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VOTE
Labour
but prepare to fight!
**Welsh assembly plans advance**

### Darren Williams  
(Wales Labour Party executive director/personal capacity)

THE WALES Labour Party at its recent conference in Llan- dumba has strengthened its policy on the Welsh Assembly, which a Labour government is pledged to establish during its first year in office.

The Assembly is now to be based in Cardiff on a presentation (PR) rather than first past the post (FPTP) as proposed. This represents a small but significant advance on the set of proposals Labour adopted in 1995.

These envisaged an Assembly elected by FPTP with the power to pass only secondary legislation, applying rather than overruling legislation from Westminster. It would be funded by a central government grant rather than having the power to raise its own taxes.

Such an Assembly would obviously have little power to challenge a Labour administration at Westminster.

The proposals fell far short of Labour’s initial proposals for devolution, promising a parliament with law-making and taxation powers, elected by PR and with equal representation for men and women (somewhere for which no provision is made in Wales). Labour’s original proposals did not represent a viable basis for the Welsh Assembly. Election by FPTP would create an Assembly in the image of the current Welsh parliamentary party at Westminster. It would certainly not be inclusive enough to embrace the diversity of political opinion in Wales.

It could and should bridge the divide between the largely rural and politically heterogeneous North and West, where large swathes of opinion would go unrepresented, and the control of Labour’s reactionary South Wales bureaucracy.

Any Assembly worth having will need a popular majority, which won’t be the case for a weak and narrowly body controlled by Labour’s reactionary South Wales bureaucracy.

The industrial south, where Labour’s hold of support would enable it to maintain its stranglehold over Welsh politics. It would also remain more dominated (only one Welsh MP out of 38 is female).

An Assembly worth having will need a popular majority, while the case for a weak and politically narrow body under the the control of the Assembly. Labour’s original proposals did not represent a viable basis for the Welsh Assembly. Election by FPTP would create an Assembly in the image of the current Welsh parliamentary party at Westminster. It would certainly not be inclusive enough to embrace the diversity of political opinion in Wales.

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Fortunately, Labour has now taken a step towards broadening its basis of support. The party’s proposals stand to deny the Assembly any real power, but the adoption of PR at least creates the possibilities of fair representation for other parties and an improved gender-balance.

The form of PR chosen, a version of single transferable vote (STV) or alternative vote (AMS) is far from ideal, however. An Assembly member will be elected by FPTP from each of the 40 Westminster constituency

### Fighting council cuts in Scotland

### Gordon Morgan  
THE TORIES have adopted a scorching earth policy in Scotland. They are fighting council through a needless reorganisation of local government in Scotland. In addition, they have savagely cut funding both in 1987 and 1997.

In 1997, the Scottish Council estimates that reorganisation costs exceed £200m. In 1977, the estimated £170m – £250m. In 1997, the estimated £20m “a success.”

All councils except Glasgow have abolished cumbersome administrative procedures. Glasgow’s position is different. It has the lowest number of problems of any Scottish city and requires extra resources. Under referendum.

However, Glasgow received only per capita funding – Strachclyde’s redaction of resources based on need had ended, massive reductions in funding have resulted. People of Glasgow and the workforce understand all of this. However, to the public, the Labour Council was elected on a platform of delivering jobs and services – it has chosen to implement massive cuts and jobs and massive tax rises.

From November the Unions and the Scottish Socialist Alliance (SSA) have been calling for a “No Cuts” Budget to be set – a deficit budget given we are not some of the City and the City is a city of democracy.

Further cuts are voted through every other day. Around 100 community halls are to be closed. The SSA and its partners are calling on the:)

### Blame Tories

If they had set an illegal budget, or resigned and let others take their place or even resigned and let the Tories to themselves try to implement the cuts, then the Tories would have been the focus of the anger. To be elected on a “No Cuts” platform and to save the City is a city of democracy.

Further cuts are voted through every other day. Around 100 community centres are to be closed. The SSA and its partners are calling on the:

### Szieze

Measuring success as a background met,

Metro...
Major's decision to announce the May 1 election early, giving the Tories a long campaign has massively backfired. That decision was linked to the need to avoid an autumn election - a mistake committee - a fact which was transparently obvious to all. The Tories are becoming mired ever deeper each day in scandal and shame. The decision of some Tory leaders to back Blair's New Labour is however not just a reflection of the difficulties Major and his party are in but of their confidence that capitalism will be in Blair's hands.

Over the last 18 years the Tories have launched massive attacks on the working class. They wreaked havoc on the unions, taking on and defeating section after section of workers, taking advantage of the weakness of the union leaders. To carry this out they turned the benefit of their fat cat friends and the deritement of services and jobs. They continue with much of the NHS, education and every other part of the welfare state.

Unemployment

They have vastly increased pov-
erly and homelessness and used unemployment as a deliberate weapon which creates conflict so that they can use anti-trade unionism to create a legal fightback almost impossible. And they plan more of the same. A tax cut would be at the expense of pensions and the London Under- ground. No, it requires an understanding of what is really going on and how they see the election. The vast majority of class conscious workers will vote against the Tories in the general election. Unfortunately, a significant minority of workers will vote Tory or Liberal Democrat.

Some on the left argue that Lab-
our has changed so much that it is now unsurprised to support it at all - it is indistinguishable from the Tories in its policies and Lib Dem. We think that is a serious political mistake. While Blair has made Labour's programme considerably further to the right than ever be-
fore, the class nature of the Labour Party has not changed, and it is not under heavy attack.

Despite its worst inten-
sions, the affiliation of the trade unions means the Labour Party is in essence a working class party, even though it has always had a pro-
capitalist programme.

We must learn those so-
cialists who believe that in order to break the working class from its support for Blair it is enough to denou-
cence Labour and stand can-
didates in the Labour Party. While that might attract a small

Health workers and the public sector are saying "Enough Is Enough" - whoever serves up the Tory policies

minds on Labour around key pol-
icy. The fight to force a Labour government to carry them out. Workers who, despite all the evi-
dence, expect Labour to deliver something, will relate to that much more than simple denuncia-
tion of Labour.

The job of creating an alterna-
tive to New Labour with serious support is ahead of us. There are very few places where candidates to the left of Labour in the election represent serious forces. While calling for an open vote for La-
bour we support some of the most credible and well-placed can-
didates of the left parties and organi-
sations, the Socialist Labour Party, the Socialist Party (ex-Militant Labour) and the Scottish Socialist Alliance.

At this stage, we are calling for a vote for Dave Nellist to stand in Coventry South (standing for the SP), Tommy Sheridan in Glasgow Pol-
lock (SP/SSA) and Arthur Scargill standing in Newport East for the SLP.

Although these organisations

This election will lead to a reshaping of British politics. The conflict between a Blair-
led Labour government and the working class will lead to recompositions in the workers' movement. There will be a shake-up of bourgeois politics too, with a post-election crisis in the Tory Party, and the Liberal Democrats moving ever closer to Blair.

layer who totally reject New La-
bour, it will have little effect on the vast majority, who will see such candidates as marginal. The by-
elections in Neath, Barnsley East and Wirral South showed this.

For more productive in most ar-
eas is to link a call for a Labour vote with a critique of their policies and build struggles which make de-

are different, we recognise both the base of support these individuals have in the workers' movement and of the importance of the forces developing to the left of the La-
bour Party. These candidates sym-

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Fight to defend a Woman's Right to Choose
Build the campaign against "Pro-Life" Alliance

Susan Moore
THE NATIONAL Abortion Campaign (NAC) has won an important first round battle against the anti-abortionists of the so-called "Pro-Life" Alliance (PLA) who are standing of a slate of candidates in the General Election. Despite this success, there is an urgent need for activists to get involved in the campaign.

Source: Daily 1 NAC held a successful picket outside Harrod's in London on the last day of the January sale. This was to protest against the fact that Harrod's owner, Mohamed Al Fayed was funding the PLA to the tune of £25,000 - which would have underwritten the deposits for the election candidates.

Before the picket, Mr. Michael Cole, spokesperson for Al Fayed, told journalists that "Mr Al Fayed decided to help the Pro-Life Alliance to field 50 candidates".

After the picket, the tune had changed. Mr. Cole said after the official launch of the Alliance "Mr Fayed is not funding it. He doesn't want to get involved in party politics". Al Fayed's retreat has undoubtedly been an irritation for the PLA but they have other powerful and rich friends such as the Quin-taville family.

Their manifesto makes clear that they want to see the complete repeal of the 1967 Abortion Act and indeed beyond this to "secure legislation which confines the full protection of the law on all human life from fertilisation to natural death".

Further they are calling for the repeal of the Embryology Bill and opposing some forms of contraception which they argue are in fact early abortions.

They are targeting constituents where candidates support a woman's right to choose - mainly a small number of others, including Theresa Gorman in Birkbeck.

They have claimed that their party political broadcast will show remains of aborted embryos at various stages of development.

PLA director Bruno Quintaville says these were found dumped outside an abortion clinic in Houston, Texas. When they are very unlikely to even retain their deposit in any text, they are gaining a large amount of publicity through this campaign - although NAC has already been able to use debating them to gain a wider profile for its stance in support of a woman's right to choose.

If your MP is being opposed by a "Pro-Life" candidate it is important that you get in touch to offer support.

There is a danger that some could feel intimidated and back down from a pro-choice stance. NAC is also organizing a postcard campaign, particularly to constituencies where the PLA are standing. Get involved and help defend the anti-abortionists.

Contact NAC at The Print House, 57-58 Kingly Street, London W8 7DL or on 0171 923 4976.

Women's TUC faces the future

Marian Brain
Women's TUC in Scarborough threw down a challenge to the whole trade union movement. It is possible and necessary to recruit hundreds of thousands of more women, not just in the next couple of years, but only by rising to the challenge of attracting and retaining them.

This means that trade unions have to rise to the challenge organisa-
tionally, not just in the structures that have been established and the conditions under which people work and the social environ-
ment in which they live.

Conference understood the importance of fighting for equal rights at work and of the importance of full rights for all work-
ers, from day one of employment, and the rights of all workers to join and be represented by an independent trade union.

Women's TUC also debated the whole question of bullying at work and the need to combat this.

The conference unanimously passed an emergency resolution which expressed concern at the contents of the amnesty interna-
tional bulletin of 7 February regarding the imprisonment of Rachel McAliskey.

The resolution calls on the Women's Committee and the General Council to support the call for bail to be granted due to Rachel McAliskey's mental and physical condition and to support the campaign for mother and child to remain together after the "birth". This was moved by MSF and seconded by the FBU.

Another emergency resolution from the Society of Telecom Executives raised the issue of the attack on working women launched by the Panorama programme. It called on the Women's Committee and the General Council to "highlight and publicise media attacks on working women" and to "campaign for recognition at work of the demands of all parents, and the need for workplace policies to accom-
modate working parents and their children."

This resolution linked into the situation of the NAPTE resolution on the whole issue of women's rights. Meeting this resolution, Mary Davies made the point that it is nec-
essary to combine theory and practice. We cannot let the right wing ideological offen-
dence against women go unchallenged.

They blame women for all the social ills of society and try to strengthen the traditional family. We must defend the gains of the women's liberation movement of the 60s and fight for women's rights to choose how they live and the material conditions which allow us to do so.

Women local government workers must reject single status agreement

Veronica Fagan
THE THREE local government unions UNISON, GMB and T&GW are trumpeting the new single status agreement and the asso-
ciated pay deal as a major step forward for their members.

The associated pay deal would give pay increases of above 2.5% per cent for most manual workers and the very lowest paid of officers while the rest would get an increase of around 2.5 per cent.

There are some important improvements in the proposals it is true. Most significantly it would intro-
duce generally equal treatment for manual workers and officers. Other benefits include improved rights for part timers, training for all employees and cancer screening for all.

These positive aspects are mas-
vively overshadowed by the attacks on conditions that are also involved now and in the future. Integral to the whole package is a new pro-
posed Job Evaluation Scheme which will not be compulsory for local authorities to use and which will not even be available before mid-April.

All jobs will be subject to local grading reviews and pay is pro-
ected for only up to three years. Whole areas of conditions which are currently determined nation-
ally will only be subject to mini-
mum terms at this level.

The main negotiations will take place locally. Other immediate problems include the introduction of a "code of conduct" and attacks on various existing provisions for leave.

Within the glossy literature produced by the unions nationally some of the key issues are hidden away.

Working hours will be set for all full time employees from April 1999 at 37 hours (36 for London). A step forward for those on contracts with longer hours - but then we are told: "Where ever possible efforts will be made to offset the increased the hourly rates of pay by more pro-
ductive working methods."

You would think that any trade unionists worth their salt would see the problem with that - and the looming threat of job losses it in-
volve.

Despite this on March 11 a Joint meet-
ing of the Manual and AFT&C (officer) union side agreed the document with only four votes against.

"Socialist"

The pompous language used to sell it to the membership is unbe-
lievable. Jane Carrollan, Chair of the AFT&C referred to the document as a "socialist agreement" and Local Government Officer Keith Son-
ner said that "It is UNISON's destiny to bring in this agreement."

Some of the media have used an image of an office worker emptying dastubs to illustrate stories about the agreement. Such proposals on feasibility are not actually part of the package.

However there is a worrying phrase in the "principles" set out at the beginning which talks of "a flexible approach to providing serv-
es to the community, which me-
ts the needs of employees as well as employers."

One wonders if the press have been told something that trade union-
ion members have not!

In any event the left has a major task on its hands to mobilise opposi-
tion to these proposals. UNISON is holding a special conference on May 20 and after that the proposals will go out to a ballot of individual members. These proposals must be rejected.
Aerospace strikers fly into action

WORKERS at Project Aerospace are linking up with others to try to spread support for their struggle. They will be on the "Social Justice" picket in December. They are frustrated that despite official support from their union, MSF, little is being done to spread their message.

They have to make a real effort to contact and visit the picket line. Only four of the unions have even come for as far as given any support.

In December, 1996, two weeks before Christmas, forty-one sheet metal workers were locked out and then dismissed by Project Aerospace Ltd in Coventry.

The strikers had made a claim for the establishment of a sick pay scheme and a company pension as well as a reasonable increase in wages.

They had serious concerns about their health and safety — when it rained, water cascaded through the roof of their metal roof to electrical equipment below.

No discussions

The company offered a wage increase of 3 per cent, refused to discuss anything more and demanded that the workers sign a new contract or else.

Following limited industrial action in November and early December, the forty-one were dismissed on the very day that discussions were to take place between the union and the company.

Since then the company has refused approaches from ACAS and has begun negotiations with another firm to register a new company.

The strikers believe that even though the struggle will be protracted they can win. There are already positive developments that the company will not be able to survive without the support of workers specials.

They need support on the daily picket at G Packett, Foleshill, Coventry and financial assistance.

Holidays, donations and requests for speakers to Project Aerospace Dispute Fund, Coventry Trade Council, Unit 15, The Arches Industrial Estate, Coventry, West Midlands CV4 7EJ.

Marian Brain

CRITICLHE LABELS in South Wales was part of British Telecom's Swilling plant. The workers printed and produced literature in house.

The Communications Workers Union (CWU) was recognised and there were collective agreements, agreements that would remain the case.

In summer 1994 30 per cent of staff were on call, including the redundancies. The company then decided to derecognise the union. Following a ballot for industrial action the CWU and management reached an agreement on recognition.

Then the company unilaterally declared that 10 CWU members, including branch officers were to be made redundant. There was no attempt to work together. They were called out for a two-week strike on 12 August 1995.

The CWU sought to negotiate that any future redundancies would involve proper consultation with the union in line with existing agreements. When this was rejected the CWU decided to strike for an overtime ban which began in October 1996.

In December the CWU was given three weeks notice of derecognition, yet another breach of a written agreement. John Monks, TUC General Secretary, denounced the strike as one of the worst example of industrial relations in Wales. Union members voted to escalate industrial action in defence of their rights. All union members at Critichle were on strike on January 22 and January 29. Managers were bullying and threatening to dismiss those who did so.

All 31 CWU members at the company, whether or not they had voted for strike action, decided that they would not tolerate bullying and intimidation. They stood by their union and fought for the right to trade union membership and representation.

Harassed

Women at Critichle have explained that sexual harassment was a problem in the factory for some time, ranging from physical contact to managers learking personal medical details.

The strikers would rather see the plant closed down than go back to a regime of intimidation under worse conditions. They have already made many sacrifices in defence of trade union rights. Some are single parents, others the only earners in their household, in an area of high unemployment. On March 7 the company announced in South Wales in defence of the Critichle Label strikers. Now is the time to spread support.

More information and speakers contact Sue Hopkins, CWU Chair at Critichle Labels, 01485 220587.
Election dogs that are unlikely to bark

1) The great pensions rip-off

18 years of Thatcherite rule has led to a decimation in value of the basic state pension, deliberately run down by severing the link between pensions and average wages established by Labour in the 1970s. Last year’s Labour conference saw a set-piece battle between pensioners’ campaigns demanding that this link be restored, and Tony Blair’s front bench team, determined to evade any such commitment.

Indeed Labour itself has been guilty, sharing the ideas of costly working voters into taking out a second, “funded” pension to compensate for the plunging value of the basic pension – ignoring the obvious problem of how such schemes will widen and perpetuate the gulf in living standards between the best and the worst off.

But a fifth Tory term could lead to an even more brazen onslaught on the state pension system. If left to its natural state, it will soon be clear that the state and private pensions that will be available to the youngest workers are likely to be less than 40% of the average earnings. As one critic predicted “A poor worker will progress to a poor pension.”

This miserable level of income would be rejected out of hand by other EU countries, and is far below the average earnings of workers who retire now on average earnings, which can expect a basic pension and State Earnings Related Pension Scheme (SERPS) payments of around 36% of their wage on retirement. The Tory scheme offers nothing but misery for the unemployed, the low-paid, the part-time workers, and for women whose pay tends to be lower and whose earnings record tends to be broken by episodes of childbirth. It would guarantee old-age poverty to over 3 million people.

Even the Financial Times, an advocate of the government’s package, admitted that “the cash … is the guaranteed amount, and not the floor … as to make the safety net safe only for ascetics. For the unemployed there appears to be inadequate assistance. Yet the scheme is moving in the same broad direction as Labour policy.”

But of course the big pensions firms are eagerly financing their calculations on the safety-net commission from the diversion of a massive £40 billion from the state sector into private schemes, and backing the Tory plan to the hilt. One of the first to welcome Labour’s plan was Legal & General, one of the companies at the centre of the massive, uncontrolled sale of inappropriate private pensions to over 500,000 public sector workers in the great pensions scan of the 1980s. Only one percent of those blessed by these companies has yet received the compensation they are owed.

Labour has ritually condemned the Tory plan – but has no policies that will win the confidence of six million pensioners, millions of whom now live in poverty.

Blair’s team will not confront the central issue, that the ever-increasing privatisation of pensions and the focus on the individual’s pension “pot” is designed above all to relieve the employers of any responsibility to contribute: employers’ national insurance contributions and taxation are extraordinarily low in Britain compared with more EU and OECD countries.

The result is that the profits are mopped up by the corporations and the pension funds – and handed out to wealthy shareholders, while the burden falls on individual workers to haul themselves up by their own bootstraps. Instead of pumping ever greater sums of workers’ cash into essentially state institutions – many of which are the driving force for rationalisation and redundancy in industry – a socialist solution would start by nationalising them and the banks, to guarantee the security of workers’ jobs and wages now and in the future.

Far from opening up what Mrs Merkel might call “a heated debate”, the Tory plans have underlined how puny is Labour’s response and how far the Party has retreated from the collective principles which even Wilson’s IPCs Labour governments sought to implement.

4) The NHS funding gap

The Tories believe they have neutralised the NHS as an electoral issue. But Labour’s recent performance it appears that they are right. Without a major breakthrough to allocate new money, Labour cannot offer any solution to the growing pressures on acute services, mental health and long term care.

The Tory plans for NHS involve a three year standstill budget, with real terms growth of just one third of one percent (0.3%) between 1996 and 1999.

This compares with commonly-accepted assumptions that the increasing numbers of elderly, advances in new technology and drugs, all demand at least a 2% per year increase to keep pace with demand.

Baroness Brown has insisted that Labour accepts the Tory targets, but this has meant a 50% greater cash limits – leave Britain below the bottom of the international league for the per capital spend, £180 per head, 20% below the OECD average per capita spending.

Ditched

The Party has ditched promises to restore free dental checks, and will be immediately caught up in a new round of scandals as health authorities are set to announce that strapped Trusts leave patients for hours on trolleys, and health chiefs are already rushing to raise cash through charges for superior meals or other “extras”. A standstill on spending will mean painful cuts. Even if Labour were to raise its meagre-cashed £100m savings by cutting bureaucracy, this is far from sufficient.

Far from an electoral asset, the NHS could rapidly become an electoral albatross. The week of a Labour government tied to Tory pledges, Kenneth Clarke on the week of a Labour government tied to Tory pledges, Kenneth Clarke on the week of a Labour government tied to Tory pledges...
British fascism down but not out

Simón Deville

Since the rise of Thatcherism in the late seventies, British fascism has been in decline. The National Front had the rug pulled from beneath them when the National Front Party adopted many of the central points of their policies, from racist immigration policies to their chauvinism, to saturation policing in poorer inner city areas and the hated "sus" laws.

The BNP has virtually abandoned organising public demonstrations since they have simply provoked mass opposition and human rights defences.

Over the last couple of years the BNP has been largely paralysed by internal feuding, with members from joining the paramilitary style Combat 18 and a split within the leadership of the BNP over money raised through the "Blood and Honour" fascist network.

Shortly before the general election was called, the fascist British National Party decided that they would stand in at least 50 seats, hoping that this would enable them to have their own party political broadcasts on TV. Their aim was to stand around 35 candidates, with several contests more than one seat each.

This plan was scuppered when both Channel 4 and the BBC stated that they would only allow broadcasts for parties that fielded at least 50 separate candidates. As we go to press the BNP are reportedly trying urgently to scrape together the extra candidates needed.

In the forthcoming General Election the BNP have no base of support whatsoever, and are likely to achieve as an extremely small vote in most of the seats they contest.

It would be distractive, though, for the left to assume that this decline will continue and that fascists will simply go away if we ignore them. The far right are likely to re-emerge under a Labour government and much must be prepared to combat this.

The BNP's electoral aim is not to win, but to lay down a marker for the future. They are relying on the widespread disillusionment that may occur if a Labour government is elected which continues or escalates the offensive against the working class that the Tories began.

To prevent fascists from mounting up now - building fascist campaigns through the fascist parties, politically, drawing in all sections of the labour movement, the trade unions, anti-racist and community organisations in opposition to racist ideas that may gain ground among some sections of the working class.

The struggle against fascism will also require organising against fascist meetings and demos, including physical opposition where needed.

Gammon to organise to defend themselves against fascists and racist attacks.

The inability of fascists to organise publicly in recent years has played a major role in demoralising their cadre and preventing them from making any significant breakthroughs.

Alternative

Finally, the left must start to put forward a political alternative. In many impoverished areas, Labour councils have been in office for years, presiding over massive cuts in spending and services.

They have implemented Tory policies, using the justification that if they didn't the Tories would carry on with even worse cuts. Despite this, most impoverished working class areas are likely to return a massive vote for Labour at the general election in the hope that they will see a change from the last 18 years. With a Labour government councils will no longer have any excuse.

A failure to deliver anything under a Labour government will create widespread disillusionment - the response could be to look either to the left or to the right.

If the left fails to put forward a strategy to fight Blair's project that appeals to working class communities, we are likely to see a massive growth of the far right and a number of electoral defections for Labour in their traditional strongholds in the 1998 council elections.

What chance for Operation Black Vote?

Mark Jason

SEVERAL recent surveys have shown that most black people do not intend to vote. This is a cause for concern to some politicians, according to the 1994 Labour force survey, nearly six out of ten black people define themselves as Black British, (this rises to nine per cent of those under 18). In response, the 1990 Trust has launched "Operation Black Vote" in order to ensure black people to register and vote. Its posters argue that the one million black people should telephone the Conservative and Labour Party leaders to make their voices heard.

We should support the campaign's aims - abstention can lead to domination and assimilation of black communities. At the same time, though, it reflects an acute political understanding amongst the black working class that none of their major parties are really doing much to change the situation they live in.

It is not enough to urge people to vote when they are convinced that voting will not change a thing. In order to defeat the Labour leadership, we should encourage black people to register and vote. Our political parties should understand the black working class that none of their major parties are really doing much to change the situation they live in.

Nationalists, national liberation politics, and the struggle against black oppression.

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More likely to be sent to prison.

Against Labour's response is confined to an attempt to out-Tory the Conservatives on who is tougher on crime.

The Labour leadership's opposition to the Immigration and Asylum Act was pitiful. Their partial opposition to some aspects of the bill was "balanced out" with assurances from party leaders that Labour will be tough on "illegal immigration". The 1990 Trust Commission document outlines plans to bring British legislation into line with the 1951 UN convention on refugees and with international law. It then states that not enough asylum seekers who have their appeals turned down are currently being deported, and supports fast-track deportation procedures, which give little time to prepare or collect the necessary documentation.

It is not enough to ensure black people to put their cross on a bit of paper every five years while all parties give each support to the system that oppresses black people. To encourage the participation of black people in politics, it is necessary to offer a way out of the enormous level of inequality blighting this society.

If the current direction of the Labour Party goes unchallenged, we are likely to witness wider and wider sections of the working class becoming demoralised and atomised. Only a consistent struggle against racism and for a massive investment in the impoverished areas can start to offer such a way forward.

Youth vote vital

Don't let Labour get away with it!

George Thomas

MAF'Y traditional Labour voters will stay at home (if they get voted in) at this General Election. Labour who have generally relied on young people for support can no longer count on the majority of them even casting a ballot.

In no part of the UK is the feeling identified with the system, when both parties scapegoat them for society's ills. It is sickness to see New Labour competing with the Tories to put young people under lock and key.

Rather than restoring rights to young people, the government have removed them through Acts like the CJA. New Labour promises that they have been even more thorough about chipping out the young unemployed, the disabled, the young offenders, and house arrest for young kids too.

At work youth will still face an insecure future, as Labour re-franchise for two years from day one of employment.

Young people will not reliably reach work, if they don't have a job when they don't even cross the road to them. We cannot afford young offenders, nor can we afford young homeless, ignoring their begging for a restoration of grants for 16-18 year olds. In London a staggering 60 per cent of black youth are unemployed compared to 20 per cent of whites. All the Labour leadership has to say on unemployment is that they will review the Jobseekers Allowance, and that they have hinted at introducing their own forced labour schemes for the unemployed.

At every level of the criminal justice system blacks face discrimination. Black people are far more likely to be stopped by the police and arrested. Once arrested they are more likely to be charged whites for the same offence, and
Down with Fortress Europe!
Lille conference calls for end to detentions

Bill MacKeith

In detention centres across Europe, more and more migrants, including refugees and people without the "correct" immigration papers are being imprisoned.

Opposition to this is growing as over 200 people from 15 European countries at a conference "Barbed Wire Europe" organised by France's Federation of Associations in support of immigrants' workers (FASTI) in Lille on March 15-16.

Most of those present were involved in practical work assisting detainees. From Britain they included representatives from the London and Gas-wick Detainee support groups, Detention Advisory Service, the Refugee Legal Service and five from the Campagna to close Campfield.

Dr Christine Poupartin, who reported on her study on the psychological harm inflicted on detainees was also present.

Conference opened with a strong address from the President of the Assembly of the Nord Pas de Calais Region. She demanded that the arms trade, third world "debt" should be challenged and anti-colonial policies be pursued as well as the detention of innocent people being ended.

During the reports from different countries it emerged that British procedures, and visiting rights for humanitarian, legal and medical support groups.

The mayor of Ferney-Voltaire on the border with Switzerland told how his town successfully opposed the building of a detention centre near-by. He invited delegates to Ferney for a re-call conference.

Proposals for this and for international day of action will be considered by a conference steering group from the conference. A full report will be published.

Contact 01865 558445.

The Sans Papiers has become a mass movement of black people.

3000 people demonstrated through the streets of Lille, in Northern France, on 15th March, calling for the "regularisation" of "Sans Papiers" in France and in support of the Lille hunger strikers.

Most of the people were young and there was a lively grouping from Saint Bernard "Sans Papiers", whose hunger strike, last year, attracted mass support throughout France.

With the latest Government anti-refugee measures there are now estimated to be 750,000 "Sans Papiers" in France. Their existence is one in which they can not work legally, can not claim benefits, are supposed to report to the police and they are picked up and imprisoned for not having papers. It is an end to this persecution that is the main aim of "regularisation".

There were speakers at the rally from the national organisation of "Sans Papiers", from Saint Ber-nard, from the local Lille organisation and from the Asylum conference that was taking place that weekend.

It is plain, from the way that this movement speaks of the way the Western governments are squeezing the underdeveloped world through debt and arms sales to western trained dictators, that this is the strongest movement of black people in Europe at the moment, which is also black-led.

The march ended at the MNE building in Lille, which is occupied by the 20 or so hunger strikers, who had reached their 62nd day of not eating solids.

On March 15, a delegation from the International asylum conference in Lille visited the hunger strikers, to show solidarity. The hunger strikers had been forcibly removed to hospital for 2 days a week and they were desperate for support.

The British media have ignored these hunger strikes, which reflect the increased desperation of the "Sans Papiers".

Demonstrations are regularly held and these should be supported where possible and messages of solidarity can be sent to MNE Building, 23 Rue Gosselet, 59000 Lille, France.

Calls for "regularisation" should be sent to the Prefecture in Lille and the French Embassy.

"Sans Papiers" hunger strike gains support.

Rochester leads anti-racist protests

Derick Colbert

The hunger strike by asylum seekers incarcerated in Rochester Prison is highlighting the appalling treatment of asylum seekers, refugees and other migrant workers by the British government.

This is a key part of the year's racist immigration and Asylum Act which welcomes the rich Britain but imprisons poor black asylum seekers fleeing from persecution or poverty.

The hunger strike at Rochester, which ended on March 15, was in protest at the court's refusal to grant bail to detainees and the continued rejection of their request to reside in safety in Britain. A peaceful demonstration against the prison last year was violently smashed by riot police, and many of the detainees suffered injuries.

Two of the hunger strikers from Nigeria faced certain torture or death in their return into the hands of what the Nigerian High Commission in London has referred to as the "frightening arm of Nigerian justice". Despite the overwhelming justice of their case, the two men were locked in the notorious "basement" wing of Rochester prison in almost solitary confinement, seeing only prison and Home Office staff.

A tall Nigerian asylum seeker, air ticket and papers in order to join his brother in Italy, was denied permission to fly by the Home Office and told he should return to Tunisia -- from where he had fled persecution.

Initially bail was refused to all these men. They remained locked up alongside convicted criminals in degrading and dehumansing conditions. Pressure on the government through hunger strikes and by protests outside meant bail was granted to five hunger strikers, but many other detainees remain locked up.

At the end of the protest, the hunger strikers issued the following statement:

"When we started our hunger strike we thought we were alone. We were not. We would like to thank all those who supported us throughout the hunger strike, for the faxes and letters of protest sent to the Home Office. There were so many faxes of protest sent to the Governor of Rochester Prison that they disconnected and disconnected that number."

"We would especially like to thank the international support we received from the people of France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece and from people who faxed and wrote on our behalf. We send greetings to the refugees on hunger strike at Lille (Falais de Calais) and to the sans papiers in France."

"Calls for 'regularisation' should be sent to the Prefecture in Lille and the French Embassy."

OUT NOW!

A new 68-page pamphlet giving a comprehensive review of the impact of the Tory years on the trade union movement and a perspective for the left in the 1990s.

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Closure triggers Belgian fightback

Jurgen De Wit in Vilvoorde

The announcement from union secretary-general De Virville came like a bombshell to the workers at Van der Ende in Vilvoorde on 27 February. Only a few hours before the scandalous decision contracts had been promised to twenty or so workers. Now the entire plant was to be closed. Renault had decided to move production to France and Spain and in the process were asking for funds from the European structural fund in order to facilitate the transfer.

The unions decided to immediately occupy in order to keep the doors shut. They even held the gates open to prevent workers from leaving. The work stoppage led to immediate action in order to keep the machines in the plant. The same evening the first demonstration was taken to the town hall.

In total 3,100 jobs are threatened. Those at Renault-Vilvoorde had already paid a heavy price for flexibility, with management imposing a flexible working week of between 27 and 45 hours depending on what was on the order book.

This added to the unbearable pressure workers are being forced to increase productivity. The result at Vilvoorde was that workers were producing 53 cars per person per day – a grim record. Already a large number of workers had been forced out on early retirement – 500 in 1989 and 150 in 1992. An atmosphere of resignation, bitterness and repression prevailed at the meeting of workers held the day after the announcement.

The demands by thousands of workers was for solidarity and numerous delegations from many factories – Volkswagen, Citroen, Deloro, Mercedes and others from France.

The unions organised a response – a big assembly on March 2 with representatives from the unions of the other European factories to organise with a special meeting of the municipal council. On March 3 a successful demonstration took place at the town hall.

After meeting at 7am the workers’ massive bus convoy followed the route to Brussels, to meet up with workers from many other branches of industry. Workers from the bankrupted trans-De Clabecq steel mill were present in their hundreds together with delegations from Caterpillar, Volkswagen, Saab, Nova and many others. Around 4,000 people joined the demonstration, the slogans of which were opposition to cuts and unemployment and job insecurity.

A national car industry meeting on the March 7, a demonstration was called in Paris for March 14 just before the mobilisation on jobs for the 16th which had been called by Belgium’s two main union federations.

The leaders of the Flemish federal region have condemned Renault’s decision in nationalist tones. “This is a French decision" said the excellent Flemish workers” was the declaration of Van der Storda, Prime Minister of Flanders. He demanded a meeting with Louis Schweitzer, chairman of Renault.

The works council expressed their anger at the loss of the factory and the powerlessness of the politicians in the face of an economic choice even speaking of “savage capitalism" in such a way as to suggest there was such a thing as “social capitalism". The result was recognised that there was still widespread support for capitalist economic choice, but they still wanted the cancellation of the Renault group’s decision.

Important to their struggle has been the combined support of the eight European unions which organise workers throughout Renault. This, together with the continuing occupation and a prospective boycott of French goods means that a significant change is beginning.

Internationalism on the march, as car workers and other trade unionists joined forces to protest at the impact of the bosses’ Europe.

Workers’ solidarity shakes bosses’ Europe

March 11 1997 was a day that deserves to be remembered for a long time to come.

Thousands of German miners occupied pits in protest at the threat to their jobs from Kohl’s proposals to subsidise the industry. The sight of the Free Democrats, Chancellor Kohl’s coalition partner who are always championing the “free market" being locked out of their offices by miners is an image that the building was very uplifting.

Perhaps a false selling image from Bonn was when miners built a mock grave outside Kohl’s office with the inscription “Three, four, five, six, seven million unemployed, that’s not important. But the European Union is”.

There could be no doubt the miners were clear on whose altar the governments sought to sacrifice them.

At the same time Renault workers from across Europe were gathering outside the companies head office near Paris to object to the closure of the Vilvoorde plant in Belgium with the loss of 3100 jobs. The protest is Europe’s wide strike action on March 7.

Joint protest

Workers from Renault plants in France, Spain, Portugal and even Slovenia joined with 15,000 workers in protesting. Support of Belgian support of German, Ford and General Motors. This magnesium display of solidarity led to the media telling us that the “Euro-demo" had been born. While this may be because they have ignored previous events, certainly the mood is building.

The sharping competition in the car industry which has led to the closure in Vilvoorde is as much a product of the bosses’ Europe as the attacks on the welfare state and the withdrawal of subsidies from the German coal industry. The battle for the single currency leads to re-structuring of private industry too. Other signs of this are apparent with the decision of Mercedes and Rover to move into the small car market. The sell-out at Halewood meant that workers there were unable to test out the potential of international solidarity against this relentless drive for profits.

In the steel industry too the battle lines are being drawn. It is being predicted that between 50,000 and 70,000 jobs in the industry are under threat as more companies succumb to takeovers and cut capacity. This would bring numbers in the industry down to below 200,000 the lowest since the industrial revolution.

British Steel announced on March 21 that it would be “accelerating" its planned job cuts from the current 500 to 1000 per year but denied that it would be cutting 10,000 jobs over the next five years nearly a quarter of the workforce.

In Germany, Krupp is planning a £20m hostile, Anglo-American style take-over of Thyssen which would lead to the biggest firm in Europe. Thyssen say this will lead to the loss of 10,000 jobs but Krupp deny this. Despite the denial, Gerhard Crommer, Chairman of Krupp has to be protected from angry Thyssen workers by riot shields when he met them at Essen in March. Krupp workers have also joined the protests.

The European steel trade association (Euromet) explains the process rather clearly. A spokesman (sic) said “the restructuring process has become permanent with costs having to be cut to maintain competitiveness”.

The message of bosses and governments is becoming more blatant – the need to answer them has never been more acute. In building on the gains of the last weeks we can begin to do that.
Why Maastricht matters

John Lister

WORKERS across Europe are linking up to confront the austerity of the Maastricht criteria: but there are those in the labour movement who argue for a different approach.

From the political right comes the reformist argument that the "Social Chapter" of Maastricht offers a better improvement in employment rights and working conditions.

Trade union bureaucrats who years ago gave up any perspective of fighting against British employers for decent pay and conditions for us so that these things might be achieved through the back door of economic and political integration. In every workers' meeting, from the bossy's table, we are now apparently working on sheets of paper from Brussels. Others, like the TUC (in common with the CBI) go further, and link any improvement in workers' living standards to a future expansion of capitalism, supposedly to be ushered in by the launch of the Euro.

Reluctant to admit their real motives, many of these bureaucrats shelter behind the claim that action against Maastricht is somehow "nationalistic" or "Little England" in approach.

Unfortunately, for these Euro-reformists, the laws of the capitalist market, spurred on by the austerity package required for most EU states to meet the Maastricht criteria, are also driving a full-scale Thatcherite offensive.

Reformists were the first to see the flimsy protection of the Social Chapter contemptuously torn up by a management hell-bent on matching the levels of exploitation achieved under 18 years of Tory rule. German miners, too, have had to resort to old-fashioned class action rather than Euro-laws to defend their jobs.

The spread of unemployment across Europe - and the accompanying onslaught on benefits and on welfare state provision give little comfort to those who argue that the Euro will open up a new golden age of beneficent capitalist expansion.

But there are those on the left, too, who stand back, arguing that their 1992 deadline.

And it ignores the fact that if the Euro is established, along with a European Bank policing the actions of member states, the scope to force concessions from any genuinely left wing or socialist government is virtually non-existent.

While leftists who ignore Maastricht denounce the "nationalism" of those fighting back, they have no answer to the fact that the oppressive power of an unelected central bank would create new national divisions and conflicts between member states.

As millions of workers are becoming painfully aware, with their cherished pensions, jobs and living standards under attack, the Maastricht process is driving forces into a continental offensive.

If workers throughout the EU are not to be driven down to the conditions imposed in Tory Britain - and then progressively further in the name of competition with low-wage economies world-wide - they must unite in common struggle.

The light of the pound, the mark or the franc, or even against the concept of a single currency: it is in order to concert the effort of Europe's workers to take their case at our expense.

The only genuinely social Europe will be one in which the wealth and the means of production are socially owned and democratically controlled by Europe's workers.

TIE binds workers' struggles together

OVER 200 trade union activists from all over Europe, as well as delegations from the USA, Canada, Turkey, South Korea and Belarus attended a four-day international conference of the Transnational Information Exchange (TIE).

Entitled "Towards a New Transnational Labour Response to Lean Production and Neo-liberalism", the conference was called by TIE and "Express" on 6-9 March. It was well organised with simultaneously translated in 7 languages.

The starting plenary had an introduction by Rob Van Tilder of the University of Amsterdam. In a wide-ranging contribution he debunked the idea of "Globalisation" and showed how Europe is doing away with the rest of the world. Companies receiving outsourced work are often themselves major world companies!

Workshops were held on Turkey, Mexico, South Korea and Belarus and there were also sessions on politics in the trade unions, the battle to change trade union rules and the effects of the "Black Workers for Jobs and Rights" campaign.

There were other workshops on company unions, AND on the fight against partnership and participation programmes.

One of the workshops was led by workers from the NUMM/USA and CAM/Canada whose experience of which started off as exemplary plants for the employers but which have reneged on trade union terms of resistance by workers in the form of negotiated agreements.

The Canadian Auto Workers reported on their highly militant contract negotiations and about the importance of building a lively debate about outsourcing that arose from the fact that they had more or less successfully opposed it. One of the most interesting debates was on Works Councils, which several of the German delegates were involved with. The general conclusion seemed to be that membership of such councils was not a matter of principle and that it is important to have a genuinely independent organisation of shop stewards.

"Interest group" meetings took place at the conference on the Euro-Parliament, March elections, unemploy-ment, which Express are sponsoring, and on the Renault dispute in France.

TIE is the only organisation that is giving some Europe Trade Unionists a chance to tackle the main issues now facing trade unionists and it is important that socialists and trade unionists give their full support to these initiatives.

Which Europe can defend jobs?

Those striking and marching in defence of Renault workers at Valence have posed the question of a different Europe. Manuel Fernandez from Renault in Seville argued that workers must create a "Social Europe" instead of a "sweatshop Europe". He told journalists "This movement proves that workers throughout Europe can get together in the face of employers who just want to play the European subsidies game and be off as tax." Those politicians on the other hand who have raised the issue of Renault have concentrated their objections on the supposed infringement of European law that the closure procedures are meant to have had.

Such a stance has been given credibly by statements from the European Commission itself that it was displeased with Renault.

In fact European law gives workers little protection. The real concern is that workers, again in the heart of Europe, are increasingly beginning to look for a different alternative.

Rouge, the paper of the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, interviewed Eliane Vogel-Polsky, lecturer in social law at the Free Uni-versity of Brussels on some of these questions:

Rouge: Has Renault Infringed European Law?

Eliane Vogel-Polsky: Yes and no. Renault has not infringed the directive on works councils within European businesses, because its works council was formed before this directive came into force. Its functions are minimalistic and in line with the directive.

They relate solely to giving in-
formation on certain matters. The workers' delegates cannot demand information. The directive does not stipulate warning the unions of changes within a minimum timescale. Renault has not met its obligations in organising a works council after announcing the closure.

Renault's only infringement of the directive has been to inform the works council of its intentions. There is no real sanc-
tion in European law, though, as any infringement of the directive is just referred back to the law of the European member state.

Rouge: Some Euro-MPs repeat that Renault shows the need for "more Europe" - that is stronger powers to intervene. E. Vogel-Polsky: "More Europe", but which Europe? That is the question.

If the directive on large scale redundancies in case of unemploy-
ting of companies which are not in financial difficulties is implemented, closures would be very expensive for companies. If a new transnational Europe existed, the closing of industries would be more difficult. This would create more favourable conditions for trade union struggle, for the reduction of working hours, for example.

You can imagine European law which would be more benefi-
cial to workers, but it will never be more than a minimum de-
mand, and should not replace social struggles. In this capitulation system, we need to fight for jobs, as the trade unionists are doing at Renault.

Socialist Outlook

ReNAULF: dispute over closures has opened eyes across Europe, showing how flimsy is the "Social Chapter"
German resistance confronts Kohl’s austerity drive

Hans-Jurgen Schulz reports from Germany

A miner expressed the general mood on the demonstration in Bonn when he said “we’ve stayed quiet too long.” The willingness to resist is growing against a background of falling real wages, the disintegrating of the welfare state and rising unemployment (4.7 million), 400,000 demonstrated in Bonn on the 15th June 1996. In October a hundred thousand struck successfully when it was proposed to reduce sick pay to 80% of wages. Now there is resistance from individual sectors, initially the miners and building workers. Coal mining receives 10,000 million marks of state subsidy a year. In the “free market” very little can be done without subsidy. In Germany this amounts to 185,000 million marks. This money is now supposed to be drastically reduced. At the beginning of February 200,000 people demonstrated against this in the Ruhr region.

When plans became known on March 7 that 66,000 out of 90,000 hi-tension coal miners would lose their jobs in the next few years, an undeclared general strike spontane- ously broke out in the two mining regions, Ruhr and Saar. All pits were occupied and closed. Miners blocked roads and motorways and demonstrated through the towns.

They knew that if they continued to protest peacefully, they would be without a job. So they drove to Bonn. On the March 10, 20,000 demonstrated, blocking the streets and the party offices of the Social Democrats (SPD), junior partner in the coalition government and rabid “free marketeers” and breaking through the cordon around parliament.

In each case the police fired their tear gas (in Germany the individual states are the police authority, the responsible state, North Rhine, paid for the police, and the federal government). Chancellor Kohl refused to negotiate “under pressure from the streets’. With difficulty the trade union leadership persuaded the sceptical miners to leave Bonn. However, they only went as far as nearby Cologne, and 40,000 awaited the outcome of the negotiations on an improvised mass camp site.

The government obviously feared that further sectors could be drawn into the struggle. However the union leadership did not organise any kind of solidarity.

Under this pressure a compromise was formulated: the subsidy would not be reduced by as much as planned. Over the next 3 years the number of jobs will fall by 48,000, but nobody will be sacked. The miners accepted this because nobody will be fired.

The building workers’ situation is more difficult. One and a half million work in this sector. Because 400,000 foreigners work on building sites either illegally or at lower rates, unemployment is high (400,000) and wage rates are coming under pressure.

In addition, this winter “bad weather pay” (if work is not possible because of bad weather, particularly in winter, building workers still get paid) was scrapped, and workers were made unemployed instead. The employers had agreed that the wage rates for east German building workers would be raised to the west German level. Suddenly, they changed their minds and insisted on an 8 per cent reduction in wage rates.

All this led to an explosive mood. Starting on the March 10, the union organised a week of action in Berlin, a centre of building activity. Union activists were also mobilised to Berlin. All week between 8,000 and 15,000 building workers demonstrated every day.

The actions went further than the union planned and they turned a blind eye to them. “We know nothing, but what you must” said an internal circular.

An activist declared “We are many, we are angry, and we can do things which the union won’t”. Activists and refugees over mobile phones which couldn’t be over heard.

Streets were blocked in Berlin too. The massive building site on Potsdam Square was occupied. The unthinkable happened: there were calculated acts of sabotage causing considerable damage.

A building trench ran with water because the safety mechanism of the tank, and fire extinguishing equipment broke down. Migrant resistance was carried out for the first time in a long time.

The battle of Gorleben

Hans-Jurgen Schulz reports from Hamburg

20 YEARS AGO THE salt mine at Gorleben, in a thinly populated, isolated region 150 kilometers south of Hamburg were chosen as a store for highly radioactive waste. A massive “intermedi- ate store” was built there, secured like a fortress. This area, which once voted conservative, has been the stronghold of resistance against atomic politics ever since.

As the atomic power stations have long been in operation – the last was opened in 1989 – the oppo- sition has been concentrated around the unresolved question of the final storage of radioactive material. Waste intended for Gorleben was stored until now either in the indi- vidual atomic piles or in the reprocessing plants in The Hague or Selkirk.

In the last three years the resis- tance has been able to slowly re- build a mass basis, despite the fact that it is not supported by any party or trade union. The Social Demo- crats (SPD) tolerate atomic politics despite the fact that they have been for withdrawal from it for more than a decade.

The Greens content themselves with public declarations, but don’t even support the movement finan- cially. The resistance is a real grass roots movement, but not at all spontane- ous, but rather well organ- ized and highly motivated.

The core of the opposition is citi- zens initiatives in the region around Gorleben (farmers, petit bourgeois and intelligentsia), small groups of veterans of the anti-nuclear move- ment of the 1970’s and above all very young people who are prepared for action. The movement is an expres- sion of a new youth radicalisation.

At the beginning of March, 6 wagon loads of atomic waste were brought from southern Germany to Gorleben. There were demonstra- tions against it in many towns, in some cases of a few hundred, in a few cases of up to 3,000 people.

On the weekend before the transport about 30,000 people as- sembled in northeast Germany and the region. 575 farmers participated in a parade with their trac- tors and combine harvesters.

The transport of the waste took place under extreme security measure- nes. There was much sabotage of railway installations. In the area around Gorleben, roads were tunneled under, railway lines pulled up and barbed wire built. One road was blocked by 70 tractors. About 30,000 police were mobi- lised to break the resistance, 19,000 of those in the region around Gorleben. The authorities announced a ban on demonstrations on the route of the transport, which was simply ignored.

The transportation took place during the week when people are tied up at work and school. Despite that over 10,000 people swarmed to arrive in the region. Some con- stituted themselves on to railway facilties and held the train up for hours.

Gorleben has no railway connec- tion, and at the point where the waste was transferred to heavy lor- ries 7,000 people occupied the road for a whole night in temperatures of minus 5c. The next morning the road was cleared after a struggle lasting several hours with the de- ployment of water cannon and police batons. Thousands tried to block the rest of the route.

They were only able to delay the transport for a time. The police went in brutally. 665 demonstrators have been charged to far. However, the re- sistance has not been broken, it will become stronger. And it became an example for others: a few days later the miners and building workers also ignored the rules of legal action.
Benn supports Euromarch message of hope

TUC ‘Day of Action’ May 28

TUC policy on the Euromarches is full of contradictions.

Having denounced the Euro-
march and circulated affidavits urging them not to support it, the TUC are supporting the Amsterdam demonstration and sending a coach load of young people to join it.

Presumably the Amsterdam demonstration on June 14th is far enough away from London and the general election to make it acceptable.

The distinction, however, is bi-
zare, since the Amsterdam dem-

Internationalism theme of dockers’ rally

IN ANOTHER show of their remark able solidarity and tenac ity five hundred dockers and several thousand supporters marched through Liverpool last Saturday demanding reinstatement.

There were banners represent ing a cross section of the trade union movement and dockers support committees.

The rally at the end reflected the tremendous internationalism which the dockers have generated in the course of their struggle.

Dockers leaders spoke from as far apart as Germany and the USA representing the international solidarity which has taken place and gained over the weekend was a meeting of the international solidarity committee which the dockers have built.

Speaker after speaker talked about the need for international solidarity.

The speaker from Germany stressed that struggles were European wide and that unity within the continent was essential.

Jeremy Corbyn linked this to the European marches, saying that workers faced not only the challenge of the global economy but also the threat of the single currency.

If the single currency was introduced, he said, it would involve a massive effect on the welfare state.

He said that the march would be coming through Liverpool from Fazakerley on its way to Amsterdam to protest at the single currency and the convergence criteria at the Intergovernmental Conference.

The claim of the rally and the rest of the march, as far as the TUC was concerned, is that the dockers were organizing a mass rally for the Euromarches when it came to model of cooperation.

Arthur Scarril raised the is sue of the role of the TGWU, given that the dockers are getting massive support from around the world but nothing from another union besides.

He called on the TGWU leadership to mobilise their members in support of the dockers and get the dockers back to work.

strengthening the British leg

The British leg of the Eu ropean marches continues to gather strength.

A meeting of the steering com mittee of the marches on Saturday 24th of March finalised most of the details of the routes of the marches from Preston and Jarrow through to Birmingham to London.

The march from Preston will start on Saturday May 17th and from Jarrow on Monday May 19th.

The marches will converge in Birmingham on Saturday May 31st for a demonstration through the city and then march south together reaching London on the afternoon of Thursday June 5th.

There will be a range of activities and events in London on Friday with a central London demonstration on Saturday afternoon with a rally and a social on the evening.

The march is expected to be large and involve a wide range of groups and organizations.

The marchers are expected to arrive in London on Saturday afternoon and will conclude their journey on Sunday morning.

The rally will be held at Hyde Park and will feature speakers from across the political spectrum.

The event is expected to attract a large turnout from supporters of the march and those opposed to the single currency.

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Rwanda: getting at the roots of the genocide

TOO LITTLE is known about one of the biggest genocides in human history more than three years after its completion.

In less than three months, between 700,000 and over a million Rwandans were exterminated simply because they were or were thought to be Tutsis.

Several tens of thousands of Hutus were killed at the same time; either political opponents or anyone anyone who refused or might have refused to join in the genocide. Before the killing took place, the population was estimated at about 7.5 million.

From few exceptions few have yet been brought to trial for this crime against humanity. Their families are thousands of hundreds of them - are contending with terrible material and psychological conditions.

The direct complicity of (in particular) the French and Belgian authorities is being covered up or is simply denied. The deadly role of the macroeconomic policies imposed by the multilateral financial institutions - World Bank and IMF - in supporting the regime and all, the survivors are being forced to pay for the weapons that were used to massacre their families and neighbors.

Eroic Toussaint report:

THE ANTI-TUTSI genocide was planned beginning in the eastern part of Rwanda and spreading to the whole country. The leaders of the Habyarimana regime which exiled a genocidal ideology at every level of the system. The army increased eightfold in size. The minimum criterion of the Interahamwe militia ("those who fight together") in 1992 was the finishing touch to the arrangements.

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At the end of 1993 the killing ma

The massacres started as early as 1990. According to estimates of the 2000 people had already been massacred. Each action was preceded by a meeting, often organised at the highest level, at which the targets were painstakingly and extensively selected. The number of massive massacres were put at the killers' disposal: petrol coupons, vehicle licences, and passes to the municipality - and weapons. The gendarmerie or the army provided the operation's cover. In January 1993 the Rwandan Federation for Human Rights published a report that stated, "The preconditions are present for genocide." During this whole preparatory phase, General Habyarimana's regime was able to maintain international support especially from France. The Interahamwe militia was armed by French troops stationed in Rwanda. According to Janvier Afrika, whose family were massacred in the early 1990s, "The French taught us how to catch people and how to execute them with French foreign policy."

Belgium on the other hand, the former colonial power, was non-existent in Rwanda. It provided military support and logistical support until the genocide began on April 7, 1994. Habyarimana regularly visited the royal palace. When King Baudouin died, Habyarimana performed the funeral ceremony (an honour which Mobutu did not have). The IMF and the World Bank party Habyarimana created, was largely financed and supported on the international scene by the Christian Democratic International and the Flemish and Walloon Christian Democratic Parties in Belgium.

France greatly increased its military aid at the beginning of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (FPR) launched a military offensive against Rwanda in October 1990. Before the mass mobilisation of para-troopers stationed in the Central African Republic to support the Rwandan regime and evacuate foreign residents.

Savoy

More than 1000 French troops remained in Rwanda for several times between October 1990 and 1993, even though Paris saw the genocide was directed from there. When the Arusha accords were signed in January 1993, accords for a democratic transition between the Habyarimana regime and the FPR - M23, for the first time in its history, signed a military agreement with the Rwandan regime.

On 6 April 1994, the signal was given to move the genocide when a missile destroyed the plane bringing Habyarimana and his Burundian partner from a negotiation session in Dar-es-Salaam. In a few hours hundreds of Hutu political opponents were assassinated according to a minutely prepared plan. The prime minister's body was assassinated. Ten Belgian para-troopers, members of MINUAR - the UN International Force were murdered while trying to defend themselves. The MINUAR command let it happen.

The provisional government that took over held its meetings in the Rwandan embassy. The massacre of opponents and the launching of the genocide began a few days later.

Several hundred thousand people died in a few weeks. At the end of June 1994, the genocide was an accomplished fact. The figure of a million dead is commonly given.

Operation Turquoise was launched by France ten weeks after the beginning of the genocide in order to allow what was left of the Rwandan army and the genocidal militia to reach into Zaire, bringing hundreds of thousands of civilians.

The policies imposed by the international financial institutions, would not adopt policies with the IMF. They recommended that the government cut its public spending, accelerate the process leading to genocide. The negative effects of these policies have been ignored in the tragic outcome of the genocide.

In the early 1980s, when the Tutsi World crisis broke out, Zaire (now known as Rwanda) had very little debt. While elsewhere in the world the World Bank's policies of structural adjustment, creditors and one of the negative attitudes towards Rwanda.

Dicatoral

The dictator regime in power since 1973 guaranteed that Rwanda would not adopt policies with the IMF and the World Bank. It would not follow the "structural adjustment" dictated by the Bretton Woods institutions.

It was seen as a potential obstacle in the region that were clinging to old notions about independence and progressive change (neighboring Tanzania, for example). During the 1970s and 1980s, the World Bank and IMF provided major support to the government of Yahya Jnr. whom Habyarimana appointed as Prime Minister of Rwanda.

These were meant to invert the Rwandan economy more tightly into the Western model, securing its potential exports - coffee, tea and tin - at the expense of crops produced for domestic consumption. The model worked until the mid-1980s, when first tin prices collapsed, then coffee prices, and then the coffee and tin prices, Rwanda, for which coffee was its main export earner, was hard hit by the US-provoked break-up of the coffee cartel.

Several weeks before the FPR launched its offensive in October 1990, the Rwandan authorities signed a 5-year agreement with the IMF and World Bank to set in motion a Structural Adjustment Programme. This took effect in November 1990, whereupon the Rwandan franc was devalued by 67 percent. In return the IMF granted credits and hard currency to enable the country to keep up its payments on foreign debt.

This made it possible to keep the balance of payments in balance. In March 1991, the government received 175 percent increase in petrol prices, up by 7 per cent. By selling these imports on the national market, the government was able to finance the pay of the troops, whose numbers were growing geometrically. The SAP forecast a cut in government spending. There was a wage freeze, a layoff in the civil service, but part of this was transferred to the army.

While import prices were rising, the purchase price paid to coffee farmers was frozen, as required by the IMF. This meant ruin for hundreds of thousands of small-scale coffee producers. These farmers and the most impoverished city-dwellers were contracted from then on a permanent source of recruits for the Interahamwe militia and the army.

Ninety-seven percent of the population lives in the countryside, and 20 percent of the peasant population has less than a half hectare of land per family. Between 1982 and 1994, there was a massive process of impoverishment of the majority of the rural population, with an impressive accumulation of wealth at the other extreme of society.

According to Professor Jef Masson, the richest 10 percent of the population took in 20 percent of rural income in 1982, 41 percent in 1992, 45 percent in 1993, and 51 percent in early 1994. The catastrophic social impact of the policies dictated by the IMF and World Bank and the fall of coffee prices on the world market (which also had something to do with the Bretton Woods institutions' policies) played a key role in the crisis. The enormous social discontent was channelled by the Habyarimana regime towards genocide.

Weapons seizure

Both the hard currency and the flow of the credit mechanisms given by the IMF and World Bank enabled the Rwandan authorities to finance massive purchases of weapons for the genocide. Military spending tripled from 1990 to 1992. The World Bank and the IMF sent several thousand 'designer' weapons to the government and, in return, the experts stressed various positive aspects of Habyarimana's austerity policies but threatened to suspend payments if military spending continued to grow.

Profitably for the arms dealers, the Rwandan crisis has spilled over into Zaire.

Get the facts, from around the world

International Viewpoint, monthly publication of the Committee for Conscientious Objectors (COC), a non-commercial publication. Carries all the background information you cannot find in the bourgeois press. IPv's normal subscription price is 25 per year, but British readers can subscribe jointly to IPv and Socialist Outlook for just £25 per year. Send your details and a cheque payable to Socialist Outlook to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UW.
Pakistan: countdown to chaos

1947-1957 Multi-party system with Muslim League and Republican Party.
1969-1971 Ayub Khan forced out by popular movements and surrender to new army chief, General Yahya Khan.
1988-1990 Zia dies in plane crash, Benazir Bhutto's PPP comes to power.
1993-1996 Nawaz Sharif's government dismissed by the President, Benazir Bhutto returns to office. November 1996, PPP government dismissed by President. The caretaker government is headed by Prime Minister Mohammad发现自己

Socialist Outlook: What has happened to the Islamic fundamentalist parties which were so influential in Pakistani politics and seemed to define the agenda of mainstream secular parties? The Jamaat-Islami boycotted the elections, although the Jamat-Ullami-Islam did win a few seats.

Azad: Ideology has taken second place for most people to the sheer struggle for day to day living. In Pakistan people pay lip service to Islam but very few want an Islamic state. They know the record of fundamentalist movements in areas where they have influence.

Secondly, the new Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif appeals to the same layer that is most supportive of these fundamentalist parties especially in the form of a more genteel and the petty bourgeois middle more generally. He has captured this vote. Interestingly the rhetoric of these movements has also changed. They are less strident in their use of Islam as ideology and now focus on social justice questions. In fact they no longer use the Peoples Party in its left on a number of issues.

It is the state of the economy which pre-occupies people. Many voted for Nawaz Sharif on the basis that as a businessman he would many more for a country where at any rate he couldn't be any worse than the previous governments. I don't think that the economy can be turned around by the new regime but that is the popular perception. At present it appears that fundamentalist movements have lost some of their force in Pakistan's history and its raison d'être as a state created for Muslims. These parties are not going to go away. Their electoral representation has always been low but these cadre based parties are the best organised. Over the past few years they have expanded their activities throughout the country and in every sector of society. They have cells in the armed forces, in trade unions and in the army. There is a good competitor in the railway workers union and in the Pakistan International Airlines union.

The fundamentalists have changed with the times. When I was in student politics, the student wing of the Jamaat banned student demonstrations, because these would import de-aesthetics and materialism into the narrow cultural or political sphere. On the other hand they rally popular music. Television is no longer frowned upon. Like other fundamentalist movements in the world they have a welfare wing which draws them political support. This has brought them into contact with the poor and they are
the most vocal on social questions. When - as frequently happens - in the course of any campaign and among common people, it is the youth wing of these parties which marches to the head of the procession and bears a large part of the burden. If the Left doesn't get its act together, unite in its ranks and redefine its role as tribunes of the people for economic justice, social justice including women's equality, land reform and so on the Jamati will reap the benefits.

Socialist Outlook: The westward media lavished a great deal of attention on the former international cricket star and anti-corruption activist Imran Khan. They were intrigued by this Oxford University educated socialist and now son-in-law of the billionaire business man Sir James Goldsmith. However Khan’s Tehrik-I-Insaf wasBuffeted and polld very poorly.

Azad: By highlighting the issue of corruption which was the sole plank of his party's electoral campaign Imran Khan reentered the hands of the establishment. He was given a lot of airtime to present his case which was very unconvincing. The_reporters cast to see how many questions could be slapped on the stump. In other words he was furthering the agenda of the military.

Hidden corruption

The establishment sees corruption only in politicians because they are the least of the establishment. The corruption of the bureaucracy and the military is hidden. People are encouraged to become politicians or bureaucrats.

They are being persuaded to lose belief in the electoral process. The LHC can only strengthen the argument for a political solution to the power vacuum. Imran Khan had nothing to offer in his political programme. He was beholden to the charisma of his personal charisma. He didn’t have a team or a vision.

Whatever he may think he is not a man of the people. He is aloof and arrogant. The allegations made about his fathering a child which he has refused to accept as his own was justified.

He keeps company with the most corrupt individuals in Pakistan. He has bought his way to his wedding but at his election rallies his local policemen are bussed upsidedown. He was always going to be a marginal figure and it was astonishing that he was given the time which gave him prominence.

Socialist Outlook: One of the measures of the caretaker government before the elections was the creation of the Council for Defence and National Security. This body provides for an institutional role for the President and the Armed Forces.

Azad: The Council will act to defend the President from attempts by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund for the reduction of the military budget which consumes 40% of national income. All economic policies has to be vetted by this body.

This means they can strike a bargain with multi-lateral lending institutions. Otherwise, legislation and the powers of the constitution are aimed at controlling the military into accepting the policies of the state onto the poor. Another dimension is that under the aegis of this Council the President has improved his own standing vis-a-vis the office of the Prime Minister and the political parties operating in his hands.

There are tensions between the Chief of the Army Staff, General Janghiar Karamat and the President on this score. General Karamat may suspect the President is trying to undermine the role of the military through the Council. The military has at some point given its life like grip over the country and the Nawaz Sharif government recognises this.

Socialist Outlook: The caretaker government nominally headed by Meraj Khalid as Prime Minister appointed a senior Pakistani economist and serving vice-president at the World Bank, Shahid Javed Burki as Special Economic Advisor. This un-electected technocrat also introduced an economic reform program which has been inherited by the new government. This is a disturbing development.

Azad: The World Bank and Pakistani government have a long relationship going back to the early 1950s when economic policies were worked out by the Harvard School of Economics.

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Campaign grows to free Roisin

International solidarity exposes British “justice”

Terry Conway

FOLLOWING successful protests across the world in support of Roisin McAleary on March 8, International Women’s Day, British authorities have been forced to concede that she will be released. The 20-year-old woman, who was arrested in October 1987, was due to be released when it is born in a few weeks.

While the decision to allow her to keep her child is an important step forward, it is vital that the campaign maintains momentum to secure her release.

McAleary has been imprisoned since November 1986 for supposed involvement in the bombing of the Osnabruck bombing in Germany. She is likely to become the only Category A prisoner to have ever given birth in prison and the civil liberties implications of her treatment is beginning to raise objections from many who have taken little interest in Irish politics.

Over the past months she has been strip searched hundreds of times despite the fact that in most occasions the visits she has been allowed have been “closed” — that is to say that a prisoner across from floor to ceiling has been separated from her visitors.

On March 7 her status was changed from Category A high risk to Category D, a step that she and her supporters regard as a result of the growing campaign in her support. This will mean a reduction in the number of strip searches and more privacy of meetings with other women.

The German government have made clear that they have no objection to her being bailed — it is the British state and the RUC who are responsible for her incarceration.

Her solicitor Gearard Fiercule told a packed London meeting organised by the Irish republican prisoner support group that “if she were charged here tomorrow there would be no requirement to prepare to defend the case; there isn’t a case” Fiercule also explained that she had never seen a prisoner treated so badly — some treatment she said is a violation of their human rights.

Hundreds of bouquets have been delivered from supporters across the world but only a token number were allowed into the prison. Roisin was shown up to Women’s Aid refuges — making her own commitment to the primary area of her political activity.

The all-women platform at the rally included contributions by Sheilah Kizinger from the Birth Control Trust, Bernadette McAleary, Ann Rosier from Women and Ireland and many others. Entertainment was provided by the Women’s Choir and by Southall Black Sisters.

The latter adapted songs they have sung in their campaigning for the release of Kinneret Allowalla, Sarah Thornton and other women imprisoned after defending themselves against domestic violence.

The ring-along choruses which resulted may not have told Roisin’s story in the most tuneful way, but they were an important part of the day’s energy and strength.

This was one of the most lively and committed International Women’s Day mobilisations in London for some years. Other actions took place in Germany, Ireland, Norway, Australia and the USA.

Let’s build on the momentum to demand Roisin’s release.

Roland Rance

VIOLENT clashes between Palestinian and Israeli troops in Bethlehem, Hebron and Jerusalem over the decision of the Israeli government to build a new settlement on the outskirts of Jerusalem are said by the press to “endanger the Oslo peace process”.

Armed clashes between settlers and Palestinians in the Middle East over the past few years will know the Oslo agreement has not brought peace to Palestinians, nor to Israel.

Rather, by recruiting the leadership of the FLO to act as Israel’s mercenary army in the suppression of the Palestinian struggle for liberation, the agreement has reinforced Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and crucify Jerusalem.

Israelis arrogate sets Oslo accords

as political, centre of Palestine. Until 1967, it was the largest town in the West Bank, the commercial heart of the Palestinian economy, and the centre of communications, not only in the West Bank but with Transjordan. However, since the 1979 Israeli occupation of which israel occupied those parts of Palestine — the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Old City — it had not been set in 1948, the municipal border of Jerusalem has been greatly expanded, and the entire metropolitan area of the city.

As a result, many thousands of Palestinians have been required to obtain special residence permits in order to remain in areas where their families have lived for centuries, not only in the centre of Jerusalem but in villages miles away.

In recent months, these controls have been tightened: in some cases, Palestinians in villages annexed to Israel have been arrested for stepping from their front doors into Israel without the necessary permits, which they have been denied. These developments from the West Bank and Gaza are legally permitted to enter Greater Jerusalem.

Stepped up

At the same time, Israel has stepped up the pace of building plans, with a new wave of Israeli settlements now threatening the Palestinian towns of Ramallah and Bethlehem, both at the risk of increasing Israeli encroachment.

This expansion is part of the continuation of Palestinian territory. By denying Palestinian access to Jerusalem, Israeli soldiers have denied those Palestinians remaining in the city and its surrounding villages from the rest of Palestine.

Communication between the north and south of the West Bank, and between the West Bank and Jordan, has been broken. Travel from Hebron to Nablus — a distance of only 40 miles — has become a major test of initiative and endurance, over poor quality roads. Israel has not yet made several months to establish its authority over the popular committees established by the uprising.

These committees were led by armed groups, and the latter have been formed of the struggle against the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem, camps, kibbutzim, and prisons.

At the time, the PLO still had the leadership of a fighting, armed leadership, however compromised, and it commanded mass support in Palestine. Since then, Arafat has reached a deal with the Israeli occupiers, and has requested the Israeli agent in policing the Palestinians.

Desperate

The Palestinian masses, increasing their demands, and new inhabitants, have not yet established an alternative government.

The organisations of the Palestinian left, the Popular and Democratic Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine, weakened and demoralised by decades of policies compromising with Arabs, seem unable to offer such an alternative. In this vacuum, it is understandable that many are attracted by the new, the suicide bombs of Palestine.

It remains to be seen whether the latest events will peter out, or will develop into a new uprising. In any case, we can expect further clashes in the occupied territories, and further blows in the Israeli heartland.

The task of building a new leadership which can not only halt the extinction of the settler inhabitants but take on the task of the liberation of Palestine has never been more acute.

What has been longed for in recent weeks is the reinstatement of the Palestinian police force, designed to surround Greater Jerusalem. In 1967, the Palestinian city of Jerusalem was fully occupied by Israeli forces and its Old City — which it had not been set in 1948, the municipal border of Jerusalem has been greatly expanded, and the entire metropolitan area of the city. As a result, many thousands of Palestinians have been required to obtain special residence permits in order to remain in areas where their families have lived for centuries, not only in the centre of Jerusalem but in villages miles away.

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Socialist Outlook

THE MEDIA delighted in showing the contrast between Tony Blair's stage-managed conference last year and the Labour conference in 1976 when Denis Healey, as Chancellor, was almost forced off the platform. With Labour likely to form a government for the first time since 1979 it is important to look at what happened last time round.

Labour fought the February 1974 election on its most radical programme for 30 years, including a programme for the conflict between the Labour government and the unions over Labour's attempt to introduce anti-union laws (In Place of Strife) in 1969 and the conflict between the unions and the government of 1975-76.

But from the start this 'contract' was given a different emphasis by different people. Union leaders insisted there would be no return to the income policy, while party leaders said that future policy would require 'closer union-understanding' - the basis for talks on a voluntary incomes policy. 

Came into office in March 1974, despite being a minority government, with sincere aspirations for reforms, Wilson's government imposed a freeze on private and council rents, introduced limits on price council stores and in subsidies on basic foods. They set out to re-nationalise Britain's terms for entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) and for Labour to introduce a wealth tax on assets above £100,000. A new Industry Department (run by Eric Heffer and Tony Benn) was created.

A White Paper on changes guaranteeing equality for women (which became the Sex Discrimination Act) was produced. 

Growing awareness that the government was setting out to resolve the financial crisis of capitalism at the expense of working people led to a rise in industrial unrest in Spring 1977.

Labour having an overall majority of 3, with persistently high inflation, low investment rates, heavy foreign debt and periodic currency crises, the government steadily slipped away from its left commitment.

Orthodox

From November 1974 onwards, Denis Healey became an 'orthodox' chancellor - no more talk of an 'irreversible shift of wealth' to the working class, but instead the beginning of extensive cuts in local authority spending.

The original idea of the Social Contract, at least in the minds of the Party leaders, was that if the government clamped down on price increases, improved the social wage (pensions, benefits etc), then the working class would voluntarily submit lower pay demands.

This informal bargain became phase I of a formal Social Contract in July 1975, which introduced a voluntary limit of £6 a week on pay rises. This received the overwhelming support of TUC Congress and of Labour Party conference in October (though against strong opposition from the CLP, where the Left was then strong). £6 was in fact interpreted as the now for all increases. While it appeared to contribute to a reduction in inflation the Retail Price Index stood at 30% in May 1975, but only 14% in June 1976, it also meant a 2.5% real cut in pay over a year.

At the same time it was obvious that the other side of the bargain - equal sacrifices for all was not happening either. In the July 1975 budget Healey took £102 million of pay cuts off wages and £150 million off the public sector in pay restraint.

Stage I of the Social Contract became phase II, with a 4.5% norm (again voluntary) for pay increases leading to a 3% gap between prices and earnings.

During these first two years of the formal Social Contract unemployment increased above 1 million. Ministers and union leaders paid lip service to the 'unacceptability' of this, but did nothing about it.

The dominant (and determinant) issue throughout the 1974-79 government was the economic recession. The guiding principle for the Labour government was its 'Social Contract' with the unions and working class, of which the agreement in February 1975 was the first version. Initially this was posed as action against "the decisive dominant role of irresponsible private hands and crude market forces". 

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The original idea of the Social Contract, at least in the minds of the Party leaders, was that if the government clamped down on price increases, improved the social wage (pensions, benefits etc), then the working class would voluntarily submit lower pay demands.

This informal bargain became phase I of a formal Social Contract in July 1975, which introduced a voluntary limit of £6 a week on pay rises. This received the overwhelming support of TUC Congress and of Labour Party conference in October (though against strong opposition from the CLP, where the Left was then strong). £6 was in fact interpreted as the now for all increases. While it appeared to contribute to a reduction in inflation the Retail Price Index stood at 30% in May 1975, but only 14% in June 1976, it also meant a 2.5% real cut in pay over a year.

At the same time it was obvious that the other side of the bargain - equal sacrifices for all was not happening either. In the July 1975 budget Healey took £102 million of pay cuts off wages and £150 million off the public sector in pay restraint.

Stage I of the Social Contract became phase II, with a 4.5% norm (again 'voluntary') for pay increases leading to a 3% gap between prices and earnings.

During these first two years of the formal Social Contract unemployment increased above 1 million. Ministers and union leaders paid lip service to the 'unacceptability' of this, but did nothing about it.

The idea of another stage of pay restraint. Both TUC Congress and Labour Party conference (by 2:1) rejected stage 3. Parliament eventually voted down the sanctions element of the policy.

The first challenge came from the petroleum and road haulage unions who went on strike in February 1976. After a nine-week official strike they won a 15% increase. There were followed by petrol tankers and road haulage drivers, an unofficial strike in the Colas' sector low pay strikes which began at the end of January 1979. NUPE continued this after the other unions involved settled (although itself eventually settling for the same amount) and it dragged on until the end of March. The two unions representing 250,000 civil servants struck from February 22.

Concordat

Despite this clear rejection of pay restraining by workers, in the run up to the General Election the Labour Party and TUC leaders drew up a 'Concordat' in early 1979, which set out 'voluntary' restrictions on picketing and secondary strikes.

The cause of Labour's failure (and subsequent defeat at the polls) was not the limits on conflict within the confines of capitalist economics.-faced with a recession, their 'solution' was to dash any commitment to 'social justice' and insist that the working class pay for the crisis through a fall in living standards, unemployment and cuts in public spending.

Healey went cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund (the cause of that boosting in 1976) for acceptance of their terms. This went even greater cuts because of the interest which needed to be paid to the private sector whose living standards in late 1978 were no better than in 1973, and who needed a 14.5% increase in pay to keep pace with inflation was not enthusiastic at the thought of re-electing the Labour Party, and who had lost its big idea of a 'social contract' between government and the working class.

While union leaders, under pressure from their rank and file, eventually rejected the Labour government's solutions, they had no alternative of their own. Erosion of working class movement over the years of Tory devastation were the result of this historic failure.
From dream to romance

Brian Gardner reviews
Anthony Minghella's film -
The English Patient

"The English Patient" is in the
tradition of the great epics of
British cinema. One thinks of
David Lean's grandiose proj-
ects of several decades ago, in
particular, Lawrence of Arabia -
for this is also a film in
which much of the action takes
place in the desert and
which the hero must traverse it
in a journey which means life
or death.

Adapted from Michael On-
dasie's 1992 Booker Prize-
winning novel of the same title, it
has as its starting point the inter-
married lives of four temporary oc-
cupants of a bombed-out villa in
Tuscany at the end of World War
Two.

After the medical convoy
in which she is travelling runs into
a landmine which kills her lover,
Hana, the Canadian army nurse
stays behind with the pilot. His
body is so badly burnt he is unrec-
ognisable, and he is known only as
the English patient.

Seemingly he himself is unable
to recall his true identity but when
Caravaggio, the sometime thief
and intelligence officer enters the
scene, even though the English pa-
tient continues to dissemble, it is
plain that the two men recognise
each other.

Meanwhile Hana falls in love
with the Sikhapper, Kip, who is
deployed to deal with unexploded
mines and bombs in the villa and
its environs.

Here then are four of our cen-
tral characters but whereas as in
the novel, the slow unravelling of
all of their histories comes to ex-
plain their tragic present, in Ming-
hella's screenplay, only Caravaggio
and the English patient have any
clear past.

The film emphasises the story of
the titular hero and in doing so
turns Ondasie's story into some-
thing which is nearer to romantic
adventure than the poetic dis-
course of the novel.

Bringing the story to the screen
has inevitably diluted its complex-
ity but this is not to say that Ming-
hella fails. His screenplay is in
many ways a marvel, translating as
it does Ondasie's dream-like nar-

ative and internal dialogue of
character into something which
works cinematically.

But this is not straightforward
lyricism or film-making and the
way in which the whole comes to-
gether through the editing
amounts to a dream-like and
dreamlike illumination of the past as it
clarifies the present.

The burns and bedridden pa-
tient is revealed to be the explorer,
Count Laolo Almasy, who though
Hungarian, is possessed of English
aristocratic bearing, speech and
manners. In the course of trying to
rescue his doomed lover
Katharine, whose husband has
crashed their plane in the desert,
Almasy encounters with the Brit-
ish military leads to his being mis-
taken for a German agent. This in
turn leads to the downfall of his
own plane and the tragic confis-
cation.

Always at Almasy's side is a
 COPY OF AN ANCIENT BOOK - HEGODEN-
toos' Histories of the Greeks and Bar-
brians, the central part of which is
the account of the conflict between
the Greeks and the Persians. Her-
ndon's interest in the culture of

people who were not Greek often
had him labelled as a 'barbar-

ophone'.

Into this volume, Almasy in-
serts extracts from other works
and fragments and artefacts from
his own life so that symbolically
the original story is converted to
his own.

In Ondasie's novel, Almasy
talks of his time spent in the des-
tert thus:

"There were rivers of desert
tribes, the most beautiful humans
I've met in my life. We were Ger-
man, English, Hungarian, African
- all of us insignificant to them. I
gradually we became nations. I
came to hate nations. We are de-
formed by nation states."

And it is the conflict between
such states which leads to his own
tragic undoing.

Though the film has received
a plethora of critical plaudits, my
own view is it is not quite the mas-
terpiece we have been led to ex-
pect. It is nevertheless vastly
superior to most of the product
which currently on offer on the com-
mercial circuit.

Minghella's direction and John
Seale's cinematography refer back
to the best of Lean.

There are also some stunning
performances from Juliette Bino-
che as Hana, Willem Dafoe as
Caravaggio, Kristin Scott Thomas
as Katharine and most breath-

ningly of all, Ralph Fiennes as Al-
masy/the English Patient.

As his attraction to Katharine
grows, we see that Almasy's initial
coldness towards her has been
nothing more than a disposition
which he has feigned in a vain at-
tempt to shield himself from erotic
involvability.

The consummation of the affair
leads not only to a betrayal of
Katharine's husband but also to
betrayal of the nation states to
which it might be assumed the ex-
plorer has some loyalty.

Overblown

Thus the ending of the central
character's story reduces simply to
a romantic notion of love being
placed above loyalty to country
and morality. Somewhat one-
dimensional and overblown, this is
not, I think, quite what Ondasie
originally intended.

So yes, go and see this film for
its beauty, its technical perfection
and its fine performances.

On the other hand, if you have-
't already done so, read the book
as well, for in this, while the story
of the patient remains central, it
is also much more clearly a metaphor
for scars inflicted on all of the
characters and which change them
forever.

Redemption
Song on tour

Banner Theatre have are one
of the few alternative theatre
groups to have survived into
the 90s with their unique form
of theatre.

Banner Theatre's latest show
highlights two crucial questions
of contemporary injustice - the
sacked Liverpool dockers and the
Asylum and Immigration Act.

The play was written by
African-American author Cheryl
Martin and follows the story of a
Janitor, 18-year old student from
the Ivory Coast. Her flight to
Britain from rape, torture and
almost certain death at home is
rewarded by imprisonment in a
detention centre.

As usual in Banner's produc-
tions, it is their use of multi-
media that makes so clear that
this is much more than the pow-
eful story of one individual but
the story of countless thousands
of black people whose voices are
rarely heard.

The links between the strug-
gle of asylum seekers and the
Liverpool dockers are likewise
made through these mecha-
nisms.

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Romance - and betrayal - are in the air for Ralph Fiennes and Kristen Scott Thomas
IN THE NINETIES, millions of women and men have taken part in the struggle against the evils of capitalist and the bureaucratic dictatorships. This reflects the fact that humanity faces widening dangers. Ecological, military, social and economic devastation affects millions of people.

Many more people recognise the barbaric nature of capitalism. In a situation where the inability of the social democratic and communist parties to provide socialist solutions is becoming clearer, the task of creating new leaderships remains ahead. Socialist Outlook is written and sold by socialists committed to this struggle. We are the British supporters of the worldwide Marxist organisation, the Fourth International. We stand for the revolutionary transformation of society and a pluralist, socialist democracy world-wide.

The overall goal which we pursue is the emancipation of all human beings from every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation and violence. Socialism must be the first step on the road of ordinary people, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist, ecologist, anti-militarist and internationalist. It must abolish wage slavery and national 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 consciousness and consciousness needed to defeat capitalism at the decisive moment of crisis.

The struggles 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 also guided around the principle "None so fit to break the chains as those who wear them". The whole working class needs to fully commit itself to these struggles. Furthermore we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these organisations which respect their legitimate autonomy.

By simultaneously building revolutionary organisations in each country and a revolutionary International we aim to guide and 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.

AS VERONICA Fagan notes in her article on the release of the Bridgewater Three, "we should not believe the press when they tell us that this is the last great miscarriage of justice". Your list of other innocent victims of British courts is far from exhaustive - and the list is still growing.

Samar Alami and Jawad Borteh are among the latest casualties of a miscarriage of justice. Samar and Jawad, Palestinian postgraduate students living in Britain, were convicted last December, after a highly political trial, of "conspiracy to cause explosions" at the Israeli embassy and the Zionist headquarters in London, and sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment, to be followed by deportation.

In highly prejudicial and emotive terms, the media have portrayed them as Islamic fundamentalists motivated by anti-Zionist bloodlust. To those who know them, this characterisation would be laughable if it were not so damaging.

Samar and Jawad are secular activists, critics from the left of Yasser Arafat's leadership of the PLO and of the Oslo agreement. Samar in particular has many Jewish friends. In a bizarre example of legal logic, her real interest in Jewish matters was used by the prosecution as further evidence of a lot against the Jewish community.

Samar and Jawad are entirely innocent of the acts for which they were convicted. Indeed, the actual bombings in London were never even mentioned in the charge sheet. The only person charged with responsibility for the bombs, with whom they were allegedly in contact, was discharged on the judge's instruction after he accused her of collapsing entirely.

The conduct of the trial, the contradictory nature of the evidence, the judge's biased summing-up, the crude attempt by Israel to intimidate jurors, and the total absence of any evidence linking Samar and Jawad to any explosions or conspiracy in this country all provide grounds for the appeal which their lawyers have lodged.

Being Palestinian, like being Irish, is not a crime, but to the British police and courts, it might as well be.

We will continue to campaign for their release and vindication.

Roland Rance and Sue Spilling

Friends of Samar & Jawad
BM FOSA London WC1K 3XJ

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No victory on HE pay

Union branches across the country were already preparing to step up the dispute. The ballot resulted on this offer—overwhelmingly in favour—reflecting the fact that if you ask people a particular question (i.e. do you accept a better deal in general? Asking it again implying you?) you are likely to get a particular answer.

When asked a matter of weeks previously if they were in favour of industrial action over continued falling levels of their pay, the same members of staff overwhelmingly said yes to that question too. In my article on the dispute I did not mention the phrase by default, despite it being used as a headline above the Klimestone & Pixton letter. But now it is too late...

Paul Urwin, London

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This text is a natural representation of the content of the document. It has been formatted to improve readability and consistency with the style of the original text. The content includes various articles and letters discussing political and social issues, with a focus on workers' rights, internationalism, and the fight against capitalism.
Pressure grows for education spending boost from Labour

Roy Leach, NUT Executive (personal capacity)

With the General Election only a matter of weeks away, this year’s NUT conference comes at a crucial time. By far the most important of the teacher unions and the only major union to be meeting in the election period, the 1000 plus delegates gathered in Harrogate are uniquely placed to put increased pressure on Labour as education continues to be central to every party’s election campaign.

It is significant that Gillian Shephard turned down the controversial invitation to address the NUT conference whilst David Blunkett has likewise declined to address the NAS/UWT. Only the moderate ATL is to be ‘graced’ by all three education spokespersons.

As an opinion poll commissioned by the NUT graphically illustrated, teachers have shifted their voting intentions massively in favour of Labour – from only 30 per cent in 1979 to 59 per cent now (at the same time the Tories share of votes has fallen from over 50 per cent to just 15 per cent).

Expectations of an incoming Labour government are high but are New Labour set to deliver?

The answer to this decisive question hinges, in part, upon decisions taken at Harrogate. The right wing – holding a perilously slender 3 seat majority on the National Executive but facing a hostile conference – are desperately seeking to avoid an early confrontation with the Labour government that they have sat back and waited for, for over 17 years.

Where once they would have sought to substitute lobbyists of Parliament in place of calls for industrial action, even that approach is seen as too dangerous: Labour MPs, whilst in opposition, could readily agree that education was underfunded and that Tory policies harmed working class children. Once in power, however, a lobby of a Labour government would pose uncomfortable demands and expose their hypocrisy.

Calls for a mass demonstration before the autumn statement, along the lines of the October 19th demonstration last year, have been gradually accepted by the right wing as a major success. Unable to reject it outright the approach is to make any organisation conditional upon local branches underwriting the excessive inflated cost (rumoured to be approaching £1 million pounds).

The past couple of years has seen the NUT leadership (including part-time General Secretary Doug McAvoy) trying to tie union policy into that of the Labour Party. The calling off of the SATS boycott and a weakening opposition to league tables and baseline assessment of 3 year-olds are but the most obvious manifestations of an increasingly cosy relationship between the bureaucracy and Blunkett.

It is essential for the Left to reinforce the political independence of the NUT, enabling it to give support to the pent up frustrations and expectations (fuelled by Labour itself) that “things can only get better”.

True, a Labour government will not extend selection – but there is no commitment to undo that which already exists (Grammar schools being the most obvious manifestation). The very limited commitment to reduce class sizes for 5, 6 and 7 year-olds – to be funded by phasing out the assisted places scheme – is looking increasingly shaky.

Not only don’t the sums add up (honouring the extension to prep schools and further delaying the release of money) but without a commitment to a legally enforceable class size maximum or the abolition of the Local Management of Schools (LMS) it is hard to see how the policy can be delivered.

Likewise, the abolition of nursery vouchers will remove the bureaucratic nightmare but the resources released won’t buy for the necessary expansion of nursery education to provide for all four year olds.

This could only be achieved by allowing local authorities to increase public expenditure but Brown and Blair have already committed themselves to continuing with the Tories fiscal policies and capping.

No doubt there will be a honeymoon period where Labour’s manifesto promises will be put to the test; but it is necessary to put increased pressure on Labour to deliver far more - the role of the NUT left is to ensure that the union is prepared to wage the campaigns necessary to do this.

That is why the outcome of the NUT conference is so critical.