Dover tragedy as 58 more victims of immigration laws perish in sealed truck

Bitter fruit of Labour's racist laws

HOW DESPERATE must a person be to pay an extortionate sum to cram into the back of a sealed truck in sweltering heat - in the hopes of finding a better life thousands of miles from home? The grisly discovery of 58 dead Chinese immigrants in a lorry trailer at Dover Docks underlines the extent to which the tough anti-immigration laws imposed by Labour and Tory governments benefit only the gangsters and the racists.

The gangsters make thousands exploiting the misery of desperate people, promising to smuggle them illegally into the heart of "fortress Europe" - and often by exploiting them again when they arrive, as cheap, illegal labour.

The racists rub their hands in glee as a Labour government vies with the Tories to slam the door harder on anyone wishing to come here. They buy for more as Straw and his ghastly Home Office crew strip benefits from asylum seekers, leaving them penniless with a pittance in vouchers, and prepare to build yet more immigration prisons.

The racists are buying for blood, and now Labour has delivered it for them. But already they are buying for more. There is nothing progressive down this road.

By attempting to placate the racists, Labour is playing with fire. Racist violence is growing. These vicious laws which fuel racism must be scrapped, or more helpless, harmless people will lose their lives in frantic efforts to reach a country they misconceivedly see as a beacon of freedom.
Greg Tucker

The London Socialist Alliance conference on June 11 marked a positive move forward for the organisation of the Alliance.

In the political climate, it seems, as if it would be a bear garden where all the negative traits of the previous Labour Party reformers re-emerge. But in a generally good mood, clear decisions have been made that will enable the LSA to consolidate its position as the focus for left organisation in London.

That development was highlighted in Tottemham. While the LSA had previously expressed concern about Labour’s threat to merge with the SDP, it is apparent that the Socialist Workers Party have accepted that the LSA is not merely an electoral convenience to be opened and closed, as with previous SWP “front” organisations, whenever convenient to them.

And despite their public manoeuvring, the Socialist Party have privately recognised that the LSA can no longer be ignored or be effective in the future.

That rest of the organised left should respond positively to this recognition which their role will be recognised and they can play a real part to this end. The number of groups affiliating has expanded, and organisations that were hostile during the last struggle are now trying to build bridges back to the LSA. And independent individuals are being attracted.

The conference agreed to redraw its strategy to consolidate its position as the focus for left organisation in London.

In each case this took a series of practical activities. At the conference the LSA will be moving forward the campaigns successfully built during the GLA elections, on issues such as the sell off of council housing.

The conference agreed to deepen their trade union activities, particularly in the building sector, where there has been a concerted effort to make these changes.

Local SA groups have opened a new dialogue between existing local groups and the building sector.

On the other hand the form that local LSA groups take must be suited to their own circumstances.

Their work is clearly difficult and they should not be discouraged.

The conference discussed the future of the LSA, its potential, its potential for making contact with the growing forces of the left.

LSA Conference marks a major step forward

CWU rank and file moves left, and tells Labour ... Privatisation? No thanks!

Marian Bracken

The CWU conference held at the beginning of June, marked a shift to the left by the union’s representatives.

This is a product of the growing interest among CWU rank and file members in politics. The current low level of activity on the picket line is contributing to this trend.

Management is trying to contract out parts of its work to other companies to reduce its costs, particularly in the latter half of this year.

The Conference Office is facing the beginnings of serious financial problems, in particular the closure of its current location at 211 Tottenham Court Road. The CWU has decided to move to a new location in central London, which will be more accessible to members.

The conference concluded that the LSA could not be ignored or be effective in the future. The conference discussed the future of the LSA, its potential, its potential for making contact with the growing forces of the left.

The conference agreed to deepen their trade union activities, particularly in the building sector, where there has been a concerted effort to make these changes.

Local SA groups have opened a new dialogue between existing local groups and the building sector.

On the other hand the form that local LSA groups take must be suited to their own circumstances.

Their work is clearly difficult and they should not be discouraged.

The conference discussed the future of the LSA, its potential, its potential for making contact with the growing forces of the left.

The conference concluded that the LSA could not be ignored or be effective in the future. The conference discussed the future of the LSA, its potential, its potential for making contact with the growing forces of the left.

The conference concluded that the LSA could not be ignored or be effective in the future. The conference discussed the future of the LSA, its potential, its potential for making contact with the growing forces of the left.

The conference concluded that the LSA could not be ignored or be effective in the future. The conference discussed the future of the LSA, its potential, its potential for making contact with the growing forces of the left.

The conference concluded that the LSA could not be ignored or be effective in the future. The conference discussed the future of the LSA, its potential, its potential for making contact with the growing forces of the left.

The conference concluded that the LSA could not be ignored or be effective in the future. The conference discussed the future of the LSA, its potential, its potential for making contact with the growing forces of the left.
Socialist Outlook

John Lister

WHEN the Labour launched the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) it was presented as a bodys. It was intended to play a key role in ending the arbitrary system of “rationing by post code” in which the policies on what types of drug and drugs and the NHS would pay for varied widely. The new health authority to the next. It was even more reasonable enough — but from the outset, campaigners have been concerned that NICE, with its small budget and its so-called “evidence-based medicine” — a system of assessing the effectiveness of drugs and treatments largely by statistical analysis of randomised control trials, without any real reference to the experience of patients, their advocacy groups and the pressures seeking to deliver front-line services.

There is a stark warning of the dangers of this approach year when the Royal College of Psychiatrists conducted an investigation into the effectiveness of the new generation of anti-psychotic drugs, which are widely recognised to offer fewer harmful side-effects than the established, much cheaper drugs, many of which date back to the 1950s. The report concluded from its statistical calculations that the new, more expensive drugs were not great enough to justify recommending them to be used by all patients. Unfortunately, they had come to this new with asking the views of patients or mental health professionals in groups and their report into account the fact that by generating fewer side-effects the new reports are more likely to secure voluntary compliance by patients in taking their medication regularly, as opposed to the widespread problems of non-compliance among patients in the community to take the old-fashioned drugs. The RCP recommendations had been forwarded to NICE, and yet not resolved. I believe it was clear that this is no serious way to assess which treatments should be supported by the NHS.

One-sided

As if to underline the one-sided approach, we now have an equally outrageous report from NICE itself proposing that patients diagnosed as suffering from muscular disorders should not be prescribed the expensive drug drug interferon, despite widespread evidence that it can bring dramatic relief to many who take it. NICE insistence that the drug can cost £1,000 per person per year, and argues that for some patients it offers no real benefit. But its ruling that no future NHS sufferers should receive it on the NHS would impose a brutal penalty on those who might respond only to treatment — and is a major step towards a rational policy of explicit rationing based on price.

Small numbers of people suffer MS; the total bill to the NHS would not be great if all of them received beta interferon, especially if account is taken of the fact that many would then not have to seek treatment in hospitals or expand existing centres. The UK’s ladder of Service has announced plans to spend up to £200 million on the deprecation of asylum seekers after their applications are rejected. It aims to remove nearly 60,000 people a year by 2004 more than 12,000 this year. The total of deportations is expected to rise to 30,000 between 2001 and 2002, and to 57,000 the following year. Then to 57,000 by 2004.

Key part of the new plan for change would see more detention centres built or converted. There are currently around 1,000 detention spaces in the UK for asylum seekers but officials are proposing that 4,000 be created.

We of course reject the fallacious distinction made by the Home Office between detention centres like Campfield and so-called “reception centres” such as at Oxstington in Cambridgeshire. All those who are held in centres, whatever their title, are detained under the 1971 Immigration Act and have the same lack of rights.

On all these issues and more the mobilisation of the past few weeks has been a positive start — but they need to be developed and extended as a matter of urgency.

Given the present health care costs, Mr Frampton, I’m afraid you can’t afford to go on living.

Jack Straw has done a good job in his hands.

Some Chinese are welcome, apparently, but not others (Guardian May 17).
Scandal of Angel Heights

The case of the Angel Heights Seven – while it contains its own particular lessons and outrages – also raises many of the issues being faced by asylum seekers who are being forcibly dispersed under new Labour’s racist Asylum and Immigration Act.

The asylum seekers were being forcibly dispersed to the Angel Heights Hostel, Newcasle-upon-Tyne, because of a number of incidents followed by the deaths of two men, under the notorious conditions they live in within the hostel. Six of the seven cases are not yet one is Iranian.

The refugees were dispersed by Kent County Council to Angel Heights in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Kent County Council were paying the cost of the accommodation.

On Wednesday 5th October 2000, asylum seekers at the hostel staged a protest and took other attempts to have their issues addressed – including 2 days of hunger strike in March over the fact that they are not allowed to have visitors and kept under curfew. Indeed their position is little different from that of people in detention centres while their landlord ranks in an enormous profit.

Management at the hostel claimed 40 windows were broken and furniture and crockery destroyed. This has been denied by the asylum seekers saying nobody’s windows were broken.

The tales of the situation at Campbell – where detainees were blaimed for damage – are told by Group 4 employees. Also, as campaigner Everton Smith.

The group was known as the Campaign to Defend Asylum Seekers who were forcibly dispersed and campaigner Everton Smith.

It is clear that the fight against this new attack on asylum seekers needed to be stepped up in response not only to the racist propaganda of recent months, but to the real assaults on the human rights of refugees that are accompanying them.

The demands of the campaign set out so far are:

Asylum seekers must have the right to income support Asylum seekers must have the right to work Defend the 1951 Geneva Convention on Human Rights

Scrap the Voucher system No to dispersal Full legal rights and representation Scrap the Asylum and Immigration Act

Given the scale of the offensive, and the currently divided state of anti-racist movement, the launch of specific campaign was correct. It should be easier for existing organisations to work together on a mass appeal and in response to the current attacks. Existing organisations have their own priorities – and are often overstretched in carrying them out.

A new energy was needed – from people who are committed to anti-racism but have not made it a particular priority – especially from the trade union movement. Others needed to be won to anti-racist arguments which answer the fifth pronged in the media.

All of this leads to the conclusion that to set up a new initiative to Defend asylum seekers is part of a longer tradition of united front campaigns to respond to specific attacks that this paper has always supported.

Many of the meetings and other activities which have happened over the last few weeks have begun to answer that challenge. From the packed meeting of 1200 in the Camden Centre in Central London, to smaller meetings in local community centres speakers from a range of refugee groups have been moving illustrations of the types of conditions from which people are trying to escape.

Time and again the British arms trade has been indicted as a major contributor to the number of asylum seekers world wide. The right to economic migration has also been defended – and rightly – challenging the notion that death through starvation is acceptable while death through torture isn’t.

All of this has been very positive. But a number of difficulties remain.

At the centre of this campaign is the Socialist Worker’s Party, the biggest organisation on the far left in Britain – and therefore often, with a particular responsibility. It is positive that SWP moved to instigate the campaign and that they have made it clear that they see it as an ongoing project.

In many parts of the country the SWP has no particular record of anti-racist campaigning – yet they insisted on having speakers on platforms in the name of their organisation while no other left organisation was offered similar facilities.

This type of behaviour is not the way to build a united front; placing preconditions and ultimatums on other forces will prevent the campaign winning the breadth of support its demands actually have.

Then there is the question of organising local activity. In many places there was no attempt to build on successful public meetings by setting up a local campaign in which all activists could come together and decide on the best ways of gathering support – whether for the petition, the demonstration or any other issue. Instead where public activity has been organised in many places it has happened through SWP structures.

The key decision to far – other than the creation of the campaign itself – was the calling of the June 24 demonstration. That decision was essentially made by the SWP – and against the advice of some anti-racists who were discussed with who rightly thought that a slower build up was likely to produce better results.

In the end the turn out credible – though doubtless influenced by the deaths in Dover in the days before. But with longer lead in time it would have been possible to build support beyond the far left who dominated the occasion. National demonstrations are usually seen as the culmination of a campaign rather than something to be organised in less than a month.

Many in the anti-racist movement who what is on offer is a repeat of the Anti-Nazi League – a great idea but one which has never had a structure in which non-SWP members could influence decisions or activity.

Essentially such democracy is not a luxury – it is a precondition for involving broad layers of activists. Within the anti-racist movement this is an issue of particular importance given the long legacy of top down structures.

During the Greater London Assembly elections and since in its work in the London Socialist Alliance, the SWP began to work more constructively with the rest of the left.

That break was also deepened by the positive responses and challenges it received from others involved. It also seemed that the same dynamic had affected their attitude to work in some trade unions.

If the campaign to defend asylum seekers is to carry out the job it so desperately needed to do, then that needs to be built on an inclusive and democratic basis.

The lives and human rights of asylum seekers are at stake – the left and anti-racist movement needs to find new ways of working to defeat this racist tide.

Conference September 15-17

Ruskin College, Oxford

European governments are increasingly using immigration detention as a way of criminalising, marginalising and deporting refugees and other migrants. Immigration detention promotes racist. Immigration detention has removed the presumption of freedom as detainees have to prove their case for freedom. Their loss is ours. Detention centres are multiplying, but so is resistance.

This is the third European conference against immigration detention organised by the growing network of campaigns against them.

Places should be booked as soon as possible as they are limited and certainly by August 14th

Ring 44-0 (0) 1865 558145 ConfAgstImmDet@aisl.com

We'll do our best to get the seven released on bail before their case was heard. Kent County Council restored support to them – but they have been moved to another hostel – so weakening the links built up with local activities. Precedents of the behaviour of the authorities at Angel Heights need to remain up for the cycle does not repeat itself.
New Alliance fights its first by-election in Labour's "rotten borough"

LSA - here to stay!

The London Socialist Alliance (LSA) achieved a remarkable result in its first ever parliamentary by-election in Bernie Grant's old seat of Tottenham on June 22 1995. The Tories, Labour and the Greens all failed to get deposits. LSA candidate Weyman Bennett, came fourth – polling ten per cent of the collapsing New Labour vote and a third of the discredited Tories' result.

Veronica Faglan

The LSA vote was 5.6% with 885 votes, ahead of the Greens, UKIP Independent Commissioner and Reform 2000 Anti-VAT.

The collapse of Greens – and decisively – is especially significant as it underlines that both the European and Greater London Assembly elections that many looked for a left alternative to come to Labour's Tory policies voted Green.

While David Lammy held the seat, Labour had to work hard to avoid his being hauled anti-war. He can have little to smile about in terms of the 15 per cent swing against his Party. He may claim in his acceptance speech that ‘the heartlands of Tottenham are safe in the hands of Labour', but this was not the verdict of many traditional Labour voters.

The swing against new Labour did not benefit the Tories, who were unable to recover from their 1997 low showings in the constituency. In the Romsey by-election, the right-wing lurch of the Tories under William Hague did not play well in front of the electorate.

The Liberal Democrats made a last minute surge to double their previous showing in Tottenham with a last minute leaflet that this was a two horse race between them.

For the LSA this result compares very favourably with those of other similar formations across Europe, including the Scottish Socialist Party at such an early stage in its existence.

The LSA really came together in a serious fashion last autumn to prepare for the Greater London Assembly elections, where it polled well, saving two constituency deposits and taking 3.1% per cent across the London constituencies.

But the Tottenham by-election was a greater challenge.

True, Weyman Bennett stood in the Haringey and Enfield constituency, so he had some recognition already in the by-election, even amongst those who didn't already know him as a long time campaigner against racism and for workers' rights.

But in the GLA elections, following the stitch up of Livingstone by the new Labour hierarchy, there was an effective strike of Labour party members. Nor did any of the other parties have an effective campaign.

The media concentrated on the Mayor's election – the Assembly received virtually no mention other than in London's Evening Standard. So the LSA were in many places the only people out campaigning; many people in Tottenham and across London told us ours were the only leaflets they had seen.

In the Tottenham by-election situation was very different. While there were undoubtedly Labour Party members who were less than enthusiastic about the fact that Blairite David Lammy was selected against Sharron Grant, he won a formally democratic contest.

While some Labour Party members stayed at home, or did the bare minimum, in protest against either Lammy, new Labour Party policies or both, the party machine was certainly in operation in this election.

In the last few days of the campaign, when it became clear from canvass returns that New Labour would have difficulty in getting the vote out, the effort was stepped up. Photographs were arranged with Cherie Booth and Mo Mowlam, and workers from Millbank stepped up their involvement.

The subsequent leaflet produced by the LSA – which was distributed to about half the houses in the constituency within 48 hours undoubtedly had an positive impact on the numbers of people who voted for Weyman Bennett.

But Rosamund Grant is not exceptional in being fed up with New Labour's performance both in Tottenham and in government. Many other long term Labour supporters are increasingly looking for an alternative. A leader left the Labour Party to support the LSA in the GLA elections – and a far greater number remained party members but voted for us. The Tottenham campaign saw a repeat of this experience, proving that it was not just dependent on the Livingstone slip stream.

The LSA worked hard through the short three week campaign focusing on campaigning against privatization particularly in education and libraries, and against the defence of asylum seekers.

Many lessons have been learnt from this first by-election which will stand us in good stead for future contests.

The greatest challenge will be to fully involve LSA supporters beyond the ranks of the existing left of centre. That is why it will be crucial in the weeks and months ahead to carry through the decisions of the recent LSA conference to relaunch the LSA as a membership organisation and build fully functioning local groups.

Commenting on the result, LSA's Weyman Bennett said: "I am thrilled we've achieved this excellent result so early in the LSA's expansion. Voters are clearly hostile to New Labour and their Tory policy."

"We don't want the privatization of our schools and hospitals, which Lammy wants to foist on Tottenham, as he made clear in his pro-privatization speech last night. He's only a poor boy made good because, like me, he had a decent education and worked system on which to depend on which Labour seems intent on dismantling."

"The LSA also raised the subject of asylum seekers, which Lammy has evaded throughout this campaign. The low turnout of 25.5 per cent, the lowest three since the war, is a threat to democracy. The 16,466 votes cast is far below what could have been, even than Bernie Grant's entire majority in 1997.

"And with fewer than nine thousand votes in a Labour stronghold, out of 64,000 strong electorate, if this is to be the end of our story, New Labour is in deep trouble. The LSA has only just begun to demonstrate that it really can do a better job. We've raised the flag of alternatives and I hope that Bernie Grant would be proud to see it flying."

New Labour's hatred of its defeated debate was demonstrated yet again in an outrageous manner after the declaration of the result, when Haringey councillor and ex-Mayor Paul Peacock threatened an LSA supporter to come outside so she could "politely guide her home".

The supporter in question is reported to have heard David Lammy's acceptance speech by pointing out that the LSA's vote had collapsed.

This disgraceful behaviour follows racist comments made by another New Labour councillor earlier in the campaign and demonstrates their political bankruptcy.

Acting returning officer David Warwick threatened the LSA election agent that she could face prosecution for fly-posting. The LSA is already taking legal advice on a private prosecution of Haringey senior officers who abused council funds for partisan purposes – and we have witness our new Labour councillor earlier in the campaign and demonstrates their political bankruptcy.

Council workers in cash-strapped Haringey were warning that they would demand LSA posters as soon as they went up. Weyman Bennett pointed out, "The Labour council plodly poverty when it comes to cleaning the streets of Harrinagey and yet they can get to every lamp post in the borough within hours of our placards and leaflets. They left all the commercial fly-posting and the New Labour leaflets that are rotting borough story which the people can run and read."

"With fewer than nine thousand votes in a Labour stronghold, out of a 64,000 strong electorate, if this is repeated across the country, New Labour is in deep trouble."
**Socialist Outlook**

**Trade unions left is key to halting the decline**

**Alan Thornett**

The left did well in some of this year’s trade union conferences. In Thurrock, the vote was won for a ballot over performance related pay (PRP). In the Birmingham union CWU the left defeated the attack on the pension fund and the firing of the Labour of the Party. The civil service union PCS at its conference instructed the NEC to launch a full campaign on national pay bargaining and launch a campaign against privatization.

And the left has done well in some of the elections as well. Dave Rix ousted Adams in the NEC elections. The union ASLEF Greg Tucker got a good vote against Jimmy Knapp for general secretary last year in the main line battles. Roger Banner policed well for general secretary of British Airways, the public sector union UNISON.

In smaller unions such as FBU, RMT, ASLEF, the Bakers’ Union, the NUJ and the NUM the left has remained relatively strong. The Fire Brigades Union have had a number of strikes (Issex for example) and strike ballots. Despite these positive developments, however, winning in the short term means not running into problems in the first place, to carry them out is another matter. The NUT NEC has sent a set aside conference policy (both NUT and NASUWT) to its members without a demagogic defeat as a result.

And the widely-held view on the left that higher levels of trade union struggle could not be sustained without the Labour Party to elect to have not happened. In fact the situation is now worse.

UNISON’s formation in 1995.

**UNISON leaders win vote to continue with hunt**

Fred Lott of UNISON Treasury (in a personal capacity)

At what could be UNISON’s last conference before the next general election, the NEC took a very open approach to the organisation of the PRP. This was opposed by NEC chairman, UNISON Unison’s Roger Banner policed well for general secretary of British Airways, the public sector union UNISON.

In smaller unions such as FBU, RMT, ASLEF, the Bakers’ Union, the NUJ and the NUM the left has remained relatively strong. The Fire Brigades Union have had a number of strikes (Issex for example) and strike ballots. Despite these positive developments, however, winning in the short term means not running into problems in the first place, to carry them out is another matter. The NUT NEC has sent a set aside conference policy (both NUT and NASUWT) to its members without a demagogic defeat as a result.

And the widely-held view on the left that higher levels of trade union struggle could not be sustained without the Labour Party to elect to have not happened. In fact the situation is now worse.

UNISON’s formation in 1995.

The first major debate was around a composite, which expressed concern over the guidelines on internal democracy. The NEC Conference Committee allowed a wrecking amendment on the agenda, and the debate went on for hours.

Unfortunately, this amendment was eventually adopted with a third of the conference voting against.

The attacks on democracy and expulsion of left activists by the leadership mobilised a wide layer of delegates to attend meeting on the Tuesday night. 400 delegates heard SWP member Yvonne Balch of Socialist Youth, Geoff Martin of London UNISON, NEC member and CFPU supporter Roger Banner, and Liz Davies, member of the Labour Party NEC.

It was reported that no UNISON member on the Labour Party NEC has submitted resolutions critical of the government or voted for those in UNISON’s own agenda, to produce a manifesto for public services in the run-up to the general election, and branch plans to take action against privatization.

Unfortunately, conference rejected a call for the union to organise nationally co-ordinated national action against the government’s national attacks. In a rare victory, a motion from Nottingham City was adopted calling for renationalization of the public utilities with compensation on national terms.

In a resolution initiated by the NEC, conference called for the raising of the higher rate of tax to 33% and levying a “ Tobin” tax on currency trading. The Living Wage, (a minimum wage at half male median earnings), will require a high priority for UNISON, with “national and regional public mobilisations” calls for a national demonstration and a lobby of the Labour Conference were lost.

For the third year running, a debate on a rule change for the union that would have stopped the NEC from taking on new sections.

For the third year running, a debate on a rule change for the union that would have stopped the NEC from taking on new sections.

### Losers

**UNISON leaders upholding Millbank’s line have been stuck with US anti-worker policies:**

Blair’s UNISON leaders upholding Millbank’s line have been stuck with US anti-worker policies.

**But the problem is not just industrial relations:**

But the problem is not just industrial relations but national, national, it is political.

It is rooted in the global evolution of the TUC and the leaders of the main unions since the defeats of the 1980s (in which they also played a decisive role), and the relationship they have now forged with new Labour in office.

After the defeats of the 80s the union leadership capitulated on either the anti-polls tax revolt or the upsurge of anger against the New of Tory closures in the mid-90s.

Sneaking the resistance, there is now a small but important potential for consequences.

In the context of real, there is, unless key opportunities like these are grasped and exploited, it is very difficult to make the breakthrough needed.

But the problem is not just industrial relations but national, national, it is political.

It is rooted in the global evolution of the TUC and the leaders of the main unions since the defeats of the 1980s (in which they also played a decisive role), and the relationship they have now forged with new Labour in office.

After the defeats of the 80s the union leadership capitulated on either the anti-polls tax revolt or the upsurge of anger against the New of Tory closures in the mid-90s.

Sneaking the resistance, there is now a small but important potential for consequences.

In the context of real, there is, unless key opportunities like these are grasped and exploited, it is very difficult to make the breakthrough needed.
Rail unions, especially RMT have waged battles - some, but not all have been successful

The wage battle continues. As the strikes listed above a range of other localised disputes took place such as the recent occupation at Kværner on Clydebank, there has been resistance to PFI at UCH hospital in central London, and various disputes on the railways, including the recent strikes in defence of Sarah Friday. They did not, however, stop the situation from deteriorating.

This month, Labour's Executive actually came into force, leaving the main bulk of Tory anti-unions laws in place.

New Labour has promised to change some laws, to shake up, and suffer the consequences of its own actions. In particular, it is targeting the unions, which it sees as the heart of the old Labour movement. As a result, the new unions are no longer as united and are facing a new challenge from the trade union leaders. However, the government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.

The government is determined to change the situation.
Is Labour set to privatisate more health care?

John Lister

NO SOONER had the cur- tains come down on the govern- ment’s jaunty jamboree of “consultation” on the future of the NHS than health workers began raising the expected two-fingered salute at the views of health workers and Labour’s core supporters. First came the conscious leaking of proposals to increase the use of private hospitals and nursing home beds by the NHS. The next shot, the nurses, doctors and other profes- sional staff at private hospitals said they would not take unilateral action and, in all seriousness, the NHS would be made to look a laughing stock. Rather than do what most people want, and restore and develop the NHS, he seeks the answers elsewhere.

The impact of draining more cash from the limited budgets of NHS hospitals into the coffers of the profit-oriented private sector is obvious. By 1990, more vital staff would be poached from front-line NHS Trusts, creating an even sharper cri- sis on the wards and in hard- pressed Accident Units.

Widening gaps

The lack of qualified staff would widen the gap in NHS provision. And NHS Trusts that fail would face greater financial penalties and loss of even more work to the private sector. A vicious cycle would be established.

But the position is also being worsened by the wave of new hospital companies formed under Milburn’s privatisation bill that is now estab- lished in the Private Finance Initiative. This not only funnels tens of millions of NHS cash into the pockets of private sector share-owners, but it also diverts driving through a massive reduction in provision of NHS hospital beds.

If the New Labour scheme is carried through, a large slice of Gordon Brown’s extra cash for the NHS will be poured straight through to private hospitals and nursing homes to treat a growing share of elective (waiting list) cases.

posing to resolve the shortfall of up to 4,000 acute beds as identified in the deeply flawed and blinkered Green Paper. For instance, the most overtly harmful proposal of the private nursing home chains to expand in areas where hospitals are under the greatest pressure.

The vast majority of the “intermediate” beds referred to in the Inquiry report are nursing home beds, all of them owned and run by the private sector – almost all of them.

Any increased reliance on these nursing home places as a way to speed the discharge of older patients from hospi- tal beds would run into seri- ous problems.

No one should be obliged to put their financial security at risk, even more NHS money into the pockets of private sector investors, but the policy would depend upon the three possible solutions pro-

WHO comes out against market reforms

John Lister

THE WHO World Health Organisation Report 2000 hit the headlines in Britain with its controversial “rank- ing” system of health care systems, in which only the US’s National Health service came 15th. There are grounds to ques- tion the basis of a compari- son which puts the univer- sally admired and egalitarian Canadian health care system (ranked 59th) well below Britain, and two places lower on the scale than the universally reviled US system.

Pressured recently in the US squander 14% of the country’s gigantic national health bill, but leaves a massive 40 million Americans with no health insurance and means that family illness is the biggest single threat to US life expectancy. The WHO report began by saying that “there should be higher share of national wealth on health care than the British government.”

The argument that “in frag- mented systems it is not the number of pools and pool- chasers that matters, but that many of them are too small.”

If the Thatchersite logic is pursued, its ultimate end is a system of “health” treatment is being reduced by introducing competition between different insurance schemes.

It argues that “in frag- mented systems it is not the number of pools and pool- chasers that matters, but that many of them are too small.”

WHO “maximises people’s exposure to financial risk and to catastrophic health losses”. (p55)

Attempts to hold down health spending by rationing care inevitably run into serious political problems, and depend on “the acceptance and support of the general public”.

As Labour ministers are dis- covering with their efforts to ration the use of beta-inter- feron (see this page) this level of acceptance is hard to obtain.

The new Labour scheme is carried through, large slice of Gordon Brown’s extra cash for the NHS will be straight through to private hospitals – in contracts to treat a growing share of elective (waiting list) cases.

WHO comes out against market reforms

John Lister

THE RECENT World Health Organisation Report 2000 hit the headlines in Britain with its controversial “rank- ing” system of health care systems, in which only the US’s National Health service came 15th. There are grounds to ques- tion the basis of a compari- son which puts the univer- sally admired and egalitarian Canadian health care system (ranked 59th) well below Britain, and two places lower on the scale than the universally reviled US system.

Pressured recently in the US squander 14% of the country’s gigantic national health bill, but leaves a massive 40 million Americans with no health insurance and means that family illness is the biggest single threat to US life expectancy. The WHO report began by saying that “there should be higher share of national wealth on health care than the British government.”

The argument that “in frag- mented systems it is not the number of pools and pool- chasers that matters, but that many of them are too small.”

If the Thatchersite logic is pursued, its ultimate end is a system of “health” treatment is being reduced by introducing competition between different insurance schemes.

It argues that “in frag- mented systems it is not the number of pools and pool- chasers that matters, but that many of them are too small.”

WHO “maximises people’s exposure to financial risk and to catastrophic health losses”. (p55)

Attempts to hold down health spending by rationing care inevitably run into serious political problems, and depend on “the acceptance and support of the general public”.

As Labour ministers are dis- discovering with their efforts to ration the use of beta-inter- feron (see this page) this level of acceptance is hard to obtain.

The new Labour scheme is carried through, large slice of Gordon Brown’s extra cash for the NHS will be straight through to private hospitals – in contracts to treat a growing share of elective (waiting list) cases.

WHO comes out against market reforms

John Lister

WHO comes out against market reforms

John Lister

WHO comes out against market reforms

John Lister
One year on: the highs and lows of the Scottish Parliament

High points

May 6 1999 - Parliamentary Elections held under formal PR proportional representation, an overall majority. Tommy Sheridan SSP, Ross Harper, Greens and Dennis Canavan, Independent, elected.

May 13 1999 - Parliament reconvened after gap since 1956. Tommy Sheridan's controversial defenestration to "Her Majesty's Heirs and Accessories" printed worldwide.

Tuition Fees and Student Grants: Commission of Enquiry set up and recommended abolition of college fees, and introduction of type of Graduate Tax, also reintroduction limited form of Grants. Government decided to abolish fees for students but set level at which as students pay Graduate tax at £1,000 per annum not £250,000 as recommended. This is still a matter of political divide and figure could be revised.

Warrant Sales. The Parliament allows each member to raise two Bills each session. The first member's Bill to be presented, to complete committee and be voted on by the Parliament was Tommy Sheridan's bill about sales and signings. This is of enormous significance as 28,000 signings were carried out on the poor last year in Scotland. It has long been seen as a form of intimidation of the poor and gives rise to loan sharks and racketeering. The executive opposed abolition but a back bench revolt by Labour MSPs forced a climbdown. It was widely reported as the day the Parliament found its own voice.

Section 28 (2A). Labour attempted to carry out its manifesto commitment to repeal Section 28A preventing local Authorities promoting homosexuality. The Bill to repeal met opposition from some reactionaries on its back bench as well as the Church. Most serious opposition came from Brian Souter of Segasco who organised a referendum on the issue. Souter who was a major funder of the SNP forced withdrawals in the SNP leadership and a few amendments in the statutory guidance. The measure to repeal been passed and went on 21 June 2000 the reactionary legislation - Section 28A was repealed in Scotland.

Parliamentary Committees. Every MSP is on at least one parliamentary committee. Tommy Sheridan is on the Equal Opportunities committee.

Although the effectiveness of these committees are the biggest expansion of democracy instigated by the parliament. Any organisation can make representations to the Parliament and in the media. Issues under discussion, the campaign organisations are invited to attend and present their case. The Minister's response and their responses recorded in the parliamentary record available on the Internet.

During evidence taking, each of the 3 or 4 committees has interviewed 3 or 4 organisations a week - sometimes for 1 to 2 hours. Committees are not part of the executive and are designed to call it to account; they can initiate legislation themselves. (See Stock Transfer)

Low Points of Parliament

May 19 1999 - Lib Dems included in coalition executive. Accused of sell out over Tuition Fees in return for Government support.

PR: wrangles between Labour first past post MSPS and list MSPs over level of expenses. This was part of an overall reaction against PR.

First past post MSPs in Labour had fought internal election and public election, and resent the top up list candidate. It eventually agreed all MSPs should pay same expenses and salaries. Westminster MPs are now complaining about MSPs passing constituency complaints - they feel undervalued.

Site of Parliament. There was a clash between the executive and parliament over the site of Parliament and the proposed new building. The traditional site of the Royal High School which had temporarily housed the parliament to 1707 was rejected by Donald Dewar as a Nationalist shibboleth. The new site at Holyrood is running years late with costs spiralling. Executive members complain they didn't enter politics to run building contracts.

“"The structures of the parliament are much better than Westminster”

Gordon Morgan for Socialist Outlook talked to Scottish Socialist Party MSP Tommy Sheridan about his assessment of the Scottish Parliament over the last year

SO: How well has the Scottish Parliament lived up to your expectations?

TS: It has brought decision making in the areas within its powers, including matters affecting health, housing and education, under democratic scrutiny. This is a major advance.

People are more conscious of decisions being made in these areas, decision making is under the microscope and MSPs can be made accountable.

Previously the Secretary of State for Scotland would take decisions by dictat and no one could influence them. This is a positive democratic advance.

As expected, in some areas - like Social Security, Tax and Finance, the Parliament does not have delegated powers. Although, we know that before the Parliament was set up, it restricts what can be done. We keep pushing this fact and make the case for more powers. The SSP is in favour of Independence and seeks additional powers for the Parliament.

SO: What are the obstacles to introducing progressive social measures?

TS: The biggest obstacle is the absence of powers over the economy, finance, social services, employment legislation. These are barriers which force us to fight over a slice of the cake rather than directly fight to expand the public sector.

The other obstacle is the centre ground consensus adopted by the main parties, that is all parties accept in the main the existing social and economic conditions.

This is a major problem as it means progressive social measures must be introduced against the wishes of these party machines.

Warrant Sales was a clear example where the SNP had supported repeal and Labour conferences for many years had stood immobile in its opposition to continuing warrant sales. Yet in Parliament Labour and Liberals leaders and the Executive as a whole fought against repeal.

That position could have held had only the SNP opposed, however, because of the SSP's long struggle on this issue particularly around the Poll Tax, Labour backbenchers felt threatened in their heartlands.

Because parties like the SSP were able to campaign outside parliament individual MSPs knew they were split. They could not hold the line without paying a price. This led to the PLP revolt and the vote to repeal Warrant Sales. This campaign shows how the political obstacles can be overcome.

SO: Has having the Parliament assisted the Left in general and the SSP in particular?

TS: Yes. The PR system has enabled minority parties to make a breakthrough. The SSP has made advances and will be much stronger entering the next session of parliament.

Despite the fact that Labour in Scotland is no different from Labour at Westminster, the context of political debate is different.

The centre of gravity is further left than at Westminster. In Westminster Labour is under attack from Hague to their right. Although the SNP has moved to the right, they still present themselves as to the left of New Labour.

Thus Labour in Hollywood is under attack from the Left. This has forced them to adopt a more traditional left profile than New Labour in England. Some Labour MSPs like John McAllion openly criticise the executive from the Left, not the Right.

This affects the mindset of each Labour MSP. It has opened doors more and created a climate for left politics to get a hearing.
What of England if Britain is broken up?

David Coen reviews After Britain: New Labour and the Return of Scotland, by Tom Nairn (Granta Books 2000)

"NO SURRENDER to the IRA was the rallying cry of patriotic England fans, assailed on all sides by foreigners and particularists in Britain and Europe. Under the banners of the Union Jack and the Cross of St George they fought and fell, often dead drunk, in the bars and squares of Brussels. The country for which they made a last desperate stand was hard to figure out. For them "English" meant British. The battle cries on the streets outside were matched inside the stadiums at "true" football supporters roared out Rule Britannia alongside God Save the Queen. The weighty burden of preserving Britain fell apparently to the English football teams.

Tom Nairn, who in 1977 published "The Break-up of Britain", returns to this theme in "After Britain". He sees his critique of Blair's tepid take radicalism in the context of the end of the Cold War and the growing momentum towards western European Union.

Now living in Roscommon in the west of Ireland, Nairn sees the 1998 Stormont Agreement as "a managed breakdown of the former United Kingdom." He doubts the durability of the "Peace Process".

Blair's constitutional radicalism was just rhetoric: he never seriously challenged the "unstormed anarchomachy of the state" but instead capitulated to the backward looking Britishness espoused by the Unionists and their Irish kin.

Accordingly, England, Scotland and Wales need to be "liberated from Britain", freed from the dead hand of Edwardianism and its "backward looking core: Monarchy, imperial Security and uncritical nationalism".

In spite of the 30-year war in Ireland Nairn claims the "deceitful step... in unmaking the United Kingdom and establishing a different relationship with the Scots".

**Incorporated**

The Scottish state was incorporated rather than destroyed by the 1707 Act of Union. The Treaty of Union was an agreement between equal states rather than the elimination of the Scottish state, and a "stalled people could not forge itself". This devolution/independence is not an episode of anti-colonial struggle but the "recovery of collective will by an already constituted nation...".

The new "civic nationalism" which will emerge from the re-making of the Scottish state and nation will apparently offer a model for the resolution of other regional and national differences in the European Union.

Nairn has long since abandoned Marxism, and is critical of the British Labour Party both for its attempts to bind the crumbling state together and its more recent failure to modernise it. Citing its failure to reform the House of Lords and in creating populist royalism around the death of Diana Spencer, he argues New Labour's grand rhetorical claims of unity attempt to disguise its spineless fate to act.

Its fake solution is "corporate populism" in which "its apparatus of consumers and stakeholders' mimics democracy, substituting brand loyalty and ordinairiness for hope and glory". From this flows its authoritarian and centralising instincts; the more Britain appears to fragment and disintegrate, the more desperately do the Blairites demand conformity, discipline and centralisation within New Labour and without.

Nairn considers that this ultimately doomed attempt to hang on to the British ancient regime represses the voice of the country "which has not spoken yet", England.

Devolution poses the question of England. For Nairn "there is no available formula for post-British England" and here we get a glimpse of the beastie that haunts the edges of his nightmares for it is none other than the "uncertain and uncontrollable... English nationalism" expressed as Euro-scepticism: the "conjunction of neo-liberalism and Britain's great power past".

The possibility that "popular heartland resentment as decline and loss further aggravaed by failure or marginalisation" could lead to unthinkable political developments must be headed off by timely constitutional reform.

**Modern national identity**

The reason for Scotland's importance in unmaking Britain is that it apparently offers a vision of a modern national identity "within the prevailing temper of a European political situation".

This new-found national identity however is not one "untainted" by the anti-colonial struggles: "it has been civic demands and action which have brought about the return of the Scottish parliament - an ethno-national assertion associated with violence exclusion or discrimination".

While there are dangers of an upsurge in anti-English ethnic nationalism, Scottish nationalism is more "modern" and outward looking.

Nairn has great faith in a written constitution to provide legitimation for the new state instead of the "pre-democratic" 1998 Scotland Act or the unwritten, monarchical constitution of Britain. He quotes a declaration by Vlaad Havli: "Union must turn to the written word".

This belief in the written Word has parallels in the fundamentalist Christianity which surely also forms part of Scotland's "identity". The Havel quotation identifies Nairn with those East European writers who felt that their literary assaults on Stalinism were vindicated by its collapse in 1989. In the end, this is idealism: the Word or the Constitution are always subject to interpretation, and their meanings reflect the prevailing relations of power.

Nairn's preference for civic action and his not well concealed anti-statism place him more in the tradition of liberal thinkers such as his Scottish antecedent Adam Smith, who created classical political economy from his observation of simple commodity production.

He is therefore closer to the neo-liberals he criticises (and indeed to Tony Blair) than perhaps he imagines. True free marketers are not opposed to European Union per se: they oppose state intervention against the interests of capital. Nairn's "European polity" with its written legal codes and appearance of openness is created, like the nation states which he believes it is replacing, by the concentration of west European capital as a more useful weapon in the battle for global markets.

Well-meaning explanations of the EU are an attempt to avoid a repeat of the two ruinous wars or as the production of a process of modernisation brought about by greater travel and communication between countries obscured by a basic fact. For all its faults, after Britain raises several key questions for socialists.

The British left is very suspicious (rightly) of Union Jack-earning British nationalism. At the same time, this has led it to concede patriotism to the right, even if their efforts to mobilize around it have been laughable. John Major's nostalgia for an England of "elderly maidsen cycling to matins" and "warm beer" certainly wouldn't ring a bell with Brixton.

Series - if the species still exists. Blair's "re-branded" modern, post imperial Cool Britannia combined with the Millennium Dome. And then there are the football fans who seem to have no language to support their team other than the symbols and anthems of empire.

**Divisions and false unity**

The left variant of all embracing Britishness is to denounce national formations within the British state on the grounds that these divide the working class.

Thus, having British-based unions organise in Ireland was defended on the basis that they represented a degree of working class unity, which only sectarianism would seek to break, when on the contrary, they represented not an equal and voluntary alliance of workers but a subordination of workers to different nations within the British state.

To return to Nairn's enthusiasm for the redemption of Britishness in the Stormont Agreement and the proposal to set up a Council of the Isles, this is something which we might agree on the principle, the fact is that the Council of the Isles is not based on the freely given demands on the part of the Irish within the British State (and outside) but is imposed by the British as part of the attempt to stabilise the Northern Ireland State which it imposed on Ireland by force in 1921.

Related to this is the question of whether the left favours the break-up of the British State. Clearly the "backwash" of the Irish ruling class in particular would be weakened by such a development even if in the short run it sowed illusions in nationalist capital among the working class.

The demand for separation can be exaggerated: is it the case that working class Scots are voting for the SNP because they have any illusions in them? More likely it is because of Blair's openly Thatcherite policies.

**Liberals transnationals**

And then there is the SNP itself: the left think the EU is the only practical option for progressive politics if the choice is between the narrow bigotry of domestic capital and the apparently more liberal transnational variety.

Nairn himself is in this category, as are many trade union leaders. The problem with this argument is that big EU corporate capitalism feels no need to make concessions - and the outcome will be a trade union bureaucracy further tied in to the Euro ruling class. Calling for a united socialist Europe while building links with workers organisations in Europe would be much preferable to neo-liberalism in its localist or pan European versions.

Finally, Nairn is wrong in believing that Scotland will be the catalyst for change in the British state. "Civic nationalism" as far too compromised to challenge the oldest imperial state of the bunch.

Only the mass action which has occasioned occurred in Ireland over the past 30 years can accomplish the task. To quote Bernardette McAliskey - who borrowed the phrase from somewhere: "Freedom only comes if you take it".
Row over Scottish council housing sell-off

Gordon Morgan

The FIRST serious split in a Scottish Parliamentary committee has occurred over the issue of Housing Stock Transfer. On 21st June the SNP members of the committee walked out, and are threatening a minority report.

The Housing and Social Inclusion Committee of the parliament has been considering the issue of housing stock transfer since September 1999. Literally thousands of pages of evidence have been presented, most of it critical of the Executive’s proposals to support the transfer of all council housing stock to Housing Associations, and to extend tenants’ rights to buy to Housing Associations.

The committee comprised Labour, SNP, Tory and Liberal MSPs, and a consensus report had been agreed at the previous meeting. A report has to be produced by July 3. The Labour chair of the committee presented over 70 amendments, which the SNP claim were designed to remove the Government’s executive and also did not endorse some of the evidence presented.

The Labour MSP John McMillan remained in the committee. However, he has previously publicly threatened to lead a revolt against extending the right to buy, and is vehemently critical of stock transfers which have directly led to good stock being demolished in his Dundee constituency. His stance will be critical over the coming weeks.

The SNP also adopted a no-confidence motion in the general has been critical of all SNP and PPP schemes.

Following the Scottish Executive, the minister for Communities appeared to endorse the plan, whilst introducing new complications. She wanted to bring the stock under control of Community Housing Associations and extending the right to buy. The issue of whether the debt would in fact be taken over has also been left open.

The campaign against

The scheme as currently proposed appears unviable. The proposal to fund £1,500 million investment over 20 years by borrowing against rents might just be attractive to investors over a 30 year period. But it becomes too risky if right to buy is extended to new tenants, and still less if the stock is split over many housing associations.

Around 25,000 dwellings are multisets which would have no value at the end of 30 years and cannot justify investment, so they will be scheduled for demolition by private finance.

The unions estimate that if the council retained the stock it would save £200 million in VAT on repairs and over £400 million in management and additional interest costs.

If the Scottish Executive paid the interest and service on the existing debt – £120 million per annum – the stock could be brought up to standard within 10 years with no further borrowing.

With the proposed scheme, after 10 years debts of over a further £500 million would have arisen. This could only be paid off by increasing rents.

A vigorous correspondence in the Herald has effectively won the argument at an early stage. Most unions and even the UNISON

Scottish council housing sell-off

Massive debts

Glasgow council housing has debts of £800 million, the highest rents in the country and some of the poorest condition stock. It is estimated it will cost over £100 million to bring the stock up to standard.

Due to Tory legislation, not yet recessed, the council is unable to invest in the stock. Other councils such as Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen are in similar, though less extreme, positions.

A campaign has run for years for the debt to be transferred to central government. Labour, however, insisted after taking power at Westminster that this would breach Public Sector Borrowing Requirement guidelines, and undermine Gordon Brown’s reputation for financial prudence.

The counter argument – that under EIRF rules as applied throughout Europe tax opposed to arbitrary PSBR rules housing investment does not count against government borrowing and has never been acknowledged by the government or Scottish Executive.

Labour decided a year before the Scottish elections to transfer the housing stock to a separately managed Glasgow Housing Association, in return for the debt being transferred to the Scottish Parliament. This would allow the Association to borrow the funds required.

Several million was spent on consultants’ reports, which were in turn summarised by trade union-sponsored consultants. After months of debate the unions and the STUC came out in opposition to stock transfer.

The SNP also adopted a no-confidence motion in the
Tramble and the myth of moderate unionism

John North

The hidden centre-piece of the Good Friday agreement is Unionist leader David Trimble.

The agreement has the enthusiastic support of Irish capitalism, and Sinn Fein offer firm support as junior partners, but it is not they who serve as the base of British rule, it is the right-wing unionists. And it is right-wing unionism that the Irish settlement still faces serious threats.

The weakness of the British strategy is that it assumes a 50% “moderate unionism” base. Yet at every test this majority crumbles.

Even the massive British pressure, David Trimble only just survived a challenge to his leadership from the far right.

The minority for a resumption of the Stormont executive was even more humiliatingly close, even when the unionist parties were a section of changes which might be painful but that even the limiting of the Patten commission to changing the local security police, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, would be honoured.

They were also given private assurance that the Union Jack, long a local symbol of sectarian domination, would be in Ireland, but as the official flag of the state.

Downhill

This小說 was a lot worse than the others.

Unionist group leader Tony Blair supported Lady Hughes who was decisively defeated in a unionist selection meeting in North Down. David Burnsilde, ultra-right reactionary and former leader figure in British Airways, has won the South Antrim selection.

On the ground the UFF has been moving away from the agreement, and giving background support to the LVF in its shoot- ing war with the UFF. This has escalated into a war between the UDA and LVF. Where each side claims a loyalist area as its own.

The UDA has been winning the battle for support and its faults—there is now an LVF presence in the UDA. The LVF has been issuing blood-curdling threats to re- launch the random sectarian killing of Catholic workers.

Worst of all was the fate of efforts by the British and Trimble to resolve the Drumcree issue. The idea was that the Orange Order would speak to the commission. Up until now they have spoken to no one, insisting on their unalienated sectarian privilege to walk where they like and intimidate the local Catholics.

Speaking to the commission directly, rather than through their legal representatives, would establish their moderation and win them swift passage. Unfortunately for Trimble the separatists not only threw out the proposal, they also kicked out the small group of grandads who had suggested the “conciliation”.

The Orange right are now gearing up for war at Drumcree. It’s Catch-22 for Trimble. If the far right wins, he’s finished—but it is also hard to see how the Trimble minority could survive the infighting that would follow defeat.

In a desperate attempt a survival he recently launched a new group, “Reunion” in the hope of recruiting more representatives of the Unionist bourgeois party. “Britishness” of the North

It’s not only Trimble and the British that have a problem. The strategy of the Dublin capitalists is to support Trimble and save the agreement. To that end they acquiesced to the changes in the Patten report and secret concessions on flags and emblems that effectively ripped up the Good Friday Agreement.

Brian Cowan, the Dublin Foreign Affairs minister, signalled this immediately after the re-establishment of Stormont by saying that it was unacceptable to expect changes in the “Britishness” of the North and that not even every section could expect to get what they wanted in the Drumcree bill.

Drumcree will be another test for the Trimble unionism.

More even interesting were the signals sent out by Sinn Fein. They could not “approve” nationalists to join the new RUC, said Gerry Adams. In other words they saw the Good Friday agreement disappear before their eyes, but instead of walking away they agreed to become the loyal opposition, lobbyist- ing the British for some concessions in their favour.

Trimble “moderation”

One sort of difficulty is based on the pressure on the Trimble wing of unionism. A much more fundamental problem is posed by the fact that there is no “moderate” wing to unionism.

It is after all Trimble who convinced the British that even the vacuous Patten workers movement to such an extent that would have to be effectively reversed. It is the Trimble wing that would have delivered a triumphant march at Drumcree. It was the Trimble wing that stymied Sinn Fein in recent Mayoral election in Belfast by blocking from Stormont to vote for the Deputy-archbishop Sammy Wilson.

The British are finding a policy based on unionist moderation uncomfortable. Nor is Irish capital at all comfortable with the situation.

But Gerry Kelly, struck from behind by an RUC baton as they force yet another Orange march through nationalist areas, can stand as a metaphor for Sinn Fein in finding it most uncomfortable of all.

A new left voice in the Dail

Joe Craig

Irishmen asked the new left wing voice in the Dail after the election for the local Workers and Unemployed Action Group in the Tipperary South section.

Headily topped the poll after nearly doubling his share of the vote from the 1997 general election. Like Faun Fianna Fail vote underwent an unprecedented collapse with the worst by-election result for the party in the history of the state, and one of its leaders was forced to confess that the fall by 15% was “courageous”. Craig had been at the core of the campaign by the Labour Party but was voted in, and the vote took place too late for any scandal to have shaken the south’s establishment.

The bestial arena is really the sting in the tail of events going back to 1996 when a working class woman was killed by a well connected architect, Philip Steady, while the latter was drunk and driving at high speed, showing lack of care that was extraordinary. He was sentenced to years in jail but even one judge, Cyril Kelly, attempting to get the trial judge to realise that Steady was a “graduate from a good family” and would be in a position to compensate the dead wife’s family.

Review

A year later a solicitor- uncovered phone call from a senior court official telling him that judge Kelly was waiting to review the case (although only the original trial judge was supposed to be able to do this) and asking when an application for review going to be made.

This intervention was made after Steady’s sister apparently bumped into a Supreme Court judge, High Court justice John Steady, at the street and asked him anything could be done about the case. O’Flaherty told the court official to get the case raised — and sure enough it came before judge Cyril Kelly, who fined Steady in proceedings lasting only a few moments, in which no submissions were made by any lawyer, and while the only state solicitors at the court was on a phone call.

As soon as Steady appeared in court the judge expressed concern for his mental health on the basis of a psychological report that didn’t exist, and which Kelly subsequently tried to add to the file. When the shit hit the fan, a judicial inquiry into the affair was set up — but it unexpectedly failed to get to the bottom of it, and failed in particular to reveal collusion between Kelly and O’Flaherty. Kelly refused to answer questions from the Dail about the affair and resigned rather than face the impeachment proceedings that William Dobson formed the government.

It might have joined the ranks of all the other scandals that have hit the headlines but for the fact that Fianna Fail, which 12 months earlier had threatened to impeach him, revisited O’Flaherty to the €174,000 a year post of vice- president of the European Investment Bank.

Having failed to explain his behaviour, his politicians among government ministers claimed his intervention was prompted by purely humanitarian motives. Unfortunately the tidal wave of public anger forced O’Flaherty into a radio interview where he explicitly rejected this but failed to explain the reasons.

Soon forget

Public anger was further inflamed when the Tanasoo, Mary Hanra, from the supposedly squeaky clean Progressive Democrat coalition partner, claimed the public would forget about all in a matter of months.

There had been some grounds for this confidence. Until very recently opinion polls had not shown dramatic falls in the government’s popularity and even the most recent had not predicted the collapse that the by-elections had promised.

Commentators are now saying that the latest scan- dall is the last straw that will break the camel’s back and that any general election is on the way in the autumn.

Unfortunately the choices that will be before Irish work- ers at that election will be dire. There is no state wide left alternative as existed in Tipperary South, and the left victory there is the culmination of hard local work going back over fifteen years.

The Workers and Unemployed Action Group has seven representatives on local authorities but is a purely local phenomenon. There is nowhere else where the left has this implantation and only a few other consequences have a credible left candidates. A strategy of simply copying this victory is therefore not on. Not that this is a search for short cuts. There will be no alternative to patient work at local level, but a simple con- centration on this work would be a collapse into the worst sort of electoralism that would have severe effects on the poli- tics of any left force attempting such an approach.

Lead

This puts more responsibility on the new TD and the Socialist Party’s assisting TD, Joe Higgins, to take the lead in pressing a new way forward for the left.

The first task would be to build resistance to social part- nership that has shackled the workers’ requirements of Ireland’s Cactic Tiger economy. So for the Socialist Party have simply used Higgins as a means to build their own organisation, with limited results, but this is an evasion of responsibility. Whether the new TDs are up to the task of staking out a new way forward for the left is the question to be posed by all socialists in Ireland today.
Grim choices for Syria’s new regime

Roland Rance

The sudden death of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad has left the Syrian regime in disarray, and strengthens Israel’s hand in the dangerous game being played between Syria and its Arab neighbors.

Whether this leads to a war, or to the imposition of a US-backed “peace” treaty depends largely on whether Bashar al-Assad can swiftly establish his authority in the first dynamic replies these sudden events, and on the arrogance of Israel’s trigger-happy generals.

In either case, the outcome is likely to bring little satisfaction to Syria’s population, struggling under poverty and authoritarianism.

Delay

The breakdown of the regime is demonstrated by the delay in announcing Assad’s death, the implications of which were being discussed by Israelis, and by the Syrian opposition, several days before it was officially confirmed.

During this time, preparatory steps were taken to extend the constitution to reduce the minimum age for a president (from 40, Bashar’s age) to 30, and to neutralize the opposition of Hafez al-Assad’s brother, the former Vice President Rifat al-Assad, in exile in Paris since 1984.

Although sudden, Assad’s death was not totally unexpected, and key players have already been hinting at a political position. Less than a month before, Mahmoud al-Zoobi, who had been prime minister for thirteen years until dismissed earlier this year in a power struggle with Bashar, died in mysterious circumstances.

TrickFragment

According to Syrian dissident sources, the real seat of power is the triumvirate of Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddad, Chief of Staff Mustafa Taha, and Foreign Minister Fawzi al-Sharaa, who see Bashar’s succession as the best way to maintain the regime.

The regime’s legacy is an impoverished state, tens of thousands of political prisoners, corrupt administration, and a cowed, divided, and demoralized opposition. Syria has few natural resources.

40% of the population are farmers, dependent on inadequate water, which is becoming increasingly polluted from oil refineries, and in short supply by the proposed Ilisu dam on the Euphrates in Turkey.

It is also becoming clear, while it is believed that huge sums from the oil refining industry are pocketed by the clique around Assad.

This is a situation which Israel will gleefully exploit. Most Israeli press reports welcome Assad’s death, recognising him as Israel’s only serious foe after the peace deals with Egypt and Jordan, the withdrawal from Lebanon, and the coexistence and neutralisation of Arafat and the PLO. “We shed no tears,” one of its popular daily Yedioth Ahuron.

Israel’s government, now rid of its “left” Meretz partners, can be expected to push for a favourable settlement of the conflict with Syria, and to continue its efforts at the peace process, despite all of his rhetoric, Barak has no intention of following the Golan Heights, occupied in 1967.

Expansion of the Qatari network in 2000, and the allocation of thousands of acres to agricultural settlements, and the approval of thousands of new homes for settlers, all indicate Israel’s intention to remain on the Golan.

The Golan in Syrian hands would pose no real military threat to Israel. Recent assessments that, if Israel were forced to withdraw, they would insist that Golan is not merely demilitarised, but also environmentally protected by the Syrian side, by a cordon of nuclear mines.

Israel is also demanding new high tech military equipment from the US, in one case, an offer of some 40 miles from Israel’s northern border.

Israeli leaders are clear about their intentions towards Syria. Two days after the withdrawal from Lebanon, deputy defence minister Ehud Sneh told Israel Radio: “The withdrawal from Lebanon is only a stage in the realization of the general plan, which is to use Israel’s military might to achieve its goals on the whole Syrian level with regard to Syria.”

“We stand now in one of the critical moments of the war with Syria, where the hatred towards Israel is stoked in its blood, and therefore it is endless help in weapons and armies to the Hezbollah.”

Yesterday a difficult and dangerous reality was created in the pull out (and the collapse of SLA), but this is only temporary, because it is only one phase of the war.

“Is it a situation which will be associated with the new future, (not immediately), not only with the aid of the international community, but by force – great force. The circuit in which we can use all our military might have not yet arisen.”

This clear threat has been repeatedly eloquently rephrased by other leading figures: either Bashar al-Assad voluntarily bore arms of the US and Israeli terms, or we will force him to do so.

Nobel prize

Many western commentators, including Syrian activists, hope and believe that Bashar will ease the authoritarian regime imposed by his father, reach a genuine agreement with Israel, and open Syria to western investment.

Clinton, hoping for a Nobel peace prize and desperate for a last foreign policy success before he steps down, will be pushing for such a solution.

But, even if Bashar was able and inclined to cooperate, this would be disastrous for Syria, whose fragile economy will be destroyed by western intervention.

Barak, meanwhile, in pawn to the religious parties, and with his military background ("the most decorated soldier in Israel’s history"), as his followers are fond of repeating), will see no reason to make any concessions.

The Syrian political and social regime, capable of mobilising the masses, the choice for Syria is either surrender, or war and defeat.

Sniping from the Left

By Charlie van Gelderen

Where does South Africa’s ANC government go for advice about the best way to privatise those assets in the economy that are still nationalised?

It sends Ian Phillips, a leading member of the South African Communist Party and special adviser to Patafleg lawyer Jeff Radebe, to China.

They want, says Comrade Phillips, to exchange ideas around the concept of restructuring "the state’s trading enterprises." They are also privatizing operations.

Still state controlled and now the subject of privatization projects are telecommunication and the energy sector. An announcement on phasing out is to be announced in a policy document soon.

Hooked on high prices

The UK’s largest pharmaceutical company, Norton Healthcare, has threatened to stop production rather than accept a 50% cut in Mithun’s price cap on generic drugs, is non-label drugs. The price of these rose sharply after Mithun instructed hospitals to switch from expensive brand name drugs to cheaper generic.

The Norton Healthcare boss is rather annoyed about this and probably regards it as a gross act of ingratitude.

He expected better of the government after donating £100,000 to Labour Party funds in 1999 and a further £10.000 to Frank Dobson’s London mayoral election campaign.

While on this subject, the drug giant SmithKline Beecham has withdrawn the Uribe vaccine in the UK due to its life threatening side effects.

The vaccine has been shown to be linked to meningitis. Their nobility is limitless, thinks Beecham is continuing to export the drug in Argentina, Chile, Haiti, Honduras, Lebanon, Malaysia and former Yugoslavia.

Hats off to Lord Roy?

Sniping from the Left is grateful to Roy Hattersley, who in his Guardian column exposed the deputy prime minister’s pro-Israeli pronouncements claim that “the values that motivate his party leader and his deputy prime minister are the same that motivated Tony Blair for the Gramcord nanomine it is.

Lord Hattersley, this column is being written just as Blair is preparing for Tony Blair’s visit to the occasion of the Queen Mother’s 100th birthday in July.

But Keir Hardie would have asked Roy Hattersley a question: "Is it there to earth are you doing in the House of Lords?"

Private reservations

If Gordon Brown and his fellow ministers are really concerned about the preferential entry from private schools to elite universities, why do they not do something about it? They could start by abolishing the charity status of schools like Eton or Harrow. Every year from now on, they will no longer have to abolish this system. Tony Blair approves this.

When the Victorian House of Commons sent a deputation to the Duke of York (later King George V), Keir Hardie asked them why the life of one Welsh miner is of greater commercial and moral value than the whole royal crown put together from the top of Gladstone grandmamma down...

Like Roy Hattersley, this column is being written just as Blair is preparing for Tony Blair’s visit to the occasion of the Queen Mother’s 100th birthday in July.

But Keir Hardie would have asked Roy Hattersley a question: "Is it there to earth are you doing in the House of Lords?"

Private reservations

If Gordon Brown and his fellow ministers are really concerned about the preferential entry from private schools to elite universities, why do they not do something about it? They could start by abolishing the charity status of schools like Eton or Harrow. Every year from now on, they will no longer have to abolish this system. Tony Blair approves this.

When the Victorian House of Commons sent a deputation to the Duke of York (later King George V), Keir Hardie asked them why the life of one Welsh miner is of greater commercial and moral value than the whole royal crown put together from the top of Gladstone grandmamma down...

Like Roy Hattersley, this column is being written just as Blair is preparing for Tony Blair’s visit to the occasion of the Queen Mother’s 100th birthday in July.

But Keir Hardie would have asked Roy Hattersley a question: "Is it there to earth are you doing in the House of Lords?"
SO: It seemed at the end of the cold war that the nuclear ques-
tion was not so important any-
more. What happened?

PB: There were positive develop-
ments: a new kind of movement emerged, a new threat, not just around arms control. Nuclear weapons were removed from 70,000-100,000 at the peak around 1986. Tactical nuclear weapons were removed from warships, even though this was not formalised by treaty. Three countries abandoned nuclear weapons: Bhutan, the Soviet Union, and Ukraine, while South Africa, Brazil and Argentina pulled back from threshold status. Two nuclear weapons free zones were set up: the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty of South East Asia and the treaty of Pelindaba in Africa. There were positive developments but in the last two or three years things have not gone to ground. You had a series of negative develop-
ments: in 1995 there was an indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, then there was the expansion of NATO, then of course the India/Pakistan tests. If there was to be one simple line answer as to why this has hap-
pened it is that after the end of the cold war, in the game of nations, the US is the dominant power, which is the unrivalled dominant power. What you now have in the US is the repetition of the kind of aggressive unilateralist, isolationist approach that the US took during the 70s and 80s. The top dog and nobody else can rival us. To justify the retention of nuclear weapons for the US and all the other arms in all sorts of rogue states. Not only the US, apart from the US senate non-ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) which is the whole question of the National Ballistic Missile Defence. This goes back to the cold war and we want to us the United States of America safe in this particular way and we're going to go ahead - we don't care what other countries want whether it's Russia or the Chinese or anybody else. Behind this is a deeper dimension of trying to control space - the United States is now dominant and pretty sure of dominance for the future - and space is also a domain that it wants to move towards, with the tests - we can't derive a kind of political perspective I think is driv-
ing the situation.

SO: There is some debate about how much the alienation of the people's tests came out of a continuity of linear thinking and how much they represented a rupture. Your book details the slow evolution of a new situation. The new context of which the rupture was part is a gamble because the tests as only have happened under a BJP government? Are there things intrinsically linked?

PB: The NAPM, together with many other organisations, organised a three month march from Pokharan - the village near where the test site was - to a place of Bohri Kalan - to the north of Jodhpur - a distance of 1000 miles away in the east of India. Every day there were people marching - sometimes 20 some-
times 200 - for three months - and that gives you an indication of the kind of movement. This autumn we will have a national convention at
which 80-100 groups will be represented — a more organised opposition is beginning to stir. There are two different types of groups involved in the Indian movement: there are those that have a specific focus against nuclear weapons and also against nuclear energy — many of the groups which are against nuclear energy see grassroots movements concerned with the victims of radiation exposure to uranium mining in central India.

Like everywhere else all over the world when you are talking about uranium mining it's always the indigenous people whether its Australia with the aborigines, whether it's the United States of America and native Americans or whether it's the tribals in India — they are the ones that are affected. It's their areas where the mining takes place — these are the areas where the radiation kills happen so this in one type of group.

What we are trying to do is move towards a national network of all types of groups — and this is a significant development. We should be realistic and realise that at this stage we will be cant alter government policies on the nuclear question — instead we are thinking of the legitimisation of those policies by the government. When we become bigger and stronger then we will have to be able to move on and challenge the basis of the policies themselves.

We've seen much more opposition and I would say that a very large proportion of people in the liberal intelligentsia are opposed to the tests. So Arundhati Roy, Bhattacharyya, Rakeshwar Sharma wrote a very good powerful peace

AV: You have to understand the motivation of crossing the nuclear threshold. In the book we argue that this lacked any strategic rationale. India's strategic environment had not deteriorated — it faced no threat to its own survival necessitating a radical change in its defence posture leaving alone the embrace of nuclear deterrence.

It was essentially a search for glory and prestige — however false and flimsy that prestige might be at the international level with the acquisition of the capability to kill millions of people at one time.

Then you have a whole other series of groups focused on different issues — women's issues, civil liberties issues, development issues which also see the importance of taking on the nuclear issue in their own particular way.

US policy is geared to expansion of markets in China on "The Bomb and I". Behind the BJP's nuclear nationalism and nuclear obsession is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) which is an organisation going back to the 1920s and is, basically, a totally and overtly fascist make-up. Its leaders are self-confessed admirers of Hitler and Himmler and of authoritarianism as a political ideology. The RSS controls the BJP ideologically, organisationally and in terms of its political agenda. The RSS's slogan has been "unite the Hindus and militarise Hindu society" and what better way of militarising than the bomb.

The bomb is the most adequate, the most developed, symbol of a particular kind of macho, aggressive, bellicose, Hindu communal and Muslim nationalism. There is a broad constituency of opinion in India that opposes that kind of nationalism as well the significant current of opinion that opposes nuclear weapons so there is a potential for much larger scale mobilisation than we have seen so far.

"India and Pakistan went to war last year over Kashmir — one year after the tests. They exchanged 13 nuclear threats and counter threats during this conflict — it was a very close call."

China will actually be degrading its own security and bringing renewed economic sanctions upon itself. China, 30 years ahead as a nuclear missile power — its economy is three times bigger than India's and growing faster. It would be economically disastrous for India to get into a nuclear arms race with China.

But India had very few choices but to cloak its nuclear ambition in this whole-East Asia China big.

China is because Pakistan, which also India also cited, made 7 proposals for defusing the nuclear tension between itself and India during the 90s and 90s and India rejected each of these as dishonest, insincere and inadequate.

It was only prepared to talk nuclear weapons restraint and elimination within a multilateral framework. It refused to discuss "regional" question — China thought it was too complex and supposed threats that they then cited when conducting the tests.

Now India and Pakistan have both become much more insecure because of nuclearisation. Far from promoting sobriety and maturity as some apologists of nuclear weapons have argued, the effect has been the opposite.

India and Pakistan went to war last year over Kashmir — one year after the tests. It was the fourth undeclared war between them. 40,000 troops were involved and 2000 combatants were killed.

India and Pakistan exchanged 13 nuclear threats and counter threats during this conflict — it was a very close call. This shows that it would be suicidal for them to cross the threshold through the deployment of nuclear weapons.

India has got into this relationship of strategic rivalry with China which is the now the country most upset by India's nuclear weapons acquisition.

France and Russia have more or less dropped their opposition although they are signatories to a strong Security Council Resolution 1172 passed in June 1998. The US has accommodated India and Pakistan into the nuclear club as de facto junior members and Britain of course has followed this line.

But China remains unrecognised — so you have the dangerous scenario not just of nuclear rivalry across the sub continent but within the Asian region as a whole.

If the US goes ahead with Ballistic Missile Defence this would have a serious knock on effect on China. China has 20 nuclear weapons that are capable of reaching the USA and these could be neutralised with a very primitive version of the missile defense system that the United States is unfortunately planning so China feels extremely vulnerable. If this happens China is expected to build up its own nuclear arsenal. Then India could get sucked into an arms race with China which is absolutely ridiculous and that could be a huge set back for Indian society as well as for the cause of International nuclear disarmament.

At the end of the cold war people high up in both the US and India began talking about the importance of moving towards a strategic partnership between the two countries. The problem is not that these views are insincere but of there is asymmetry of power between the two countries.

The Indians are arguing that the US should worry about China as its main opponent and that India could be an important of counterweight.

Over Pakistan, they complain that the US gives Pakistan too much attention and pleads that India is more important - it's a bigger marker - a bigger power.

After all Pakistan is an Islamic country and we are not — so you should pay the minimum price for a better relationship with us by dropping your close collaboration with Pakistan.

But the US won't decide their perspective as what the Indians. All the lip service they pay to India is just rhetoric. India is not a significant world power — its not even the major power in the region — in fact nuclearisation has produced some strain of secularism between itself and Pakistan.

And despite the pressure of the right wing Republicans, the US is engaged in an existing relationship of great complexity with the Chinese, which is not about to sacrifice simply because India says — look we can be a counterweight. The Trade bill and what just happened with that is an indication of this - after all the Chinese market is far more important than the Indian.

Whether the Americans decide to sever business Pakistan, will be determined by their views on Pakistan's continued relevance via a con central Asia and the strategically crucial Middle East. Any reassessment will be brought about by a change in the US's needs not by the spin of the Indian elite. India still has to prove itself — it still has to make the grade. It is true that Clinton's recent visit suggested a shift in terms of both these countries but we need to recognise the open ended character of this.

There is a possibility of a shift in US policy but it depends on a whole series of factors. At this stage you can't make a clear assessment of the overall trend. If US/India relations significantly deteriorated then it's a different situation. If the Taiwanese demanded independence and this was backed by the US this would have an impact.

If the US felt that Pakistan was becoming too Talibanised, too Islamicised - and this jeopardises its role in the Middle East - then there is some chance that what the Indian elite want could happen. But none of it is certain.

What is clear is that the US will decide whether there is a reassessment - and India is obviously not the most important factor that they have to take into account.
Schools under New Labour
going down to business

A test-bed for Labour's public-private vision is Zones for Action, a private initiative to replace education standards in schools in socially disadvantaged areas. There are now 67 Zones, and of the features of the Zone approach is that they are required to have business partners.

They include major international companies such as ICL, Barclays Bank, Colgate Palmolive, John Laing Construction, Kellgros, Unilever, Morgan Stanley, Tain and Lyte, American Express, British Aerospace and Rolls Royce. Particularly prominent are the information technology companies, including some of the bigger names: IBM, Roll Information Services, British Telecom, and Research Machines.

They are joined by a new breed of non-traditional private sector companies such as Nord Anglia and Arthur Andersen aiming to contract out education management and other services from schools and local authorities.

The EAZ policy assigns several roles to business. Firstly, it is expected to provide money and resources. Zones receive an extra £750,000 a year from government. They are expected to find an additional £30,000 a year from their business 'partners' (often in kind, for example, supplying computers, or management training, or monitoring for pupils).

The reasons behind this are several: it reduces state spending on education; encourages schools to be more business-like; provides funding for themselves; and brings schools together, with the aim of increasing the influence of business agencies.

The second reason is to take part in managing the Zone. Zones are run by Rolls Royce, Action Forums, separate from and not accountable to LEAs, which bring together a variety of participants, including the business 'partners'.

Thirdly, to influence the content of education. The partnership with business is used to help schools more responsive to business agendas. Schools are encouraged to adopt a work-related curriculum. This means that any skills which are attractive to employers.

And finally, business methods and expertise to the management and control of schools. What this means in practice is illustrated by the programme of a conference in March 2002 of the Education Action Zone Conference.

Workshops at the conference included: 'What buses can bring to EAZA'; Business risks for GCSE students with RM (Research Machines); 'Business solutions to educational challenges', with British Aerospace; 'Classrooms in companies and companies in classrooms'; and 'Leadership Challenge: how business solutions developed by Cambridge Education Associates, who was responsible for personnel and payroll matters, school inspections and school improvement, governor support and special education needs. The contract is subject to targets and penalties set by government, and is to run for five years, at a cost of £600,000 a year.

Do schools need teachers any more, or can they just sit in front of computers?'
Some further reading:

be acknowledged that business claims to offer answers to the real problems of public education and the real concerns of teachers, parents and school students - low funding, low motivation, low attainment, lack of relevance of the classroom to the real world.

The existing system is experienced by many as unequal and bureaucratic. Things follow. 'Firstly, we can't simply base ourselves on a defence of the existing system.'

Secondly, it is not necessarily self-evident to many teachers and parents that every encroachment of business should be opposed.

Thirdly, business cannot simply be excluded from schooling. Some of the things business offers have a dual character; the Internet is an obvious example.

So the crucial questions are ones of boundaries and of power. What do we want from business and what don't we want? And how can we ensure that we get what we want from business on our terms, not those of business?

Some boundaries are easier to draw, if not to maintain:
- No to private companies running schools or LEAs.
- No to business management methods in the schools. of which the cutting edge is performance pay for teachers, designed to ensure their compliance with business style schooling.
- No to business sponsorship of advertising - the state, not business, should fund education, and schools should not be a market for advertisers.
- But others are more difficult:
  - What should happen to LEAs? Should we call for no business involvement at all, or only under effective democratic control - and if so, how can that be exercised?
  - What about information technology?

What set of demands would provide a basis for IT on educational terms, and not just those compatible with the interests of Microsoft and British Telecom?

These are urgent issues for the whole labour movement to resolve. Perhaps the forthcoming conference of the NUT on privatization and schools on November 21 will give a lead.
Exploring the work of Ernest Mandel

The Legacy of Ernest Mandel, edited by Gilbert Achcar, Verso – London
Reviewed by Charlie van Gelderen

Ernst TROTSKY called Ernest Mandel "the last great figure of post-war classical Marxism" and this is a characterization with which few of the contributors to this book will disagree. The contributions are not uncritical, and that is how they should have wanted it. If there is any criticism of the book itself it is that there is not a specific tribute to his work as a militant of the Fourth International, although that it referred to in passing. As Gilbert Achcar writes in his introduction: "He was one of those few men and women in the history of the socialist movement who were able to combine uniting activities of a revolutionary with a body of intellectual work..." Some of the contributors to this volume were, at one time, members of the Fourth International. They were drawn into its ranks in 1968, during a rising revolutionary wave. When this revolutionary tide receded, they rapidly withdrew back to their academic and literary activities.

But not Ernest Mandel. To paraphrase Marx, his position was that it was no longer enough for academics to analyse and dissect the political and economic world, they must actively engage in changing it. For Mandel, his immense and unparalleled theoretical and literary output was part of what he regarded as his main purpose in life - building and strengthening the Fourth International. If anyone was Trotsky's heir, it was Ernest Mandel. He was firm in his conviction that to combat international capital, the working class needed an international organisation to co-ordinate the struggle and give it guidance where necessary.

Marxism had been distorted - primarily by the revisionism of Stalinism but also by a variety of philosophical interpretations. "As a result, Marxism and particularly Marxist political economy became sterile, incapacitable of understanding the forms acquired by capitalism in the second half of the 20th century" (Albercin & Monate in their contribution on Mandel's Late Capitalism).

More than anyone else, Mandel, banishing himself "on the methodology and fundamental categories used by Marx" developed Marxism for the second half of the century. With his Late Capitalism, he "erected a bridge to connect the origins of Marxism to its subsequent evolution, placing economics at the centre of the analysis and recovering the fundamental categories of Marx's political economy to explain the evolution and present state of capitalism and class struggle ahead.

The book contains noteworthy analysis of Mandel's development of the 'long wave' theory and of perhaps prime importance, his contribution on the Marxist theory of bureaucracy. Mandel puts both the growth of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union and the bureaucracies in the social-democratic parties in the west under the microscope. He went back to Rosa Luxemburg, who, well before Lenin and Trotsky, understood that the emergence and development of the trade unions and party officialism was the key to German social democracy's growing officialism.

In his contribution, Charles Post defends, although not without some criticism, Trotsky and Mandel's characterisation of the Stalinist-dominated Soviet Union and the other countries under the rule of the Stalinist Communist parties, as degenerate workers' states, refuting the theory of state capitalism as espoused by the late Tony Cliff and the SWP. He argues: "The strongest historical validation of Trotsky and Mandel's thesis that the former USSR and Eastern European regimes were not rooted in a new mode of production was the rapidity with which they collapsed in 1989-91. "Bureaucratic rule in these countries was not overturned by either the working class or imperialism, but emerged as a result of chronic economic stagnation. Not surprisingly, the social formations that emerged...have yet to make a successful transition to capitalism."

This position is reinforced in Catherine Samary's contribution on Mandel's views on the transition to socialism, although she does stress that there was, in the Soviet Union, a real sociological trend towards reproduction of the bureaucracy. This was reinforced under Brezhnev when, increasingly, sons and daughters of the bureaucracy had a better chance to go to university and become bureaucrats than others. There was, Samary maintains, nothing specific for the bureaucracy to establish itself as an elite even if it did not succeed.

Norman Geras discusses Mandel on the historical importance of the Holocaust. Whereas Geras sees the Holocaust, the deliberate extermination of an entire race, as unique, Mandel maintained that it "has only pushed to the fore an aspect of the habitual methods of imperialism in our epoch". "Ians Trotsky, in his "Understanding the Nazi Genocide" supports Geras on the uniqueness of the Final Solution, as did Isaac Deutscher. Anyone who seeks a shortcut towards an understanding of Marxism do no better than to turn to Mandel's Why I am a Marxist, which, thankiful, is included in this volume. I cannot enter into the text without quoting from it, the text I believe to be Ernest Mandel's Tempest: ...

I am a Marxist because only Marxism makes it possible to keep believing in humanity and the possibility of a transformation - despite all the terrible experiences of the twentieth century, despite Auschwitz and Hiroshima, despite this "Third World" and the threat of nuclear annihilation.

"Marxism teaches us to take a positive attitude towards life and human beings and to love them without a false glass, without illusions, in full awareness of the never-ending difficulties and insurmountable setbacks in the millions of years in which it has taken our species to develop from ape-like creatures to global investigators and of the struggle that theoretical socialism, classless, non-violent world socialism."

Where we stand

As a New Century begins, the battles of the last century remain to be won. Millions of women and men are taking part in mobilisations against the evil of capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorships. This reflects the fact that humanity faces withering fingers. Ecological, military, social and economic devastation faces millions of people. Many think people recognise the barbaric nature of capitalism. In a situation where the inability of the social democratic and neo-socialist parties to provide socialist solutions is becoming clearer, the task of creating new organisations is getting more urgent.

Socialist Outlook is written and sold by socialists committed to this struggle. We are the British supporters of the world-wide Marxist organisation, the Fourth International. We stand for the revolutionary transformation of society and a pluralist, socialist democracy worldwide.

The twice monthly newspaper aims to inform and educate every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation and violence. Socialist Outlook must be under the control of ordinary people, democratic pluralist, multi-party, feminists, ecologists, anti-militarists and internationalists. It must abolish slavery, toil and oppression. The working class is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed. The working class and its allies must uncompromisingly fight against capitalism and for a clear programme of action in order to gradually acquire the awareness and consciousness needed to defeat capitalism at the decisive moment of crisis.

The movements of women, lesbians and gay men, and black people to fight their particular forms of oppression make an essential contribution to the struggle for a different society. They are organised around the principle "None as free as those who wear them". The whole working class needs to fully correct itself to achieve an accurate picture of the world and society. Furthermore we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these organisations of an alliance which respects their legitimate autonomy. By building simultaneously revolutionary organisations in each country and a revolutionary international, we can encompass the global interests of the workers and oppressed. By building a united struggle against exploitation and oppression we aim to ensure the survival of the human race.

If you think this is worth fighting for, and you like what we are doing, why not join us? Drop a line to us at PO Box 1189, London N4 2UU, and we'll be in touch.
Liberal democracy offers no solution to Indonesian crisis

Adam Hartman

When Abdurrahman Wahid was elected president of Indonesia in October last year the British government, like many others, hailed a new era of democracy and stability in the world's fourth most populous country. Defending Britain's support for the resumption of arms sales from European Union countries to Indonesia in January (which were suspended in September following the army-orchestrated pogroms in East Timor), Foreign Office Minister John Battle said: “It is not commonly understood that there is a programme of reform, and my view is that the government needs to be underpinned in that programme of reform.”

Yet two years after the downfall of Suharto, Indonesia remains a country wracked by national and ethnic conflict, an economy in crisis, mass poverty, and a military which continues to mete out repression with impunity and to cast a shadow over the reform process.

In February Tony Blair declared support for the territorial integrity of Indonesia, carrying on the traditional policy of past Labour and Tory governments of consigning Indonesia's deeply unpopular ruler to oblivion, and maintained that independence, notably West Papua (bordering Papua New Guinea) and Aceh (Indonesia's northernmost province).

When the Dutch pulled out of West Papua in 1962 they promised the population a vote on its future under UN auspices. Instead, Indonesia moved in, and in 1969 formally incorporated West Papua under the “Act of Free Choice” in which 1,025 Papuans hand-picked by the authorities “voted” at gunpoint to integrate with Indonesia. Since then the Indonesian army has used brutal repression against the rebellious Free Papua Movement (OPM) and against any popular manifestation of support for independence. For 500 years Aceh was an independent sultanate, which did not come under Dutch rule until 1877; long after the rest of Indonesia. After World War Two the Achehnese took part in Indonesia's struggle for independence and agreed to join the new republic on condition that its autonomy was respected.

But the central government broke its promises. Under Suharto, revenues from Aceh's abundant natural resources supplied 20% of Indonesia's annual budget - with only 1% reinvested in the province, leaving it impoverished and underdeveloped.

Multinational companies have plundered Aceh, cutting off people’s access to land and natural resources, polluting their environment and denying them jobs.

Since the 1960s these conditions have fostered periodic rebellions. The Free Aceh movement (GAM) emerged in the 1970s. In 1989 the authorities designated Aceh a military operations area (DOM). Human rights violations soared in the 1990s with an estimated 3,000 civilians killed, 3,500 disappearances, over 4,500 cases of torture and nearly 200 rapes. 90,000 people have been forced to flee their homes.

The fall of Suharto gave rise to hopes that the authorities would loosen their grip and seek a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Encouraged by the example of East Timor, inhabitants have taken to the streets to demand a referendum on independence.

The response of the authorities has apparently been contradictory. On one hand the DOM was lifted in 1998 and (seriously flawed) judicial proceedings have been launched against low-ranking troops accused of human rights violations.

On the other hand the army and security forces intensified their reign of terror against the population. Britain’s policy is to maintain the arms trade with Indonesia.

The Indonesian economy is still reeling from the currency crash which spread through South East Asia in 1997. The crash greatly increased Indonesia’s foreign debt burden and led to a sharp fall in capital income. The working class has borne the brunt of the crisis through unemployment and the ‘shock therapies’ prescribed by the IMF, which included the removal of subsidies on essential goods.

The measures favoured by the Wahid government offer no way out of this crisis.

The main goal of Britain (and other imperialist countries’) policy towards Indonesia has been to engineer stability through a carefully managed transition to liberal democracy, in order to create a secure and profitable market for British multinational companies.

Preserving Indonesia’s territorial integrity is a key part of this stability - Britain fears that independence for Aceh and West Papua would destabilise the region.

The problem for the imperialist countries is that the economic and political policies which it is supporting in Indonesia actually increase instability. This is where the arms trade comes in.

The supply of arms tools, up the military-industrial complex, and the imperative of force.

Government ministers may shed crocodile tears over the loss of jobs at British Aerospace and fret over the loss of votes in Labour’s heartlands. But the government’s main reason for supporting the arms trade is not to save jobs. It is to project Britain’s influence on the world stage and to help maintain order wherever British commercial interests are involved.

The Indonesian Human Right Campaign, has been used as the main source for information in this article. Their website is at www.gn.apc.org/tapol.

British guns are helping this "democratic process"
Strike to save Ford jobs!

On Thursday June 22nd 700 workers from Ford's Dagenham plant arrived in a fleet of coaches to demonstrate outside of the Ford UK head office in Kensington. They were protesting against the decision of Ford management to end car production in Dagenham and transfer the new Fiesta to Germany.

Most of the workers were from the Dagenham Paint Trim and Assembly (PTA) plant which is the site faced with closure. There were also workers and stewards from the engine plant which, according to Ford management, is staying open, at the present time. It is a policy of divide and rule.

700 was seen as a good turn out, given that it was a working day and took place against management pressure not to leave the plant and the possibility of disciplinary action being taken against those who did. It should provide the basis for action to be stepped up.

Tony Woodley, the TGWU national official for the car industry, spoke to the demonstrators before going in to meet management and present them with the trade unions official rejection of Fords closure proposals.

He attacked Ford management over the closure but he was not talking about stepping up the action. He said that there will be a ballot for strike action if necessary but that this will not take place until the current round of redundancies - those resulting from the reduction of the PTA from two shifts to one - not the proposed closure - have been completed.

He went on to say that after this demonstration, and the lobby of parliament by Ford workers due to take place on Wednesday June 28th, there will "be a hull in the campaign" until the ballot takes place. There were murmurs of "what campaign?" given that there have not yet been mass meetings inside the plant, and this was the first action of any kind which had taken place.

The problem is that time is on the side of Ford management, and the longer it takes to get resistance off the ground the more difficult it will be.

Already there has been a collapse of the shop stewards committee in the PTA, with 20 shop stewards, including the convenor, taking redundancy in the current round of cutbacks.

It is a difficult situation, but the turnout and the militancy of Thursday's demonstration shows that there is a solid body of workers prepared to make a stand if a lead is given. New stewards need to be elected and the shop stewards movement made to function.

But if this is to come about the momentum needs to be kept up. A national demonstration in London led by thousands of Ford workers, would get a huge response from the London as the Birmingham demonstration against the closure of Longbridge did on April 1. It could help to galvanise the situation and lead up to a successful ballot for action.

The crucial steps must be:
- Mass meetings at Dagenham to involve the workforce and keep it fully informed.
- A national demonstration in London, against the closure.
- A ballot for strike at Dagenham against the closure.
- Supporting action from the other Ford plants.

Don't miss an issue: SUBSCRIBE now!

20 pages of internationalist news, views and marxist analysis each month. 12 issues delivered for just £10. OVERSEAS subscribers 12 issues for just £20.

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

PLEASE send me:

☐ 12 issues of Socialist Outlook
☐ 12 issues of Socialist Outlook plus International Viewpoint

Name: ___________________________ Address: ___________________________
Phone: ___________________________ Age: ___________ Post Code: ___________

SEND TO: Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London NW2 0UU