic commitments into comprehensive and effective reform.

Outlaw discrimination

There will be few new bills which cannot be made to touch on measures against discrimination. The most important are measures to outlaw discrimination in employment, housing, education and services something which the European Convention, on its own, manifestly fails to do.

There will be other new bills too, which will actually worsen our position unless countermoving steps are included: increased powers for the police under 'zero tolerance' for 'low-level' crime will not help us as Straws claimed unless the laws under which the police and courts currently hound us are themselves removed.

As a result of years of campaigning inside and outside the trade unions and Labour party there is now widespread support for lesbian and gay equality as an elementary human right.

This support has now even per-
Defiance of Magnet strikers

"We will come through — and win!"

Trade unionists at Magnet in Darlington have been on strike for seven months now. Pat Smith, a Socialist Outlook talked to IAN CRUMMOND, secretary of the strike committee, who represents 340 workers on both sides of the picket line against the company.

3D: What is the current state of the dispute?

IC: We are still mounting a 24-hour picket line, 7 a.m. to 7 a.m. on strike. We have a strong picket line and a good delegation team, though we could do with more people. Our national support is really starting to turn.

Locally it is still at a low level — hopefully that will improve after the national picket day on March 1. We are losing most of Magnet's major retail outlets, asking people not to buy Magnet kitchens until we get reinstatement.

3D: Tell us about the women's support.

IC: The women's support group is modelled on the Liverpool Women's Support Group and the miners' women's support groups. They wrote to Berrington's share-holders about the dispute and went down to London to lobby the AGM of Berrington — the publicity from that has been brilliant. They are organising a local leafleting campaign. They play an active part in the day-to-day work of the strike committee, gathering information, writing to people, talking to people, and so on.

SD: What support have you had from the different unions involved?

IC: There are four unions involved — TGWU, GMB, UCATT and AEEU. Early on they played a low key role. Unions are under pressure to settle disputes by negotiation. If any one party won't negotiate they are at a loss as to what to do. They took a back seat and didn't take any initiative in support of the dispute. They paid strike pay, but information and support in general were of a very low standard. Now things are getting a lot better.

The TGWU is giving us full support. They have paid strike pay, have donated £10,000 to the strike fund, set up a delegation work, and provided us with an office in Mid-dlesbrough.

The UCATT Regional official initially took a high profile on the picket line, but that gradually died off.

UCATT is financially very poor, but we have had some good physical support. We have been up to UCATT meetings in Scotland and UCATT has a strong membership in the Hull and York areas. A UCATT support group in Sheffield has put on benefits for us and organised meetings.

As regards physical support, UCATT has been very active.

The GMB branch has been very helpful financially and physically. I don't want to get into a slanging match, but the union nationally has not been as supportive as it should be. We have been out in support of their members, and really the support should be greater than it actually is. The individual members of the GMB branch here have been absolutely marvellous, but it is the union hierarchy that is one of the problems.

The AEEU was least represented among the strikers. There were — to my knowledge — only a couple of AEEU members still on strike. Support from the AEEU has been very low key, both financially and physically. The full-time official does attend the picket line every Sunday with sausages and refreshments, but he doesn't do anything to tell AEEU members nationally about the dispute.

We have tried to maintain the strike committee with all four unions involved on an equal basis, but at the moment it is up to the men who are going to get a pay rise and had no real need to be out on strike.

Any strike needs primarily two kinds of support — financial and physical. We can stand outside with a collecting bucket forever and not get anywhere, we need the physical pressure on the company to force them to negotiate a fair return to work.

UCATT and the TGWU, are starting to get themselves more into the habit of helping. We are struggling a little bit at the moment, but we will come through and we will win.

SD: What support have you had from other Magnet factories and outlets?

IC: It's been very poor. We've been very disappointed with those union members in the other Magnet factories who have not supported us, basically because they've got a job. They got a pay rise of 3 per cent, the same as we wanted, they accepted it just as we would have done. I have no problem with that. The problem is their lack of physical and financial support for us. It should be there of right that any trade unionists that works for a firm gets the support of the members who work for the same firm. We understand they are worried about their jobs, but 340 of their colleagues need their support.

There are four other major factories, they are collecting money on a irregular basis, we would like to do something about that. If we can do something about that, then we could maintain the picket line on a regular basis. We are not condemning them or blam- ing them, but we need their sup- port, and we are putting pressure on them to give it.

SD: Would you tell us about the events that led up to the Liverpool dockers and the Hillington hospital workers?

IC: We linked up with the dock- ers early on in the dispute. We had- n't heard about the dockers or the Hillington workers until just before we went on strike.

The dispute I feel most angry about is the Hillington workers. We came out for a pay claim, the dockers came out in defence of their sons' jobs, but the Hillington workers were sacked for doing nothing — not asking for a pay rise, not wanting to change their working conditions — they were sacked for merely taking part in a pay cut.

They are 53 Asian women not used to standing up in public, but they decided to come out and say "shared and networked work set up that you're not going to take away our jobs". It's brilliant, and they've be- come more and more confident over 17 months.

The way they've been stabbed in the back by UNISON is shameful, no trade union should do that to its members. We support them, we al- ways mention them when we speak, and will continue to do so whether they are official or unofficial.

We have a very close affinity with the dockers, they've been on our picket line and we've been on theirs. We have met their mass pickets and demonstrations (unfortu- nately we turned up late after the confrontation, so did the route on our own!) and they've turned out on ours. We will be at the march for social justice on April 12 with our brand new bann- ers, which will be brilliant.

Those in dispute must get together and support each other and this is one of the reasons for our conference on March 1.

It's important that information is shared and networks set up that can provide support for large and small disputes that come after us.

Don't let the right wing exploit CPSA merger!

by Shaun Cohen, branch secretary, Department of Transport CPSA, North and North West Wales, personal capacity

Negotiations are currently taking place between the Civil and Public Service Association (CPSA) and Public Taxation and have provoked a view to merger next year. If the merged body goes ahead it will create a civil service union with about 270,000 members.

As part of a run up to the merger, ballots have been circulated to members, and a new CPSA document called 'Aims and Values' forms part of the negotiations.

This document appeared just af- ter Christmas with no prior warn- ing, and members were asked to endorse it. This apparently has been agreed by the membership, al- though as yet no voting figures have been released.

The aim of the document is to lessen the existing democracy, in fa- vor of a union which is demo- cratic and member centered, efficient in the use of resources, and above all strong and effective on your behalf. You will have an equal right to vote in key union elections and on major changes to the union's poli- cies or rules.

Quite clearly, the leadership wishes to impose some kind of one member one vote system to sup- press the independent voice of democratic. Likewise, elections to the NEC and conference will be become bound.

"Moderates"

These are the changes that are right wing (so-called moderate) leader- ship have attempted to introduce before without success. They are now trying to use the CPSA as a means to sneak in a new rule book which will in the end work against the interests of mem- bers.

The merger negotiations are, of course, taking place against a backdrop of continued attacks on the public sector. Since 1992, nearly 70,000 permanent civil service jobs have disappeared due to privatisa- tion and cutsbacks. In the same peri- od, the number of staff on temporary contracts has increased on average by 41.5 per cent.

At the same time, figures recently published by the government's own Efficiency Unit show that market testing/contracting out have saved an estimated £240 million, not £44 million as previously claimed.

CPSA national president with responsibility for privatizing the civil service, has further admitted that two thirds of the figure were achieved by 'non-competitive tech- niques such as internal restructur- ing.'

While government difficulties are to be welcomed, jobs are still under threat in all departments. For example, the Employment Service is threatened with the loss of 1750 jobs, the Department of Transport is currently losing jobs, as is the re- cently privatized H.M.S.O., and the list goes on.

While fine words are said about how strong a new union would be, and the need to protect jobs and services, no strategy to achieve this is forthcoming. CPSA leaders claim to have led a whole host of actions in defence of jobs, yet these have all remained isolated and depoliticized.

No strategy

Since the national strike of November 1994, there has been no clear strategy or plan for priva- vation other than in-house bot- tom up.

Unfortunately, the election of a Labour government is not go- ing to be the panacea some thought it would be. While the immediate threat of privatization might be lifted, we are left doing more work with fewer staff, with a continuing decline in real wages.

So where do we go from here? Quite simply, we must urge all members to vote against the document "Building a new union".

We are not opposed to a merger with PTC, but it is unac- ceptable on the terms presented to CPSA members.

UNIONS 5

Forging links with different unions and disputes, the Magnet strikers have an eye to prospects for strikes to come
As desperate Tories try to railroad through Tube privatisation
New line needed to defend railways!

Greg Tucker (RMT National Executive)

TRANSPORT policy is shaping up to be a major issue in the run-up to the general election.

As the privatised South West Trains faces further disruption as the RMT ballots its members in a dispute over management intentions of new contracts for its cleaning and maintenance staff.

The answer lies in the action of rail workers themselves. South West Trains faces further disruption as the RMT ballots its members in a dispute over management intentions of new contracts for its cleaning and maintenance staff.

RMT rail workers in the south east have scored a notable victory when they won a 48-hour strike on a Southern service. The decision to strike was taken by a large majority of the RMT union members.

The strike was called after the company failed to reach an agreement on pay and working conditions. The RMT union had struck on a Southern service for the first time in 25 years.

The RMT's action is a clear signals to the government that it is not prepared to accept cuts in pay and conditions.

RMT General Secretary Matt Wrack said: "We are determined to protect the jobs and pay of our members. We will not be intimidated by the powers that be."
Unions pull back from winnable battle to defend jobs

Halewood: the missed opportunity

Andy Klimiszer

THE AGREEMENT reached by the TGWU with Ford over job losses at Halewood is a massive missed opportunity.

For the first time in recent years there is a coordinated action across all British plants in a major company to closure plans, which could have fed into national strike action. Yet union negotiators threw this chance away and accepted a deal which still involves almost 1,000 redundancies, only 300 of which were originally announced.

The new ‘people carrier’ model offered was not one previously planned before the negotiations. The promise of a new van, which would secure production at Southamptom is a real gain, it is true.

However, this is just a show how much could have been achieved if the union leadership had been more determined to high on the historic achievement of unanimous votes to ballot on action at all Ford UK plants.

That achievement itself was the result of initial strong leadership by the union, a positive development which was all too quickly reversioned. Equally, the mismanagements to future production are merely paper promises.

This deal is even more unacceptable when the vulnerability of motor manufacturers, with their new plant mainstream systems, to strike action is taken into account.

Quick victory

Last year in the US a relatively small strike of maintenance workers at General Motors spread rapidly through the company involving 20,000 workers in a couple of weeks.

The strikers’ demands over outsourcing of work were met, at least in part. The same kind of outcome was perfectly possible at Ford’s, with its densely integrated European network. Industrial action at Halewood could have sparked a European campaign over job losses in the company, and in the motor industry more generally.

Such a campaign would have been especially significant and necessary. European car workers are currently facing the likelihood of a new set of management onslaughts over jobs, working conditions and productivity.

The Financial Times of November 14 1996 reported that Peugeot and Renault were in discussion with the French government over proposals to cut thousands of jobs. Some reports put the figure of possible job losses as high as 40,000.

Similar cuts elsewhere are on the cards.

There are a number of reasons for these developments. Firstly, demand for cars in Europe is stagnating, owing to slow growth and high unemployment as countries struggle to meet the Maastricht criteria.

But secondly competition is increasing. Under the Single European Market rules all limits on Japanese car imports to Europe and on the sales of Japanese transplants in Europe are to be removed in 1996. Slow sales growth in Japan as the country struggles to escape recession is encouraging Japanese manufacturers to look elsewhere.

Moving In

But Japan is not the only source of new competition. Increasingly South Korea and Malaysia are moving into Europe. The South Korean company Daewoo has been making rapid progress and increasing its drive. In particular they have taken over the British Vauxhall plant in Poole, in one of the biggest car industry investments in Eastern Europe, after Volkswagen’s purchase of Skoda.

Last November the Malaysian prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, plans to launch a big export programme, particularly direct to Europe. His prediction was that by the end of the century there would be producing up to 1 million cars for export.

The UK sports car and engineering company Lotus, bought by Malaysia’s ‘national’ car manufacturer, is to build a new factory in Sabah. Last Autumn, is to provide the technological expertise to back up this project.

Equally important is the restructuring which European manufacturers are currently undertaking. Part of this involves the shifting of production, for instance to new production locations in Eastern Europe – the Czech Republic, through Skoda, for Volkswagen and Poland and Fiat and General Motors/Opel. There have also been substantial cutbacks and job losses in Western Europe, for example in Volkswagen’s seat subsidiary in Spain.

Another strand to this competition is the increasing bargaining over subsidies with national governments and the European Union. Volkswagen has recently concluded a lengthy dispute with the EU over German government subsidies for its plants in Eastern Germany, in Saxony.

The new BMW engine plant announced for the Midlands in November was apparently designed specifically to meet Ford’s E12m social services budget. North Yorkshire council’s bid to win £5m from a national government budget of £70m: but the campaign to defend front-line services is being led by the unions but a coalition of voluntary agencies.

In Wakefield, however UNISON is balloting members for action in protest at cuts which threaten 850 jobs across the council, with £3.5m (8%) to be hacked from social services.

Newcastle social services department is warning that it will be cutting back services to the bare statutory minimum, while it axed a children’s home, increases charges and cuts ten social work posts.

East Sussex, facing a £7.5m deficit on social services, is warning that community care will be available only to those in the most extreme need.

One of the biggest cuts packages is in Staffordshire, where the potential £20m-plus shortfall is so great that the county council has joined forces with Labour to endorse a budget E50m above John Gummer’s “cap” – making it apparent that the only county to challenge the government’s budget is Staffordshire.

But with the prospect of a Labour government carrying out its threats to slash Tory spending limits, the county faces the probability of £1m cuts in education, £3.2m in social services, almost £1m from museums, art and leisure, £1.4m from road maintenance and £1.6m from environmental services.

A vigorous local campaign linking public sector and other unions with voluntary organisations is pledged to battle the Staffordshire cuts and after the General Election. But without more sustained campaigns in other affected areas, the chances of success are limited.

Council cuts: the silent misery

Labour councils throughout the country are preparing for government’s budget by pushing through cuts in basic services, axing thousands of jobs – while unions stand idly by.

Councillors are under strict orders from Whitehall’s Milbank HQ to make cuts rather than ‘rock the boat’ by raising council taxes or by campaigning for more cash in the run-up to the election. The social services departments have clearly been brought to bear on national union leaders, who have raised yet another as social services, education, leisure services and road maintenance jobs are slashed to balance the books of borough and county councils.

The November debate at its E12m social services budget. North Yorkshire council’s bid to win £5m from a national government budget of £70m: but the campaign to defend front-line services is being led by the unions but a coalition of voluntary agencies.

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National Education Week
Raising the pre-
election stakes on
education funding

John Lister
A UNIQUE coalition of teaching
and staff unions, parents and
governors' organisations, and
campaigns and pressure
groups will fight for the future
of education in National Educa-
tion Week (March 10-15).
The initiative, first proposed
by the Fight Against Cuts in Educa-
tion (FACE) has achieved the seem-
ingly improbable task of bringing
altogether rival teaching unions (in-
cluding NUT, NASWT and the
head teachers’ NAHT) and a genu-
inely broad range of national or-
ganisations (including the
Association of County Councils) to
ensure that the spotlight is turned
on government funding of schools,
nurseries and colleges in the run-up
to the election.
The campaign is targeted at all
three major parties in all constitu-
cencies. It is clear that in dem-
- onstrating increased cash for schools
the supporting organisations are
challenging existing government
policy — and throwing down a
challenge to Tony Blair's “New La-
bour”, which has embraced Tony
spending limits.
40,000 posters and thousands of
FACE information packs have been
distributed through over 70 mail-
- ing lists across the country, in an
effort to coordinate campaigning
activities, with each day in the
Week highlighting a specific issue
in education funding.
FACE is still compiling a na-
tional diary of planned events,
stunts and photo-opportunities,
but it is already clear that the Week
will span the country.
Monday March 10 will focus on
buildings and backlog mainte-
nance.
“£3.2 billion must be spent over
the next five years just to keep exist-
ing primary schools which have
outside toilets… and over 25,500
classes are being taught in temporary class-
rooms every day… for 765,000 chil-
dren school is a bus or a mobile
classroom”. (From Local Authori-
ties Association Capital Expenditure
on Education on April 1996).
Tuesday March 11 will target
nursery education.

The campaign Against Voucher-
- ers in Education (CAVE) have cal-
hed on the government to give a
full list of administering vouchers for £60,000
4-year olds would pay for approxi-
mately 1,000 qualified classroom
- teachers.

Wednesday March 12, the topic
is class size.

Denmark, Finland, France, ger-
many, Greece, Norway and Scot-
land all have managed to achieve a
maximum permitted class size.
England and Wales have no maxi-
- mum class size.
Thursday March 13 spotlights
special educational needs.
Chief schools inspector Chris
Woodhead has stated that special
- needs buildings open in 1991 were
- effective in less than half of all
schools. Most schools did not have
enough money to implement the
government’s legislation on the
- protection for special educational
 needs.
Friday March 14 will look at
funding in general.

The Association of County
Councils estimate that they will
need an extra £785 million if they
are to implement the new legisla-
tion being imposed by the govern-
ment on education, over and above
the cuts in funding they have suf-
fered in the last few years.
Saturday March 15 will see a
conference of school students dis-
cussing “Education Beyond
2000”.

Capital crime
CAPITAL funding on schools
has halved in real terms ver-
the last 20 years, plunging
from £31.2 billion in 1974/5
to £16.6bn. Britain spends only
5% of its education budget on
capital projects as compared with an average of 9% in
OECD countries.
The campaign is clear
equal enough to see. A 1994/5 report from the Inspector of
Schools found:

- 6% farmed crumbling
- 47% had rotting or faulty
windows
- 82% said local schools had
crowded classrooms
- 92% said schools had tem-
porary buildings
- 36% still had outside to-
lets
- 72% were inadequately
heated
- 8% suffered from poor
furniture and equipment.

Campaigners step up fight to kill
off “Project Work”

Paul McGowan
THE ‘TORIES’ election pledge
to extend Project Work na-
tionwide shows their desire to
increase class sizes on the back
issue at the polls. How they
can flout their appalling rec-
ord as a vote winner stagnators
believe it until one considers
Labour’s failure to offer a clear
- policy on government
- policies.

A handful in the public utilities
will provide new schemes for the
young unemployed, but the miser-
able and poorly publicised parts of
these schemes is promising not a penny more to
reduce the jobs total. Actually
Labour risks losing the whole
issue if Brown sticks to Tony
spending limits and sticks to Britain’s targets for European
- Union.

Although the Labour leadership
has declared its opposition to Project
Work, it is already clearly at odds with
state labour schemes. Many Labour
Councils have now agreed to buy
- project Work, but few have
raised their criticisms in public.
They appear paralyzed by fear
of speaking out in support for the un-
employed in an election year.

John’s efforts to play to
the prejudices of Middle
England.

Also they are embarrassed by
their own party’s record in increasing
the jobs figures through pursuing
demolition policies. It is certain a New Labour
government would like to keep aspects of the
JSA and job with workforce, yet
- efforts should be made to make it
- a genuine move. With pressure,
it could immediately scrap Project
Work.

In East London, the largest
area for Project Work, Waltham
Forest Council is still at odds with
first Labour authority to privately agreed to buy-
ject Work.

Domino effect
Campaigners against unemploy-
ment will use its example to create a
dominous effect amongst others
from the area. We want a public
statement by Waltham Forest to en-
courage local employers to take
- no part.

We are demanding the council
withdraws funding from bodies fi-
nanced by them should they use
Project Work. Local Labour MP,
Harry Cohen, has already agreed to
our request that workfare is
unacceptable in talks with the Health
Authority.

Many unions have begun to
frighten their employees into provid-
ing no placements and charities are
being conned to leave it alone.
As well as continuing our leaflet-
ing side-jobsenter, campaigning against
low pay will be stepped up.

The excellent links between
local CPA branches and unemployed ac-
tivists has even come to the attention of Barry
Rees-Mabbutt, the Blairite
- Secretary of the CPA who is
- attempting to whitewash a local
CPA, which faces closure.

These links are increasingly essen-
tial. Despite the extra workload
of Project Work, the management
in the East London project is not
- to shed 10 per cent of Employment Service
staff. CPA members have held in-
dicative votes for strike action and
hope soon to disrupt Project Work and
report redundancies.

Through broad based campaigns
like in East London we can kill the
- plots for Project Work. By also fo-
cusing demands on Labour we can
- once again make a ‘Workfare Free
Britain’.

BIRMINGHAM anti-cuts cam-
paigners organised by Birming-
ham Community Conference
mobilised a successful lobby on
February 10.
The Labour-led council was de-
bating how best to carry through
Tory cuts of £35 million in revenue, and
massive cuts in capital spend-
ing.
Parks and Neighbourhood Of-
cices have been high on Labour’s
- chopping list, and they were well
- represented among those who
turned out to lobby against the
budge cuts. The full council are
due to vote on the final cuts package
as we go to press.

Birmingham Community Con-
fereence has now been running
- nearly three years, and has pro-
duced 13 issues of its 4-page bulletin
Public Service.

- ANTI-CUTS campaigners in
Camden notched up a signifi-
cant victory, with strong pres-
ure from demonstrators led by
a 12-year old local schoolgirl,
councillors voted to drop a pack-
age of £4m cuts in education
spending.

American political science
professor Michael Shuman
has warned that the cuts in the
budget for the United States
National Dairy Council will be
likely to cost the country
$250 million in revenue over the
next five years.

Hospital cuts
threaten East End
misery

AS WE go to press, news has
broken that the Royal Hospitals
Trust in East London is propos-
ing to close Queen Elizabeth's
Hospital for Children in Hack-
ney and half of Earl's Hospital,
to save money.

The Queen Elizabeth closure,
which would take effect by the
spring of 1998, would leave
Hackett without any children's
medical beds or specialist chil-
dren's casualty services, forcing
parents to travel with their chil-
dren to the Royal London Hospi-
tal in Whitechapel — a long and
awful journey by bus in a des-
perately deprived area with well
below average car ownership.
Owen handles over 20,000 child
- casualties a year; the local Hert-
ford hospital has no children's
unit, and is only planning to pro-
vide out-patient and day surgery.
While these cuts claim to save up
to £9 million a year, the Royal
Hospitals Trust is still attempting
to carry through a ridiculously ex-
cessive £310m rebulding of the
Royal London, financed by pri-
vate cash. The latest rumours
however suggest that this
scheme is near to collapse, leav-
ing only the closures intact.
Learn lessons of FN victory in Vitrolles

Samy Joehsa and Geoff Ryan

(Adapted from an article in the February 13 Issue of Rouge, weekly paper of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, French section of the Fourth International)

Militants must now draw up a complete balance sheet of what happened at Vitrolles. Not because the victory of the FN [National Front] has dramatically changed the party's position in French national political life.

Its electoral process remains limited and partial and in some places is even declining. But its victory in Vitrolles reveals a danger that is becoming more and more threatening.

Anglade, outgoing Socialist Party mayor, got roughly the same number of votes (7,207) as in 1995 (7,466), when he won.

The FN increased its vote from 7,113 in 1995 to 8,199. A switch of votes by some people who normally vote for the traditional right-wing parties gave Megret, the FN candidate, his victory.

Some right-wing voters clearly felt closer to the FN than to the mythical 'Republican Front' put forward by the leaders of the traditional right-wing parties. If this phenomenon, familiar in the Provençal region, were to spread throughout France the dangers would grow enormously. That is the first lesson of Vitrolles.

Victory at Vitrolles allows the FN to build on its strengths: the ability to bring together people with very different motivations. Megret won both because of and despite a campaign of violence that called to mind the far-right in France before the second world war.

Hardened fascists freely indulged in their activities; semi-fascists could give vent to obscene verbal attacks on foreigners, young people, 'delinquents' and 'degenerates'. Others preferred not to see any of this and voted for the only party that appeared to you as a way out of the problems that are making life more and more unbearable for them.

Unless we reverse the momentum, they will expire, sooner or later, the fascist ideology that runs deep through the FN.

One of the specific features of fascism is to bring whole layers of the working class into the embrace of an ideology totally hostile to their interests. That, unfortunately, remains possible today. That is the candidates untainted by corruption, with close ties to the masses and who reject clientelism. This is particularly true of the Socialist Party, at least in the Provincial region. That is the third lesson.

The anti-FN campaign was based on grass roots organisations in Vitrolles. Initiatives from women's groups and trade union meetings were very successful. The anti-fascist organisation Ras I'Front, which started out with only a handful of activists, became a rallying point for young people ...

For many white French people the FN appears to offer an alternative. In the councils it controls it does deal with issues of housing and unemployment. FN leaders declare their support for pensioners and visit old people's homes.

For the moment Le Pen is even playing down his racist and anti-immigrant rhetoric in favour of social questions. The left cannot ignore the very real, material reasons why sections of the French working class have been attracted to the FN.

This is even more important because the right-wing government is attempting to undermine FN support by adopting even harsher anti-immigrant laws. On February 15 over 100,000 people marched through Paris in protest against these measures. This is a magnified step forward, which will be followed up by a demonstration against the FN conference in Strasbourg on March 29.

In the fight against the FN nothing should be neglected. We should continually denounce them, alongside supporting the struggles of immigrants and women. We need anti-fascist and anti-racist unity and more demonstrations. But all this indispensable work will count for nothing unless the left puts forward a new alternative at the political level.

We have to put forward answers to the problems of unemployment, homelessness and poverty which have driven sections of the French working class into supporting the FN. Moral appeals are not enough. We have to find ways to resolve this issue, despite the difficulties. This is indispensable if we are going to stop the growth of the FN. This is the fourth and most important lesson. It brings into focus our own responsibilities.

GMB backing for boycott of sweatshop Disney products

by Elkie Dee

The success of the recent remake of 101 Dalmatians has encouraged lots of people to rush out and buy sweatshirts and other Disney merchandise.

The film portrays Cruella de Vil, a rich, single woman, interested only in making money and in fashionable clothes made out of scraps of fur to cuddly animals. She is also shown as a cruel and mean old boss. Nothing like Disney's bosses, of course!

Through its licence merchandising, Disney makes huge profits out of the exploitation of works, children and women, in other countries. The company has admitted that Italian workers are paid 4p to sew a sweatshirt which is then sold in Britain for £12. There is evidence of the use of child labour in Haiti and Indonesia.

In the US, activists have campaigned for Disney to stop doing business with subcontractors who refuse demands for higher wages, clean drinking water and other improvements in conditions, genuine collective bargaining and an end to indiscriminate layoffs and the victimisation of union activists.

Now in Britain the GMB has called a nationwide campaign against Disney stores here, and written to Michael Eisner, chief executive of the Walt Disney Company, protesting against Disney's stance in the US.

Members of the GMB and Haiti Solidarity Campaign together with anti-working class groups have launched the campaign in Britain with a picket of Disney's Reel World, Fortnum & Mason, on February 13. Other trade unionists and socialists must join in raising the issue.

For further information contact: Disney/Haiti Justice campaign, PO Box 755, Fort Washington Station, New York NY 10001; (212) 242-1996, e-mail soho.sos.ies.com

'The Disney company makes a lot of money in the desperately poor country of Haiti.'
Brussels success boosts Euro-march campaign

Alan Thornett and Terry Conway

SIX HUNDRED people, over half of them unemployed, drawn from 16 participating countries attended an exciting conference in Brussels on the weekend of February 22-23 to launch the second stage of the Euro-march. Eleven main marches are now confirmed and the first stages will start on April 14.

The conference noted that the delegation from France was smaller than it might otherwise have been due to the huge anti-racist demonstration taking place at the same time in Paris to protest the new racist texts being introduced in addition to mark their concern at the recent electoral success of the Front National.

Representatives of the Liverpool dockers spoke in the opening plenary session on the international struggle against employers who were increasingly organizing at an international level with a globalised economy. They received warm applause.

Christophe Agiton from the European Secretariat of the campaign spoke from ACI in France to explain that we were fighting for a 'Europe of full employment', one in which everyone who wanted to work was able to do so. If we only mobilise within our own countries, our campaigns will be more short-lived and an international campaign has more strength.

He argued that we had to respect the ideological differences between the different strands present which meant focusing on the main points that allowed unity to be maintained.

The importance of this approach was demonstrated throughout the weekend as discussions developed and it became clearer the diverse traditions which were participating. In itself this is already a major achievement.

The task of concentrating on our common objectives, of fighting the issue of unemployment and the myriad different forms of exclusion faced by unorganised by trying to introduce issues that go beyond this already broad sweep.

Strenthening the movement

It was time to discuss precisely what should happen after the final demonstration but there is a clear indication of ongoing co-operation.

The project will strengthen existing organisations and begin to put in place a network that can link them together.

Other speakers spoke of the unity that had developed in France between the organisations of the dock and trade unionists in struggle during the massive battles of late 1993.

Two million people in France have no income at all, and we were told of the important victory of the unemployed through the campaign of occupations of job centres at the close of last year.

A speaker from "Drum & Lodge" (Right to Housing) in France described the current struggles of the homeless and the continuity and differences with battles throughout the century. He argued that an important focus of the campaign was the revival of use of a low introduced by De Gaulle which allows the repositioning of empty buildings for use as housing.

Later discussion in the housing workshop explained that similar laws existed in other European countries.

A delegation of 60 attended the conference from Britain, including Liverpool dockers, Margaret Thatcher and representatives of unemployed centres from across the north of England and from Scotland.

Others attended from trades councils and union bodies and activists from campaigns defending the welfare state, for the rights of asylum seekers and in opposition to the JSA.

Most delegations could find workshops which dealt with their special interests and involvements in anti-racist, housing, the welfare state, unemployment and the effects of European integration on women.

The British delegation organised a successful workshop on flexibility and the unions and the unemployed.

The conference confirmed that support for this building is rapidly across Europe and sessions on the practical organisation took it all a step further.

As impressive report was given on the Mid-June events in Amsterdam itself. Current estimates of the final demonstration are 30,000.

The French campaign expects to take 5,000, for example, and the Dutch campaign has pledged to send four clowns which come from abroad.

This is to mean promise in a country where support for the European Union has traditionally been very strong -- but of late cracks are beginning to open, and the campaign is beginning to gather significant support.

The initiative for a Feminist Europe, part of the Coalition for a Different Europe, the organisers of the counter-summits, are calling for women attending the demonstration to wear white as a sign of the continuing discrimination against women.

The counter summit itself is becoming a major event which will run from June 12 until June 16.

Each day it will take as a theme a major issue involved in European integration: racism, unemployment, homelessness, an ecological Europe, women in Europe and culture.

Both those on the marches and those travelling to Amsterdam for the demonstration are invited to attend the counter summits.

The conference heard that the European TUC had been pressured into calling a non-commitment of day action on May 28. Several speakers argued that it was vital that our campaign reached out to this initiative which will give us access to a mass of influential people.

There was a debate over the weekend (in a commission open to all delegations) on a new Euro-march manifesto submitted by the organisations which would go along side the original Florence declaration.

In the end only part of it was agreed as an addition to Florence, the rest was submitted for further discussion by the campaign in the various countries. The new text will be available shortly.

Socialist Outlook

Women fighting back against Euro-austerity

Susan Moore

A LIVELY discussion took place at the Brussels conference as to a set of common demands which the women as part of the overall campaign could take up our specific needs.

The workshop provided a useful forum for exchange experiences and emphasised the need for more work to be done to explain why, within the common offensive against us all, women in different groups of countries are affected in different ways.

For example in France between 52-54 per cent of the unemployed are women and 33.8 per cent of women but 9.5 per cent of men are unemployed.

In Britain on the other hand 7.4 per cent of women but 11.4 per cent of men are jobless. In this sphere it seems that Britain is exceptional within the European Union.

Undoubtedly these disparate patterns are a result of the distinct patterns of work and of women's employment going back many decades -- but more information would strengthen our hands in fighting back.

The workshop focused around a number of key themes which could play a unifying role -- while recognising that in particular countries each would be given different emphases or expression.

The demand for a reduction in the working week with no loss of pay must be accompanied by an increase in social spending for the provision of child care etc so that women are not pushed into the home.

The need for free public services -- transport, health, free provision in school, after school activities, school meals.

Equal pay this being especially important where unemployment benefit is based on wage levels.

Full time jobs for part time workers -- opposition to the introduction of part time work where this has the effect of driving down conditions.

Rights for autonomy within their communities of immigrant and black women.

A brother from Norway explained that the Norwegian women's movement raised the demand for a reduction in the working day to 6 hours -- rather than a reduction in the working week.

This is because large numbers of women currently work 6 hours a day but because unemployment benefit is linked to wages then suffer when they are out of paid work.

Catherine from Denmark explained that women in Nordic countries have been more sceptical than their male counterparts about the European Union.

One reason for this is the fact that in most countries of the European union social insurance is linked to having a job and some times a full-time job. Women who are married to a man who is working gain insurance this way.

We must live single women, women who work part-time or under the counter particularly vulnerable. In Scandinavia there has been a universal welfare policy which does not discriminate against women in this way.

The European Commission has launched a major campaign to change women's minds. Not only have they tried to use the record of the European Court, in which women have won some important victories, but also have argued that Nordic women are living off state help in helping their more oppressed sisters in the south of Europe.

Much debate took place as to how the campaign should relate to black and immigrant women. This discussion particularly reflected the different experiences of self-organisation black communities throughout the continent. There was concern that we should not be seen to impose cultural hegemony on women from very different traditions.

Women from France explained how women had organised separately within the 'Sans papiers' campaign and sisters from Britain talked of the need to take up the cases of women facing deportation who had also be subject to domestic violence.

Participation in the workshop certainly stimulated women from Britain who attended to begin to make more concrete plans for ensuring that our profile as women and our demands are given prominence within the campaign here.
TUC bid to sabotage Euro-Mark solidarity

March 1st 1997
To: John Monks, TUC General Secretary

We write regarding the advice issued by the TUC Executive to Regional TUCs, Trades Councils and unemployed centres not to join the European marches against unemployment and social exclusion, which begin across Europe in mid-April and converge at the G7 of the EC in Amsterdam in mid-June.

There appears to be a serious factual error in the advice you have issued. You say that in opposing participation in the marches you are following the lead of the European TUC, who, you say, have already taken such a position. We have been in contact with the ETUC and they say that this is not true. They have never discussed the marches with anyone, except the Secretary General. There is a personal letter from Emilio Gabaia of the ETUC saying that he feels that the ETUC should "keep our distance" from the marches. You imply an official position of opposition to the marches, which is a very different thing.

The substance of your objection to the marches however, is a far more serious matter. You say that the marches are "anti-Maastricht" and cannot be supported for that reason.

We believe the opposite. The basis of the campaign is not against the Maastricht Treaty but against the social effects of the Treaty as it exists, most importantly through the convergence criteria for the single currency. The convergence criteria are the racist provisions of Schengen and Fortress Europe.

Within the campain are those who are against the Treaty in principle, and those who are not. We are united in opposition to the effects of the Treaty in its present form, principally its effects on employment and the welfare state.

We are aware of the implications of the convergence criteria.

To enter the single currency, each member state must reduce its public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR) to below 3% of GDP. Once inside the single currency, each member state must maintain its PSBR below 3% permanently or face massive fines through the "Stability Pact" agreed in Dublin. It does not specify how this is to be done.

One way these requirements can be met is by cutting state spending in all its forms: health, education, pensions, welfare and benefits.

In this country it means billions of pounds of cuts just to get into the single currency, more to meet its obligations. The EEC has estimated that this will mean the loss of 100,000 jobs.

The threat represented by the convergence criteria is not just something recognised by campaign groups in Britain: Across Europe it has provoked the biggest wave of industrial action for decades. There have been general strikes or mass actions in the majority of countries of the EU and elsewhere to protest the social effects of EMU.

The European marches directly reflect that opposition. We do not support the nationalistic opposition to Maastricht as expressed by the Tory right, but neither can we allow them to set the agenda.

The convergence criteria represent a massive attack on the working class right across Europe and there needs to be a working class response right across Europe. This is reflected in the European day of action called by the ETUC on May 28th, which the Euro-marches will join, as well as in the Euro-marches.

Our problem with the advice you are giving on this issue is not just that you oppose the European marches but that you appear oblivious to the dangers involved in the convergence criteria, in fact you don't even mention them.

This is a big problem since it is hard to defend jobs and services unless you recognise where the attack is coming from. It is even harder to defend jobs and services if you are in favour of European integration and in favour of a single European currency under the conditions it is currently on offer, which seems to be the burden of TUC policy as adopted at last year's Congress.

The marches have gained wide support in Britain and will go ahead. We call on you to reverse your decision on them; firstly because your interpretation of the position of the ETUC is wrong, and secondly because the basis of the European marches is not anti-Maastricht per se.

Most importantly the TUC should support the marches because we should all be united on the basic aims of the marches: the defence of jobs and services against unacceptable convergence criteria.

Glenn Voiris
For the British Euro-marches committee

Docker launch new Peoples' Charter

As well as marching for social justice on April 12 the dockers together with Women on the Waterfront are launching a "People's Charter for Social Justice", which they are publishing for discussion throughout the labour movement and among all their supporters.

The Euro-march organising committee in Britain fully supports this initiative. Many of the demands raised are the same as those we want highlighted and focus on through the marches across Britain and Europe.

The Peoples Charter for Social Justice

We, THE PEOPLE, demand social justice: 1. Immediate reinstatement with full trade union rights of the 500 sacked Liverpool dockers, the Magnet workers, the Hillington hospital workers and all other unjustly sacked workers.

2. The right to join a trade union, to strike, to respect picket lines and to take solidarity action. Immediate repeal of all anti-union legislation.

3. The right to work and to job security. Repeal of the policies of casualisation, privatisation and de-regulation to secure full employment. No compulsory overtime. Acknowledgement of the value of low-paid and unskilled work: equal pay for work of equal value.

4. The right to recreation and to assembly repeal of the Criminal Justice Act.

5. Defence of the Welfare State. Abolition of the Job Seeker's Allowance. Free education including nursery and university provision; free health care; adequate pensions and benefits for all. Equal rights and social provision for people with disabilities, the sick and for all minority groups.

6. The right to a home. Emergency measures to house the homeless, including occupation of empty buildings.


8. The right to citizenship within a democracy. Abolition of the Monarchy and the House of Lords. Withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. Repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

9. The right to a future for our children. Emergency action to reverse national and global pollution and devastation of the planet's resources. Action to curb the private car and road lobby and to reclaim our streets; implementation of an integrated public transport system. The right to drink clean water and food. Abolition of the nuclear power industry.

10. The right of workers to organise internationally to resist injustice and oppression, to reclaim the planet and to put an end to war. Abolition of the nuclear weapons industry. An end to all trade in arms and instruments of torture.

HOMES! JOBS! A FUTURE!
A call to battle for women’s liberation and socialism

The pamphlet International Women’s Day was written in 1920 by Alexandra Kollontai as part of a campaign to teach women about the history of the working class movement and the struggle for women’s equality, about the gains of 1917, how they must organise and fight to establish the new society which would guarantee their liberation.

Kollontai was the Minister of Social Welfare in the first Bolshevik government, and was the only woman to hold such a post. Born in 1872 into a wealthy family and brought up in comfort and seclusion, Kollontai nevertheless became involved in the political questions of the time.

Involved both in the international women’s movement and in the organisation of working women in Russia, Kollontai had always been concerned with analysing the position of women under capitalism, their relationship to the revolutionary movement and the struggle for socialism. The oppression of women is a complex and many-sided oppression, and Kollontai was therefore involved in discussing the family, the education of children, maternity and personal relationships. But Kollontai, in 1920, would probably have thought that by now life would be organised in such a way that a “Working Women’s Day” would have no point. But working women have yet to win this new life. They have yet to win a world where society relieves the working women of material cares and leaves her time and strength to take part in the life of the community.

Launching the Revolution: the demonstration of women through Petrograd in March 1917: the banner calls for support from workers and soldiers

International Women’s Day

By Alexandra Kollontai

A militant celebration

Women’s Day or Working Women’s Day is a day of international solidarity and a day for reviewing the strength and the organisation of working women.

But this is not a special day for women alone. The 8th of March is a historic and memorable day for the workers and peasants for all the Russian workers and for the workers of the whole world. In 1917, on this day, the great February revolution broke out. It was the working women of Petersburg who began this revolution; it was they who first decided to raise the banner of opposition against the war and its associates. And so Working Women’s Day is a double celebration for us.

How and why was Women’s Day organised?

Not very long ago, in fact, about ten years ago, the question of women’s equality, and the question of whether women could take part in government alongside men was being hotly debated. The working class in capitalist countries struggled for the rights of women workers: the bourgeoisie did not want to accept these rights.

It was not in the interest of the bourgeoisie to strengthen the voice of the working class in parliament, and in every country they hindered the passing of laws that gave the vote to working women. Socialists in North America insisted on their demands for the vote for women with particular persistence.

On February 28 1907, the women socialists of the USA organised huge demonstrations and meetings all over the country, demanding political rights for working women. This was the first “Women’s Day”. The initiative in organising a women’s day thus belongs to the working women of America.

In 1910 at the second International Conference of Socialist Working Women, Clara Zetkin brought forward the question of organising an International Working Women’s Day. The Conference decided that every year, in every country, they should celebrate on the same day a Women’s Day under the slogan “The vote for women will unite our strength in the struggle for socialism”.

But in the last years before the war the rise in prices forced even the most peaceful housewife to take an interest in questions of politics and to protest loudly against the bourgeoisie’s economy of plunder. “Housewives’ uprisings” became increasingly frequent, flaring up at different times in Austria, England, France and Germany. The working women understood that it wasn’t enough to break up the stalls at the market or threaten the old merchant; they understood that such action doesn’t bring down the cost of living. You have to change the policies of the government.

And to achieve this, the working class has to see that the franchise is widened. It was decided to have a Women’s Day in every country as a form of struggle in getting working women to vote.

The first International Women’s Day

It was decided to hold the first International Women’s Day on March 19 1911. Our German comrades picked this day because of its historic importance for the German proletariat. On the March 19 in the year of the 1848 revolution, the Prussian king recognised for the first time the strength of the armed people, and gave way before the threat of a proletarian uprising. Among the many promises he made, which he later failed to keep, was the introduction of the vote for women.

Efforts were made in Germany and Austria to organise for Women’s Day. During the week before it two journals appeared: The Vote for Women in Germany and Women’s Day in Austria.

The first International Women’s Day took place in 1911. Its success exceeded all expectations. Germany and Austria on Working Women’s Day were one seething trembling sea of women. Meetings were organized everywhere — in the small towns and even in villages. Halls were packed so full that they had to ask male workers to give up their places to the women.

This was certainly the first show of militancy by the working women. Men stayed at home with the children for a change, and their wives, the captive housewives, went to meetings. In Austria there was conflict with the police. During the largest street demonstration in which 50,000 were taking part, the police decided to remove the demonstrators’ banners: the working women made a stand. In the scuffle that followed, bloodshed was averted only with the help of the socialist deputies of parliament.

In 1915 International Women’s Day was transferred to March 8. This date has remained the working women’s day of militancy.

Women Workers’ Day in Russia

Russian working women first took part in “Working Women’s Day” in 1913. This was a time of reaction when tourism held the workers and peasants in its Vice-like grip. There was no thought of celebrating “Working Women’s Day” by open demonstration.

But the legal newspapers of the working class — the Bolsheviks’ Pravda and the Mensheviks’ Iskra — carried articles about International Women’s Day: with portraits of some of those fighting and taking part in the working women’s movement, and greetings from foreign comrades such as Belal and Zetkin.

In those bleak years meetings were forbidden. But in Petrograd, at the Kalashnikovsky Exchange,
AS ANOTHER International Women's Day approaches and the general election looms, socialists and feminists should pause for reflection — just what do women in the nineties want, and what do the traditional and new-style electoral parties offer?

Here GILL LEE draws up her own personal manifesto for women. The next issue of Socialist Outlook will look at the manifestos of various parties standing in the general election to see how they measure up...

THE RIGHT of women to organise collectively around demands they have democratically decided on.

We need the right to organise autonomously within the trade union movement and be able to discuss together what our problems are and how to resolve them.

This is hampered by laws which restrict trade union rights and the Cole (six month) Act — they must be abolished.

We need free high quality child-care available round the clock to enable women who so wish to participate in meetings and other activities, including full time work.

Paid maternity and paternity leave with no loss of job security are also crucial.

A minimum wage would give working women additional income for their lives and allow women to work fewer hours and play more of a role in housework, relationships and childcare.

We want full time rights for part-time workers.

The state must be involved in the welfare state to improve the pay and conditions of those who work in it and the lives of all those who depend on it. For a change in the way the welfare state works so that communities who use it are more involved in running it is for the right of people with disabilities to have the right to control the money and be involved in controlling the kind of services they need.

All contraceptive, abortion and fertility treatment should be freely available on demand.

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Socialist Outlook
PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU
Tony Smith, IIRE 1994, £3.50, 85p.25. ISSN 0298-7902
REVIEWED by Michel Dupont, leading member of the LOR, activist in the ACI movement against unemployment

IN THE "NOTEBOOK" series of the Amsterdam-based International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE), Tony Smith offers us a well-documented critique of the theses that "lean production" was the answer to problems of unemployment, in a lasting way, the contradictions between capital and labour.

This is high quality work, based on close collaboration with the international literature on this subject.

Tony Smith uses the concept "lean production" to make a very pedagogical argument, in order to show how these innovations in no way abolish the structural contradictions and oppositions between capital and labour. Instead, "lean production" re-creates these contradictions, in a new form. The result is a remarkably clear and detailed illustrative text, which reviews contemporary developments. It is highly recommended, stimulating reading, and an excellent synthesis for the non-specialised reader.

The problem is that lean production theory can be demolished using the critique which Marxists make against capital, whatever the historical period. Curiously, Smith seems to have missed the target. Nowadays there are very few writers who claim that lean production was not an ideology of their own.

The working day is between 12 and 14 hours, and it is at the end of this period that we are to be attacked.

Although Smith mentions that the crisis of the 1970s was significant, he doesn't refer to the Belgian Marxists' work on long waves of boom and slump.

Indeed, Smith avoids the very concepts of long waves. He explicitly rejects all "reificationist" approaches.

This is a common attitude among excessively "orthodox" Marxists.

Faced with the accusation that a reformist alternative might be possible, they don't want to even consider it. They believe that capitalism could be capable of regenerating itself and producing stable social structures which will permit continued accumulation. Since he asks the question, Smith can hardly convince us that the answer is no. This obviously makes the analysis of his critique.

Could lean production be the support for a new long wave of expansion?

Capitalism has regained a historically high average rate of profit. A new model for the extraction of surplus value has been found. In that it reinforces control over labour while simultaneously partially liberating labour's capacity for initiative, this model is more efficient than Fordism. So, given all this, why is there no new dynamic of durable growth?

To answer questions like these, you need to stop concentrating on the sphere of production and look at the global configuration of the new regimes of industrial and financial accumulation, and the relationship between private accumulation and the public sphere.

As you do, you begin to realise that neo-liberalism, even when re-enforced by the most innovative forms of lean production, does not offer the possibility of credible, long-term growth.

On the contrary, the persistence of neo-liberalism goes hand in hand with the aggravation of social contradictions and conflicts. But to prove to this people we need to go beyond generalities about the collapse of the model of production, however true they are, and bite into the question of specific modes of capital production, in their historical context.

Let's hope that, in his future work, Tony Smith will focus on this.

Tony Smith replies...

I am grateful to Michel Dupont for his generous review. I would like to acknowledge that much of the credit for whatever is worth in the monograph goes to comrades working on the front lines of the struggles against lean production, especially those associated with the newsletter Labour Notes.

Certain criticisms made in the review are well taken. The monograph does not examine the global dynamics of contemporaneity; so, given the political strategy of neo-liberalism, nor the role of the financial sector. My only defence is that it was not possible to talk about everything in a relatively short work.

I am less sure about other objections. Dupont asserts that "I missed the target" because no one today believes lean production goes beyond capitalism. But as he elsewhere notes, my target was not the claim that lean production transcends capitalism, but the quite different thesis that lean production is a form of capitalism with the potential to abolish many antagonisms between capital and labour, capital and their process of accumulation, and private property. And this thesis is still being pursued by popular and scholarly business press, the bourgeois academic community, and in factories and offices where lean production is being introduced.

Dupont claims that my account is incompatible with long wave theory, and lumps me with "orthodox" Marxists, who have difficulty appreciating capitalist's ability to regenerate. This is a cutting, given the statements such as the following in the Notebook: "The epoch of Fordism appears to be coming to an end. We now appear to be in the midst of a transitional period, in which a new variant of capitalism is gradually taking shape." It is completely consistent to accept criticisms of the regulation school and still hold that capitalist develops in long waves in which technologies and forms of social organisation holding sway in one wave give way to new technologies and social organisation in the next.

The most important issue raised in the review is whether lean production could in principle be part of a solution to low growth rates. In a manner perhaps in tension with his criticism of "orthodox" Marxists, Dupont denies that this could be the case.

I am not sure a definitive judgement is yet possible. As Ernest Mandel argued, the start of an answer lies in the elucidation of the effects that do not depend simply upon the availability of new technologies and forms of social organisation; or a myriad of contingent factors play a role as well, usually those connected to class struggle.

Among these contingencies is the extent to which the ideology of lean production infects the working class and its allies. This is why I thought it worthwhile to establish that the promises proclaimed by advocates of lean production cannot be fulfilled in socialism.

To order Lean Production: A Capitalist Utopia, send a cheque for £1.00 to Outdoor LEAF, 32-36 London N4 2UW. (Michel Dupont was the French editor)."
Get Clinton's hands off Cuba!

By John Lister

OVER $1 million was reportedly raised at the highly-publicised dinner in Havana to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Cuba’s elite Cohiba brand cigar. But far more important for Fidel Castro’s beleaguered regime was the fact that as many as 200 top US businessmen and politicians defining threats of legal action from the State Department and accepted invitations to attend the dinner, making another high-profile breach in the American effort to isolate Cuba and stifle it into submission.

The gesture comes at a crucial time for US President Clinton who is under pressure from the Republican-led Congress and many of his own virulently anti-communist Democrat to implement a new escalation in the trade embargo, first imposed in the early 1960s in response to Castro’s sweep- ing nationalisation of US-owned industries. For the last five years the United Nations General Assembly has each year declared its opposition to the US embargo.

The Helms-Burton Act, authorising US lawsuits through the US courts against foreign companies doing business in Cuba, was passed into law in March of 1996 with Clinton’s support. The legislation gives the President the discretion to delay its full implementation for six months: but it was due to come into full force at the end of February, amid a storm of angry opposition from the USA’s main trading partners and competitors.

The resistance to Helms-Burton has been led by the European Union, but also supported by the USA’s partners in the North American Free Trade Area, Canada and Mexico. A furious Canadian government, annoyed at being press-ganged into fighting the USA’s battles, has threatened to open up the gates of litigation by obstructing the implementation of US court judgements and allowing retaliatory lawsuits against US companies. The EU has called for the World Trade Organisation to set up a dispute panel to rule on the legality of the US measures, with the near-certainty that the World Trade Organisation would throw out the US, recognising its weak- ness, has refused to co-operate with the WTO panel, claiming that ip vention against Cuba is necessary for US national security. The worry among top European business chiefs is that if the world’s most powerful nation could so much as week at the predating WTO, the entire structure of support of the years of GATT negotiations could rapidly collapse.

But at the same time, increasing sectors of European capital have been attracted towards investments in Cuba, bringing a significant turnaround in the country’s economic fortunes. The past five years of deprivation as a result of the loss of subsidies and favourable trade deals with the former USSR and Eastern Europe, Cuba’s two-way trade plunged from $13.5 billion in 1989 to $3.1 billion in 1995. The loss of hard currency, coupled with the intensified US blockade, brought dire shortages of medicines and medical supplies.

But from 1995 Cuba reported a number of economic changes which opened up the possibility of joint ventures, and it is said that it would create low-cost free-trade zones. Europe and Cana- dian firms are anxious to secure guar- anteed profit margins from tourism and other ventures, in order to assist the USA’s shaky identity onslaught on Castro’s regime.

Clinton’s aim, reinforced by Helms-Burton, is to isolate Cuba diplomatically, politically and eco- nomically. Indeed Section 104 of Helms-Burton makes clear that if the US is opposed to Cuba being al- lowed access to the International Monetary Fund or any other economic and financial institutions for at least six years, with strict conditions attached to any access.

The US objective goes much fur- ther than toppling Fidel Castro and imposing regime favourable to the USA. The administration foresees the idea of making certain grants and loans available to a post-Castro government in "true journ- alist", fund "democratic political parties", fund "long-term advi- sors" and assist in "transforming Cuba’s armed forces" to make an alternative to the USA. Clinton’s document is effective Malcolm Maclean for the reconciliation of Cuba.

The obvious divisions that have opened up among the ranks of the world’s capitalists offer short-term hope that Cuba can survive this fresh attack. But the cringing reluctance of the British and EU governments to confront their rival imperialists in Washington underlines that the only long-term defence of the gains of the Cuban revolution hang on the solidarity and support of the working class.

British trade unions should be demanding that Tony Blair, alleg- edly so keen on ideas of peace and tell him to get his hands off the Cuban people, sack Schröder and lift 35 year old blockade.

Dayton deal no solution for Bosnia

By Geoff Ryan

FIFTEEN months after the Dayton Agreements suppos- edly brought peace to Bosnia the changes are far from dra- matic.

Of course there is no longer war- fare on the scale prior to Dayton. For most Bosnians that is not enough, they are not welcomed.

Mladić has also abandoned the Bosnian Serbs as a means to getting UN sanctions against Serbia faded. Radovan Karadžić no longer holds any official positions within the Bosnian Serb Republic. Although Dayton clearly stated that no-one in- dicted in the Hague for war crimes could hold office it still took over six months before he stepped down.

His replacement, Biljana Plavac, is a member of the mass murderer Ar- kan and was closely allied to Karadžić. A significant improvement.

Ratko Mladić has also been pushed out of command of the Bosnian Serb army while Nikola Kol- jevic, the architect of the destruction of Sarajevo, committed suicide in January.

Both Karadžić and Mladić are sup- posed to be arrested on sight by NATO’s S-for (formerly I-for) troops. They appear to have little difficulty in moving around, including passing through S-for checkpoints.

By and large NATO troops simply ensure they keep as far away as pos- sible from them. Nor have NATO troops done much to allow people to return to their homes — another aspect of Dayton. In Sarajevo they stood by whilst Serb nationalists burned down houses in order to encourage Serbs to leave the city for the Bosnian Serb Repub- lic.

Mostar

In Mostar right-wing Croats con- tinue to expel Muslims from the western half of the city. Early in Feb- ruary over 100 elderly Muslims were driven from their homes, watched by NATO troops. The only protec- tion for the Serbs offered was to Muslims wanting to collect a few belongings from their home before fleeing to the east Mostar.

In Prijedor 97 Muslim families ap- plied to return to their homes. They were denied by the international officials, who passed them on to the police. Within 48 hours every one of the houses had been destroyed. At least four members of the Prijedor police have been indicted for war crimes by the Hague tribunal but continue to hold prominent posi- tions.

NATO has now postponed for a year a decision on whether Brcko should be part of the Croat-Muslim Federation or the Bosnian Serb Repub- lic.

Brcko was one of the first towns to be 'ethnically cleansed' by para- militaries from Serbia at the start of the war in Bosnia. Muslim owned houses have continued to be de- stroyed though no-one has ever been apprehended. The council, courts and police are all in Serb hands.

Fifteen months after Dayton it is clear that the only parts of the Agreements that are being imple- mented are those which provided for the division of Bosnia into the Muslim-Croat Serb entities and the creation of a Zone of Separation between them. All other economic and political parts which were supposed to be brought about the reunification of the coun- try are being ignored.

The effect of this is to increase the hold of nationalists and war criminals amongst all three nations. The re- sults of the September elections clearly demonstrate this — leaving aside all the problems of how genu- inely democratic they were. The three main nationalist parties were clear winners in elections for the Presidency and the House of Representatives.

In the Federation the non- nationalist slate of former Prime Minister Haris Silajdžić won only 7.4 per cent of votes for the House of Representatives. Silajdžić did somewhat better in the election for the Bosnian section of the Presidency, getting 13.36 per cent.

Silajdžić’s position is now more dis- appointing since he was at least ad- mitted to campaigning in those areas of Bosnia under the control of the former Bosnian government opposi- tion candidates who were allowed access to TV and radio and an independent press exists.

In the Bosnian Serb Republic the nationalist SDS displayed Karadžić’s portrait on its campaign material — despite this contravening electoral regulations.

The small opposition parties had virtually no access to the media. A similar situation existed in Herzegov- inia:

Bosnia where the official Bosnian Croats media did not receive the electoral Rules and Regulations and made efforts to suppress the election, even by more than the HDZ access.

The only other television infor- mation came from the HRT on state service in Croatia. On the contrary there was no documentary on the “dangers of Islamic fundamentalism”.

Poor vote

Despite the relatively poor vote for non-nationalist candidates the very different conditions in which the election was fought in the Sarajevo controlled part of the Feder- ation, Herzegovina and the Serb Republic show that the three main nationalist parties are not the same. With the exception of mainly Muslim SDS does allow opposition for to organise, in anyone other than the HDZ access.

At the time of the Dayton Agreement Socialist Outlook warned that the creation of the Federation was not enough — that those who want to carve up Bosnia, the election results show that the Serbs who continue to live in the Croat-Muslim Federation, the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Federation stand still want to recreate a single, multi-national Bosnian state. The vote for the SDA was not a vote for an Islamic state.

Unfortunately the longer Bosnians are no longer allowed freedom to vote. The price of the SDA was no vote for an Islamic state.

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WORLD OUTLOOK 15
Psychology and Marxism – strange bedfellows or a combination for change?

It's psychology, Jim, but not as we know it ...


By Rod Marshall

PSYCHOLOGY and Marxism do mix. This is a commonly held view of many who have come into contact with psychology in many of its forms. For one thing, it is a science that is historically committed to the study of the individual and which eschews collective explanations of social behaviour. Psychological theory and practice have been often been trumpeted by the faithful (e.g. Eyres's work on the connection between race and IQ) or have been used as hard handed instruments of social control (e.g. in the use of harmful drugs to contain psychiatric patients).

Frend, although seen by some as a liberal in breaking taboos surrounding mental illness or sexuality, also talked of gay people as being "victims of this one fatal perversion". The Institute for Psychoanalysis does not allow gay people to train as psychotherapists even today.

Against this generally reactionary grain Psychology and Society cuts a blade sharpened on many decades of work by psychologists on the left. In this one volume, edited by psychologists Ian Parker and Russell Spears, are many and varied attempts to show that a radical psychology is possible, that a bit of the unspeakable can be useful for both psychology and its critics.

Martin Roiser and Carla Willig from Thames Valley University highlight the history of working class psychology from the time of Marx and Engels.

Working class

This rich vein of pro-working class psychology was highlighted at the 1996 Conference of the Social Psychology Section of the British Psychological Society in a special session on Marxism and Psychology.

Research by Engels and Marx, for example, into the working conditions of the working class (e.g. in The Condition of the Working Class in England) included a questionnaire for French workers entitled the Enquete Ouvriere.

Although most of the 100 questions were not "psychological", Roiser and Willig show how this links with Marx and Engels' work on class consciousness and alienation. This work was taken up and given an extra psychological dimension in the work of Kautsky and Bernstein and further in Goffman that the radical Frankfurt School was formed in 1922.

This School is best known for the work of Fromm, Marcuse, Weiss and Adorno and includes work on the causes of fascism both at the level of the state and at the psychological level to the individual "authoritarian" personality (Adorno et al 1951).

The initial intent of the Frankfurt School was to explain the failures of German Social Democracy and this was done largely along Marxist lines, mainly unainted by Stalinism. In portraying late capitalism as the cause of authoritarian personali ties Fromm (in the famous Fear of Freedom) drew perhaps overly pessimistic conclusions.

Nonetheless the work on the authoritarian personality by Adorno et al in the USA became a highly influential in examining the nature and causes of prejudice, albeit one which tended to reinforce notions of individuality by focusing on personality differences.

Radical Psychology reappeared strongly in Germany in the 1960s, centring in the Free University of Berlin and led by the influential Klaus Holzkamp. This movement, as part of student uprisings across Europe in the 1960s, made a huge contribution in renewing a Critical Psychology, largely through rejuvenating the application of Marxism to Psychology. Sadly little of this work has been translated into British working class theory.

More recently, the rise of postmodernist thought during the 1980s has allowed Critical Psychology to regain a foothold and to grow again after a barren period in the 1970s when many radical psychologists were forced out of universities in Britain. The strand of reductivism, in the form of cognitive psychology, became ever tighter.

An important issue today is the extent to which the work of poststructuralist thinkers, like Foucault, can be used positively in developing a truly radical psychology (see Gane 1986, Shotton & Parker 1990). This issue is dealt with both directly and indirectly in Psychology and Society (for example the chapter by Kum-Kum Bhavnani and Angela Davis on strategies for women prisoners).

The truly remarkable aspect of Psychology & Society is its diversity. In nineteen chapters there are many more than nineteen psychological perspectives and more than nineteen types of Marxism to match them.

New versions

It is not surprising that some of the versions of both would not be recognised as such by some of those who define themselves as either Marxists or Psychologists.

This is not a criticism, but is instead indicative of the many brave attempts to fuse Psychology and Marxism together found within the book.

In nineteen chapters there are many more than nineteen psychological perspectives and more than nineteen types of Marxism to match them!

Take the chapter by Jeremy Ullman. Behaviourism, as personified in the work of people such as Pavlov, Watson and Skinner, has been largely disregarded within modern Psychology. For Marxists, the emphasis is on the importance of natural selection as a driving force in behaviour which has often made them dismiss behaviourist ideas (as with genetic reductionism).

This is particularly true for those who have broken with the official Stalinist line, which was heavily based on the notion of "homo sovieticus" and the role ofeducation in developing the whole person in the "new communist society".

The book's strength lies in the variety of approaches found within. Each one is well argued and supported by practical examples and case studies.

The positive aspects of Ullman's approach involve the abandonment of Cartesian dualisms such as between the physical and mental and the Cartesian subject-object relation which is critically discussed in the first chapter by Edward Reed (things in themselves can never be known, only there interpreted appearance. Hence the need for a cognitive system to do the interpreting).

These problems appear to bedevil the attempt by RD Hineswood to show possible convergences between psychology and Marxism. These centre firstly on the Marxist notion of alienation and Freudian ideas of depersonalisation.

Hineswood argues that the notion of surplus value (based on the circulation of workers' productive activities in the form of commodity) is similar to the idea of the group involving aspects of personal identity that are also being "circu- lated".

The second convergence relies on the supposed dualism between the social and individual that has perhaps been a driving force in psychology and also reinforces the internal - external dualism found in much psychology. While Hineswood has some fascinating insights into possible overlaps between Freudians and Marxists, the chapter is weakened by the fact that the chapter deals with a single cell to a social formation composed of millions of people.

It is worth wondering how dialecti cal such a relationship might be if neither the cell nor the social formation is aware of the function of the other (which is still the case for brain function where location for function is still a mystery). Freud worked because of a chemical change, but what does this chemical change actually represent in human, social terms? After all, dialectical logic does not imply a dual determinism of the wooden variety that is favoured by empiricism. Ullman celebrates how "selectionism" has removed the focus from the internal cognitive states (such as memory and processing) but it is worrying that in doing so the concept of subjectivity may have been lost altogether.

The book gives no overall answer to the question of whether a Marxist psychology and I suspect that any such Psychology, benefit of its formal logic and bourgeois conceptions of psychology would be psychology, maybe, but not as we now know it.

Radical

Until that day and as a step to getting there, So’s book concludes Psychology and Society by discussing the ways in which radical psychologists are already fighting back both in developing theory and in the practical aspects of their work.

The organisation "Politics, Psychology and Resistance" is committed to fighting the oppressive uses of psychology and aims to promote the development and dissemination of emancipatory psychology and radical opposition to oppressive practices of all kinds. This is an aim that all Marxists should support in remembering that, in overthrowing capitalism we also have to "create an association, in which the free development of each individual shall be the condition for the free development of all" (Marx & Engels, The Communist Manifesto).
Socialist Outlook

FEATUES

Such a limited rebellion by the newest female role models

Spicing up old conservative values

By Kathryn Marshall

INTERNATIONAL Women’s Day this year coincides with international solidarity for the Spice Girls. Their album and single have hit the top of the charts, and discos and dance floors are up and down the country throbbing to their beat.

They have recently achieved success in the US, and received two Brit awards, notably ones voted for by ‘the people’, not music industry moguls.

On the face of it, the Spice Girls phenomenon seems very positive for young women, that of an all-female band who display confidence and control of their lives. The music is loud, bouncy and visually impossible to ignore. Their energy for life is enticing.

What lies behind this, though? Take the Spice Girls’ slogan, “Girl Power”. Does it mean anything very much other than power to make noise and to assert yourself within the present system of relationships and families?

Their latest single, “Mama”, echoes the sentiments of the theme song for a movie that is unhelpful and oppressive to young women, and to mothers. The words have the young women agonising for all the times they “crossed the line, she burned through” going to places they shouldn’t have.

There’s nothing wrong with mother and daughter having positive and strong relationships. But this songuggests such a relationship by having the daughter become subordinate to the mother. It does nothing either to free the mother from her sole role as “cater” in the family. The Spice Girls end up trying to protect these roles from any attacks.

You might think young women want freedom, and so do their mothers, they say, but actually we rather like things the way they are if we’re being honest and searching about it.

Their political statements corroborate this view of their music. Firstly, they were declared as Thatcherites by various newspapers. This has more recently been watered down to two of them being fans of Thatcher and believing her to have been the first “Spice Girl”, while the rest either think they have no political or a vague group of anarchy.

The idea that Thatcher was the first Spice Girl makes considerable sense. Her position as first woman Prime Minister in Britain, and her outspoken and assertive manner, led some to herald her as a feminist, we’re being honest and searching about it.

The Spice Girls also tap into this way of thinking. It is fine and easy for women to accept the current organisation of the family, or indeed, of all relationships within it, because they have attained, through the music business, a temporary feeling of freedom from these constraints.

They are in a position now to be choosy about their partners and to be apologetic to their mothers, knowing full well that they will not be forced back into a relationship that can hurt and trap both parties.

There is a crucial difference, though, and one for the Spice Girls to be very wary of. Thatcher constructed much of her own career and became the puppeteer in control of many others. The Spice Girls are the latest in a long line of bands constructed largely by men in the music business to make money.

“Girl groups” in the fifties and sixties were examples of this. Their careers were short-lived and we know little of what has happened to them since.

The former Shires called last year of how one of the songs was just handed over to the all-male band, Manfred Mann, who had considered success with it. The Shires were never acknowledged.

All this was decided by backroom manoeuvres.

The Spice Girls were brought together to convey an image and an ideology not decided by them. Where will they be in the years to come, once the society and the system of relationships that they are endorsing have had their way with their careers?

And what of all their fans, longing for women to be really challenging and assertive in the music business? So often, the fans’ perception of the band is in advance of the band themselves.

It is necessary to promote music that is currently on the fringes, where women take control of their music, alongside their male colleagues, such as techs and dance music where new sounds are mixed and created from what has existed in the past.

Such music may not always be so easy on the ears, but in its very difference and its existence in a space quite other than that inhabited by the Spice Girls, is it at the very least a marker for change.

Leeds Memorial Meeting for Bob Pennington

“A bookie’s runner – but a hero of a recruiter”

Bob Wood

“Our memorial is not a ritual remembrance of the past but a persistent challenge to face up to the demands inherent in our own share of a shored task” – Istvan Mesaros

IN EARLY February, more than thirty people gathered in Leeds for a memorial meeting in honour of the late Bob Pennington. John Archer spoke about Bob’s period in Leeds in the fifties and Keith Sinclair took up the story in later years.

Archer claimed that Bob had been a colourful, energetic and magnetic character, devoted to building the Fourth International. After a spell in the RAF, and then working in a coal mine, Bob had come into contact with Trotskyism in Blackpool in 1949. He joined the Revolutionary Communist Party just before it broke up.

He moved to Leeds in 1951 and worked there intermittently until 1957. Bob was active in the Harehills Ward Labour Party. John recounted how, at a meeting in the local park, Aneurin Bevan had defended the Chinese Revolution. “Has the stock exchange been abolished? Have they got rid of the landlords?” The audience had no alternative but to agree that these were positive achievements.

Although American imperialism had then turned the war into a feeding frenzy, Bob (like many others) was confident that the revolutionary epoch had not ended and that eventually the FII would gain a mass base.

1953 split

At the time of the 1953 split in the Fourth International, Bob had helped to ensure that the majority of the Trotskyist “Club”, supported James Cannon and the American SWP, and all those forces that went on to form the International Committee.

Using a striking image, John suggested that 1953 is in this room”, and later, in the meeting, tentatively floated the idea that one of the reasons for the split was a lack of clarity in handling alliances.

Bob played an important role in the early and mid-fifties, helping to lay the basis of the Socialist Labour League and recruiting many to its ranks. He eventually parted company with the SLL in 1960. In John’s view there were no obvious political reasons for this. Although he had fallen out with the “deeply insane” Healy and had not been paid his wages as a full-time worker for the organisation, it was likely that there were also other reasons.

John recounts how Bob had lived in the Archer’s attic for a while and had been very good to their two sons. Bob had made a study of the Daily Express to learn how to get its ideas so clearly. Bob had combined what John described as Anglo-Saxon scepticism with a certain impatience with the theory. He had a good sense of practicalities.

Keith Sinclair spoke first about Bob’s assessment of the dockers’ breakaway from the TGWU in the fifties to the National Amalgamated Stewards and Dockers Union (NASU) – the blue union, with which Bob had been closely involved.

In a 1960 article, Bob had taken an equal distance from the bureaucracies of both the TGWU and the NASU, and argued only for the building of rank-and-file committees.

But by the eighteen his attitude to the blue union had changed. Noting in an interview in 1982 that what became the SLL had been very cautious about the move to the blue, he concluded that nevertheless it had been right to leave the TGWU at that stage.

But when the 1955 NASU recognition strike was defeated a few years later, he considered in retrospect that the dockers should have returned to the TGWU.

After a brief flirtation with the Solidarity group, Bob was linked by the mid-sixties with the International Group, the precursor of the International Marxist Group.

Reassessment

He moved away from the positions he had held in the fifties. “The fall and fall of Gerry Healy” – critically reassessed that tradition, writing of the opportunism, catastrophism, hyperactivity and anti-intellectualism which characterised Healy’s organisations.

In the early eighties, during a period of serious factional struggle in the Socialist League (successor to the IMG) he was one of the leader of the tendency which emphasized the centrality of events in the Labour Party. He always stressed the key importance of the labour movement, of the trade unions and the Labour Party.

Bob was a militant who made a contribution over a long period, with a leadership role stretching over decades. He continued to be active until the end of the eighties, and many of his articles in later years stand the test of time.

From the floor, Len Hodgson remembered Bob as a man of tremendous courage. He played cards and was well known in his local pub. At one time he had worked as a bookie’s runner for a Leeds councilor. He had been a “hell of a recruiter.”

The meeting was a fitting tribute to a fine socialist, with comrades mainly from Leeds, but also from further afield. After the meeting ended, most stayed to renew old acquaintances and exchange reminiscences of the man they had come to honour.
McCarthy - Witchfinder General

Brian Gardener looks at the background to Arthur Miller's 'The Crucible'.

The Crucible was first produced in 1953. At the time the United States was in the grip of powerful anti-communist hysteria. This period is often summed up by the phrase 'McCarthyism', but appearing centre-stage only In 1950, the senator for Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy, was something of a latecomer to the drama.

By the end of the war, the US was in the throws of an unprecedented economic boom. However with eleven million servicemen due to return, if the country was to avoid another serious depression foreign markets had to open up to US trade and investment.

After suffering some twenty million casualties, the war was in no state to go to war. Yet in order to justify its profitable military expansion, the US very much needed a new enemy.

The years following the war saw the U.S. experience the greatest number of strikes in its history. For American capitalism the enemy was not only without but within.

So began the Cold War both at home and abroad.

Truman and the Democratic Party's adoption of anti-communism provoked a knee-jerk reaction to the rhetoric of their Republican opponents. In 1948 the Republicans had been out of power for fourteen years. With few other weapons in their armoury they fell back on slurs that the Democrats administration was soft on communism.

In 1947, the Republican dominated Congress passed the Taft-Hartley act which outlawed strikes by government employees, banned the closed shop and required union members to swear they were not communists.

Truman established a federal loyalty programme and the Attorney General was authorised to compile a list of tainted organisations. Two thousand were sacked as a result. Evidence against an employee could amount merely to the existence of texts on Marxism on their bookshelves.

The administration established a 'Council for Democracy' in schools. The teaching of anti-communism became an important part of the curriculum.

For the members of Congress' House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), the communist conspiracy pervaded every area of American life. Many proscribed themselves before it, confessing to their former sins and naming their erstwhile comrades.

The actions of the committee gave free rein to others to carry out purges. Companies carried out their own investigations of employees and trade unions rid their organisations of suspected communists before the HUAC could get to them.

Many lost their livelihoods. Some suffered the worse fate of imprisonment and death.

In 1948, the committee's new boy, Richard Nixon, grilled the former State Department official, Alger Hass after it was alleged that he led a secret communist cell inside the Roosevelt administration of the 1930s. Hass denied the charges but was later sentenced to five years in prison having been convicted of perjury on oath before the committee.

In 1949, when the Soviet Union exploded an atomic bomb, the prevailing view was that they could not possibly have developed such a capability without having been passed secret information. In 1951, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were convicted of giving away atomic secrets and were finally executed in June 1953.

The hysteria reached its zenith in February, 1950 when the previously obscure senator, Joe McCarthy made a speech claiming that 205 State Department employees were communists. Never able to substantiate the charge, McCarthy changed his story several times over.

Addicted to his own publicity, McCarthy slung mud at any convenient target. If it didn't stick he quickly moved on to something else.

He was Witchfinder General to the many respectable and moderate Republicans who balked at getting their hands too dirty. His downfall came in 1954 when he made the mistake of investigating the army.

The military establishment counter-attacked with an accusation that he had sought preferential treatment for a recently drafted member of his staff. In the televised hearings he appeared both arrogant and deranged. Later that year the senate censured him for "conduct...unbecoming a member of the United States Senate".

In 1947, before the onset of the McCarthy the HUAC had investigated the motion picture industry. The Hollywood Ten were refused to be interrogated on the grounds that such questions from a governmental body violated the First amendment of the constitution.

Every one of them was jailed for contempt of Congress and the studio bosses ensured that most of them were never to work in the film industry again.

In the fifties Hollywood increasingly intervened in anti-communist propaganda to divert output. When a young screenwriter, Arthur Miller was pressured to turn the gangster villains into communists in his story about the Brooklyn waterfront, he withdrew the script.

The following day the producer sent him a wire saying, "It's interesting how the minute we try to make the script pro-American, you pull out." "Timehenge", Miller's autobiog-raphy, describes his evolving feelings on the parallels between the events in Salem in 1692 and the contemporary political situation. He says: "At first I rejected the idea of a play on the subject...But gradually over weeks, a living connection between myself and Salem, and between Salem and myself was made in my mind...the

44 years on - but still exciting: the new film version of The Crucible

In the community portrayed by Miller it is clear that the distribution of wealth and property is undergoing radical transformation. Once a society in which there was a considerable amount of inequality, the society now outcasts such as the vagrant Sarah Good - an easy target for the accusations.

The whipped-up hysteria of Devil worship serves a noreferrer capitalist class extremely well. Landlord Thomas Putnam is more than willing to join in the witch hunt against Giles Corey, a farmer with whom he has dispute over land.

Conspiracy

Those who oppose the hysteria are charged with being communist members of the Satanic conspiracy. John Proctor's confrontation of those who accuse his wife and others leads eventually to an accusation against his own wife. When she says that his face calms the devil. "At least, it is my face", he says, "that is the final confirmation of his guilt. He is of no use to me..." His name is corrupted and his accusers will be called back into court.

The film's new screenplay and Miller's direction have combined to make a convincing and dramatic piece of cinema, the re-telling of a history which is as relevant now as it was almost half a century ago.

New film still hits the target

WITH A NEW SCREEN treatment by the author, Nicholas Hytner's film of 'The Crucible' is a proof that the forty-four-year-old piece is more than simply a metaphor for McCarthyism.

Certainly the events of the last few years and the state of the world became the catalyst for the piece but in no way does Miller twist the historical facts of the seventeenth century to crudely represent those of the twentieth century.

The theme is analogous to several other twentieth century events, not all of which had much evidence when Miller wrote it - the Salinas show trials of the 1930s and the witch trials of the late sixties. The purges during the cultural revolution for example. Perhaps this is one reason why 'The Crucible' is the most performed of Miller's works.

The film is the first shown charged that any analogy with contemporary events was specious. The difference between witches and communists was that whereas communism existed, witchcraft was a fantasy. But as with anti-communism in 1950's America, the charge of being in league with the devil trapped large numbers of those who dared to dissent from the dominant ideology of the society.

In the community portrayed by Miller it is clear that the distribution of wealth and property is undergoing radical transformation. Once a society in which there was a considerable amount of inequality, the society now outcasts such as the vagrant Sarah Good - an easy target for the
Euro-state ahead?

I welcome John Laurence's criticism of my review of International Socialism. He rightly says that the SWP recognises the explosion of world trade. I think the SWP still ignores two important things. Firstly, a "trait" - these opposing economic and political zones around the USA, Europe and Japan as - is carving up the world market. Secondly, a single-currency "super" has been established as the core of the European single market. These things are not cast in stone. However, the SWP is not responding to these. The SWP should recognise this "trait" which increasingly rests on large multinational corporations. They are not the biggest 200 multinationals new equal one-quarter of the world gross product. They were built up by active political interventions by capitalist governments over 20 years. Circulating capital has rapidly concentrated in the "trait", 56 per cent of the world total was there in 1982; it was around 40 per cent in 1980.

The book says that the SWP itself has failed to organise the entire European market. I think that is true of the SWP. The World Trade Organisation negotiations show that the SWP is blind to the fact that the EU is a real giant over world prices and the terms of trade. SWP leader Chris Harman still writes that the EU is "an established fantasy".

Jowet's account of British difficulties over European integration is quite true. However, that, won't prevent a "hard core" of states using the Euro and falling still further. Labour will probably keep the UK outside the first round of the Euro. Nothing much can come out of the current intergovernmental conference in Amsterdam. If Labour can, only a massive renewal of Europe's working class organisations can prevent the establishment of that "core".

Today, the odds are against that radical renewal happening in the short term. In order to change things, the Fourth International and the GST in France are building the Euro-March. How far the SWP's comrades build them too?

Duncan Chapelle, London N4

Feedback

Send us your letters on any topic, to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Letters over 400 words may have to be edited for length.

It's glocal, not global!

Please note the following inaccuracies which crept into the article version of my letter (February Outlook) on Duncan Chappe's review of Chris Harman's Globalisation article.

"...while European ones with smaller home markets are more "glocalised" should read "glocalised". This wasn't a typo.

The point was intended to show that the Harman article recognised that there was an emerging European economic bloc, mainly on France and Germany, but also the advanced European states like Belgium and Holland.

I wrote that "The economic policies which have produced a context of "weak cohesion" in the British economy". This was turned into gobbledygook as "economic politics".

I wrote that "Such solutions include local and industry-wide strikes against cuts and services and the key sectors of manufacturing should be publicly owned and policy directed at the nationalisation of financial institutions". This was again altered wrongly. While I could have said it more clearly, my point was that strikes again cuts and readjustment are growing now, whereas nationalisations will require a struggle to rearm the labour movement politically.

Otherwise, I think you represented my analysis fairly and in depth.

It is very important to develop a precise position on these issues for practical reasons. For example, on February 1 there was a very large meeting on Maersk organise by the Labourite at Central Hall with Benn, Corrby, All Lomass, Bob Crow, Jimmy Nolan and Geoff Martin.

Probably 65 per cent of the audience were French, but they stole a march on the British left. Among their slogans were "For a people's Europe" and "No to a Single Currency". I think such slogans need debating, along with the issue of exactly how the left relates to right wing Eurocrats and differentiates itself from them.

John Laurence

Seeing a victory as a sell-out?

There are problems with the article headed Higher Education workers must reject degrading offer in February's paper.

The offer, which has been recommended by all 8 unions, and so far formally accepted by unions representing non-teaching staff, gives 2.9% to non-manual staff, and 3.9% to manuals for this bargaining year, backdated to the various settlement dates for each bargaining group. For the next bargaining year, starting very soon, the offer is 2.9% for non-manuals, and 3.4% for non-manuals - or the March RPI (plus 3.5% for manuals) - whichever is the greater.

This is nearly double the original "final" offer, and is entirely due to what the article correctly calls the "historic' national strike by all the unions last November. It is much more than the stupid offer made just before Xmas which was also a 2 year deal, but forgot about backdating!

Importantly the offer agrees to maintain the national negotiating machinery on conditions of service, which the employers had said they intended to scrap.

The offer represents a victory, for staff, the vast majority of whom either have agreed or will agree to accept it. The fact that it is weighted towards the low-paid is also a victory.

It would be absurd to seriously propose rejecting it. Obviously the offer comes nowhere near the huge amount required to restore the value of the pay of many sections of staff to what it was 10 years ago and more. But this was never on the agenda, and would need massive injections of cash from government, as would ending the deregulation of higher education in general.

The offer allows staff to move on to campaigning for better funding and against attempts to step up the race of exploitation, with the confidence gained from a victory through militant action.

The attitude expressed in the article could not unite activists, and would leave them and us standing on the sidelines.

Other criticisms of the article are that it seems to be written from a purely teaching angle, with no idea of what was going on amongst non-teaching staff. The article does not spell out a goal to struggle for - what offer would be acceptable to Paul Uwins?

And crucially, though it should not necessarily be mentioned public- ly, there was no refish among the collective membership for more strike action. It may have been possible to have had another united strike, but not to plan an escalating program.

Localised actions were increas- ingly being discussed; but across large groups of staff these have a de-mobilising effect, are long-term, and do not involve all members.

Mike Pixton and Andy Klimister, Oxford.

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Education campaigners link up to demand

Money! Money! Money!

Will Labour CUT school funding?

DESPITE the seemingly endless mantra from Tony Blair that Labour’s priorities are “Education, education, education”, there is no sign so far that they are prepared to come up with the necessary cash to tackle a mounting crisis.

Gordon Brown’s announcement that a Labour government would stick to the spending limits imposed by the Tories in the 1996 budget means that Labour is set to push through disastrous cuts in local government finance in 1998/9 and 1999/0.

Kenneth Clarke mapped out plans for local authority spending to increase by just 1.2% in each year, compared with projected inflation of 3%. To make matters worse, local authority capital funds are set for a cut of 9% in 1998/9 and a further 1.3% cut in 1999/0.

This issue will be brought to the forefront in this vital pre-election period by a concerted joint campaign for increased funds for education being mounted by teaching unions, campaigns and pressure groups.

Organised by Fight Against Cuts in Education (FACE) National Education Week (see page 8) has set out to put local and national politicians of all parties under pressure to make schools and colleges a genuine financial priority.

It takes place in the context of another round of brutal cuts in local government spending, which is threatening more teaching jobs as well as a further increase in the backlog of maintenance in our crumbling schools. Those who vote Labour in the election have a right to demand a real change after the Tories are defeated.

The education lobby; which has done more than almost anything else to undermine the credibility of the Tories in their “middle England” heartlands, must lead the charge in the fight for progress.