Labour's plans are even less popular than Thatcher's Poll Tax!

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RMT Conference calls time on right wing policies

Greg Tucker

DELEGATES at the RMT national conference have scored a decisive blow against the right wing Executive’s witch-hunt against left activists. At the same time they have voted to serve warning to the Labour Party — support RMT policy (on rail rationalisation) or you lose the union’s support both financial and political.

As detailed in last month’s Socialist Outlook, the right on RMT was toying with the idea of proposing to bar from office Pat McLeish and the two other left activists — their crime, trying to defend union democracy.

To add to this attack one right wing Branch brought an emergency resolution to the RMT conference calling for the left’s President to resign over his role in trying to sort out this witch-hunt.

But after a days debate during which Pat and the others under attack were able to answer the charges against them, the conference overwhelmingly threw out the Executive proposal.

The emergency resolution backed on the right — its near unanimous dismissal effectively giving an endorsement to the charge that the President had been forced to do to defend union democracy.

Turning to the Labour Party the RMT followed the line of other union conferences this year in critically examining its relation with Blairism.

With only four votes against it declared, “it cannot and will not continue to support a Labour government that has deserted its working class roots — utilise these disastrous policies are changed, we will no longer support them politically or financially.”

The right were reduced to arguing in another resolution that however bad Labour might be it was the only party that could represent the aspirations of the membership. Even this was stongly rejected.

The conference went on to express its complete opposition to the TUC’s “Social Partnership” policies and its call for a campaign against the effects of the WTO general agreement on trade.

The conference came at a time of success in the union’s campaign to protect the safety role of the guard on trains with the majority of train operating companies now in agreement with the union in the face of successful strike ballot.

The RMT is now looking to take on ASLEF in a campaign to review the guard on Driver Only services.

However this success is only partial — one company, C2G is still in dispute with guards now on their third day of action, whilst another, Midland Main Line, successfully forced an injunction to halt their strike.

The terms of the injunction were based on a handful of RMT members not receiving ballot papers in the ballot. Taken with the court decision on the RMT ballot on LUL earlier this year it is clear that the obligations on unions to provide details of who is being balloted and to keep perfect membership records is now more rigorous under Labour’s anti-union laws than it was under the Tories.

The RMT remains committed to the repeal of all anti-union laws and is not a matter of urgency that all unions join the campaign to see off this legal absurdity — defying the law as LUL workers and others have done this year, if necessary.

UNISON conference fires warning shots at New Labour

Fred Leplat

UNISON annual conference held between the 18 and 22 June sent a warning to the government: no more privatisations. In a rare display of unity between all delegates and the NEC, the conference condemned New Labour for its continuing programme of privatisations including PFI, and of the rise of racism fanned by scape-goating of asylum seekers.

The agreement between delegates and the NEC, including the new general secretary Dave Prentis, was expressed in the form of voting through motions which obviously condemned privatisation, but which also committed the union to organising a national demonstration against PFI, to lobby of Parliament, and back official strikes against the effects of PFI and privatisation.

This goes much further than the NEC had been prepared to support in the past, and goes some way towards the left’s view that only a national campaign including industrial action has a chance of defeating the national attacks from the government.

The scene to adopting this motion on the Wednesday was set on the day before when Stephen Byers, Minister for Transport and Local Government, tabled a PFI and the notorious motion 131 titled “support New Labour Government.” What do we get for our membership?

This motion notes that members are questioning why UNISON is hanging on to its membership, and is a real threat to the union, while at the same time it is attacking public services and members’ jobs and conditions, and that electors are voting independent candidates that are opposed to attacks onpublic services.

The NEC went on to state that UNISON is therefore not using its funds to pursue UNISON’s policies.

The motion committed the NEC to consult with branches and regions in order to prepare a report to next year’s conference on the future of UNISON’s political funds.

By adopting this motion, UNISON will not be disaffiliating from Labour. But it is a serious warning shot.

Coming closely on a similar vote at the FBU conference, this indicates that union members are no longer as loyal to Labour as in the past, and are prepared to stop “feeding the hands that bites them.” This is the first step towards a political break from Labour, which the Socialist Alliance and Scottish Socialist Party represent.

The conference unanimously voted through a motion condemning the recent rise of racism, calling for the repeal of all racist immigration control and the development of a relationship with the Anti-Nazi League and the union, and committing the union to “high campaign against the General Agreement on Trade in Services.” A set-back for union democracy was the failure of the NEC to call for a running to adopt union internal discipline to protect the basis on which the left would be.

Unfortunately, a rule change means that the option to change New Labour and unite in a broad movement of the left.

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EDITORIAL

The second term as farce...!

Those who fail to learn the lessons of history, warned Karl Marx, are doomed to repeat them. Millions of Labour voters felt into this category when they turned out again in June to give Tony Blair a second chance to deliver reforms which has spent years explaining he does not support.

If Blair’s first term can now be seen as political tragedy, the second is shaping up as farce, with ministers and MPs brazenly stuffing their own pockets with massive pay increases, waging war on public sector unions, disdaining disabled and civil liberties, and acting more gannily than ever.

For example, instead of the safety of the House of Lords, really did speak for wide sections of Labour supporters when he described his desperate hope prior to June 7 that this might be the end of a second Blairian government would be closed to Labour’s traditional policies than the first.

And his颂的 groans of frustration, as soon as it was clear that his team made it clear that they were determined to defend every single right wing pledge in their 2001 manifesto, will have been echoed across much of the country.

Of course Hattersley has been left stranded by the party’s rapid move to the right. His politics have not changed: he is just as opposed to socialists and the left as he was when he helped to launch the movement through the witch-hunt against Militant in the late 1980s, paring the way for the subsequent Blair offensive against Clause 4.

But his offer to lead a crusade to win back the Labour Party for social democracy is not just a case of increasing his already lavish earnings from journalism: it is part of an unravelling of the Labour bureaucracy.

This is driven by the tension of a second term in which the party is in office with another unprecedented majority, but people recognise that its traditional policies, which still hold the loyal support of millions of working class voters, are even further than ever being imple-

Hattersley is not the only one under daily threats and hoping that Blair’s team will take notice and concede before they are called to take any action.

Just weeks after Labour secured its first-term landslide with a massive majority, union leaders have already sought to demonstrate their independence from the Blair bank and their commitment to public services.

Before the election, we had the historic vote of the Fire Brigades Union to democratise its Political Fund. This started from the incredibly popular view that union funds should not support a party that attacks the union, but went on to argue that funding should be given to “support candidi-

By UNISON, too, announced that it had topped £250,000 from its ele-

Since the election, there has been even more debate. The conference decision to mount a year-

Privatisation less popular than Poll Tax!

Tony Blair’s “keynote” speech on “refocusing” the public service sector was the delivery of a new commandment of private companies on July 16 had been seen as spelling out the end of the new government’s commitment to press freedom, and all fronts with the highly unpopular “public-private partnership” model of financing for hospitals and schools and private sector enterprise in public services.

The Royal Free – which contains the biggest unit of any London hospital – seemed a logical choice for such a speech, in which Blair was expected to go further than his ministers in throwing down the gauntlet to public sector union leaders.

But in the event the lengthy speeches already spelled out during and since the election. New Labour’s “Law and Order”

• Step up the programme of building hospitals and primary care trusts (and move to tackling towards financing social services, imaging and computer equipment) with private capital through PFI – regardless of the accumulation of evidence that the result is fewer, high-cost, low-quality, unsustainable builds for the NHS while the city’s fat cats pocket the difference.

• Step up the purchase of waiting list treatment from private sector hospitals which cannot find enough paying customers to fill their beds – despite the fact that the will drain more staff and resources from the most pressured NHS hospitals to bolster the balance of the revenue earned under the management to run “silk” schools and LEAs, again profiting from the historic lack of resources and deprivation, and transforming education from a public service into a business and a corporate income stream.

Of course Blair is formally right when he says that these big steps down the road stop short of a fully privatised sys-

But we should remember the bits of these services that have already been largely squeezed our houses are taken by and loaded on to their customers, and the NHS will be largely funded from taxation, and free at point of use. Even if these body clouds could be cracked, more services could go the same way in later phases of what Blair means is a 10-year programme.

TGWU leader Bill Morris floated the idea of working with the Lib Ds to challenge government policies and even GMB chief John Edmonds proposed to cut contributions to the Labour Party’s local fund campaigns in defence of public services. The rail union RMT voted down a right wing motion which proclaimed contained loyalty to take any action.

Indications that none of these threats is likely to force a change of line from ministers included the decision to remove some conflict with a series of common committee charts for the “crimes” of outspoken criticism of the government.

One of them, Ginny Williams, has (as chairman of the Transport committee) been a consistent thorn in the side of minis-

But her willingness to speak out against her removal undermines another common feature of this post-election unravelling process: the resistance to Blair’s control is not inconsistent with the drive to build broad alliances.

UNISON, too, announced that it had topped £250,000 from its ele-

We should support every fight against Blair’s plans for the broadest possible base for the Socialist Alliance, and for alternatives for those who conclude that they cannot win.

While we fight for maximum debate in the unions on the Political Funds and the policies of New Labour, our immediate aim is not disillusion from the Labour Party – because at present there is no alternative party which could plausibly bid for national-level union affiliations.

The danger is that under these conditions a disillusion from Labour would lead to a depoliticisa-

O f course Blair is formally right when he says that these big steps down the road stop short of a fully privatised sys-

The objective is to follow the FBU example, and establish the rights for every union to fund parties and candidates whose policies are in line with the needs and aspirations of union members.

This is very different from the objectives of Hattersley and the union bosses, who clearly want to use the unions to put themselves at the head of the resistance in order to limit its political development.

By contrast, socialists will support the widest possible resistance to Blair’s plans and argue that the more people become engaged in active struggle, the quicker they will learn the hard lessons that enable to break from Blair and take action in a more radical way.

This second term may already be a farce: but it’s no laughing matter. The sooner the debate gets serious in the labour movement the sooner the real light has begun.

Liverpool firefighters fighting the imposition of external managers are the first to stage a 24-hour strike since June 7.  

Privatisation less popular than Poll Tax!  

The second term as farce...!

Privatisation less popular than Poll Tax!
Alliance must act now to build on election gains

Terry Conway

The Alliance emerged from the General Election in a rather disorganised state, and more dynamic organisation than before. It is in this context that the Alliance itself really created the Alliance as a viable political force, creating local branches of the Alliance in many areas where they didn't previously exist, and winning many new members.

Now the key challenge is to build on those successes, to ensure that the new Alliance can establish itself as a key player in the battles against the neo-liberal politics of this new Labour government both at a local and national level.

The Socialist Alliance can build on the success of this year’s debates on demon- strating the political failings of the Labour party in a number of unions, both by continuing to support the initiatives that have been made and widening to other unions, as well as by developing the wider fight against privatisation.

The many people who have come into the Alliance during the election campaign need to be made to feel that this is an organisation which offers them a political home, a place for both discussion and activity and one where their priorities can shape.

The Alliance must also continue to work in a way that reaches out to the increase of contacts between people who will become disillusioned with New Labour as the attacks of the second front continue - both by trying to win them to the Alliance itself, but at the same time finding ways of working with those who are not ready to make the leap.

But in order to carry out these tasks, the Socialist Alliance needs to develop the right structures.

It has been proven that the current structures both politically and organisationally. This is the reason that there is a national conference towards the end of the year which can deal with all these questions.

A number of issues need to be addressed.

The current membership system which is somewhat chaotic, needs to be simplified. At the minute, there are methods of local alliances but not national members, while others have re- signed at the end of the year, it may not be clear what’s going on in the Alliance.

There should be a unified structure so that people join once and have the rights and responsibilities at both local and national level. The structure should be able to go back to those go to back to those new people that we have made contact with either nationally or locally but not actually signed up and formally recruited them.

Local Socialist Alliance members should be involved, and not just the leaders of the national organisation.

There needs to be a strengthening of the leadership which has the authority to lead the organisation and involves the different political convicts both explicit and implicit within the Alliance.

All of this needs to be able to react quickly to political events as they unfold to ensure that the Association is involved in the heart of opposition to government attacks. It needs to build the organisation nationally and resource its local units.

Discussions need to take place about the best way of forming a leadership team – as there are a number of different approaches that could be followed.

The Socialist Alliance must now build on its success in the elections and build it, there will be a problem with that but it is also important not to be held to ransom by them. The Alliance which has emerged from the election campaign is not the same organisation as it was at the beginning of the year.

These are to build on the gains of the election campaign by becoming an effective radical political organisation which can continue to fight against the neo-liberal policies of new Labour and win the new support through doing so.
Bradford pays the price for poverty and segregation

Dave Miles
A WEEK after the riot there are many boarded-up shop windows in the centre of Bradford. However there are only a few boarded-up shop windows there were a week before the riot. The city centre has looked increasingly run-down over the past few years. This is symptomatic of its economic malaise, which has fed the frustrations of both Asian and white working class youth.

There is a contrast with Leeds, Bradford's bigger neighbour. Chapeltown in Leeds was the site of riots in 1980 when African-Caribbean youth clashed with the police. While Leeds has much of its textile industry, along with engineering and other older industries, however Leeds has found a replacement in government bodies, commercial legal firms, financial services and health care.

Chapeltown is not prospering. Among the reasons Leeds is pockets of poverty, homelessness and unemployment, there is a long-term boom in Bradford. Bradford has found few significant replacements for old industries. Poverty is more widespread, and with the collapse or export of industries the trade union movement has become weaker. Large swathes of the city's housing are ageing and in disrepair, much of it dating back to the 19th century. Having been an educational pioneer, Bradford also has many anachronistic seventeenth-century schools, often with playfields full of temporary buildings.

"Self-segregation is driven by fear of others, the need for safety from harassment and violent crime and the belief that it is the only way to promote, retain and protect faith and cultural identity and affiliation."

The Ouseley Report ("Community Pride not prejudice - Making Diversity Work in Bradford") says this. Bradford also has a black ethnic minority with a greater weight in the city's population. The Pakistani Asian community is a growing part of the city. Although they have prospered economically, as entrepreneurs, they also include some of the poorest workers in the city, some of them dependent on taxi driving, home working and other precarious employment, living in privately owned housing blocks. Meanwhile the poorest of the white working class are often concentrated on outlying housing estates like Ravencliffe, also lacking decent opportunities to work. Much of the housing is still council-owned, and more modern, but nevertheless decrepit and in need of refurbishment.

One of the problems between white and black is physical segregation.

Asians have moved from the areas in which they originally concentrated, their new white neighbours have also moved. This well-recognised trend is a white flight. This is less the behaviour of poor working class whites, who may not like it or not can afford to move to middle class whites. This means, for example, but many of the teachers in inner-city schools largely made up of ethnic minority children themseves.

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Socialists fight for free school meals

When I went to school and college, we had free school meals, all pupils got grants and full publicity was given at schools and indeed milk at school broke the bank. Under the Tories milk was removed, charging for meals introduced, and under Blair it was removed. Under Blair fees were introduced. The Scottish Parliament has "deferred" fees and discussions are ongoing for students. Till now free meals were off the agenda, but yet arguably their abolition was of the most harm to our youth. Although meals are free to children of families on benefit, there is a stigma attached to this. Up to 1/3 of entitled children do not take up their entitlement. The results are poor nutrition and malnourishment, and the children who do eat in hospital see 20% with signs of malnutrition. Most schools now have privatised caterers putting fizzy drinks, chips and burgers, the duty of care principle may apply to schools but not their contracts. In an attempt to reverse this trend, Tommy Sheridan and the SSP have introduced a bill in the Scottish Parliament to abolish the means test in schools and provide a free and nutritious meal to every child in Scotland who attends a state school. This bill has the backing of 11 MSPs including the Green MSP Robin Harper, independent Dennis Canavan, Labour's John McEUtilon and several SNP MSPs - no Tories. Whilst the executive seem certain to oppose the Bill, through parliament we will be able to demonstrate the need for a basic and universal nutrition, and to show that this is a vital step in reversing Scotland's record of the worst health statistics in Europe.

Stop housing stock transfer!

The Scottish Parliament has passed 2 new Housing Bills after a year and a half of evidence taking and deliberation. Although there are some positive aspects of the bill, overall it is an attack on Council Housing and contrary to its stated intentions is likely to increase homelessness. The Bill will replace existing tenancies on social housing with a single secured tenure. For many it will mean a weaker form of security which may lead to more evictions. The Bill denies the right to buy for Council Tenants and extends these rights to Housing Associations. This is likely to lead to shortages of affordable housing in better areas, higher rents and ghettoising of the poor. Finally the Bill retains the right to transfer property from Councils to Housing Associations, now requiring a ballot of tenants. This is the latest provision which is being used by the executive to attempt to force the removal of housing from Council control. Tommy Sheridan on behalf of the SSP moved a detailed amendment to the Bill. Although many received the same result, SNP MSPs, most were defeated. In a Bill that only "塍" s against the Bill as a whole. In Glasgow the passage of the Bill has been taken as a green light to proceed to the transfer of property from the council to a Housing Association which to all intents and purposes will be controlled by private landlords. The process of considering the transfer, Glasgow's council leaders gave assurances if 6 months consultation once the business plan was published. It now appears at most the bare minimum period of consultation will be given and it is unclear the business figures will be made available. All the Council's independent consultants' reservations appear to be swept aside by ministerial dictate.

The new Housing minister Jackie Baillie wants a positive ballot by November. The Council seems to have scheduled the decision to proceed to take place in August. Throughout the past year tenants and unions have been campaigning against the proposals. Houses require investment, but the money the executive appears to be about to commit to the private sector could achieve the same result cheaper, quickier and without an outstanding debt of £1,600 million after 10 years - from viding the same money was invested through the public sector. The only way the proposed scheme is viable is for a massive rent rise and Glasgow already has the highest council rents in Scotland. At present we believe a majority of tenants oppose the transfer but they are being told their houses will not be improved unless the scheme goes ahead. To counter this Glasgow UNISON has been producing information packs and tenants opposed to the transfer have been holding meetings. With the STUC formally opposed to transfer and is seeking to build a broad movement of opposition. Union has a £250,000 fund to fight the proposals, but it is important that other agencies contribute similar amounts. If Glasgow tenants vote against this will force the Scottish executive to consider changing their plans for Housing in Scotland and for PFI generally.

Socialists and campaigners applaud the struggle, but Glasgow council seems to be seriously out of its depth.
Harry Sloan

Harry Sloan, the front-runner in the battle to keep it illegal, has been defeated, but not the cause. This is a victory for all those who oppose the criminalisation of cannabis. The campaign has won, and we should all celebrate.

Terry Conway

There can be no doubt that Blair’s decision to make cannabis a class A drug was a mistake. The evidence is clear: the drug is harmless and does not cause any harm to society.

The new Labour government has been a disaster for people with disabilities. The cuts to services and the lack of support for disabled people have been devastating. The government needs to do more to support disabled people and ensure they have the same rights as everyone else.

Padrac Finn

If you know the Roald Dahl story, you probably know that it was written to mirror the social and economic conditions of the time. The story is about a boy who is given a magic carpet, but he uses it to exploit others. In the same way, the government is using its power to exploit disabled people.

The World Trade Organisation has been accused of being biased against developing countries. The organisation is supposed to be neutral, but in reality it is a tool of the wealthy nations to enforce their own interests.

Socialists challenge hypocrisy on drug policy

Socialists have long been critical of the war on drugs. They argue that it is a failure and that it has led to the criminalisation of millions of people, many of whom are innocent. The new Labour government has continued this policy, and it is time for a change.

New Labour puts boot into people with disabilities

The new Labour government has been a disaster for people with disabilities. The cuts to services and the lack of support for disabled people have been devastating. The government needs to do more to support disabled people and ensure they have the same rights as everyone else.

The The World Trade Organisation hits Brent

Privatisation is the unfriendly giant

Privatisation is the unfriendly giant that is eating away at our public services. The government is selling off our hospitals, schools, and other public services to private companies. This is a threat to our democracy and our way of life.

The government is not interested in the needs of the people. They are more interested in profit and the interests of big business. This is a danger to our society and our future.

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Matters of safety
In his manoeuvres to priva-
tise the London tube, John
Percott always stresses that
safety is the priority. Who
will be able to ensure that
this is the case? Perhaps we can look at
the newly-appointed Chairman of the
London Tube, John Robinson!
Mr. Robinson and the rest of
the newly-appointed Board members not only
have no prior experience as managers of
railways, the Chairman, at least, has an unenviable
record when it comes to safety.
Is the chairman of the
pharmaceutical manufactur-
ers, Smith and Nephew. In
July 1996, the Board
was fined $106,625 by the Health
and Safety Executive, HSE; in
three sample cases where they had failed to ill
accident reports properly.
The total of 27 incidents in a
year is staggering!
Mr. Robinson is also chair-
man of RJM Mining - he
seems to be a collector of
well-paid chairmanships.
In 1997, the HSE of the South African parliament that "towards the
end of 1997, some cases of under-reported accidents at
KTJM Mining have come to light.
But in 1999, the HSE proce-
sued RJM Mining because
it had had more serious
issues. The Board is
charged with the
management of their
distinctive electric trains when the
level of flammable "firebomb" gas made
using these trains dangerous and ill-
moderate. The company
owed $62,000.
What better qualifications can there be for putting
this man in charge of passenger-
carrying trains?
These golden handshakes
In the capitalist world, you
don't have to make a success of
the business you manage
to receive your take home
pay.
Take Marks & Spencer, one
of the biggest names in the
stock exchange. Sales in its
class in high street shops in Britain and overseas
have dropped to cata-
stric levels. Shares have
changed.
One would think that
they are in charge of the
business during this period of
downturn. Not a bit of it. Guy McCracken, M&S's director of
operations, in charge of the
loss-making European end of the business, closed down
with the loss of more than
3000 jobs, is rewarded with a
bonus payment of £79,070.
This is on top of the
£265,000 pay and other ben-
efits he earned before he left
the firm last September.
Other directors of the fail-
ing company packed up golden handshakes
from 7% Filmmation Corporation of America.
Marks & Spencer is not the only company where fail-
ures are rewarded. The share
price of the privatised BT
has dropped from £15.50 to
£6.52. It has lost 1 billion on its corporate debt of
£409 billion in the past year.
As a reward for presiding
over this, Sir Peter Beddington,
Chief Executive of BT, is
allowed to receive a bonus of
£481,000, in addition to his
salary of £80,000 and share options worth two-thirds.

Someone must
be paying for all this!
The world's largest private
prison operator, the Correctional
Services of America, is in trouble. The
Corporation imprisons
41,000 people in the US.
Three years ago its share price
was exactly £4.45. Today, they are worth less than
£1, a 98% drop.
In Arizona, the Talilulah
downed juvenile prison was recently
re-opened by the state, follow-
ing its failure as a privatised
operation. But, while it is now once again run by the
state, it is still owned by pri-
ate operators.
No wonder the local news-
paper describes it as "a rip-
off, pure and simple".
That staunch defender of public-private partnership
(PPP), John Percott, MP
for Hull East should look at
what happened to the joint
venture in 1995 between
Hull City Council and a
development company
Keelempart to repair and ren-
ovate the Gayville Estate
in the west of the city.
Far from producing
the £3 million for the council
from land sales as predicted, by 1997, the refurbishment
scheme had to cover a
cash injection of £ 1 million.
It had to be increased
by £2.2 million.
According to the last
recorded submission to
Company House, in 1999-
2000, the joint venture
company made a loss of
£496,000. There is an excess of liabilities over assets of
more than £855,000.
Keenlempart's liability is
limited. It has only £81 shares in the limited company.
Theoretically, its shareholders' liabilities are also
limited. It has only £9 shares.
But someone has to pay the
bills. In these joint public-
private enterprises, most
of the well-paid lawyers and
accountants will always
confirm that if there is any
financial failure, it is not the
governmental shareholders who will be the losers.

Pay up for Blairite hand-
raisers
The New Labour's leader-
ship is not going to be left
behind its friends in the
shadow cabinet. Each one
must be rewarded for their failure to
reach their targets
for the year.
Incidentally, repeal of the
anti-union laws, linking
penalties for striking,
'ethi-

cal issues of a pol-
icy,
empathy, etc., etc.
One of the first acts of the
party after taking office was to up its sales
... and how?
Tony Blair takes pay rise of
£47,000, and most cabinet
ministers will receive an
increase from £99,793 (how
can anyone be expected
to live on £312,000?)

That hardy son of soil, John
Percott will now be able
to afford a third Jaguar.
How can anyone think
people have any idea how
real people live - workers
earning the minimum wage,
pensioners getting £75 a
week?
No wonder ministers can't
remember how many houses
they own. How can people
they don't want to tax them?

Drug giant reneges on promise
Despite the epic victory
against the drug corpora-
tions in the South African
law courts last year, the
victims of HIV/AIDS are
not getting the treatment
they require.
The pharmaceutical giant
Glaxo Wellcome
in March that it had dropped the price of its AIDS drugs in
Africa, has, surprisingly,
not made good on its promise.
This means that South
African patients who started
taking the medicine in the
belief that it would drop in
price, still do not know what
relief they will get.

The Mbeki government
has a lot to do in the wake of the court decision,
and COSATU has threatened to mobilise the
strength of the trade unions to put pressure on the
government.

Action against privatisation
While the trade union movement is in the so-called
developed world in quies-
cence, they can work something
from the socialist and
governmental governments.

The "under-developed"
countries, from Bangladesh,
Africa, Latin America, a
renewed militancy is pump-
ing vital blood into the veins of international labour.

Electricity workers in
the Indian state of Uttar
Pradesh are succeeding in
their campaign to halt priv-
atisation in the electricity
sector.

Indian Prime Minister
V. P. Singh's plan to centralise state control over water sup-
plies is facing a protest to World
Bank/IMF privatisation, has met with strong opposition.
A national coalition of unions, consumers, green and water organ-
isations have succeeded in mobilising opposition to the plan.

The South African
Municipal Workers Union
(SAMWU) hosted a
South African Solidarity Work
against privatisation in
Harrow, Zimbabwe.
South African trade unions from Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia,
Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

SAMWU hosted the con-
ference because nearly all
research into privatisation
in Africa is sponsored by the
World Bank.

The privatisation of water and
utility services in African
countries increased in the
last two years, and there have already been major priv-
atisation failures during this period.

All South African municipal
workers need a concrete
programme to fight
the privatisation of water and
utility services.

SAMWU has already
forced an anti-water priv-
atisation campaign on
civil servants in Ghana.
The conference also dis-
cussed a possible date for a
Southern African day of
demonstration against privatisation.

In Zimbabwe, the powerful
Confederation of Unionised
Unions has called for a
two-day national strike, which
started on July 3 in protest
against a 70% hike in fuel
prices, and general misman-
gement of the economy.

Solidarity with Palestinians
Boycott Israeli goods!

Roland Randle
THE GROWING revolution
at Israeli repression of
Palestinian rights has led to the birth of a new boycott
campaign against Israeli goods and
leisure tourism, in response to
discrimination from Palestinian activists.
At such a meeting in the House of Commons, Labour MP Lynne
Jones declared, "there is a
non-violent way to raise public awareness.
Israeli academic Dr Moshe
ehman said: "Wherever the Palestinian economy will be damaged
d by a boycott. Such work does not apply in this case. The
Tourism economy has been
throttled by Israel."

Other initial supporters of the
campaign include MPs John
Autoy, Roger Artificial, and
Neil Gerrard; activists Tony
Benn, Christine Blower, Ken
Cooper, Liz Davies, and
Christine Shawcroft; writers
and performers including
Carlos Churri, Hakim
Pintas and Michael Rosen,
Leon Rosselson, Alexei Sayle, Emma
Thompson and Benigno Sotomayor.

The campaign, which
targets the goods rather than the
traders, overcomes this problem.

Israel's most famous export is citrus fruit, and it is planned to
bolster this with a "BLOOD Orange"
campaign. However, or-
ances are not the coun-
try's major export; in cash
terms, Israel's most impor-
tant exports are arms and diaries.


Culture
At present, there is no call for a cultural and academic boycott of
Israel. Some activists have sug-
uggested that Israeli aca-
demics attending confer-
ences abroad be quizzed on their
views on Palestinian rights.
There have also been objections
from the World Jewish
Congress, which has expressed
concern at "a boycott of Israeli
artists and cultural performers."

Sopranos: Kirkby recently
attracted headlines in Israel when she refused to
fly to Tel-Aviv, in protest at
the upsurge of racist attacks on Palestinians.

Nadine Gordimer refused
to accept an Israeli literary
prize. In the end, she offered
the money to a fellow writer
from the apartheid she had spent most of her life fighting.

The boycott campaign will
become more widespread.
Further pressure can be exerted
on Israeli embassies and
consulates to pressure the
authorities to take a stand against the
apartheid and to support the
Palestinian struggle for liberation.
Bring war criminal Sharon to justice!

Roland Rance

in London, I heard of Gemayel's assassination (apparently on Syrian orders), and of Sharon's decision to invade West Beirut and to send the Phalangists into the camps, I knew and warned of the likely result. It is inconceivable that Sharon didn't know what would occur, and it must be assumed that he intended this outcome.

Although the subject of the British inquiry is Sharon's most notorious crime, his role in enabling or ordering the Beirut massacre, further claims are expected to be submitted to the magnanimous Presbyterian.

Many of these relate to the invasion of Lebanon, conducted by Sharon, often behind the backs of prime minister Begin and other ministers. In the course of this war, several thousand civilians were killed, frequently by the use of weapons banned under international law.

These included cluster bombs, which scattered dozens of smaller bombs and mines, causing severe injury or death to anyone who went near them, and incendiary phosphorus bombs designed as fire and used with devastating effect against civilians.

In his account of that war, Pal Braham wrote in The Ecologist: "Sharon was responsible for the Phalangists in the camps. Several months later, an Israeli commando attack on the camp, and then defence minister Sharon was personally responsible for the massacre, and he was forced to resign his post (though he remained as a government minister)." To this day, no one has been prosecuted for the atrocity.

After the massacre, Sharon said of the Phalange: "Not for a moment did we imagine that they would do what they did. They had received harsh and clear warnings. Had we not foreseen this coming, we would have never let them into the camp."

Most observers find this hard to believe. According to Ben Alot, a Dutch doctor working in the camp at the time: "Everybody in Beirut knew what would happen if the Phalangists were allowed into the camps. In spite of this, Sharon gave the green light." (Guardian, 13 July 1982). I visited Sabra and Shatila just two weeks before the election of Phalange leader Bashir Gemayel as president of Lebanon. When, back

Heartless Israeli shell had demolished the house of David on the synagogue's roof.

I n describing Israel's, and Sharon's, behaviour as a war crime, what must be remembered is that not only the conduct, but the very purpose of the war, was directed as civilians.

It was quite explicitly a war of terrorism, designed to break the civil infrastructure of the PLO, to turn the population of Lebanon against the Palestinian presence, and to intimidate the Palestinians in the occupied territories, who had initiated a mini uprising in the spring of 1982.

Sharon had planned the war from the moment he took office after the 1981 election, and for six months before the war began the Israeli press had been full of speculation and analysis about its goals and prospects.

Sharon's appointment as defence minister, like his whole career, had been controversial. Begin had expressed his fear that Sharon would "be the prime minister in office with tanks" if not appointed.

From the early years of the state, Sharon had a reputation as a thug and a boheder, ready to carry out the most brutal acts in response to the Palestinian struggle for liberation.

As director of the general defence ministry during the 1950s, he was responsible for the establishment of Israel's arms industry and nuclear programme. In 1967, he was one of the team which ordered the attack on the US spy ship Liberty, killing 34 American servicemen.

And in 1986, he ordered the kidnap of Mordochu Vanunu from Europe and his secret transport back to Israel to face trial for treason, after Vanunu revealed to the Sunday Times the extent of Israel's nuclear arsenal.

If a related development, Danish MP Soren Sondberg has called for the arrest of Israel's new ambassador to Denmark, Carmi Gillon. Gillon is a former head of the Shin Bet (Israeli Security Service).

In his memoirs he admits ordering the torture of at least 200 Palestinian detainees, and in a recent interview with the Danish media he has justified this, portraying his actions, and torture in Israel generally, as a defence of an open and democratic society against a "sea of piranhas." Such torture is a breach of the Geneva Convention, and Gillon is, thus, by his own admission, a war criminal. The Israeli daily Ha'aretz reports that, as a result of the controversy, he is now unlikely Gillon will take up his post.

These actions in Europe cannot, by themselves, bring about the liberation of Palestine and the Palestinians. However, by making life more difficult for Israeli thugs and murderers, and by focussing publicity on their crimes, they further weaken the legitimacy of the Zionist state.

Activists in Britain should support similar moves here, while opposing the pretensions of institutions like the Hague tribunal.

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Marxists and the new anti-capitalist movement

Salvatore Cannavo

A new phase

From Seattle onwards, the whole planet has been shaken by a mobilisation of a kind and scale that has never been witnessed before. Not since the time of the Great French movement of 1955, which pushed the Juppter plan and opened the way to the victory of Joypas, was felt in Amsterdam in June 1997 with the first European March for a Social Europe, organised by the network of European Marches.

The following year in Birmingham, Jubilee 2000 — a campaign for the cancellation of the Third World debt, born in Great Britain between 1996 and 1997 and involving trade unions, NGOs, movements of women and refugees — succeeded in bringing more than 70,000 people to the annual G-7 meeting. Between 1998 and 1999, ATTAC was created in France, and quickly became an instrument of participation and organisation of the world movement (with the birth of "sectors" in dozens of countries, in particular Italy) while Jose Bove has set up Via Campesina (created in 1993, but now able to organise nearly 60 million peasants on the world scale) which will play a decisive role in several struggles in the Southern hemisphere.

After Seattle

These diverse elements found in Seattle a symbolic element of fundamental identification. From this moment, there was a common moment (demonstrations or mobilisation), a common definition of the movement (a pluralist movement composed of social movements, ecologists, women and activities), and a form of organisation of the movement (the Internet, also on the national level) which were shared by all and considered effective.

Thus, it is not by chance that the movement has "migrated" throughout the world. The states are symbolic: after Seattle (November 1999) and Washington (April 2000) there was Milliwa (June 30, 1999, solidarity with Jose Bove), Melbourne (September 11, against the World Economic Forum), Prague (September 26, once more against the IMF), Seoul (October 16, during the BSE Europe summit), Nice (December 7, against the European Union summit), Quebec (April 2001), against the launching of the FTTA, Gothenburg (June 2001), against the EU summit. This list includes only the "institutional" events, against the summits of institutions and bodies, and against existing or future international agreements.

Over the same period, dozens of other events, demonstrations, and struggles have taken place in all the corners of the world. Quoting from memory: the World Women's March Against Violence and Poverty, the strikes and marches in Latin America in various demonstrations on May Day (particularly combative in Great Britain with the role of movements like Reclaim the Streets and Globalise Resistance), the Zapatistas march in 2001, struggles against layoffs in France, the demonstrations in Japan against US bases, and again.

The mobilisation in Genoa in July 2001 during the G8 summit represents only the last stage of a more general process of struggle. Of course, it is too early to say that we are on the eve of a new 1968 — and in any case analogies are never perfect. But the extent of the mobilisation of young people, the ceaseless expansion of the critique of neoliberalism, whether on the planetary level or with more depth in various sectors of society, indicate a possible cycle of more sustained struggles.

Above all, there is a possibility that the negative period opened by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, marked by the definitive collapse of Stalinism as an organised state form, with the defeat and disillusion of the left which followed, but also with the total victory of capitalism in its most aggressive form — is starting to unravel.

Admitting the defensive aspect of the current struggles, the aggressive nature of the neoliberal policies and the weaknesses of the anti-capitalist left do not allow us to consider the period of defeat as finished. But the situation is no longer what it was only ten years ago, when ideologues like Francis Fukuyama defined capitalism as 'the best of all possible worlds'.

The financial crises of 1997 and 1998, the current stagnation in the United States and Japan, the contradictions facing Europe, and even the contradictory nature of Berlitz's victory in Italy — with a majority in parliament, but not in the country — show that the framework is extremely unstable and uncertain.

Meanwhile, a new generation, which does not carry the weight of the deceptions of the old ideological incarnations, and does not feel the influence of Stalinist "camp" politics, is asserting itself.

Apart from politics following a crisis of the left, in particular, the social struggles of the new anti-capitalists.

Now they are unable to interpret the new struggles that exist, or to represent them, organise them, or offer them any hope. The new struggles need new politics which are not perceived as old or archaic.

As might be expected, the global movement faces major contradictions. However, these contradictions do not prevent a linear development, an expansion on the international scale and a progressive widening to involve new sectors.

Despite the diversity, there are unquestionably some general characteristics: the movement's attempt to define itself byrediscovering an internationalist tradition which seemed lost; a contradictory but real relationship with the old labour movement; and a generalised mistrust of all organised political forms, but linked to the desire for an overall alternative.

A global vision

The movement as it exists today denuces the damage wrought by neoliberalism on the international scale: but on the other hand many of its components are born of specific instances or problems. It is often about a "rough" anti-capitalism based on experience. In good part it is also the fruit of the presence of movements and a specific group of militant intellectuals.

The role of the trade unions

The workers' and labour movement has accompanied the mobilisation since its birth. The role of the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organisations), a trade-union federation with 13 million members and some 4.8 million workers (lorry drivers) — able to bring the country to a standstill when it has to — is critical.

This is the product of the internal turmoil marked by the friction and generational split that the AFL-CIO has shown in recent years, in the consequent ability of the AFL-CIO — which remains very moderate of the new anti-capitalist and socialist protectionism — to grasp the importance of new forms of struggle in the workplace (as with the creation of Jobs with Justice, organising temporary workers, the unemployed, students).

This maturity is found especially in the United States where the Brazilian CUT was heavily involved in Portland Aflalo, while the ORT (a regional organisation connected to the international) naturally gave its support to the Forum's closing appeal.

On the European level, the situation is very different. There have been contacts with the various labour movements but it is like the demonstration in Amsterdam June 2007, which led the European Commission of Trade Unions (ECU) to act — in Luxembourg in November of that year. But one cannot compare these links with the links in America.

In Prague in September 2000 the mobilisation against the IMF and the World Bank saw a significant participation from northern Europe, Italy, Spain and Greece, but it was certainly composed of young people, with an almost total absence of trade-union forces.

The truth is that since March 2000, during the European summit. This time, at the initiative of the most radical components, in particular of ATTAC, the European Network, the League, Greenpeace, the IFIC, but also the Italian COBAS and European alter- native trade unionism in general — a united demonstration against the ECU.

This unity was established despite the ECU having slogans (support for the Charter of European Rights) and those of the other (also against the ECU and trade-union leaders have revealed).

Despite the fact that it has been shown that the relationship between the traditional trade union movement and a movement of neo-Anti-Capitalists is that of a new type, composed primarily of young people opposed to neoliberal globalisation, is possible.

The Forum of the IFIC-CGIL (metal-workers' federation of the Italian CGIL) for the Genoa demonstration in July against the
The anti-political risk

The opportunism of political parties is a characteristic, although less marked, of the socialist parties in the Anglo-Saxon world. And an understandable side, considering the damage caused by the social democratic parties and the disasters generated by Stalinism. On the other hand, sometimes unionism can lead to a generalised inward-looking approach. This mistrust is obviously the product of a political climate since the historical defeat symbolised by the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Furthermore, it is referred to on the historical idiosyncrasy, origins ceased to exert fascination, attraction and interest - to be replaced by mistrust or by stepping back. It is clear that when the movement expresses itself on the political level it displays divergent orientations. On the international scale, for example, one can distinguish three broad political lines: the first is definitively radical, with an anti-capitalist orientation; another seeks above all a dialogue with the supranational institutions with the aim of reforming them; and a third is a more protectionist current, which seeks to defend the positions of nation states as a counterweight to the excesses of the multinational organisations. These are considered orientations, not yet reasons for division. They often echo the positions of specific parties at the political movements. It is true, however, that the political line is neither homogeneous nor definitive. Indeed, a more fundamentalist sentiment makes the movement very cautious in opposing its importance on the organisational and analytical level. This is good, provided that the relationship with the parties does not become a source of division and division. It is obvious that this depends on the scale on which the party behaves. The problem cannot be resolved with schemes inherited from the 20th century. Far more than in the past, the political parties will have to become part of the movement as much, and build links as equal with the other parties, at the same time their social and political usefulness. Basically, the political parties will have to establish for themselves a legitimacy that, otherwise it astronomical recognition in advance. At the same time, they must demonstrate in the field of ideas and political programmatic that they can offer valid and decisive solutions to the problems of the movement. One thing is clear, we, while showing that the anti-capitalist left. They may not be a great quantity are able to see the link between they must seize this moment to re-establish themselves in the medium term. The movement needs to happen, it can only succeed and "visionary" response to go forward. The left also needs it, if the left itself is to emerge from its crisis and build a new project.

The opportunity of Genoa

A G-8 is very significant from this point of view.

The anti-capitalist risk

Since Seattle every major capitalist country has taken place under siege - with processes encountering massive police mobilisation, as in Salzburg.

Build the movement, build the party

The Communist Party of Refoundation (PRC), in particular, through the Young Communists, has played an undeniable leading role during this new phase. From participation in the Forum at Porto Alegre to the material construction of initiatives on the ground, the PRC has known how to connect to a living reality, to support it with conviction, but also to maintain an intelligent dialogue with it, without precaution or the old-fashion fighting spirit for political control. Since its birth, the party is in a real relationship with a powerful mass movement, but the political force it has to face is more subtle and delicate problem. If it avoided "paralytic", and self-conflagrating, the party must be able to rise to the opposite error, by adapting to the positions and behaviour of the movement, or rather some of its sectors. It has become more difficult to maintain the necessary balance between the construction of the movement and the construction of the party, without thinking that it excludes the other. The problem is not only simple: but precisely because of that, it is a theme that has to be discussed seriously, without simplifications or excesses. Certain "taya" flow from the events of today, but also the post-G-8 period: 1) To work to widen the movement, to build it and consolidate it. The movement has already shown that it exists, it has shown its potential and stated its objectives. Now it must grow, strengthen itself, reach wider sections of the population, of the workers' movement, vast layers of young people and so on. To do this, there are certainly necessary conditions, including a guarantee of the pluralism of its components, and the legitimacy of various positions - but also a unity based on ensuring adequate space for discussion and mobilisation. It is necessary to continue and to reinforce the experiment of the Genoa Social Forum, building Social Forums in the image of Porto Alegre, but on a national and local scale. The movement must go beyond structures for coordination, towards a form which can better stimulate participation. 2) To do that, it is fundamental to formulate a clear political agenda, a platform of struggle, a declaration of intent. If we are entering a new phase, one of its components is that resistance is not enough any more.

The new generations demand solutions, ideas, realizable projects, which one can demonstrate and debate. The "socialisation" of the counter-summits is likely to oxidise a political movement which has much more potential and scope for action. Overall demands must concern the process underway, going to the heart of the contradictions engendered by neoliberalism - the conflict between labour and capital, the exploitation of the Earth, the commodification and oppression of women, the intensification of "flexibility" on a whole generation, war and hunger, and so on. 3) The necessary link - between the global and the local, between daily questions (unemployment, wages, pensions, schools, information, culture and so on) and the global policies decided at international summits - becomes central. The example of the sackings at Danone is significant: in this case, the precise relationship between the operations of a multinational and the impact of its decisions on the local level have been made clear to all. 4) The construction of a stable relationship between the workers' movement and the new forces in movement and their capacity to link up is every bit as decisive. Once again, the case of Danone is an illustration: the dismissals by a profitable company were immediately perceived as a very serious injustice. The workers had recourse to a traditional and always effective weapon: the strike. But thousands of citizens countered the weapon of the boycott to show solidarity and to take part in a struggle they consid ered their own. 5) To give an anti-capitalist and radical face to the movement. The anti-globalisation movement is a "plurality" movement which finds its common roots in opposition to neoliberalism, and this is good. It is a movement which is still on the ascendant and beginning to assert itself. Nevertheless, inside it, various orientations are already visible, with different objectives. It is thus useful and right that a class and anti-capitalist orientation continues, opposed to profit and speculation, and aiming to revolutionise the relations of production. Of course, this should not be approached in a sectorial, dogmatic, or doctrinaire way, but as part of the concreteness of the movement, respecting its temps and forms.

6) To construct base units of the movement does not mean to underestimate or ignore more concrete chances to form part of a more general international movement, if they appeal. New structures on the world scale already express this need and this potential. ATTAC is one. Its imminent launch in Italy constitutes a very significant experiment. Of course, building ATTAC cannot substitute for trade unionism in its traditional or newer forms, even less can it substitute for the party, which on the contrary should start again in this new context.

The active construction of the party represents a necessary consequence of what we have affirmed until now. The party is a structure which has to draw aside when the impact of the movement: nor it is a transitory structure which has to draw aside when the impact of the movement: nor it is a transitory structure which does not have any further function. It is an essential place of collective development and planning of the internal action of the party. It is an essential place of collective development and planning of the internal action of the party.

Today the Communist Refoundation aims to build itself through the struggles of workers and the flight against globalisation; this means it must respect these struggles and their base, but maintain a consciousness of its own contribution and the necessity for its own existence.

There are two areas where this approach will be applied: the redefinition of the concept of public interests and public services in opposition to the neoliberal abolishment of profit, but also, in the light of the failures of the 20th century, in opposition to the experiments of the supposedly "actually existing socialism" Stalinist bureaucracy is one, the others.

Starting from the experiment of Porto Alegre, but going beyond it, a communist movement is an instrument of direct democracy, of rank and file participation - can play a fertile role in the process of Communist refoundation.

Salvatore Cannavo is deputy director of Liberazioni (daily newspaper of the Communist Refoundation), member of the editorial board of the monthly magazine Randiosa, Rossa, and member of the leadership of ATTAC Italy. This article has been substantially edited for publication in Socialist Outlook.
Gothenburg: an orgy of cop violence

THE GOTHENBURG ACTION

International March

This was very big. I've read 25,000, although I wouldn't have said a bit. The contingent from Scandinavia was dispersed. The SAC (Swedish socialist union) probably had 2,000 members.

There was also a big contingent from the Christian Democrats. There were very few mainstream trade union flags from them, but a contingent of the Swedish police and even sang "We shall overcome. But I had to confess to my fellow demonstrators that I had two Joan Baez records.

We got a very friendly reception at the station. The driver stood up in the rain watching the crowd.

THE LESSONS OF GOTEBOG: WHAT NEXT?

The orgy of police violence which we have just seen will turn a hair amongst the bastards into mud. Indeed every socialist-democratic bureaucrat in Europe now suspects us and the right to protest.

I have read that Genoa will be shot off completely. Motorways, air traffic diverted to Torino, the lot! It will be extremely difficult to get in and register a peaceful protest.

I've even read that they're thinking of transferring the next demonstration to something more in their line - in Gothenburg. We are left with the EU summit in Copenhagen next year and the political fight for freedom of speech and to ensure the safety of all those demonstrators who have attacked us. I think there is a danger of going from bad to worse. But we must not use these to show what really happened.

We had to prepare for police celebrations in Copenhagen and against the demonstrations in Sweden. The SAC could be active in a positive movement for a better tomorrow.

Two Danes - two Danes were deported from northern Europe... One was 15 when he travelled.

Finally we need to be better organised in København and with the non-socialist opposition. We need an easy option in the current climate.

An article is by a member of the SAP (Danish section of the Swedish International) who wishes to remain nameless "because he lives in Schengenland."
Oil giant behind Bush challenge to Kyoto

Susan Moore

Thanks to the merger of Exxon and Mobil oil companies, the US President Bush is going to face some very difficult decisions when he meets with President Putin in Helsinki in July. Bush, who is the leading candidate in a re-election bid, is facing strong opposition from within his own party. The merger, which is expected to create the second largest oil company in the world, has been widely criticized by environmentalists and unions. The new company, ExxonMobil, has been accused of engaging in unethical and illegal practices, including pollution and human rights abuses.

ExxonMobil has close ties to the US government and its policies. The company has donated millions of dollars to political campaigns and has close ties to key members of Congress. The company also has a strong presence in the oil industry, with substantial holdings in various countries. The company's decision to merge with Mobil was seen as a major victory for the US oil industry, which has been facing increased competition from foreign companies.

ExxonMobil has been accused of engaging in unethical and illegal practices, including pollution and human rights abuses. The company has been involved in a number of high-profile cases, including the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska and the ExxonMobil Bayou案例 in Louisiana. The company has been forced to pay millions of dollars in fines and settlements, and has been subject to ongoing investigations.

Despite these problems, ExxonMobil remains one of the most profitable companies in the world. The company's success is due in large part to its aggressive marketing strategies and its ability to control the world's oil supply. ExxonMobil is also a major player in the global climate change debate, and has been a vocal advocate for policies that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The company's position on climate change has been the focus of a number of controversies, and the company has been accused of using its influence to block progress on this critical issue.

The merger of Exxon and Mobil is a clear example of the power of the fossil fuel industry in the United States. The company's influence is not limited to the US, however. ExxonMobil is a global company with operations in more than 100 countries, and its policies have a significant impact on the world. As the company continues to grow, it will be important to monitor its activities closely and to hold it accountable for its actions.
Kevin Keating

T his is an open letter to parents. There is no doubt that the teachers’ strike is justified. On the issue of disputes, like the nurses’ strike in 1979, this has significance way beyond the 16,000 members of the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI) involved in the dispute.

While most trade union disputes are settled only an indirect bearing on other workers the teachers’ dispute was, and still is, of a political nature. It is in the matter of interest to every working person in the country. Why is this?

Just like nurses, teachers are fought within their own camp, science to the hearts of working class people, most of whom realised it was showing little improvement despite the Celtic Tiger. Properly paid and motivated teachers are clearly in the interests of all workers and teachers could count on this bedrock of sympathy from the start.

The teachers were explicitly against social partnership and the Fine Gael led government in order not to be bound by the new Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF).

This leadership role in rejecting partnership earned them the virulent opposition of the government which demonstrated the organised trade movement.

The government itself seemed to be breaking a law by not paying teachers for work they were not doing while they refused to carry out purely voluntary and unpaid supervisory duties.

In particular they incurred the wrath of the trade union leadership. ICTU opposition was a factor common to the nurses’ dispute, but the teachers’ strike went on for months. The government was bereft of any strategy to deal with the situation.

The opposition had control of the 39 strong national executive. The fact that they had been left in to press ahead with the strike is an unprecedented situation.

T heir strategy on exams was aimed at teachers taking responsibility for the disruption which would be an inevitable outcome of the dispute, however severe it is – it’s a fact, not one which flowed from more fundamental fault.

The government was able to point out that ASTI was alone among the teacher unions in taking action, ignoring the fact that, as we have said, the majority of teachers supported ASTI’s demands.

This is what lies behind the incredible fact that only a third of teachers supported the strike action. This is why the government was prepared to go to court to defeat it.

This happened because although ASTI reflected ordinary teachers concerns the TUI and INTO remained firmly under control of the union bureaucrats.

ASTI failed to go over the heads of these leaders to appeal to the rank and file. The rank and file in these unions was also unable to take the initiative and in fact trailed after manoeuvres of the leadership, the latter actively undermined the strike.

This could be seen in the unified leaders’ reluctance to benchmark, which became an ‘incomplete strike by the strike by encouraging the two other teachers unions to come ahead with their submissions to the benchmarking process.

When the leaders of the TUI put behind ASTI’s failure to go even in favour of bringing forward benchmarking this caused confusion even on the left. In fact both amounted to strike breaking in the midst of the ASTI action but this was not understood by many in the TUI and INTO.

This weakness followed the leaders to dissuade ASTI’s supporters including the left brought up to believe that industrial action is the answer to everything.

It is clear that the unions behind the right to strike have eroded public opinion.

His failure to fully appreciate the cause and effect of benchmarking came to the fore again last Monday when after the effort against it failed the left supported it being brought forward so they could get the money they wanted.

In the final analysis the failure of the strike resulted from a lack of political consciousness. This is what lies behind the fact that the government was prepared to go to court to defeat it.

Ireland

Kevin Keating

Kevin Keating
Crisis? What crisis? “Moderate” Trimble back with the bigots

John McAnulty

A few years after the so-called “Irish” nationalist optimism and the initial Boaliba promise for British policy in Ireland, the British and Irish governments finally accepted that the good Friday agreement is in crisis. Yet even now, when the agreement has failed to deliver the social justice and rights that nationalists in the Irish society so desperately crave, the Sinn Fein leadership is refusing to accept the indefinite future, crisis is probably too strong a word – indeed, it would be almost a compliment!

The difference between crisis and instability is quite simple. A crisis would require significant accommodation putting forward an alternative, and this is conspicuously absent from the current situation. The Sinn Fein stance is particularly suspect when one considers the information provided by the spokesperson for the people of the loyalist paramilitary organizations who indicate that their guns aren’t going to be laid down. It is not that the British government or the unionists are concerned about their security arms – and that they do not believe that the talks can or will be done at the meeting and want to appear as the hardliners to the opposition.

All the parties, with the exception of Sinn Fein, were up against the storm institutions and want them to continue, along with their gravy trains and the patronage that go with them. The British government is not spelt out that their sectarian privilege is secure in the new state and, such as their bigotry, they may still bring the argument from the dressing down. If they do, the institutions of the agreement may be rendered useless.

The threat to the agreement comes from the right. Sinn Fein selected for the agreement is total and no signs of accommodation were made from disaffected republicans or from the left. The threat from reaction has existed from the beginning. Any interpretation of history shows that the British have never been able to persuade their unionist brothers and sisters that they would remotely satisfy nationalists requirements.

In the end the British waited for the collapse of mass support and with the mountain of their erstwhile colleagues that would remotely satisfy nationalist requirements. They gave up in the face of a fierce nationalist reaction, and when those they wanted to cooperate with them, they told them to be removed. The agreement was signed in 1998 and it is clear that the British government is not only making a mockery of the agreement, but they are also making it much more difficult for the Irish government to deliver on its promises.

Anger at Ardoyne school back-door “compromise”

CHILDREN from a particular ethnic group are allowed access to school only by the back door. Where are we? Some fascist reducto in the Balquhain? An encroacher of the South Africa? No. We are in the British colony in the North of Ireland, the area supposedly democratic and governed by the Good Friday agreement.

In the run-up to the Twelfth celebrations in Ardoyne’s orange festival — Loyalists in Belfast’s Ardoyne area demonstrated against Catholic primary schools for the children attending school.

Children were forced to enter and leave the school by travelling across fields to the back door. The protests only ended when the school closed for the summer holidays.

Ethnic cleansing

Loyalist groups have been involved in a growing campaign of violence for some time. The introduction of the “compromise” cleansing of Catholics is intertwined with drug and turf wars amongst themselves.

Britain stepped in before the elections to force them to issue a statement saying that they were still at peace with Sinn Fein. It is only one purpose that Sinn Fein is to force a public surrender and said the disposal of arms by the republicans.

There is no longer any arms from the republican leadership. All they say is focused on what they will get for their sacrifices, the need to have back the agreement to the extent that there was and it assuredness that the arms question will not extend into endless demands from the unionists which of course it will.

The type of changes and compromises that is produced is a mess. The good Friday agreement is not possible, requiring so much however that the parties need the excuse of British imposition to make it work — much in the way that the original Good Friday agreement was imposed.

Leaks from the republicans indicate that the sticking point is not deconstruction on their side but unionist acceptance of a republican presence on police boards — something that was in the Patto report but then removed.

What irony! The British are to fight tooth and nail to allow the disarmed republicans to take responsibility for a sectarian police force over which they will have no control!

The scenes lie a real crisis. In the period since his resignation David Trimble has endangered the untried sectarian right of Orangemen to march wherever they please.

More irritatingly he “misleadingly” slandered a catholic youth, Ciaran Cummings, the victim of a sectarian killing, as a drug dealer. There was no mistake here. All the intelligence resources of the state were at Trimble’s fingertips. What he was doing was latching up with the array of bigots who quietly endorse the use of terror against the nationalist population.

This is the face of moderate unionism on which the Good Friday agreement is based. This is the sectarian hell-hole of Loyalism with Dublin as junior assistant, attempting to stabilise.

Out of office, Trimble it again boasting the Orange bigots

The battle in Ardoyne on the night of July 12 was immediately presented by the state forces as an attack by the Provo’s to return to conflict with the RUC. Nothing could be further from the truth. The humiliation of deconstructing local resistance to loyalist and RUC blockades of a local school in the previous fort night was proof enough of that.

The Provo account is accurate enough. They attempted to lead a peaceful protest and were attacked by the RUC, this attack then escalated into a full-scale riot.

Paralyzed

This is the typical of the normal sectarian behaviour by the RUC, who allowed an Orange protest in Derry on the 12th to parade the city for most of the day. They looked on helplessly as opposing UDA and UCV orange groups for the most part brawling in the area of the town of Belfast.

One of the central elements of the Patto report was that republicans still cling to the promise that the RUC will become 50% Catholic (in the sweet by and by). A recent recruitment drive, when things were going well and the RUC were free to define atrocities across around the world as “Catholic” give a figure of this approach.

Any sustained control would quickly erode even this shortfall and reduce the pressure that these uniformed gangsters would be reformed by the back door.

Resistance

On this occasion the RUC ran into very stiff resistance, led by local republicans, who were honest people who were afraid of the fight, but who were determined to make with their children over fields to the back door of the school.

What happens when supporters of the Good Friday agreement, supporters of the republican leadership, find that the bottom line is that they are still second class citizens in an occupied country?
Blair and Adams: decommissioning Republicanism

David Coen

Responsibility for the latest in a long string of betrayal in the "peace process" is once again laid at the door of the republican leadership. The reason for the ongoing crisis in the agreement itself. Refusing to accept an agreement between the Irish and the Unionists, the Republicans, it promises one thing to loyalists and another to republicans, that it will somehow reform the sectarian state but keep everything the same. It can't work nor will it unless something gives. The gives are expected from the Republicans. It is for this reason that "decommissioning" is the key test and it may not be for off. A chorus from Britain, the US and Dublin demands that the Republicans "put their weapons beyond use" - a polite way of asking them to hand them over.

Trouble's antics makes it harder for them to do so; it smacks too much of surrender. Handing over the weapons would be a public declaration that armed struggle has failed, but also that the struggle itself was pointless. If the Republicans believe that Republicans have in practice accepted partition and the 6 County State, this is what the Unionists believe the Republicans signed up to.

Socialist Outlook has long wel-
comed the ceasefire but opposed the election of Sinn Fein to power. The threat to republicans making peace with the UUP and the DUP represents the unionists. Sectarian divisions are set in stone, exactly the intention of the founders of the state. Alongside this is the growth of a whole new "early" which depends on British/EU "reconciliation" funds, some administered by the churches, and which has a vested interest in continuing divisions.

Nationalists who understood that the Stormont regime (nor the British) could not concede even the mildest of concessions in 30 years of struggle now find their leaders comfortable in the very statelet for decades opposed them and against which they waged a bitter war. But no alternative politics is available and even mild dis-
agreement is stamped on by the
ternationalism within the
the Republican Movement.

Neither is this a surprise. By par-
Ori the Government with
some of the most reactionary ele-
ments in the British state Sinn Fein
will be forced, if it wants to make
the Stormont Agreement work, to impose new reactionary policies on
to the base in the nationalist areas. It will also cut itself off from the
loyalist working class and instead of making an effort to win them
away from the reactionary politics of
unionism, it locks them on the
wrong side of the class divide. Not
surprisingly, seeing that all they are
being offered is a screwed up version of Fianna Failism in the South
and no prospect of an improvement in
their material conditions, loyalist
workers are prey to the sectarianism of the loyalist paramilitaries and their friends in the British security appara-
tus, both of whose politics and activities represent much more closely the true attitudes of the British side than the platitudes of Blair and co.

In the South, while Sinn Fein was an important component of the recent Anti Nerve Treaty vote, it is no more an obstacle to participat-
ing in a future coalition govern-
ment than the traditional Fianna Fail opposition to military alliances involving Britain. Describing
themselves as the all-Ireland party, Sinn Fein hopes to win enough seats in the next elections for the Dail either to hold the bal-
ance of power or to be invited to
join Fianna Fail in a coalition gov-
ernment. Here too decommission-
ing is a pre-condition for participa-
tion in government. After all, Fianna Fail itself repudiated armed struggle when it entered the Dail in 1932 and this meant de-facto accep-
tance of the settlement imposed by the British in 1921 under the threat of overwhelming force. It is worth remembering that the new Fianna Fail government launched a very harsh repression of republicans and communists who refused to give up the struggle.

Many on the left in Britain fondly believe that the "peace agreement" allows normal class politics to oper-
ate. But the class struggle is not
somewhat hidden under the battle between unionists and nationalists; that is at the core of the struggle.

Loyalists slip through the "peace" net

Ethnic cleansing, sectarian killing,
gangland battles in full orange regalia with ceremonial swords and pikes, drain votes from the meeting and statements that they no longer sup-
port the Good Friday Agreement.

All these add up to only one answer
- the loyalist paramilitaries are slowly but surely slipping off the politi-
cal process and back to what they do.

The reason is very simple. The loy-
alists are what they appear to be -
sectarian gangsters with no real politi-
cal base who prey on Protestant
workers as well as Catholic and have
no hope of building a political base.

The UDP leader, Johnny Adan, at a press conference last year, said that the UDP had no hope of building a political base.

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And that's why the UDP are on the outside of the peace process and back to what they do.

On the one side is the British rul-
ing class organised by the state; on the other is the nationalist working class. The battle between them is the class struggle.

Some suffer the illusion that the British state can have disastrous consequences for socialists because it disarms them against it. It is based on the reformist idea that the state is neutral and can be trans-
formed from the inside.

Whatever the outcome of the lat-
est crisis talks, one thing is certain: there will be further crises. And sooner or later republicans will have to confront the question: do they join Tony Blair in his attempts to restructure the British state. That is the real meaning of "decommissioning": very little to do with arms, all to do with politics. The omens are not good.

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port the Good Friday Agreement.

The UDP leader, Johnny Adan, at a press conference last year, said that the UDP had no hope of building a political base.

These are the real reasons why there is a crisis in the peace process. The UDP are at the heart of the problem. And the UDP are the loyalist opposition.

What it does mean is that those who accept the Good Friday agreement have to accept loyalist intimidation as part of the background and that working-class opposition will have as one of its tasks that of defence against state-sponsored thugs.
Milosevic trial rocks Balkans

Geoff Ryan

The assurance of Slobodan Milosevic in the dock in the Hague was greeted with amusement by many people throughout former Yugoslavia. They had never expected Milosevic to face trial for war crimes. They were not surprised that they were barred from the trial. Stung by the shock they expressed great joy at Milosevic being put on trial. Such sentiments among Milosevic’s victims are totally understandable. Nevertheless they were misjudged.

Socialist Outlook has not taken the view that Milosevic should never face the Hague tribunal, though we did not demand that he should do so.

We have consistently argued that the rebuffing of working class autonomy throughout former Yugoslavia demanded that any trial of Milosevic for crimes against humanity take place in Serbia.

However, as we wrote in 44 “if the Yugoslav government did freely decide to hand over Milosevic it would not have to be tackled by the Hague tribunal”, but by the courts of Serbia.

I also argued that “we utterly oppose any attempt by western powers to bully the Yugoslav government into handing over Milosevic.”

By no stretch of the imagination could the Serbian government be said to have freely decided to hand over Milosevic. The transfer was carried out by a government which had rapidly and involved highly irregular, possibly illegal, procedures and under threat of the consequences of not agreeing.

Moreover, the decision was taken after western pressure, in particular the United States, offers massive subsidies ($1 billion) in the form of aid, to the situation in the armed and Yugoslav governments.

Milosevic was not handed over, the Yugoslav government simply returned the man they had kept under control for a long time.

The decision of the Hague tribunal has also had serious consequences in Croatia. Social Democratic Party prime minister Ivica Racan argued (under protest) to the handover of two of the highest-ranking military figures, widely believed to be General Rahim Ademi, and retired General Ante Gotovina.

Four members of the Social Liberal Party, junior partners in government, resigned in protest. Racan himself faces a vote of confidence, probably on Sunday July 15.

The decision to cooperate with the Hague tribunal was not, as taken by the previous government of president Franjo Tudjman, (whose death possibly prevented him from being indicated as a war criminal alongside Milosevic). This has not stopped the nationalistic HDZ, the party founded by Tudjman, from opposing any attempts to indict Croatia.

The HDZ has been actively organising protests against the Racan government alongside veterans’ groups. Last December a massive rally was held in Split in protest against the arrest of another Croatian General.

Recently a riot took place in Split after the local football team Hajduk Split lost 2-0 to Dinamo Zagreb in a Croatian cup match. (The Zagreb team have now reverted to their traditional name after it was forcibly changed by Tudjman from the ‘too communist’ Dinamo to Croatia Zagreb).

The riot was not simply a reflection of traditional hostilities between football rivals. It had political elements. The Croatian government has been involved in the violent protests.

Attempts to comply with the demands of the Hague tribunal have had serious consequences in Croatia. Social Democratic Party prime minister Ivica Racan argued (under protest) to the handover of two of the highest-ranking military figures, widely believed to be General Rahim Ademi, and retired General Ante Gotovina. Four members of the Social Liberal Party, junior partners in government, resigned in protest. Racan himself faces a vote of confidence, probably on Sunday July 15.

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Racan claims he is hopeful of winning the vote of confidence but this is only a temporary reprieve. The current national euphoria surrounding Ivansic’s Wimbledon victory will not last.

The more Racan tries to comply with the Hague tribunal the less likely his government will survive. The most likely winners of new elections are the HDZ who have pledged to tear up the limited (and never implemented) concessions made by Tudjman.

The handing over of Milosevic has also done nothing to arrest the moves to civil war in Macedonia. Milosevic, in fact, was ready to play a major role in this when fighting started in Macedonia.

Although the latest ceasefire appears to be holding, for the moment, negotiations between the Macedonian government and leaders of the Albanian minority have made little progress.

The government has rejected Albanian demands for a separate, self-governing political entity with rights equal to Macedonians guaranteed in a rewritten constitution, claiming this would lead to a break-up of the country.

Like its Yugoslav and Croatian counter-parts, the Macedonian government also finds itself torn between wanting to satisfy western demands and its own survival.

When they agreed to allow the withdrawal of National Liberation Army forces in the parliament in Skopje was besieged by Macedonian forces. The army was much stronger militarily than the Albanian fighters against Albanian fighters.

In order to save himself, the president Boris Trajkovski then launched a massive military offensive against the NLA.

The result is increased pressure from the west for the NLA, a hardening of Macedonian nationalism and total lack of progress in peace talks.

Western governments have made some criticisms of Macedonian military actions these are totally hypocritical. Macedonian troops have not sent NATO and NATO states have made plain their opposition to any Albanian ascension.

Moreover, NATO has warned that sending troops to Macedonia only exacerbates the existing conflict.

The role of NATO troops will be to disarm the NLA but as the NLA are predominantly Albanian it is highly unlikely they will allow others to disarm them.

Since NATO states are unwilling to risk the lives of their citizens they are unlikely to allow the Macedonian army will have to do it for them. Far from reducing the risk of civil war NATO’s influence is actually likely to increase.

In this situation socialists should have no hesitation in supporting the right of the Albanian minority to secede.
ANALYN THORNTON was among the guest speakers invited to participate in this year's Marxism event, organised by the SWP. These are his impressions from the sessions he attended.

The major themes of the talks included the future of the Socialist Movement and the Scottish Socialist party and the anti-globalisation movement, and new left strategies.

This time speakers from other revolutionary organisations were invited to the event. While these were mainly from the Fourth International, in particular the LCR from France, it is a good step in the right direction.

On the theme of the future of the left there were a number of sessions which extended the current debate on both the Alliance and the SSP in the Scottish election situation. A strand of this was whether the Alliance in England and Scotland follow the line in Scotland and become a party rather than an alliance – which implies a looser and more informal structure.

The first such discussion was Socialists After the TUC meeting, with Liz Davies and John Rees. Liz Davies argued that there is no need to recreate the Alliance and run in elections, but that to ensure it is democratic – including the chance for allies to select their candidates and take decisions relating to standing in elections. She also argued that the Alliance did not need to become a party, but on the other hand it was as far as ways already a party.

John Rees stressed that it is necessary to consider the structural, to ensure the Alliance and run its structure, and should remain a party. What was needed, he argued, was a structure which could accommodate both revolutionary and those who prefer participatory democracy and in particular be accountable to those breaking from Labour to the left.

The ISG thinks that the Alliance should eventually develop into a party, and that the SSP are wrong to think that the case is made from those breaking from Labour. But we absolutely agree that revolutionaries need to have a strategy of orientation to this layer, which was far broader than the existing supporters of the Socialist Alliance.

The theme of renovating and rebuilding the left was taken on the European level on Saturday evening, with a session titled The Future of the Revolutionary Left, with Alain Krivine and Chris Harman.

A new debate on the topic of the left, with a contribution which, it has to be said, was overwhelmingly about the history of the revolutionary left rather than its future. It ran over the 20th century, touching on debates around questions of reform and revolution, and polarising against the great left of the 1930s, including what he presumes it as the line of the Fourth International at the time.

Only in his last few sentences did he touch on contemporary politics and then only in general terms and in the context of the need for a revolutionary party... i.e. the SSP.

Krivine on the other hand took up a more concrete discussion of the anti-capitalist left across Europe, putting it in the context of the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of some of the Western camps and the abolition of the neo-liberal agenda by European Social Democracy.

He argued that this has opened up wide space to the left of social democracy across Europe, which has put on the agenda, the new left, the new left of broad anti-capitalist parties in a number of European countries. The revolutionary left has a major responsibility to relate to this process and avoid it.

As examples, Krivine pointed to the Left Bloc in Portugal, Rifondazione Comunista in Italy, the United Left in Spain, the Red Green Alliance in Denmark, the ODPE in Turkey, and important developments in Greece, the Socialist Alliance in England and Wales and the SSP in Scotland.

He referred to the success of the LRC/LSU stalemate in France in the European elections, the strength of the far-left vote in the local elections, and the possibility that the far-left may well out-poll the Communist Party in the presidential contest next year.

He stressed that within these broader regroupments, which are taking place, we have to take up the issue of the unity of the revolutionary organisations themselves. The new links which are being forged, for example between the LCR and the SSP and the SSP and the ISG, are important in this process.

These themes were taken up in the discussion. A speaker from the SSP group in Canada said that new levels of unity were being forged in Canada around the anti-capitalist movement which includes for left currents which have simply been rivals in the past – the SSP grouping and people from the LCR for example.

He argued that this should be developed further and knew the old debates from the past, but the basis for unity today is on the politics of today, he said.

A speaker from the International Socialist Movement, the majority platform in the Socialist Alliance, argued that the struggle against the growth of the anti-capitalist movement that is producing a new left.

"We have to prove that the revolutionary socialist tradition is relevant to that movement - which is not automatic."

Another leading debate was introduced with a contribution which could only be seen as sharply at odds with Chris Harman. He discussed the LCR and the SSP are two organisations which have emerged from the downturn more or less intact. Now the very methods we used to survive during the downturn become obstacles when we are moving on to new levels of struggle.

"This is why this is a challenging time for us, because we have to shed all kinds of past habits which we have and we have to give up outdated dispositions."

"I agree completely with Alain that historically important argument of the interpretation of Stalinism was it would be ridiculous to say that this can be the reason for having separate revolutionaries organisations today.

"We need to move forward in a new era in which we no longer have to compete directly with the Stalinists as we did in the past and indeed we are in a period of regroupment – both with the SA and the SSP."

"We also need on an international scale to explore the extent to which we can work together. But it is also important to understand that as revolutionary organisations, the LCR and the SSP all of us, face a very real challenge, we are confronted with a new anti-capitalist movement that is producing a new left.

"We have to prove that the revolutionary socialist tradition is relevant to that movement - which is not automatic."

Chris Harman, however, made no concessions to this in his reply to the discussion. He returned to the old debates again.

He distanced what Krivine had said, accusing him of calling for the building of a series of electoral alliances across Europe, which he thought would be wrong. Of unity between the FI and the IST he stressed only the problems and the need for clarity to avoid splits and a return to "the Life of Brian."

It has to be said, however, that this was not the general tenor of Marxism 2001 on these issues. Overall the mood was one of far left unity and the stress was on the building of the Socialist Alliance in Britain.

John Rees in the session on Where Now for the Socialist Alliance could hardly have been more insistent on this, arguing that the building of the Alliance was of "strategic importance". He made it absolutely clear that there is no equivocation in the SWP's commitment to building the Alliance. These discussions were however placed in a straightforward way. The SWP argue that there was a downturn in the 1970s, and an up turn at the end of the 1990s.

In fact the level of strike struggle was trebled in the beginning and end of the period. Yet there were still high points since the general strike. There is also an over-estimation of the period of the 1980s, of the 20 years (crucially important as it is) in particular of the British because it was sent as more or less a return to the early 1970s.

In Britain we remain at historically low levels of strikes and the important recent rise in some industries and the extremely important development of the anti-capitalist movement, which is qualitative and ongoing development.

In Britain, however, development are still limited to some extent by the low level of strike struggles. The contrast with France, in particular the role of the CGT, is obvious where sharply rising levels of class struggle. The two have intersected with the anti-capitalist sentiment of the anti-globalisation movement and created big social movements like ATTAC.

These were reflected in the impressive session called Women Against Globalisation. It was an empowering and mobilising session but the analysis from the SWP, still at the top in their analysis – almost suggesting imminent revolutionary breakdown. Boris Kaganskyi projected the same sentiment. He often does, he was strong, however, and the whole group of Grassberger demonstrators (as were the other speakers) pointing to the violence of the state and saying that the state forces "put us in a position where it is impossible to be peaceful."

There was, however, virtually no mention of environmental issues in this discussion. This is a problem, given the role of environmental activists in the anti-globalisation movement and the fact that the neo-liberal agenda is seen as privatising and deregulating but also exacerbating issues of the environment. In fact the whole question of the environment was a low profile subject in Marxism 2001 as a whole with only one session out of the 200 and mobilising and workshops at the event specifically on the environment.

Thus of course reflects the weakness of the left as a whole and not just the SWP. It's given the economic problems now posed by global warming and environmental destruction, is it a question the whole of the left has to come to terms with.

Another omission was the whole question of the struggle against colonialism and the question of the single currency. There was not a single workshop on any aspect of the EU as such. This is also a problem given the significance of recent mobilisations at Nice and Gothenburg which were with the future shape and development of the single currency and the neo-liberal project in Europe.

Overall, however, Marxism 2001 was an impressive meeting of large numbers of socialist and activists, and it was an important contribution to the centrality of issues of building the Socialist Alliance, reshaping the left, and building the anti-capitalist movement.
Children, the family and the lynching-mob mentality

Jane Kelly

The popular response to the parole board's decision to release Richard Thompson and Jon Venables, who, as children killed James Bulger, has been nothing short of astonishing. The gutter press has encouraged a lynching-mob mentality in its readers.

They have ignored all evidence that these young men have accepted responsibility for the murder and feel remorse and sorrow for the event, that they have been thoroughly rehabilitated and are intelligent and well educated adults who could, in the best of worlds, reintegration into the community.

Rejecting the idea of rehabilitation the press has called for retribution, and delight in this young men's "evil", arguing that they should be "locked up and the key thrown away".

Unfortunately it was not just the gutter press which responded, this way, James Bulger's family and supporters have vowed to hunt these young men down and there is a widespread support for this.

In Scandinavia Thompson and Venables would have been charged with a much higher charge, The age of criminal responsibility is much higher than in Britain, and children of their age would not have been tried as they were in an adult court.

Instead, they would have been returned to their community with high levels of support, would have gone back to school and resumed as normal a life as possible.

The facts of their upbringing and background, which were only made public months after their convictions, revealed that Thompson and Venables as the children of parents with alcohol abuse and sibling violence an integral part of everyday life.

Ironically their incarceration in secure units, with their parents in frequent contact, has given them a feeling of belonging and better education than they could possibly have expected if none of this had happened. But none of these facts are allowed to undermine the call for retribution and punishment.

How is it that such a response is possible in Britain now, when twenty-five years ago it was so different? Why is it different in other countries? It is about children that raises such extreme irrational fears.

To answer these questions we need to look at the family in Britain today, its relation to the state and the place of children in it. In most parts of the world the bourgeois nuclear family is society's basic unit of organisation.

While in the 1970's in Britain and North America, feminists analysed the family as oppressive to all its members, especially to women and children, today these questions are far less discussed. There is little understanding of these ideas, despite the fact that, in Britain at least, the family is under much greater pressure than before.

Socialist feminists in the 1970's exposed what English million of millions with no country had also understood. The bourgeois family is the man is bourgeois and the woman the proletarian.

They pointed out that the form of the family under capitalism suited the bourgeoisie, ensuring the husband's inheritance to his class, but for the working class, then with nothing to pass on to future generations, it was a convenient form of cheap reproduction, daily and generationally, materially and ideologically, as well as a useful form of social control.

Today the nuclear family remains society's basic unit, but is increasingly in contradiction with people's material and emotional needs. At the very least, an idealised version of it, based on some variant that may have existed for some in the 1950s, remains the aspiration of most of us, an alternative available form.

Promoted by governments of both left and right, throughout the century, with Blair's brood a shining (if vulnerable) example, parents are expected to be responsible and reliable in reaching their innocent children to be model citizens and future workers.

In this scenario, children especially are the victims of moral panic. Throughout the twentieth century, 'teenagers' were seen as a dangerous and unruly group. Nowadays, younger children are the subject of similar moral panics.

Perhaps the deepest of the contradictions associated with the nuclear family is visited on the children. They are assumed at the same time to be innocent and empty vessels to be filled with correct behaviour and beliefs; and when this goes wrong the individual or family can only be described as inherently evil.

Despite the ideological pressure to marry, live in families and have children, many people know very well that far from being a safe, caring haven from the competition and vagaries of public life, the nuclear family is a violent and unscrupulous place, where we learn relationships that harm us for the rest of our lives.

These relations of dependence, of competition and rivalry are patterns that we have to spend the rest of our lives trying to unravel.

These changes are not driven by simple experience or individual desire for something better, but are linked to a transformation of the labour market and the working class.

In Britain today women make up about half the workforce, but with the growth of the flexible labour market, many men and women, as well as young people, who is poorly paid, non-unionised jobs, on short-term contracts and in bad conditions.

Workers in Britain also work the longest and most anti-social hours of any workforce in Europe. The Dooney Tract's report Shift Parents', published in September 2000, revealed 25% of the workforce working at some point between 6pm and 6am, as well as 15% at night.

61% of working families have parents away from home for the early mornings, evenings, nights and weekends.

So even when there are two adults in a family, with both parents working and fewer state provisions for creches, after-school clubs, etc, children are increasingly left to their own devices, unacquainted for care and having to fend for themselves.

Add to this the awful poverty that has resulted from the deindustrialisation of some inner city areas, schools worrying more about OFSTED reports than the education of deprived children, widespread drug use and the criminality associated with it, and it is no wonder that children are alienated and demoralised.

It is all of this which creates children who are capable of what Thompson and Venables did, or what was done to Damilola Taylor on the Pimlico Estate at the end of last year.

The failure of the state to appreciate or care about what is happening to our children in these situations is nothing short of a disaster. And the refusal to provide proper safety nets for such children, in the name of protecting as much of the welfare state and public sector provision as possible, is accompanied by an ideologically attack on the most vulnerable in society.

The behaviour of children is at once and the same time blamed on 'evil' children,'poor parenting', 'single mothers'— anything but the real culprits.

The lynching mob mentality of the gutter press and many people has been fuelled by government policy and statements.

Government seeks 'bogus' cuts off any humane and just support for people fleeing persecution. Calling those who have committed illegal and evil' and refuing the notion of rehabilitation like people like Myra Hindley rotting in prison her whole life. It is a big step then to seek retribution rather than justification for the child killers of James Bulger.

I study in the Dursnarn in Streatham, Dursnarn has been most of the votes. The interesting thing was that the Socialist Alliance got their best result in England (7.4%). The Socialists got three times more votes in our school than in our borough (Lambeth)!!

Leon

Alliance gains in Streatham class struggle!

I study in the Dursnarn in Streatham, Dursnarn has been the most outstanding secondary mixed school in South London by the Evening Standard and Olsted. On very same day of the elections (June 7th) almost all,1,000 pupils voted in simulated election.

the Labour Party won most of the votes. The interesting thing was that the Socialist Alliance got their best result in England (7.4%). The Socialists got three times more votes in our school than in our borough (Lambeth)!!

Leon

Creaming off PFI profits

The Big Lie underlying the government's propaganda around the PFI, PPP and工作作风 could be found in the following report in the Daily Mail on 16th August 2000.

The report states that the government is committed to "cutting out middle men" and "removing the turf of private companies from behind all schemes.

Siphoning captures the way in which these schemes are like driving your car on someone else's petrol. It lends itself ready to-on extraction, such as tax-payer's money (cream) being scored into bowels labelled NHS and Education whilst various cuts atop off their stores for the next thirty years.

There is no economic argument for these schemes but once you have the utilities and the mutu-
al's, the only "market" left in the mature economies of the west are the provision of Education and Health ser-

The beauty of these

McN

PS Rogue one of our colleagues is a good spirit, seems a little paranoid, on re-reading the words of the woman, the eggs come to mind.
Menwith Hill protestors say:

Star Wars starts wars!

George Bush is undoubtedly relieved that the missile test carried out in Vandenberg Air Force Base in California on July 14 was successful — particularly given the fact that the previous tests in the sequence were either failures, or in one case only a partial success.

Millions of people disagree with him — as it is clear that this programme is the biggest threat to nuclear disarmament faced for many years. Demonstrations highlighting opposition on this deadly question, as well as in support of the Kyoto treaty are following the President wherever he goes. It’s clear however that whether or not the test had “succeeded”, Bush is committed to pushing ahead with the Ballistic Missile Defence programme.

His proposed defence budget for 2002 provides $8.3 billion for missile defence research — an increase of almost 40% over this year’s allocation. Since the test, it has been made clear that further tests will continue, and plans are being laid for constructing a long term test site in deepest Alaska.

Meanwhile activists here in Britain have again highlighted the fact that American bases on British soil are crucial to the project. On July 3 and 4 groups of activists were able to enter Menwith Hill base in Yorkshire, which together with Fylingdales is essential to the Son of Star Wars project.

More than 100 Greenpeace supporters breached security at the base in 3 places, and the occupation which gave effective publicity to opponents of Bush’s military madness. Pictures of activists with banners stop radio masts and the huge water tower carried the message that “Star Wars starts Wars”. No sooner had the police finally managed to remove all the protestors but one almost twenty four hours later, than a second breach took place. Not a happy present for George W on American Independence Day.

Key to the protestors’ demand was the call that Tony Blair should say no to British involvement in the system. Greenpeace Executive Director Stephen Tindale explained that Bush needs the two British sites as the “eyes and ears” of the planned Star Wars system and added “We urge Mr Blair not to bow to Bush on such a crucial issue”.

However the Prime Minister has continued to block debate on this issue despite the fact that more than 100 MPs have signed an Early Day motion opposing the scheme. Replying to Chris Mullin following the Menwith Hill protests, Blair retorted “I don’t agree with him (Mullin) that the Americans are wrong to identify weapons of mass destruction as a genuine threat. “They are. And I believe we need to be prepared to look at all systems that are necessary... offensive and defensive systems.”

“I think it is important that we keep an open mind on it,” he added. Blair’s position, doggedly maintained since Bush’s election is that the US have not yet made any request to Britain, so there is currently nothing to discuss. Over the months ahead we need to build a broad and effective disarmament movement which can effectively demand that Blair answers our questions — not those of his mate George W.

Stop missile madness
CND national demonstration LONDON
October 13 Blockade PASLACE Trident base
October 22

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