Air traffic ... railways ... 
Tube ... hospitals ... schools, 
prisons ... Blair’s team 
treads old Tory path, as

STOOGES FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR!

The final days before the end of Parliament saw a mad 
dash by ministers to ram through their Bill for the privatisation of Air Traffic Control services. 
They did so in the teeth of opposition from their own 
back-benchers, air traffic control unions, and public 
opinion – effectively ignoring the views of anyone who 
does not have a cash incentive to support the sell-off.

They are flagging off a key service rather than invest in 
it future, regardless of the safety and other implic-
tions, despite the fiasco of rail privatisation still dominat-
ing the headlines.

Blair’s team are not just weak; they are bitterly hostile 
to the public sector and those who work in it. That’s 
why, like Thatcher before them, their answer to almost 
any question is privatisation.

This winter will see the nonsense of millions being 
dished out of the NHS to pay for treatment in private 
hospitals, which in turn peach vital staff from the NHS!

A handful of back-benchers have been brave enough 
to resist. But the unions and the whole labour move-
ment must step up the fight against Blair’s privateers.
**Socialist Outlook**

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**Fightback against Bradford cuts**

Thousands of council workers are taking to the streets in protest against the proposed Bradford Council cuts which would lead to 370 workers losing their jobs. The proposed cuts include closures of libraries, youth clubs, community centres and day nurseries. Workers have been in dispute with the council for many months and now they are mobilising to block the cuts.

**RMT Conference crisis - but left moves forward**

**GLLP: eclipse of London Labour Left**

**Terry Conway**

Another step was taken on the road to creating a new left-wing, pro-union, pro-self-organisation (of a special conference type) union on 10 November. East London MSF unionists, who have been forced out of MSF, have launched their own AEEU and have a series of meetings planned. The meetings will be held on 4, 10, and 17 December at 7pm and will be held in various locations in East London. The meetings will be open to all who wish to participate.

**Susan Moore**

November 11 was not a good day for the Labour Party movement. The Government of London UNISON, with Martin's help, won the local election by a landslide. Most significant in many ways, the result is the breakdown of the trade union vote. Martin won the majority of trade union votes (56%), but it was soundly trounced in the Conservative section, polling only 23%.

This outcome comes not only months after Labour Party Conference in which the government's defeat over pensions was only possible because of the trade union vote - the majority of constituents represented at conference supported the government despite the result of last year's 50% rise. This is a minor, but round of political democracy, with the general election only a few weeks away, with the left side of the field advancing on the basis of majorities in the CLPs and where the leading were much more likely to support the leadership. It is a graphic demonstration of the changes the Blair reforms have brought on the base of the Labour Party. Apart from the vote for Chair, other aspects of conference were more positive for the left - again massive majorities for anti-Syria resolutions, for an election to the NEC and for the election of local Labour. Both were passed with large majorities - though fewer voted for the latter. An emergency resolution from the CWU has been passed in British Telecom was also agreed.

The workshop on organisation passed a resolution that trade unionists in Livingstone's readmission to the party, and would be successful in keeping off the conference floor. Other elections for the GMC will see some good left candidates elected - particularly in the trade union section again. But November 11 may well be the first in a series of actions on the ground not much more in committees.

**Greg Tucker**

A CONGRESSional crisis has erupted in the RMT after Flag Hopkin's resignation. The union's national executive committee, closing down the conference. Acting in the absence of the RMT's Assistant General Secretary, Vernon Hodge, then withdrew all the union's members from the executive committee - but their plans have now been thrown out by the membership. The RMT conference has been held in a series of internal national elections. The interesting thing is that Hodge has been thrown out by the membership, to be replaced in the New Year by the left's candidate, Phil Brown, a former executive member. 13 Boston had stood on a clear platform opposing Labour's transport policies and for the liberation of the union's political rights. The resignation of campaigns and candidates who actually agree with the RMT's policies of nationalisation of the railways.

At the same time the left on the Executive has been strengthened by the resignation of Alex Gordon to represent the South West. A leading trade union activist, Gordon has been central to the campaign for a better safety record in the New Year.

The background to all this is that Jimmy Kinnock is seriously ill. All left RMT activists would wish him well, in his role and in his personal life, who can effectively put a lid on the mounting anger of rail workers at the government's abject failure to deal with the crisis. It is this which reflects on passengers and staff. For rail staff working under severe pressure, facing the righteous indignation of the public and the mass support of the trade union movement, the crisis is clear - privatisation.

But Labour has refused to accept the role taking any part of the railway back - should the crisis in the subsidy the privatisation has led to. For rail staff working under severe pressure, facing the righteous indignation of the public and the mass support of the trade union movement, the crisis is clear - privatisation. But Labour has refused to accept the role taking any part of the railway back - should the crisis in the subsidy the privatisation has led to. For rail staff working under severe pressure, facing the righteous indignation of the public and the mass support of the trade union movement, the crisis is clear - privatisation.

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Prescott's real crime: against the climate

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott's attempt to blame French negotiator Dominique Voynet for the failure of the world climate talks at the Hague last month has been well received, but his own role was definitely criminal.

The real story of what happened at the Hague was that Prescott's task was to try to stitch up a deal acceptable to the American ruling class—a deal which could in all probability have led to the destruction of the planet.

If we have been told many times over recent weeks the US is the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases—28% of the whole globe's outpourings of the deadly emissions that, among many other events, have been linked to the destructive weather conditions we have been suffering in Britain in recent months—then the fact that the effects of those storms have been devastating for those whose houses have been flooded here, how much worse is it for the hundreds and thousands of people in far poorer parts of the globe who have been subjected to extreme weather for far more extensive periods?

In the face of all this, the deal done at Kyoto was completely inadequate, a tinkering at the edges. Kyoto promised a 5% reduction on 1990 levels—while scientists agree that a reduction of between 60-80% is what is needed.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the UN's own body of experts, has said that "potentially tens of millions of people"—including in some instances the whole of some island populations—will be displaced by rising sea levels over the next 65 years.

American society is the car society par excellence, but contrary to popular myth the reasons for this have rather more to do with the power structure of industry and government than the supposed greed of American workers.

In large parts of this huge continent it is impossible for people to move about—to work, to shop or to socialise—without driving.

Public transport is even less available or reliable in the USA than it has been in Britain in recent months. And many people who have jobs have to travel huge distances to get to them. But the steep rise in emissions is in the US since Kyoto is a product of industrial consumerism, not individual consumers.

More than that, the motor industry, and even more importantly the oil industry, are the key backbones of the American economy, and therefore closely tied into the US political elite. Blair's crawling to the captains of these industries has nothing to do with his American visit.

Despite all this, it would seem on the surface that the American honeymoon would have at least some element of support from the Bush administration. Can they make the profits on which their existence depends if their actions lead to the destruction of their markets through death and disease?

What can possibly be the rationale for their cynical proposals that carbon credits be sold without a limit or a cap, making it impossible for governments to take actions to reduce emissions?

What can be the logic for proposing that ancient mixed forests be destroyed and replaced with fast growing single species plantations—which will lead to the faster erosion of precious top soil and therefore less fertile soil as well as more "natural" disasters?

The problem is that to ask these questions is to make one rather large miscalculation. For one of the fundamental characteristics of this rotten capitalist system is that it is incapable of long term planning—even when it fails to do it this fatally destroys not only its own basis but the very continuation of human existence.

For them creating a market from environmental destruction is more "smart" than saving the planet.

This is why we need to build mass protests against this criminal irresponsibility before the Bonn summit next May—and also why we need to persuade those in the environmental movement who think they share a common interest with the predators in seeking to save the planet that they are fatally misguided.

Hackney fights back!

The scene in the London Borough of Hackney where a Labour-Lib Dem coalition is challenging the approach to privatisation of the mid-80s where housing cuts in jobs and services in local government was a regular part of most local political debate.

And hearing reports from campaigns in West Yorkshire—often focused hugely against privatisation—it's not yet seen the light of the fight back is sharpening up.

Hackney council has slashed £725,000 in housing budgets, £630,000 from the money for new social housing, and is pushing through privatisation of the refuse service from which it had previously renounced. At the same time, despite promises during the recent Hackney council election, it has decided to sack ITEN, the private company that runs the council's housing benefits service. ITEN's incompetence has led to thousands of people being given the wrong benefits or assessments of more than £25 million in unpaid benefits.

But at the same time many things have changed since that previous round of battles—many of which is why in many places town hall steps have not been the constant site of demonstrations through cuts and attacks on conditions have been relentless in the intervening years.

Last time round there was opposition inside most council chambers and the demonstrations outside led by an alliance of the labour left and council trade unions. This time there are few critical voices amongst Labour councillors—and even from Hackney. To give her due, local Labour MP Diane Abbott has been vociferous in her opposition to the council's cuts in Hackney, taking a particularly prominent stand in support of the successful occupation of two of the borough's nurseries which were summarily closed by the borough Labour-Lib Dem council.

Council trade unions took a far better beating through the defeat of the rate-capping struggle and the constant round of cuts that followed. It is to the credit of its current leadership, especially branch secretary John Page that his UNISON is playing such a pivotal role in today's struggle to defend conditions and services. The UNISON branch is ballotting for strike action against the cuts and is confident that they will be successful.

Chief Executive of Hackney Council, the hated Max Caller has said that he is not surprised that the Trade Unions are calling for industrial action but is disappointed "particularly as they chose to do this prior to the consultation we are currently engaging in with staff. Strike action is not going to resolve our financial difficulties and will certainly do little to improve our efficiency or service to our residents." John Page has responded: "It is a bit rich that Max Caller comments that we started a ballot for Strike action in advance of consultation. At the time that the ballot was initiated, the council had already decided to cut terms and conditions, to remove the voluntary severance scheme and the timescales for implementation demonstrated they had no plans to meaningfully consult with us."

The decision to hold a ballot has already forced management to negotiate.

A resolving "Yes" vote and solid strike action in defence of our terms and conditions can break the cycle of crisis and cuts. Our campaign continues to gather momentum.

Many previous anti-cuts campaigns saw the formation of umbrella organisations under the rubric "Fightback"—and today's campaign in Hackney has done the same.

Common to both incarnations are the council trade unions and community organisations. Sadly the Labour left is now represented by only a small number of individuals. On the other hand the left outside the Labour Party, which in the previous period often abstained from these mobilisations are today at their centre.

The Hackney Socialist Alliance (HSA) has been particularly crucial to such mobilisation against the administration making it present felt through banners and leaflets while marching in unity with anyone prepared to fight the devolution of the borough these proposals represent. Through the unit-union approach HAs is going from strength to strength—recruiting 41 new members on the November 25 demonstration.

Also noticeable has been the presence, particularly on the November 6 protest outside the town hall of anarchists and libertarians who led the dancing in the rain that gave that evening particular energy.

George Monbiot's address on November 29 illustrated that the anti-capitalist movement has brought new layers into action, which previously were divisive of local government. Strike action is likely to come in the form of direct union and community organisations. Sadly the Labour left is now represented by only the next major focus for the campaign.
Nicole summit

A superpower in search of a leadership

Nerousness reigns in the highest spheres of the EU as the Nice summit approaches. The setback to the Danish referendum, rejecting involvement in the single currency, followed a series of failures. These include:

- A fall in the value of the Euro and the inability of Wim Duisenberg and his crew at the European Central Bank (ECB) to develop a coherent policy.
- The failure of a coordinated reaction to the EU to the fuel crisis.
- And the failure of the “anti-fiscalt” intervention in Austria, cynically utilized to inaugurate “the birth of the political European”.

All of these are symptomatic of deeper problems: once again the development of the EU is getting bogged down.

The “benefits” of the Portuguese presidency from January-June 2000 (full employment through the new economy) have rapidly evaporated. They were not enough to develop a united Community spirit within the EU, sufficient to enable the interests of the national states to be subordinated to the interests of the single currency.

Public opinion is proving a disappointinment to the social-democrats, shuttering their dreams. At this time when the economic conjuncture is stable, and many governments are making concessions, workers in a number of countries, instead of thanking their generous rulers for their promises, have moved into action.

The Danish “no” vote has not unleashed a tempest, either on the financial markets or in the channels of the media. The Danish community has long since come to terms with the idea of a single currency, but its democratic conviction is at stake.

Yet each EU government and political leader has had to deal with the fact that the referendum shows that half the population of the member countries are determined to resist an enormous ideological bombardment over several months, with huge resources behind it.

In fact, the Danish “no” vote also brings to mind the nosedive of stagnation during the last European elections, and the backlash the result inflicted on the social democrats, the principal architect of the Amsterdam treaty.

The EU enjoys a very weak legitimacy in all the member countries (except the poorest countries and regions, which receive, for the moment, the muma of subsidies).

Against this background, the EU governments are confronted with a series of major problems: how to become a European power, by sup

Blair and Chirac agree on how to tackle a pint, while Commission President Romano Prodi (must) hangs on to powers plementing the single currency with a European army and the political-economic union of the continent.

It is in this framework that institutional reform is posed, to control the economic and social upheavals intrinsic to the “enlarged and powerful” EU, which will affect the relationship of forces between member states, but also external relations – protecting the presence of the EU on the world stage and its rivalry with the US.

The Nice Summit will have to deal with sizeable problems, which rights which will be debated at Nice is an emaciated attempt to give a new connection to two elements of the European state under construction: the EU, and the nation-state. It actually involves a step backwards on social policy.

It will give a “European” face to the legal and fiscal agenda of the nation-states which try to dismantle the gains of the social movement.

However, indirectly, and involuntarily, it raises the problem of the “new national” state. It poses the problem of a new European Constitution.

Facing this historic problem, a consequence of capitalist globalization, the informal summit at Barroso presents a new spectacle. Everything turned around squabbles about posts (who and how many) in the Commission or the Council of Ministers.

Behind this there are two basic ideas, which are never clearly articulated. What sort of Europe, federal or confederation? What institutions are needed to create a real political leadership? Debates around Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) are certainly not very exhilarating but how to bridge them lies the biggest issue.

Abandoning majority rule is not simply a question of functional efficiency in the face of enlargement. In abolishing the right to vote in favour of the QMV, one enters a regime of supranationality, of adoption of legislation by country in the minority of states to implement the decision. And this is proposed for the Commission – the real decision-making power.

There can be no imagination that the big three (Germany, Great Britain, France) will ever be up in a minority on any essential question. That would immediately lead to a crisis.

So the weighting of votes has to be organized around the numerical preponderance of this trio (not inside the Council, using demographic and GDP as the supposed justification. What is suggested is that the trio, which now have 10 votes each, will become 30, as would the “other states”, therefore 27, and so on.

This would have a direct effect on the composition of the Commission where the weighting is based on the numerical preponderance of the trio plus Spain and Italy, each have two commissioners, the others the country only one. What if the EU enlarges to 20 or more? They say it would be impractical for every member country to have a commissioner. They suggest a smaller Commission, say 10 or 12 commissioners, would be more coherent and efficient. This would mean countries turning to have a smaller commission.

But this problem is that a Commission without the big countries would be weakened in its dealings with the Council of Ministers.

China’s solution is that each country would be represented in the Commission, but a sort of Presidency of the Commission, in which the big countries would sit, composed of the biggest countries.

The only problem is that it becomes possible to extend qualified majority voting. The countries of the trio would be a new center area of their national sovereignty in exchange for some renationalization shared between them.

What is at stake here is giving a legal, institutional basis to the mechanism that already exists, which is the real motor of the EU: the bilateral (exceptionally tri bilateral) preparation of the summits by...
France, Germany and Great Britain. Between the summits there would be consultation on important positions. This mechanism would be thus incorporated into the Treaties.

The European Union's ambition of becoming a superpower without being a superstate (as Blair and Chirac say - though Schroeder is more discreet on this subject) has not been taken as a real political leadership which would move towards the Council of Ministers. The EU would head towards a confederation, abandoning the federalist perspective, which implies a coordinated and maximum transfer of the prerogatives of the states towards the supranational level.

In this scenario (which Chirac tried to impose on the smaller countries at Maastricht), the centre of gravity would move towards the Council of Ministers. The EU would head towards a confederation, abandoning the federalist perspective, which implies a coordinated and maximum transfer of the prerogatives of the states towards the supranational level.

A confederation is distinguished, by definition, from a federation or a unitary State, by the narrow number of supranational prerogatives - currency, defence, law and order, questions of citizenship. Greater "strengthened cooperation" would be without the possibility, creating a more advanced and more coherent centre of gravity, to which the other states would be tied in on the basis of a more limited constraint. This is already the case for monetary union, which Britain, Sweden and Denmark aren't part of, for the Schengen treaty, and for the setting up of the euro.

One can imagine that some Eastern countries will join the EU without participating in monetary union, without applying the single market (which has been the only "substantial" impact, and without being present in the ECB).

The contradiction between the institutional deepening of the EU and its extension is a pressing feature of the Union, as particularly played out by the tactical needs of the Union of countries playing the game of balance of power and by superficial journalists. In reality, there is substantial agreement between the trio (and others like Italy) on this perspective. Even if this agreement is shot through with contradictions, these are secondary.

What concerns these two dynamics is the difficulty the British government is facing in joining the monetary union. Blair has to make rhetoric concessions to public opinion. But Blair really does need a "change of cap" in favour of membership.

The referendum on the Maastricht Convention is an initiative by Britain (with France), on the basis of their common preferences towards monetary union and their common irritation with the US. If this question is resolved, the other problem, that of the political management of the ECB, could be tackled.

The EU and its vanguard - the three key countries - has the perspective of creating a political leadership in tune with their European, indeed global ambitions. It is impossible to over-stress the threat that the British "change of cap" could be the signal for the gains of the working class.

It is necessarily to do everything possible to stop this move, and it is possible. The mobilisation of the labour movement and progressive public opinion are decisive.

Stop right there! As you are closing doors of an omnipotent European Council!

It is necessary to know that the crucial decision must lie with the peoples of Europe;

We must determine, through public debate, through a decision of the people, the fundamental bases on which they wish to live together: from the Pole to Greenland, and from the Atlantic to the Urals.

Steve Metcalf

Railroad boss Gerald Corbett seeks a safe way to travel by rail before being humiliated on the rails. (Right) Prescott with too fog, why should he worry?

Since privatisation, 6,000 former British rail infrastructure workers have been made redundant. No wonder they can't maintain the network!


Exclusions: no way to build socialist unity against New about!

Alan Thornton and Dave Packer

Nick Long's letter (left) raises a number of issues which are central to the current debate about the building of the Socialist Alliances. In particular it focuses attention on their political character, and the need for people from diverse parts of the left to work together within them if they are to be developed into an effective socialist alternative to Blairism.

It is unfortunate, however, that Nick Long has decided to defend the disgraceful witch hunt against the SWP in Leeds. The Leeds Left Alliance (LLA) has denied membership of the SWP to be full members of the LLA and have debarred them from standing for office within the Alliance (SO95).

Nick Long euphemistically describes this anti-democratic outrage as "defining the political boundaries" of the LLA. Blair and Mandelson want to "define the political boundaries" of the LP by drumming out the left. Such an action by Miliband would rightly be condemned by the whole of the left.

Democracy is not an optional extra for the Socialist Alliances to be discarded when there are a few scores to settle or a few revolutionary socialists to be nobbled. It is an integral part of the Alliances or they are nothing.

You can't fight the right-wing with the bureaucratic methods of the right-wing. An SPL mark II would go nowhere.

Nick Long invokes his experiences in the Lewisham Socialist Alliance to justify his defence of the indefensible in Leeds.

Yes, the Lewisham Alliance is a divided Alliance, and this has led to divided campaigns. But his description of the roots of those divisions is at least highly controversial with all the political organisations involved other than the Socialist Party (SP).

Note that he says that all the independents in the Lewisham Alliance share his view. The picture he paints of the SP and the independent working in harmony whilst the rest simply doing their own thing is a rather grotesque caricature from all accounts.

As welcome as the recent victory of San Dinas in the Peyps by-election is, it is very welcome indeed, the fact that the Socialist Party imposed her as a candidate on the Lewisham Socialist Alliance.

At the meeting to adopt a candidate she firmly refused, as a member of the SP to stand as anybody other than a candidate of the SP – i.e. under the SP's election banner of Socialist Alternative/Ian Page team.

What does promote harmony? What happened to local democracy? Or any kind of democracy?

Unfortunately it reflects a long and dishonourable tradition on the far-left in Britain. Democracy is a very good thing as long as it does not interfere with our 'rights'. For socialists there is a higher principle than simply being in the best position to get votes in a local election.

And this is not the only place where the SP have imposed a candidate – or presented an ultimatum as to who it would be, which amounts to the same thing.

At a recent Socialist Alliance public meeting in Walthamstow the SP speaker Simon Donovan announced from the platform that he would be standing in Leyton Forest, and the Socialist Alliance would simply have to decide whether to support him or not.

It is not surprising that there are divisions in the Lewisham Alliance under these conditions. It was a credit to the others in the organisations and individuals, that they decided to support the SP's candidacy, even though they had been given no say in deciding the candidate.

This all flows from the unilateral declaration of the SP (in the Socialist) that they would stand against their own candidates in pre-determined constituencies. This is irrespective of the views of any local SA group in those areas, either now or in the future if one is launched.

This is not the way to build any kind of alliance – even a federal one. It is another practice borrowed from Blairism. Nick Long does not refer to these imperatives or give his view on them.

Nor does Nick Long make the case for his assertion that the SWP was attempting to take over the Leeds Left Alliance.

This is because no such case exists. But in any case, if a judgement has to be made about the conduct of the SWP in the Alliances, it needs to be made on the basis of their general practice.

In our experience they have not attempted to take over alliances, even in places where they have the numbers to do so.

On the contrary in most places (though not all) they have been careful to involve independent organisations and have sought to be in a minority, often a small minority.

They know that a successful SA intervention will build their organisation, of course, because of the resources, both human and material, that they will bring to it on the ground. But there is nothing wrong with that. The whole left will grow if successful in building the alliances to their potential in the present period.

The LLA should realise that without organisations like the SWP involved (and the SP as well) there will be no credible general election intervention, certainly not one which could meet current requirements.

The rest of the left, those organised and those independent, are not strong enough to do it.

Like the SP and the LLA, Nick Long talks about "the move towards centralisation" arising out of the Coventry conference at the end of September which adopted a protocol for the general election campaign. As the ISG has argued previously (SO95), this is a gross misrepresentation of what took place at Coventry, and it is being systematically promoted by the SP.

In fact Coventry produced an extremely federal election protocol, which put no restrictions on local alliances.

They are free to stand under a different name to the Socialist Alliances whilst being a part of the Socialist Alliances if they want to. They can have their own local profile and local demands and the candidates can make their own political affiliations.

This has been made clear to the LLA repeatedly by the officers of the Socialist Alliance nationally, in case there is any problem of interpretation.

In fact the Coventry protocol creates a far less centralised structure than the Leeds Left Alliance has itself, if the way its executive was able to act against the SWP is an indication of its powers.

And, by the way, the Green Socialist Network AGM actually voted for affiliation to the Socialist Alliances, not
against as Nick Long claims. It was only after a long series of strikes on the SWP by Mike Davis of the LLA and then a successful appeal of the vote to be re-adjourned that it narrowly changed its mind.

This, however, is not a real debate. The real objection, of course, that the majority had with the SWP was not organisational or constitutional but directly political.

I
n the statement sent out with the ballot paper for the postal vote their main objection to the SWP was that the SWP are an organised party with an elected leadership, and - worse than that - it has a revolutionary perspective rather than a reformist one. This was absolutely explicit.

The same point comes through in Nick Long's letter, although not so clearly. He refers to the "alienation left" and "those who are seeking to build a centralised and directly democratically accountable organisation which can become a healthy new revolutionary Labour party". He counters these to condemn (such as himself) who want to build "a broad electoral structure".

But what about the SP? Doesn't he realise that the SP is itself a centralised and directed political organisation?

The ISG, he writes, "appears to be clearly drawn into playing a minor role in a united revolutionary party, rather than leading it into building a broad socialist party which can be at the centre of left politics".

The ISG has published its views on this a number of times (e.g. S034). Yes, since we are a revolutionary organisation, we do want to build a new united revolutionary party. However, there is more to it than that.

In the present situation the existing divisions on the left are not only damaging to the cause of socialism, but to the pressing need to organise a fight-back against the capitalist offensive and its main political representatives in Britain today - Tony Blair and the Labour government. Without a broad-based, nationally co-ordinated Socialist Alliance we don't believe a socialist voice will be heard in this general election - or an alternative to Blairism built.

This would be a defeat for the working class in Britain - and for our struggle as revolutionary socialists.

It is for this reason that we advocate building today the broadest possible, inclusive alliance - not a revolutionary bloc. This is not a unanimous view in the SA, but we and others (including the SWP) are opposed to imposing a revolutionary programme on the SA, or constructing a new "united revolutionary" party artificially.

We do not know in advance how the SA will develop in the future, but we do not believe that any decisions about its future should be made in a one-off appeal and under a much wider range of independent conditions. Any decisions should be made with a full and democratic discussion.

In our view there is no parliamentary road to socialism, therefore we do not advocate one. And we believe that this implies a particular type of party - one that is organised along Leninist lines to carry through revolutionary change. Consequently we are not for a recreated "old" Labour.

The political conditions do not exist in Britain today, however, in which the diverse left which is breaking from Blairism can be drawn together into a new revolutionary party. There may, in the medium term, be the basis for bringing together some of the existing revolutionary organisations into a bigger and more effective organisation, still working within a broad alliance, but that is a different issue.

We therefore seek to build a broad and inclusive alternative to Blairism, which can contain the revolutionary organisations along with sections of the Labour left, the trade union left along with environmental activists and anti-capitalist campaigners.

The best format for this at the present time is undoubtedly the Socialist Alliance.

Beyond that we think there is the possibility of creating, in England, a new broad party of the left on the lines of the SSP in Scotland, as the next stage of development.

We have argued on numerous occasions that such a new workers' party must, as a first principle, be federal, inclusive and democratic. The SLP was politically dead from the time that Scargill rejected federalism, refused membership to the SF, and others, and said that individuals could only join the SLP if they renounced any other organisation they might be a member of first.

Nick Long seems to think that the SSP is more federal than the Socialist Alliance. This is not true. The Socialist Alliance are a loose network of groups seeking to develop an organising structure to facilitate common action and common campaigning based on an agreed platform.

The SSP is a political party with an extensive pro-revolutionary programme and a democratic inclusive structure, and of necessity much more centralised than the Socialist Alliance. It started as the Scottish Socialist Alliance and developed into the SSP by tightening up its structures and extending its programme and politics.

Neither the SDs nor the SSP are revolutionary organisations of course - nor should they be. They are coalitions of organisations between revolutionaries and those who do not regard themselves as revolutionaries, at least at the present time.

They are united from frontwards in which a broad spectrum of the left can build the best possible political alternative to Blairism in today's conditions.

New Labour is busily ramming through its attacks, including:

- the privatisation of Air Traffic Control against the wishes of the bulk of the population;
- the privatisation of the London Underground against the vast majority of Londoners;
- refusing even to contemplate the re-nationalisation of the railways despite the overwhelming majority of people supporting (even demanding) it.

More and more people are looking for an alternative. This was clearly reflected in the results of the recent round of by-election results. We have, today, a unique opportunity to build such an alternative against Blairism with signs that the bulk of the far-left organisations are prepared to abandon past histories of sectarian practice even to get in building the Socialist Alliance.

We must not allow a knee-jerk reaction to the SWP to get in the way of this. Most people who have been active on the left for some time will have had bad experiences with the SP's (and with the SP/Militant as well by the way). And bad experiences are still happening in some areas of work.

It is easy to sit back and say "don't trust the SWP". This can be a self-fulfilling prophesy. The significance of the SWP is not so much how much they haven't changed, but how much they have.

The level of collaboration which is now taking place between the bulk of the left within the alliance is unique and the SWP are a central part of it. They should appreciate that the best way to combat the inherent sectarianism of the SWP, indeed the whole of the British left, is to build the Socialist Alliance in the most inclusive democratic and effective way possible.

"Election successes boost Alliance"

Terry Conway

It is no good to the Socialist Alliance Labour Liaison Committee meeting in November, a report on what had been agreed by the executive committee in September.

On November 23, the Scottish Socialist Party took over 7% in both the Highlands and Western Isles by-election for Glasgow Anniesland - following fourth in the former seat.

The SSP has established itself as a third party in Scottish politics - a remarkable achievement in such a short time.

On the same day the newly formed Swansea Socialist Alliance polled 4.9% in the Swansea and Carmarthen by-election, while the south London borough of Lewisham, Socialist Alternative candidate San Dias Sam, backed by the Socialist Alliance, took the seat.

The meeting also heard of the myriad of political campaigns that local alliances have been involved in from the Council elections to the General Election and to clarify that local alliances can add to the national movement as they see fit. While the meeting was aware that the resolution in the national campaign was not the case because the Executive would be accountable to the Liaison Committee whereas the body promotes the SSP and not reported only to full members meetings.

Amendments were proposed and agreed to the SSP/Executive resolution to ensure that the Liaison Committee meets regularly in the run-up to the General Election and to clarify that local alliances can add to the national movement as they see fit.

This was in the planning stages and the next national conference is expected to report back on the next national conference of the Alliance, which will now take place in the early March.

This national meeting was a positive step forward in the Alliance. It demonstrated that although it had some problems, which mainly resulted from one step towards a successful General Election campaign.

The meeting also heard of the myriad of political campaigns that local alliances have been involved in from the Council elections to the General Election.
Justice for Roger Sylvester

Veronica Fagan

On the Crown Prosecution Service announced that no police officer involved in the death of Roger Sylvester is to face criminal proceedings and will now be held early next year.

This is the latest in a long series of blows dealt to the establishment by the Sylvester family since Roger’s death in 1999.

Several hundred activists answered the call of the family to picket Tottenham police station demanding justice for Roger. The lively and noisy picket was addressed not only by members of the Sylvester family, but also by Myrna Simpson, mother of Joy Gardner, and Kwame Akuffo, brother of the late Michael Menson.

Campaigners from Hastings Socialist Alliance, including White Hart Lane’s election candidate Gary McFarlane had a high profile.

Commenting on the CPS decision Sheila Sylvester, mother of Roger, said: “This shocking decision comes as no surprise to my family. We have continually voiced our dissatisfaction with the Metropolitan Police and their handling of the inquiry. The only public investigation will now be the inquest.”

“The inquest officers will once again be able to remain silent, as the coroner will tell them they do not have to give answers that may incriminate themselves.

“It is nearly two years since my beloved son met his death while being restrained by police officers, and I am no closer to finding out the truth about how he died. There is something shameful about a system where when people die in custody their custodians never get a proper account of what they did. The system is not geared towards making anyone properly accountable.

On 11 January 1999, Roger Sylvester, aged 30 years old black man, was restrained outside his home by eight police officers, from Tottenham Police Station. He sustained numerous injuries and died in a coma on a life support system. Seven days later, Roger was dead.

On the night of 11 January sometime after 9.30pm police arrived outside Roger’s house as a result of a 999 call. He was attended initially and found naked in his front garden. Within minutes another six officers had arrived and in total eight officers brought Roger Sylvester to ground, handcuffed and restrained him.

Roger had suffered from “the assistance of medical staff, treatment was given to him but he had sustained numerous injuries and remained in a coma at the Whittington hospital, effective treatment had been missed and the machine was switched off.

The case was initially referred to the Police Complaints Investigation Bureau (CIB) a decision approved by the Police Complaints Authority (PCA). The conduct of the CIB is the subject of a complaint from Roger’s family over the many fundamental flaws in this investigation.

The family is still waiting for the Metropolitan Police Service and Police Complaints Authority decision on whether to take disciplinary action on any of the complaints made against the CIB.

Following the family’s complaint about the Metropolitan Police’s investigation, the Police Complaints Authority agreed the complaint of neighbouring Essex Police to conduct the investigation.

Its terms of reference were “to investigate the circumstances leading up to, during and following the detention of Roger Sylvester on 11 January 1999 leading to his death on 19 January 1999 and any matters arising.” They would also investigate the complaint made by the family about the conduct of the initial investigating officer.

The investigation took ten months. It was the first investigation to take following the publication of the Macpherson inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence, in which greater liaison and openness with the families was encouraged.

There were regular but unsatisfactory meetings during the course of the investigation. In fact Essex Police, the PCA and family members, their solicitor and INQUEST. However, the family, their lawyers and INQUEST found these meetings unsatisfactory: they felt like a public relations exercise and the information being supplied was minimal, often partial. It became clear that the police preferred instead to spend hundreds of public hours investigating Roger’s death rather than the circumstances of his death Sheila Sylvester commented: “The investigation has not centred on the eight officers who had hands on my son that fateful night. Their only actions were not investigated with the thoroughness and rigour that would have been the case had they been civilian. This is unjust. Instead Essex Police chose to investigate Roger, the victim, in an attempt to blame him for his own death.”

The Police Complaints Authority, being satisfied with the conduct of the Essex investigation, issued an ‘interim statement’ on 21 October 1999 and the files were passed to the Crown Prosecution Service who took up the case in November this year to decide to that no action would be taken.

Copies of the file also went to the coroner and the Metropolitan Police Commissioner. Neither the family nor their lawyers will see all of the investigating officer’s final completed report, as it is covered by public interest immunity.

Despite a House of Commons early recommendating release of at least part of an investigating officer’s report to bereaved families, this seems unlikely to happen.

An inquest with a jury will be held in the New year into Roger’s death at which the family have no automatic right to representation though with the support of INQUEST they will be fighting for exceptional legal aid. At an inquest, police officers can also refuse to answer any question that might incriminate them.

In the recent inquest into the death of Christopher Alder at Hull Police Station, for example, police officers exercised the same right of silence to avoid giving a full account of what happened.

Several police officers involved in Roger’s death were removed from operational duties, but have never been suspended. This is yet another insult to the Sylvester family and to Roger’s memory.

The Macpherson Inquiry reported in relation to deaths in custody: “We are clear that this issue is outside our terms of reference, but it is an issue of deep concern and of the depth of feelings expressed.

There is a need to reduce the perceptions and concerns of the minority ethnic communities in this regard.

Such an issue if not addressed helps only to damage the relationship between police and public, and in its absence there is an atmosphere which hinders the investigation of racist incidents and crime.”

The Justice for Roger Sylvester Campaign demands:

- Police officers involved in custody deaths are suspended until investigations are completed.
- Officers responsible for deaths should face criminal charges even if retired or otherwise.
- All deaths in custody should be investigated independently.
- Police Complaints Authority (PCA) to be replaced by a body independent of the police.
- Police forces are made accountable to the community they serve.
- Legal aid and full disclosure should be made available to the relatives of the victim(s).
- Instead of an unlawful killing verdict is returned, a prosecution should follow automatically.

Asylum voucher review: Don’t let them get away with it!

At both the national Policy Forum in July and at October’s Labour Party Conference, a response to concerns of the outrageous voucher scheme for asylum seekers was to offer a revised version of the “reduced list” voucher scheme. Sadly rather than responding to the review was needed and that the system should be scrapped altogether. Bill Morris of the PCS has expressed his disappointment on the issue.

Since then no public statement has been made either by the government or by the Home Office on vouchers. But tucked away in the pages of Howard campagner’s report ‘Asylum: The review of the asylum system’ is a provision for the introduction of the voucher scheme in some areas by December. In addition, the report states, “If the government is satisfied with the outcome of the review, it would be expected that the scheme would be introduced in all areas by early 2001.”

While the government did ask people to respond to the consultation on the voucher scheme, it is a fact that no actual consultation occurred. This is even more important given the fact that all submissions will be published after the consultation and for further information contact the campaign to defend Asylum Seekers’ BCM Box 4289, London WC1N 3XX 07978 478 629

Close

Harmondsworth

Detention Centre!

- Close on 16 Dec
- 12.00 to 1.45
- The Government keeps 90 refugees locked up without a charge or trial in Harmondsworth Detention Centre.
- Next year it is building an even bigger Detention Centre. Due to open in the spring, this will hold 550 asylum seekers including families.
- Support the refugees, close the Detention Centre!
- Protest against Harmondsworth detention centre
- Colnbrook By Pass (A4 North of Heathrow) or B418 or B419 but from the stop opposite Housewes West tube
- Bring banners. Also if possible collect a list of 2 phone cards which we will pass on to detainees
- Called by the Close Harmondsworth Campaign
Child abuse: blame it on the (bourgeois) family

Jane Kelly

The moral panic this summer over naming paedophiles, initiated by the then Home Secretary, was a calm down, and a somewhat more reasoned debate is taking place. But still the real issues underlying abuse and neglect – the relations of power with the nuclear family, the hierarchy between children and parents, girls and boys, women and men – are ignored.

The ruling class simply cannot accept that the family, the basic unit of capitalist society, is the locus of sexual abuse and violence.

While around 40 investigations are ongoing into sex abuse in children’s homes, going back to the 1960s and 1970s, the idea that such abuse is also part of family life for many children, is unthinkable.

Ever since the Cleveland affair, when large numbers of children were identified as suffering from sexual abuse within the family, the powers that be have tried to defuse the issue, hiding it from the local and social work professionals who have uncovered it, denying its existence.

In November this year the NSPCC published their report Child Maltreatment in the United Kingdom: A study of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect. It was widely reported in the broadsheet press and media.

At the same time Newsnight on 23 November investigated the long-term, systematic abuse within and around one family, while Panorama on 26 November looked at the probably wrongful conviction of a care worker for sexual abuse of boys in a children’s home.

The complexity and difficulty of these issues is at last being aired – albeit mainly within sections of the media.

The Panorama programme exposed the fatal flaws of a police investigation which, after allegations of sexual abuse in a children’s home in the late 1970s to the early 1980s, revealed, for further evidence by interviewing large numbers of ex-residents of the home, working in local social services who made clear the likely compensation available for anyone coming forward in court.

While making it clear that sexual abusers should be prosecuted and victims compensated, it pointed out that the two should not be mixed together.

Although two of those who had been accused of abuse and were imprisoned, the third man, still in prison for crimes which he refuses, seems to be the victim in this vicious, unrelenting and malicious campaign.

Perhaps more shocking was the Newsnight investigation. Focusing on one family, it followed up allegations by a young woman about sexual abuse perpetrated by her stepfather on herself and her two sisters. All three were abused by him from a young age. Worse, they were also subjected to sexual and physical abuse by other men in the family

When one of the sisters inevitably became disturbed, running away from home, attacking one of her sister’s or her stepfather, she was put into a children’s home, where further abuse took place. Despite complaints to the police at the time and since, little was ever done.

Even now, people seem reluctant to investigate the stepfather, who admitted the sexual abuse – though that is not what he called it.

This is clearly a product of the complexity of abusive sexual relations within the family.

One of the sisters had taken over her dead mothers place, including in her stepfather’s bed, and seemed genuinely sympathetic towards him, even as she argued she was doing it “to save him abusing others”, including her grandmother.

Although the programme was somewhat uneven, it included the stepfather describing his behaviour, he recorded his sexualised and misogynist references to young girls, he brought home in a graphic and emotive way the terrible effects of such an upbringing, whose experiences can never be forgotten.

The issue of how children can be equipped to reject such sexual behaviour, or to report it if forced to participate, has also been raised.

The importance of children being comfortable with their bodies, of recognising sexual abuse, and being able to express it, is emphasized, as well as the need for sex education so that children can tell the difference between harmless play among peers and non-consenting sexual activities between older people and children.

The NSPCC Report however points out that it is not always easy to differentiate between these two types of behaviour, especially between siblings. "Sexual relations with and between children and young people are hard to define in relation to abuse.” (Quoted in The Observer, Nov 19)

While the BBC programmes focussed on singular examples, the NSPCC Report was based on interviews with nearly 3,000 people between the ages of 18 and 26, asking them if they had experienced either sexual abuse or physical neglect when they were under 16 years old.

I fact the resulting figures for sexual abuse within the family are not as high as might have been expected. But the reporting, even in the ‘quality’ press, concentrated on the 4 per cent who reported sexual abuse, of whom 14 per cent said it had been committed by a brother or stepbrother, compared with 19 per cent who named their stepfather, and 16 per cent who named their father.

This apparently unexpected result – that stepbrothers and brothers represented by far and away the highest number of abusers – has "turned on its head the widespread belief that adult males are the most likely abusers.” (The Observer Nov 19)

The other part of the NSPCC Report was given hardly any press coverage. This is hardly surprising, as the figure of 6 per cent of young adults reporting serious neglect during childhood is in some ways more startling, and especially as the neglect was blamed almost exclusively on mothers.

Furthermore as the synopsis published by the NSPCC on its website argues: "The study underlines the link between child neglect and social disadvantage. Respondents in semi or unskilled employment were ten times more likely to have experienced serious absence of care in childhood than were respondents who were in professional jobs and almost twice as likely as those in higher education.

While sexual abuse and violence against women within the family do not respect class differences, neglect is much more often the result of dire poverty and deprivation."

The tragic and apparently motiveless murder of 10 year old Damilola Taylor in Peckham at the end of November, reveals the end result of neglected and denigrated children and teenagers, brought up on run down estates, excluded from school, with no state resources dedicated to their upbringing other than policing.

Local social services are unable to support any children but those in immediate danger of sexual and physical abuse; there are no youth clubs in the area; many young people are banned from using the local leisure centre; and the culture of drugs provides not only a way of blunting the harsh realities of life but also a way of making money.

Discussion of the NSPCC Report has made much of the high incidence of sibling abuse, but we should not be surprised by this. Nor does it shift the debate away from the family.

Rather, it underlines the fact that every member of a nuclear family is touched by its oppressive and hierachical nature. In the 1970s socialist feminists identified the family as the key site of women's oppression. They also recognised that children too are oppressed by the relations within the family.

Developing ideas from Friedrich Engels...
For a workers’ party in the USA!

The Ralph Nader campaign in the US Presidential elections together with the wider questions it raises, have become contentious issues on the left. In the last issue of Socialist Outlook an article which argued that socialists should give critical support to Ralph Nader. Here DAVE PACKER presents an alternative view.

For MANY on the left in Britain it seemed common sense to support Ralph Nader in the American Presidential elections. He presented himself as a radical left alternative to the flagrant stitch up which has traditionally given the American working class the choice between a Republican tweed dum and a Democratic tweed dun.

There is no mass workers’ party, until Nader. So to make socialists Nader appeared to be the next best thing, even a chance to show that we are in the vanguard of a new political space. In my view these arguments are wrong because they do not start from the perspective of class.

Clearly, the Nader campaign was radical, but it was also populist rather than socialist. It acted as a pole of attraction to the left, and its rallies were huge with several drawing numbers ranging from 6,000 to 14,000 people.

The largest was in New York City’s Madison Square Garden where major movie stars like Susan Sarandon, Michael Moore and the TV talk show star Larry King were also present.

Nader often took up feminism, anti-war, and environmentalist themes. Attacks on multi-national corporations were prominent. In the context of U.S. politics, there was no doubt that Nader’s campaign was an alternative to the “two-party” system. Many of those who voted for him did so to protest against the fact that there was virtually no difference between Bush and Gore.

They did this in spite of incredible pressure from the pro-Gore lobby to establish a new movement of the type of Green Party which was begun in 1998.

What then was the class base of the Nader campaign? If not the workers movement, then what? It was mainly the Green movement, the environmental anti-WTO layers, a few disaffected Democrats, mainly middle class radicals, as well as small groups like the ISO, Solidarity and the Socialist Alternative group.

It is therefore understandable in this context that many trade unionists, US Labour union activists, farmers from the broad anti-capitalist vanguard have turned to Ralph Nader’s candidacy. But his campaign is a cul de sac.

Nader, a veteran consumer rights campaigner with an anti-corporate rhetoric, got 2.5 percent of the national vote and is clearly a radical pole of attraction. But we have said his anti-corporate stance is not anti-capitalist.

He has rightly dismissed accusations of “splitting” the left, but in the long run, his actions have undermined the work of the New Independent Workers Party – a socialist Labour Party of America.

For a workers’ party in the USA!

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Official Florida Presidential Ballot

Follow the arrow and Punch the appropriate dot.

Bush

Buchanan

Gore

Nader

American election: two-party carve-up exposed:

Lessons from the chaos

John Letter

A S WE GO TO press, we still cannot say for certain who has been elected President of the world’s most powerful country. Legal wrangles over the shambolic and corrupt election process in Florida have continued unabated throughout November.

Meanwhile the shabby credibility of election results in other states was undermined by the late recount in Oregon, which at the end of November installed a Democrat in place of the Republican senator who had been declared elected.

This now leaves the 100-member senate split down the middle between the two rival capital parties.

Evidence is still emerging to show just how many thousand Florida voters have not been counted in the haste to declare Bush the winner.

But with party patronage and bias such a feature of US public appointments, it is almost impossible to find a trustworthy scrutineer to produce an objective result.

Florida’s shamefully partisan Republican Secretary of State Katherine Harris, herself a co-chair of George Bush’s campaign in the state, possibly over-played her hand in trying to hurry through a decision that her man had won.

But the state’s Attorney General and key Florida judges are Democrats, equally determined to see Al Gore pick up the few hundred extra votes he needs to tip the balance of the whole election.

It is clear that hundreds of thousands of votes (especially those of any smaller rival parties) are routinely ignored and not counted in elections across the USA — yet another result of the corrupt two-party system.

Hundreds of thousands of postal votes drift in days or weeks after the elections, and appear to be largely discarded. Only when the contest between the two major parties runs close — as it has this year, with Gore now narrowly ahead on the popular vote across the US, but likely to lose the Electoral College on the most minuscule of margins — does the spotlight focus on the embarrassing local details.

The system works consistently to exclude parties representing the working class and the oppressed, not least by disfranchising the minority of Americans who do turn out to vote into choosing their “lesser evil” candidate from the two on offer.

Comedian Bill Maher was not far off the popular view in his summation of the situation: “Neither Bush nor Gore has been elected president. I know that’s a great feeling, but it can’t last forever.”

The satirical news paper The Onion talks of the Serbian government sending 30,000 peacekeepers to the US, and reports newly-elected Serb President Kostunica saying “We must do all we can to support free elections in America and allow democracy to gain a foothold there.”

But for the two main parties, which have spent $3 billion on the presidential and congressional elections, and another $1 billion ensuring they keep their monopoly control over the state-level elections, the situation is no laughing matter. The stakes are too high.

The far right, the gun lobby, the pharmaceutical and private medical industry and the oil companies are among the sinister forces that have invested unprecedented sums in securing the election of George Dubya (“the real-life Forrest Gump”). They plainly intend to use him as the front-man for a hard-line government driving through even more deregulation and privatization than was contemplated by Reagan or Bush Senior.

Bush is not even choosing his own staff, as the first moves are made to pull together a “transition” administration even while the courts deliberate the election result. Instead, between hospital visits to check on his dicky heart, Dick Cheney, defence secretary under George’s father, is the “running mate” setting up the new team that will run the White House. Bush is hundreds of miles away, on his Texas ranch.

Old cronies of the Bush Presidency are being wheeled out into position for a second bite of the cherry, and there will be huffy favours to repay to some of the big donors that helped create George Dubya’s election machine.

One billionaire with high hopes is Richard Rainwater, a founder of the giant Columbia/HCA healthcare corporation, a former business partner of George W and contributor to his campaign for Texas governor. Rainwater has been keen to press Bush to pursue his proposal to privatise state mental hospitals.

Oil and tobacco firms hope that the Clinton administration’s limited measures to restrain their freedom to pollute and damage health will be rolled back under Bush, while drug companies have made no secret of their opposition to Gore’s proposals to limit prescription costs, and will see the new regime as a hard-line defender of private medicine.

The military will also be well represented, with former General Colin Powell likely to be Secretary of State if Bush’s costly teams of lawyers prevail in the ongoing wrangles.

Under this pressure it is still not clear that the bulk of Gore’s support can come from those who saw themselves most at risk from these policies — women, black people, Hispanics, Jews and the poor (earning $30,000 or less).

By contrast, Bush’s vote has centred on the rich and well-to-do ($75,000 a year plus), men, whites and protestants. Bigots largely turned out for Bush while the unions and black churches mobilised for Gore.

But Gore’s huge credibility problems among his core voters rests on their experience of the last eight years of Clinton government, which has led to continual erosion of welfare rights and real wages, without delivering the promised anti-poverty policies which so many desperately need.

As a party equally based on the political needs of big business and white supremacy, and seeking only at election time the support of some leaders and progressive movements, the Democrats have again robbed themselves of what should be a clear majority, and crowded the electoral bind.

Many of the millions of disenfranchised who have again been denied a vote in these elections effectively voted with their feet, refusing to give Gore a mandate, but finding themselves with no plausible candidate to support instead.

The current czar will soon run to a no-confidence vote in the paradise of the world’s most advanced economy boasting the least developed political system in the most politically backward labour movement — means that whoever wins, he will be the best president money could buy.

The best conclusion would be that this latest exposure of the bankruptcy system will trigger the long-delayed political awakening of the US trade unions, and the launch of a serious labour party, independent of the Democrats.

But don’t hold your breath!

Stop Dumb!

ELECTION AMEND A VOTE NOW!!

Socialist Outlook

The WCD recommends that there must be shared responsibility for peace, development and security.

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HIV - the scourge of Africa

Charlie van Gelderen

The HIV epidemic raging across Africa is a tragedy of epic proportions, one that is altering the region's demographic future. It is reducing life expectancy, raising mortality, lowering fertility, creating an excess of men over women, leaving millions of orphans in its wake.

The second millennium began with 24 million Africans infected with the virus. In the absence of a medical miracle, nearly all will die before 2010. Each day 6000 Africans die from the virus; each day an additional 1100 are infected. In Botswana, 36% of the adult population is HIV positive; in Zimbabwe and Swaziland, 25% per cent, Lesotho, 24% per cent, and South Africa, Namibia and Zambia, 20% per cent. In none of these countries has the spread of the virus been checked.

Life expectancy, a sentinel indicator of economic progress, is falling precipitously. In Zimbabwe, without AIDS, life expectancy in 2010 would be 70 years but with AIDS is expected to fall below 50 years. In Lesotho, in the same period, life expectancy is projected to fall from 66 years to 33; for South Africa, it will fall from 64 to 48 and for Zambia, from 60 to 50.

The reason for this drastic demographic picture is because, in contrast to most infectious diseases, which take their heaviest toll among the elderly and the very young, HIV takes its greatest toll among young adults.

In the absence of a low cost cure, infection leads to death. The time from infection until death for adults in Africa is 7 to 10 years. This means that Botswana can expect to lose the 36 per cent of its population that is HIV positive within this decade, plus the additional numbers who will be infected within the next decade. Two. The HIV toll, plus the normal death rate, means that Botswana's population is declining.

It is not only adults who are dying from AIDS in Africa. Infants and mothers who are HIV positive have a 30 to 60 per cent chance of being born with the virus. Their life expectancy is typically less than two years. Many more infants acquire the virus through breast feeding. Few of them will reach school age.

There is also some evidence that the virus reduces fertility. By the time the symptomatic years of AIDS appear, women are 70 per cent less likely to be pregnant than those who are not infected.

Females are infected an earlier age than males because they have sexual intercourse with older men who are more likely to be HIV-positive. The female infection rate is also higher than that of males.

Among 15-19 year olds, five times as many females as males are infected. Because they are infected so early in life, many women will die before completing their reproductive years, further reducing births.

No one knows how much the HIV epidemic will reduce fertility, but one thing is known: the wholesale death of young adults in Africa is creating millions of orphans.

By 2010, Africa is expected to have 40 million orphans. Even Africa's highly resilient extended family system will be unable to cope with this demographic crisis. The AIDS epidemic may claim more lives than WWII, it is not being given the priority it deserves, either within the countries affected or the international community.

Only two countries in Africa have seriously tried to tackle the problem. In Uganda, one of the earliest countries hit by the epidemic, the infected share of the adult population has dropped from 14 per cent in the early 1990s to 8 per cent today.

Zambia has mobilised the health, education and agricultural sectors, and church groups, to halt the spread of the virus. As a result, the infected share of young women in some cities has halved by nearly half since 1993. Africa has had its share and more than its share of poverty, TB and malaria for centuries. All these have taken their toll. But never have people been decimated like this.

President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, amid public outrage, maintains that poverty, not HIV, is the root cause of the growing AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa. "The world's biggest killer and the greatest cause of ill health and suffering across the globe, including South Africa, is extreme poverty. As I listened and heard the whole story about one country, it seemed to me that we could not be worrying about a single virus."

There is, of course, more than a bit of truth in this, but Mbeki has used this approach to refuse to take steps to bring affordable help to AIDS sufferers. This cannot be justified.

(Based on material in Daily Labor News from South Africa)

Scandal-ridden Shell goes back into Ogoniland

Shell Oil's complicity in the hanging of an Ogoni leader, Ken Saro Wiry, and others is an issue that Ogoni people in Nigeria will never forget or forgive. Shell employees were a partner in a death sentence for a Bodo leader, O C I Gblooha, to hold brief on its behalf at the Ogoni's high court proceedings which eventually murdered the Ogoni leader.

But this is certainly not the only crime this multinational has committed against the Ogoni people. CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN explains:


Shell applies variable standards in its approach, carrying out oil exploration in Ogoniland and causing serious damage to the environment under different environmental practices in Europe and the US.

Shell continues to export the Ogoni people oil royalties and renting rents for 40 years, amounting to about $1 billion and another $4 billion for environmental devastation.

Shell refuses to bury its oil pipelines in Ogoniland. These dangerous pipelines, which criss-cross farms, streams and village paths, are all health and safety standards, and pose a great risk especially to Ogoni children. Shell's parent company refuses to clean its oil spills in Ogoniland. This has degraded farmlands, rivers and streams, thereby depriving the Ogoni people of their source of livelihood, resulting in endemic disease, malnutrition and starvation.

Shell has profited immensely from the estimated $100 billion of oil taken from Ogoniland. But while their results for the third quarter of 2000 are estimated to be $2.2 billion, Shell has managed to circumvent the judicial system in Nigeria by refusing to pay the court compensation order of $40 million for the Ejuma Ekubu 1970 oil spill.

Shell sponsored genocide in Ogoniland between 1993-1996 by providing income and weapons to the Nigerian military leaders, Paul Okumu, Dauda Kom and others, who declared war on the Ogonis, resulting in the killing of over 2000 Ogonis, innumerable maiming, raping, looting and the general destruction of Ogoni villages.

Shell refuses to implement the recommendations made by the United Nations fact-finding mission to Ogoniland after making environmental impact assessment of the company's exploration activities there. According to the Ewara (the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People) "Shell is a corporation that continuously uses high profile spin doctors and public relations machinery to mislead the public about its attitude to environmental issues. Its much publicised business policies on environment, health and safety and good community relations are not adopted in either Ogoniland or the Niger Delta."

Shell oil refuses to meet with the Ogonis and address the problems it has caused in their land. Rather it is forcing itself on the Ogonis, thereby violating the rights of the Ogonis to life and to participate on issues concerning their own welfare.

Shell encourages bribery and corruption in Ogoniland. Shell withdrew all personal non-grante in Ogoniland by all Ogoni organisations on 4 January 1993. This remains the verdict of Ogonis on Shell.

Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers Christmas Cards & Postcards

Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers has produced Christmas cards and postcards as well as postcards to be sent to Jack Straw, asking him in the "division of responsibility" of the Home Office to stop the deportation of asylum seekers.

Cards are 50p each, £4 for 10 or £7.50 for 20.

Please note that the cards are all in full colour. Not black and white.

Contact CDAS: BCM Box 4289, London WC1N 3XG, 0171-981-7628 or e-mail cias.seas (at) dmsx.co.uk. See also the web site www.defendaseas.org.uk
Serbia: is there new life after Milosevic?

Shelia Malone and Alan Thomett interviewed Serbian activist DRAGOMIR OLUJIC on his recent visit to Britain in two ways. One is the view that the worst is past, the other that the worst is yet to come!

Q: Can you say something about the new Kostunica government?
A: You can characterise the situation in Serbia now in two ways. One is the view that the worst is past, the other that the worst is yet to come!

Q: What have you been doing here?
A: I was doing two things. I was trying to reach as many people as possible and spread the word about the new government.

Q: How do refugees survive in Serbia?
A: Refugees in Serbia are not allowed to work. They can only work illegally. They don't have any rights. At first there was a lot of humanitarian aid from the international community, but nowadays there's nothing, and refugees just live in extraordinary conditions. They have relatives who rely on them for help, but many have none.

Q: What is the new government doing?
A: The new government is taking action against the old regime. It is trying to deal with the problems of the past.

Q: Is the new government effective?
A: Yes, it is effective. It is taking action against the old regime.

Q: Has there been any change in the situation of refugees?
A: Yes, the situation of refugees has improved.

Q: What is the secret service of the new government called?
A: It is called the National Security Agency.

Q: Is the new government in control of all aspects of the army, police and secret service?
A: Yes, it is in control of all aspects of the army, police and secret service.

Q: Do you think Kosovo and Montenegro should be independent?
A: Yes, I think they should.

Q: What about the people of Yugoslavia?
A: They are against independence.

Q: How long can this coalition survive?
A: It is difficult to say how long the coalition will last.

Q: How long will it take to achieve independence?
A: It is difficult to say how long it will take.

Q: What are the main challenges facing the new government?
A: The main challenges are economic, political and social.

Q: Are they actually against the occupation?
A: Some are: the nationalist, ultranationalist unions are against. As to the others, their leaderships are against, the rank and file support them. I think that this question of workers' rights and the expression of the real interests of the workers will be the main problem of the future for government.

Q: What is the future of the army?
A: It is uncertain. The army is still a problem.

Q: What is the future of the police?
A: It is uncertain. The police are still a problem.

Q: What is the future of the secret service?
A: It is uncertain. The secret service is still a problem.

Q: Who pays them?
A: The government pays them.

Q: Are there really only 'secret' police in Serbia?
A: Yes, there are.

Q: Can we go back to the beginning, about Serbia nationalism, the point you made about Milosevic destroying Yugoslavia ... does the new government also have aspirations towards a greater Serbia?
A: Kostunica doesn't talk about Greater Serbia, but nevertheless he supports the policy, and supports it during Milosevic's government. For the new government it is not a problem that Milosevic waged the war, the problem is that he didn't win. They know that Greater Serbia is not possible now. No one supports it. So they don't talk about it.

Q: Can you imagine a scenario where it could happen?
A: No, it is unlikely to happen.

Q: What do you think of the new government?
A: I think it is a good government.

Q: Do you think Kosovo and Montenegro should be independent?
A: Yes, I think they should.

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Q: What will happen in the future?
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National Convention for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace, November 11-13, 2000

A landmark in popular resistance

Resolution on Nuclear Missile Defence and Theatre Missile Defence of the USA

This National Convention for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace condemns unilaterally the proposed US Government to deploy so-called National Missile Defence (NMD) and Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) systems.

While this programme may be currently on hold under the Clinton administration, it is more likely than not that the next administration, under the pressure of defence contractors who will actually deploy Nuclear Missile Defence and Theatre Missile Defence systems.

The promotion of the Nuclear Missile Defence and Theatre Missile Defence in the US political arena has all the hallmarks of the manner in which the US nuclear programme has been justified and sharpened.

Against this background, (or improperly designed ones) are used to argue that the technology for this exists and can be developed and deployed. International instruments like the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty are sought to be circumvented or undermined or rejected. New bogus threats, like the danger of nuclear weapons in the hands of so-called 'rogue states' are created to justify the programmes. Objective opinion concerns that even against 'nuclear' terrorist threats, NMD and TMD make little sense.

The very discussion of the proposals for the NMD and the TMD in the US has evoked strong reactions from other nuclear powers (NWS) and any pursuit of these programmes will undermine the nuclear doctrine, strategies and postures of the other NWS.

In the pursuit of the NMD and the TMD will be a serious blow to the cause of global nuclear disarmament. This conference considers it a crucial task of the global anti-nuclear movement to mobilize vigourously against these programmes.

This conference calls on the Government of India to resolutely and forcefully reject the imposition of the Indian people to the NMD and the TMD in all international fora.

Organising Committee: National Convention for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace

C/o Delhi Science Forum, B-1, Second Floor, LSC, J. Block, Saket, New Delhi 110017 Tel: 11-462-4222, 11-652-4324 Fax: 11-666-2716 E-mail: raocon2000@rediffmail.com

Conflicts such as that over Kashmir are dangerous enough without the threat of nuclear weapons being used by either side.

against weapons of mass destruction and India's nuclear policy volte face. These are added to the other, scarce and unconnected to a structure with a national (and international) presence, profile and perspective. Matters changed with networking among different groups early in 2000 and the holding of three preparatory meetings, interspersed with an intense and very robust small debate in the Convention's concept, function, programme, organisation, composition, finance and logistics.

The quarters of the Convention's delegates came from outside Delhi. They all paid for their own travel and on an average spent a week in preparing for and attending the Convention. There were 50 delegates from Pakistan (down from 60 owing to visa problems), 15 from the rest of South Asia, and about 20 from Australia, Northeast and Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe and America. They included campaigners such as Bruce Kent and Jeremy Corbyn (MP) from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), representatives of the Abolition-2000 network, and Japanese activists, besides the Pakistan Peace Movement.

The Programme of the Convention, spread over three days, was divided into five Plenaries, 12 Working Group sessions in four broad categories, and cultural events culminating in "Celebration of Peace", with live music, theatre and poetry festivals in Central Delhi.

The flow of the Convention's deliberations led from an analysis of recent international and national developments, discussions on how to construct a strong moral, legal, political and security-based case against nuclear weapons and their impact; understanding the experience of peace movements regionally and globally; and developing strategies and campaign tools for an abolition movement in South Asia.

The deliberations ended with the adoption of an Action Plan and an Interim Charter, and the election of a Coordinating Committee.

The Action Plan includes a number of specific programmes and campaigns, including:

- Regional disarmament conventions and sectoral meetings of professionals,
- Advocacy and lobbying of political parties,
- Campaigning and organizing a "Nuclear Disarmament and Peace Week" from August 4 to 10 every year,
- and setting up a national federation of radiation victims, besides enhancing the South Asian peace movement's presence in international peace forums.

The Inaugural Plenary set the tone and broad agenda of the Convention. The speakers included activist Arundhati Roy, former Admiral E. Ramdas, energy scientist A.K.N. Reddy, Narmada Bachao Andolan leader Medha Patkar and M.R. Nagvi and Karamat Ali (both from Pakistan Peace Coalition), besides Pratul Bidwai, who introduced the Convention's rationale. The two chairs who read a few of the 50 memoranda received from peace networks and organizations and one government (New Zealand).

The principal thrust of the speeches was on the immorality of nuclear weapons, the fallacy of nuclear deterrence, and the crucial importance of comprehensive or human security, and need to build a non-nuclear social coalition for peace.

Following the Plenary, the first set of Working Groups dealt with "The Case against Nuclear Weapons. The world is not safe wherever possible by mixed teams from India, Pakistan, and elsewhere, and encouraged full participation from all present, including Indian languages (with informal interpretation) as well as English.

The Groups stressed the deterioration in South Asian security in the haste to nuclearisation, the further hardening of India's and Pakistan's nuclear postures since 1998, and the growing danger of a new arms race. They emphasized that no US anti-ballistic missile programme is one of the points where participants remained sharp on the issue of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, although there was better appreciation of divergent positions.

There was complete unanimity that there must be no further nuclear tests, no acquisition of fissile material and no research on nuclear weapons. (See the attached tentative Charter).

The second category of Working Groups dealt with "The Impact of Nuclear Weapons on the People." These Groups generated a potent critique of the ideology of nuclearism.
and its contribution to virulent nationalism, communalism, and male-supremacism, with an emphasis on militarisation of nuclearques thatushed unbalanced news and comment came in for widespread criticism —in part by the poor media coverage the Convention received.

Surprisingly, it took some years before nuclear power and nuclear weapons, and of the viability and desirability of nuclear power growing the subject, expected to generate heated debate, produced a remarkably sober discussion, with even the staunchest proponents of nuclear power conceding that in their existing designs and operational practices, most nuclear installations are far from safe or economical. They did not only AKN Reddy's compu-
tation of the high cost of nuclear electricity, or his support for cheaper alternatives. There was a debate over the inevitability of the power-weapons nexus. But there was unani-
mity that there must be no compromise on health, safety standards or transparency.

Physicist M.V. Ramana made a significant presentation on the effects of nuclear explo-
sions and accidents, building upon his earlier work, Blahoming Bomoby.

November 12 opened with a Plenary and head-to-head sessions on the acti-

vities and concerns of delegates representing different regions, sections and constituencies worldwide. A highlight was the progress of the Indian government in different parts of India, in South Asia and the world. The major emphasis was on the initiatives and accomplishments of the government in the field of nuclear energy and related issues.

This was the main forum at which the international delegates spoke about their activities in national matters and international initiatives like Abolition-2000 (a network over 2000 peace groups), New Agenda Coalition (comprising facilities of Brazil), Egypt, Mexico, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden; the Middle Powers Initiative, the World Court Project which led to the legal verdict against nuclear weapons in 1996, and the Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Network, etc.

Some said the centre of gravity was shifting to South Asia itself, but the question was whether the South Asian abo-
sition campaign had already become an indis-
sensible input into the international movement and in fact countries in the Cold War era.

Following the Plenary was the third session of Working Groups, on building a "Movement against nuclear weapons: sectoral and statewise strategies". Some sessions were special Sessions on the "Campaign for Safety and Environmental Aspects of Nuclear Power and Nuclear Munitions". Studies by Bhavdeendra Sharma and Ghanshyam Bhati, the grass-

roots activists from Jaduguda uranium mines.

The eight Working Groups focused on specific aspects of the convention. The deliberations produced specific proposals on how to put nuclear dis-
amament, and the need for the participation of the youth, NGOs, medical and scientific associations, trade unions, the working people, etc. by underscoring the need for the practical impact of nuclear-
isation on their priorities, as well as on the larger society and politics. Of particular rele-
rance was the Working Group on sensitising the media to non-conventional notions of security.

This was followed by the screening of an award-winning documentary by Shri Prakash

(John-Rain)!

The Buddha Weeps at Jaduguda, which traces the struggle wrenched upon the health of uranium miners and their families by patently unsafe practices and available exposure to radioactivity and other toxic hazards.

The fourth (and final) session of the Working Groups was devoted to the nitty-
gritty of developing "Networks as transformation forms — campaign experience: methodolo-
gies and campaign materials for different constituencies.

These sessions focused on educational, material and cultural products, and discussions on Networking and Resource-Sharing and Advocacy. Another Working Group produced a draft "Plan of Action" to be presented to the Final Plenary.

The Evening Plenary of November 12 heard reports from the Working Groups, besides watching an educational slide-show by Ghanashyam Bhati, explaining the complex facts of nuclear physics, on how the bomb works, and what makes it an illegitimate weapon of mass destruc-
dion.

The Closing Plenary on November 15 dis-
cussed the Plan of Action, adopted a Declaration for Nuclear Disarmament for Peace and, most important, estab-
lished a Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and choose its Coordination Committee.

There were more than 30 interventions and many amendments to the Draft Charter, itself subjected to an intense debate over six months. Some speakers questioned the Draft statement of India's nuclear policy after the first Pokhran test of 1974. Several leaders welcomed the impor-
tance of broadening the concept of peace.

Many speakers noted the uneven develop-
ment of the movement in different regions, and questioned the need to strengthen it especially in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala, the Northeastern states, etc and to address special constituencies like environmentalists, students, students, poets, political leaders, and Dalits.

However, so numerous were the Charter amendments, both substantive and syntactic, that the chair felt they could not be all incor-
porated into a document, and moved that the meeting. The Plenary broadly accepted that it adopt one-page summary of the thrust of the Charter, leaving the final document to the Coordination Committee. This summary was accepted (and later reduced to the press).

The Plenary adopted a plan of action and resolved to work on a clearing house of infor-
mation and campaign material, on advocacy and lobbying, besides implementing the spec-
cific campaigns outlined in programme.

This National Convention for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace resolutely opposes nuclear weapons in India, South Asia and globally, nuclear weapons are evil and immoral. They divert resources from real needs, promote insecurity, are genocidal, undermine democracy, endanger the envi-
ronment and future generations.

The Convention unequivocally condemns India's entry into the Nuclear Weapons Club in 1998, which represents a betrayal of its own previous positions.

The Convention seeks to bring together largest members of groups, organisations and individuals on a common platform with the following Agenda. To carry forward this Agenda we constitute ourselves into a National Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace.

India:

To halt and roll back India's nuclear weapons-related prepara-
tions and activities we demand the following:

The Non-Proliferation Treaty is to be imple-
mented immediately.

No nuclear weapons, no production and deployment of nuclear weapons. No acquisition and development of nuclear weapon-specific delivery systems.

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BLOODY SUNDAY: history lessons for the Education Minister ... and others

David Coen
On Sunday January 30, 1972 British paratroopers opened an unprovoked attack on the Bogside in Derry. 13 unarmed demonstrators were killed, seven of whom who died were teenagers. Five had been dead for several months. The Derry Coroner, Mayor Hubert O'Neill, was instructed to remove his sympathy. "It strikes me that the arms ran amok that day and they shot without thinking of who they were shooting. There were shooting innocent people." The official report produced by Lord Widgery, a High Court Judge, claimed, without any evidence, that the army had been fired upon. The families of the victims who had been using nail bullets. Every year since 1972 the Bloody Sunday demonstrations in Derry and in Britain has sought to draw attention to what happened, focusing on the neglect of the shooting of peaceful demonstrators protesting against internment, and the right to trial for civil rights, but on its political significance.

In 1998 a new inquiry under Lord Saville was set up to look at the events of Bloody Sunday. The families of those killed have been organized to overturn the lies of the Widgery Report and to elucidate their relatives. They told the British government to pour out a series of justifications for the actions of the Parachute Regiment, of which some are fictitious. To anyone watching the Israeli's use of live rounds against Palestinian stone throwers, what happened on Bloody Sunday is no secret.

Decades of protest have demanded justice since Bloody Sunday.

The Saville Inquiry is but another step in the pacification of Ireland. In the unlikely event of it revealing British government complicity in the massacre, some in the Republican Movement will see that as supporting their view that the sectarian state could not be broken, and the only alternative is to participate in running it. The mass of nationalist people, like the Palestinians, will surely take a very different view. The danger is that next time the gunfire at the demonstrations will come not from the British but from other nationalists.

Republican writers - tactical retreat hides new threat

The campaign defending members of the Republican writers group in Belfast from physical intimidation by the Republican movement has entered a period of difficulty. This is in part due to initial successes.

The unjustified nature of the killing of the real IRA member Joe O'Connor and the clumsy and brutal nature of the intimidation of the writers who investigated the killings provoked a backlash amongst republican supporters. Unfortunately the leadership have faced many backlashes in the period since the peace process, and have learnt that - in the absence of a political orientation and dealing with their unhappy supporters is simply a matter of making tactical retreats while refusing to budge on the main issue.

This is the case today. Initially, due to a wave of anger in republican areas of Belfast and a series of letters of support for the writers - Tommy Gorman and Tony McIntyre.

Prominent sympathisers in Dublin expressed opposition to the attacks. Socialist Party Dail member Joe Higgins contacted and the Irish Socialist Workers Party expressed strong opposition to the witch hunt. Gerry Adams faced sharp questioning in the USA following reports of his tour by the mother of the dead RBA volunteer. In the face of the criticism, Adams announced that he would support an inquiry into the death. It looked like a republican retreat.

Worrying

However, a closer look reveals a more worrying picture. Adams' support for an inquiry was conditional on his judging that Mrs. O'Connor was not under the influence of other organisations like the real IRA; this was in practice a diplomatic gesture in its own right. The physical attacks have died down, but this is because Tony McIntyre and his pregnant partner have been forced from their home. A new slander campaign has been launched. Essentially the republican leaders argue anonymously in letters of support for the writers that their attacks are based on the writers naming the gangmen who killed Joe O'Connor rather than on their political opposition. It has been demonstrated conclusively that the real IRA members did not have those names.

Now the republican campaign is complicated by the issue of the RUC involvement in the shootings (not posted by the writer's specifying at all) and the use of a rumoured British police called "beak knife". The physical attacks on the writers still exist. If the level of protest dies down the level of threat is likely to increase sharply.

Socialists and civil libertarians should contact the republican movement directly, and inform the RUC website that they have done so.

IRMG at http://www.irmg.org

Greetings ... with fighting racism

Eleven anti-racist activists from Dublin are being charged in relation to a protest against state racism which took place at the Taoiseach's constituency office on March 28.

On that day a short sit-in took place at the office. The protest was taken on, at that time, the cabinet was meeting to discuss a number of discriminatory measures to be introduced against antigen groups. These included:

- the introduction of detention camps
- the introduction of accommodation on prison ships (also called "flobs")
- forcible fingerprinting of asylum seekers
- an expansion of the power of the political dispersion system where other groups who have been categorized as "problematic")

Bertie Ahern is no more than Blair is to bulldoze asylum seekers

E-mail messages of support to: dublin_11@hotmail.com
RUC — Back to the future?

John North

If there is one thing that has stood as a touchstone for the corrupt sectarian British colonial city of the North of Ireland, it is the local police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). The present troubles began with the RUC attacking Sinn Fein demonstrations, murdering and gisting. The chief of the leading sectarian pogrom is the Catholic建军.

Later, when the leaders of the infamous riot squad had been promoted to the most senior posts in the RUC, it spearheaded murder, torture, internment, shoot-to-kill and involvement in the loyalist campaign of random sectarian murder.

Recent actions involved the murder of Human Rights Lawyers Pat Finucane and Rosemary Nelson. The RUC was watched indifferently as Robert Hamill was beaten to death in the centre of Portadown.

Attempts to investigate the force came to nothing. Manchester police chief John Stalker who tried to probe RUC conduct was himself investigated, and evidence for the Stephens inquiry disappeared in a mysterious fire.

Now, following November's vote in the British parliament, the RUC has gone. It has been changed to the Northern Ireland Police Service.

That's it. Very little else has changed and the RUC — on the vine then it would no longer need a sectarian police force.

If, as Socialist Democracy argued, the Good Friday Agreement was simply an imperialist offensive to re-establish the sectarian status-quo, then in practice the RUC would remain the RUC.

It had become clearer earlier in the process that democratisation did not mean an end to emergency powers and the strong state. Emergency legislation, the nature of the RUC, was to be incorporated into community policing, the military Digilock courts were to be retained.

This was largely ignored by the republicans. Their focus, and the focus of the "nationalist family", was on democracy in the sense of local control of the force and independent oversight to prevent its tendency towards sectarian murder and pogrom.

It is this democratisation that has been removed and, perhaps the most significant of all for the republicans, removed by the British state rather than as a result of unionist pressure. The British government at the current Bloody Sunday enquiry, shows, have never forgotten that the role of the RUC is to protect their forces and obscure that reality.

To understand the process occurring now in the aftermath of the Police Bill we need to recognise the relationship between the RUC and the Irish capital.

Irish capitalism recognises Britain's authority and negotiates within the boundaries of British interest. Once they have reached the limits of negotiation, the Irish capitalists must join immediately with the British in enforcing the deal and ensuring that there is no working class challenge that could threaten their own position.

Nationalist family

It is now that the "nationalist family" support unionism and particularly with Sinn Fein to face down the British, comes into its own. The end point of Patten will be nationalist acceptance of the RUC.

The "Catholic Church" who support unionism have already spoken out. The Catholic church has said that support would be "premature" — which means that open support is just around the corner.

The Dublin Government has made it clear that they support the amended Part 3 proposals. The SDLP says that lobbying the British on the implementation package is the way forward — but of course that means supporting the package.

Catholic Bishop Sean Brady set out the policy of nationalist Ireland most clearly at a religious service in County Louth on November 26.

In his view Patten was progress. So also was the policy of the Police Bill to wean the Catholic community from the sectarian RUC. That is very little else has changed and it would be well to remember that the SDLP and Sinn Fein are the instruments of their own sentences.

mean confessing that their strategy is in ruins and leave the SDLP to government. There is still room for Sinn Fein in an alliance with Irish capitalism for any hint of republicanisation.

The reaction of the North to the Police Bill demonstrates once again that there is no place for the slightest vestige of democracy in their programme and therefore there is no possibility of meeting the needs and aspirations of the working-class republican base.

Gerry Adams has already indicated a shift in the party's direction by toning down initial absolute demand of the bill and shifting attention to army bases in South Armagh. The British have long held these bases back as a sweetener and would be likely to make some move to distract the republican base from the SDLP.

The Good Friday agreement and the Police Bill arising from it face no real challenge yet for all this the support of the republican base is gradually disintegrating. The agreement contains within itself no genuine democratic reform and thus guarantees that a section of the nationalist working class will continue in opposition.

The nationalist support for the police now emerging means that this working-class layer will have to break from capitalism to be effective.

*Amongst these is Maurice Hayes. For years he was beyond the pale as the only top Catholic civil servant in the Stormont regime. He was appointed to the Parten commission and used his position to urge immediate joint security arrangements in Northern Ireland.

We get some feeling for the Sinn Fein shift to the right when we hear that Barely de Bruin, Sinn Fein health minister, appointed Hayes to head an enquiry into health provision in the province.
Whose state is it anyway?

The Captive State: The corporate takeover of Britain, by George Monbiot, (Macmillan £12.99)
Reviewed by Terry Conway

George Monbiot's Captive State is a well-written, accessible weapon in the battle against neo-liberalism and deserves to be read by every activist who can lay their hands on it.

From the graphic picture it paints of the interests behind the generic modification of food to the clear description it sets out the process behind the Private Finance Initiative in the Health Service and the increasing incursion of business into University research, it is packed full of information and arguments that we all need at our finger tips.

Monbiot puts forward his case in a number of different ways; through his stories about how the neo-liberal policies he is criticising affect the lives of ordinary individuals, through presenting factual information about the (often hidden) processes involved and the amount of money being squandered on making the rich richer and also through direct political polemic.

Through these changing foci Monbiot certainly kept my interest in a way that one approach would have been less likely to do. Despite its strengths however, Monbiot's book has a central flaw. In seeking to demonstrate what is new about globalisation and the way in which today the relentless search for profit dominates every aspect of our lives, Monbiot downplays the extent to which neoliberal capitalism has occurred on the basis of the exploitation and emiserisation of working class people.

Moreover, if you think that this advocacy of the problem has not practical consequences, you obviously didn't see Monbiot's Question Time on November 2.

Talking about the fuel protests, he made a welcome move away from his previous stance all for car plants to be shut down and that the massive profits of the oil companies should be taxed. This was a welcome move. Maybe in response to the vigorous debate at the Brighton 25th conference. The other hand, while he did defend direct action at a limited level, Monbiot also argued that governments should not be dictated to. Indeed at this point you could have thought he was speaking for Blair himself, so much did it follow the New Labour line. But where, you may ask, does this fit in with his position on corporations and the state?

Look again at the title of the book. There seems to be an important question here. Is nation states were created initially to serve the interests of everyone who lived within them, but that now under globalisation they have been "taken over" by big business?

This idealistic notion of the past class basis of states leads to the sorry political errors shown in the Question Time debate. As Chris Matthews rightly shows in his article in the autumn issue of International Socialism, 'Anti-capitalism, Theory and Practice', this flaw is not Monbiot's alone - but one which he shares with most non-Marxist left critiques of globalisation, such as Naomi Klein.

Harman stresses that the right-wing ideologues of neoliberalism seek to paint a picture of the state which sees things from the point of view of finance and trading capital and therefore ignores the reality of production and exploitation. Such a view is also a useful tool for the trade union bureaucracies and compliant governments who support these policies but can sell them under a new cover - that the processes that have led to globalisation are inevitable and cannot be challenged either by governments, workers or any other force on the planet.

Harman is also correct to criticise the fact that many of these opponents of globalisation also swallow the myth promoted by the right-wing ideologues that the nation state is powerless today in the face of uncontrollable processes. As he says, "Firms like Boeing, Microsoft, Texas Sales and General Motors would not be where they are if they had not long-standing ties with the American state in general and the US military in particular" (IS88, p24).

While of course Monbiot, Klein and their co-thinkers support - and by their writing promote - protests against globalisation, the weakness of their analysis can lead to an idea that the solution is to return to a golden age of non-exploitative capitalism.

This can fit neatly into some of the ideas of forces in and around Green Parties that small is beautiful and that production and consumption is intrinsically bad. By generalising questions of whose interest and under whose control production or research takes place, they fall into a reactionary trap. This in its own way is a question of Harman himself in his polemic with Monbiot and his co-thinkers plays down the significance of globalisation as a specific phase of capitalist development. He focuses on the similarities between capitalisation today with that of a century ago. But here are specific aspects of today's world which are important for revolutionaries and other campaigners to understand: for example instead of speculation, which was a key aspect of the Asian financial crisis.

I basically in the same issue of International Socialism, Paul Fussell also makes an interesting, sophisticated argument.

McGarr analys of the environmental destruction through different phases of capital accumulation is very instructive and brings us to the relentless search for profit.

At the same time he also explains why the dangers we face today are not global warming, GMOS, etc. are much greater than in previou.

In the context that the movement against globalisation is by far the most dynamic edge of the fight against the capitalist system today, it is certainly vital that the left engages with its ideas - and criticises its weaknesses both in terms of strategy and tactics.

But to do this effectively we have to relate to the new questions, the dangers in today's world that motivate this phase of struggle.

The North Sea, or the state of the Left

By Charlie van Gelderen

Blame it on grandad

Giving the Herbert Morrison Lecture at Westminster, last month, Ken Macdonald, Morrison's grandson, asked: "Why was it that, after a great Labour government, that achieved so much in those terms, failed to meet the challenge of renewal and allowed its huge majority to melt away and be followed by 13 years of Tory rule? And how can we be sure to avoid the same fate?" No, said Morrison, the task now was "to consolidate." Permanent reform of the economy was not for him. Capitalist style management would continue in the nationalised sectors, often the same people who were in control under private ownership. Workers' control would have a fresh emphasis. There is no need to look further for an explanation of the question raised by Macdonald.

But it's pretty clear he has not learned the key lesson of that period - that the choice is between permanent revolution or a return to embittered capitalism.

Diagnosis

Tony Blair underlined this diagnosis when, speaking at the NHS conference in Brighton on November 10th he admitted undertaking in the NHS during his three years in power.

"Because of his decision to stick to Tony spending measures. He said he would "stand or fall by that decision". But he won't be the only one to fall. This decision has left the NHS seriously short of funds which has resulted in a shortage of doctors, nurses, etc and such a shortage of beds that the NHS now has to rely on private health facilities to cope with the demand. And winter is still to come with its added pressure on health services.

Then there is also the decision to force pensioners to open bank accounts instead of collecting their pensions from post offices. This will not only increase the already swollen profile of the banks, it is also another step toward the privatisation of the Post Office.

Make bosses shell out

After an absence of seven years, Shell is returning to Ogililand, Nigeria, despite growing opposition from the Ogonis, Ken Sara-Wiwa, the Ogoni leader was executed five years ago by the then Nigerian government, acting for Shell.

There were no tears shed for the Ogoni people in the Shell boardroom in October, when a record annual profit of £2 billion was announced. This column is not demanding a reduction in fuel tax because we recognise the harm caused by theleggion breaking through the Vagrancy Act, 1893, will compound social exclusiveness and could lead the beggars into crime. Begging is caused by capital and by other forces of exploitative society. People don't become beggars out of choice. Research has consistently shown that they do not respect the law because they are desperate. The answer is definitely not more institutionalisation. Most of the people now begging in the streets have more than their fill of institutions. To add to this the crime list, we will do nothing to reduce it. We don't need any new offences.

As John O'Farrell pointed out in the Guardian, "The main lesson of the reporting on ... crime grieving is to refer reference to City fraud or big business tax evasion ... there are no inter- vistas with old ladies saying how they are afraid to go out because of some idea, but some tips for inside trading.

"Where are the big yellow signs saying 'Appeal for Witnesses - Smashing the remnants fund, selling currency forward and then spot fixed overnight'!"
British and French Telecom: unions confront market forces

Pete Cooper

In 1997 the European Commission removed all restrictions to competition in the EU telecommunications market. This was the starting gun in the multi-nationals' race to gain an agreed rate of profit on their converging third generation of internet and mobile telephony, broadband ADSL transmission, bringing video quality sports, traditional sports and a telephone network.

The cornucopia of unlimited competition and massive restructuring of the industry is completely overwhelming the power of management-union relations in the formerly nationalized monopolies such as BT and France Telecom.

But left union responses to the challenges thrown up by these developments are significantly different. For the two companies.

The Broad Left led CWU has adopted a short term traditional defensive trade union approach. It has failed to develop any long-term strategy, which could begin to challenge the neoliberal offensive.

The far left-led UNI union in France Telecom by contrast is attempting to develop a strategy which can both meet the immediate situation and decisively contribute to the reorganisation of the telecommunications movement to confront the challenge.

BT's massive competitive and financial situation than France Telecom. This is primarily a result of its earlier privatisation and introduction of competition from the likes of Virgin Media and presets in internet provision. To deal with its collapse in market share and profitability, BT is planning its conversion into a holding company with its operational divisions into subsidiaries quoted on the stock market, with the very real possibility of their total disposal.

Derecognition

The consequences for the workforce are different and worse in each of the new subsidiaries, and the possibility of eventual union derecognition, or all of them. The CWU's union response to the dominant Broad Left NEC majority was to call the plan the lesser of two evils - the greater evil being total takeover of BT by a predatory anti-union multinational. In reality the BT plan actually increases the possibility of its wholesale breakup and to its attendant consequences for the unions.

Faced with this situation the Broad Left at a specially convened meeting correctly identified the presentation of a united contract as the key immediate objective, while attempting to present BT's anti-unions breakdown, and calling for the renationalisation of the telecom industry.

As several speakers pointed out, however, all experience shows that unions have had no success in preventing this type of financial operation. Once subsidisation is in place the maintenance of common and non-commercial lines is a valued part of the unions.

But what is striking and depressing is the absence of any strategic discussion in the BT about how to challenge in social partnership in achieving and maintaining a strong position of the trade union movement to challenge its right wing megaphone. Mobilisation around either industrial or broader issues is also very much lacking from its discussions.

Across the channel France Telecom leaders have a much healthier image of the market, financial and political situation than BT. It is only now in a very narrow (46%) privatised and has been protected for longer against competition by the French state, although that position too is being rapidly eroded, albeit from a higher starting position.

France Telecom is still making foreign acquisitions, but it has recently bought Orange, a quarter share in NTL, the British cable operator, and it is currently bidding to buy BBE, while BT is having to sell its foreign holdings to preserve a domestic position. Nevertheless FT is faced with a similar challenge that BT is no more than two years. It is adopting a similar strategy of subsidisation.

Left-led

The far left led UNI and PTT, now the majority union in French Telecom is also discussing its response. For them the issue is preservation of the civil service status of the majority of FT staff which could be threatened by the further government sell-off of its holding

But the essential difference of approach between that of SUD and the Broad Left led CWU is one of issues of strategy and mobilisation. Although SUD is a "breakaway" union in an already fragmented trade union scene, it is serious in attempting to address the issue of the reunification of the French trade union movement on an anti-neoliberal basis.

It has played a central role in developing the "Group of 10" unions autonomous from the main increasingly partnership-oriented trade union federations. It is in serious discussion with the other unions about forming an autonomous teachers' union about creating a new trade union confederation.

The left union confederation would enable these trade unions to take on the whole political power to the "break the chains as those who wear them".

The whole working class needs to fully come together in a mass movement to confront the attack on our jobs and way of life.

Furthemore we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these organisations - an alliance which cannot be compromised.

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