No to Tory policies!

Millions of people voted Labour at the last General election in 1997, enthusiastic at the prospect of getting rid of the hated Tories.

But instead of listening to the aspirations of the majority of those voters, new Labour has continued with Tory policies and driven them through in areas that even their predecessors did not dare to venture.

- Blair’s policies have seen a widening gap between rich and poor
- New Labour has carried through and planned privatisation in new areas – from housing to air traffic control
- Tuition fees have been imposed on students, and grants abolished
- Jack Straw has attacked asylum seekers and is threatening to tear up the 1951 Geneva Convention
- Despite refusing to make a clear statement, Blair backs Bush’s “son of Star Wars” project, which threatens to trigger a new arms race

Blair’s New Labour government will be comfortably returned on June 7 – winning votes from traditional Tory voters, whose own party is in deep crisis.

Many working class people on the other hand will vote for new Labour with a heavy heart. Keeping the Tories out rightly remains a central preoccupation – even though they are not a short term threat.

But building an effective opposition to Tory policies – whether they are put forward by Hague or Blair – must be the priority for socialists.

That opposition now has a focus at the ballot box as well as on the streets and in the workplaces.

The Scottish Socialist Party and the Socialist Alliance, together mounting the biggest left wing challenge to Labour in living memory, offer a voice to the voiceless at this election.

That is a huge step forward.
Crown's surrender angers hi-jacked tube workers

Greg Tucker

Tony Blair wants to clear the deck of the union opposition that is called The controversy over London Underground is an issue he wants out of the way. London Transport's MPs are increasingly worried that PPP is a millstone round their necks. So whilst Blair was busy dealing with Kier and Livingstone, John Monks was pressed into service to try to convince the RMT to drop their opposition to tube privatization. Rather than take the opportunity to push through tube workers demands, Bob Crow has given in. Offered a deal which puppets to give tube workers 'guarantees' for 'life' Crow forced through the RMT executive the postponement of the strike called for May 3. A consultation meeting with RMT reps on May 8 will be asked to settle the dispute on this basis. The workers were angry that their dispute has been hijacked, particularly when it emerged that Crow had been in secret talks with RMT full time organiser for LUL for weeks. They are furious that on the executive he was forced to use the EC rep for Scotland to move the resolution to suspend the action, against the wishes of the RMT rep. Crow must realise that the "jobs for life" offer is useless. It answers none of the safety issues on which members have been successful in winning. Indeed up until last week Crow had argued against the likes of the Evening Standard that this dispute was not about "jobs for life". Even on its own terms the offer does not stand up. Even if the necessary formulas were placed in the new PPP contracts they would be difficult to enforce. In any case, the experience of the other engineering contracts run on the mainline railway, by the same contractors, shows the problem. With a turn over of staff, within a short period those formally protected stop to lose out to new staff on worse conditions. It becomes progressively easier for management to run them down on formal rights. The Kiley deal gives no protection either. Whilst details are still sketchy at the time of writing, it seems that all the caution we have expressed in previous issues has been nullified. Kiley says he will continue with the judicial review of RMT's threats new strikes to defend safety

The RMT has served notice on every train operating company that they intend to ballot all train crew in the dispute over their operational safety role. If all goes according to schedule strikes could be called across the country by the end of the month. With attendance up on previous years, the RMT's Train Crew conference, again held in Glasgow, gave a clear message that the action has to be given a firm priority. Members were fed up with leaflet orders to attend the meeting for action to defend their conditions, and the safety of the public, undermined since the privatization of the rail network. The mood amongst train crew has hardened since the Hatfield. Delegates are keen to press for the scrapping of Driver Only Operations and the reintroduction of Guards on all trains. This principle was lost in 1995, but with both ASLEF and the RMT committed to an end to DOO and with public opinion on our side the time has come to act. The fact that neither British Rail or the train operating companies have ever evaluated the safety implications of doing away with Guards in the first place gives a further urgency to this issue. The conference also expressed an view on the current crisis facing the RMT. In giving RMT new leadership, Phil Boyce, a standing ovation for his fight to defend union democracy against the attacks launched by Knapp and the right wing majority of the national executive. The conference unanimously agreed resolutions of no confidence in the executive and Senior Assistant General Secretary, Vernon H ganze in defence of Pat Sokins and the others being witch hunted. Rail workers are increasingly anxious at the way they have been deserted by Labour. So the conference was determined to be addressed by Scottish Socialist Party MSPs in the Scottish Assembly. They were horrified to hear that, days before its closure was announced, Motorola workers had been lectured by RMT sponsored Labour MP Tim Dallal to moderate their demands to keep their bosses sweet. An SSP fringe meeting attracted a third of delegates who heard details of the SSP general election campaign. A number of delegates signed up for the SSP or pledged support for the Socialist Alliance campaign south of the border.

Headed for another sacking?

South West Trains halted by strike

As a precursor to the national train crew dispute, guards on South West Trains successfully staged the first of a series of coordinated day long strikes on May 3. Picott lines outside depots across South West Trains, including those in Bath, Clifton and Bristol, were all backed by RMT and ASLEF members. Headlined as a dispute over red waitcoats, the guards said they were backed by indemnity policies, discrimination procedure policies and a refusal by management to seriously negotiate with the RMT on a number of issues.

If SWT thought that this dispute would go away they were wrong. The conclusion of the dispute was that, if a given, lead, rail workers are prepared to stand up and fight to defend their working conditions.

MSF left must gear up for merger

Activists in MSF will not be able to rest after the General Election is over. The union's conference starts on June 8. General Secretary Roger Lyons will undoubtedly use the opportunity to show both the supposed achievements of new Labour in government and his own failures in winning the ballot for merger with the GMB. This issue, along with the fight against the continuing witch hunts, will be major tasks for activists in London region has tended to dominate the concerns of the left in the union. It was always obvious that we would lose the merger ballot, given the highly undemocratic way it was organised. Huge amounts of the union's scarce resources were penned into ensuring that a new and stronger right wing union was created, while opponents of the project were denied any opportunity to put their views across to the membership. It was necessary to fight on this issue, as well as to defend those facing trumped up charges on political grounds, but for the left to make real progress we need to move beyond this over internalisation.

It is very welcome that moves are being made in advance of conference to try to create a new left, mobilising activists from the AEU as well as MSF and focusing on political issues such as an opposition to social partnership. It is on this big questions facing trade unionists that we can begin to go forward.
Vote Socialist where you can — and Labour where you must

T

he coming General Election is very different from the 1997 election. Then the main preoccupation was to defeat the Tories after so many years of destruction of working class organisations. Today, there will be the biggest left challenge for decades.

In 1997 many people had aspirations that Labour would improve things significantly. Others had fewer expectations, but some faith that 'change could only get better'.

The disappointment that has followed has brought to the lowest-ever turn out at local government and European elections. Millions of workers have stayed at home in solid Labour constituencies, while others have voted for green or nationalist candidates.

Where socialists and campaigners were able to put forward an alternative electoral platform, most notably in the first-ever elections for the Scottish Parliament and for the Greater London Assembly, they performed remarkably well.

Building on these successes both the Scottish Socialist Party and the Socialist Alliance have gone from strength to strength.

In this General Election every voter in Scotland will have the opportunity to vote for a party that puts the interests of working people first. It is a huge step forward that the Scottish Socialist Party are standing in every seat and building a fightback against new Labour’s Tory policies.

And in more than 90 seats in England, the Socialist Alliance will be on the ballot paper. This is a magnificent achievement for an organisation that has not previously stood in a General Election.

The Alliance is already reaching out to many people who have been Labour Party members for years and have become deeply disillusioned with the record of this Labour government.

In Newcastle and Nottinghamshire, for example, a section of the Labour Party, including the former council leadership, has joined the Alliance. They will be standing a candidate at the election.

During the election campaign proper, the SSLP and WLC will be able to reach out to more disenfranchised Labour voters than those we have so far linked up with.

At this stage of its development, the Alliance has rightly decided not to stand in the small number of constituencies where real left Labour candidates are standing. It would be sectarian to do so when the Alliance is not in a position to stand in all seats.

In places like Islington North, Hayes and Harlington, Merton and Wandsworth, Labour supporters of Socialist Outlook and many other conscious socialists will vote Labour with some conviction.

But even here, questions need to be asked. While a small number of MPs have consistently voted against the government on major issues such as asylum and lone parent benefits, they have failed to organise those who support them either inside or outside the party.

Voting against the government — which relatively few Labour MPs have done — or appealing on platforms of worthy campaigns is not sufficient. These MPs need to put themselves at the head of that resistance and win the support of those who trust them.

The underpinning of the rest of the campaign is to win the majority of opposition voices: those of those who stand outside the Labour Party.

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Blair plans second term rip-off from the cradle to the grave!

John Lister

Labour's plans for a second term are a bitter insult to the millions of students who are struggling to pay tuition fees and on their way to more than £35,000 as a result of New Labour's policies. They will also be seen as a sick joke by school students struggling in underfunded classrooms without cash for books or equipment.

Tony Blair unveiled plans to give a cash handout to new born babies, and occasional extra payments that might add up to £3,000 by the age of 18, claiming that it would help tackle child poverty. But child poverty flows from the low pay, unemployment and inadequate benefits of their parents: tackling £300 in a bank account for use by the child 18 years later will do nothing to address these problems.

As an increase in the minimum wage to the EU " decency threshold" of £7.40 would do far more to tackle child poverty than Labour's feeble bribe.

Blair's Band "Baby Bond" is a much more sinister shift of government policy.

At the same press conference, Blair and fellow Labour ministers reverted to the language of Thatcherism, arguing that a second term Labour government would require people to "stand on their own two feet" and end the traditional support from the welfare state.

Blair said: "We want to encourage adults to save for themselves, to help themselves in difficult times: losing a job or becoming ill, for example."

David Blunkett went further and argued for a system of "self-help". He suggested a return to the old mutual systems, which were the only support for workers before the welfare state was introduced.

These warnings of New Labour's future rigid policy ambitions came in the run-up to Tony Blair's widely-expected announcement of an election on June 7 (though this is still awaited as we go to press).

But they reinforced other significant hints that the privatisation and business-friendly policies that have so antagonised many of Labour's core voters will be eclipsed by the onslaught as soon as Blair has won his second term.

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Why Greens are not always good for you

John Lister

WITH New Labour having travelled so far and so fast to the right, and the Liberal Democrats lacking any real conviction in their efforts to appear as a left bourgeois alternative, many young and older voters are perhaps thinking the Green Party, seeing it as a radical alternative.

The Greens have caught on in mounting concern for the environment, worried over climate change, which, a substantial layer have drawn few substantial political conclusions.

But on none of these areas which might be seen as the strengths of the Greens' case have New analysis or a visible policy other than seeking election as effectively another reformist party committed to working within the system.

In office - as we have seen with the Liberal Democrats - this approach leads to policies very similar to those of the Labour Party, seeking first and foremost to balance the books of the council, and little connection with the interests of working people whose jobs and conditions are at stake.

While some within the Green Party define themselves as socialists, and embrace the best elements of an understanding of capitalism as a system of class rule and exploitation of the majority by the wealth-owning majority - this elementary starting point is strikingly absent from the Green Party's own Manifesto for a Sustainable Society.

The section on the Economy, for example, talks in New Labour style the "equitable distribution of wealth", but does not address the issue of the ownership of the means of production. Under the heading "companies, ownership and the stakeholder principle" it points out that:

"The accountable exercise of economic power by large corporations has done much to destroy the environment and convivial social structures. Green policies will establish greater community and environmental accountability." Indeed the Green analysis of the capitalist system falls at the first hurdle, with its insistence that the real, rather than the labour of working people, is "the primary source of all real wealth".

Without an understanding of the class structure of capitalist society, and the relentless drive for profit which has propped up the banks and multinationals and corporations into their reckless plundering and destruction of much of our nature environment, it is hard to see the root cause that must be tackled in an ecologically sustainable economy is to be established.

Without recognising the profits that are being stuffed up in the world's wealthiest countries it is impossible to tackle the poverty that is being generated by the same system -- for the billions who live in the world's poorest countries.

Of course the system not only enriches the wealthy few, but also exploits and exploiting the vast majority of the world's population: the gives millions of people a material interest in going to fight for their rights and for a world to live in. Socialists draw on the Greens' analysis that the need to build and work consistently in the organisations of the working class, which must play the leading role in the overthrown of the system.

Cut off from this analysis, the Greens have little perspective to offer but the quest for personal reform coupled with moral exhortations to individuals to live better lives.

The Socialist Alliance has made a point of incorporating the fight for environmental questions into its campaigns and seeking to win the best anti-capitalist fighters to a consistent socialist policy.

The Greens, by contrast, wind up in alliances with other bourgeois reformist parties which share their "socialist" principles and confront and challenge the power of capitalism - locally, nationally or globally.

Blair said Forbes: "Over the coming few years, corporation tax revenues as a percentage of national income will fall..."

"Our priorities for the next term are to carry on establishing enterprise, through research and development, that invests in the future, amongst others in relation to anti-capitalist tax and corporation tax.

"Business chiefs in the US we've threatened would be no let-up in the anti-capitalism, Labour inherited from Thatcher.

"I have made it quite clear that we will retain a competitive, healthy, global capitalist market here..."

I t may well be hard for trade unionists and workers struggling to survive on a pittance, but Blair's priorities are clear: "My ambition is for Britain to be the best place for business in the world and in Europe in particular."

But Blair also sees his key role as a driving force for globalisation and the neoliberal agenda of deregulation and privatisation, backed up by the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation.

It isn't just for Europe and for Britain it is important we use this time to push forward and measures of liberalisation within Europe, and we have played a part of reorienting the whole of the economic agenda around economic reform in Europe. ... At an international level, we must push ahead on the WTO..."

For teachers, Blair had a proposition:

"I want to see far more emphasis on entrepreneurship in schools, far closer links between universities and business. I want to see us develop a far greater entrepreneurial culture. We have only just gone beneath the surface of this so far.

"We have two separate states for beleaguered public sector unions, and I'm delighted at the extent of private privatisation through the ever more open-ended Nature of a Labour extended:"

"We must push ahead with the whole agenda of liberalisation going on at the moment. If I go to my constituency now, our country is more liberal in this way -- my electricity and my water are both owned by French companies...

"The onslaught on the unemployed with the "workfare" system ushered in by Labour's "New Deal" will also continue, with people being forced into low-paid jobs for fear of losing benefits."

"We can't allow a situation where five non-pensioner household had no one with a job among them, right? We've reduced enormously the number of benefits, the number of benefits we've introduced, the range of benefits, we've introduced tough measures on welfare and workfare..."

"You know, you lose your benefit if you're not taking part in any kind of activity or work. So there is a whole series of things we're putting through, and it's vital we'll have to put through, to do that..."

"There's performance-related pay for teachers. There's the whole agenda of the liberalisation of our health system going on, and the social agenda there for a second term."
NUT Conference setback for teachers

Gill Lee, officer Labour, Union News

The NUT’s Broad Left (right-wings) leadership once again professed at annual conference in in the belief that it is incapable of defending teachers and education’s reputation. Privatization, teacher salaries, and the progressive undermining of comprehensive education formed the background to this year’s conference, as did the need for financial parity pay (PPP). The Executive had ignored the PPP motion at the conference and refused to ballot for further action.

The tasks of the Left were clear: to map out a strategy of campaigns and action which could:
- Defend comprehensive education;
- Increase salaries and stop oversee teacher shortage;
- Hold the line on opposition to National Curriculum testing and league tables; and
- Begin to redress inequalities in performance management and PPA.

Most of these issues the left were left defeated. Teachers, pupils and all those with an interest in the working class receiving a broad, balanced and critical education are the losers.

The only exception was on the issue of performance management, where Conference agreed to call for a boycott.

In his closing speech to Conference General Secretary Dick Boyton, which view of the way forward for the union. He emphasized the need for “professional unity” with other teacher union organizations and that unity could only be achieved through common purpose.

He talked about the union engaging itself as a leader of high quality professional development for teachers.

He stressed that teachers had nothing to fear from good performance management and that “We are not fife agents trying to claim to be so”.

The only issue was on the extent of performance management, where the union must subordinate itself to what government decides ...

and McAvoy will not carry on Conference’s decision to ballot for a boycott of performance management.

“Professional unity” had been the mantra for all those opposed to a perspective of struggle.

The commitment of the leadership of the NASUWT and ATL to a joint proposal to the government about taking on excessive workload and pay was continually used to stop debate on strike action for higher salaries and to defeat resolutions calling for action on workload.

The unions were unsuccessful in arguing that action was the best motivator of unity and that they ourselves to the coat-tails of the ATL meant no action at all.

The Broad Left had carried out a bold move in calling off the very limited ‘cover to contract’ action before Conference even began, and successfully defeated attempts to restart the action.

This opens up the danger that the unions will now be seen to be legitimating management’s demands that teachers work beyond contract to cover up for teacher shortages.

In arguing that such a massive crisis in education can be resolved by an “Inquiry” into workload and pay, the Broad Left pointed to the victories won in Scotland.

Those in the Scottish teachers’ union, the EIS, who opposed the McAvoy deal pointed out at an NUT fringe meeting that it involved a 20% increase in workload in exchange for the increase in pay. This would intensify teacher shortages, not solve it.

The defeats at this year’s Conference only emphasize the need for unity of the left, currently divided between the Socialists, Teachers Alliance, the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union, and the SWP which left the STP some years ago.

Some initial steps were taken at Conference and these need to be built on in order that the Left can better defend itself, teachers, and comprehensive education against the attacks to come.

Blair’s return could bring back two-tier education

Rick Hatcher

The Daily Mail has called it the “Death of the Comprehensive”. How it summed up the proposal in the government’s Green Paper on education to turn nearly half of all secondary schools into “specialist schools”.

This move will create a twotier school system in three ways:
- Specialist schools will get extra money — £100,000 plus £125 per pupil per year.
- Second, they will be seen as “better” by many parents, and this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- Thirdly, they will be able to select up to 10% of their intake. However, 10% is not enough to really change the character of a school. How long will it be before some specialist schools demand that the ceiling is raised to allow selection of at least one whole class with pace?

Specialist schools are not the only equal opportunity issue in the Green Paper. There is a real contradiction at its heart.

On the one hand it contains much more explicit commitments to reducing inequalities than previous education policy documents.

At the other hand, the measures it proposes to tackle inequality are far too weak, and in any case many of the Green Paper’s other proposals will tend to reinforce, not reduce inequality.

On gender issues the Green Paper has almost nothing to say. Current debates on masculinity go unmentioned.

On racial equality at primary level the Green Paper says little.

At secondary level the solution is to lie in a combination of measures: target the literacy, the languages, and the “EMAG” policy for teaching pupils whose first language is not English, with vague remarks about working more closely with black parents and communities.

Social class inequality, in contrast, is a battery of measures. In the early years, the expansion of nursery and play opportunities provision is welcome, but far too limited.

At secondary level, there are three elements in Labour’s approach to social disadvantage.
- First, the emphasis on diversity of schools.
- Second, the continuing application of Labour’s previous aim of improving the leadership, monitoring, targets and inspections.
- Thirdly, a whole set of initiatives aimed at providing additional targeted support, including zonal programmes, Education Action Zones, Excellence in Cities, Teachers’ Standards, extra funding for 50 low achieving secondary schools (£2 million, which approximately £60,000 per school), ‘partnership’ between grammar schools and neighbouring comprehensive schools; City Academies; and Fresh Start or closure.

Inequalities might lessen under Labour — indeed, after 16 years of right-wing Tory government it would be surprising if they didn’t.

The question is, are they likely to diminish sufficiently to make even the limited notion of equality of opportunity? In other words, to qualitatively alter life experiences and life chances of those whose interests are served least by the school system?

What is entirely absent from the Green Paper is any notion that Labour’s social agenda and the agenda of improving the quality of education can be realized through a limited equality agenda.

The structure of the school system.

The quasi-market (tests, league tables, parental preference, school selection, per capita funding etc) reinforces inequality. Diversity of schools: This reinforces inequality. The specialist schools proposal will create a two-tier system.

Diversity within schools: Ability grouping reinforces inequality, as will more academic- vocational segregation at 14.

The curriculum: Is it self a reproduction of social differentiation, but regarded as neutral by Labour. Nor is there any notion of tackling race, gender and class in the curriculum in an emancipatory perspective.

The management of education: Authoritarian rationalization and increased workload prevents the creativity and innovation by teachers which is vital to tackle inequality.

End of school and home: Could the reliance on the ‘parent as co-educator’ actually reinforce patterns of privilege?

The increasing role of the private sector: What are the implications for equality?

Education Action Zones: Effectiveness is doubtful.

Excellence in Cities:用户体验和能力

There is a contradiction at the heart of the Green Paper between its concern for social inclusion and (an albeit limited notion of) equality of opportunity and the three dominant imperatives of Labour education policy.

It is concerned for the production of human capital for a hierarchical labour market; the refusal to challenge middle class privilege in education for electoral reasons; and the desire not to spend too much money that determines the government’s agenda.

All these three targets are incompatible with a genuine egalitarian agenda.
Will Blackburn leave Straw in the wind?

Adam Britner
April 24 saw the largest gathering to date behind the banner of the Lancashire Socialist Alliance to support the election campaign of candidate Jim Nichol.

Contesting the Blackburn seat against Home Secretary, Jack Straw, Jim puts an ideal position with his record as a civil rights lawyer, representing those marginalised by our society.

The main focus of the campaign will obviously be the treatment of asylum seekers as well as the sell off of Blackburn's council service’s, which has led to the lack of a public service in our area. The council service’s have been severely damaged through a town council scandal and leafleting.

Mr Nichol said: "As a Labour MP, I have been involved in cases involving people who have been wrongly convicted, such as the Carl Bridgewater case, the MR5 case, and the MR25 case. Every day I represent people without assistance and no power."

"This has made me especially passionate about the kind of people who blame the less fortunate in our society. Every time a Labour candidate rises to their feet or an immigrant is arrested and asylum seekers, every time they have to send a child or pass a law to make criminals out of people who support dissent abroad, I am incensed."

Nichol revealed local and national politics and that he had been postmaster for a month in his most recent case, when he succeeded in halting the decision of Accrington's Bank for the closure of the town's branch.

"I am determined to raise over £100,000 towards much needed funds. A generous donation of £40,000 for the deposit came from John Nicholson from the UPA and the consolation he received for being manhandled in a Manchester protest against the Terrorism Bill on April 1 last year. It’s nice to see the Home Secretary paying the deposit of his opponent in the way he’s paid in the past."

Jim Nichol said of the donation: "I spent most of my working time fighting against injustice in the judicial system. In many ways therefore it is fitting that money from this source should be used to help mount my challenge to Jack Straw, who said giving in on record on civil liberties."

In Blackburn, the ISA has done the job of setting itself has a clear alternative to the reactionary Jack Straw. Nichol explained further his reasoning for running for the ISA’s ticket.

"As a lawyer I oppose Straw for reasons of policy, as a socialist bring brought up in a mining family in the North-West, he would not support the Labour government for their Tory policies, especially their obsession with privatisation.

Target: Jack Straw

"Look at the mess on the Liberal Democrat doorstep, let’s take them back public ownership? I’m heading to give everyone who feels the same indignation a chance to contribute something for something they believe in."

Paul Hubert
Local political developments have kept the Bradford Socialist Alliance busy over the last month. The local Liberal Democrat council majority has continued to move forward on its privatization plans and the riot in the Lidgate Green area highlighted continuing issues of race and racism.

Unions representing thousands of council staff have failed to agree with the management over new terms and conditions. The result of negotiations, a ballot for industrial action is now underway.

A consultation exercise is supposed to be underway over the intended privatization or “transfer”, of Bradford’s council houses. However the sincerity of this consultation was questioned when Councillor Kris Hopkins, executive member for health and housing, said representatives of the people of the area were not being consulted. "They want to get into the real world."

The council is also poised to choose between Education — a newly formed company of North Anglia and Aremy — and Serco/QAA to run its education service. One company has no experience of running council education services, while the other has been strongly criticized in the only two council education reports recently completed.

"These policies are being carried forward by the majority vote of the Tories in the Liberal Democrat dominated council Labour, having started the programme with a sell-off of the Lidgate Green area."

The last election, offer only toothless opposition. When Councilor Kris Hopkins, executive member for health and housing, said representatives of the people of the area were not being consulted. "They want to get into the real world."

The Socialist Alliance issued a leaflet pointing out that the main political party has been dragged through the Asian Muslim community, if anything the police have been called to answer the address the issues of poverty and privatization in Bradford, or the right of communities to defend themselves against attack by racists.

The Alliance called for a campaign for services and facilities in all areas, including defending and improving council housing, and fighting rising poverty and inequality. Redundancies have been announced at Pace in Saltdean, The Bradford company, which manufactures items for multiple retailers and TV set-top boxes, has decided to close down its production in Bradford and set up with cheaper labour in Eastern Europe. 400 workers face the choice. After the destruction of the textile industry on which modern Bradford was built, the likelihood of it being brought back to life as offering the opportunity to replace old industries with sunrise once. Pace’s announcement is an illustration that, while calling for loyalty from workers, capitalist have no loyalty towards them.

Bradford Socialist Alliance has campaigned steadily, finding new purpose from these events. It has offered an alternative to the consensus of the main parties, and has supported local campaigners when appropriate.

Alliance candidate for Bradford South, Areeq Siddique, has also intervened into the national debate to offer a socialist perspective on events in Lidgate Green.

Alliance supporters from around West Yorkshire supported protesters outside the Bradford courts as a white man who had stabbed an Asian trader with a knife was acquitted of murder.

The court accepted a claim that he acted in the belief he was defending himself, in marked contrast to the treatment of many black people who have defended themselves when clearly they were under attack.

We have also shown that we can Party. A social feature of Hypocrite (former members of UK’s mental) and a young local band was well-attended – and made money.

The next test for this young grouping (I mean the Alliance) will be to appeal several gears to meet the challenge of a general election.

It is clear from the sympathy and interest we received that much can be achieved.

Tyne-Socialist Alliance has had plenty to keep it busy. Not only are there two candidates to support: Terry Sanderson in Tyne Bridge and Pete Burnett in Tyneside North, but there are a host of local issues to campaign around in addition to the national platform of the Alliance. For example, a few years ago, saw campaigners in the City Centre petitioning not only over the threatened closure of the local fire station, an issue the Alliance has been working around for some time, but around the threatened closure of Carmel Lads shipped at Hebburn.

Of course, which employs 750 men at Hebburn, had been taken into receivership in the previous week. On May 13, the Evening Chronicle broke the exclusive story that the owner of the neighbouring Swan Hunter yard, Jack Krouse, wanted to buy the Hebburn Yard. The story, published on Good Friday was headlined "Saviour". Krouse, who has since put together a consortium which involves the GMB said "We are really interested in the Hebburn yard for production of new offshore work but not really repair work and would need a partner if were going to take over and make it worthwhile as well". Althorpe, the vessel moved onto the River Tees for the Rover group bought it and to prominence, and a number of other companies have also expressed interest.

The attitude of both the govern- ment and local government is clear, the GMB is good and the attitude of the government is that the country paid off against those in another. This was the basis of the activity over Easter weekend and subsequently, and it was pleasantly surprising that so many people were ready to listen to the arguments despite the fact that it was a public holiday and trade union leaders pushing the message of comprome- 

see the closure of the yards at Swan Hunter yard, and the loss of hundreds of jobs. Events in Lidgate Alliance believe that the companies should stop wanting to see workers in one part of the country played off against those in another. This was the basis of the action over Easter weekend and subsequently, and it was pleasantly surprising that so many people were ready to listen to the arguments despite the fact that it was a public holiday and trade union leaders pushing the message of compromise.
Extra mural support for Erdfington fight

John Harding

STIRLING, STAFFORDSHIRE, the Erdfington Socialist Alliance candidate, launched his campaign by unveiling a giant mural on the side of a friend’s house. The mural shows Jeremy Corbyn. Godward housing Tony Blair and William Hague. Erdfington is a working class area in north Birmingham represented at present by Robin Corbett. Although he lost the seat a little while ago Mr Corbyn announced he was not standing again, allowing Mr. Miliband almost total control of the selection process.

The 300 local members of the Labour Party were blatant process. During the selection process in defiance of the rules. Even though several local councillors and prominent members put themselves forward, not a single local member made it onto the short list of four – the (4) local party members who attended the selection meeting were appalled. In July, Labour Party right wing members stormed their disappointing for about 20 minutes and it looked like the meeting would be closed. However, candidates improved. Eventually Sian Simon, clearly a head office stooge, was selected. Mr. Simon promised himself – he was now going to do regular for the Sunday Telegraph and The News of the World, two more reactionary newspapers it would be hard to secure a position on a local Labour Party which has supported every twist and turn of Blairite policy could not be trusted to select this person as the “right” candidate.

Meanwhile Socialist Alliance candidate Godward has emphasised his opposition to privatisation, in particular the PFI scheme at the Dudley Group of hospitals and in Birmingham at Selly Oak and QE hospitals. He said the Socialist Alliance would stop privatisation, bring the railways back into public ownership, repeal the anti-union laws, and massively increase funding for health and education.

Godward was until recently a member of the Labour Party, and other local members and ex-members have become involved in his campaign, including ex-ward chair Clive Resort. Steve said “We can make a difference. People don’t have to vote Labour, and they don’t have to vote Tony. There’s a new political party in the area that puts people before profit and people before greed.”

Steve’s campaign has been the most dynamic and well supported in Birmingham with two successful public meetings so far in Erdfington and on the Castle Vale estate and a very successful weekly stall.

On May 5 a candidate with a Tony Blair mask harrassed the crowded shopping area in Erdfington High St saying he was going to privatise more public services! Local people were queuing up to pay 10 pence to throw wet sponges.

Six of the best from the ISG

The International Socialist Group has 6 candidates standing for the Socialist Alliance at the General election. They are: PETER BURNETT in Tyneside North, BRIAN DRUMMOND in Bristol East, JOHN LISTER in Oxford East, ANDY RICHARDS in Hove, GREG TUCKER in Streatham and PAUL WILCOX in Carlisle.

Putting forward these members as candidates across the country is one of the ways we hope to play a role in building the Socialist Alliance as an effective opposition to Blair’s Tory policies.

Socialists must listen to win Labour supporters

Terry Conway

Islington Socialist Alliance has had plenty to keep us busy in recent weeks. We have been out campaigning against the closure of the local bowling office, against Amend’s plans to site a new waste dump in a residential area in order to facilitate their new big business stadium, and in solidarity with tube workers.

One of our focuses was to build a public meeting which was addressed by our candidate Jenny Lee and also the candidates for Hoxton and Wood Green, Louise Christian and the David. We felt that people in Islington would be particularly interested in hearing by Liz Davies, an Islington councillor and respected local activist for SOAP, who had made her decision to leave New Labour and join the Socialist Alliance. We were proved right by the turn out of over 70 people, many of whom we didn’t know before including 8 local Labour Party members.

It was the debate with these Labour Party members which was not surprisingly the most important aspect of the meeting. Many of the activists were from Islington North and not surprisingly supported of local Campaign Group MP Jeremy Corbyn. Socialist Alliance supporters were able to point out that we had made a conscious decision not to oppose Corbyn, and that we would be calling for people to vote for him, as well as suggest that people from the north of the borough could come and assist with Jeremy’s campaign in the South.

There was however a weakness in the response from many of the Alliance speakers, particularly from the SWP. Speakers who were still Labour Party members clearly showed that they were torn between their anger with government policies and their loyalty to a party that many of them had been involved in for all their adult life.

But some speakers ignored their questions, simply making general comments about the numbers of people breaking from new Labour. May’s Socialist Review carries quotes from long standing Labour Party members who have eventually come down on the side of the Alliance, indicating that the SWP leadership recognises that this is the vital group of people that the Socialist Alliance needs to orient towards.

To do so successfully, we need to encourage people to vote for us, rather than just before finally making a decision to leave new Labour.

We need to recognise that we will build a stronger movement if we are able to listen to and address people’s personal concerns as well as their political aspirations.

GREG TUCKER is a train driver and RMT activist, standing against Keith Hill, Minister for Transport who is also a member of the RMT. Greg was a Labour councillor from the mid 1980s until 1993 when he was expelled from the Labour Party for his record of defending local services and fighting the poll tax. As well as fighting for rationalisation of the railways and against tube privatisation, Greg’s campaign has highlighted the creeping selection taking place in Lambeth’s schools.

PAUL WILCOX is a shop worker and member of USDAW. Carlisle Socialist Alliance has been fighting for rationalisation of the railways and Paul has been campaigning against the imposition of tution fees.

Paul says: “We don’t just say vote for us and we will fight for you, we say vote for us but also join the Socialist Alliance and fight with us. The only people that can change the conditions of the working class are the working class themselves.”

ANDY RICHARDS is an activist in UNISON, currently chair of the Brighton and Hove branch. He is also Treasurer of the local Trades Council. He was a member of the Labour Party from until February of this year, a Labour Councillor from 1995-97 and also held the positions of Chair and Secretary of the local constituency. Andy says: “What is striking is the marvellous spirit of unity in the Socialists Alliance. There seems to be a real commitment to making successful as a socialist alternative to new Labour.”

JOHN LISTER is standing in Oxford East against Chief Secretary to the Treasury Andrew Smith. John, a journalist who sits on the NUJ’s Standing Orders Committee, is best known as a campaigner against hospital closures, cuts, privatisation and PFI as the NHS in his job as Information Director for London Health Emergency. John also lectures in journalism at the local FE college and has also played an active role in campaigns against education cuts and in defence of social services in Oxfordshire.

BRIAN DRUMMOND, who is standing against Treasury Minister Dawn Primrose, is a teacher and NUT activist. He has been particularly active in the fight to defend education in the city after the council used a local referendum to try to implement massive cuts in the city schools. British Socialist Alliance, together with other local anti-racists have been out demonstrating outside the local council’s demanding an end to the decreasing voucher system for asylum seekers.
Why I Left the Labour Party

Andy Richards
Scottish Socialist
PPC Hove

My decision to leave the Labour Party was finally made in February, although I had been thinking about it seriously for six months or more.

I started to wonder what I was actually going to do come the general election. Was I going to campaign for my local MP? A loyal Blanter who had collapsed in every attack made by New Labour on the poor, on public services, on non-selective education, on asylum seekers? Or was I going to stay and see what the whole thing was about? When the Socialist Alliance started to come together locally and nationally, it became clear to me that really only one choice. It is vitally important that the left makes an intervention in this election – other parties and the credibility of political forces which would have everyone believe that the only choice on offer is either Blair or Hague, two sides of the same capitalist coin, will be immeasurably strengthened.

The great question which has preoccupied the Labour left has always been ‘what is the alternative?’

It is clear that the Socialist Alliance does represent that alternative and I hope some union left whingers still hanging on in the Labour Party will do all that they can to make it a success.

Why I joined the International Socialist Group

Paul Wilcox

I LEFT the Socialist Party with much sadness, but I could not stay in a party which had a perspective which was so different to mine. The first thing that worried me was the leadership of the Socialist Party’s position in the debate with their Scottish comrades and their hostility to the setting up of the Scottish Socialist Party. I thought that the creation of the SSP was a very positive development, although I did have concerns about whether the Scottish comrades would remain properly organised.

Then there was the attitude of the Socialist Party leadership over the Fuel Crisis, where they made no criticisms of the SSP full time leadership of the protests. But the most important issue for me was the fact that the Socialist Party began to pull back from the Socialist Alliance. I was fully committed to the development of the Alliance and hope that from this it will be possible to build a new party of the working class. So why did I choose to join the SSP? I did not have to say anything about the Fuel Crisis and about Mark Serwotka’s election campaign when he stood for the General Secretary of the PCS.

Most importantly, I agree with the SSP’s perspective on the situation and the Socialist Alliance in other countries and developing co-operation between them.

I strongly support the SSP’s perspective on building organisations like the Socialist Alliance in other countries and developing co-operation between them.

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Socialist Alliance makes its mark at NUT conference

Gill Lee

The Socialist Alliance held an impressive fringe meeting at the NUT conference. Called for the Monday lunchtime when meetings were mercifully small, it was attended by over 120 people who heard a series of uplifting speeches – mainly from Alliance candidates who were themselves teachers. The optimistic mood of the meeting was in part due to the number of other conference fringe meetings which all failed to capture the rather bleak picture of struggle within the NUT (see article on page…).

It represented the feeling among supporters of the Socialist Alliance and reflected in the speeches from both platform and audience that there is a growing opposition to the neo-liberal policies being pursued by New Labour and that the Alliance can begin to express this politically.

The meeting was chaired by Christie Blower, ex-president of the NUT and a leading member of the Campaign for a Democratic Union. Other platform speakers included members of the Socialist Trade Union and of the Socialist Workers’ Party who currently operate outside these two major union groupings.

The question of unity of the left within the union was thus posed in the choice of speakers.

The solution however is not as suggested by one platform speaker, that we set up a Socialist Alliance within the NUT. This would cut us off from many within the union who have an excellent record of class struggle militancy but who have not yet to win to the perspective of opposition to Labour at the electoral level.

The Socialist Alliance also had a speaker at a meeting called by the Socialist Teachers Alliance on the opening night of the conference. Brian Drummond, the Alliance candidate for Bristol East, and a teacher himself, spoke about the work of the Socialist Alliance in the general election campaign and their involvement in local struggles around education.

He stressed that Socialist Alliance are not just about elections but about campaigning. There was a lively, at times heated, discussion from the floor. This centered around the role of the Alliance to those still in the Labour Party, but who might want to switch camp. Whether a new party could or should be based on a platform of a 90s-95 percent of STAs or whether a new party could or should be based on a platform of a 90s-95 percent of STAs or whether a new party could or should be based on a platform of a 90s-95 percent of STAs or whether a new party could or should be based on a platform of a 90s-95 percent of STAs or whether a new party could or should be based on a platform of a 90s-95 percent of STAs or whether a new party could or should be based on a platform of a 90s-95 percent of STAs or whether a new party could or should be based on a platform of a 90s-95 percent of STAs or whether a new party could or should be based on a platform of a 90s-95 percent of STAs or whether a new party could or should be based on a platform of a 90s-95 percent of STAs or whether a new party could or should be based on a platform of a 90s-
Wales

Electoral Why it's different for Wales

Wales political 'leaders' present themselves as active passives. In late February, First Minister Rhodri Morgan suggested that he was powerless to protect employment in Wales: "We do not control macro-economic policy. That is left to the Treasury."

said: "The English, every country they go to, in to, they have raped, they have taken the wellbeing out of our country.

Labour politicians immediately lined up to demand the head of this 'traitor'. Plaid Cymru - the party that he clearly meant the British Empire, not the English people. Tragically, the emphatically non-racist British empire, strapped and his own party, and even then had to consent to be "re-educated". Rivalled was the Plaid leadership.

The incident demonstrates Labour's insistence that it can determine the limits of the Welsh electorate.

And this at a time when national self-consciousness is flourishing in Wales - particularly among young people - even if few see the Assembly as the embodiment of their aspirations on the political plane. The British state may increasingly be exposed as an outdated, unelitist, and it will find no support from the unionists of the official Labour movement.

Plaid's policies do not, however, offer an alternative to Labour. Its leadership is less infatuated by the market and the private sector, and it can draw on a more traditional socialist approach to the Welsh economy, and a more state assistance on where it is most needed. But it is more inclined than Welsh Labour to see the European Union and specifically the single currency - with all its constraints on public spending that this involves - as a panacea.

Neo-liberalism at the European level seen as the only alternative to nationalisation at the British level.

Nevertheless, socialists should welcome a big vote for Plaid, and an increase in its parliamentary representation, on 7 June. Without making any concessions to its international democratic. The British state should be opened to recognise that people in Wales, whether Plaid or Labour or those less people - will vote Plaid essentially for reasons.

Firstly, a vote for Plaid is seen a means to defend the welfare state, and as a gesture against the ravages of neo-liberalism. Secondly, the Plaid leadership confers confidence on the part of the Welsh people, an impatience with the benefits to the Plaid Party and a determination to develop solutions to national problems at a national level.

With the Welsh Socialist Alliance a weak and feckless creature, and the Greens having found little resonance, a Welsh vote in support for Plaid will be the only clear manifestation of the demand for a specific agenda.

At the very least, it will put pressure on Labour from the left and help to shift the centre of gravity of Welsh politics away from Westminster and neo-liberalism.

More importantly, Plaid candidates in winnable seats - notably Adam Price (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) and Llanedeyrn Wood (Rhondda) - represent a resurgent, working-class and often with a trade union background. They present a new left against the more conservative settlement of the Labour movement in itself.

This suggests the very likely to deliver another big shock to New Labour in Wales. It is to be hoped that this vote will bring about an ability of greater engagement and demonstrate between the Labour and Plaid left and other socialist and campaigning groups.

least in the face of multinational cor-

purposes. But in Wales, this timidity also reflects an unwillingness to push at the boundaries of the devolution settlement - a lack of any determination to do a more serious job, securing greater powers, and thereby demonstrating the need for these powers.

As with steel, so with a series of other damaging developments in the economy, Wales' political 'leaders' present themselves as almost passive observers. In late February, when more than 5000 job losses had already been announced since the beginning of the year, First Minister Rhodri Morgan suggested that he was powerless to prevent employment in Wales: "We do not control macro-economic policy. That is left to the Treasury."

When asked how to regenerate the Welsh economy, Rhodri and his min-

isters typically offer little more than vague generalities: "developing the export potential of Welsh companies ... establishing an innovation and entrepreneurship culture ... promoting our natural strengths", etc.

With such a lack of vision, it is unsurprising that most people in Wales are hard-pressed to name a single achievement for which the Assembly can claim credit.

For the first eighteen months of devolution, Labour bumbled its lack of discernible progress on the trials of minority government. The coalition with the Liberal Democrats, agreed in October, was supposed to have removed this obstacle, however.

In fact, it has pushed the administration to a series of worthy, but small-scale reforms: free travel for schoolchildren under seven; free prescriptions for the under-2s; free bus travel for pensioners and the disabled; free entry to all museums and art galleries.

Potential, such measures could help to rehabilitate the idea of a public service, freed from the inter-determination of the market, but it is telling that there is no such attempt to present these developments as part of an overall strategy of decumodification.

Rather, reflecting the meagre vision of the Liberals in particular, they are offered as 'one-off' give-

aways.

Rather than call for greater powers to allow it to pursue a bolder strategy, Welsh Labour is still hoping on early entry into the European single currency. The occasional hint in this respect (never strong enough to suggest impatience with Gordon Brown's caution) in the only suggestion that anything about the status quo might be less than perfect.

The Welsh Labour administration, invariably react with phrase anger whenever Plaid Cymru makes any statements about the devolution settlement not being final. Indeed, Plaid's pronounce-

ments on the national question pursue Welsh Labour with the only stick with which it feels it can beat the official opposition.

His usefulness distracts attention away from the fact that Plaid's policies are generally far more in tune with the views of Labour supporters than Labour's own. (For example: on privatization, Plaid is critical of PPP and supports the renationalisation of the railways.)

So, Labour was quick to pounce when Seion Glyn, a Gwynedd Plaid councillor, called for "monitoring" of immigration by affluent, and allegedly anti-Welsh, English settlers into economically depressed Welsh-speaking commun

ities. Rhondda Plaid councillor, Mike Bratton, branded by a BBC, interviewer for a controversial quote
ISG response to Lindsey German’s “Third Way”

Why not make it a new party?

Vernon Conway and Alan Thomas

It is positive that Socialist Outlook sets out its views on the future of the Scottish Socialist Party, in an article by Gary Milne in the latest edition. The article expresses the view that the SSP should separate from the Alliance, to enable the two bodies to pursue different political strategies.

The article argues that the SSP should focus on electoral work, while the Alliance should concentrate on building a mass movement. It is suggested that this would be a more effective way of building a new political party.

The article also criticises the Alliance for its failure to develop a clear political strategy, and for its lack of a coherent electoral base. It argues that the SSP has a better chance of building a mass movement, and of winning power, if it remains separate from the Alliance.

However, the article also acknowledges that the SSP and the Alliance have a shared history and a common membership. It suggests that a new party could build on these strengths, and that it would be foolish to ignore the possibility of a new party.

The article concludes by calling for a new party to be set up, and for the SSP and the Alliance to work together to build it.

But this approach has its limitations. The article does not address the issue of how a new party could be organised, or how it could be funded. It also does not consider the possibility that the SSP and the Alliance could work together within the Alliance to develop a new political strategy.

The article’s emphasis on the need for a new party is also limited by its failure to consider the political context in which such a party might operate. The SSP and the Alliance are operating in a political context that is dominated by the Labour Party and the SNP. It is unlikely that a new party would be able to compete with these parties, or that it would be able to win power.

In conclusion, the article by Gary Milne is a valuable contribution to the debate about the future of the SSP and the Alliance. However, it is also clear that there are significant challenges to be faced in any attempt to build a new party.

The need for a new party is clear, but the challenges are significant.
Alliance leads charge against racism

Veronica Fagan

The last few weeks have seen the greatest racist backlash since Enoch Powell’s “river of blood” speech. But Nick Griffin of the BNP is only one when he says that William Hague is his true recruitment sergeant.

The leadership of both main political parties have been vying with each other to play the race card.

Of course all anti-racists deplore William Hague’s failure to deal with the deeply offensive statements of his Prime Minister and most supporters in a more decisive way. But the comments that Townsend made reflect a widely held opinion in his party and elsewhere. It is not welcome in Britain.

This episode demonstrated yet again the deep crisis of the Tory Party and the threat that the party’s leaders will be under after the election.

But few people expected any different.

It is Tony Blair, as Prime Minister and leader of the Labour Party who must bear the greatest responsibility for much more widespread upsurge of racism, through:

- The witch hunt against asylum seekers
- The increase in racist attacks
- The backlash against the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry

The fact that this is a deliberate strategy on the part of the new Labour is graphically demonstrated by Tony Blair’s recent articles in The Times. In the few days before calling the General Election, the Prime Minister made clear that racism is a serious issue.

The first story was further fuelled by writing an article calling for the scrapping of the 1951 Geneva Convention.

But Blair’s attack on the Geneva Convention is focused on the supposed increase in “economic migration”.

He greeted the idea of people fleeing wars and persecution as a positive phenomenon, one with capitalism can deal easily.

Likewise he ignores the millionions made homeless by environmental disasters, the result of the fact that the system he and his cronies pro-

The real reality is that neo-liberal capitalism is starving to death many children, women and men across the world not because there is not enough food to eat but because that food is produced for profit not greed.

Blair is also guilty of the abolition of all immigration controls. We have argued time and again in these pages that a world which values profit before people that fuels racism.

In the issue, we are pleased to print letters from Gabriel Nwosuc which are a powerful indictment of immigration detention.

In previous issues, we have told stories of the horrific realities from which asylum seekers have fled in their own countries. We have tried to give a voice to black people fighting back against racism in the so-called criminal justice system in this country.

This is why we welcome the initiative from the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers to launch a petition against racism in this election and carry the text on this page.

We hope all our readers will not only sign it themselves but become actively involved in the campaign around it.

Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers

Sign the petition against racism by politicians

We the undersigned are appalled that politicians are encouraging racism and vicious racist attacks.

Scotland Yard noted a 300 percent increase in racist attacks following William Hague’s notorious British as a “foreign land” speech.

The leaders of the far-right British National Party has announced his intention to stand in Oldham, with the aim of increasing racial tension. He says that scapegoating legitimises the idea that “we cannot afford to have asylum seekers here in the first place”.

Britain is a vibrant multi-racial country, which has benefited greatly from immigrants’ contribution.

Meanwhile, the right to work has been denied to refugees under New Labour. Some 1,500 asylum seekers are detained in prisons and holding centres. The home secretary boasts of his intention to deport 30,000 asylum applicants this year.

The voucher scheme has stigmatised those fleeing persecution and oppression, while the dispersal programme has created isolation and alienation for asylum seekers.

We object to New Labour’s draconian racist policies on asylum seekers and believe that Jack Straw’s policies are directly fueling racism.

Instead of scrapping the voucher scheme, the dispersal programme and detention centres, Jack Straw wants to abolish the 1951 Geneva Convention. He claims it is outdated, at the same time the United Nations estimates that 17 million people are living as refugees across the world, only 0.5 percent of them in Britain.

We demand:

- The scrapping of the voucher scheme
- An end to dispersal and detention
- The retention of the 1951 Geneva Convention
- Full economic and social rights for asylum seekers
- An end to inflammatory speeches by both Tory and Labour politicians

Copies of the petition and further information from CDAS, BCM Box 4289 London WC1X 3XX or email info@defend-asylum.org
Gabriel's Letters

GABRIEL NKWELLE was imprisoned for eleven months in detention centres and prisons in the UK. He has tirelessly campaigned against detention and the conditions faced by himself and his fellow detainees and his letters, sent while in detention, are an inspiration.

He has given us permission to reproduce his letters, which are a heavy indictment of the system of immigntation detention. They continue on page 14.

HMP Rochester 09-10-00
Dear Sir/Madam,

Appeal For Urgent Intervention

I am a fellow human being, fellow mankind, it is with a profound sense of injustice that I make this desperate appeal for your timely intervention in the horrifying and pathetic plight of asylum seekers in the UK detained at HMP Rochester, Kent under Immigration Act 1971. A whole group of people have been kept under universal standards and human principles the obligation to seek refuge by any means internationally acceptable.

I am united with all men who are created equal and by virtue of their existence are vested with certain inalienable rights to be the sole masters of their destiny.

This has not been the case with asylum seekers in the UK detained at HMP Rochester who from the beginning, because of their accommodating attitudes, have been slowly stripped of their human rights. With the oppressor mechanism of 02/1000, now working full time to completely dehumanize and enslave our people no matter what means including genocide. It is therefore time for asylum seekers in Rochester, Kent, and humanity as a whole to fight back. Many people may not readily understand or agree with the reasons why asylum seekers should be classified as criminals by a system which treats all people equally as any other human being. Asylum seekers detained at the notorious HMP Rochester, are treated worse than convicted criminals detained at the same HMP. Asylum seekers are held indefinitely without trial or initial decision on a claim made. This decision is taken by the Immigration Service which does not explain the decision in detail to the persons concerned.

Asylum seekers held at HMP Rochester, Kent, have fewer rights than suspected criminals and often do not understand why they are being held indefinitely.

Not surprisingly, this causes mental anguish among detainees, many of whom have already survived horrendous ordeals in their own countries. The whole process of asylum seeking and being detained for a lengthy period of time in UK, is extremely humiliating and degrading.

The way to refugee status, is a long way to go. At HMP Rochester, Kent, the Echo and Delta wings where asylum seekers are housed for this lengthy period, has rectangular dimensions of sixty by forty metres. Each floor has four metres, totalling nine, inmates packed in cells six by six metres area available, and whilst a hundred and fifteen whilst Delta house about six fifty inmates. Out of twenty four hours a day, you are allowed six hours only at the sixty by six metres area, whilst for eight hours room and seized all the appeal papers printed ready to be dispatched. That governor Lewis ordered the seizure.

As a detainee I have not got the right to express my view to the media. We leave at tippance station never knowing what to expect next as the threats and pressures to live in internal exile being continuously hunted for our right elimination like dogs. To us as people, there can be neither peace nor progress where unrectrained repression, assimilation, exploitation and human inequality reign supreme. To you comrades, also battling your own personal hell, I wish you courage and with God's blessings a happy ending to all your woes. It will also help all of us disadvantaged people, to get together and aid each other in any way possible. To all of you, whom God has blessed with justice, humanity's most cherished gift, human dignity and freedom, help us, the more fortunate so we can have a semblance of it someday.

The situation now brewing here at HMP Rochester, has the potential of making the asylum seekers the flash point of a dangerous regional conflict. I call on you people to render any help to the plight of asylum seekers held at HMP Rochester.

The gratitude of asylum seekers will know no bounds. God crown our efforts with success and may he bless us all.

If you have any queries concerning the contents of this appeal please do not hesitate to contact the writer.

Yours sincerely,

(Nkewele Gabriel A) Human Rights Activist (HRD) no. 11364 Cameroon)

22/1/2001

Hasard ASYLUM SEEKERS FACING LIFE IN PRISONS (BEHIND BARS)

I firmly permit me to stress the appalling treatment that asylum seekers are subjected to in prisons. The Ministry of Justice and Office announcement of June 1994 to keep Immigration Act detainees in five prisons.

The state of affairs is so dehumanising it contradicts the Human Rights of all concerned. Immigration detainees comprise mainly asylum seekers and others who, for one reason or the other, are being held for an unnecessarily long period by the Immigration Appeal Authorities.

The treatment meted out to detainees held in prisons makes me wonder if we are actually detainees or prisoners on death row. Why are detainees held in prisons? This is the first bit of the whole story which will be comprehended.

Not only are detainees held in prisons, but they get far worse treatment in here than convicted criminals found guilty by the law courts.

"Not only are detainees held in prisons, but they get far worse treatment in here than convicted criminals found guilty by the law courts."

"If a detainee voices his displeasure at all, the prison staff are quick to remind him to 'piss off back to your own country'. I strongly believe some of the prison staff are staunch members of BNP."
the effects of previous detentions. Further detention puts torture victims in circumstances of relative isolation, often exacerbated by the barrier of lack of language, thereby increasing the likelihood of their relapse, as well as fixation to past horrors, of increased anxiety and distress, of the possibility of self-harm and suicide.

The majority of detainees must hurdle through horrendous ordeals in their own countries and being bunged up in prison on arrival to the UK, is just a way over the top.

The way I view it, the whole system has been designed to strip immigration detainees of humanity, to cause maximum frustration and to degrade detainees. The underlying issue regarding asylum seeking is being liable to persecution in a particular country. Why then does a detainee have to face this anguish in the UK, having escaped to this country to seek asylum. Engaging detention is another cause of concern. Some detainees are held at the so-called degradation centers (persons) for months/years with little or nothing being effected on their case. Amongst the five prisons holding immigration detainees, HM Prison Harlar, (to which the Home Secretary announced a change of name to HOHC in January 1995; a change existing only in White Papers) houses 160 detainees in dormitories A to H. A Dormitory houses 9, E 22, D 37, E 56, G 56 and H 10 detainees.

At HM Prison Harlar at the time of writing, some detainees have not been moved to the new dormitory for from one to three months and above, while those who should permit their release.

But the Immigration Authorities do not appear minded to release them, eg David Smith, Ragavan Ramaswamy, Abdul Cader, Patrick Madia, Kumbu Kamaladun, Krishna Kumar and many others. These detainees have spent what is tantamount to a three year prison sentence. For months, solely for being immigration detainees.

Why should prison rules apply to detainees who are not sent to the criminal recidivism or convicts? Why, as detainees, do we have to spend more of our days in or out of court? Why are worse on Wednesdays with staff training, a process whereby occupants of dormitories are locked up all morning or all afternoon and evening.

The psychological torture, the "being up" and the harrowing experience of being detained for lengthy periods takes such a heavy toll on some detainees that they end up in hospitals or mental institutions.

During the month of May/June 2000, an Egyptian detained at HOHC Harlar was supposedly economized to sign to go back to Egypt. As a result of getting no reply from the Immigration Service. As a result of having no knowledge of what was going to happen the next day, he became paranoid and starved that he wounded himself badly. He ended up in a psychiatric medical institution from Harlar prison. Furthermore, the heavy handedness of public order was of course addressed. A misunderstanding on 13.12.2000 in Harlar between Detainee Dovoh Tshoher a Jaamacian was told by a member of staff [Paul] that he is going to be bunged up in Dormitory to take his feet off a chair, which he did. The next day about 10 of us were sitting with our feet on other chairs when the same officer came in.

He fetched another officer who directed to Dovon and told him to take his feet off the chair, which he did without protest. The only protest was from me. I said that it was unfair to pick on Dovon. On 12.01.00, an officer came and told Dovon he was going to hospital. By the time we came back from education, Dovon had left, not for hospital, but for H.M Prison, Rochester. On 27.12.01 and 07.01.01 respectively, despite the fact that racial or insulting language is unacceptable under prison rules, detainees. Newile was insulted by officer (HR020) on the first occasion and by officer (HR015) on the second. On both occasions the officers asked about keys and both officers called the detainee "a stupid..." Witnesses to the drama are Ogumiyi, Augustine, Yu, Shu, Kiam, Henry Smith and David during the months of November and December, and up to 7th January 2001.

I have already been subjected to a pipe running along the wall. The standard issue of clothing is not enough to keep detainees warm during the day and the two thin blankets are not enough at night. In most of the dormitories, the cubicles in which detainees sleep have no doors, no curtains on the window and the partitions do not go up to the ceiling. Detainees have no privacy and no respite from the noise of TV and of other detainees. This contributes much to their depression.

It is not an effective use of detention space to detain people for lengthy periods before a decision is taken on their claim. It is abundantly clear that in the actions of the Immigration Service, there is little or no consistency or logic in the current arrangements for using prisons for detention, nor in the way that prisons used for detention.

I strongly believe that the use of prisons to detain immigration detainees is a corrupting experience, particularly in the case of asylum seekers. I implore you people to, please, look into these atrocities and demand from the Immigration Authorities reasons why immigration detainees are held in prison when there are proper detention centres. Why are immigration detention centres treated differently? At the end of the day, immigration detainees are not different from any other human being. They are not criminals and refuse to be treated as such, or even worse than criminals.

As regards the expired food allegations, it is not that other detainees are not aware. They are, but they are scared to speak out. Kitchen workers such as James Alor, Patrick Madia, Kuzubu, Kiem, Mathieu etc can testify. I have already been victimised by HM Prison Rochester and HOHC Harlar prison staff, likewise immigration authorities, for daring to speak out on the poor treatment meted out to immigration detainees held in prison.

As a result, I am murdered like General Beaussolod in Togo, Dr Hansom in an accident in Tanzania etc, or like other asylum seekers abroad, it would still be worth it because killing the messenger does not kill the message.

This letter therefore could be regarded as the first course in a restaurant, meant to whet the appetite for the main dish that could follow one day. If you, however, find it too salty then I alone am the bad cook.

Yours sincerely,

Gabriel A. Newile
Human Rights Activist (HRDA)
Cameroon with reg. no.11344

10 February 2001 Belmarsh

I am writing to HM Prison Belmarsh

Asylum Seekers (Immigration Detainees) are mixed up with racist, Spor or Wing and in Cells with Remand and Convicted Prisoners.

I cannot believe that anyone could imagine that detaining Asylum Seekers, or any other human being, in prison is the right thing to do.

The plan to increase the number in detention in the U.K. is absolutely ridiculous. The U.K. detains asylum seekers in prison for longer periods, with less judicial review, than any comparable country in Europe.

Despite worldwide criticism, politicians are using the asylum issue to gain an election advantage and are now suggesting that the policy of detention will not only be maintained in future, but will be expanded to include all asylum seekers. The Conservative Party

Continued overleaf...
Gabriel's LETTERS
(continued from centre pages)

announced recently that their policy of detaining asylum seekers in prison "will have a significant deterrent effect on those travelling to U.K. to seek asylum." I do not agree that it is the answer to solving concerns about immigration. For me, it is even more desperate. They will take any risk to get here and detention won't stop that.

In the history of the western world, Australia has been the only western country that detains asylum seekers in prison and it has repeatedly faced criticism from the U.N. bodies. Today this policy has been ignored by U.K. and U.K. is leading this race.

I have heard and read many drastic news about Australian nationals can be detained if they or she differs from the British government or Prison Administration. I am a victim of such news, I was asking myself, "would I like to pose is it a country practicing democracy or dictatorship?"


HOHC (Prison) Haslar, being contrary to international law and human rights, has a treatment different in its regime against asylum seekers. It is called "privilege," and I have experienced HOHC (Prison) Haslar administration and the Immigration authorities' ill-treatment of asylum seekers held in this letter in my letter 22/01/01 "Asylum Seekers Facing Life in Prisons (Behind Bars)."

I have been moved unexpectedly from HOHC (Prison) Haslar to HMP Belmarsh on February 2nd 2001. I was astonished by it. Such a letter has been received by my letter, for a letter, a better exchange has happened. I was transferred to a Plymouth in a prison asylum seeker's block.

To get the asylum seeker's block, I was physically assaulted by a member of staff, Mr. Mackenzie, on February 12th 2001 at about 11:30 am.

All Wailed had toothache. He drew an attention of a member of staff. Mr. Mackenzie came instead of taking Ali to health care, he moved Ali out of his cell and butted Ali, beat him back on the wall, saying "you bloody fucking African. If you are sick go back to Africa."

Mr. Mackenzie was accompanied by two other members of staff - Marshall and a Chinese officer (BA168). I refer Mr. Mackenzie's act to Schedule 1, Article 3 of the Human Rights Act, as explained by paras 3.2.4 of the Home Office Study Guide. Inmates opposite, Abdullah Walild and Benidh Karna witnessed it.

There have been threats of mass suicide from asylum seekers detained in HMP Belmarsh as well as many attempted escapes. These threats are made by those human beings who, having fled persecution in their own countries, suffer further hardship under Britain's much criticized mandate detention regime. Despite the fact that freedom from arbitrary deprivation of liberty is a Fundamental human right.
New Labour invents violent conspiracy while anti-capitalists are

**Reinventing May Day**

By Greg Tucker

A one-sided, opportunistic campaign of disinformation by the unions and the media has led to the invention of a conspiracy to blame the May Day actions on anti-capitalists and anti-war demonstrators.

**May Day crack down in Pakistan**

In another example of the anti-war movement beingTargets are more likely to be seen as sympathetic and therefore less likely to be targeted.

Victory for people over profiteers

After the historic victory in South Africa, in which mass protest forced a major retreat by the world's leading pharmaceutical companies, DENISE MCDOWELL, Director, Genesis House Trust and JOHN NICHOLSON, Chief Executive, UK Public Health Association look at the issues at stake in the campaign.

The victory in the South African court case was a victory for people with HIV. It was a victory for campaigning. This was despite all the best efforts of governments and multinationals and international lawyers. It was a victory for public health — although there is still a long way to go. It was a victory for developing countries.

South Africa stood up to the pharmaceutical companies and the USA and the free market as a whole. And they won.

As the High Commissioner for South Africa in London said when the battle was first started, by standing up to the giant drug, South Africa was doing something that the G8 always says it can't do.

And it was a victory for anti-capitalists. Everywhere. All in all, it was a "victory for common sense".

Solidarity key to drugs fight

Charlie van Gelderen

The organised labour movement in South Africa played a key role in the court victory over the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association as the beginning and the end of the campaign. Its Central Executive Committee meeting on April 26th, CASUAT said that the year was not over yet.

A long battle still lay ahead before affordable medicines were available for people who need them. If the medicines and related substances amendments Act is not implemented immediately, the courtroom victory would prove a hollow one.

CASUAT is demanding that employers, especially the big corporations, provide free treatment for those of their workers and their families who are living with HIV/AIDS. It is also demanding that insurance companies, banks and medical aid schemes end all discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS.

Indeed, it was a victory for just about everyone other than the greedy multi-national pharmaceutical companies, who used the World Trade Organisation and the courts to put profits before people. All of which makes it no exaggeration that our government was backing the wrong side.

Our government was prepared to see people die from HIV in order to protect the profits, the patents and worst of all the favourable regard of the multi-nationals.

"Laboratory business" was the slogan adopted before the 1997 General Election. Exactly so. Our government took up their stance firmly in support of the rich drug companies and against the poor and sick.

South Africa

In contrast, the public support for South Africa was because the issue was so clear. It was an issue of life and death.

The UK government report into pharmaceutical industry competitive rejected cheaper drugs for developing countries — stating categorically that "patients are the victims of the industry".

At exactly the same time the actions of non-governmental organisations throughout the world in support of individual people with HIV were combining to put the brakes on the unregulated drive for world domination.

Nations is appealing, our government offered no such concern for the "lifeline of "patients", such as those living with HIV in the developing world.

Prime Minister Blair endorsed this personally: "the UK must offer a supportive business environment". How the lack of such supportive environment is offered people seeking refuge here.

Even Oxfam, which has rightly campaigned against the voucher system, and for affordable health drugs for all, was taken aback at what it called "govern- men capitalism to big business" in this report. But this is what happens when a task force investigating an industry is stuffed full of the very multi-nationalists whose activities need regulating.

According to the government, membership of the 12: person task force included Astra Zeneca, Glaxo Wellcome and Smith Kline Beecham, Novartis, MSD, and both the ABPI President and Director General.

Also on the force is Lord Sainsbury, whose position is Minister for Science and Innovation. Of course he was also previously Chair of J Sainsbury plc, one of the superstore chains in the Competition Commission for alleged anti- competitive practices — and the principal backer of the pharmaceutical company Diatech, as the Northern of the Sainsbury Laboratory at the John Innes Centre, genetic engi- neering centre in Norwich.

In acting thus, government abandons government it acts in the inter- est of the greed of the few rather than meeting the needs of the many.

South Africa has more people living with HIV than any other country, an estimated 4.7 million people. In 2000 2.4 million African people died from HIV-related causes, HIV deaths in South Africa is expected to rise from 120,000 last year to an annual 365,000 in 2010.

And South Africa is not the hard- est hit. Life expectancy in Botswana has been cut to 44 years. The whole continent is devastated. 76% of adults with HIV are widowed and 80% of children live in Africa. Our health cannot be left to private sector.

Depopulation plan: the gold and diamond asset-strippers and conspiracy-theorists — but there is enough wealth on this planet to protect and support the population, of the whole world. It is just a case of putting the priorities in the right order, by reordering the stark inequalities.

Ensuring we are — all — healthy is not amenable to the profit motive of the pharmaceutical companies who exist only to make money for the few. Public health is not in private hands.

But the issue is much broader than the drugs alone. In this respect, Moebi has always been right. Public medicine, with widespread poverty, where access to food, water, housing and basic amenities are totally lacking, the solution is bigger than discount on drugs. Any realistic solution must be holistic. It must involve two main strategies: taking action on a wide range of issues.

This includes tackling head-on the global anti-health forces, such as the multi-nationals who aspire to run the world and who are flooding developing countries with such products as arms and tobacco.

It includes all western govern- ments now pressing the multi- nationals to drop all their legal actions, including Brazil, where the battleground has now shifted. It includes governments playing their own part, in ensuring that health care is provided is publicly funded and accountable, for all the peoples of the world.

Where does a special fund fit in all this then? For some time now Gordon Brown, in his stated Budget commitment to present to the Doha Conference in the UK and world-wide, and Clarke Short, in her pronounce- ments of "making globalization work for the poor", have been pro- moting the initiation of a multi- government fund to assist develop- ing countries obtaining vital medicines.

They have wisely sending out messages of encouragement of cheaper production by multi- national pharmaceutical compa- nies.

But what we should be doing is "making the rich work for the globe". Just 10% of the multi-national pharmaceutical compa- nies' re-search money goes on ill- nesses affecting 90% of the world's population (on their own figures).

They still restrict development of new medicines locally through use of World Trade Organisation rules and their laboratory time and resources to ill- nesses affecting the rich world, in which there is a profit, because the people here can afford to pay.

And they do not devote the same energy to illnesses such as malaria and TB — and even on these they are still stopping patients on new remedies being developed for resis- tance.

A "special fund" is a step in a bet- ter direction. But it is not a solu-
Quebec stand-off as global bosses hide behind barricades

Susan Moore
QUEBEC CITY from April 20-22 was the site of the largest international mass protests, this time in opposition to the Summit of the Americas. For the governments of the Western hemisphere (excluding Cuba) and their friends in corporate boardroom, the idea was further talks towards creating a "free trade" area across the whole region, in order that the process of neo-liberal globalisation could proceed more smoothly. The police violence on the demonstration itself was extreme. X rounds of tear gas were fired during the course of the weekend – fortunately a lot of the time the wind was blowing the gas away from the protestors and into the police lines. The hotels and the convention center were required to shut their windows and their air conditioning systems so that the tear gas does not enter the undemocratic hallways of corporate power. Water cannon and rubber bullets were also used – one man was shot in the leg while being hit with a group of drummers about 15-20 metres away from the police lines. Another marcher, already on the ground, was attacked by a stun gun.
On one occasion on the Friday a group of protestors were chased by the police into a block of flats which turned out to be a sheltered housing block. Some activists were giving a peace sign to the police, and others were explaining to them in both English and French that this was obviously where pensioners lived. Despite this, and the fact that some of the residents were visible volleys of tear gas were fired into the block.
At another point the police became frustrated that people near the fences were becoming immune to the gas, so they started hitting canisters further back where people weren't prepared for it. Some of the canisters missed their mark and fell into the streets below.
Over 400 people were arrested and 120 hurt – of which 2 were police. This yet again proves that the real violence comes not from those opposing neo-liberalism but those in the state protecting it...

Anonymously International, after examining a report from its observer in Quebec City, made a statement expressing concerns about:

- the excessive use of tear gas on protestors not involved in violent behaviour or posing any threat to property or police, including the firing of tear gas canisters directly at individuals and directly into a private property for no apparent reason (the use of tear gas in enclosed spaces is extremely dangerous in certain circumstances);
- the use of plastic bullets in situations where the safety of police officers and the integrity of the Summit were not threatened;
- the use of an electro-shock device (taser gun) on a peaceful demonstrator who had refused police instructions to move. This amounts to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment;
- the denial of prompt legal representation to those arrested and;
- the overcrowding of cells containing those arrested, including the holding of up to five persons in cells designed for two.

It is clear from the events in Quebec, as well as the increased state violence against May Day marches across the globe, that our opponents in the boardrooms and governments across the globe are increasingly supported by the strength and visibility of the anti-capitalist movement. The best way of explaining to that repression is to ensure the biggest possible mobilisation.

If you haven't yet booked transport to Genoa contact globalise resistance on 0208 980 3005 or 0796 681328 or contact www.resist.org.uk

All aboard for Genoa!

The next step for the anti-globalisation movement after Quebec, will be the G8 summit in Genoa on July 21.

The protest outside the World Bank organised by Globalise Resistance on May Day showed that capitalism is a highly popular issue amongst thousands of people furious about the way capitalism is destroying our lives across the globe.
Since May Day, and their subsequent appearance on Newnight, Globalise has been inundated with phone calls and enquiries. Make sure you book your seat for Genoa today, contact globalise resistance on 020 8980 7936 or 681328 or contact www.resist.org.uk
Rebellion in Cincinnati

In the context of the backlash that black communities from Oldham to Bradford are facing in the wake of Tory policies on race and immigration from Blair and Hague, are the young black people at the hands of the racist police and the demands they are raising in fighting back.

The situation in Cincinnati is almost reminiscent of one of the 1970s films "Jaws"; just when you think that it was safe to go back into the water... Just when many people thought that it could not get any worse, another blatant example of police abuse and murder.

After well-publicized police abuses nationally, we have now witnessed the murder and burial of Timothy Thomas, yet another Black person executed by the police.

Cincinnati more of a major media market might have been better prepared for this newatrocity. Were Cincinnati more of a major media market, we may have better grasped the history of police abuse conducted in that city against the Black population.

It was not the murder of Timothy Thomas that surprised many about the outrage and rebellion on the part of the city's Black population.

Clearly Black people in Cincinnati had had enough. Their fury could not be contained and therefore exploded. Ours is not to address the damages of the rebellion but to affirm that the outrage was just and that only by calling attention to police rampage and lawlessness will we be able to bring it to a halt.

Some have said that the murders in Cincinnati should not have been a surprise because Cincinnati is Klin country, i.e., very conservative with a history of terror deployed against Black people, reminiscent of the Jim Crow South.

This may be true, but the growing attention to police terror in the USA more than anything else reiterates Malcolm X's old adage: the "South" is everywhere on the Canadian border. Those, most recently, with terror was in Cincinnati, but it has also happened in New York, Los Angeles.

The bottom line, whether in Cincinnati with Timothy Thomas, or New York with Madou Diallo, is control. It is not simply a matter of racial fear, or even racial more often than not returns to the status quo.

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Even after rebellions such as in Cincinnati, or in Los Angeles in 1992, the larger system generally finds a means to excuse away the police terror and to place many of its most outspoken critics of police.

The Black Radical Congress suggests that Cincinnati must be a symbol of why we must fight the police state nationally and locally! We must demand, as we are advancing in our national petition campaign, a fair and impartial investigation into the death of police terror.

The assumption of Black guilt is so pervasive in this system that allowing, by our silence or acquiescence, these executions to be treated as accidents turns unfortunate situations into absurdity.

This is the time for action. We must cry for Timothy Thomas. We must grieve with his family and friends. But more than anything else we must organize.

In Cincinnati, the call that we should support nationally has emerged from the Black community; the removal of the City Manager, Police Commissioner, and State #1 Director. There must be accountability for this situation of racist lawlessness, particularly given the demonstrated history of atrocities.

At the national level, in addition to support for Cincinnati's Black community, we must push for national legislation for criminalizing police terror. This issue must be raised in every Black community newspaper, every pulpit, but also in city council meetings, on talk radio programs, and in the streets.

It is not enough for us to express support to those in Cincinnati carrying out a valiant fight against police terror.

The time to nationalize this issue and to sustain a national campaign has arrived. Enough is enough!

Contact: National Co-Chair, Bill Fletcher Jr.,
bifletcher@comsource.com
The janitors strike back!

who is politically and organisationally in charge.

The radical politics of Louch's film is clearly too much for Philip French, *The Observer*'s normally perceptive film critic. Leaving aside his ignorance of Louch's politics, suggesting that "he probably had a sneaking regard for Michael Foot(?)", French concludes:

"Not for the first time, however, his and the small victories that stem from New Labour and the sexualisation of politics might have flowed from Gore breezing through the same small rooms and being taken up with a sympathetic light when their collective (and usually individual) behaviours cause suffering to millions of people on a daily basis."

As for his appeal to the virtues of the US Democrats (and New Labour) Mike Davis, writing in *Socialist Worker*, points out that "the median household income of 30 million US Latinos fell by nearly $3,000 between 1990 and 1996-the biggest loss registered by any ethnic group since the Depression. And in Los Angeles, despite the now faltering "New Economy" boom, poverty levels in Latino neighborhoods were significantly higher in 1999 (22 percent) than in 1990 (15 percent)." French's point about the virtues of trade union officials and Fabianism shows that he has no understanding of the film's main point. Only struggle can be successful and the unspecified "small victories" of New Labour are almost entirely illusory.

One factor in Louch's choice of the LA location to make his film was undoubtedly the absence of struggles such as that of the janitors and any significant victories of any kind in Britain in recent years under New Labour.

While the backdrop of *Bread and Roses* is illegal immigration, its focus is on union organising.

For an examination of the inhuman and dehumanising consequences of immigration controls the missing and anger-inducing portrayal of British racist treat- ment of undocumented immigrants in Pawel Pawlikowski's *The Last Resort* is to be recommended, providing a stark contrast to the upbeat tone of *Bread and Roses*. *Bread and Roses* is well worth seeing, but you might have difficulty in finding it. Channel 4 films have only made twenty copies for British distribution and have produced little publicity.

There is no chance of, for example, the mass distribution and acclaim which has accompanied the release of the film in France, where Louch has a mass audience and where the consequences of neo-liberalism are better understood and resented.
Joe Cran...
Build the Socialist Alliance – or hang on in Labour Party, waiting for something to happen?

Nearly 70 people attended a debate organised by Workers' Action (Red Rose – Islington April 22) to discuss "what role for the Socialist Alliance". ALAN TORNHET was there.

Despite the title, the debate was more about whether the Alliance has any useful role to play at all rather than the particular role it might play in building a fight back against Blairism.

The meeting was more or less evenly divided between advocates of the Alliance and those from fragments of the left which still insist that working inside the Labour Party remains the key tactic of the day. Both sides of the argument had almost entirely male faces, and rather than divide the room, it brought it together in a common and rather emotional rallying.

There were four platform speakers: two from the Socialist Alliance - Pete Firmin from Workers Action and Bob Pit the editor of What Next, and two in favour - myself and Rosie Wood from the AWL.

Hem Firmin was the opening speaker, offering not so much a rejection of the Alliance as a series of complaints about it. He had failed to do this, that, and the other that it should be done. Personally, he said, did not speak with one voice, and there were competing ideas as to its next stage of development. But his contribution raised the political issues.

He did strongly make one political point, however. That was that the politics of New Labour are little different from the politics of previous Labour governments in the 1960s and 1970s. This is a standard argument among those insisting that work in the LP has to remain the principal tactic. After all, if the LP has not changed, why should tactics towards it change? Firmin concluded by stressing that the task was still to defeat social democracy and Blairism, and therefore the most effective place to be was inside the Labour Party.

I spoke next making it clear that I was not there to condemn those who were continuing to mount resistance inside the Labour Party (quite the reverse), but I was there to argue that this could not possibly be the principal arena for mounting an effective opposition to Blairism.

Right now, and for the foreseeable future, that has to be preeminently outside of the LP. The idea that you have to be inside the LP to fight Blairism makes no sense: how and where you fight depends on prevailing conditions. You can wage a battle against Blairism in the unions, and in the various campaigns, and by building a political alternative.

Blair has not just repackaged the Labour Party in British politics, but built a completely new relationship with the employers and the super-rich, he has carried through fundamental changes in the rules of the party which make all this extremely difficult to reverse. It also severely restricts the scope of the left to work usefully in the party or to influence its policies and decisions.

I argued that there are two defining political issues which the left in Britain has to address - and will pay a heavy price if it fails to do so.

The first is the rise of the anti-globalisation movement - which is not a passing phase involving a few thousand demonstrators on the streets, but a new factor in world politics. It reflects a profound reaction by people all over the world against the effects of the neo-liberal offensive, particularly in the third world. It is attracting thousands of young people – and the left must be a part of it.

The second is the rehashing of the left in Britain, which is expressed in the emergence of the Socialist Alliance in England and the SSP in Scotland.

This reflects severe disenchantment in the Labour heartlands and amongst Labour voters and the fact that socialists are leaving the Labour Party in increasing numbers. The task of the Alliance and of the left is to offer such people an alternative.

Bob Pit will return to vote Labour in the general election, but a significant number will not - and they represent the most important factor in a fight-back. If the Alliance can organise them, it can reshape the left in England and move towards a new party on the lines of the SSP in Scotland. This is the right response to the rise of Blairism which is a new type of Labour leadership and a sharp break from traditional social democracy.

The strength of this approach is shown by the spectacular rise of the Alliance to a position where it has selected nearly 100 candidates, has had two major conferences, has adopted an extensive election manifesto, and has non-party people coming on board all the time.

Bob Pit's contribution was utterly negative and cynical towards this, and compatible of the far-left as well. He refused to see any useful form of life outside of "the labour movement". He said that instead of standing "no hope candidates" in the election the most positive thing the Alliance could do would be to shut up shop and go away.

Rosie Wood responded to this by pointing out that those arguing for work in the Labour Party had nothing to lose but to do it other than be in it. There was no strategic framework for such an intervention.

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be pointed out that if the Alliance did not exist, the left would have no profile in the election at all. When it was possible to have things like a Socialist Campaign for Labour Victory. The only practical thing that Bob Pit proposed was to use Meriden and campaign for Christine Shawcroft, as if that represented a perspective for the left in the election.

The only difference between my contribution and Rosie Woods seemed to be in the future of the Alliance. While I stressed the need for a new party of the left, she talked about the need to resolve the crisis of representation in the working class. This is an abstract division - which still needs a practical solution in the form of a party. The discussion from the floor was polarised a bit by the decision of the chair to ask everyone to categorise their contributions as either "for" or "against" the new Labour Alliance - so that he could balance the discussion. In fact the range of views in the meeting was more complicated. One issue quickly raised from the floor was how was the vote in constituencies where there is no Alliance candidate. A number of speakers argued that Machover and Anne Grey in particular - argued for no vote for the new Alliance under any circumstances. Machover argued that Labour was a straight bourgeois party and could not be supported. Rosie Woods replied, rightly arguing that we should call for a vote for Labour where we have no candidate. Although it is the aim of the Blairites to turn the LP into a straight capitalist party, they were not there yet, and we should still vote Labour where there is not a socialist alternative.

The meeting demonstrated that Workers Action has hardened its position on the Alliance. But they are opposed to the Alliance stance on the labour in the election, rather than to the idea of a campaigning organisation. Bob Pit, on the other hand, insisted that the LP could play no useful role, even as a campaigning organisation.

Some Workers Action speakers criticised the Alliance for being too harsh in its criticism of New Labour, arguing that living standards had actually improved since 1997, and this should be recognised.

Other speakers pointed out that this ignored the fact that the risk was getting richer and the poor poorer - which is the real and growing legacy of the new Labour. Richard Price (from WA) even criticised the Alliance for representing a rather old age group - which seemed odd at a meeting which was on average 10 or 15 years older than the average Alliance meeting.

It was an interesting discussion. But all that was being offered as an alternative to the Alliance was hang on in the LP... and hope that something turns up.
Should Socialist Alliance fight for a revolutionary programme?

Jason Travis, Greater Manchester Socialist Alliance

V ersionica Fagan addresses an important issue in her article Manifesto and Power and it is timely that she appears (Socialist Outlook, March 1) and I would like to welcome the fact that Socialist Alliance has explicitly joined in on the debate about the future of the Socialist Alliance, whether it should exist at all and, if so, what and what sort of programme we should have.

Fagan argues against those who ‘confuse their own political ideas with that of the people represented in this alliance’ - those who argue for a revolutionary programme in favour of adopting reforms that can widen forces to the project of the Alliance.

This argument is significant: whatever the internal debates, we should keep up the debate and indeed take up such arguments with people we meet in struggle.

The two main questions then are whether we should argue for the Alliance to become a party and whether revolutionaries inside the Alliance and any future party should argue for a revolutionary platform. In this article, I want to argue for both a party and a revolution.

There are three reasons I want to highlight for this: (1) the good reasons for believing that a revolutionary programme can be achieved (e.g. following Trotsky’s transitional method) can win much wider forces much more quickly than the retrenchment of Old Labour reformism; (2) reformist politics is a dead end and many workers and youth can already see this, even if only a tiny minority are self-proclaimed revolutionaries.

(2) The crisis of politics is still a crisis of working class leadership and this programme will lead us to more genuine alliances.

I want to make clear straight off, however, that adopting a transitional programme does not mean adopting a full scale maximum revolutionary set of demands.

On the eve of a revolution, we will be able to put very different political. Now we want to get to significant sections of the class struggle and move beyond that stage. We want to build a new socialist movement.

In this election, we should say to such people we agree with you that parliament is an empty hollow sham. Vote Socialist Alliance as a protest against this (whether you vote or not) to join in the class war and make sure people are not ready to join then we will say work alongside us in a genuine revolutionary struggle.

A revolutionary party could help co-ordinate the struggles of the international working class by sharing and reflecting on experiences and learning the lessons both from history and present day struggles.

A greater danger facing the self defined revolutionaries is that the moment is refusing to put forward transitional and the lessons of previous struggles for fear of being seen as ultra-left.

There has been a lot of confusion over this issue with an attempt to portray those in favour of a revolutionary program as being indeed ultra-left.

I think the danger is that of a flight of capital that so reform becomes increasingly difficult and unstable and is under attack. As the worst, as in Allende’s Chili or Sandinista Nicaragua the economic crisis is accompanied by imperialist sponsored civil disturbance and war.

In Chile workers were demanding an end to the repressive factories and the gains of the left government were lost and Allende, in the name of placating the bourgeoisie and not being too left, led the government to capitulation.

In Nicaragua similarly the working class and peasant movements were advancing, the bourgeois needed complete expropriation. Even Gorbachev was still living in another political organisation and I think it should be noted that not all ‘indepen dent’ means ‘true’ - not because however deformed its workers’ state (in my opinion right from the start) nevertheless workers and peasants were able to repel a US invasion and hold on to some of the limited gains.

Imagine how much more powerful a genuine healthy revolution would be that did not impress or deport people for their political beliefs (as the Castro leadership did to Trotskyists).

It would have immediately linked with the struggle for black civil rights in the USA, for mass strikes against the Vietnam war, for a working class women’s movement, for an end to the war on drugs and all this and more could have and could still lead to a seismic shift to establishing global socialist revolution.

Another example would be Ecuador, where recently a rebellion led by indigenous peoples (who were on the verge of seizing state power). However, lack of leadership and experience led to a defeat. Why not call for the armed working class to join them and complete the process of revolution.

If none of this happened before then we should now be arguing to learn the lessons. However, socialists should point out that many of the lessons are already there for the taking in the study and application of Bolshevik history and those principles.

How will the working class ever learn these lessons if self avowed revolutionaries are not fighting for them now? No is not the time to talk about revolution. We have to intervene in the arguments areas for the right or by words alone.

We can take a consistent line throughout, and go through the experience of victory and defeat. With the socialist alliance, we have alliances and a working class forum. Socialist Alliance from day one was demanding of democratic community defence, socialisation of the means of production under democratic workers’ control, and international solidarity.

The argument presented by Veronica Fagan (and previously Alan Thorn) would be relevant if Workers Power or the CPGB and others were arguing for a maximum revolutionary programme immediately, along the lines of issuing leaflets ‘Revolution Now! F reedom or Death! Anarchist insurrection!’

Such a programme would jump several steps ahead of the working class and rightly divided many. We need to build a step by step case. Revolution is always an illusion not just that because by 2020 few thousand youth is not enough. However, unpublished research as well as everyday anecdotal evidence indicates that hundreds of thousands of young people can be won to radical politics and that (probably for the same reason) they have little interest in mainstream political debates, processes or activities such as voting.

T he young people working for the syndicalist Right, largely being shot in Cambodia, or our ruling class of our lives, or 19,000 children die every day from easily preventable diseases whilst millions of others wallow in luxury.

We must attempt to win a youth in Oldham (where I teach), Bradford, or wherever we can, that is a minority are self-proclaimed revolutionaries.

The potential for anti-capitalist discontent across the world has never been greater.

The rebellion is beginning. We must reach out.

The revolutionary movement of the 1930s never regained the power it once had. The working class would have to be led to revolution through resolving the crisis of working class leadership and to overthrow the crisis ridden capitalism currently strangling the working class and murdering millions of humanity every year.

This debate should not take place within the Socialist Alliance but also more importantly must be extended to all those millions of workers and youth disillusioned with the betrayals of New Labour and across the globe to the millions fighting the increasingly rapacious but also increasingly vulnerable global capitalism.
Policy Debate

Building a real bridge to win the masses

Trottsky: stick to his method but not necessarily each and every demand of 1938 programme

Veronica Fagan replies

I welcome Jason Imvis’ contribution to the debate about the direction and shape of the Socialist Alliance should take both now and in the future. I agree with him on two issues needs serious discussion.

The International Socialist Group has tried to stimulate and generate debate in such a debate through the pages of Socialist Outlook and through its involvement in the Alliance itself. We agree with most of the main political points that Jason puts forward; that the Alliance should become a political party, and that it should do so using the method of the transitional programme. Our disagreements however are important, and centre on concentrating Trotsky’s approach to create a living instrument that can take the working class forward in the current transitional phase. We don’t think that we – or anyone else – has fully worked through what this means and we welcome any opportunity to explore these issues.

Certainly it is true that the Socialist Alliance should move towards becoming a political party – we would argue on the same sort of lines as the Scottish Socialist Party. But the question of tempo and method will be important here.

Few people would have imagined just one year ago that the Alliance would develop anything like as rapidly as it has done. Even when we started discussing standing in the General Election back at the end of last year, people were talking about standing in around 50 constituencies. In the event we will stand in around 100.

New Alliances are being set up almost every week. Particularly since Liz Davies’ announcement that she would support the Alliance, people who have been Labour Party members have joined or have been councillors or held prominent positions in their party, are joining. These people are coming into the Alliance focused on the general election itself rather than on what the future of the Alliance should be.

Even amongst the majority of people who have been involved for some time, the question of the future shape of the Alliance has not been the issue at the forefront of their minds – making the best possible showing at the election has rightly been predominant.

The conference of the Socialist Alliance in the autumn will discuss the question of the Alliance’s political direction – what a political party which partly nationally automatically becomes a member locally and in reality.

Ensuring that we have structures that reflect the political diversity of the Alliance should be possible without the current quota system because then we would have worked together long enough to know what those strata are.

The Social Movement Workers Party have made clear in the current issue of Socialist Worker (May 5) that they favour strengthening the central structure of the Alliance – through steps such as taking on full time staff and training an occupation, employing full timers and creating a system of affilia- tion. Elsewhere in this issue of Socialist Outlook (GID) Tony Conway and Alan Thoronet respond to their position that there is not the basis to create a new party at this stage.

The ISG agrees with Jason that the creation of a new party is a step that should be taken, we don’t think it is yet clear what the most opportune moment would be for such a transformation. It is important that we go forward with as much consensus as possible amongst both current and potential supporters of the Alliance, both on the need for a party and what sort and political content it should have.

No return to Old Labour

The second major point that Jason makes, where again there is agreement, is that we don’t want to recreate Old Labour. This is an issue now in terms of what policies and ideas the Alliance puts forward, and would become an even more crucial debate if we moved towards creating a new party.

The Labour Party says its inception has been a bourgeois workers party – that is a party whose very existence came about to prevent working class people taking power for themselves,claiming to speak for them.

But there is a complication here which Jason doesn’t really address. We don’t want to replicate what was reactionary about Old Labour – but at the same time we want to win to the Alliance those thousands of working class people who are angry with Blair is doing, but not yet embracing the revolutionary ideas.

Jason refers to the transitional programme drawn up by Leon Trotsky in 1938. Trotsky argues that the ISG adopted in putting forward its submission to the Socialist Alliance Conference (available on the website) and in assessing the material that went to the Alliance conference in Birmingham in March.

In quoting my article in SO 43, Jason says that I am in favour of “adopting reforms” in order to win broader forces to the Alliance. That is not my approach at all. I don’t think it is possible to point to anything in the Socialist Alliance manifesto that could be seen to argue that working class people should have confidence in parliament or the institutions of the capitalist state. And that is the essence of reformism; not the fact that we argue for reforms such as a minimum wage of £7.40 an hour.

At the core of Trotsky’s approach was the idea that revolutionaries had to build bridges between current levels of consciousness and the ideas necessary to defend or advance the interests of working class people.

This cannot mean in all circumstances just replicating the demands that Trotsky himself put forward in 1938, it must mean analysing the concrete situation we are in and putting forward the appropriate demands for that actual living situation.

To be more concrete, let’s look at what was proposed on the manifesto that the ISG opposed. On the question of the police for example, Workers Power in amendment 18 starts:

“The police cannot be reformed as an institution. The police force exists to defend the bosses system. That is why we support the disbanding of the police.”

Or the CPGB in Amendment 23 “The Socialist Alliance is against the standing army and for the armed people”.

If this isn’t a maximum programme, then I don’t know what is. There is no way that this reflects the consciousness of the majority of people breaking from New Labour – the audience we want to win to revolutionary ideas through a transitional approach.

Self-defence

Jason doesn’t himself use this formula. Instead he talks about community self-defence – and explicitly argues that this should be a demand that socialists “raise from day one”.

But even community defence councils can not be seen as a transitional demand in today’s political conditions. Most people, even politically conscious people don’t have a clue what we mean by them. So that’s no bridge.

On the other hand, the slogan “self-defence is no defence” – now part of the Socialist Alliance manifesto – is much more accessible. It has been the spontaneous slogan of many protests and demonstrations especially those led by black youth. And it incorporates the same political idea – that is no longer the case that the ruthless state will police our communities with anything other than repression. Mind you we have to organise our class independently.

Jason says “Millions of people have dropped out of voting altogether and become utterly cynical about the ability of parliament to do anything significant.”

Certainly it is true that many of the people, particularly the young people, involved in the anti-war and anti-racism movement have drawn some of these conclusions.

Ultra-left

One of the problems for us is that some of the groups that have gone further, in an ultra-left direction and adopted such ideas beyond the failure of the revolutionary left to address their concerns.

It is certainly true that this layer of people is one with which the Alliance needs to engage, to learn from its mistakes as well as to suggest ways of organising that can take forward the struggles they are involved in.

But you can’t explain the increasing level of abstentions in elections etc. beyond the failure of the revolutionary left to address their concerns.

Most traditional Labour voters who have stayed at home, or cast a protest vote in recent elections etc. so because they are fed up with this new Labour government. They voted Labour or SNP or Liberal against the Alliance on the basis of New Labour. They did not vote.

They have not however drawn the conclusion that what is needed to further the interests of the working class is the replacement of Parliament with worker’s democracy or the destruction of the existing state system.

Revolutionary socialists want and need to convince them – or at least significant numbers of them – that this is what is needed. We can do this to some extent by working with them in campaigns and through the trade union, but we can also do this through political dialogue in the Socialist Alliance.

Level of debate

The level of political debate about these fundamental questions of our lives today and for the future is not high in the British Labour movement. A majority of people who are disillusioned with New Labour do not define themselves consciously as revolutionaries. But people have hardened ideas from which they would disagree.

We should point out that revolutionary ideas are really very common sense. After all we want a society that organised in the interests and with the active participation of the majority – a society in which we want a world that puts profit before people.

But unless there is a huge rise in the class struggle that leads to a major shift in political consciousness, that we successfully creating a new, conscious revolutionary will be in a minority. That could be the ‘revolutionary platform’, a banner within the broader party around which to organise for our ideas.

The opportunities that are opened up by the Alliance project are enormous – we have the potential to create a sustained challenge to the system that is destroying our lives and our planet.

At the same time the challenge we face to broaden the movement and ultra-left makes the future possible debate about the steps we need to take to achieve our goals indispensa-
Socialists join fight to halt Star Wars madness

George W Bush has made clear that he intends to go ahead with his 'Son of Star Wars' project – and tear up the existing Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in the process.

Bush's determination to take this crazy path, which will in all likelihood provoke a new arms race, is fuelled by his close relationship with the oil and arms industries.

Tony Blair, while refusing to make any definite statement on the question, is clearly happy to let his new friend in the White House use the US bases in Britain as part of this macabre operation.

Both internationally and here in Britain a new mass movement of opposition to this nuclear madness needs to be built, building on actions like the mass protest at Faslane earlier in the year.

As Frank Ormiston, the Socialist Alliance candidate for the City of York has said: "Together with others, the Socialist Alliance is committed to taking action to stop the USA using Menwith and Fylingdales in Yorkshire as outposts for its world-threatening NMD scheme.

"The casual attitude of both Bush and Blair to the violation of the Anti-Ballistic Missiles Treaty of 1972 is terrifying. Their aggressive stance will incite other countries to develop further their nuclear capabilities.

"Instead of the peace dividend we were promised with the end of the Cold War, we now have a renewed and utterly pointless war-drive. Virtually alone in Europe, Tony Blair, Geoff Hoon, Robin Cook and their New Labour colleagues are giving Bush and the American right-wing crucial support and credibility.

"We say to Labour members: join our fight for nuclear disarmament, cuts in military spending, and a British foreign policy independent of US influence."