Scandal of Blunkett’s policies...

Defend asylum seekers:

CHRISTMAS DAY’s usual lack of news was broken on this occasion by the story that 500 desperate asylum seekers had tried to leave the Sangatte refugee camp in France, cross the Channel Tunnel, and get to Britain. This story followed hot on the heels of the death of eight refugees from Turkey, including three children, in a container thought to be bound for Britain - but which actually ended up in Ireland.

It is easy for Berne Ahern, like his British counterparts, to condemn those who make profits from this obscene traffic in human lives. But it was the creation by the EU countries of a “Fortress Europe”, hostile to refugees and immigrants, that has allowed this trade to flourish and grow. The easiest way to end people-trafficking would be to abolish all immigration controls.

These and many other stories obviously illustrate the plight of many fleeing torture and terror in their home countries. But contrary to the lies of many politicians and media hacks, they do not demonstrate that Britain is a "soft touch" but that the rest of Europe is just as illiberal.

Blunkett’s new proposals on the treatment of asylum seekers, sold as a "liberal" turn on the basis of scrapping vouchers, are no such thing (see page 2).

On top of this, the new “anti-terrorist” laws restrict the right to asylum, and all the evidence is that the Home Office is stepping up deportations, regardless of circumstances, in order to meet its arbitrary targets.

All of the evidence is that the Labour government is even more racist and reactionary in its efforts to close the gates against refugees and immigrants than even the Tories before them.

David Blunkett’s policies are a kick in the teeth to all those who believe in a tolerant, democratic, multi-cultural, anti-racist Britain. That’s why all socialists must redouble the fight against them in 2002.

Conference to support asylum seekers – inside, p2
Brussels: an impressive turn-out of Europe's left

Two demonstrations greeted the EU summit in Brussels in December, the last meeting of the European Heads of State before the launch of the Euro.

The first was an 80,000 strong demonstration of the European trade union on Thursday 13 December, and the second a 2,000 strong demonstration of the European left on the following day.

The trade union demonstration, called by the ETUC, was protesting at the neo-liberal Europe which is being developed by the EU whilst the demonstration of the political left called "for global peace and justice" and was in effect a general action protest.

The trade union demonstration saw a huge mobilisation in particular from the French CGT, but the left was marred by the fact that a number of sectors time off was negotiated for strikers but other workers were threatened if they did not face disciplinary action if they returned.

As usual the official British government had its own anti-capitalist section and illustrated the weakness of British trade unions in these situations.

Both demonstrations were proof that the war and the drive have not been successful in halting the anti-capitalist movement or the capacity of the European unions to mobilise when they decide to do so.

The mood was loud and clear, the movement has not gone away.

Workers from the Belgian state airline Sabena and Belgian postal workers fighting for a 12% pay rise claimed to have turned out on Thursday's trade union march but on Friday as well.

Sabena workers who faced 12% redundancies after the company went bankrupt in October marched behind a large model aeroplane with placards demanding "Stop economic terrorism!"

The main far-left delegations on the demonstration of the radical left came from the International Socialist Tendency, the International Brigades, the socialist parties including the CP and the SWP, the Fourth International and the Committee for a Workers International contingent including the Socialist Party from Britain. The IST continued to be a popular delegation at the right from the Labour Party who travelled on the coach organised by the government.

The calls for peace were led by the French LCR and the PS/SP of Belgium. There was a big delegation from the Belgian Macrons the PDS, the other European Trotskyist groupings such as the US and Canada were conspicuous by their absence.

The bulk of the demonstration comprised of a multiplicity of NGOs and campaignings including ATTAC groups from several European countries.

On Thursday evening many attended an anti-capitalist film forum organised by the Belgian section of the FI with the support of the French LCR and the SWP.

Over 1,000 people joined in the hall to hear speakers from the LCR, the Socialists Communists, the SWP and the Socialist Party.

The presence of the Socialists Communist on the platform was an important development and represents a process in which RC is moving further away from its Stalinist past and closer to the European far left.

Both the demonstration and the meeting were further proof of the increasing co-ordination of the European left, including the far left groupings, in the face of the right-wing drift of social democracy.

Conference called to defend asylum seekers

Veronica Fagan

Home Secretary David Blunkett's new proposals on the treatment of asylum seekers, said as a liberal turn on the basis of scraping vouchers, are no such thing. They involve the continued use of detention and the introduction of a "smart" identification card with the same stigma as vouchers and probably the thin end of the wedge for the wider introduction of such cards.

Forced dispersal is retained, and refugees will have even less right to an independent income than at present, because those kept in "holding centres" will only receive food and other essentials if they stay there.

On top of this, the new "anti-terrorist" laws protect the right to asylum, and all the evidence is that the Home Office is stepping up deportations, regardless of circumstances, in order to meet its annual targets.

The call came after intensive campaigning from local and national campaigns and virtually every national trade union.

That there are many organisations campaigning around the rights of asylum seekers is obviously positive; however, the movement has often been weakened by the lack of coordination of the efforts of the different campaigns.

In order to clarify the opposition to Blunkett's proposals to build joint work between those active around the issues, a conference is being called for Saturday March 23, 11am, at the Queen Street Chapel, Manchester.

Initial organisers of the conference include the National Civil Rights Movement, the Jewish Socialist Group, Barred Wire Europe (the coordination of campaigns against the detention centres), the National Coalition Against Anti-Deportation campaigns, and the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers.

The conference is open to all those who want to stop up and coordinate activity to defend the rights of asylum seekers.

There will be workshops on different aspects of campaigning, such as detention, dispersal, deportation, organising with asylum seekers and building local campaigns, as well as a final session on building joint work.

Further details of the conference from CDAS, BCM 4395, London WC1N 1ES (emailed: defas-sy.org)

Strong vote for strike on South West Trains

As we go to press RMT members on South West Trains look to be shown to start four days of strikes. The dispute is two-fold - over pay and over victimisation of RMT activities.

A three to one ballot result, with an over 70% turnout, showed the strength of feeling of RMT members over pay.

The company had offered a 9% pay rise to all non-driving staff - but given drivers an 11% increase.

They argued they needed to give drivers such a rise because of market forces. Whilst the other grades would not begrudge the drivers their increase they were dismayed if they were going to be left behind, with the company pleading poverty when it came to their pay award.

Over victimisation, a separate ballot saw train crew in a comfortable majority in favour of action to defend their half a dozen activists picked off for disciplinary action by SWT over the last six months.

Key in this dispute is the treatment of Greg Tucker, driver's rep at Waterloo who was dismissed in August for a position as a ticket collector.

As we go to press RMT members on South West Trains look to be shown to start four days of strikes. The dispute is two-fold - over pay and over victimisation of RMT activities.

The membership have clearly indicated that they believe that he was targeted for his activism and that he cannot be allowed to be picked off in this way.

It is clear that SWT owners Go-Ahead, at the highest level, decided to target Greg Tucker after the successful local guards' dispute in the spring of last year.

Key in this dispute is the treatment of Greg Tucker, driver's rep at Waterloo who was dismissed in August for a position as a ticket collector.

The membership have clearly indicated that they believe that he was targeted for his activism and that he cannot be allowed to be picked off in this way.

It is clear that SWT owners Go-Ahead, at the highest level, decided to target Greg Tucker after the successful local guards' dispute in the spring of last year.

Key in this dispute is the treatment of Greg Tucker, driver's rep at Waterloo who was dismissed in August for a position as a ticket collector.

The membership have clearly indicated that they believe that he was targeted for his activism and that he cannot be allowed to be picked off in this way.

It is clear that SWT owners Go-Ahead, at the highest level, decided to target Greg Tucker after the successful local guards' dispute in the spring of last year.

Key in this dispute is the treatment of Greg Tucker, driver's rep at Waterloo who was dismissed in August for a position as a ticket collector.

The membership have clearly indicated that they believe that he was targeted for his activism and that he cannot be allowed to be picked off in this way.
Blair's New Year pledge: A new war on poor services

The new year marks a turning point in the trade union movement and the Labour government: the drive towards privatisation and "reform", which was initiated in 1997 by Chancellor(3) and Blair's fateful free-market/"reform" efforts on behalf of George Bush, is to be reinforced.

With the military offensive losing its way, Labour is attempting to turn the new Taliban to be combated are seen as public service workers — and their unions — as they battle to keep public services public, and defend them from privatisation and "reform". To do this, they must defend the conditions against a renewed Labour onslaught.

New Labour message is that they should brace themselves for a full-scale war in 2002 and a "premature" and "insulting" changes throughout the public services.

These first in the cross-sites of Blair and all the rights are health and education.

No amount of evidence of the failure of privatisation and the free market — most recently the deepen-ing collapse of the once "private" BUPA hospital chain — can stop the privatisation of Air Traffic Control and the privatisation of the NHS. New Labour's reaction to the public service workers' struggle is not to go into areas of the NHS that are currently the care of the private sector, but to drive the private sector deeper into areas of the NHS that are currently public.

This is perhaps clearest of all in the NHS, where the answer to any question about the NHS is "privatisation by privatisation". Alan Milburn, who appears to be more involved in privatisation than a privatisation minister, is the new NHS privatisation minister.

Last summer's NHS purchase of the bankrupt private Heart of England and run by the privates followed by a renewed drive to send even more NHS patients for treatment in private hospitals, and the decision in December to buy up the entire capacity of a BUPA hospital in Surrey to treat NHS waiting list patients.

The costs of private sector treatment, for the relatively restricted range of elective operations it provides — also consistently higher than the average cost of the same operations within the NHS. For every 10 operations Milburn buys from the private sector, the cash resources for 15 similar operations are drained from the NHS.

And of course any patients who develop serious complications while in a private hospital will be rapidly dumped back onto the NHS: in 2000-14,000 patients were transferred to the NHS from private hospitals that could not cope, and would not meet the bill for additional treatment.

The government's coddling up to a private sector that is only interested in pocketing the profits from a greater share of the eastern elector, while simultaneously giving the NHS hospitals to shoulder the burden of all emergency work and all of the cottswold specialties, is an all-round disaster for NHS Trusts and health workers.

But Milburn has made clear things can only get worse. With the collapse of national targets at the beginning of the NHS pay awards (largely because ministers receded at the cost of implementing a fairer system). Milburn has now floated the idea of return to the bad old days of local pay bargaining which developed (and caused chaos) under Thatcher's market-style reform.

Perhaps the crown jewels to health workers and Labour voters is that after claims of credit for sweeping away the Tory internal market in the NHS back in 1997, Milburn is now talking openly about a new system of "patient choice". He 'he hopes that this is the new divisive aspect of that market system, leaving NHS hospitals to compete once more for each other for patients and market share.

There is no doubt that as a minister who according to the Telegraph describes himself as "the last Blairite in the Cabinet", Milburn's relentless drive towards privatisation is backed by Blair. An increasing share of the extra cash being pumped into the NHS by Gordon Brown will be pumped straight out again into the coffers of the private sector.

It is significant in this regard that the Winters Report, commissioned by Gordon Brown, which describes an old-Labour style mixed economy, is a privatised NHS through taxation, does not discuss how the money is spent, or how it is to be where the money spent in the services is to be used to buy.

Our bank, Wannsee 2 a flawed and partial study makes no analysis of the value for money of these proposals for the NHS patients — or of funding new Private Finance Initiative (PFI).

Ironically, January 2002 is the 49th anniversary of the Tory government's Hospital Plan for England and Wales, which mass-fully increased public sector investment, and built a new generation of NHS hospitals and general hospitals. New is Labour which is progres-sively privatising the NHS asset base, not least through Private Finance Initiative hospital building programmes, which are likely to increase during 2002.

Given the increasing role in the development of new schools, though as in the NHS serv-ices of backlogging maintenance have escalated alarmingly — with the last ex-ante estimate for 2001/02 "£750m is required for urgent work to avoid closures of private schools", and another £1.1 billion required within two years.

New Labour has spent more on school main-tenance, but has directed much of the new money to building private schools. But Labour's new Education Bill published in December does not address the issue of resources to prop up the fabric of school buildings. Instead it is looking in ways in which schools can be further detached from local communities and any democratic accountability, and turned increasingly into busi-nesses run on commercial lines.

Education Secretary Estelle Morris has been keen to stress that schools will be given autonomy to apply for exemption from current education laws by "future ad-hoc" schemes — as long as they are approved by the Secretary of State.

In other words, schools that fit Mor-ros's idea of innovation, will be able to disregard the national curricu-lum, and tear up the national terms covering teachers' pay and conditions, They may prolong the school day, be in evening or hol-iday working, and focus on a few specialists areas to the exclusion of others. It seems that nobody need be consulted over these changes apart from the Secretary of State.

Nor is there any guarantee of higher quality education among schools which break free. They may well be encouraged to use more such services.

The Bill proposes new ways of backing the private schools by allowing them to be taken over by pri-vates under "cooperative arrangements" or other "good schools".

Of course this increased freedom for the best-educated of the resources to make profits at the expense of the poorest, need not back the undermining difficulty of a two-tier education system. The best predictor of educational success is still social class. Nor does it address the growing shortages of teaching staff.

Of course the more "spe-cialist" schools are encouraged to become, whether on the basis of the subjects they have dropped or included, or on the basis of incorporating more "fee" schools, which selects on the basis of religious prejudices, the more the idea of comprehensive education is weakened, whatever the "specialist" group is.

Of course the Tories, diehard defenders of selective education, have keenly welcomed Morris's call for more faith schools.

While a few Labour back-benchers have expressed reserva-tions — it has been left to the Lib Dems to point out that Morris's vision of faith-based, selective and "cooperative" arrangements is not as far away as people think, and that the distinction and exclusive character of faith schools is undermined.

The divisive and exclusive charac-ter of faith schools is undermined by the education secretary's minister, Canon John Hall, who told the BBC in New Year's message: "The Church intends that its schools offer distinctively Christian education to those who choose to seek such an educa-

New Labour's determina-tion to reform educa-tion is being driven forward by a step backwards — to an essentially Tory, pro-business agenda, with more selection and more money to the very rich at the expense of the poor and the children. The Church under Morris is encouraging the government to use the system to sell off the NHS at a possible profit. It's time to take to the streets to defend the NHS and the teachers on the one hand, and the patients and pupils on the other.

Public sector unions face a stiff challenge. They called off an increasingly vociferous campaign against privatisation in the after-math of September 11; but minis-
ters are making it plain that they have used the terrorist attacks to back their plans. It's time for the gloves to come off, and the fight to resume. 2002 will be a test of strength — and it's one the public services have to win against Tony Blair's privateers.
Workers must fight Argentine austerity

In the same week as the latest stage in the launch of international capital’s most intense phase of financial and monetary projects, the euro, came a rude reminder of the instability of global capitalism. The economic crisis in Argentina has now led to riots on the street, the resignation of two presidents and the threat of a general strike, all in an economy in ‘emerging markets’ for the last three years.

Yet neoliberal analysts have attempted to dismiss these manifestations as manifestations of the Argentine crisis. They have argued that the main difference between what is happening now and what happened in the early 1990s in Russia and Brazil in the late 1990s is that the international financial system is now much more stable and able to withstand problems in a particular country.

Currency and debts crises share one fundamental characteristic when looked at from a Marxist, ecosocialist, perspective. They are not merely redistributive. They arise from struggles over the distribution of the surplus which has been created in production, through the exploitation of the working class. These struggles take place between different national capitalist classes and between capital and labour in the countries affected.

It is false to say that the crisis of debt or credit crises. But it is true that many of the forces, including the Argentine peso devaluation, represents a redistribution to holders of other currencies. Other processes being equal, national capitalist classes will want to keep the value of the currency high, rather than falling, as high as possible, to increase their purchasing power.

However, the instability of the system arises from the fact that such a strategy potentially undermines the basis of capitalist production, by making domestic production uncompetitive in international markets.

The second crisis is a prolonged struggle over distribution, where domestic and international capitalists cannot agree a common strategy for distributive demands. Incompatible approaches lead to capital being unable to impose a vision of how to resolve the crisis and consequently to paralysis of policy-making. This is what is happening in Argentina.

The Argentine economy has suffered from very high levels of foreign debt (now valued at around 80% of GNP for two decades). The fundamental cause of this is the underlying pattern of undemocratic and anti-market policies in the country, which has a small export sector (40% of GNP) and which depends on imported consumer goods and primary commodities, and which has to a large degree failed to break into local production.

As a result of the ‘terms of trade’ which measure the price of Argentine goods in terms of the price of goods produced in Argentina (generally, as long as Argentina imports have moved dramatically against the country in recent years. This process of ‘de-industrialisation’ has itself been a part of the history of imperialist domination of Argentina. The country was established as a ‘de-industrialising’ country in the failed policies of the Argentine capitalist class both under military rule in the 1960s and 1970s and under both Radical and Peronist governments since 1982.

The high level of debt has led Argentina to be very vulnerable to conflicts over redistribution of the kind outlined above. The situation for the Argentine government has been made worse by two further factors. First, the Argentine capitalist class is exceptionally skilled in tax evasion, which has led to a constant problem both of declining government revenue and of flow of capital out of the country. Secondly, the nature of the Argentine constitution and the balance of parliamentary power has meant that the federal government cannot impose its will or spending plans on the powerful provinces.

In the 1980s the Radical government under Raul Alfonsin tried to solve this by extracting more from the working class through a series of austerity programmes. But at that time the Argentine trade union movement was relatively strong and confident, after the overthrow of military rule and with the support of the opposition Peronist movement. The austerity measures failed. Economic inflation resulted as firms tried to safeguard their profits through price rises and workers responded by demanding higher wages.

When the Peronists came to power in the 1990s they faced the problem of hyperinflation which would seriously debilitate capitalism in Argentina. They therefore introduced a ‘currency board’. The central bank was only allowed by law to print money which was backed up by foreign exchange reserves.

The exchange rate was rigidly fixed against the dollar, enabling domestic capitalists and foreign creditors to make large profits. Under this strategy fixed exchange rates would impose discipline on workers, who would realise, it was argued, that wage rises would price them out of jobs.

The exchange rate also safeguarded the value of foreign investments in Argentina and thus attract inflows of capital, while ensuring that the debts could not be repaid, since the peso would not be in danger of falling against the dollar in such a way that the burden of debt would rise.

This became a springboard for a dramatic assault on the working class under Carlos Menem, with cuts in wages, deregulation and a wholesale privatisation of large parts of the economy. Investment boom from 1991 to 1998. The economy grew by an average of 6.2% per cent through the 1990s. Argentina became fixed by the IMF and neoliberal economics as a model economy.

But the fundamental contradictions of production in Argentina were not solved in any way by the policies of Menem and Domingo Cavallo during this period, and as a result the conflicts which had appeared to be resolved were bound to re-erupt.

This is what has happened over the last few months, during which Argentina has been in recession. The immediate cause of the difficulties has been the movement of exchange rates.

Argentina’s main trading partners are Brazil and Europe. Following the devaluation of the Brazilian real in January 1999 and the more or less steady fall of the euro, while the dollar remained strong, Argentine exports have become uncompetitive. But this has only acted to uncover deeper problems with the currency board strategy.

The Argentine economy has weakened, foreign lenders have demanded higher and higher interest rates to compensate for the possibility of debt default. This has both worsened the recession and led to a fiscal crisis for the Argentine state, which has found it increasingly hard to pay the interest on its debt. Slow economic growth and higher government deficits have in turn lowered the confidence of international investors in Argentina and led them to demand even higher rates.

The last eighteen months have seen a very pronounced swing of confidence, with attempted IMF bailouts in November 2000 and August 2001 both failing. The government has desperately tried to shift the burden of debt repayment onto the working class through more austerity.

These, and the effects of the recession, have led to the current unrest. The severity of the crisis has broken the unity between the Argentine capitalist class and foreign creditors, and led to splits and conflicts about how it might be resolved. Two main strategies have emerged.

One, following lenders such as Wolf and Ricardo Hausman of the Inter-American Development Bank, says that the peso must be devalued. The advantage of this for the capitalists is that it opens up the possibility of shifting at least part of the burden of devaluation onto the mass of the Argentine people. Their real wages and savings would be cut back, as happened in Mexico ten years ago and Asia five years ago.

If it allowed interest rates to fall, Wolf argues, then the Argentine economy would grow and allow debt payments to continue with a relatively minor recession. The interests of foreign creditors would be safeguarded, at least to some extent. Nearly all the Argentine ruling class now holds its wealth in the form of dollars, so its wealth is permanently tied up in dollars. If devaluation carries with it real problems: the international impact of the future of the currency board strategy, supported by the IMF, to protect the value of the peso would be dramatically reduced. But developing economies would face a stark choice between letting their currencies float and giving up having a national currency at all, as in the ‘dollarisation’ option adopted by Ecuador and Venezuela, which might spark off a crisis of confidence about the ability of other highly indebted countries to pay their debts.

The alternative is to default on the debt. But with 20% of the economy already owned by Argentine creditors, this would have severe effects on international financial markets. It might spark off a crisis of confidence about the ability of other highly indebted countries to pay their debts.

Brazil, where foreign debt is over 500% of export earnings, and has a much tighter exchange rate, could be affected. It would also raise questions about how the continuing Argentine balance of payments deficit is to be funded.

The IMF is still at the bargaining table, but only because the Argentina government is now so weak and has been vacillated up and down between each of these strategies.

The project of introducing a ‘third currency’, announced by the Brazilian central bank last year, is a basis for a controlled devaluation of the peso. At the same time it would ‘institute a temporary suspension of debt payments. Yet, the government is itself divided and is unable to agree a common strategy with international capital. In these circumstances it cannot present a clear way out of the crisis. The result of this is a situation which in many ways is more problematic for global capitalism than that of 1997 or 1998, the USA, which played a crucial role in evolving crises in developing economies, is now in recession. The Bush government is unwilling to help Argentina but even if they were willing and able to take action, there is no agreed way forward.

There is a danger that Argentina and Brazil are leading a wave of new debtors into similar situations and that the speculative crises were the result of too little financial deregulation in the leading regional banks, industry and the state, cannot be applied to Argentina.

Argentina has adopted precisely the approach prescribed by the IMF and the US. What is different is that the Argentine crisis comes after three years of recession and social polarization, not, as in Brazil, a recovery out of a period of up of economic discontent.

It also needs to be remembered that when the class struggle has intensified in several neighbouring countries, such as Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, Argentina will not be able to depend primarily on the Argentine working class to resist its political and economic programmes, and will balance the antagonistic forces to make it pay for the crisis. But already enough has happened for Argentina to become a crucial case for socialists to use in the fight against the fundamental injustices and instability of the capitalist world economy.
As 'Jack the Knife' takes over... Scottish Executive buried after foot in mouth outbreak

Gordon Morgan

Henry McLeish's tenure as First Minister of Scotland effectively ended on BBC's Question Time when he was shown to have lied over the sub-letting of his constituency office.

Henry tried to stagger on, and offered to repay up to £300,000 in expenses or resign. He then said he had arranged for an MP's constituency office to be registered in the name of his wife. He was found to be making false declarations.

His fate was sealed when an SSP supporter in First Minister Donald Dewar's constituency complained to the Scottish Parliament's Standards and Procedures Committee. Dewar, a member of the Committee and an applicant for the SSP's leadership, resigned in the wake of his decision.

He said that it was right that he should resign from the Committee in order to ensure that there was no conflict of interest. The Committee's decision to disqualify Dewar was announced on Friday, following a hearing on Thursday.

In a statement, Dewar said that his resignation was a matter of personal integrity and that he had acted in good faith.

The Committee's decision means that Dewar will not be able to take any further part in the debate on the resignation of McLeish, who is set to appear before the Committee on Friday.

The Scottish Executive, the Government of Scotland, has been described as a "disgrace" by opposition politicians, who have accused it of being a "shambles".

The Edinburgh-based executive, which was set up in 1999 to replace the Scottish Executive, has been mired in controversy since its inception, with allegations of corruption and mismanagement.

The Committee's decision has been widely welcomed by those who have been critical of the Executive's performance, with one commentator describing it as a "moment of triumph for democracy".

However, it has also been met with criticism from some quarters, with opponents of the Executive arguing that it has been used to cover up for the failures of the previous administration.

Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party leader Ruth Davidson said: "This is a welcome development and I congratulate the Standards and Procedures Committee on its decision.

"However, we must be cautious and not assume that everything is now perfect. The Executive has a lot of work to do to regain the public's trust and confidence."

The Committee's decision comes following a series of high-profile scandals involving members of the Executive.

These have included allegations of corruption and mismanagement, which have led to calls for the executive to be scrapped.

In a statement, the Committee said: "The Committee has been considering the resignation of Mr McLeish for some time.

"We have concluded that there is no justification for his continued membership of the Scottish Executive and that he should therefore resign.

"We have also concluded that the Scottish Executive should be dissolved and a new Executive set up in its place.

"We have recommended that the First Minister of Scotland should immediately appoint a new Executive.

"We believe that this is the only way forward for Scotland and we urge the First Minister to take urgent action."
The Socialist Alliance constitutional conference was held in London on Saturday 1st December, last year, with over 700 members present. ALAN THORNE reports

The conference successfully adopted a new constitution proposed by the International Socialist Group (ISG) the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and five prominent independents — by 349 votes against 31] for all influencing votes.

The new constitution gives Socialist Alliance members full rights to determine policy, elect leadership bodies and select candidates to stand in elections. It also enshrined the rights of freedom of expression and dissent within the Alliance and the right to contribute to publications other than those of the Alliance itself.

It is a good framework for the next stage of the development of the Alliance. It was partly achieved because the conference, however, did err if it had been widely predicted in advance — was the carefully staged walk-out by the Socialist Party (SP).

Five alternative constitutions were presented to the conference. That proposed by the SyISG and a number of key independents was adopted.

Those proposed by Workers Power and by the GWG were either, and both effectively called for the SA to become a revolutionary party, Pete McAlpine, one of the existing officers, put forward another constitution which was essentially the same as the ISG and a number of key independents was adopted.

The conference then adopted a new constitution for the ISG which is the key independent party to the conference. It is a good framework for the development of the Alliance. It was partly achieved because the conference, however, did err if it had been widely predicted in advance — was the carefully staged walk-out by the Socialist Party (SP).

Five alternative constitutions were presented to the conference. That proposed by the SyISG and a number of key independents was adopted.

Those proposed by Workers Power and by the GWG were either, and both effectively called for the SA to become a revolutionary party, Pete McAlpine, one of the existing officers, put forward another constitution which was essentially the same as the ISG and a number of key independents was adopted.

The conference then adopted a new constitution for the ISG which is the key independent party to the conference. It is a good framework for the development of the Alliance. It was partly achieved because the conference, however, did err if it had been widely predicted in advance — was the carefully staged walk-out by the Socialist Party (SP).
Why even RMT chiefs can't be bothered with New Labour

In the run up to the Socialist Alliance Trade Union Conference, Greenback looks at the debate on the political fund that is taking place in the RMT.

Referring back to his historic role in the formation of the Labour Party a century ago, the RMT leadership always held its links with Labour in high regard. Jimmy Krippo was always proud of the deep links between Labour and the union at all levels.

At the top the RMT sponsored half the shadow cabinet and had great expectations of a Labour government. A significant number of union activists had been encouraged to become Labour councillors and at the grass roots the union benefited from the higher degree of party membership of any trade union.

But in the last few years it has been harder and harder for the union bureaucracy to defend our links with a Labour party that was definitely not returning. Clear expectations passed at the last two years RMT conference have in effect turned a yellow card — the Labour Party has been warned, "don't expect continued union funding unless you start implementing policies in line with union members'. needs."

No U-turn

There was a view that such a U-turn has taken place. On the one hand the disastrous attempt to privatise London Underground continues. And the failure to take any steps towards rationalisation of the railways has left many members disillusioned. What started with Labour excuses about loss of resources ("Wasn't it more important to invest in hospitals and schools?") hardened into a clear ideological support of the private sector.

We need to continue to argue for the case for a publication in order to develop the argument for the next time we get the chance to propose it.

The important thing now is how the incoming leadership of the SA (and the constitution) responds to the adoption of the new constitution and structure. If the SA is allowed to stand still in the next few months (as the SWP allowed it to do and defended it as an essential)

Campaigning on issues such as the miners and asylum rights is vital for Socialist Alliance

in an increasingly inefficient system with increasing public subsidy. With subsidy now three times as high as it was before privatisation RMT members were not free to ask — wouldn't a rationalisation actually save money for schools and hospitals? Such is the disaffection that the right at last year's conference were reduced to arguing that, despite all its faults, at least Labour was "our party" — what we had to do was to fight it.

But even this rings hollow in most activists' experience. RMT Labour councillors claim that they have no say at local level in what the party in office does, and cannot be bothered to stand for re-election.

Even the right's candidate for General Secretary admits that he cannot be bothered to attend meetings of Labour's Regional Executive in the south west on which he sits — because it is utterly irrelevant. Support for Labour has become irrelevant for helping the union in its struggles. Indeed it is clear that in most cases Labour is now an obstacle. The RMT has let them throw down the gauntlet over the question of our use of the political fund. Overall up to now we have last reservations which badly state the intention to break with Labour; it is inevitable that such sentiments will be expressed with increasing vigour at successive conferences.

For now, the approach which has found most favour is to argue for the liberation of the union's political fund to be used as the members see best fit: in each circumstance — for Labour candidates where individuals will support our policies, for other candidates where they won't.

Scotland

This has already meant the union conference agreeing to meet with Tommy Sheridan and the SSP to discuss campaigning through the Scottish Parliament — Krippo, and now acting GS Vernon Hince, have spent two years bashing to ensure this decision is not implemented.

C overt support was given to Ken Livingstone in the GLA elections, and many Branches, no longer able to stomach giving local affiliations to CLPs, have supported independent political campaigning, such as with the Campaign Against Tube Privatisation electoral stand and including supporting the Socialist Alliance, in practise if not officially. Such local moves need to be deepened. And as the deadline for conference resolutions approaches the formal battle for the future of our links with Labour needs to be up in the next few months — drawing up campaigning priorities inside the union.

Socialist Alliance Conference

The Political Fund - where should it go?

Stopping privatisation and job cuts

Saturday 16th March

11am to 4pm

South Camden Community School, Charrington Street, London NW1.

Conference fee £4 waged/£2 unwaged.
No substance in complaints
Socialist Party makes its excuses ... and leaves the Alliance

Since the Socialist Alliance conference, the Socialist Party has issued a statement, agreed by their Executive Committee on December 7, defending their walkout. This reply by ALAN THORNEY deals with some aspects of this statement which raise questions about the conference report on pages 6-7.

The political framework of the Socialist Party's statement is their call for a new mass party of the working class. This is its programme for a number of reasons:

1) The use of the word 'mass' is crucial. Whilst the SP calls for a mass party, the PSF is opposed to the formation of a separate party of the left which is not, at this stage, a mass party; for example, the Socialist Party or a new party on the same lines in England even though it originally welcomed the formation of the Socialists Labour Party by Arthur Scargill in the mid 1990s.

2) The statement argues that since the Labour Party has been transformed by Blair into a party of 'the', a new mass party (a reformed Labour Party), will emerge or less spontaneously from future exploitation of this 'cleavage', based on struggle. Meanwhile there is little the existing left can do to prepare for this or bring it about.

3) While the Socialist Party are wrong to say that Blair has deserted the Socialists Alliance, this seemingly good-natured statement conceals that crucially important political space has opened up to the left of Labour; that is what the Socialist Alliance is all about.

4) Where they are wrong is in dismissing the need to prepare for such a situation. The idea that the working class will leap from a situation of no organised alternative to new Labour to a new mass party is fanciful in the extreme. The preparation needed today in the form of a new organisation of the left may well be crucial to what becomes possible when upsurges of struggle take place and bigger developments become possible.

5) Future upsurges of struggle in Scotland, for example, would be more likely to draw socialist conclusions with the SSP in existence than without it.

Unfortunately it would be wrong to assume that workers involved in struggle will automatically draw the conclusions that the answer is a new socialist party in the absence of an effective, united organisation of the left fighting alongside them.

The advantage of having already in place a broad and democratic socialist party which would not be a reformed Labour Party is obvious.

Today we have the opportunity in England, to begin to build such an organisation as the SA. The forces already exist for such a party to be the form of the existing left organisations and the disaffection that is taking place, with New Labour.

The challenge for the far left today is to be able to respond to this. This means breaking from its sectarian past and building an organisation which can be a point of attraction not just for revolutionary socialists but for those who have not yet embraced revolutionary politics - people who are lacking from New Labour, as individuals or small groups.

It is this challenge which must shape the type of organisation we build today, and it is to this challenge which the SP falls with the model of the Socialist Alliance is made for at the SA conference. This was an alliance of the constituent organisations rather than alliance which emphasises the rights of individual members - making it the least effective way to fill the space to the left of New Labour.

The SP claims that they established Socialist Alliance in the mid-1990s on a federal basis; and then in the last two years the SWP came to, took it over, and centralised the organisation to an unacceptable degree. This is a version of history that is hard to recognise.

Arthur Scargill had excluded the SP from the SPF, the SP did set up Socialist Alliance in areas like Coventry, but they did not consistently build Socialist Alliance in areas where they had forces: and even where they did organise, they did so in a way that treated the latter as their own front organisations.

Some local alliances came into being for separate reasons, such as the expulsion of the majority of the Labour Party Group in Walsall, who set up the Democratic Labour Party there - and affiliated to the Alliance.

At this point, the Socialist Alliance did not really exist as a national organisation with a consistent political or electoral practice.

Things began to change around the time of the European elections in 1999. An attempt was made to establish a London SA for those elections. It founded when the SPW were only partly on board, withdrew when Scargill intervened. The following year, with the SPW fully on board, the LSA stood in the GLA elections. From then on, and through the general election campaign, the SA became a very different organisation. Local alliances came into being in virtually every area of England. The general election campaign was by far the most extensive policy statement adopted by the Alliance and this stage the overwhelming majority of the far left were involved. Therefore claims by the SP that the SWP stole its bull are not only baseless and specious - they are also historically dubious.

Another central plank of the SP statement is the federation versus centralisation debate - the idea that the SP originally built the SA on a federal basis, and the SSP have now changed it to a centralised structure. In this the meaning of the words change with yesterday's federalism becoming today's centralisation.

For example when Scargill excluded the SP from the SPF he did it on the basis that he would not countenance any federalism. By that he meant that he would not have any organised political formations inside the SLP. He has now changed that position, as he said on the meeting in the run-up to the conference: "If you want to join the SLP you have to leave any other party you are in first!"

The SP were right to reject Scargill's ultimatum, and demand to be allowed inside the SLP as an organisation and that the SLP should have a federal structure. They were right to demand that as federal structure is what they are rejecting today as ultra-centralisation.

In the new constitution of the SLP, which is far more federal than any constitution the

"The SP were right to reject Scargill's ultimatum ... What they rightly demanded then as federal structure is what they are rejecting today as ultra-centralisation."

SLP is likely to have had with the SP in it: for all the talk about "peace" they have not, today the SP denounces the political direction of the SLP, and is absolutely against the federal structure - even though the political situation is much more advanced since it was then.

The new SA constitution is rightly a move in the direction of a party structure, but this is not merely a move towards federalism, it is not federal. Its policies are not political, but organisational, the constituent organisations, which are explicitly given the right to dissent and the right to distribute their own publications.

Membership of the SA is for both local Alliances and the Alliance and individuals is on the basis of broad aims, not detailed programmes. This is exactly the same as the outgoing constitution.

The new constitution specifically recognises the rights of minorities to publically promote views other than those of the SA if they feel so inclined - this is clearer than in the old constitution. The outgoing constitution is not to obstruct campaigns decided by the SA. The new constitution requires the declarations as follows. The first is exactly the same as the outgoing constitution, whilst the second is an extension of it:

1) "The SA shall, as far as possible, open, inclusive and flexible membership, based on voluntary participation. The SA is politically pluralistic and encourages all individuals and perspectives to participate fully in our vision of a socialist society and our way of working towards it. Members of other parties, organisations and groups who take the SA point of view will be able to keep their identities as these organisations whilst participating fully within the development of the SA."

2) In the spirit of the new constitution respecting the right of minorities publicly to promote views in the event that an organised minority intends to take any action conflicting with a decision taken by the SA, which is based on the viewpoint which the minority should inform the SA at the relevant level of its intention to do so."
The first meeting of the National Executive of the Socialist Alliance was a considerable success: held in Birmingham on the 13th December, it was well attended, with high levels of political discussion and business-like procedures. It bodes well for the future. In particular Liz Davies proved to be an excellent choice to replace Dave Nellist as chairperson of the Alliance. Dave Packer regrets.

With a Deft hand Liz Davies steered the meeting in productive directions – sometimes firm, but never bullying, and with complete fairness. Other officers were provisionally elected. The meeting also addressed opportunities laid ahead for the Socialist Alliance. This was not only the very important Trade Union Conference in Whitehall and the May local election.

There was also the real possibility that in the future left could make a political breakthrough into mainstream politics, independently in its own name and with its own socialist policies, and occupy the space that had been left by a Labour and the Blair love affair with right wing free market capitalism.

The national conference of the Alliance has instituted a new constitution that will mean the basis on which we can now move forward to establish a national structure.

We present ourselves as an organisation with a realistic alternative to New Labour and everything they stand for and pole of support for leftward moving workers and activists. In the first major discussion on general perspectives and the role of the executive, there was agreement that we must activate the Alliance around several themes, under four type campaigns and events: organisational and front line preparation for the May Elections; and a membership drive.

Trade union conference

It was agreed that the most important that local Alliances should build is the Socialist Alliance Trade Union Conference. It was recognised as a potential catalyst for re-learning of Alliance in the next phase of its development. The two main themes of the Conference had been already decided. They were the trade union battle – where should it go? and Stopping privatisation and jobs. And the conference was also mainly local trade unions.

There is much more. It means immediate local campaigning to get TU branch officials and shop stewards in personal capacity (if not officially) to sponsor the event and that they send reps/observers and/or corps themselves.

There are a number of other initiatives on the ground, for example, the war. This remains important, although temporarily winding down. But only if preparations are made to target particular areas.

The issue of Civil Liberties is also very important in this context. There are significant struggles taking place around housing, race relations, funding, and cuts.

The conference left it very important that all local Socialist Alliances establish a basic framework of a set of priorities to enable us to realise the full potential of the Socialist Alliance nationally and locally. As well as distributing campaigning material on the streets (leaflets etc.) and on the log estate, outside workplaces and colleges, we must pay attention in our unity from work to establish long term links with local labour movement.

This also applies to well established campaigns, for example on asylum seekers. We stressed that the Alliance

Temper our ambitions with realism about available resources. We must decide how best to maximise our impact locally.

We must give careful attention to a smaller number of wards where we can can contest and thereby make a real impact. Where possible we should come to agreement with other left organisations outside, once again, we should not stand against one another.

In this respect we looked at how we needed a membership drive. The unfortunate decision of the SP to stage an unprovoked walk out during the recent General Election Conference had left a hole in the middle of the conference chamber.

Sectarian

However, in most localities the sectarian decision by the SP to pursue their own narrow party-building interests at the expense of the broader movement will have little impact.

Sadly, this is because they had not developed very far, and so they had mostly withdrawn from the local Yes votes to two totally local, but there is plenty of space to build the Socialist Alliance.

With such attention to detail, it is no wonder the SP have resorted to sectarian insinuations rather measured argument.
Solemnly, by post while British postal workers fight Consipia, European postal workers are also up against an onslaught on the service - and in its name!

**Terry Conway**

The 3rd Conference of the European capitalist CP in Brussels on the 12-13 December 2001 in the run up to the Lisbon summit of the European Union and the demonstration would yet grant it. I attended the conference of behalf of the Socialist Alliance, which was also represented at the previous conference in Paris in December 2000, though not at the inaugural conference in Lisbon during the Portuguese presidency of the EU.

The list of participating organisations (see box below) comprises the major political organisations in the countries of western Europe, which are involved in the process of reshaping the left in their own countries. The Types of political developments that led to the emergence of the Socialist Alliance in Europe are not unique to Britain but part of a broader picture. These conferences provide an opportunity for common discussion amongst organisations that are trying to relate to the political space opened up by the crisis of the traditional mass parties across Europe during the 1990s in which they can learn from each others experiences.

Some countries were not represented at all, either because no organisation was invited - because none exist which the organisations felt fulfilled the criteria (e.g. Sweden, Greece, Germany) - or because they declined the invitation (Norway, Red Electoral Alliance). This was the first of these conferences that Rifondazione Comunista had attended.

Clearly the political map on the left in each country varies - for example those countries which had mass Communist Parties face a different situation than we do in England. Despite the different traditions and the gaps, there has been a process of reshaping taking place in European left politics over the last decade.

The increasing adherence of Social Democratic parties to neoliberalism has resulted in increasing numbers of those who traditionally looked to them being open to new alternatives and organisations - the process we are familiar with in Britain which led to the rise of the Socialist Alliance. Communist Parties have also been in turmoil - with some merging over to social democratic positions, others trying to retain the Stalinist model, despite the extent to which it has been discredited. Some currents coming out of this tradition have tried to develop on a different path - one which questioned at least some aspects of their Socialist Party membership, such as the lack of internal democracy and was willing to work with broader forces.

The most important organisation to develop out of this process is undoubtedly Rifondazione Comunista - the Party of Communist Refoundation in Italy with 90,000 members. The discussion inside this organisation is currently deepening in the run up to its fifth congress due to take place in the spring.

The anti-globalisation movement has had a profound impact on the organisation, leading to a text from the leadership for the congress that argues that the party must build itself as an instrument of the movement rather than of the institutions.

The text also explicitly argues that in order to do so, a more thorough questioning of aspects of the tradition of the Italian Communist Party is necessary. Where organisations of the revolutionary left have been accustomed to these developments across the continent and willing to break with some of their own previous sectarianism, new organisations, parties and fronts have been born some of which have already begun to have significant successes at both electoral and campaigning levels.

It is important that the Socialist Alliance relates to these developments. So far there has not been much collaboration even at a bilateral level with any of the other European organisations. The emphasis with which the speaker from Rifondazione was greeted at the December conference shows that there is enthusiasm for these types of links and discussions, and the new Executive should look at how to develop this.

The representation from England - consisting of three different organisations - was not ideal, but arose for historic reasons. However it is something that should be recaptured for future meetings. There should be a single delegation from England through the Socialist Alliance. This should be a pluralist delegation in which different currents - including the SWP - should have the opportunity to express their own views where the Alliance itself does not have a position. If at all possible the delegation should include a number of key independents on the new Executive.

Inevitably the discussion at the Brussels meeting was dominated by the situation in the aftermath of September 11 and around the war leading to the adoption of the statement printed here. In general there was a good deal of agreement on the report, given by Francisco Lozada of the Left Bloc of Portugal, and on the statement which circulated in draft form in advance of the conference. Lozada's report was on similar lines but with more emphasis on economic developments.

There was a general agreement that the ruling class offensive since September 11 had not silenced the anti-globalisation movement although clearly this would be further tested on the streets of Brussels itself in the foreseeable future.

There was discussion on the evolution of the anti-war movement in different countries and its current unevenness. The French comrades argued that the key reason for the weakness of the movement there lay with the role of the Communist Party who were not prepared to break with their Social Democratic partners in the opposition of the war. Comrades from the SWP suggested that the single central slogan of Stop the War had been key to the success of the anti-war movement in Britain but the Italians pointed out that the more successful movement in Italy had two key slogans: No to War, No to Terrorism.

The British Socialist Party played a generally powerful key role in the proceedings and did not use the opportunity as one might have feared to attack the rest of the British left in the wake of the walk-out from the Socialist Alliance. They did however state their disagreement with the draft statement on the question of the process of European integration - suggesting that as the economic crisis deepened this would inevitably lead to the rise of nationalism.

There was one major controversy that stood out in these exchanges in which the representatives spoke - how to deal with the question of Islamic organisations. In this discussion the meeting was grappling with two difficulties. Firstly there were clearly differing opinions, though none of the participants had the view that had been expressed in the anti-war movement in England, that this was an adaptation of the Green Alliance in Denmark who was aware of the reactionary nature of all Islamic movements.

It was actually quite difficult and dangerous - to make general and timeless characterisations of organisations which are involved in different social and political contexts in different parts of the world.

I agreed with those who felt that the original draft of the statement could be read as suggesting that all Islamic organisations could be assessed in the same way and that they never played any progressive role.

The approach suggested by Marmer Smith of the Scottish Socialist Party, and strongly adopted in the final draft was to limit the scope of the statement by making direct reference to organisations like Al-Quida. The Irish draft was strengthened by the inclusion of the need to fight against Islamophobia.

This and a number of other changes arising out of the discussion strengthened what was already a useful statement around which there was general consensus. The SWP did initially move a further amendment which was rejected and the final formulation at the end of the second last sentence of the third

**Who was there**

Participants were: the Red Green Alliance (RGA, Denmark), the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), the Socialist Alliance (SA, England), the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party (IP, Netherlands), the Linke, the CIO (Italy), the Communist League (IPL, Portugal), Esquelas Alternativas ("Left Space", Spain), Rifondazione Comunista (Italy), Solidaritiert ("Solidaritiert", Switzerland, Geneva), the PDP ("Party of Solidarity and Liberty") of Turkey, and Platforma de la Izquierda ("Left Platform", Spain) as observers.

**Solidarity by post while British postal workers fight Consipia, European postal workers are also up against an onslaught on the service - and in its name!**
For the third time in ten years, imperialism is at war. After the unfinished war (for oil) against Iraq and the ‘humanitarian’ intervention in the Balkans, the United States is bombing Afghanistan, one of the poorest countries on earth, pretending in doing so to ‘rescind terrorisms worldwide’.

‘Self-defense’, ‘humanitarianism’, ‘western civilisation’, ‘the democratic model’ or ‘crusade’ all are used in excess.

They cannot hide their basic objectives: restore a strong authority on a region with abounding raw materials, wealth, and opportunities for power, and impose on these people that are mass annihilated, whole populations terrorized, governments and movements broken down or eliminated, without restraint to obtain it.

We unanimously condemn the September 11th attacks as an act of mass terrorism against the civilian population.

The project of reactionary Islamic organizations like al-Qaeda is to establish a theoretical, totalitarian and oppressive society. They have used terrorist means to control the general population over the immense riches of the region. But they don’t struggle for the liberation and welfare of their people. This condemnation must be accompanied by a denunciation of all racist and chauvinistic campaigns.

This new international aggression is the direct result of the advent of global capitalism, with its deepening and sharpening of the rich and poor gap.

This brutal war will never lead to a lasting peace. On the contrary, from Afghanistan, again under the control of the war lords, to Palestine, where Israel’s racial terrorism has a hands-free, this war can only lead to new wars. It is up to the Afghan people to decide its own destiny.

The European Union, which is itself a motor of globalization, is clearly not in concurrence with the US government.

After some initial hesitations, it is participating in the war with its own objectives: a secondary imperialist power: to appear close to the US, the only superpower in charge of the global ‘new world order’; to hold on its position inside the triad (US, Japan, Europe) to enlarge its zone of influence, supporting its multinationals in the conquest of new areas for trade and investment; to get its share of the final war-booty.

In both cases, the EU attempts to develop a more “humanitarian” and “peaceful” profile, and to take its own political-diplomatic initiatives. It tries to build on the unpopular war in Iraq, in the context of the cold war between the US and its war adventurism, that threatens to extend the theatre of war to Iraq, Somalia, Syria, Lebanon, and even Palestine, and across the Ocean, to Colombia.

Or on the fears of “wild” immigration: From Eastern Europe. Finally, the EU will be unable to control the gates of those who are also not only “necessary sacrifices” upon the working class to pay for the “armed arm” of its dreams.

We oppose NATO as well as any European army. We are also against the rising militarism in the member States.

The terrorist attack of September 11th and the imperialist war have given a big impetus to the state building policies of the EU. Under the pretext of the terrorist threat, it aims at protecting any form of radical action by the popular and working classes, any social and political struggle to change the economic, social, political structures of society, and it is supported by a majority of the population.

Indeed, “terrorist offences” will be all those “...intentionally committed by an individual or a group against one or more countries, its institutions or people, with the aim of intimidating them in seriously alter or destroying the political, economic, or social structures of those countries.

And one becomes a “terrorist group” without even “more than two persons” taking part in activities to commit terrorist offences, i.e., any political party, trade union, section, antiracist association, feminist group, and everyone of its members can be jailed from 2 to 20 years.

The purpose is to discourage people from the cause to fight against the evils of this system, and to outlaw the organisations that defend the fundamental right of self-determination and contest the capitalist order.

“His state of emergency” looms upon the labour and social movements and their struggles.


d\n
A radical right-wing government will find in these laws a complete tool kit for repression that a left government might not dare to use. Once more, war has created a splitting line: once more, social democracy (supported by the Greens in some countries) has done the dirty work, especially in the key countries of the EU: Blair, Schroeder, Jospin!

The ruling classes, the financial-industrial capitalists understand clearly that full scale offensive will meet with opposition and resistance.

One of the objectives of this global state of war is to stifle the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist, anti-globalisation, to destroy its offensive spirit and prevent its impact on the broader labour and social movement.

But it is nothing to stop the mobilisations: more than 100,000 workers, trade unionists and youth contested the EU Summit in Brussels.

The second World Social Forum in Porto Alegre will offer a mass platform for developing the critique of capitalism and for launching on a world scale a new wave of struggles against capitalism.

Without abandoning its own aims and objectives, the movement against globalisation represents an important lever in support of the left movement against the war, imperialism, headed by the anti-militarist and anti-neoliberal forces.

Taking advantage of the war, the EU has launched the biggest attack on democratic rights and liberties since the Second World War.

Under the pretext of the terrorist threat, it aims at preventing any form of radical action by the popular and working classes, any social and political struggle to change the economic, social, political structures of society, even if it is supported by a majority of the population.

Indeed, “terrorist offences” will be all those “...intentionally committed by an individual or a group against one or more countries, its institutions or people, with the aim of intimidating them in seriously altering or destroying the political, economic, or social structures of those countries.

And one becomes a “terrorist group” without even “more than two persons” taking part in activities to commit terrorist offences, i.e., any political party, trade union, section, antiracist association, feminist group, and everyone of its members can be jailed from 2 to 20 years.

The purpose is to discourage people from the cause to fight against the evils of this system, and to outlaw the organisations that defend the fundamental right of self-determination and contest the capitalist order.

“His state of emergency” looms upon the labour and social movements and their struggles.

A radical right-wing government will find in these laws a complete tool kit for repression that a left government might not dare to use. Once more, war has created a splitting line: once more, social democracy (supported by the Greens in some countries) has done the dirty work, especially in the key countries of the EU: Blair, Schroeder, Jospin!

The ruling classes, the financial-industrial capitalists understand clearly that full scale offensive will meet with opposition and resistance.

One of the objectives of this global state of war is to stifle the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist, anti-globalisation, to destroy its offensive spirit and prevent its impact on the broader labour and social movement.

But it is nothing to stop the mobilisations: more than 100,000 workers, trade unionists and youth contested the EU Summit in Brussels.

The second World Social Forum in Porto Alegre will offer a mass platform for developing the critique of capitalism and for launching on a world scale a new wave of struggles against capitalism.

Without abandoning its own aims and objectives, the movement against globalisation represents an important lever in support of the left movement against the war, imperialism, headed by the anti-militarist and anti-neoliberal forces.

Taking advantage of the war, the EU has launched the biggest attack on democratic rights and liberties since the Second World War.

Under the pretext of the terrorist threat, it aims at preventing any form of radical action by the popular and working classes, any social and political struggle to change the economic, social, political structures of society, even if it is supported by a majority of the population.

Indeed, “terrorist offences” will be all those “...intentionally committed by an individual or a group against one or more countries, its institutions or people, with the aim of intimidating them in seriously altering or destroying the political, economic, or social structures of those countries.

And one becomes a “terrorist group” without even “more than two persons” taking part in activities to commit terrorist offences, i.e., any political party, trade union, section, antiracist association, feminist group, and everyone of its members can be jailed from 2 to 20 years.

The purpose is to discourage people from the cause to fight against the evils of this system, and to outlaw the organisations that defend the fundamental right of self-determination and contest the capitalist order.

“His state of emergency” looms upon the labour and social movements and their struggles.
The ‘war on terror’ – a preliminary balance sheet

Paul Clarke

The ‘war on terror’ represents a determined attempt to push world multipolarity to the right under US hegemony, and to deliver a knockout blow against all the main opponents of the US at home and abroad. The political-military offensive of the Bush team, targets in particular the global justice movement through the USA, the European Union and opponents at home, including the Democrats in Congress. It also aims to help the US achieve key US political and economic priorities – economically the absolute domination of the US corporations and US world leadership.

Now, for the first time since the end of the Cold War, since September 11 the US project has an overarching ideology, the ‘war against terrorism’. It represents an ambitious new stage, an attempt to politically wipe out all opposition to the US world leadership campaign, and to secure for decades ahead the ‘new world order’ which Bush senior talked about at the time of the 1991 US-led military campaign of the Gulf and the Iran war.

Ideologically, the ‘war against terrorism’ is an increasingly open and blatant espousal of imperialism, leading some critics (like Professor Niall Ferguson) to argue that the US should openly declare that only US domination is the ‘virtual US world government’ – can make things work, can impose its will. A more ‘multilateral’ version of this has been proposed by leading US Labour Party congress speaker in October, espoused by the Bush administration, the National Security Council and the Labour Party at its conference in November, espoused by a new vision of the ‘West’ as the ‘centre of the world’. This is the basis of the West’s policy.

Any balance sheet of how far the US has succeeded in its objectives since September 11 must be extremely provisional. When the Bush-Cheney team declared this will be a prolonged campaign, they mean it. The next year will provide important new tests of strength between the US and its political opponents which will make the picture clearer. But already certain trends are clear.

Afghanistan – has spectacularly succeeded in its objectives of destabilisation, sanctions and war. Both regional and the Al Qaeda networks, although not all the time of fighting in suppressing or killing Osama Bin Laden.

The relative ease of this victory, and the US ‘N Bush’ sound, has strengthened the Pentagon ‘hawks’ and weakened the more cautious camp around Colin Powell in the State Department. This makes new short-term attacks on other states much more likely, in turn making the building and extension of the world peace movement vital.

In the world’s most one-sided war vulnerable targets to further US military dominance

The alliance which the US built around the attack on Afghanistan has largely survived intact with spectacular results in relation to Russia, but it is now clear that this will probably not survive the extension of the campaign to an assault on Iraq, Yemen, Somalia or Sudan. The US understands this – and basically doesn’t care.

At the DoHa World Trade Organisation meeting in November the US succeeded in getting through its main agenda, the launching of a new round of talks about liberalising world trade, the first such negotiations since the end of the Uruguay round of the GATT talks in 1994. But substantial problems remain, particularly opposition in the US Congress.

Any US attempt to diplomatically coax Ariel Sharon’s play of letting Israeli’s anti-Palestinian war part of the war on terrorism has now dropped out of sight; and the occasional Bush-Blair talk of a ‘Palestinian war’ is clearly a cover for allowing the Israelis to do what they want.

Numerous governments have responded enthusiastically to the US offer to sell them their domestic opponents to the list of terrorists against what the International Community' in waging war, including Turkey, India, the Philippines and Spain; but more more gratefully than Vladimir Putin, who has seen his genocide in Chechnya sacrificed as part of the war on terrorism.

And the EU governments in particular have backed the attack on Palestinian rights, which is most outrageous expression in the most docile without trial in the US, and the new anti-terrorism law in the UK.

The evidence so far is that the global justice movement has not been decisively thrown back, and indeed its existence has contributed to the rapid building of a mass anti-war movement, the centre of which is Iraq and Britain. However, for the moment, ‘war on terror’ is the one possible exception to this assessment.

The War

The US unleashed the full force of its arsenal against Afghanistan, with predictable, although not that chimerical war. Bombs used against the Taliban have been of equal destructive capacity as to chemical weapons, although of course without the radioactive fallout. Thousands have been massaged as a result. Professor Mack Harold of the University of New Hampshire has calculated, by cross-referencing all the reports of civilian deaths, that 3500 civilians have died under the US bombardment – probably more than died on September 11th.

Thousands more have died, and it is clear that the US has given the green light to anti-Taliban forces to kill non-Afghan prisoners (mainly from Arab countries and Pakistan). US and British ‘special forces’ have directed these massacres, most notoriously after the battles of Kunduz and Kandahar. In both cases about 400 fighters are known to have been slaughtered.

After the battles for Kandahar up to 100 prisoners died while being transported in sealed containers. As in Iraq and Kosovo the US victory has been based on the massive use of airpower, with minimal commitment of US ground forces, and a consequently low ‘body count’ of US dead, although it is probably several times more than the 10 or so reported in the press.

Even if the total US dead were 100, historically this is a miniscule level of casualties, which has created a military euphoria in Washington, with immediate consequences for the way the war to other ‘rogue states’.

Hawks in the ascendency

This has sharply changed the balance of power between the hawks’ Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld (and his even more vigour-happy deputy Paul Wolfowitz), and the more cautious Secretary of State Colin Powell. Of course, the different positions of these two camps are only different tactical options; but it’s clear that the lead person now in White House deliberations in Ramstein, and that Powell is marginalised – at least for the moment.

That means we can expect the conclusion of the war in Afghanistan will come more directly and less directly by attacks on other ‘rogue states’ which is especially crucial since the US had made it clear that it is not interested in any post-war peace-keeping or ‘nation-building’ role, which will be left to the British and the Australians.

Whether or not Bush starts with Somalia, Yemen or Sudan, the prime target is of course Israel. Probably the US will try to liberate a major Israeli city, or a certain of the country, and proclaim an anti-Saddam government from there.

This means that a major war with Iraq, with inescapable consequences in terms of casualties and material damage, is in virtually certain sometime in the next year, maybe much sooner. As the Daily Mirror reported that, both the Iraq military and the civilian population have been preparing for this war since September 11th. As we discuss below, this poses huge responsibilities on the trade unions and on the left.

The pre-existing alliance in support of the Afghan war will collapse with the launch of a new war in the Gulf. Basically the US doesn’t care. Rumsfeld has declared ‘the war must determine the alliance, not the alliance the war’. In other words, we alone decide the war, and build a new alliance from there. These wars we fight are not up for discussion with any of our temporary or permanent allies.

Afghanistan has taught them that they are in an immensely powerful position, and can get its facto com-

World Outlook

Defeated Taliban think about themselves for terror and US "justice"
Russia and Star Wars

The speed with which Vladimir Putin aligned Russia with the "war on terrorism" surprised many, and probably the United States itself. His stance is reflected in his decision to give the go-ahead to the stationing of US special forces in Uzbekistan, and his mild reaction to the widely forecast US decision to pull out of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM), in preparation for the new "Son of Star Wars" programme.

Putin would be an idiot to believe Bush's claim that the anti-missile proposals are not aimed at Russia (although correct to believe that the main target is China). But Putin's role in the "war on terrorism" represents absolutely fundamental strategic choices for the Russian people.

Putin has decided to go for an explicit leadership role in the current Russian对外 strategy, a real sense of Russian-ness. But this move requires a new strategy for the nation. Only then will a new strategy for the country.

Russia and Star Wars

much more than Russia. But from the point of view of a pre-capitalist development in Moscow, and its super-rich and middle class supporters, mainly in the western Russian cities, what more can they gain from trying to play a hard nationalistic line, or confronting the US on a range of foreign policy issues?

Palistine

To ensure support from Arab states, in the immediate aftermath of September 11 the Bush administration, under the leadership of Condoleeza Rice, the US Secretary of State, and Donald Rumsfeld, the US Secretary of Defense, made verbal gestures in the direction of the need for a Palestinian state. It seemed that Bush was embarrassed by Sharon's intransigence and the anti-Americanism of his government. The Bush administration was keen to distance itself from Sharon's policies in the face of growing international opposition. However, this policy was not well received in the Middle East, and in particular in the United Arab Emirates, where Bush's trip was met with widespread criticism.

Sharon's government is engaged in a conflict with the Palestinians. The conflict has been replaced by a "semi-autonomy" together with "a political solution". The Palestinians, if they agree to keep quiet and give up the struggle, can administer isolated settlements of land, but constantly supervised by the Israeli military.

There is little possibility of the young generation of Palestinians ever accepting this, and every prospect of Israeli aggression strengthening the grip of Hamas and other Islamic groups. On the horizon is the terrifying possibility of a new intifada, to drive the Palestinians out of West Bank for ever.

War on Civil Liberties

In the United States basic civil liberties have been thrown into the dustbin. Between 600 and 1,000 people have been detained without trial, often without access to lawyers, frequently beaten and abused, for being terrorism "suspects". In this hysterical atmosphere there is now serious division in Congress and beyond about the reintroduction of torture as a legitimate weapon in getting information. The US will continue to use military tribunals pressed over by top generals, with the power to impose the death sentence, to stifle terrorist suspicions.

All resistance - previously strong from the Internet and the banks to total FBI and CIA access to Internet communications and webmail key has collapsed. The big Internet service providers have been recruiting staff to co-operate with the intelligence agencies to monitor internet traffic.

The EU countries have agreed a Europe-wide arrest warrant to target "terrorism" and "organised crime", despite the cosmetic opposition of the Italian government who wanted financial crimes and corruption excluded.

Britain's new anti-terrorism law is implementing powers to prevent people travelling to other European countries to attend any political, sporting, social or other event which it deems dangerous to public security.

The open positive feature in this situation is the indication by European governments that they will refuse to extradite to the United States anyone who could face the death sentence there.

Global justice movement not defeated

An anti-war movement has been built in record time. For the giant mobilisations have been taken place, with maybe 250,000 people on the march from Amsterdams to Copenhagen over 100,000 people in Rome in November, defying the simultaneous pro-war demonstration called by the British government. In London, 75,000

Notes

1. Although the US government should pay heed to Hamas's article "Game Over", which two days after the September 11 attacks pointed out in the US press, "the war is not over, the battle is far from won, the war is not over, the battle is far from won." 2. A detailed account of the infighting in the Bush administration can be found in "Revels: The Untold Story of the White House in the 9/11 era," by Michael Isikoff and David Corn. 3. Bush and his allies could not have anything to fear from the war: the "counterpart" to the war is anti-Americanism, which is growing faster than ever. The USA does not have the power to dictate its will on the world. 4. The AIBH treaty didn't bring anti-war resolutions, but they did bring anti-war resolutions, and the world can do without them.
Israelis step up terror campaign

Roland Rance

Israel’s peasantry, hamlets, villages and mountains, including the Defile of Bibriv, were not among the defensible end of the peace process. The Oslo Accords, signed in 1995, were designed to bring about a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, the peace process has been marred by violence and territorial disputes.

The PLO, and dismantling the national struggle for the past eight years. Oslo has fulfilled the purposes intended by its leaders: to bring about a peace settlement and bring about a peace process. However, the peace process has been hindered by numerous obstacles, including territorial disputes, disagreements over the status of Jerusalem, and the continued settlement of Jews in the occupied territories.

Believing that such an approach could enable Israel, through a Palestinian peace, to rule the occupied territories, Sharon was prepared to make minor concessions, but held firm on nuclear weapons and the PLO. It was to carry out the liquidation in the future, and certain lands in the Gaza Strip would be annexed to Israel, but Sharon continued to resist the demands of the PLO.

Even before the signing of the Oslo Accords, Sharon had expressed his intention to annex the West Bank and Gaza Strip to Israel.

Efrain Barak, however, consistently failed to commit to the terms of the Oslo Accords, maintaining a policy of unilateral action. As a result, the peace process has been stalled and there have been no genuine efforts to implement the agreements.

Sharon’s approach was to move unilaterally, bypassing the PLO and the Palestinian leadership. This has led to a breakdown in negotiations and a widening of the conflict.

The peace process has suffered numerous setbacks, including the PLO’s refusal to recognize Israel, the continued settlement of Jews in the occupied territories, and the failure to reach an agreement on the status of Jerusalem.

Barak’s failure to commit to the terms of the Oslo Accords has prevented the realization of a two-state solution. Instead, the conflict continues to escalate, with both sides engaging in acts of violence.

S Shimon Peres

Barak’s failure to commit to the terms of the Oslo Accords has prevented the realization of a two-state solution. Instead, the conflict continues to escalate, with both sides engaging in acts of violence.

Shimon Peres

Blair greets Sharon at an Israeli-Palestinian summit in September

Is Iraq next in U.S. crosshairs?

Harry Soren

Encouraged by the almost complete collapse of Saddam Hussein’s regime, President Bush has set his sights on the next target: the Taliban in Afghanistan. This strategy, which involves a rapid and decisive military campaign, could bring about the fall of the Taliban and the return of stability to Afghanistan.

However, there are several challenges that need to be addressed. The Taliban is a complex organization, with a broad range of political and religious affiliations. The United States and its allies must work to disrupt the organization and prevent it from regaining control.

One of the key challenges is the need to address the regional implications of a successful military campaign. The Taliban could seek refuge in neighboring countries, such as Pakistan and Iran, and use these countries as bases for further activity.

Another challenge is the potential for the Taliban to adapt and change, making it difficult to predict its behavior. The United States and its allies must remain flexible and responsive to these changing circumstances.

The ultimate goal of the U.S. strategy is to create a stable and secure Afghanistan, one that is free from terrorism and able to support the international community.

However, this goal is not without its challenges, and the United States must be prepared to face them head-on. With a well-planned and coordinated strategy, the United States can achieve its goals and create a brighter future for Afghanistan and the broader region.
India, Pakistan workers must challenge war hysteria

Farooq Tariq, General secretary Labour Party Pakistan

The Bush "war on terrorism" has taken a new turn. It is possible that this war could erupt between the two nuclear-armed states, India and Pakistan. This would not be the only way traffic as was the case in the last round of nuclear war. It would be the sort of war not seen by the world for many years, full of blood on both sides. Both border clashes have already taken place and tension between the two countries is on high alert. There have been reports of massive army presence on both sides of the border. The spokespersons of both governments are speaking the same language of war. The Indian Ambassador has been sent home and the "friendship" bus service and four times a week flights between Delhi and Lahore have been suspended by the Indian government.

(The Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif friendship was killed in 1998 and afterwards initiated the bus service and flights by their newly-found friendship.)

Pakistan Prime Minister Vajpayee has declared that all means are open to the Indian government, beginning with diplomatic efforts, but then discussing the possibility of other options. Pakistan's General Musharraf, on a five-day visit to China as the time, branded the Indian response as an arrogant knee-jerk reaction. The Pakistani newspapers reported on December 23 that the Indian government is also calling for the scrapping of the Indian Water Treaty and the suspension of overflight facilities to Pakistan civil aircrafts.

The Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee and the Indian President Shankar died consecutively from the Indian nuclear war. There were military casualties but none on the aspect of the war. There were some casualties in the Indian nuclear war. The Indian President Shankar died consecutively from the Indian nuclear war. The Indian President Shankar died consecutively from the Indian nuclear war. The Indian President Shankar died consecutively from the Indian nuclear war.

The attack on the Indian parliament, the failed suicide attack on an airliner on 22nd December, the killing of the brother of Minister of Pakistan on 22nd December at Karachi, the ongoing armed conflict in Pakistan, all show that terrorism cannot be stopped by some spontaneous terroristic acts. India may have won; the war may be very pleased by the Taliban's departure from power, but the dangers of that terrorist attacks have not gone.

Instead the US has promoted the philosophy of war, and war politics. Not only the departure of the Taliban is an end of an era of religious fundamentalism, but the entire world is seeing the end of a religious fundamentalism. The Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee would not accept the centrality of Kashmir issue. Vajpayee offered to open the borders, trade relations and other economic measures to bring the two countries close to each other. But the Indian government rejected all these offers and insisted point blank on the black list, Hakimullah and Tahir ul-Qadri nationalist leaders.

The strategy of the US government could be compared with a strategy after their victory in the Gulf War. US imperialism helped the Afghan warlords and helped them to curb the popular uprising of Shia Muslims.

At this time, the US government is trying to stop the new war. They have bowed to the will of the US government and the geopolitical interests.

Despite the fact, that Pakistan's military regime helped the Americans in the Gulf War, religious fundamentalists groups are openly opposing to the government, and they are being stopped from stopping the terrorists.

The attack on the Indian parliament, the failed suicide attack on an airliner on 22nd December, the killing of the brother of Minister of Pakistan on 22nd December at Karachi, the ongoing armed conflict in Pakistan, all show that terrorism cannot be stopped by some spontaneous terroristic acts. India may have won; the war may be very pleased by the Taliban's departure from power, but the dangers of that terrorist attacks have not gone.

Instead the US has promoted the philosophy of war, and war politics. Not only the departure of the Taliban is an end of a religious fundamentalism, but the entire world is seeing the end of a religious fundamentalism.
Afghan Workers
Solidarity Campaign

Shoaib Bhatti, Organiser, Afghan Workers Solidarity Campaign

(Central Chairman Labour Party Pakistan)

The Labour Party Pakistan in collaboration with the Afghan Labour Revolutionary Organisation launched an Afghan Workers Solidarity Campaign. The idea for the campaign was discussed during the visit of Conference Secretary, the Scottish Socialist Party. The SSP has already decided to extend its support to the Campaign. LUF and ALRO are appealing to all the Afghan left and trade union movement to support the campaign.

The main aim of this campaign is to help the Afghan workers in their struggle to survive in a world market and bring every day necessities to the Afghan workers on emergency basis. Help which will be distributed inside Afghanistan and also in refugee camps in Pakistan.

This will help to strengthen the progressive organisations of the Afghan workers. The suppression by the religious fundamentalists of all democratic and human rights in Afghanistan over the years has left the organisation of the Left progressive and anti-middle class position.

Now this life or death for the cause of socialism in Afghanistan. Others have been underground or in exile. Their families have been tortured and some sentenced to death.

Sponsor the AWCF by sending the following amount of $100 for the organisation.

Monthly paper

The LUF has been promoting the Afghan Left for some years. It has now to plan to produce a monthly paper in Pashtun language to help the Afghan left in promotion of their ideas and projects.

The LUF has already started advertising clothes, shoes, hats, blankets, shirts, shoes and other everyday food items to be distributed among Afghan refugees through the ALRO and other Afghan left groups. What can you do?

Kevin Keating & Joe Coyle

In the South of Ireland, November 2001 recorded the highest levels of unemployment in recorded history, with the manufacturing output of 7.1% in the third quarter of the year. This affects tax revenue which is forecasted to increase by a forecasted surplus of £2.5bn turned into deficit.

In one-off measures in the budget, only partial measures to public spending cuts and tax increases to alleviate this. The South is now widely reported as the world's most rapidly slowing economy.

This means an escalation of attacks on working class living standards to reduce profitability to capitalist enterprises. It is an escalation the working class is not prepared to resist.

The implication of the failure of many working people to grasp the share of the booming economy and has repeatedly called for strike action to push up wages as the way forward.

This was inadequate during the boom and will be even less useful now. The working class will be losing of poor strategies but may also compound a re-reckoning with the central issues.

For the working class task facing workers during the boom are to develop relatively favourable economic conditions as an aid to challenge their trade union leaders so that they were able both to make gains during the boom but to prepare for the collapse of the boom.

Aer Lingus

Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in Aer Lingus. The workers are faced with over 2,000 redundancies, a wage freeze and a marked deterioration in their conditions. All this before the airline paid off the private sector where its future is anyone's guess. The response of the trade union leaders is not to join the airport through industrial action, easily possible as the airline is in a desperate state. Instead they have accepted the terms imposed by EU rules forbid it. What is seen here is not the sham of the Irish State is founded on subsidising private investments, including millions of pounds given each year in handouts to multinationals through grants and tax concessions. And after all didn't the Irish people reject the didacts of the EU bureaucracy in the Nice referendum any way?

Militancy

Six months ago the left was appealing to the Irish people to stand up to the foreign air lines to support the strikers on the Titanic. Now the selling of the oil is in itself it proved.

The union bureaucracy was unchallenged and remained firm. It was not more than appear on television bellowing about saving a national asset and being ridiculed and humiliated by Brendan O'Conner.

The Aer Lingus workers face the same future as those of El Al. There Anthony Keliy has resigned that he will replace existing workers on civil services and conditions of the 25% part time employees.

It is of course another alternative. It means retaining the existing union leaders and rejecting pursuit of an increased share of a privatised company. It is increasingly helpless company. It means internalised action demanding full state investment
to keep the company. It means internalised action demanding full state investment to keep the company. It means internalised action demanding full state investment to keep the company. It means internalised action demanding full state investment to keep the company. It means internalised action demanding full state investment to keep the company. It means internalised action demanding full state investment to keep the company.

By pressure of course of the 25% part time employees.

Political life will polarise significantly and break a tradition of governing with the support of small centre parties. The upcoming government will be pure right.

There will be harder for unemployed, poor people and particularly refugees and immigrants. Environmental protection will be saved in favour of corporate profits. Danish donations to international programs will be reduced.

Profiting from a general economic upturn, unemployment has been reduced significantly during the current period. Consequently, very important restrictions of the rights to unemployment benefits have been passed in Parliament without serious mass-scale implications.

With a new recession, this will change and make it impossible to fulfil its welfare promises.

The four key Liberal elections promises were: 1) shorter sentences, particularly for rape, a 10% increase in the minimum wage, 2) more restrictions in immigration legislation, 3) more stringent conditions for health care.

The presidential race between the two Rashmoussons, the Liberal and the Social Democratic candidates, partly explain why the radical left in the Red-Green Alliance went from 3.3 to 4.2% (2.4% of the national vote).

In Copenhagen, the stronghold of the Alliance, it went from 4.6% to 8.1%. If it lost two seats in this link-up. It will lose sway one of the seven City Councils.

Two MPs were re-elected - Søren Sandegard, who is a member of SAP, the Danish section of the 4th International, and Kaj Albrechtsen, spokesman on European Union Matters. The two new MPs are both women, Permiile Rasmussen Thel is a 24-year-old student, Line Bartolf is a 37-year and a lawyer. Two members of SAP were elected to local councils. The Alliance will now have to adjust its political orientation. It entered the Parliament in 1994, five years after its formation, and became, in a certain sense, the parliamentarian majority parliament.

While the general economic policy was supported by the right wing in some specific cases - including squatting, transport and environment - the Alliance took part in this legislation and had a real influence.

Now the Red-Green Alliance will be in a clear opposition. It will be marginalised in the parliament. The party will not be able to compete with the press. The Red-Green Alliance will be in a clear opposition. It will be marginalised in the parliament. The party will not be able to compete with the press. The Red-Green Alliance will be in a clear opposition. It will be marginalised in the parliament. The party will not be able to compete with the press. The Red-Green Alliance will be in a clear opposition. It will be marginalised in the parliament. The party will not be able to compete with the press. The Red-Green Alliance will be in a clear opposition. It will be marginalised in the parliament. The party will not be able to compete with the press. The Red-Green Alliance will be in a clear opposition. It will be marginalised in the parliament. The party will not be able to compete with the press.

Aage Skovrin is editor of "Red-Green Line", fortnightly membership newspaper of the Red-Green Alliance.
Radical democracy in education in Brazil

Richard Hatcher

PORTO ALEGRE has become famous for its radical democratic Participatory Budget (PB) process. In 1996, the People's Assembly made a decision about the city's budget priorities by having an annual process of local and city-wide meetings. This successful experiment in direct democracy has now been extended to the whole state, with a population of 10 million.

In its first year, the Participatory Budget process at state level, 190,000 people took part in the meetings. In 2000, 281,000 people took part in the new PB process established locally.

The number of participants in 2001, the third year, was 384,000.

What is less well-known is that, in the field of education, the state government, again building on the experience of Porto Alegre, has instigated an equally successful process of popular democratic policy making in education based, like the PB, on local and regional mass meetings, called the School Constituency (Constituência Escolar).

The principles of the School Constituency are:

- Education as a right of all citizens, with particular emphasis on the situation of those who are economically excluded, not having access to school or being excluded from school.
- Popular participation as a method of management of public policy in the field of education, stimulating and guaranteeing the conditions for the collective construction of the education we want.
- Dialogue as an ethical-existential principle of school reform, based on solidarity, which respects differences and the pluralism of visions of the world, while also being critical and a perspective of the race of local inequalities and injustices.
- Institutionalisation of Democratic Education as the strategic objective of a government of the left, committed to the interests of the majority, the popular classes, stimulating and managing the public sphere as a space towards popular sovereignty and control over the state.
- Utopia as a motivational vision of the education and the school we want, and also of the project of socio-economic development which is both possible and necessary for the great majority of the population, which is expanded and exploited in the capitalistic system. Utopia as the motor force, driving forward the struggle for the process.
- The process of the School Constituency, organised in five stages, was launched by the State Department of Education in April 1999.

The process of the School Constituency, organised in five stages, was launched by the State Department of Education in April 1999, followed by regional launch meetings and the election of the school and regional coordinating committees.

Problems in November 1999 problems and good practice at the local level were analysed, resulting in the identification of 23 issues.

From December 1999 to June 2000, these issues were explored in depth by briefing papers produced on each, drawing on educationalists such as Paulo Freire. From June to August 2000 a Draft Text based on these discussions was debated and approved in 95 municipal or micro-regional conferences, involving 60,000 people.

The final conference resulted in a revised Draft Text which became the basis of Regional Pre-Conferences with about 9000 people elected as delegates from the municipal or micro-regional pre-conferences.

Finally, a further revised version of the Draft Text was discussed at the State Conference by 3,500 delegates elected from the Regional Conferences, organised in 100 working groups. At the end, all the proposals were voted on.

The final text of the School Constituency, which began in September 2000 and is still continuing, the principles and policies agreed on are being translated into action plans at the local level.

The Three Dimensions of the Democratisation of Education

The three dimensions of PT education policy are:

- The democratisation of access.
- The democratisation of knowledge, and
- The democratisation of management.

The democratisation of access means education for all, through a range of policies from expanding provision from pre-school to adult literacy and education projects for youth and adult workers.

The democratisation of knowledge means education for all, which is achieved by providing education to all.

The key to this is the creation of democratic education, within the school and its relations with the community, establishing a broad process of participation in order to rethink the curriculum.

As school level, the main mechanism of the democratisation of management is the elected School Council, composed of representatives of the school to those who make the school happen and changing the State Public Education into a democratic education.

Participatory democracy as an educational process

For the PT, the direct democracy of the Participatory Budget and School Constituency processes is itself a crucial educational experience by which working people become the agents, not the objects, of history.

"In this workers' struggle for their rights, in their organisation and mobilisation we find a new kind of socialisation and the construction of the human being [...]. This embrace of demands and social struggle are in themselves educational processes for the effective construction of transformative historical individuals.""You do not educate people to form individuals, the formation of individuals takes place through actions and movements developed in the popular struggle.""The struggle itself for education, for the right to go to school and for changes in its role and the way in which they develop their work, for example, the exercise of this right of demanding rights, creates in the individual a new vision of society, new relations among them, a political culture where workers identify themselves effectively as individuals who are transforming and constructing history."

Of course, participatory democracy is not without problems and difficulties, to a national context of government constraints, which arearl out of the reach of popular support. But the level of popular support for it is an indication of its relevance as an alternative to the current state educational system. Here in Brazil, our experience in education is the clear and obvious demonstration of the power of any influence, as local authorities become less and governmental puppetry of local power is also bound by government deceptions, and local communities are free to take action.

Up to now the left has had little to offer in terms of radical democratic vision to authoritarian management. Porto Alegre and Rio Grande do Sul show a future possibility for a different kind of education, where the people's government is not just a formal title, but a real life experience of democracy.
Gains for growing Canadian left at federal convention

Barry Weisleder

W

Anticipating in late November, just like a Tale of Two Cities, I’m not referring to the snowstorm that punctuated a week of unusually mild weather. I’m talking about 'the best of times and the worst of times'.

Hundreds of activists converged on the federal NDP convention hoping for a new direction, very thinly viewed class in composition. There were 1500 NDP members, new and not so new, as well as non-party activists. The visibility of openness and innovation was in the air.

But there was bitter disappointment for many on the left. Instead of renewal, they saw a party leadership preoccupied with retaining control.

One assessment of the convention is that the NDP establishment clawed the day. They got their ‘renewal package’ through. They got a modified OMOW system for electing the Leader in 2007 and their slate captured almost all Executive and Council positions.

But the victory of the establishment came at a price.

The media headlines screamed 'NDP Needs Off Challengers' and 'NDP slams left turn'. What does this mean?

The ‘challenge’ that the leadership offed came from the largest, most vocal and most radical opposition at an NDP federal convention in many years. The NDP establishment retained control, but they seemed shaken nonetheless. They know that the struggle is far from over, and bigger battles are just ahead.

Politically, what did the leadership get out of the convention? The Star summed up the situation with a Nov. 27 editorial: ‘Left tilted, but...’

The Star argued that leader Alexa McDonough emerged from the convention ‘still in charge of her fractious flock’ but that ‘she did not cite a single new policy thrust. She did not talk about building affordable housing or closing the gap between rich and poor or reaching out to the country’s most desperate people...’

‘She did not speak up for ethnic minorities who feel threatened by Ontario’s security clampdown. She did not even venture a glimpse of a better Canada.’

Canadian Auto Workers President Buzz Hargrove pointed out in a media interview that Alexa’s anti-war position was muted at convention in favour of American sentiments.

Today, working people face a situation where this country and the entire capitalist world are in recession. The US is leading an unlimited war of aggression. What has the NDP said about jobs, peace and democracy, except that the government should spend more of the recent federal surplus? What about a shorter work week, without loss of pay and benefits? What about reversing cuts in the global corporate trade deals on the eve of the ‘sell-off of Ontario Hydro, which would be irreversible under NAFTA’?

Whoever is the new leader, no automatic re-election to the NDP’s 136 seats is likely. It was an incredible victory for the NDP establishment. The need to resist this new leadership is clear.

At times, Socialist Caucus members, New Politics Initiative (NPI) supporters, and Canadian Auto Workers Union delegates worked together at the convention. But we had different goals and expectations.

The NPI had a resolution calling for a new name, a new manifesto and a special leadership convention within six months.

The NPI concentrated on one issue, a new party process, and presented it in a compromise form that NPI leaders thought could win. The CCA had a resolution calling for a new name, a new manifesto and a special leadership convention within six months.

The NPI argued that the new party process was needed to bring the NDP into the 21st century. The CCA argued that the new name, manifesto and convention were necessary to bring the NDP into the 21st century.

Both resolutions were defeated. The NPI motion was defeated by a margin of 415 votes. The CCA motion was defeated by a margin of 424 votes.

The Socialist Caucus, with the support of over 100 delegates, was battling for democratic principles and socialist policies. We did not expect to win any elections, or to convert the NDP to socialism. We predicted that the agenda would be tightly controlled and that rank and file options calling for radical change in the direction of the NDP would be ignored. Unfortunately, we were right.

Based on our expectations, we tried to challenge the agenda, to open up more time for the ‘new party’ debate, and to limit the general discussion on renewal because that’s not where decisions would be made. We tried to get some of our eleven Socialist Caucus resolutions to the floor, resolutions that had the support of up to 18 local associations and unions across the country.

We moved amendments to establish motions, and challenged the chair when the chair tried to prevent democratic debate. An SC member from Edmonton, Pam Williams, upset the chair on Sunday morning by correctly insisting on a gender-balanced speakers’ list. That’s how speaking lists are organized at SC conferences—alas, not yet in the NDP.

We advised NPI leaders on floor strategy and how to lobby for policy priorities. We gave up one of our speakers to the NPI in the ‘new party’ debate, and we refrained from making any radical resolutions. The NPI proposed that the NDP launch a process leading to the formation of a ‘new progressive’ party. The Socialist Caucus supports that initiative, but the NPI argued that the new party should be a ‘labour-based, socialist’ party.

The compromise resolution asked the NDP federal council to recommend a new party to the next convention in 2003, to be followed by a membership referendum. It was defeated, but got 37% of the votes.

The next day, SC candidates for Leader, Marcie Hutch, who got 120 votes to 645 for incumbent Alexa McDonough. Nearly half of the SC team of candidates were gay and lesbian people, a group that has to be a first in the federal NDP.

The Socialist Caucus campaigned as a radical socialist platform calling for social ownership of the banks and big business, under workers’ and community control. SC leaders presented socialist ideas to a cross-country television and radio audience.

NDP gatherings were larger than SC meetings, and they injected some animus into an otherwise still convention. But the NPI had its weaknesses too; NDP preoccupation with the single idea of a ‘new party’ played into the hands of the party establishment.

It may have been useful for the Greens to appeal to party ‘loyalists’ and to mobilize a majority of delegates against the initiative, which they voted down by calling it a proposal to ‘dismantle the NDP’.

The SC argued for a ‘labour-based, socialist party’ to be organized by a representative committee of currents both inside and outside the NDP. This appealed to delegates who want change but who are reluctant to embark on an uncertain process towards an unknown political entity.

The NDP, after NDC Renewal, proceeded to the ‘new party’ discussion. The result was adoption of a resolution that would be the equivalent of ‘renewal’ discussion meetings across the country.

The resolution goes to Federal Council to implement the recommendations of the Renewal Report, subject to the membership adopting a final decision. This includes approval of OMOW plus 25% for labour, as well as a range of initiatives. It will put the NDP on record as favouring increasing direct representation of financial contributions to political parties.

Both policies, modified OMOW, and the equation of union and corporate financial contributions, are major setbacks for the left, undermining the remnants of collective democracy inside the NDP and weakening the party’s ties to the labour movement.

But not all was gloom at Winnipeg. While the morning socialist resistance may have been weakened by the success of the government’s new ‘renewal’ strategy, there was also success following a similar strategy with the chair and a lively debate.

Following the convention, Party officials crowded around to claim the applause in anticipation of the challenge. It is very easy to get carried away by such a convention. So why are most SC activists ‘erstwhile’ activists? Because we did not expect to turn the NDP sharply to the left at this convention.

We are building a socialist movement to do that, and it is now stronger across the NDP and across the country.

If we can get our friends in the CWL, in the NPI, in the anti-poverty and anti-war movements, we have a chance to make the NDP what we have now have a unique opportunity.

The crisis of the NDP is not new but it is growing. Neither will the party disappear. The NDP remains a strong working class political party in the country. But the NDP leadership shows no sign that it is capable of moving forward. The membership that defends Blairism and the status quo is declining.

But the left has not been devastated inside the NDP. More activists are recognizing the need for a political party as a federal component of the struggle for a Workers’ Agenda.

They are turning their attention to what socialists and ‘new party’ proponents have been able to do inside the NDP in just a few months. If the anti-capitalist left is able to turn the tide, the left could win the party establishment and move the party to the left.

Recruiting to the NDP may not be easy. But it’s a hell of a lot easier than recruiting to any agreement on a programme for a new party without any funds or social base.

Re-building the left is what we need to do so we can get inside the working class institutions and work to build the unions and the NDP.

So, back to the Left? I for one, the answer will flow from the question: will the NDP stay and will the SC certainly stay. We cannot afford to abandon our class.
If you tolerate this, your children will be next


The slogan above, a call for international anti-fascist solidarity, is often quoted to support the cause of a national cause. However, it is always entertaining to watch the occasional non-Marxist historians to have to perform when narrating the Spanish Civil War, force them as they are to contemplate the spectacle of left-wingers fighting for freedom and democracy. However, this exhibition is perhaps as true to the facts as could be achieved in the context of a bourgeois institution committed to its particular version of history and 'objectivity'.

To their credit, the organisers have probably favoured the Republic and those who fought for it. The position has not been made easier, of course, by the perceived collapse of the Communist movement post-1990, so that the show the Spanish Republic becomes a galant figure on the downward march of a "democracy" that is non-class specific, and the Civil War becomes implicitly associated with the subsequent world war of "democracy" against fascism. Ironically, this is not far from the popular Frontist position of the Communist Parties for most of the thirties and forties.

The Spanish Civil War began in 1936 as a coup by right-wing army officers, led by Franco, and backed by the Catholic Church, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, against a left-oriental Popular Front government that had just been democratically elected. Although one-third of Spain was swiftly conquered by the rebels, Republican areas social development which included land seizures by peasants and elements of workers' control in the larger industries.

As in the Russian Revolution, the combination of a militant working class and farmers, a solidarité peasantry and the presence of oppressed nationalists within the state (particularly, here, Basques and Catalans) contributed to the creation of a potent insurrectionary cocktail.

However, the degeneration of the Communist Parties under Stalin meant that in Spain, unlike in Russia in 1917, a decisive revolutionary leadership was lacking. The forces calling for restraint included middle-class Left Republicans, moderate Socialists and the Communist Party. Those at least notionally in favour of a more radical orientation included the Left Socialists, anarchists, and the small anti-Stalinist, Marxist, United Workers Party (POUM), now on exhibit as an inscription on an inscription reads: "The Republican war effort was undermined by divisions between those whose first aim was to win the war, and those who wanted to make social revolution". Although superficially fair, this statement actually counterposes the winning of the Civil War to the social revolution, when in fact those on in favour of the latter thought that social revolution would make it possible to win the war, since it would be easier to ask workers and peasants to fight for a government that was unequivocally in their interests, and easier to generate international solidarity for that fight.

Belatedly, the USSR weighed in with military assistance in order to counteract the aid given to the rebels by the fascists. However, as another label correctly states: "Moscow, seeking alliances with the Western democracies, put its weight behind a centralised war effort and the stifling of the Revolution".

The Republican government, it should be said, collaborated with Moscow in this counter-revolutionary strategy, partly in a seemingly effort to convince Britain, France and America of the need to abandon their non-interventionist stance. The Republic eventually succumbed in early 1939. It is not entirely fruitless to speculate on what might have been. At one point an inscription reads: "Fearing that a left-wing Spain might become a Soviet satellite, the Western democracies put class prejudices before strategic interests." In one sense, perhaps, this seems quite a reasonable proposition. For one thing, if Britain and America had supported the Spanish Government against Italy and Germany, a less isolated Stalin would probably not have gone through with the pact with Hitler of 1939 and 1940. And if there would have been grave dangers for British imperialists in pursuing such a step, Germany was further ahead in the arms race than Britain in 1936-8, for example, compared to 1939.

More importantly, perhaps, victory in Spain would have strengthened the left, including its radical wing, throughout Europe as well as strengthening the position of the USSR. A Europe-wide war, of a more overt class character than the conflict that was actually to take place, might have been necessary in order to repress those forces. The statement quoted above therefore misleadingly counterposes "class prejudice", which is supposedly incidental, to "strategic interests", which apparently have nothing to do with class.

These criticisms aside, the exhibition brings together an impressive and moving assemble of posters, photographs, documents, letters, personal effects of combatants and films, as well as multimedia sound works of art by Dull, Faccio, Magritte and Mico, among others.

For me, as an art historian, it was the first relatively flat that the expensive medieval art was generally much less stirring than the other material. Of course (I should be accused of philistinism), many of the propaganda posters owed much to modernist devices such as bold simplification, strong diagonal-based compositions and bright colours.

Also, the poems and quotations from poems acquired extra potency in the context of the other artefacts, images and texts. And, given the recent formation in this country of Artists Against the War, it was interesting to see one of the Neville Chamberlain masks worn by English Socialists at a London anti-fascist demonstration in 1938. For those who missed real acknowledgement in the recent Surrealist exhibition of the reactionary power of the pro-war Catholic Church, there were some suggestive images and objects here. A Nationalist propaganda poster, which would make Bush and Berlusconi proud, carries the message "in Spanish": "Front Crusade: Spain the Spiritual Reference Point of the World". In the image the shadow of the cross (made up of the first two words of the slogan) falls ominously across the globe.

A nearby photograph, meanwhile, shows Catholic priests standing next to rebel army officers and giving the Fascist salute. This helps to put in context the photograph of the afternoon of an attack on a convent in Barcelona, in which the dismembered corpses of nuns have been theatrically exposed on the convent steps amidst the fragments of the cloisters - a case of Catalan anarcho-patriots preserving some of the worst aspects of Jacobin iconoclastic traditions, perhaps.

A good deal of the exhibition space is given to the contribution of the International Brigades. It is estimated that between 35,000-40,000 volunteers served in the International Brigades and that 100,000 died. The French supplied a quarter of all Brigade members, with the next most numerous being British volunteers supplied by Germans and Americans.

It was salutary to reflect on some lines by the British artist Eric Gill: "It was not fraud or foolishness, but starkness and we came because our open eyes could see no other way. The lack of such clear-sightedness and determination here is sobering. It is a long time since socialists in the West have been called upon to make such sacrifices.

A list of names at the end is headed "Reds Who Fought for Britain's Volunteers". There seems to have been a coven about making it "too explicit" in the case of the International Brigade members. A call to the museum elicited the information that this was indeed the case, and that thanklessly no number of Fascist volunteers from these islands were included, which would of course have been an insult.

It is worth pointing out, though, that many of the Irish volunteers (seven of whom are mentioned in Christy Moore's song 'Viva La Queada' and a number of whom were Republicans) might have taken umbrage at being listed as "terrorists on behalf of the British Government".

The display, although quite extensive and thoughtfully presented in a cramped little corner of the Imperial War Museum and is very much more effective than the permanent First and Second World War sections of planes, guns and tanks in the main hall.

On the day I went (just before New Year), it would have been nice to have seen a few more of the dads drag their kids away from the exciting war-games and into an exhibition which has the potential to promote reflection on the causes of war and how to resist it.

1 See Trotzky's writings on Spain, plus an excellent contemporary account, Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain, by an American Trotskyist journalist, Felix Morrow (Pathfinder Press, 3rd. print). George Orwell fought with the POUM militia in Aragon, as he recounts in Homage to Catalonia. Ken Loach's film Land and Freedom is partly based on Orwell's narrative.

2 The Picasso painting, entitled Weeping Woman, is related to his famous Guernica, which was apparently too fragile to travel from Madrid to this exhibition.

Star Wars revived ...
Afghanistan blitzed ... who will be the next target as US steps up "anti-terror" campaign?

Stop Bush war drive!

Don't miss an issue: SUBSCRIBE now!
20 pages of internationalist news, views and marxist analysis each month. 12 issues delivered for just £10. OVERSEAS subscribers 12 issues for just £20.

SPECIAL OFFER (UK only): One year of Socialist Outlook, PLUS one year of International Viewpoint (Fourth International magazine) for only £30.

PLEASE send me
☐ 12 issues of Socialist Outlook
☐ 12 issues of Socialist Outlook plus International Viewpoint.
I enclose £...

Name
Address
Post Code
Phone
Age

SEND TO: Socialist Outlook,
PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU