Victory at last!
Don't let New
Labour waste it!

We've dumped the Tories ...
now let's dump their policies!

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on the March to Amsterdam

A Socialist Outlook pull-out on the Euro Marches 97
Bakers out for more bread

65 WORKERS at the Arnosuit Plitta Bread Bakery in Tottenham have voted to stop strike for better pay, improved working conditions and union membership. The workers rejected a 2% pay increase plus holiday and sick pay payments. The strike, which began yesterday, is the first strike at the factory for 10 years. The strike is planned to continue until Monday.

The walkout is being led by members of the Unite union and is supported by the National Union of Students. The workers are demanding a 3% pay increase and an end to zero-hour contracts.

Socialist Outlook

Southwark College message to Blair

"Education, Education, Education!" was the cry during the election. So striking NATFHE members from Southwark College called on Downing Street yesterday afternoon. After walking the streets of London for two days, they arrived at the College to be greeted by 700 pickets. The College management has refused to negotiate with the strikers, who are demanding a 3% pay increase and an end to zero-hour contracts.

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Step up campaign for Roisin

Terry Conway

ROISIN McLASY is entering her seventh month of imprisonment and is expected to give birth very shortly. She is wheelchair bound and still not receiving adequate medical treatment. A further bail hearing was due on May 6. Pressure must be increased on the German Government to drop the extradition warrant - and on new Prime Minister Blair to secure her immediate release!

Roisin and Bernadette McAuley

Fight on to reverse NACAB victimisation

UNION members at the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB) are still taking action to defend union activist Glenn Sutherland, sacked after 19 years under a "differentiated, unauthorised photocopying". Two highly successful days of action have already been held, on Monday and Wednesday, 23 April. On both days no member of the main MSF union group went in at the London offices, and half of the 14 offices around the country (where union membership is weaker) were closed for the day.

Appeal

Although Glenn lost his appeal on Tuesday 15 April, he certainly won the appeal to be heard. This appeal has been a major point of contention for workers in the union, with many feeling that the decision is unfair and that the appeal has been unprepared.

Stronger

Despite this, the second day's strike was stronger than the first. New members for the union are being identified in order to be able to participate in the second day's strike. The union group is now stronger than ever.

A special meeting of NACAB's Executive has been called for May 23 to discuss the case, a very rare event which has only happened once before at the College.

The cut at the College.

The strike graphically exposes the problems faced at Southwark College. On the one hand the question of accountability has to be considered. The decision to strike the workforce was taken by a handful of union leaders. They are intent on driving forward with the process of rationalisation of the college with a Labour council being a willing party to the imposition of redundancies.

Neither is this an isolated incident. In North London, Kingsway College workers are set to take action in the next few weeks in a similar dispute - and other Colleges across the country face the same stark choices, with governing bodies looking to the same solutions - job cuts and agency workers.

New Labour's promises of "Lifelong Learning" and "full time work for all" are now a distant memory.

Mixed signals for Telecom and postal workers

Pete Cooper

Tony Blair's victory creates a new context for BT and postal workers in more specific ways for the trade union movement as a whole. It is unclear what is in store. A statement by Stephen Byers that the Broadband Bill will be in line for at least partial privatisation was swiftly denied by BT's Head Office.

But Blair's further shift on the privatisation issue at the outset of the campaign at the very least puts a question mark over previous pledges.

BT is unlikely to be part of Gordon Brown's windfall tax, despite its continued massive monopoly profits. Motions at this year's CWU conference to support this exclusion should be thrown out.

BT management clearly favoured a Labour victory in the hope of a re-run of the "symmetry" rule which prevents BT from taxing the new Cable and Wireless cable company and Sky in offering home entertainment services.

This would make it lively for broadband cable network more profitable.

The CWU/Telco leadership which has termed the "deal" has placed much reliance on this outcome in the hope of more jobs, renewed membership and greater jobs. But CWU will mount a major challenge, including in the Courts to limit BT's freedom to destroy its smaller competitor. Much of any additional work will be carried out by exist union contractors. The care of under-contracting is already eating into BT's workforce after yet another recent retreat by the union leadership on their further encroachment.

The resolution on recruitment strategy of workers against contractors is high on the agenda.

A new factor is BT's merger with the US Telco TCI. Merger at the management level is already well under way.

The new organisation is already moving to reduce key times for union facility and BT is introducing "trading units" (external markets) which if fought by the out by national ac-

John Smith House, 150 Walworth Road, London SE1 1JT ENGLAND

There are many other artic-

ations and e-mails ad-

ress at

The above information should not be treated as a complete and accurate representation of all the content found in the image. The text has been truncated and some sections may have been omitted. The natural text may differ from the original document due to the nature of the truncation.
THOUSANDS of people staggered to bed in the not so early hours of this past Saturday. May 1 exhausted but elated. Many more woke on the following morning to the joyful news of Labour government and a Tory rout.

As long as the dark years of Tory rule that had savaged so many lives and property were at an end. The relief was visible in the faces of strangers smiling at each other in the street.

The Tories are left not only an English only party but essentially a party of the shires and suburbs. The knives were out long before the ballot boxes even opened and whether the Tory party can survive this scale of defeat remains an open question.

But no one can afford long to recover after the election campaign, the fight against Blair's Tory policies needs to start yesterday and we need to be doing something today.

CROWD

When Tony Blair addressed the union jack-waving, hand-picked crowd outside number 10, he was at pains to state "I know well what this country has voted for today. It is mandate for New Labour and I say to the people of this country: we ran for office as New Labour, we will carry on as New Labour."

Despite the certainty in his words the facts belie him. Polls -- which were totally accurate in predicting the results of the election itself -- also sold us voters views on politics.

Stry per cent of those voting Labour for the first time in 1997 vote for the redistribution of wealth and 85 per cent against any further privatisation. The figures were higher still for traditional Labour voters.

Millions voted Labour to end the Tory nightmare not to see it continue in a new guise. Despite his great pains to ensure the contrary most took little notice of Blair's plea: "Don't expect significant changes in their lot over the months to come."

Moves such as signing the social chapter and ending the ban on union at all G20 nations does hold the mood of hope for a while but Blair has no intention of using his massive mandate to bring the real improvements that Labour supporters want.

In Tory-free Scotland this election saw a swing to Labour against the SNP to destroy the architecture of the poll tax but the polls also showed that the SNP were promised more votes than Labour in the referendum on a Scottish parliament.

Despite the timidity of the plans constitutional reform in Scotland and Wales in particular the SNP will change the political map forever.

While the Liberal Democrats have massively increased their number of MPs, their share of the vote remains the same. Their improved showing was a result of better targeting on their behalf and more efficient tactical voting from a layer of the electorate.

There will be no pressure on Blair to co-operate with them to get his programme agreed -- but he may choose to do so to strengthen the political profile of the party and present it on a wider range of issues.

The vote for the Referendum Party seemed vaguely respectable -- until one unpicked them and realised that they only did that largely rely on Tories denouncing the sinking ship, but that with £20 million spent on the campaign this works out at £25 per vote!

Fascists lose out

The fascists by and large lost the vote but even won the vote for these candidates in lor cons and they may well increase their numbers in the House of Commons.

The so-called Pro-Life Alliance fared badly -- averaging 0.9 per cent where they stood - a testament to the campaign of the National Abortion Campaign not only during the election itself but in its years as a battle for a Woman's Right to Choose.

The media were quick to point out on May 2 that New Labour's leader could afford to expend any left hand rocks in the PLP without fear of legislation being compromised. They further argued that if the unions were strung along on the industrial front he would move quickly to completely sever the union link.

While these briefings may well have been issued from Milbush in the hope of intimidating those who might think of challenging the clique line, it may be too easy to silence dissent now the hated Tories are dead and buried. While the majority of the new intake are undoubtedly supporters of the leader some disidents did slip through the net, their numbers swollen by unexpectedly high turnouts.

The left in the PLP were wrong to keep their heads down not only during the election campaign itself but in the months that preceded it. No attempt by Blair to continue the monetarism of the Tories must remain unchallenged.

There are tactical decisions to be had as to whether the left should vote against the Queen's Speech in the early days of this new administration, when such actions might only be understood by very few. It might be better to wait until Brown's promised budget in July when proposals that directly impact on jobs and services are likely to be made. The left will need to analyse such developments as they occur in order to plan the best tactical response.

Conference fightback

With the majority of union conferences taking place over the next two months there will be a sharp test of the ability of activists to prepare the fightback.

It is ironic that Blair is straddling union influence just as the party created by the unions has won its biggest-ever victory.

The unions must oppose Blair's 'Party into Power' proposals - which threaten to gut trade union influence in the party -- as well as advancing the demands and interests of their members.

Most union leaderships will continue to keep their heads down -- they can't remember anything else. Despite this it is likely that expectations of many who voted Labour will spill over into action the leaderships are unable to control.

Candidates to the left of Labour were squeezed by the massive sentiment across the country to get rid of the Tories which has left that party high and dry.

Within this overall tendency the Socialist Labour Party fared generally a lot better than the PLP. It was seen by a small but significant layer of voters as a legitimate alternative to a post-Clause 4 Labour Party that made clear it would carry out policies very similar to that of the Tories.

There was a difference in the level of support their different candidates received that with the exception of Searle reflected their record in local campaigning.

Over the next months there will be countless opportunities at both formal and informal level to debate strategy and tactics. The left inside and outside the Labour Party desperately needs to engage in these discussions in as open and comradely a way as possible, at the same time as engaging in the day to day battles against Blair's Tory policies.

Dockers demonstration shows way forward

Susan Moore

TWENTY thousand people marched and danced through London April 12 on the March for Social Justice organised by the London support group for the Liverpool Dockers.

The event raised issues that were otherwise sidelined in the election campaign of the main parties. The march gave high profile to the campaign of the Liverpool dockers for reinstatement and the dockers, Women on the Waterfront and dockers support committee were prominent.

Other workers in dispute, including workers at Hargreaves in Hillingdon and important aerospace all of whom have been fighting for reinstatement for the last two years, demonstrating the strength and spirit of workers.

Fifty per cent of the demonstrated were made up of supporters of Red und Black, the other remaining the alliance they have been fighting for the last two years.

The march was well supported, the mood was electric and a sense of unity has begun to appear.

The decision of the police in attacking mainly RTS activists after many of them dispersed was entirely justified.

The Liverpool dockers and the London Dockers support committee have had enthusiastically that the march would mark the start of the European Marches in Britain since the issues raised by both are the same.

Glen Voris, Secretary of the British Marches Committee spoke about the marchers to the rally in Trafalgar Square -- Jeremy Corbyn MP also spoke in support of the marchers.

Euromarch supporters gave out thousands of leaflets to the demonstrators, many of whom were previously unaware of the Marches.

Euromarch T-shirts also sold well. In the week since the demonstration the Euromarch committee has received many enquiries from people wishing to march.

The London Euromarch committee and the London Dockers Support Committee have now merged to build the biggest possible mobilisation for the EuroMarches in Britain.

The event presaged precisely the kind of alliances that will need to be built and actions that will need to be organised in the months to come under Labour.

It also gave us confidence that such a task is achievable.
Scotland - A Tory Free Zone!

There is a mood of celebration in achieving this, even amongst people who distrust Labour - the defeat of Michael Forsyth was particularly welcome.

Compared with 1992, there was a 9 per cent drop in the Tory vote to 7 per cent (higher than at local elections), an 8 per cent rise in Labour to 47 per cent (down on recent polls), SNP up 1 per cent to 22 per cent and Lib Dems down 1 per cent to 12 per cent. The extent of tactical voting was not recorded from both SNP and Lib Dems taking more seats with much the same percentage as in 1992. In Labour-held seats the SNP and Lib Dem share of the vote fell.

The SNP strategy was to focus on UK issues and focus on the need for change at Westminster. This clearly worked – particularly in the last 2 weeks. In the early stages of the campaign Blair almost blew it by not concentrating on devolution and sovereignty which showed he didn’t understand the basis of the Claim of Right, nor took the detail of Labour’s proposals.

For a time this allowed the SNP to succeed in raising the ‘Scottish Question’, and to get seats in their vote to nearer 30 per cent. But it was not enough as they took seats from Labour. Labour returned after reaffirming their commitment to a referendum on a Scottish parliament. This time the people trust them to deliver.

The SNP are moderately pleased. They succeeded in proving that an independent Scotland could be at least as affluent as the present set-up (under capitalist policies and within the EU) and indeed proved that Scottish tax payers have been ‘subsidising’ Westminster.

This has changed the terrain of debate between devolution and independence – however, the implications of this have not yet had an impact on voting intentions.

Preferred

However, amongst under 25 year old independence is now the preferred option, and in a poll which showed voting intentions for this election in line with results, the same people indicated 38 per cent would vote SNP in elections for a Scottish parliament – as against 39 per cent for Labour.

The Scottish Socialist Alliance (SSA) in 16 seats gained 7,460 votes, 1.8 per cent. It saved one deposit, with Tommy Sheridan getting 3,359 votes and 1.1 per cent of the vote. It was in the belief that they might emerge from a squeeze in the last 2 weeks. Early rallies were well supported. However many places that the symbol vanished, particularly in areas where the SSA has traditionally been active (due to reorganisation most boundaries had changed).

Overall the SSA has gained credibility, several of its candidates have been returning to the solid Labour base, many new members have been gained, and in Glasgow one in 80 voters voted SSA.

Effectively this was the launch of the SSA leadership campaign as a political organisation. There will be few elections over the next 2 years, so to grow the SSA will require to become integral to the political and community life of the area as well as taking campaign initiatives.

Scargill’s disappointing electoral challenge

Phil Jones

ARTHUR Scargill, in Newport East, has registered a respectable, if disappointing, protest vote against New Labour’s candidate, ex-Tory detector Alan Brown.

With nearly two thousand votes cast by the total of the seats in Newport, Scargill standing for the Socialist Labour Party (SLP), saved his deposit. He still holds his seat by a slender margin, coming in behind the Tory and Lib Dem candidates.

Nevertheless, by standing against Heworth the Hun coalition highlighted for many in Newport Blair’s attempts to disaster Labour’s party from its working class base.

Labour supporters in this solid working class constituency were given a stark choice. Preferred by their own party with ex-recent esmomer of the government who had so mercilessly attacked their jobs and communities, many gave their support instead to the miners’ leader – a man who has consistently led the resistance against such attacks.

Ideology had set a drift too far for a layer of activists, whereas Scargill embodied a more familiar politics, rooted in working class self-organisation.

Dissension within Labour ranks in Newport was stirred up by the leadership’s blatant manoeuvring to secure Heworth a safe seat at the last moment.

While with ex-Tory MP Roy Hughes ‘persuaded’ to stand down. How he was selected from a shortlist with – significantly – excluded several strong local Labour candidates.

Party members taking part in the ballot were left in no doubt that they were expected to endorse the leadership’s choice, and must duly do so.

Leviathan were however disgusting by the effective imposition of a candidate unopposed by the rank and file.

On the other hand the Socialist Labour Party candidate, Arthur Scargill, is a well known figure on the trade union scene. The SLP candidates were amongst the audience at the SLP campaign launch.

The Hun leader was well received at the packed meeting, although public debate had been minimal. When Newport West MP endorsed Heworth, he was shouted down.

Scargill failed to build on this promising momentum however, dissipating his and his party’s energies instead of concentrating on his situation in Newport. The SLP stood candidates in four other South Wales constituencies, in none of which it had any significant local base.

In the special circumstances of Newport, with the combination of Scargill’s personal following and an opponent not seen by many as an ‘authentic’ Labour candidate the SLP could have made a significant impact.

Elsewhere in Wales however and throughout most of Britain the party has been premature in trying to advance a left alternative to the Labour government for which millions of workers have been fervently waiting.

Will Labour squeeze the unionists for an Irish deal?

John McNulty

Sinn Fein’s success at the polls in Northern Ireland has been matched by Labour’s victory in Britain, and it is clear that this is now a reality in the UK and that Sinn Fein will be part of the price.

The price of inclusion however is the abandonment of unconditional military and political support by the republican movement.

The goal of the process itself remains a ‘power sharing’ arrangement that aims to achieve a power sharing arrangement between the two communities. The power sharing arrangement, which aims to achieve a power sharing arrangement between the two communities.

The British and Unionist parties have agreed to work with Sinn Fein, and Sinn Fein are a key player in the negotiations.

The DUP, led by Revd Ian Paisley himself and his deputy Peter Robinson, while the Official Unionists won an extra seat – re-establishing themselves as the senior unionist partner.

Split strategy

British strategy since the beginning of the peace process has involved a willingness to split unionism and discard the extremists in order to do a deal with the moderates. The problem is that ‘moderation’ here means David Trimble – the hero of Drumcree, who has already led a revolt against the British in order to preserve the sectarian privilege of unionism.

But that is the most significant element of the election in the North of Ireland that has nothing to do with local figures. The local election of Labour administration in Britain is their most important factor.

The theory peddled by the SDLP and accepted by the republican leadership in the North of Ireland, that the vote for Sinn Fein has been a vote for an Irish deal, is that the election of a Labour government will therefore enable the real peace process to start. Of course this ignores the fact that Labour could go further in time have a democratic mandate to see the interests of the British ruling class a whole.

Not only did they not do this, they backed the Tories all the way and secured the election on a platform of support for the sectarian state and for the unionist veto against progress in Ireland.

Labour will however have a lot more to lose than the SDLP or the British. Sinn Fein is likely to eat their existence. Sinn Fein needs that base that unionism provides to maintain its occupation of Ireland.

That means that the terms of the settlement will be whatever David Trimble can be persuaded to accept. The only demoralised and neutered Sinn Fein could live which such a deal, so a tight British squeeze on republicanism will remain a feature of the coming period.

It will however be much easier under Labour than the Tories to campaign on issues of democratic rights. Labour will have less space to subordinate these issues to the negotiating process. The first test for Mo Mowlam will be the recent Tory law increasing the notice period of march marches to 21 days.

A moment’s reflection will make it clear that such a law will have no effect on the traditional sectarian marches that are organised a year in advance.

But they are a denial of free speech. In assembly rights those who oppose the sectarian marches. Will Labour take this position? No without a lot of rank and file within the Labour movement.
Eerie silence follows the election euphoria

Who’s afraid of the Big Bad Blair?

By Terry Smith

"NEVER MIND the majority – we will still be timid," is the message Tony Blair and his lieutenants are banging home to the Party’s newly-elected MPs as Parliament reconvenes.

Anyone naive enough to expect that the Party’s landslide victory might open the door to reforms rather more ambitious than the feeble pledges in Blair’s manifestos are in for a rude awakening.

Disregarding all the evidence from exit polls during the elections, Blair is adamant that he will remain a "New Labour" prime minister, and that his MPs will see the line – or face stern consequences.

But with a majority larger than the entire Parliamentary strength of the Tory Party, the excuse for imposing Tory-style policies is already wearing thin.

Labour is also lumbered with the consequences of Tony’s economic policies, which have not only left the cupboard bare in key public services – they’ve also left a massive gap – a "black hole" – in the Budget, leaving little if any scope for extra spending even in priority areas.

Among the first to point this out (and call for increased taxation on top earners to plug the gap) has been Ken Livingstone – who may be the only left winger confident enough to break ranks and speak openly out of line with New Labour orthodoxy.

The threat of expulsion from the Labour whip has been covertly raised to bludgeon wayward Labour MPs into submission, and some established MPs on the hard left are expecting swift retribution from Blair’s boys-boys.

Union chiefs

But how are we to explain the most impotence of the union leaders? It seems that they have voluntarily gagged themselves – perhaps agreed with Blair that unions are an electoral liability, and perhaps also in the hope of delaying Blair’s drive to sever the Party’s links with the unions.

With the slight exception of GMB leader John Edmonds’ speech to the Scottish TUC, the leaders of the trade unions which bankrolled Labour’s campaign have been obediently invisible for weeks, making Trampish monks seem chatty.

Now a few of them are drawing strength from the result on May 1, demanding their share of the credit and the spoils of victory. May Day speeches have been more confident.

Some bureaucrats may be temporarilily placated by the government’s decision to sign up for the European Social Charter – embarras by John Major’s Tory government – which offers to consider adding additional legal rights to British workers: but after swallowing 18 years of Tory attacks, others want to be seen to ask for much more in the way of reforms to benefit working people.

Lew Adams, leader of the rail union ASLEF has called on Blair’s government to set a timetable for renationalisation of the railways.

UNISON’s Rodney Bickerstattle has yet to emerge from the pre-election silence, but one of the union’s most prominent lay officers, London regional convener Geoff Martin, has added his voice to those calling for immediate action on a minimum wage, pensions and a National Health Service.

Rudely breaking the silence: Essex fire fighters continued their strikes against cuts by the Labour-run council in Colchester.

Edmonds: spoke out in Scotland

"The whole election campaign may have been targeted at a few thousand swing voters in the marginal seats, but it is the millions of ordinary working class people who were the backbone of Labour’s success, and it is the unions who are the voice of these people – so we have nothing to be ashamed or defensive about," he said.

"This is our government, and we will attempt to influence it,” he told BBC radio’s World at One. "The unions remain 50% of the vote in the Labour Party and we shouldn’t be shy about using it."

UNISON’s priorities are the public services and the pay of its members employed by them. "They have been ground into the dust over the last 18 years through privatisation and low pay. It has to be a priority to rebuild these public services and the morale and confidence of the workforce. I hope those on the Labour front bench won’t forget who put them in power."

In the debates and discussions before the election, Geoff Martin has also been among those most keenly advocating the idea of a new Labour Representation Committee to stand up for the demands and interests of the trade union movement as Blair’s team moves towards excluding the unions from decision-making and breaking their remaining links with the Party.

Representation

A similar line has been advanced by Tony Bebb. In an interview in March with the Welfare State Net- work’s paper Action for Health and Welfare, he said:

"The Labour-trade union link is central. ‘Fairness, not favours’ works both ways. It was a great struggle in the early Labour movement to get Labour representation.

"The trade unions will again have to set up political action committees to get Parliamentary representation."

"If the Labour leadership goes for state funding, trade unions will have a lot of spare cash to use."

"Seven million trade union people can campaign directly. For now they are all zipping their lips, but after the election I think things will be quite different."

"In 1980 we put forward the idea of refunding the Labour Representation Committee – out of which grew the Labour Party – and I think we should look at it again."

"I think we must refund the LRC within the party. It must be broad; it cannot be a conglomeration of left sects."

Benn’s proposals are likely to come back into the centre of events as trade union conferences during the summer recognise the need to keep the link with Labour while fighting for the interests and demands of union members against a government pledged to Tory policies.

"Post-Mayday Tension", with its false dawn of silence on the left of the labour movement will not persuade Blair to relent on his plans to gut the party of its working class roots, but nor should it fool socialists into believing that there will be no battles to come.

By the May Day Bank Holiday – just three days after the election – the Morning Star had already concluded that "Herman’s Honey-moon is Over", pointing to Labour’s plans to hold down benefits.

The possibility to unite wide layers of angry, but reinvigorated forces on the left in the fight for working class politics will become steadily stronger as Blair’s manifesto and Brown’s budget emerge in their full gory detail.

Let’s be ready for them.

Labour

Left to discuss the way forward

Neil Murray

THE CONFERENCE being organised by the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups on May 31 with the support of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs will give the Labour Left an early chance to discuss how to fight in the aftermath of the election victory.

A key focus will be to deepen the fight against ‘Labour into Power’, but there needs to be serious discussion on the strategy of the Left in the Party. Crucial to this will be the need for us to promote and link up with struggles which do break out against the Labour government, whether strikes or campaigns, such as in defence of the welfare state.

The MPs have to be challenged to do the same. If keeping quiet served a purpose, it was in order that they can use parliament as a tribune to rally opposition to Blair’s programme. This might mean, especially as Labour now has such a commanding majority, that they are seen as traitors of the Party.

However, they cannot allow this consideration to dominate what they do. Their first consideration has to be what furthers the struggles and interests of the working class and oppressed. If Blair moves against them, their best defence is if they are linked with trade unionists and Party members in building the Left.
Tories leave public sector cupboards bare

New Labour: new cutbacks?

Harry Sloan

IT TOOK the new Education and Employment Secretary, David Blunkett, just a few hours to confirm what many education campaigners could have told him months ago: there is a big hole (of at least £69 million) in the middle of the finances of further education.

We could also save time by tell- ing him that the schools' budget is around £260m short of the cash it needs. And that, in light of the new legal obligations placed on County Councils by the Tories - let alone the promises to move towards Labour's pledge of reducing class sizes or implement their promised literacy campaign.

Savage

Universities, too, are struggling to cope - a vicious squeeze in their budgets while student num bers increase. For a government pledged to "Education, Education, Education" (and not much else), the urgent need is to inject money, money, money.

But this is not the only area of front-line service that has been decimated by the Tory cuts machine. As Socialist Outlook has warned, increased government budget cuts, too, have been ruthlessly squeezed, with brutal cuts totalling £300m imposed on social services spending across the country, leaving support for frail elderly people, children at risk, people with men- tal illness and many other vulnera ble groups.

These cuts for 1997/98 are just beginning to make themselves felt as Labour takes over the reins of office. The government must either deliver more cash to meet drastic reductions in services or share the blame for the consequences.

Quaggers

While Labour'scollege-counsellors have been dodging through these cuts to avoid any hint of rocking the boat prior to the elec tion, the cutbacks looming in the NHS have been cynically concealed or delayed by the vast net work of Tory-appointed quaggers - health authorities and Trusts - which control the £43 billion health budget.

With very few exceptions - St George's Hospital in south Lon don and a few Trusts in the mid lands - Trusts boards consistently held back announcements of cuts and redundancies that would enable them to push patients in the run-up to the election.

This artificial calm could never have lasted the summer months at most; but following Lo buland's landslide victory we can confidently predict a flood of revelations of huge financial problems confronting health authori ties and Trusts. London's Redbridge & Waltham Forest

health authority was perhaps the first of the bunch when, after the votes were counted, it called an "emergency" meeting for May 7 to discuss its budget crisis.

With closures, more redundan cies, rationing of services and long delays in waiting list admissions are all likely to be announced in in creasing numbers as hundreds of thwarted Tory appointees who covered up the crisis until now pile pressure on Labour for extra cash to the NHS.

The threat of the NHS is likely to bring the greatest headaches for the Blair government, with the spending increases in the Tory spending limits will bring not only an autumn and winter of embarrassing, headline-grabbing scandals and trolley waits, but another two years of intensifying cri sis as the NHS budget is increased by more than 3% in real terms while demand increase - an unprec e dented squeeze on health spending never achieved by any government before.

Hospitals

The pressure will be greater in key areas: in London the above average spending on the NHS was closely linked to concerns at the threat to hospitals in the capital, with a surge general in the intake; in the catchment areas of two threatened hospitals: Edmonton and Oldchurch (Romford).

To make matters worse, Labour has embraced the failed Tory pol icy of attempting to raise private capital funding for NHS and other public sector projects through so-called Private Finance Initi atives (PFI). Not only has this brought all major hospital projects in the country to a grinding halt since 1993, but to proceed with it would add massively to the unit costs of struggling NHS Trusts.

With a massive popular mandate and a majority of 179, most people would think that the easy op tion for Blair's team would be to raise taxes on industry and top earners in order to rescue vital and popu lar public services rather than carry the can for the crisis they have in herited.

But as Gordon Brown "boldly" hands over control of key elements of the economy to the bankers, it is clear that only pressure from campa igners will ensure they are forced in this direction.

What will New Labour deliver on education?

by Keith Sinclair (Hull NUT delegate to 1997 conference, in a personal capacity)

Will New Labour deliver?

This question ran through every debate at this year's NUT conference like a holiday resort through a stick of rock. In debates about schools and teachers at the chalkface.

David Blunkett, Labour spokes person for Education, addressed the question in his remarks to con ference and made a defence of the cuts, saying that education was severely limited but has to be contrasted with the Conserva tive manifesto promise of a grammar school in every town. I wonder why the Tories didn't campaign on the slogan of "secondary moderns in every city."

The problem is largely what was missing from David Blunkett's speech, and indeed the Labour manifesto. There was no defence of the comprehensive system. Nor was there a mention of the need to abolish league tables or OPSTED inspections of schools.

OPSTED is a political hit squad which makes snap judgements on schools and teachers. It has wreaked havoc in schools and done nothing to improve education. Schools need new resources and welcome genuine advice. However, OPSTED inspectors are forbidden to help and advice.

The 600,000 cost of the OPSTED inspection of my school could have stocked the library, provided new computers or funded jobs in Special Educational Needs departments.

The key problems school face is funding. Even broadcasters promised that New Labour would make "a start to eliminate the £3 billion backlog of capital repairs". But Gordon Brown has stated several times that his government will keep to the public spending plans of the Tories.

It is impossible to make any real impact on repairing and replacing crumbling schools if the additional funding is not there. There has been hints that private sector money might be used. This will sim ply bring into education all the problems of the Private Finance Ini tiatives that have arisen in the health service.

Tory slump

Opinion polls in the run-up to the election showed that Tory sup port among teachers has slumped over the last eighteen years. The majority of teachers probably voted Labour on May 1, many for the first time.

Their expectations are high but the reality is that under the New Labour government, public sector trade unions will have to fight to defend our pay and conditions and to ensure that real improvements are made to the education service.

Events at the NUT conference reaffirmed the belief that the election results were vital for the future of education. The re-election of the Tories would have been a disaster, increasing selection in schools and escalating the attacks on schools and teachers. But the election of New Labour will only make a real difference in limited areas. It will not resolve most of the problems facing our schools.

The issues we fought on before May 1 are still there. Socialist students, parents and teachers need to step up the fight to defend free, comprehensive and fully funded education for all. Taking that battle into the Labour Party is one element of the fight. Building campaigns like fight against Cuts in Education (FACE) will keep up the pressure on the government. The election of New Labour is the start of a new stage in the fight for what is needed.
There they go, there they go, there they go!

18 CRUEL years of single-minded promotion of the interests of the wealthy few at the expense of the majority came to an end on May 1.

Almost two decades of cruel attacks on the basic rights of trade unions, on local democracy, on the state pension and on the bedrock rights and benefits of the welfare state have combined to stoke up massive social divisions.

Since 1979 Tory policies have increased the real income of the top-paid ten percent by a thumping 65%; but the same period has seen the real income of the bottom ten percent slashed by a staggering 13%.

The gap between rich and poor in Britain is now as great as that in Nigeria. One person in five living in Major's Britain lives in a poverty-stricken household. One British child in every three lives in poverty — a higher proportion than in any other European country.

This is no accident. Thatcher's government came to office in 1979 with a mission: to smash the strength of the workers' movement, grab the enormous profits to be made from the privatisation of nationalised utilities, drive up the rate of exploitation in the workplace, and line the pockets of their wealthy backers.

Within a year they had confirmed the steel workers' efforts in the first anti-union laws and commenced the sale of council houses at knock-down prices. By 1982, with her eyes already on the next election, Thatcher mounted the Falklands War, spending billions to reassert Britain's imperialist role.

In 1983 a bonanza Thatcher trumped over a miserable Labour campaign to notch up a 144-seat majority, and the following year privatised British Telecom and went for the big battle, provoking the year-long miners' strike and spending billions to defest the strongest section of the British working class.

Yuppies. Yuppies flourished on a diet of inflated property prices, privatisation and tax cuts. In 1986, after increasing interest rates, rising property prices, and the collapse of the stock market, more than 100,000 mortgage payments were lost. Yuppies were in for a massive financial shock.

The 1987 election took place in the midst of Nigel Lawson's "boom", with Neil Kinnock leading Labour to another miserable defeat.

Exploiting her 102-seat majority, Thatcher went on in 1988 to force through the Poll Tax, an act of magnanimity by abolishing the GLC.

The 1988 election brought the Conservative Party to power with a two-seat majority, and the government went on to implement even more radical policies.

Major's six years included the Gulf War, the Maastricht experiment with the Exchange Rate Mechanism, and the water-thin 21-seat election victory over a "professional" Kinnock campaign in 1992.

Since then the Tories, wracked by sleaze, scandal, BSE and bitter divisions over Europe, have resorted to the drags of privatisation (Pillar) while struggling to cut down public spending — with education cuts in particular antagonising millions of their "natural" supporters in the shire counties of "middle England". Only the massive £3 billion prison building programme has remained intact.

The more "radical" the policies put forward by the Tories have served further to alienate their support, notably the privatisation of pensions, increased selection in schools.

Their defeat leaves the party demoralised and divided — just what they have done to so much of the country. 18 vicious, miserable years have left scars that will take decades to heal.

The task now is to ensure Labour dumps the policies that have done the damage.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TORIES?

Alan Thornett

THE LABOUR landslide could hardly have been more devastating to a Tory Party which has been one of the most stable bourgeois parties in the western world, and most stable in Britain for the whole of this century.

They were reduced to a rump at Westminster, with no MPs in Scotland or Wales.

The reasons for the Tory debacle are clear enough. There has been a rejection of the Tory ethos of the 1980s and worse and corruption took its toll.

The central reason, however, was the civil war over Europe which has wrecked the party for several years. A big section of the party had written off the election of before it had started and were not prepared for a cease-fire even during the campaign.

Their problem has been that this has not just been a split in the Tory Party amongst people with different ideas — it has involved a fundamental split in the British ruling class between those who advocate clinging to its previous world role as a major imperialist power and those who recognise its role today as a middle ranking power within Europe.

Finance capital in particular wants to retain its global role through the City of London, while manufacturing capitalists are looking for access to the huge European market without the problems of fluctuating currency exchange rates.

The divisions cannot be solved by appeals for unity. It is an objective problem, insoluble within the Tory Party, which has been a coalition of both wings.

The Tories are by any objective analysis two parties, and following the kind of defeat they have just suffered they would under other circumstances split into two parties with competing political lines.

They may well do this — either before, or more likely after the leadership contest, with the followers of the defeated candidates leaving to establish something new.

The problem for those who would split is that past the post electoral system means that one Tory Party would have to smash up the other in the process — if either of them was to stand any chance of getting elected.

For the moment there will be a leadership contest which will follow pro and anti-Europe lines with the Eurosceptic right likely to win.

Whatever wins, however, whatever the consequences, the European issue will not go away and nor will it destroy the abilities that the polls.

It will take the Tory Party a long time.
Tories ‘wound back’ figures to hide growing tax gap

Labour’s trusting leaders buy a clapped-out economy

Andy Kilmister

THE LABOUR leadership may be satisfied with the Tories’ massive political defeat on May 1. But the underlying economic problems of British capitalism, which in large measures led to that defeat, remain as acute as ever. Labour in office is no more likely to resolve them than the Tories.

The issues confronting Blair and Brown cover both immediate problems and long run questions. In the short term inflation finally appears to be beginning to rise sharply, largely as a result of the mini-boom engineered by the Tories for electoral purposes.

The financial markets know this and are expecting interest rates to rise quickly. This has meant that speculative money has poured into the British currency markets this year driving the value of the pound up. Interestingly, exactly the same is happening to the dollar.

Caught either way

This means that the government is caught either way – if they raise rates they risk killing off what is still a weak and patchy recovery, if they don’t British exports will be harmed by the high value of the pound.

Looking a bit further into the future the central issue is the public sector deficit and the spending criteria. Kenneth Clarke has claimed that Britain will meet these targets easily.

Tory figures show the deficit at about the target level of 3 per cent of GDP this year, and falling to around 1.4 per cent next year. But this is highly misleading. The Tory plans are based on optimistic assumptions about growth, about tax receipts (especially cutting down on corporate tax avoidance) and on savage public expenditure cuts in the next few years.

To take just one example, while NHS spending has been rising at the (still inadequate) rate of 3 per cent in the last two years, Clarke’s budget projects annual rises of only 0.3 per cent in the next two annual rounds.

Most economists are generally agreed that to have a budget deficit of around £25 billion four years after the low point of a recession indicates serious long-run problems. At the corresponding point of the business cycle in the late 1980s the Tories actually managed to run a budget surplus.

The National Institute of Economic and Social Research has called for cutting £15 to £20 billion off the deficit. This would either mean a much more determined assault on low company taxation (not just cutting down on avoidance but raising taxes) and on the privileges of the rich than Blair is prepared to contemplate.

It is much more likely that Blair will sanction deep cuts in public expenditure and welfare benefits. Recent reports that Labour will limit rises in social security benefit as part of the programme in force claim that back to work are just the start of this process. So is the change of policy on approving further privatizations.

Single currency

If the single currency goes ahead at the end of this year, there will be tremendous pressure from British capitalists on Blair for such cuts, in order to enable Britain to join the currency in the second wave in three years time.

However, the problems of public borrowing and exchange rates simply reflect the deeper structural problems in the economy. The ‘recovery’ created by the Tories rested on two main pillars, both of which are now politically weaker.

The combination of slower growth in Asia and America with continuing recession in Europe is likely to mean that Britain can depend less on world developments for economic growth in the coming period.

The second basis of the Tory economic project was a relatively high rate of productivity growth in manufacturing over the last five years, and more generally since 1979. It is much more likely that Blair will sanction deep cuts in public expenditure and welfare benefits. Recent reports that Labour will limit rises in social security benefit as part of the programme in force claim that back to work are just the start of this process. So is the change of policy on approving further privatizations.

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We are marching together from all the countries of Europe unemployed, in struggle for secure jobs, retired, immigrants and homeless.

We will march on Amsterdam where representatives of the European governments are meeting at another Intergovernmental Conference in June 1997.

We are marching because, although our solutions may differ, we all strongly oppose unemployment, job insecurity and social exclusion.

We are marching to show our anger.

According to official statistics, more than 20 million people are unemployed in Europe, 5 million are living in poverty, and 5 million are homeless – anyone one of us could slide into this situation.

In workplaces throughout Europe millions of workers are forced to accept insecure jobs.

Within our male-dominated society, women have been particularly targeted, suffering from lower wages, dead-end jobs, and the imposition of part-time work. Women are also the first victims of cuts in welfare provision as both workers and users.

In Europe, immigrants are treated as criminals and exploited by unscrupulous employers. Repressive laws force them to leave illegally, working in unacceptable sweatshops and conditions and ending up in streets and cities.

The demands of employers, without regard to the needs of workers, while thousands of unoccupied buildings lie empty in Europe's towns and cities.

Young people are without a decent income. Unable to support themselves, they are left to survive as best they can or forced to accept the worst conditions. Many are pushed into “training schemes” without the chance of a job. Insecurity in all sectors of the population is growing.

The peoples of Europe are frightened of the future, unable to plan their own destiny, paying more for a small safety net.

This social climate promotes individualism, nationalism, and racism. Workers in different countries are forced to compete with each other. Public services are being attacked throughout Europe. Education, health, housing, social security, transport. The arts and energy are sold off to the market while trying to serve the community.

At the dawn of the 21st Century the free market is driving a wedge between the peoples of Europe, pitting nation against nation, people against people.

We march together because we are against the way Europe has been built. We are opposed to a society in which the poor get poorer and the rich still richer. Governments are hiding behind the constraints of the Maastricht convergence criteria which are affecting both the unemployed and employed workers throughout Europe, forcing them to accept lower wages and lower benefits and removing their rights in the name of “progress”.

Together across Europe we are marching because we want something different:

- A Europe built on solidarity from the ground up which welcome others.
- A Europe of real citizens, real freedoms and equality.
- A democratic Europe which will not accept massive unemployment.
- A Europe for the people, where the people and not big business make policy.
- A Europe open to the world with equal relations with the east and south.

We demand all forms of exclusion be outlawed.

We demand a radical European solution to unemployment, and we know there will be no changes without a massive mobilisation of all those directly and indirectly affected by unemployment.

We are actively campaigning for a massive reduction in the working week, without loss of pay and supporting the ongoing struggle for women’s rights.

Act together

The marches gives us the opportunity for us all to act together and demonstrate, breaking down the barriers between us, persuading those we are working with to cry out that enough is enough!

Against unemployment, job insecurity and social exclusion, throughout Europe and world wide, we demand:

- An end to forced redundancies, cut backs and downsizing made in the drive for greater profit in growing unemployment.
- That everyone have the right to a job of their choice with a decent living wage.
- Against all attempts to force the unemployed into low paid dead end jobs and against forced part time work and fixed term contracts.
- For a decent minimum income for all the unemployed including youth.
- For a massive reduction in the working week without loss of pay.
- A massive creation of socially useful and ecologically safe jobs.
- An end to free market policies and an end to the ceaseless drive against public services.
- Equality for disabled people.
- Decent health provision for all.
- The right to education.
- Decent benefits for all who need them.
- Investment in the infrastructure of public services.

The time has come to take our future into our own hands. Join us in Amsterdam on June 14th!
Single currency: not at our expense!

Campaigning against Fortress Europe

Simon Deville
LAST Christmas, one week before the start of the European Year Against Racism, 280 migrants were murdered off the coast of Greece. They were forced to depart on a small boat that had smuggled them through the barriers of Fortress Europe, a boat designed to carry no more than 100 people. The captain then rammed their boat and sank it. People are forced to take desperate measures to escape repression and poverty that is imposed upon the under-developed world by western capitalism. This incident was exceptional only in the number of people involved in a single incident. A week later 16 migrants were found dead in a lorry outside Pamolda with no shoes or winter clothing in temperatures below minus 20 degrees. The driver had deserted the lorry and several of the migrants had had limbs amputated. Every year hundreds of migrants die trying to flee by sea or land to live within Fortress Europe. Their lives are seen as worthless not just by the black migrants who profit from their plight, but by European governments themselves. The EU governments sponsoring the European Year Against Racism have, for a number of years, been discussing how to manage the co-ordinated policies to keep migrants off the boats and asylum seekers out of the EU and to police the minority communities that already exist. In Britain, mass immigration was effectively ended by successive rounds of racist legislation from both Tory and Labour governments between the mid 1960s and early 1970s. Under the Tories, racist ideology and legislation has focused on two areas, refugees and asylum seekers on the one hand and black communities on the other. More recently Labour governments have further restricted the right to asylum, the right to benefits, legal aid and the basic rights granted to UK citizens. At the same time the paralysing style policing that was tested out in the north of Ireland, in the inner-city riots of 1980-81, and during the 1984-85 miners’ strike, have become commonplace in depopulated working class communities, against black people in particular. The type of policing goes in hand in hand with a whole range of racist policies from exclusion in schools to the courts and the prison system. Such policies are not limited to little England Tories and are simply too obvious to mention. But the financial burden placed on local government is likely to provide an increased pressure to restore benefits from within the party. The Schengen agreement and various subsequent EU agreements aim to tighten up immigration law across the European Union, taking the most draconian aspects of each member state’s legislation to form a unified policy. Similarly, an imperialist policy based on the economic inviolability of each member state is emerging. For example Germany will demand the greater repression of Turkish migrants throughout the EU, as will France of Arab migrants or Britain of Irish Repatriate. Labour’s landslide election will open up some opportunities for positive change in some areas at least if we can keep up pressure through mass campaigning and trade union support. In their policy statement on asylum, Labour’s stated aim is to bring legislation in line with international agreements such as the 1951 convention on refugees, which would mark a significant step forward. Labour policy on the benefit cuts to asylum seekers is that it would ‘review’ them, though the financial burden placed on local government is likely to provide an increased pressure to restore benefits from within the party. Whenver Labour frontbenchers have been forced into discussing asylum and immigration, however, they have always stated that Labour would not bring ‘illegal immigration’ and stressed their policy of ‘fast-track’ appeals procedure. Labour’s policy document claims that not enough asylum seekers who have their appeals turned down currently leave the country. Presumably new Labour aims to deport more people than the Tories. On the issue of policing it is difficult to see any difference between the views of Jack Straw and the Tory right, which is likely to be a much more difficult issue to tackle. To go on much beyond tinkering with relatively minor aspects of a system that is racist through and through requires a challenge based on militant anti-racist and anti-imperialist struggles throughout Europe and beyond. Various member states have tried to justify the tightening up of racist legislation on the basis that if they didn’t go along with the rest of the EU their particular country would be overthrown with a ‘tide of immigrants’. Involving the challenge to racist legislation in one EU country will necessitate a struggle against racist legislation throughout the continent. The Euromarch Campaign aims to develop an alternative vision of Europe that challenges all forms of racism throughout the EU, with participate action in campaign meetings, demonstrations and events. A number of days of the marches in the United Kingdom have been racist-themed, explaining the effects of racist legislation across Europe and trying to strengthen the fight against this. Many issues surrounding agreements on immigration are held in secret, and documents relating to them have been called ‘non-papers’. In February this year one such secret meeting of EU ministers in Noodewijk was discovered by the Dutch Coalition for a Different Europe and a direct action group Counter Control. 50 activists, dressed up as famous squad members, were due to surround the conference, with binoculars, bearhugs and long-distance microphones. Though the non-papers aren’t sustainable evidence, the group in the European Parliament has obtained copies of some and put them on their website. Though there are no concrete proposals within the paper, it is clear that signatories of the Schengen agreement are considering it for to be adopted as EU policy, that there are proposals that refugees are not accepted from other EU states, and that ‘Third Country Nationals’ are given the right to emigrate to EU countries will not be allowed the same freedom of movement throughout the EU that it is currently available. UNITED, the largest anti-racist network in Europe, called a day of action in Amsterdam on 12 and 13 June, prior to the Inter-Governmental Conference. This must be used as a starting block for anti-racists to build the kind of alliance that could overwhelm the forthcoming struggles against Fortress Europe - from inside and out.

Euro would slam door on women

Gill Lee
The Equal Opportunities Commission has recognised that women are a "double whammy as a result of the Single European Currency" and European Union, The Women and Europe. Lack of growth in the service sector and its rationalisation will be the principle structural shock of European integration, the EOC said. "Women will pay for convergence through attacks on them as workers and through a cut in the social welfare state," it said. Women will pay for convergence through attacks on them as workers and through a cut in the social welfare state," it said. The Women and Europe. Lack of growth in the service sector and its rationalisation will be the principle structural shock of European integration, the EOC said. "Women will pay for convergence through attacks on them as workers and through a cut in the social welfare state," it said. The Women and Europe. Lack of growth in the service sector and its rationalisation will be the principle structural shock of European integration, the EOC said. "Women will pay for convergence through attacks on them as workers and through a cut in the social welfare state," it said. The Women and Europe. Lack of growth in the service sector and its rationalisation will be the principle structural shock of European integration, the EOC said. "Women will pay for convergence through attacks on them as workers and through a cut in the social welfare state," it said. The Women and Europe. Lack of growth in the service sector and its rationalisation will be the principle structural shock of European integration, the EOC said. "Women will pay for convergence through attacks on them as workers and through a cut in the social welfare state," it said. The Women and Europe. Lack of growth in the service sector and its rationalisation will be the principle structural shock of European integration, the EOC said. "Women will pay for convergence through attacks on them as workers and through a cut in the social welfare state," it said.
Build on gains of Euromarch

Terry Conway from Socialist Outlook talked to Christophe Aguton from the European Secretariat of the Euromarches on May 4 when he come to London to speak at the London May Day festival.

5Q: What have been the most important gains of the campaign so far?
CA: This is not the first European-wide mobilisation because we have the action in Belgium, France, Spain and Italy around Renault-Vilvorde but it signifies the year 1997 in which we are beginning to see the construction of pan-European social movements that are really new in Europe.

We did have the tradition of mobilisations across by farmers because half the budget of the European Union was for the Common Agricultural Policy but at the level of the working class there was nothing.

We had the first experience of a European strike with a one day strike on rail three or four years ago and last year there was the first strike in Telecomunion.

The actions around the closure of Renault-Vilvorde were critical because it showed a change of mood in some of the key countries of Europe - in Belgium, France, Italy and Spain.

It is in that context that our campaign and our march exists. It is the first mobilisation in all the European countries - even Luxemburg had a national committee to build the marches. We have people mobilising in Switzerland, Germany, even little things happening in Ireland. These mobilisations are also attractive to those groups such as in Morocco, Egypt, South Korea, Brazil and Mexico for example.

5Q: The campaign in France had a head start over most other places because you were able to build on previous campaigns by Agir Chomage (AC) - one of the organisations fighting unemployment which previously had very successful marches. Has this campaign been able to go beyond those previous successes?
CA: Yes, definitely. Through this campaign we will have organised more than 150 marches in more than 150 towns across France with the support of lots of unions and unemployed groups.

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All the organizations of the unemployed are involved in this action together with groups such as the DABH, the movement for homeless people and many others.

At the same time it is important to recognize that while these movements are very important in French social and political life what we can was involved in it with no controversy.

All the same time in Grenoble the women's group is there putting together a white book with women's specific issues and calling on other women across Europe to become involved in this project. 5Q: How has the development of the struggle for the right of immigrants in France affected the march?
CA: The development of the "sans papiers" movement over the last year has been very important. It started with an African leadership and now other groups are coming forward reflecting the diversity of immigration to France.

This movement is linked to the marches because there is a reciprocal solidarity. During the san papiers struggle many from the unemployed movements were involved. We have discussions planned to discuss how the "sans papiers" will support us.

5Q: What do you think should happen after the mass demonstration in Amsterdam?
CA: There are two important interrelated tasks. Firstly we need to strengthen the existing networks for example the European Network of the Unemployed which is the only European organization of the unemployed that exists.

It is also necessary to open the European TUC to other forces. Some unions such as the CGT and SUJ in France are not part of the ETUC and this must change. We must try to build all the existing networks.

At the same time we need to build coordination between activities involved in the different networks - the official structures are not sufficient for what we need to do. These organizations are not the only voice we need.

We think the Euro-march campaign can give a complementary voice and complementary actions between the different social movements to the official structures. We can build a very broad network.

Robbed pensioners look for Labour action

Jane Brown

PENSIONERS' income has been slashed under the Tories, and already the Labour Party's backroom boys have brought about damaging re-treats on this issue from the unions.

The Public Service Pensioners' Conference has collected its previous diathesis of demanding that pensions be linked to the better of earnings and prices (a measure challenged and successfully rejected at recent WFTU Conference), arguing that it is 'unfair that a political party would commit themselves to retaining the link. Fortunately many pensioners' organizations reject that approach too.

The effective against pensions is another facet of the attack on the welfare state required to make the choice criteria for the single European currency.

It is an attack aimed at one of the most vulnerable sections of the working class which cannot threaten to withdraw its labour in support of its demand for dignity, but which is increasingly willing to organise to publicise its demands, as shown through the massive pensioners lobby of last year's Labour Party Conference for example.

As it attacks on pension levels themselves were not enough the services older citizens rely on have been slashed in the last eighteen years. Pensioners have been at the sharp end of many of the attacks on the welfare state, since they disproportionately rely on the services. Social security benefits, public transport and public services.

The imposition of VAT on fuel disproportionately hit older people, who spend a higher percentage of their income on heating. The much publicised £79 million shortfall in Kent County Council's funding last year was to be partly met by closing 10 old people's homes. The cuts in Glasgow City Council's budget meant cuts in home helps, warden support in sheltered housing, and meals on wheels services.

Thousands of old people's benefits have been taken under the Tories, resulting in worsening conditions for those who work in them and for the people who live there.

Daily benefits are now means-tested, and frequently older people will not apply for them or cannot figure their way through the bureaucratic layers to get to them. These indirect attacks on pensioners have been matched by attacks on the pension itself. One of the most damaging attacks of the Thatcher government in 1979 was to sever the link between national insurance and average wages. Single pensioners would be around £23 a week better off today and couple £32 if they had not been robbed in this way.

The British government's reversion to full equality was to be the basis for an attack on this basic and vital right.

Pensioners have already paid for their right to security in old age through years and years of National Insurance contributions - they must not be stolen from them.

The Secretary of the Public Services Pensioners' Council assured it that the Council 'would not be taken seriously' if it continued in the run up to a General Election with the call to link pensions to the better of earnings or prices.

Pensioners will not take seriously a trade union movement which does not fight for retirees.

Under the Tories the whole existence of the state pension was being increased ineligibly under threat, it is vital to ensure that Labour understands that neither pensioners nor the trade unions movement will stand for an attack on this basic and vital right.

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Pensioners will not take seriously a trade union movement which does not fight for retirees. Nor will they take seriously any government which says it cannot fund pensions while refusing to tax more highly those earning over £100,000 per year and continuing to pay billions for Trident missiles.

The Tory government looked after its people; the bosses, bankers and arms traders. The Labour Party - with its mass majority - must be forced to look after all of ours.
EUROMARCHES launched
Six marches head for Amsterdam

FROM SOME of the farthest reaches of Europe: Morocco, Spain, France, Bosnia and Finland, the marches are on the road.

Over recent months workers in many European countries have demonstrated and taken strike action against the threat the convergence criteria is posing to their jobs, living standards and working conditions. Miners and steel workers in Germany, Renault workers in Belgium and France and many others have joined battles against the effects of Maasstricht.

The struggle of black people deprived of their rights by South Africa and other racist restrictions as Fortress Europe is strengthened by a series of campaigns like that of the ‘sans papiers’ in France and the hunger strike at Roehmer prison in England.

Countless other struggles against social exclusion are in progress against homelessness in France, against the Job Seekers Allowance in Britain for example.

The marches set off over the weekend of 12 and 13 April and will arrive in Amsterdam for the International Chequepoint!

Throughout the country including a rally at the E.N.I. chemical factory in Crete in the south with hundreds of workers present organised by the unions to mark the start of marches from other places.

Greece
Although full march is not possible from Greece the project has big support and large delegations will be joining the march to Amsterdam. The campaign was started with a meeting of 300 people addressed by the Vice President of the CGT (the Greek trade union federation). Buses and an aircraft have been booked to get the largest number to Amsterdam.

Ireland
The Irish march is due to set off in June. An official launch rally for the march took place in front of the European Commission Officials in Dublin on April 14. The rally was well covered by the media with interviews with INOU officials and with Christophe Agutiu for the European Coordination.

Paris
On Sunday April 13, 400 unemployed activists occupied the Palace of Versailles to mark the start of the marches. They took over the King’s rooms, and symbolically spoke from the King’s balcony, presenting new measures being taken against the unemployed in France. This was the balcony where on August 4 1870 the abolition of privileges was declared.

Frankfurt-on-the-Oder
May 1 Departure of the 1st German March.

The official departure was from the Polish side, where 30 Solidarnosc militants gave the marchers a good send off across the Oder Bridge. The day was organized by the DB (the large confederation of German unions). Later on some Polish people will join the march.

Barcelona
March from Almeria
When the march arrived in Barcelona there was a lot happening. A strike on the underground had started which was planned to last until April 30.

A demonstration was organised by women and youth against terrorism, wars and an aircraft which have become the most glaring symbol of job insecurity. There was a hunger strike by immigrant workers demanding “permits for everyone” in the Saint Louis Gnandina church. A demonstration of 2,500 was organised by the marchers in a show of unity between the different groups taking action.

Toulouse
May 1: A joint trade union march with over 1200 people, supported by 200 militants of the European March. A picnic for the Euro

March from Tangiers
Thursday May 1, Bayonne: a joint trade union march with over 1000 people. The European March banner led the cortège. Afterwards, there were speeches in the three regional languages, Basque, Spanish and French. In the afternoon, there was a debate on the problems of unemployment which was held on the local union’s premises.

Pyrenees
April 29 at the Somport Pass in the Pyrenees, 12 Spanish marchers decided to stay on the march into France with the French marchers. The marchers met local small farmers who were fighting against the construction of a motorway.

50 marchers on the Bordeaux-Oloron part of the march rode along on bicycles. Later in the afternoon, the marchers occupied the local job centre in Oloron and mounted a campaign for free transport for the jobless by using public transport, in a large group, without pay.

In Hendaye, the march converged with the other leg of the Spanish march.

International Chequepoint
Socialist Outlook has promoted the campaign for the Euromarch since the autumn of last year.

Together with our sister organisations of the Fourth International in national across Europe we believe that there is a great need for unity of those in struggle across the borders of the bosses.

Now the marches in Britain are almost on the road. Our resources have been stretched by the money and time we have put into building this com-m
French left alternative to Socialist Party austerity

"100% left" candidates

Duncan Chapple

Right wing French President Jacques Chirac has called a snap general election to decide on French entry into the Euro, the single European currency.

He aims to catch the left unprepared and win popular support for the right. To join the single European currency the French government must cut social provisions and increase taxation. An early election will allow them to press ahead with their plans without fearing defeat at looming elections.

Chirac was elected because he promised to mend the fractured French society with social reforms and job creation schemes. His "Social Chiracism" was invented to head off militant working-class and youth mobilisations in 1995. Economic difficulties made it impossible for Chirac's rightist party, the Rally for the Republic, to deliver on these populist and almost workerist pledges.

Austerity was opened by the Junot government instead. This has lead to a profound social and economic crisis. Very diverse parts of society are fighting the government. They are connecting these attacks to the neo-liberal policies needed to allow the Junot party to meet the criteria set for joining the single currency.

The two social-democratic parties, the misnamed "Socialist" and "Communist" parties, are trying to turn the fightback into a one-sided campaign to get a coalition government that favours themselves elected.

They claim to oppose the criteria for joining the Euro. However they also favour a common currency for the European Union.

This is not good enough. Because the European Union is a capitalist union, and deep in recession, any single currency necessarily leads to austerity.

The far left will take advantage of France's two round election system to drive the message home. Rather than vote for these parties whose promises are not to be believed in the first round on May 23, our French comrades are standing revolutionary candidates aiming to build "a left wing that is 100% left".

The Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), Socialist Outlook's sister organisation in France, will stand its own candidates and back others who want to build a radical alternative to the Socialist and Communist parties.

The League's platform explains the need to use the snap election to build the fight in the unions and the social movements against both the right wing government and social austerity. The League will build on the successful European Marches against austerity, unemployment and social exclusion.

In the second round, voters must choose either the social democrats or the current government.

The Socialist and Communist parties' campaign promises to unfreeze spending, to immediately reduce the working week to 35 hours, and to create 700,000 new jobs for young people.

They also promise to cut public spending. 1999. They will not therefore be able to carry out the progressive parts of their programme – these are hollow promises.

The LCR will vote for the social democrats and against the government in the second round on June 1.

This is not the policy of others on the far left. In the first round the Worker's Struggle (Lutte Ouvriere) group is likely to get a good response to its presidential candidate, Arlette Laguiller. However it will not campaign to kick out the right in the second round.

Its newspaper, Lutte Ouvriere, equates Socialist Party leader Lionel Jospin with rightist prime minister Alain Juppé. Jospin or Juppé, two 'J's paired up against the workers... If Jospin replaces Juppé only to conduct the same war against the working-class, what kind of change is that?" This understandable sentiment is mistaken. A defeat for the right will place more pressure on the existing leadership of the working class to improve the position of working people.

It will make it harder for the Communist and Socialist parties to exclude the far left from the movements against fascism, the Maastricht criteria and from common left strates in local elections which aim to defeat the National Front.

You can help!

The 100 per cent left candidates need your help!

This month, the League needs your help in raising £20,000 so that the "100% gauche" candidates can have a militant campaign.

If you agree with the LCR's campaign, give it your financial support.

IN BRITAIN: send cheques payable to "Outlook International" to PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UO. Please make out "LCR election" on the back.

ELSEWHERE: Send cheques in French francs payable to "LCR Souscription" to "100% gauche", 2 rue Richard Lecoq, 93100 Montreuil, France.

Get the facts, from around the world

International Viewpoint, monthly publication of the Fourth International, carries all the background information you cannot find in the bourgeois press. IVP's normal selling price is £2 per month, but British readers can subscribe jointly to IVP and Socialist Outlook for just £20 per year.

Send your details and a cheque payable to Socialist Outlook to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UO.
Checking his secret bank account? Arafat plays a central role in Israeli plans to contain Palestinian resistance

Roland Renne

THIRTY years on, Israeli military rule over the Palestinian territories occupied during the 1967 war (the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem), as well as over the Syrian Golan Heights, continues without let-up. Despite the deal made in Madrid and Oslo, and finally signed in Washington, most Palestinians see little real improvement in their situation.

Economic, social and political conditions in the Occupied Territories have sharply deteriorated since the Oslo agreement, according to US academic Sara Roy, the author of The Gaza Strip: The Politics of Development.

Between 1992 and 1996, per capita GNP fell by almost 40%, to $1500 in the West Bank and $700 in Gaza. Malnutrition is rising, and there are increasing reports of begging, sitting through rubbish for food, sale of body organs to Israeli hospitals, and prostitution. 30% of the children in Gaza suffer from malnutrition, 60% of the babies have anemia, and 90% have intestinal parasites, according to Israeli activist Amira Hass in a recent book, Drinking at the Gaza Well.

The frequent closures, which restrict or ban free movement within and between areas, have severely damaged the economy.

In 1996, there were over 100 days of total closure, and countless periods of partial closure. Unemployment is rising, totalling 29% of the 440,000 labour force when closures are lifted.

In Gaza, where unemployment reaches 40%, over 40% of the families have sold property in order to buy food. At the same time, there is a large increase in child labour. Land confiscation for Israeli settlement, military bases and roads also continues, with 44% of Gaza and 78% of the West Bank now in Israeli hands.

Meanwhile, the Arafat regime becomes daily more brutal and autocratic. Nearly every day, further reports are received of the arbitrary and undemocratic way in which Arafat and his cohorts carry out their task as Israel's surrogate in the slums and refugee camps of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Human rights activists, such as researcher Basam El-Eid and psychologist Eyyad al-Sarraj, have spent lengthy periods in Arafat's prisons.

Twenty-four political prisoners - one of them a lawyer - are reportedly held at the Interrogation Center for the General Intelligence in Jericho, and denied the right to see their lawyers and, in many cases, their families.

Several detainees have died under interrogation and torture in these prisons, often at the hands of guards who had themselves suffered similar techniques in Israeli prisons.

During the early years of the Intifada, Israel arrested Palestinian teachers for teaching, which had been forbidden. Now, they are arrested for union activity.

On 21 April, the Palestinian Authority arrested over 30 teachers leading a strike demanding better wages and conditions. For several months, teachers had been demanding a 100% increase in their salaries, which now average about $300 a month.

Despite claims of their release, human rights activists report that teachers are still in prison and that the strike continues.

The assault on democracy and on the institutions of civil society painstakingly developed by Palestinians continues through the first two decades of Israeli occupation and the early years of the Intifada serve the interests of the Israeli and Palestinian regimes alike.

As Israeli Professor Tanya Reiner notes, the Israeli army continues its racist provocations, the Israeli army continues its undercover operations, the Israeli government continues to evict Palestinian land, to build homes and roads for Jews only, and the Palestinian Authority plunders and tortures the masses who struggled for their return and rule.

Israelis settle their racist provocations, the Israeli army continues its undercover operations, the Israeli government continues to evict Palestinian land, to build homes and roads for Jews only, and the Palestinian Authority plunders and tortures the masses who struggled for their return and rule.

Israeli settlers continue their racist provocations, the Israeli army continues its undercover operations, the Israeli government continues to evict Palestinian land, to build homes and roads for Jews only, and the Palestinian Authority plunders and tortures the masses who struggled for their return and rule.

When the Intifada erupted, in December 1987, the Israeli government had many commentators who accepted the official line were surprised. They should not have been.

There had already been several small uprisings, and it was clear to most independent observers that a major uprising was likely, though the date and form could not have been predicted.

A similar situation is developing now. The clampdown on the intifada under the Old City of Jerusalem and over the settlement at Jabal Abu Gneim are bloody, but short-lived.

They are unlikely to be the last. Under a brutal regime of occupation, forges by the world and abandon the doomsday of the coming millennium, while the leaders of the nationalist left seems to have abandoned the struggle.

The responsibility of Palestinian society, and of society in the Arab world as a whole, has never been greater.
Kabila is coming!

B. Shankhakumar

KIA-NANGA, Mobutu-Mali and Lubumbaru have fallen in quick succession to the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaïre (AFDL).

Now are advancing on the Zairian capital Kinshasa where residents eagerly cry, "Kabila yako, Kabila yaikye!" (Kabila is coming! Kabila is coming!) as the AFDL leader Laurent-Désiré Kabila comes to symbolize this popular rebellion.

Up to even a few months ago few dared to believe that the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko would soon be reduced to watching helplessly as under his very nose people protest in the streets demanding "Mobutu must go!"

This wily manoeuver who has plagued Zaïre for thirty years, greasing its coffers as his private purse and its people as his servants is on his last legs.

Abandoned

Publicly abandoned and humiliated by his Western backers (some France) and wracked by cancer, his end is not far away.

It was his own destruction of his country that accounts for the speed of his downfall. Wherever the AFDL troops arrive they are joyously welcomed by a local population which has for decades been abandoned by central government excepting being terrorised by his Army and secret police.

The Zairian Armed Forces (FAZ) has simply not confronted its enemy, which has minimised the number of casualties on both sides and among the civilian population.

However they continue to harass unarmed people, raping, looting and pillaging as they flee towards Kinshasa.

Many soldiers have deserted to the AFDL where at least they get paid regularly and stand a better chance of survival.

Mobutu's regime has had to rely on the combined forces of the former Rwandan Armed Forces and its allied Bahutu militias as well as white mercenaries for any resistance there may be.

These mercenaries from Serbia, Croatia, Russia and France are paid upwards of US $2,000 a month whereas Zairian regulars (infrequently) receive a mere US $1 a month - contributing to the latter's low morale.

Bombardment

The mercenaries have been involved in front line combat in the air bombardment of civilian populations in Bukavu, Walungu, and Shabunda. Even they have been frustrated by the collapse of the Zairian army and bouts of dysentery and malaria which has encouraged many to leave the country.

Mobutu has marched his military prowess with political acumen. He successfully formulated the introduction of western troops as so-called "humanitarian intervention" which the French government continues to favour seeing it as their last chance to save a client regime.

While the western powers and Mobutu's supporters like Daniel Arap Moi in Kenya have been pressing the AFDL to cease fighting and negotiate some sharing of power with Mobutu's regime, Kabila has been intransigent in his goal.

"The only thing to negotiate" says Kabila, "are the modalities of Mobutu's departure."

Unlike the opposition politicians in Kinshasa who over the years have played a game of musical chairs for the Prime Minister's post where President Mobutu is always the choreographer, Kabila has not allowed himself to be seduced likewise.

While western governments seek assurances that Kabila will share power with opposition leaders like Bintiene Tshisekedi, he rightly perceives them as part of Zaire's problem and not part of the solution.

Partly out of respect for Nelson Mandela and partly to moderate the mounting international pressure on the former Rwandan refugee situation in eastern Zaire, Kabila agreed to the direct talks in Gabon with Mobutu.

While many including perhaps the South African government will urge Kabila to form a transitional government with Mobutu to pave the way for free elections, he must stick to his earlier position of Mobutu's removal from power and the cleansing of all aspects of Mobutuism from the political system.

The Alliance's political and economic programme have become clearer in recent weeks. As a coalition it can probably be likened to the nationalist organisation of Pierre Mulele and even Laurent Kabila once gave it.

There are two planks in their programme which Kabila in an echo of his radical past recently called a "national democratic revolution."

"Redenazietration" means a western liberal democratic system and separation of powers between an executive presidency, legislature and judiciary, as well as full freedom of the press, association and assembly.

Also reconstruction and development, which has been described as the "return to the Congolese population of control over production, distribution and consumption of their land and mineral resources."

In particular the Alliance has identified the need for primary health care for all, education and housing and the development of the rural infrastructure and increasing personal consumption power.

What remains unclear is a timetable for its implementation and precisely how the economy is to be managed in the interests of the people when foreign mining companies have an effective control over their diamond, gold, cobalt and copper concessions and their exploitation.

Uganda model

Some speculate that Kabila will follow the Ugandan model of this friend and ally Yoweri Museveni where political parties are banned (excepting the liberation movement) and a market capitalist economy is encouraged under authoritarian political leadership.

It would be a mistake to think that Zaïre's political scene is any smaller, ethnic and political diversity and after the legacy of Mobutu's dictatorship will be amenable to this system of government.

What should be institutionalised is the short term is transparency, accountability and participatory government within genuine federalism.

A new regime must permit the organisations which emerged in the 1990s as part of the partial democratization full freedom. These include the workers' and religious associations as well as peasants' and workers' unions, student and youth groups, and so on.

All of which is still some way into the future.

The old regime will not abandon Kinshasa as easily as they did other towns.

Mobutu recently appointed a senior army officer Major-General Likula Bolongo as Prime Minister, the third incumbent in as many months.

He hopes that the Zairian Armed Forces will not desert one of their commanding officers and may even be tantalising them with the prospect of direct military rule if they can face down the Alliance forces.

Much of the opposition in Kinshasa is reluctantly to Kabila's forces taking control and leading out a campaign of non-violent resistance to the taking of emergency that has been declared.

Western states from the United States, France, Belgium and Britain have been steadily building up in neighbouring Congo, Gabon, and off-shore near Kinshasa, apparently to evacuate their nationals.

This last leg of the military campaign may be the most difficult yet.

Kabila's Alliance has identified the need for primary health care for all, education and housing and the development of the rural infrastructure and increasing personal consumption. What remains unclear is precisely how the economy is to be managed in the interests of the people when foreign mining companies have control over their diamond, gold, cobalt and copper concessions...
Sri Lanka Left leaders arrested

THREE leaders of Sri Lanka’s New Samata Party (NSP) have been detained by police in connection with an arms cache police claim to have discovered in a building occupied by the Trade Union. The NSP General Secretary Wickramasuriya Karunaratne has been released on bail, and will appear in court on 9 June, in connection with the alleged discovery of 32 weapons in the building of the Health Workers Co-operative Society. Police have not released Ajith Poree, President of the co-operative society, and P.D. Saranapala, General Secretary of the Janaraka Health Workers Union, which has offices in the same building.

Both men are members of the NSP central committee, though the workers centre is open to health workers of all political persuasions.

In a statement after his release on bail, Karunaratne or claimed that the NSP “categorically denies” all allegations against its members.

"Reactionary forces are trying to impeach the NSP in a conspiracy to use concealed weapons," he said. “By these lies they hope to discredit worker struggle against price increases, the genocidal war (against the Tamils) repression and privatization.

Their other aim is to suppress the NSP,” he continued.

"Yes, our party defends the right of the masses to rise up against this unjust capitalist system. But we have always dissociated ourselves from individual terrorism and revolutionary methods of revolution. Such tactics actually undermine the active movement, and sap the democratic initiative of the NSP and the other components of the United Socialist Alliance, so that they can guide themselves against the Deshapriya Janatha Viparanaya (Popular Peoples Movement), a chauvinist section of the JVP."

At least 24 NSP members were murdered by JVP chauvinists. Trade Union Centre leaders were also issued with arms, after a leading Communist Party trade union leader was also killed.

According to an earlier NSP press statement, "The NSP returned all its arms when the government demanded them. It did not return its arms to the Health Workers union centre, and is therefore not responsible for any arms discovered in the arrest of an arms holdup gang which is part of the JVP opposition to the privatization programme of the Chandrika government.

The NSP is also a clear opponent of the war against the Tamil people. Babu Karunaratne has been identified as a determined opponent of the government’s policies.

Since his election to the Colombo Municipal Council he has become a very popular figure in the city.

The NSP asks friends and comrades abroad to send messages demanding the release of all its leaders from prison.

Her Excellency the President, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, Presidential Secretaries, Colombo 03, Sri Lanka, (fax 94-1-333703), and The Secretary, Ministry of Defence (fax 94-1-54-1529) Please send a copy of your protests to the NSP at fax 94-1-334882.

Donations to the legal fund should be sent to United Federation of Labour, A/C 16 500 061, Peoples’ Bank, Union Place, Colombo 02, Sri Lanka.

Tokyo workers on a May Day demonstration: elsewhere, 60,000 marched in Mexico City and 1.3 million in Havana!

US nurses fight billion dollar giant

THE GIANT Kaiser Permanente corporation, which runs hospitals and healthcare services across the USA, is locked in an increasingly bitter struggle with nursing staff over hospital cuts and closures, job losses and pay cuts.

Thousands of California nurses at 45 Kaiser hospitals and clinics walked out on a one-day strike on 13 May, warning that the company’s ruthless drive for increased profits was putting the health of its subscribers at risk. Its rationalization of services has included the closure of In- tensive Care units, restricting the use of Emergency Rooms (A&E), limits on tests, specialist care, hospital admissions and patient stays, and the axing of 15% of qualified nursing staff, while no potential patients are signed up as subscribers.

But nurses are even more angry at the threat of further closures coupled with a 2% pay cut for Registered Nurses.

Having floated federal safety standards in several states in- cluding Texas, Kaiser faces the possiblity of its lucrative Federal Medi- care and Medicaid contracts, worth a massive $2.9 billion in 1998 out of the corporation’s total revenue of $13.2 billion.

The Texas Attorney General has warned that Kaiser’s relations are serious enough to revoke its license to operate in the state.

A Department of Insurance report, which Kaiser has tried to suppress, has alleged that the company disallowed Emer- gency Room treatment. It is also facing a growing number of wrongful death lawsuits.

The strikes are highlily the "free market" in health can cost you more than an arm and a leg.
How do we get to socialism from here?

Harry Sloan

WE ARE so near—and yet so far. For the second time in history a Labour government has a majority. They do what they want it: but Tony Blair’s policies are so right wing his team makes Clement Attlee’s post-war government look like a bunch of Trotskyists.

Millions of workers have voted Labour longing for a real change, for radical policies, deregulation in the Blair’s constant efforts to deflate and desist such aspirations. How can this latest progress, fuelled by 18 miserable years of Tory onslaught, be directed towards the fight for social policies?

This is the key issue for the survival of the left in the labour movement, as the Blairites shackle their knives for a renewed and even more determined offensive — a sham to sever once and for all with the links between the Labour Party, workers’ unions and working class which created it.

Past experience suggests that workers will be more willing to fight for their interests now that the Tories have been defeated. In the past these demands have been successful.

The last Labour government, elected 23 years ago, in March 1974, helped to solve the unemployment problem and won a majority of four (dropping almost at once to three with the defection of John Stonehouse) in the follow-up election in October.

Pressure

Yet the pressure on that government was sufficient to force through much more radical policies than anything now on offer from Tony Blair: among other measures were an increase in pensions and the minimum wage, equal pay, the state pension and average wages, the repeal of anti-union laws and the introduction of the Employment Protection Act, the Health and Safety at Work Act, the Equal Pay and Employment Disputes Acts.

Immediately after the election, in an ill-fated effort to contain wage demands by holding down prices, Labour spent hundreds of millions in food subsidies designed to keep the Retail Price Index below the level that would trigger “threshold” pay increases.

Working class militancy, which had helped to precipitate the election, continued and even increased, despite the speed at which the leadership of the union leaders, as workers quickly realised they could not expect the new government to solve all their problems.

The election had been triggered by Tony leader Heath’s attempt to whip up an anti-union “who runs the country” hysteria in the wake of the miners’ strike, while inflation, boosted by the increase in oil prices, was galloping away at wages and salaries.

Harry Schwartz had no left wing cabinet: it included Roy Jenkins and Shirley Williams who would later jump ship, (soon to defect to the Tories) Jim Callaghan and Denis Healey.

Michael Foot was hailed by the Tory press for a magnificent choice as Employment Secretary. He established the Economic Survey. The economy had — as now — been trashed by the Tories, and the Financial Times pointed out sympathetically that: “Labour is faced with the unpleasant task of trying to induce a sharp reduction in real incomes over the next 12 to 18 months in order to make resources available for the balance of payments.”

Within a week of taking office Harold Wilson’s Queen’s Speech had not only ditched all of the party’s nationalisation pledges, but (after paying out sufficient to end the miners’ strike) endorsed the Phase 3 wage controls imposed by Heath’s government.

Tory laws

The new government also avoided any commitment to repeal the Tory Industrial Relations Act or the Housing Finance Act which had kicked up council rents and led to heavy surcharges on Clay Cross councillors who defied it. And the six building workers (Sheffield City 6) jailed on frame-up charges for picketing were to remain in jail under Labour. Labour’s NEC voted on the government to lift the Clay Cross surcharges, while the TUC was lobbying for the Sheffield pickers — both were ignored.

Healey’s first budget, three weeks after the election, confirmed the Tories’ massive cuts in public spending, and pumped £50m into the roads to buy cheap votes — keeping up profits while appearing to curb prices — but sharply increased charges for electricity, phone calls, stamps, rail fares, petrol, alcohol, tobacco and confectionery.

Two days later the engineers’ union AUEW was fined £47,000 by the National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC), bringing the total fines to over £200,000 — including £47,000 to cover the cost of a company-financed holiday for three bosses!

On April 9 the Industrial Relations Court threatened to seize the entire assets of the AUEW after it refused to pay the £47,000 fine, but the government made no move to repeal the Act. The AUEW reacted

— by threatening national strike action, which received overwhelming support. On the eve of the strike an anonymous donor paid the union’s fine and costs, and the strike was called off. But by this time the NIRC was scheduled to hear a £3 million damages claim against the TGWU — and Michael Foot was finally persuaded to step in and repeal the Act.

However Labour ministers and the top levels of the TGWU bureaucracy blatantly connived in the efforts which began immediately after the 1974 victory to smash the strength of trade union militancy in the car industry, which had led the fight to defend living standards and working conditions.

They — and the Tory mass media saw the Trotskyists-led workforce at British Leyland’s Wolsey assembly plant as a key threat to any attempt to “solve” the economic crisis at the expense of the working class.

In April, amid a secession of stoppages triggered by new speed-up on the production line, BL’s management stepped in to withdraw recognition from depot convenor Alan Thorne.

A month-long strike in Thornet’s defence ended when a rigged TGWU inquiry cleared him of the company’s allegations, but criticised the running of the union in the plant, and ousted convenor Bobby Fyver and the former leader by imposing new elections in ballot in the teeth of an unprecedent media witch-hunt.

As the Labour government turned increasingly to union leaders to curb the actions of their rank and file members, there were to be more witch-hunts and victimisations of left activists in various industries and the public sector unions.

But in March, health unions had thrown out a pitiful pay offer for nurses and other NHS professionals. And at the end of May, nurses — denounced by NUPE leader Alan Fisher as “irresponsible, amateur adventurers” — took up a programme of industrial action against the continuing Tory pay laws. This included demonstrations, canny boycotts, open strikes and restric-

Subsidising bosses: Denis Healey

Nurses joined marches, lobbies and strikes in 1974 — and won — despite being denounced by bureaucratic union leaders.

Additional subsidies: Denis Healey

On hospital admissions. The nurses were supported by the Society of Radiographers, who mobilised nearly half their 8,000 national membership in a march through London, while radiographers in ASTMS staged strikes in London and the north east.

The pressure forced Wilson’s government to launch a face-saving inquiry into NHS pay, headed by Lord Halsbury. Reporting in July, the Halsbury committee found nurses to be a “special case”, and awarded increases averaging 30% (though some grades got as little as 6%).

Fighting back

The arrival of a right-leaning Labour government had not, therefore, deterred the working class from defending itself. Union leaders found themselves dragged into action by the anger of their members.

In their effort to escape from this, key union leaders signed up to the summer of 1974 for a “Social Contract” imposing voluntary limits on wage demands after Heath’s Phase 3 pay controls ended.

But Healey’s November 1974 budget did little to help union leaders win support for the so-called deal, allocating a massive £1.5 bil. to his efforts to “improve profitability and liquidity in the company sector and shifting re-sources from consumption into investment and exports.”

Union members were even less impressed when companies showed their attitude to the Social Contract by announcing an ever-increasing list of closures and redundancies: by August, 1975, unemployment had reached 950,000.

While Labour ministers pumped subsidies into the coffers of private industry and attempted to deliver a low-wage workforce to ensure the continuation of British capitalism, the union leaders continued to balance the pressures of their shopfloor membership and that of the profit-hungry employers.

While workers remained strongly organised and willing to fight back, they were politically weak, their trade unions controlled by timid reformist bureaucrats, the Labour Party by parliamentary “reformists with no shred of socialist commitment.

Open the books

Even apparently limited demands such as the opening of the books of private firms to elected trade union committees — flying in the face of “business secrecy” — and the call for a sliding scale of wages to ensure pay levels stayed ahead of inflation were seen (correctly) by union chiefs as a threat to their position and to the system, opening up a logical route towards demands for workers’ control of production, and a system based on the needs of the working class majority, not the profit wants of the capitalists.

This type of approach is essential if large numbers of working class activists are to be involved in the trade union movement and wider campaigns are to be won to organise the working class.

But the left in the 1970s was un-successful in building an alliance of class struggle forces in the unions which could move politically beyond these limitations.

It remained fragmented and predominantly sectarian in its politics, too late to recognise the emergence of a new “Benite” left which grew after Labour was ousted in 1979 but which was, in turn, largely extinguished by the setbacks inflicted on the working class and its organisations by successive years of Thatcherite offensive and the emerging right-wing of the Labour Party.

The challenge to socialists in 1991 is to grasp the opportunities that are likely to open up — some only fleetingly — as an expected working class movement, exultant at the defeat of the Tories, runs into conflict with the hard-line policies of a new Labour Party.

If the left again fails to develop and popularise a socialist programme, win support and fight for it in mass campaigns throughout the labour movement, it faces more decades in the doldrums.

features
IN THE NINETIES, millions of women and men have taken part in一定程度的抗议Capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorships. This reflects the fact that humanity faces widening dangers. Ecological, military, social and economic devastation faces millions of people.

Many more people recognize the barbaric nature of capitalism. In a situation where the inability of the social democratic and communist parties to provide socialist solutions is becoming clearer, the task of creating new leaderships remains ahead.

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

The overall goal which we pursue is the emancipation of all human beings from every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation and violence. Socialism must be under the control of ordinary, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist, ecologist, anti-militarist and internationalist. It must abolish wage slavery and national oppression.

The working class is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed. The working class and its allies must uncompromisingly fight against capitalism and for a clear programme of action in order to gradually acquire the experience and consciousness needed to defeat capitalism at the decisive moment of crisis.

The movements of women, lesbians and gay men and black people to fight their particular forms of oppression make an essential contribution to the struggle for a different society. They are organised around the principle "None so fit to break the chains as those who wear them".

The whole working class needs to fully commit itself to these struggles. Furthermore we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these organisations which respect their legitimate autonomy.

By simultaneously building revolutionary organisations in each country and a revolutionary International we aim to guide and encompass the global interests of the workers and oppressed. By building a united struggle against exploitation and oppression we aim to ensure the survival of the human race.

WHAT'S ON

Sat May 10
MSF Campaign for a Democratic Union, Annual Conference, University of London Union, Malet Street, WC1.

Sat May 17
British leg of EuroMarch leaves Jarrow

Sat 24th May
African Liberation Day March and Rally, Assemble 1p.m., Max Roach Park, Brixton Road, London SW9 for march to Trafalgar Square.

May 30-June 1
National Conference of Trades Councils, Blackburn

Sat May 31
Network of Socialist Campaign Groups Conference, What Are We Going To Do Now? A Socialist Strategy for Labour, 10a.m.-6p.m., London Welsh Centre, 157 Grey Inn Road, London WC1 (near Kings Cross).

Sat June 7
EuroMarch arrives in London. Departs Southall 8.30am, marching to Hyde Park 1pm, Rally in Westminster Central Hall.

June 12-13
International conference against racism in Amsterdam. For more details contact UNITED, PB 413, NL-1000, AK Amsterdam.

Sat June 14
Mass demonstration in Amsterdam as culmination of EuroMarches. Coaches depart London June 13, return June 15. Tickets £50 (employed and sponsored) or £20 unwaged (limited number of places). Booking: ring Roland on 0181-800-7460.

Sat 28th June
Capital and Class conference, Subcontinent and African Studies, London S.a.m.-5p.m.

July 19-26
International Youth Camp, central France.

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Keith Sinclair reviews The Rights of the Unemployed, by Anne Grey (European Labour Forum Pamphlet, Spokesman Press, £1.95).

WHAT EXACTLY is workfare? This may seem a funny question to ask. Many of you will know that I have spent a significant amount of the last year fighting Project Work which we have all dutifully condemned as workfare.

Anne Grey's pamphlet argues that workfare should be seen as having the broad impact of simply the explicit workfare programmes like Project Work.

Grey argues that the impact of a whole series of policies over the last few years has been to introduce a growing consensus between the two major parties in favour of what she describes as "soft workfare".

It is by this means the introduction of policies such as the Job Seekers Allowance and the Job Seekers Allowance legislation.

Anne Grey explains clearly the effect of 'soft workfare' on the labour market. She argues convincingly that:

"Much of the debate about workfare has centred round the main issue of whether or not the claimants should be disqualified if they refuse work or training. The fervour of this debate has distracted from the economic functions of workfare, from its role in the wage fixing process, which in the end is more important."

Grey also makes the important point that when workers are forced to take low paid jobs then the downward effect on wages hits those already earning low wages.

"One of the good things about this pamphlet is that it made me think about my own ideas. Grey rejects campaigning for 'full employment', arguing that this leads to a defence of 'harmful forms of work'.

However the reality is that nationally eight people chase every single vacancy. To demand that the state provides a job for everyone is a legitimate demand as part of a programme to fight unemployment. To argue that there is a growing political consensus in favour of 'soft workfare', Anne Grey does not grapple with the consensus that the Labour Party nationally - and crucially local councils - have held the line against Project Work.

It's important to ask why that opposition has taken place. One possible danger of using the term 'soft workfare' to describe a fairly wide range of programmes is that it could blur the edge of specifically anti-workfare campaigns.

In the areas facing Project Work Extension the key immediate task is to campaign against the Extension.

Overall, Grey has provided an excellent pamphlet which describes the history of the various employment schemes over the last decade. Everyone campaigning against Project Work should get a copy and make time to study its arguments.
Wales: PR would open door to Popular Front

I WOULD like to comment on Darren Williams’ article “Welsh Assembly plans advance” Socialist Outlook April 1997.

The unity of the workers’ movement in Britain is threatened by the growth of anti-capitalist and renegade Labour leaders on the NEC of the NEC Wales Party, Wales, along with Ron Davies. As Tony Blair’s agents in Wales they have refused to fight for a majority Labour government and subordinate the Labour Party in Britain to the pro-capitalist Liberals.

In Wales they subordinate the struggle of the Welsh working class against British imperialism and bureaucratic centralism to the ideological illusions of petty bourgeois Welsh Nationalism.

The referendum in Wales is a diversionary ploy by the Labour and TUC leadership to tie up the workers’ movement from within our own ranks.

During the general election campaign we in Brecon and Radnor Socialists of the Campaign Group advanced the following slogans: Labour to Power! No Coalition! For a Majority Labour Government!

Only these slogans, we argued, would allow the Labour Party in key marginal seats like Brecon & Radnor to win. We demanded a break from the umbilical cord of pro-capitalist parties.

We told the bitter truth that a fight for a majority Labour government would not come by itself. It must be fought for even against our own leaders who are the saboteurs and architects of our defeat.

We did not fight for these slogans for Ron Davies or Darren Williams or the petty bourgeois nationalists in Wales by supporting the election of a Welsh Assembly, but for a proportional electoral system.

We call for the Welsh Assembly to be the tribute of the working class in Wales. PR for the Welsh Assembly is a fight against the working class in Wales.

The Labour leadership want a consultation Assembly for the purpose of making deals with the petty bourgeois nationalists and Liberal prime ministers in Wales.

Williams seems to want the same thing, the only difference is that he presents a left face to on constitutional change.

It is very easy to blame in print but much harder to fight inside the Labour Party the “reactionary South Wales bureaucracy” of which he is a member, sitting as he does on the Welsh Labour Party Executive.

This is the same “reactionary bureaucracy” including Ron Davies which Welsh Labour Action seems to be courting. If at all, Williams is fostering illusions within the Labour movement in Wales that the imperialist bourgeois British state and the bourgeois democratic parties are in some way progressive, reformable and can be used by the working class in Wales to advance its interests by merely advocating change in the electoral system, by introducing some form of PR system.

This is the Trotskyist criterion of the most reactionary kind.

The nationalism of the working class and small farmers in Wales is the only shield of their social rebellion against the centralised capitalistic state, while the nationalism of the petty bourgeois and Liberals is only a pawn in their play with the British state against the Welsh working class.

It seems that not only Ron Davies fails to draw the line between the nationally oppressed workers and small farmers in Wales and the ruling class and their shadows.

Davies is no busier to throw the nationalists and Wales off the back of the Labour Party. Williams would also rather spend his time constructing a “popular majority” through a Welsh Assembly elected by PR (it with petty bourgeois political parties) which in my ABC of Marxism is the same thing.

Marxists form alliances with nationally oppressed workers and small farmers, not with reactionary and national bourgeois political parties who use their political machinery to line up discouraged elements and the fascistically distressed petty bourgeois behind them and against the organised working class, only to allow them in turn to be exploited in the name of international finance capital and the bourgeois imperialist state.

This drama is not without its comical side. New Labour in Wales moves alongside the restless working class with the precious load of nationalists and Liberals on its back.

It answers the protests, complaints and curses coming from the working class in the voice of a slapstick comedian. “Look at these creatures on my back! They are my sworn enemy. I will list their crimes against me: pay attention! etc etc.”

And when the crowd, annoyed by this spectacle, begins to laugh, New Labour takes advantage of this favourable condition to carry its load a little further.

If this is what is meant by struggling against the Nationalists and Liberals in Wales, then what is meant by a struggle in support of them?

Stefan Cholewka
Secretary, Brecon & Radnor Socialist Campaign Group

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Don’t be too kind to the Patient

BRIAN Gardiner’s interesting review of ‘The English Patient’ raised a lot of useful points. But I think Brian was too kind to the film and its kind enough to the book on which it is based.

The novel is, despite what Brian says, nothing like the film because the emotions of the characters are dealt with in great detail.

It is also an intensely political work, especially in the way it deals with issues of colonialism and racism, culminating in the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

It does this primarily through the character of the Sikh supper Kip and his relationship with Hanna, which mirrors and comments on the love affair of the English patient. But this character is almost entirely omitted from the film. This both distort the balance of the film and meant the loss of almost all the political content which is so powerful in the book.

It would be a shame if socialists were to treat ‘The English Patient’ just as an enjoyable love story and to miss exploring the other issues which Michael Ondaard raises, both in this book, and in some of his remarkable novels.

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German role in frame-up

YOUR article on Résitén McCluskey in the last Outlook was factually wrong in one important respect.

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

This question has been answered extensively within our campaign in Dublin.

Contradictory statements have been made by various representatives of the German state from the beginning — embassies, politicians, the Federal Prosecution Service itself.

The factual position is that every time there is a bail application a representative of the German Federal Prosecution Service indicates opposition — on this basis the magistrate refuses the application.

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Urgent fight to keep Labour’s link with unions

Once the initial euphoria dies down after Labour’s landslide, many who worked for a Labour victory will be turning their attention to the battles that now need to be fought with Blair.

He has made clear he intends to govern as ‘New Labour’, and to recreate the Labour Party in his own image. He sees the massive parliamentary majority as a mandate for carrying all of this through.

However, the swing to Labour and the opinion polls show that people voted Labour precisely because they want change not a continuation of Tory policies.

Will MPs who have kept quiet for the last year start to challenge Blair’s policies and support workers who come into struggle against the Labour government?

Of the trade union leaders only John Edmonds at Scottish TUC spoke out during the election campaign, with a critical speech, but will he and the other union leaders follow it through?

Union conferences over the next months will give an indication of the response among activists to Labour’s victory.

Celebrations

Will the conferences insist that Blair has to deliver now he’s won, or will they merely be victory celebrations? Will they be demanding that Blair repeals the anti-union laws and renews the welfare state?

The test comes on two fronts: a challenge to Blair’s policies in words and in action is needed, as is rejection of his proposals for restructuring the Labour Party.

For Blair the two go together. He knows that if he is to pursue capitalist policies he has to remove the ability of the unions and Party members to influence policy and call him to account.

The ‘Labour into Power’ proposals drawn up by the NEC are a far-reaching attack on Party democracy in general and the union-Party link in particular, in that they would remove the right of unions to put resolutions to Party conference.

They are currently out for consultation, but most of the consultations period has been taken up with campaigning for a Labour victory.

They will be rewritten together with an ‘Action Plan’, but not until after the deadline for resolutions to Party conference. The deadline for resolutions to conference has been brought forward. This is all carefully planned to allow the proposals to go through as smoothly as possible.

Conference

They would remove the right of unions and CLPs to submit resolutions directly to Party conference. Conference would only discuss reports submitted to it by a new Joint Policy Committee, with the Cabinet having an in-built majority.

Resolutions would go to the unaccountable and undemocratic National Policy Forum and a series of commissions before reaching the NEC and JPC.

Conference would become a series of presentations by ministers instead of a forum at which the movement discussed the priorities of a Labour government and Party.

The NEC would be restructured, allowing for direct representation of the Parliamentary Labour party, the European PLP, the Cabinet and Councils, and removing the women’s section in favour of quotas.

MPs could not stand for the constituency section as at present, meaning the likes of Dennis Skinner and Diane Abbott could no longer get elected. It would be downgraded to a purely organisational role, with its policy role taken over by the JPC.

If these proposals go through, they would be very difficult to reverse, since the mechanism to do so would have been removed.

Blair may decide to go further and completely sever the link with the unions and introduce state funding—either at this year’s conference or in the future. This task will be much easier for him if the existing proposals meet little opposition.

Proposals have been tabled for affiliated union conferences rejecting these proposals, and fringe meetings have been organized at many of the ‘Keep the Link’ campaign and other forces in the unions.

Mandate

A fight must be organized not only to win these motions but to commit the union delegations to voting against them at Labour Party conference.

Constituency Labour Parties will be discussing conference resolutions over the next month.

The Left should be pushing the model resolutions being circulated by the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups on aspects of the ‘Labour into Power’ proposals.

We must also attempt to mandate delegates to vote against the final NEC document.

Affiliate to the ‘Keep the Link’ campaign, sign its petition, get a speaker to your union branch or CLP. Keep the Link can be contacted c/o 138 Crampton St, London SE17 1AE.