March to stop Bush's war!
London Sept 28

Assemble 1pm, Embankment
Organised by the Stop the War Coalition and the Muslim Association of Britain

In the run up to what is hoped to be the biggest anti-war demonstration for a generation, we can see cracks appearing in the New Labour consensus. Unlikely individuals such as Lord Healey and Michael Cashman are warning Blair that backing Bush in a unilateral strike could have dangerous consequences for the government's future.

These people don't oppose war against Iraq for the same reasons that we do. But we can use their dissonant voices to put pressure on Blair, and to build the campaign even more broadly than before. In the US support for the war has dropped by 20 per cent over recent weeks as the so-called doves have become more vocal.

Up and down the country the Stop the War Coalition are holding public meetings. From Edinburgh to Kent, local groups are mobilising against the war. Over 100 coaches are travelling from Birmingham, and 40 coaches plus a train have been booked in Glasgow.

While not everywhere will manage to match this support, it's clear we are heading for a huge demonstration. We need to strain every last nerve to make sure it is - and to make sure there is as much visible trade union support as possible.
Foundation Hospitals: Reinventing the flat tyre?

John Lister
Health Secretary Alan Milburn's idea of turning top-flight "star" hospital trusts into foundation hospitals, which will come before Parliament this autumn, has been roundly attacked by his predecessor Frank Dobson and the former Labour health spokesman Chris Smith.

Now the scheme seems doomed to founder under the onslaught of Gordon Brown's Treasury mandarins, who see in every bid for greater independence a hidden bid to beg or borrow more money.

Indeed one of the biggest lures to attract big fish like UCLH Trust chief executive Robert Naylor, and other top NHS bosses towards the hub of foundation hospital status was the initial promise that the new "freedoms" they would acquire would include the right to sell off surplus assets ... and to borrow money on their own account.

Funnily enough we have heard those same freedoms before - when Margaret Thatcher's government first came up with their expensive and bureaucratic "market reforms" in 1989.

Then hospital chief executives were urged to "get out" and become "self-governing" trusts - and promised that in return they would be "free" to sell unused land, borrow money, fix local pay, and compete against other trusts for increased contract revenue.

But even the market fundamentalists of the Tory party realised that the level of financial freedom could drive a coach and horses through their system of cash limits for health spending. So even before they had been formally voted in and subjected to strict External Financing Limits. And while a few trusts attempted to impose local pay deals - generally offering staff conditions worse than the prevailing national rates set under the Whiteley Council system - most found themselves preoccupied with the endless rounds of contract negotiations with health authorities that were vital to ensure their survival in the new, competitive market system.

The system cost billions more, but delivered little if any improvement in patient care. Waiting times soared. Numbers of senior managers and administrative staff rocketed as the system gulped rhetoric about business methods but became ever less efficient.

In 1997 New Labour came to office committed to just one apparently radical policy on health - to sweep away the internal market system.

Trusts remained in place, but with a new "incentive contract" - local pay deals to encourage trusts to out-innovate one another were scrapped and ambitious national talks aimed at a new NHS pay structure.

But in London, the Royal Free and the Whittington - which are not eligible for foundation status.

However one problem they would have in doing so is that it appears foundation hospitals would be excluded from the NHS pension scheme - one of the few genuine perks for NHS employed staff, so the incentives may even work in the other direction.

In London, for example, UCLH could in theory spend some of its extra cash on reduced pay rates to help poach specialist staff from neighbouring Trusts such as Barts and The London, the Royal Free and the Whittington - which are not eligible for foundation status.

Better care to patients in their immediate vicinity, at the expense of falling standards and resources in other hospitals - taking us back to the postcode lottery New Labour promised to end.

But there have also been hints that they would be allowed to supplement their budgets by treating private patients from home and abroad.

Foundation hospitals can be seen, together with the Private Finance Initiative (under which private companies build, own, run and lease hospitals like the new £450m UCLH to the NHS), and the Concordat (under which the NHS buys treatment from private hospitals) as another stepping stone from NHS provision of care to increasingly private provision.

But this brings yet another problem, one that was skated over by the Tories. If a foundation hospital is run as a business, and fails - could it go bust?

The Tory reforms at first insisted that trusts which failed in the internal market would be allowed to go broke: but in practice ministers intervened to pump in transitional payments to avoid bankruptcies.

With the legislation to establish the new foundations not yet published, nobody quite knows what the details will be - or whether the first applications need to be submitted by November.

The hope of foundation hospitals would be to increase their share of the available work (and revenue) from the NHS in the near future, leaving other hospitals struggling to sustain their income. But this could mean better care to patients in their immediate vicinity, at the expense of falling standards and resources in other hospitals - taking us back to the postcode lottery New Labour promised to end.

Both Milburn and Thatcher's government first came up with their expensive and bureaucratic "market reforms" in 1989.

They were even before they had been formally voted in and subjected to strict External Financing Limits. And while a few trusts attempted to impose local pay deals - generally offering staff conditions worse than the prevailing national rates set under the Whiteley Council system - most found themselves preoccupied with the endless rounds of contract negotiations with health authorities that were vital to ensure their survival in the new, competitive market system.

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VICTORY for Glasgow UNISON hospital strikers!

Sodexho agrees to NHS terms and conditions

UNISON's Sodexho members at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary are celebrating a wonderful victory today after achieving their objectives of £5 an hour minimum, backdated, and a guaranteed phased return to NHS terms and conditions of employment by no later than April 2004.

Other major concessions include a Monday to Friday (39 hours full time) £3.50/month raise, a new 25% shift allowance and an extra public holiday.

Members agreed to accept the offer after a day in which Sodexho management talked four offers: the fourth offer was accepted at a jubilant mass meeting, and the further strike action due to take place was suspended.

Carolyne Lecque, UNISON

Branch Secretary said the "hard-fought victory" was for Trade Union organisation. "We first shouted at the absurd with a membership of less than 20. We ballooned 222 and now have members, well over 90% density and many new but now insurable achievers. "This was a David and Goliath battle between the biggest private provider and a brutal multi-national who refused to budge or do anything to stop us in their battle to defeat us. They failed." Frank Morgan, Sodexho Services Councillor, was ecstatic.

"We've been kept down, exploited and bullied for profit for too long. Now that we've won, Sodexho is now facing upgrading and wages a campaign for the upgrading of NHS nursing staff in a major offer against low pay. The example of the Scottish strike has also had an impact south of the border, with medical secretaries discovering their industrial strength in successful strikes and upgrading claims in a growing number of cities across England.

SCOTTISH UNISON demands £5/hour NHS minimum

A pay revolt is growing among low-paid support staff in Scotland's health service.

Following on the successful strikes by Glasgow medical secretaries and the subsequent upgrading of most medical secretaries throughout the country, UNISON is launching a campaign to raise the pay of other admin and clerical staff - and demanding a minimum of at least £5 for hospital ancillary workers.

A minimum of £5 per hour for ancillary staff throughout NHS Trusts in the Lothians, rising almost immediately to £5.20, was secured by UNISON earlier this year, and hailed as "the best minimum wage deal anywhere in Britain.

This landmark deal has been followed by claims in Ayrshire, and by five days of unofficial strikes involving up to 600 staff in Argyll and Clyde, which unions backed management rapidly to the negotiating table and a deal bringing all staff up to a minimum of £5 per hour from the beginning of September. Fringe staff pay increase will be up to £20 per week.

UNISON has proclaimed these deals a "wake up call" for managers throughout the NHS in Scotland, and it is clear that what works elsewhere those low-paid sectors have been strengthened by the success of successful campaigns.

The union's Scottish region office is circulating standard forms to encourage and assist admin and clerical staff to demand upgrading, and waging a campaign for the upgrading of NHS nursing staff in a major offer against low pay. The example of the Scottish strike has also had an impact south of the border, with medical secretaries discovering their industrial strength in successful strikes and upgrading claims in a growing number of cities across England.

Scottish Unison demands £5/hour NHS minimum
As we approach the anniversary of September 11, it is inevitable that the US war drums will beat louder against Iraq. At the same time, this very process has made it clear that Bush cannot count on the same level of support as he himself had a year ago or as his father had at the time of the Gulf War.

At home prominent Republicans and generals have publicly opposed going to war without further evidence that Saddam Hussein poses any imminent threat to the US. The US administration’s support for the war is not the same as ours. But they weaken Bush.

They can rely on no one in the Middle East. Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Syria, Kuwait Qatar, Iran and even Saudi Arabia are against him - as are both India and Turkey.

The leaders of these countries are not worried one bit about the innocent people who will suffer if there is a war. They are however concerned about their own positions of power. They know that widespread anger over the threat bombing, if the region will be turned against their governments – particularly given this continued massacre of the Palestinian people.

The US administration is not worried by the lack of enthusiasm from most European leaders for their plans. But they are concerned about the growing anti-war feeling in Britain.

Michael Cashman, likely to take over as Leader of the European Group of Labour MPs any day now and promoted precisely as a Blairite clone, is no longer able to survive on the ‘pro-war’ side. He, too, is clearly worried – that anti-war sentiment in the Labour Party could lead to a new rise of the Openly the US says they will go it alone if necessary – and may be in the US too. But this means that Tony Blair is, facing home-grown pressure is a real worry.

There is no doubt that the phone at number ten has been ringing off the hook – with Bush making sure that Blair is on board in his crusade. Blair has responded by making clear that he agrees that “invasion is not an option”.

Keeping up the pressure is vital if we are to have any chance of breaking Blair from Bush. Of course we won’t get Blair to oppose the US bombings. But we want to make it as difficult as possible for New Labour to actively join in his murderous plans.

Of course we need to beware of the arguments that some people are using in these debates. But at this point we want to march and organise with anyone who opposes the war – for whatever reasons.

The Daily Mirror, for example, has been useful in convincing people to criticise Blair and Bush’s plans – but it does so on the basis that there is no UN mandate to wage war against Iraq.

If this changes, and Bush is forced to go to the UN, we can have no doubt that he will try to win the support he wants. The UN will in all probability eventually do the bidding of the US. So we need to be pushing the most militant arguments against invasion of Iraq, beyond these legalistic points. We need to carry as many of these arguments as possible on the campaign board if this turns out to be the situation we are in.

For the time being, the culmination of the hard work that anti-war activists across the country have been working towards over these last few months is to have major demonstrations on September 28 – to show our “so called leaders” that the majority are against the war.

One key in the campaign is to bring on board the trade union leaders. Nick Haynes, the Communication Workers Union General Secretary will be speaking at the demonstration. The CWU are sending coaches from across the country.

Mick Rix from ASLEF has also been a high profile opponent of any attack on Iraq.

The Stop the War coalition is backed by growing number of trade unions, but we need more to build the new militancy and to bring their banners to the march.

This is vital as we head towards TUC and Labour Party conferences. Trade unionists are against the war – but their money is going to a party whose leaders are hell bent on war.

We need to make a stand – or should we say a march?

If we can get over a hundred thousand people, socialists, trade unionists, peace campaigners and anti-capitalists and the Muslim community, then we can make a real difference. The louder our voice is, the stronger we are.

This war is not in our name. It is to be waged in the name of the free market – freedom to pillage and plunder and freedom to exploit the mass majority of the world’s population.

This is not just about opposing the war but about challenging the whole of the mania.

The Don’t Attack Iraq petition is now online at www.stopwar.org.uk

If you need stickers, badges, leaflets etc contact the local Groups, Lucy or Paul on 0795 123 5915.

Break Blair from Bush!

Why we’re joining the Resistance

In a new venture, arising from a new spirit of unity and determination on the left, we are about to launch a new monthly newspaper. As a result, this will be the last issue of Socialist Outlook to appear in its current form.

The new paper will bring together the International Socialist Group, which has produced Socialist Outlook as a newspaper since 1991, along with the Socialist Solidarity Network, and a number of individuals who will work with us to sponsor, write for, sell and help finance its production. An editorial board will be elected to ensure that the production and circulation of supporters are directly involved in the process.

The working title for the new paper is Resistance but the final decision will be taken on September 8. What is already agreed is that the first issue will be out in time for the anti-war demonstration on September 28.

Internationalism will be a central core of the new paper and the commitment of the bulk of the resistance in Iraq are bearing ever louder while the massacre and oppression of the Palestinian people by the Zionist state continues. Despite the growing pressure against war on Iraq, Blair continues his systematic destruction of the, that conti-

ues to drive forward neo-liberalism at home and abroad.

In this context our task is not just to unite and reach out to the widest audience on the left but to seek new ways to link up with radical movements developing on the world stage. One year on from September 11, US imperialism has certainly not succeeded in one of its key wars – in silence the voices of dissent expressed in the anti-globalisation movement. In many ways that movement is stronger than it was then 12 months ago – though clearly in the US itself the reactionary government offensive did weaken it initially.

But in other parts of the globe, resistance to the war in Afghanistan and to the occupation of Iraq has been fully incorporated into the aims of Global Justice movement.

Thousands of new young activists are coming onto the streets in solidarity with the Palestinian people, in opposition to privatisation and poverty – like the 40,000 who have been demonstrating in South Africa as we go to press.

At the same time as the Global Justice movement and anti-war movements are mobilising against the increasing inequalities meted out by governments and corporations to the millions of working poor across the globe, new political formations are being created and strengthening.

They are a response to the fact that today social democratic parties and governments not only fail to resist this drive for ever more profit, but often participate in it.

The growth of the Socialist Alliance is part of this process that has led to the creation of the Left Bloc in Portugal, or the Red Green Alliance in Denmark or Risdunione Comunista in Italy or the Scottish Socialist Party.

These new broad socialist parties are absolutely essential tools in fighting for an alternative to the murderous system in which we live. This understanding is central to the creation of Resistance.

The ISG, the SDN, and the many individual socialists who are coming forward to sponsor this new paper agree on this perspective. There is both the opportunity and a need to organise around these issues through the production of such a newspaper. We will be putting our political and organisational resources into Resistance to help ensure that it is successful.

This does not mean that there are no disagreements amongst those launching this new paper.

We come from different traditions and different experiences, so this is natural.

Such different experiences will only enrich our work around the new paper, however, since we share a common commitment to a more constructive and progressive role in the reshaping of the left, which is going on today in Britain and internationally, and which is reflected in the SSP and the Socialist Alliance.

The ISG, of course, will continue to fight for the political ideas that define us as an organisation and as the British Section of the Fourth International.

We will produce Socialist Outlook in a new form and in this category and maintain the ISG web site and continue to produce leaflets and pamphlets on internationally.

At the same time we will be fighting to build Resistance and working closely with all those who support our position. Socialist Outlook readers will agree with us that the launch of Resistance is an important step forward, and we will want to join us as readers and supporters of the new paper.

See subsective form and launch statement on page 5.
Debate rages over 2-year pay deal for council staff

Terry Smith

HALF a victory—or half a sell-out? That’s the question to be answered in any verdict on the pay offer to two million local government workers. After the recent one-day strike action across the country on July 17.

"Half a victory" might be the view of those who focus primarily on the fact that a grudging, tight-fisted bunch of employers were forced to improve their “final” offer, and concede an ACAS-brokered deal which for the first time will bring a minimum wage of £3 per hour for the lowest-paid council staff.

They will of course still be paid the same, and the 3.5% offer for other sections of staff falls far short of the 5% demanded by the unions as a means of redressing the long-term injustice of pay levels that lag far behind other comparable groups of workers.

But a deal which would raise the pay of up to 275,000 workers by around 50p per week—giving many of them increases of £20 per week over the 18 months to April 2004 should not be brushed aside as insignificant or an outright defeat. Their increase over the 2-year deal will be worth almost 11%, while the increase for other grades will be just over 3.5% per year, compared with a previous offer of 3%. Already it seems that the example of the militant action by local government staff and the achievement of the £5 minimum has helped to encourage at least one other group of public sector workers—Scottish hospital ancillary staff—to take action on similar demands.

But however positive it may be for strike action finally to show some positive results, the outcome is still half a sell-out. The strength of the turn-out and the mood of the workers showed that the three main unions UNISON, GMB and TGWU have the potential to force a significantly better deal than the phased 2-year 7.7% settlement.

Another day of strike action had been planned for August, and many branches were convinced they would deliver as strong a or even stronger support than that on July 17.

Squeeze

The old motto “when you know you’ve got the employer by the balls, just squeeze” suggests that had union officials national officials kept their nerve they might have forced more out of the council bosses.

Instead they suspended the action for six weeks, while a “consultation” process takes place (these six weeks (concluding on September 16) will allow temps to cool and make it more difficult to crank up any further rounds of action—even if a majority view in the three unions favours further action.

That is no accident: union officials know it would happen. It is hard to avoid the impression that they were desperate to get off the hook, and find a pretext to settle with the employers: when the chips were down, it was the last chance to break the link.

Some UNISON officers have been quick to argue that there is no guarantee that more strikes could deliver a better offer. But they will have their fingers crossed that this view is not put to the test.

Indeed the biggest obstacle to further improving the deal by renewed action is that those national union bureaucrats have gone on record promoting the current deal, and would therefore have little credibility leading a renewed charge.

UNISON is also stressing the significance of the next Commission on Local Government Pay, the establishment of which is included as part of the settlement, and which may offer a platform for raising a whole series of anomalies and issues which otherwise remain neglected.

Workers will need to be convinced this will be more than a talking shop designed to take the steam out of future pay demands.

Opposition

It is hard to predict the outcome of the consultation, since the vocal opposition seems to have come from the “usual suspects” and much of the membership of the three unions is in areas which have yet to declare a view: the debate is no doubt very stimulating at local level.

But whether or not the fight is resumed in a hopeful autumn, it is already clear that local government staff have in their biggest show of strength since the 1970s been able to demand and win some positive results which are likely to form a building block for other resistance among the low paid.

Change at the top brings real prospect of change in the RMT

GREG TUCKER

The thought of a leadership team of Bob Crow and PatSunikro has been a nightmare haunting the RMT right wing for some years. Despite two attempts by the leadership in the last four years to bring him and from standing in any elections Pat Sunikro has now succeeded in being elected as Assistant General Secretary of the union.

While all sorts of questions remain to be answered and the balance of forces is by no means resolved, it is clear that the creation of the union is undergoing a significant shift.

At the political level this was clear at the union's Annual General Meeting. Taking a lead from Bob Crow, the conference agreed to cut its affiliation to the Labour Party to a bare minimum. It confirmed a change in its sponsorship of MPs —away from sponsoring the constituency parties of a group of MPs, many of the top ranks of the government, who have consistently refused to support union policy —towards supporting the campaigning activities of another group of MPs who are able to actually agree with what the union stands for.

But significantly the conference also agreed a resolution that all new rules changes should be brought forward next year to allow branches, regions and the executive nationally to finance support other “socialist” groups like the RMT.

At the industrial level, Pat has taken responsibility for the union’s main train operating companies. The Arroa Trans Northern strike continues — still going strong after seven days. London Underground workers are being balloted over pay.

More waiting for London weighting

London council staff have also seen their demand for a real increase in London weighting thwarted in the sights of negotiation after four successful days of strike action.

Julia Coleman, chief trade union side negotiator and UNISON regional head of local government, has confirmed she wrote to the employers early in August seeking a positive response to the London weighting claim which was lodged over a year ago.

The Association of London Government, which negotiates on behalf of all 33 London councils, has agreed to meet to discuss the claim on September 12.

UNISON, with 55,000 London local government members, is the biggest of the local government unions, but has been pursuing the claim jointly with the GMB and TGWU. Council staff receive just £1,407 weighting in outer London and £1,674 in inner London.

The high cost of living in London, Europe’s most expensive city to live in, is a serious problem. Key workers such as dinner ladies, street cleaners and classroom assistants, many of whom have to make £9,000 a year are being forced out of the capital due to the cost of accommodation and transport.

The union points out that the Metropolitan Police, which increased to London Weighting to £6,000 a year plus free travel on public transport within the M1, has managed to stymie its recruitment crisis as a result.

A joint meeting on August 21 warned that if the ALG do not yield quick and positive results they will call further stoppages and step up efforts to disrupt the work of councils while protecting the general public.
Why we’re launching a new paper

The International Socialist Group and the Socialist Solidarity Network, acting in concert with individual sponsors, are taking the initiative to launch a new paper—"Resistance*.

We think this is necessary to express and build support for a distinct political position which, despite differences among us on secondary issues, we share. We want to deepen the fight for a broad socialist and anti-racist movement in England on the model of, for example, the SEP in Scotland and the Party of Communist Refoundation in Italy.

We want to strengthen the fight for inclusive, creative and forward-looking Marxist politics on the British left. We will do this in the Socialist Alliance, the SSP, the anti-globalisation movement, the movements of the oppressed and the labour movement generally.

In taking this step, we base ourselves on the following positions—

1) World capitalism has moved into a major new recession, which is exposing the contradictions of modern capitalism ever more blatantly. This recession will bring hardship and despair to millions who see their savings and pensions disappear or substantially reduced—so much so that even George Bush speaks of the danger of the American people “losing faith in our free enterprise system.”

2) This crisis is impacting on the third world through mass poverty and austerity, and in the worst of cases mass starvation. More, ever over, the role of transnational corporations and the institutions of imperialism like the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF is being exposed—leading to an explosion of support for the anti-neoliberal globalisation movement, which has survived the impact of September 11.

To environmental destructiveness—mass poverty and unemployment is now added the constant danger—and daily practice—of imperialist militarism, already impacting on Afghanistan, Colombia and other countries, shown itself in the escalation of Israeli barbarism against the Palestinian people, and most likely leading soon to a massive assault on Iraq.

3) This new crisis of world capitalism, together with the collapse of Stalinism, and the object capitation of social democracy worldwide, exemplified by Blairism in Britain, has created a new space for left and socialist alternatives.

But this is happening in a period when the labour movement internationally is still on the defensive, and when rebuilding the labour movement and social movements of the oppressed, and the traditions of mass solidarity and resistance is still ongoing.

4) We see the movement against neoliberal globalisation as a key instrument for helping resolve the crisis of the labour and social movements. We want to learn from its refreshing dynamism, creative ways of organising and spirit of renewal.

Within this movement it is crucial to fight for socialist, anti-capitalist perspectives and against those which see the possibility of a ‘reformed’, ‘humanised’ capitalism.

5) For us a crucial aspect of that is the fight to build broad socialist parties, exemplified by the Scottish Socialist Party and Communist Refoundation in Italy, which can begin to act as a political alternative for at least a section of the masses.

We do not believe that existing left organisations, even the largest of them, are politically broad enough or have enough organisational strength, to play this role on their own. Although they have a vital role to play in bringing new socialist parties into existence and leading them.

We note, for example, that the French LCR, even after its electoral success in the presidential election, launched an appeal for a broad anti-capitalist formation, which could become a new broad socialist party. We think this is the right way forward.

In the existing crisis, reactionary and the left-wing alternatives are being forcefully advanced, as exemplified by the successes of the far right in elections in France, Holland and elsewhere. The far left is in a race with racist reaction for mass allegiance, as the political centre collapses or goes into crisis.

The formation of broad socialist parties able to intervene in elections and beyond, and posing a credible alternative, is crucial to stopping the advance of the far right. It would be irresponsible not to fight for a broad socialist alternative in the face of this danger.

We will seek to promote:

A creative, inclusive and forward-looking Marxism, which implies a willingness to reach out to, learn from, and engage in a dialogue with, those from other traditions as well as a wide range of campaigns, movements and activists who do not see themselves as Marxists or even socialists.

The fight for the Socialist Alliance to become a broad socialist party when the organisational and political conditions for this are ready. The precondition for this is activity to build the Alliance and extend its political scope.

The building and rebuilding of mass movements of resistance to racism and the war on asylum seekers, the oppression of women, lesbians and gay men, and people with disabilities. The vast majority of the victims of this oppression are working class; building these movements will strengthen and help unify the working class movement and the left within it.

The rebuilding of the fighting strength of the labour movement, and within that the fight for class struggle politics and democracy in the unions.

Socialist internationalism, expressed through deepening and consolidating links with like-minded socialists and movements in Europe and beyond; and also in the fight against the witch-hunt of asylum seekers, and support for Globalise Resistance and other movements against neo-liberal globalisation, and the Stop the War Coalition.

Sign up for the new paper!

If you agree with the principles outlined in the statement, why not subscribe to the new paper, and make sure you receive every issue?

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*Resistance is a working title for the new paper, a final decision on the name has yet to be taken.
Germany: Caravan for the Rights of Refugees and Migrants 2002

War creates refugees!
Refugees do not create war!

Asylum right is a human right! We are here because you destroy our countries!

The refugees, in unity with the victims and with all those rejecting racism and for human progress, call on you to join the Caravan Tour 2002, August 17 (Bremen) – September 21 (Berlin).

During the decisive phase of the general strike in Germany – which will most probably be fought out in the detriment of the refugees – we will tour the Federal Republic and the GDR to explain:

- The Caravan for the Rights of Refugees and Immigrants
- For those we left behind in our home countries
- Against war and destruction of our countries
- We will not stand idly by and wash as the right to asylum is swept away by those who have no respect for human rights.
- Join the Caravan! For a strong solidarity front for our rights!

Veronica Fagan
New Labour's attack on asylum seekers took a new turn over the summer with a desperate attempt by Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell and Home Secretary, David Blunkett to stop a lottery grant going to the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation campaigners.

The campaign had been awarded the money three years ago to expand its work. By now all asylum seekers are being dispersed to the North East of England and Scotland, where existing resources are limited. The plan was to enable the NCADC to open and staff a new office in the north-east - most probably in Middlesbrough in addition to their existing bases in Birmingham, Manchester and London.

The organisation provides invaluable support to many individuals threatened with deportation.

As Tony Ospershaw, NCADC's north-west co-ordinator, said:

"NCADC's website is frequently the first port of call when asylum seekers and deportees need advice.

"The most common questions we receive are on the process and on how to contact Ministers...""

Radio 4's World at One in which she said:

"There are a few simple questions. First, is lottery money being used for political purposes? Second, is there any evidence this organisation encourages people to break the law?"

"Even officials at the Community Fund seemed surprised to be asked to comment on the lottery.

"In the 21 days, we gave at least half to groups engaged in lobbying. We gave money to the National Governing Body, and the health secretary, Sir Michael, said "I must decline" when asked if the lottery was an election trick.

"Worse, we were threatened with legal action, and we changed our minds completely, in the end we do not give money to groups that engage in political activities but there is a grey area.

"A large number of groups did lobby government for changes in the law - Esther Rantzen's Children's Lobby is one of them, and they have just received a grant.

"Ms Sainsbury also said that voluntary sector organisations had specifically highlighted the need for asylum seekers when the fund consulted them on how to spend its money."

"Blunkett and Jowell have won themselves few friends themselves with their actions which were so clearly an attempt to close down organisations that are fighting for justice."

Despite this, campaigners need to be on the alert in case the Community Fund investigation does result in a further threat to this vital organisation.
The Ahmadis: send donations for the campaign to CDAS 8M Box 4289 London W1X 3XJ

On Wednesday 14 August the family was taken from Harmondsworth and flown to Germany, where they had initially applied for refugee status in a specially-chartered jet at a cost to the taxpayer of an estimated £50,000.

Their lawyer Pierre Mahlouf had lodged an appeal for a judicial review before the removal, when the Home Office failed to consider the psychiatric reports on Peribis before making its final decision.

The point of the action at that time was "to oblige the home secretary to consider the evidence that he has not yet considered" Mahlouf said.

The report concerned was the first to expert diagnosis on Mrs Ahmadali who, her lawyer said, had "burned" the signs of recovery were in Britain were she should be supported by friends.

Following the deportation, the family finally succeeded in winning a judicial review of the decision to deport. Lawyers for the Ahmadis family were able to show that a Home Office letter of August 13 contained inaccurate information about what their immigration status and rights of residence would be on arriving in Germany.

The Home Office had claimed that they had been prevented residence in Germany on humanitarian grounds. It was revealed that this claim would not be settled in a reception centre and that they would have "settled rights" including full access to the German social and welfare system and be housed in the community.

However, Nick Blake QC, representing the family, told the high court that this was not the case. The Ahmadis were put in a reception centre on arriving in Munich last week and then moved to a refugee camp.

The status they had been given in Germany did not entitle them to full access to the country's welfare and medical system, he said.

Though the right to a review was granted, the family have not been allowed to return to Britain in the interim.

Speaking to The Guardian from Landberg camp, near Munich, Mrs Ahmadali said she was anxious about the family's future despite being pleased by the ruling.

"We have been told nothing about what is going to happen to us or where we're going," she said.

"How long can I wait? I still want to be in England with my family and friends. I was looking forward to studying. My children are due to start back at school. We're all too young to be worried."

Ardi Young was to point out in a powerful article in The Guardian on August 9 the hypocrisy of a government which uses the plight of Afghan women as a pretext for its warmongering in their own country but treats them with extreme brutality when they seek asylum there.

"The government's twin priorities seem to be to create chaos abroad and to insulate itself from the fallout at home. Not content with screaming fire in a crowded cinema, it wants to close all the emergency exits too. Those who perish inside get all the sympathy, those like Mrs Ay who manage to escape get none."

While every deportation case inevitably involves horror stories - of the desperation which leads people to leave their homes in the first place but also of the racism and inhumanity of the asylum system here, this case is particularly outrageous.

The lies that were told to justify the deportation merely needed to be exposed - and campaigners need to be at it, for similar things are not happening in other cases.

It is clear that the government is determined to step up the removals - at whatever cost to human dignity and justice.

Home Office Minister Beverley Hughes, who was responsible for the letter, should resign.

The Ahmadis must be allowed to return for the case, and be granted indefinitiely leave to remain. It is important of all, this case and the many others like it must strengthen our resolve to work until no one is illegal.

Yurdugal Ay, a Kurdish woman married to a Pakistani and her four children, Barwani, (14), Mehnaz (12), Mehsa (7) and Dovon (3), are fighting deportation from Britain.

Mr Ay's husband, Salti, was sent back to Germany, supposedly a "safe third country", by the Home Office some time ago. On May 11 he was deported from there to Turkey.

Since there has been no news of him, and Mrs Ay is very worried about what has happened to him.

Yurdugal and the children were snatched from their home and were first sent to Tinsley House Detention Centre at Gatwick. After 10 days they were moved to Dungare Detention Centre near Gatwick, and then from friends and community hearing on August 27 was unfortunately unsuccessful.

Yurdugal explains how she and her family ended up in Britain:

"I am from Deyrzkab: My husband and I were living in Smalk which was a dangerous area at that time (1988). The soldiers and janitors (military police) kept coming to our villages and putting pressure on us, coming into the house and beating us, asking if we were supporters of the guerrilla."

Husbands were being taken to the guerrilla station and being beaten. They were also beating the children and women in the home. We want to go to Germany.

"For eleven years we lived under a hellish psychological war in Germany. Twice the police came to the house to try and catch me. Once they said to us "You are politicians - go and do politics in Turkey. The children grew up in that atmosphere, and were all affected by it."

We have always heard bad things about Turkey, which is somewhere they've never been heard.
There is no Maastricht road to socialism.

Review of new Alliance for Workers Liberty pamphlet For a Workers Europe
Alan Thornett

The Socialist Outlook is currently debating its position on the Euro in the expectation of a referendum next year. It will hold a conference on October 19th to vote on the issue. The two main planks in the debate are the vote no (position held by the SSG, the SWP and others) and an abstention position supported by the AWL, the CPGB, Workers Power and the RCG.

The clearest expression of the abstention position is the AWL - partly because they have been doing it longer. The AWL (or rather 7 of its predecessors Workers Fight) was the only left-led organisation to call for an abstention in the 1975 referendum on Britain joining the EEC before it evolved into an increasingly pro-EU, and consequently pro-Euro direction.

The position of those on the Euro is informed by their overall position on the EU - which is to see it as a progressive development in European capitalism, albeit with some unfortunate, and nasty, anti-working class features. The case for this supposed pro-gressive nature of the EU is spelt out most clearly by Seas Margan in the new AWL pamphlet on European integration. He argues:

"Undeniable aspects of the European union which the bourgeoisie has created notwithstanding, the EU is much better than the older Europe of separate, often hostile and sometimes warlike nations... The basis exists now as never before for working class unity across Europe: for a Europe-wide working class movement - it should be the historic and socialist United States of Europe".

Later in the article on what the bourgeoisie has created and united the working class across the EU to fight the bourgeois change and social reform and, in the course of doing that, building towards socialism.

Whatever we may wish as revolutionary socialists, the fact is that the bulk of the class struggle continues at the level of the national state - which has far from disappeared in the way Seas Margan claims.

This reality is reflected in the highly appropriate motto of the anti-globalisation movement: "think globally: act locally". This recognises that although many of the attacks on the working class are coming from a few trans-national agencies, they are implemented by national governments, and by employers located at the national and local level.

The international agencies of capital, from the WTO to the World Bank and the EU are structured in such a way as to ensure that things continue to work in this way. Individual states carry out the policies and decisions handed down to them from these trans-national agencies. This means that struggles usually take place at different times in different countries, which was the case even with the battles over qualification for the single currency.

Socialists have to get the relationship between the struggle at the national and international level right. Attacks emanating from the international level certainly have the potential to generate a response at the international level, and to develop class consciousness in the process. That is why there was an increase in internationally co-ordinated struggle following the Maastricht Treaty and the introduction of the convergence criteria. Workers could see where the attack was coming from.

Neoliberal globalisation initiates the same process on a world scale - hence the anti-globalisation movement. This does not mean that neo-liberal globalisation is a good thing, or is progressive, or that capitalism itself is progressive because it is driven to globalise. It means there is a response to its offensive by the working class. A multi-national company has the same effect if it chooses to attack its workforce simultaneously across national boundaries. This does not make it a progressive institution. Otherwise why don't we pro- pose reforming an inherently progressive capitalism?

Socialists must grasp all opportunities to internationalise the struggle in order to equip the working class more effectively to fight its own ruling class. That was the role of the European Marches in the late 1990s, and that is the role of the anti-globalisation movement today.

Attacks on the working class emanating from the EU have the potential to generate an international response: but if the attacks are successful they will strengthen the employers, and the national governments, and weaken the working class at both the national and international level.

Working class unity, nationally or internationally, is a concrete thing. It depends for its development on successful struggles, and winning a favourable balance of forces between the ruling class and the working class.

The road to workers' unity, therefore, is not through the more effective reorganisation of European capital against the European working class, but through the internationalisation of the working class in each country against its domestic class enemy, and the co-ordination of these struggles at the international level. That is the task, whether the EU units or not. We don't need the EU, or NAFTA, or the WTO, to exist in order to fight for international solidarity. We were fighting for it long before they existed, and we are fighting for it today. They just strengthen the ability of capitalism to fight back.

What does this imply as far as voting on the Euro is concerned? Well, if the EU is such a good thing, and should be defended against those who want to break it up, it is hard to see why the AWL do not call for a yes vote. The EU would certainly be damaged by a no vote in a referendum in Britain.

In fact the AWL, for largely, argues, in the debate, that a no vote would be a disaster. Indeed if you really do think that the EU is "better than the old Europe", has created the basis for "working class unity all across Europe", and the best conditions for achieving a "democratic and socialist United States of Europe" (no less!), you are quite wrong. It is clear that the Euro project is logical.

In the pamphlet the AWL justify not voting yes by saying that it will be seen as endorsing cuts and privatisations. They put it this way:

"The Euro is not just a discreet, small measure - it is a giant step towards the capitalisation of which at this time necessarily means a package of cuts and privatisations. We cannot be seen, as we would be if we say yes, to endorse those attacks."

Indeed why do this? This seems a good reason for voting no?

In an informal discussion at a meeting of the NA Executive, Martin Thomas (a leading member of the AWL) said that if he was forced to vote on the Euro, he would vote for the Euro, "but there is no need to make such a choice at the present time". This is presumably because it would put the AWL out on a limb in the debate.

Another argument the AWL is advancing is that vote either yes or no for the euro (rather than abstain) is to choose between two capitulations. For them, the only choice is something socialists should never do.

Capitalism is capitalism, whatever of the national state, the EU, or anything else, and the workers' movement in any country is subordinate to the capitulation they organise against the working class, and we should not concern ourselves with.

The AWL approach (presumably) therefore means that we must vote against the capitulations of the capitalists' strategy, whilst having no view on just say: well, they are a capital the movement develop politically from such a position? No one learns anything.

This makes no sense. Some forms of capital- ist rule, and capitalist strategies against the working class, are more effective (and others less so). Can we be neutral on that?

The workers' movement has to take this into account. Without an analysis of the politics behind the attack the movement is disarmed. If the capitalists change their form of rule (either on a national or international level) it is up to the capital how they organise against the working class, and we should not concern ourselves with.

Socialists are not indifferent to various forms of bourgeois government either. We don't think that all are capital. Indeed we were not indifferent to the signification of the Thatcher governments of the 1980s and we are not indifferent to Berlusconi in Italy today, for example.

We vote for social democratic governments as a (capitalist) alternative to the parties of the right because this puts the working class in a position as the right that of the ruling right of the state. We don't say just that they are different forms of capitalist rule: which they are.

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Military rule is a capitalist strategy used to
"The CPGP (who work with the AWL in the debate) have made a number of people's political goals (even by their standards) - such as "mobilising the workers to burn the ballot boxes" and calling for strike action in the workplace - in favour of - yes - an abstention in the referendum!

We can look forward to seeing in which workplaces the CPGP essay make a serious proposal along these lines."

How would socialists vote in a referendum which proposed the suspension of liberal democracies and the imposition of some form of military rule? We would vote against it, not abstain or vote for an "active boycott".

The same applies to a reorganisation within an individual capitalist enterprise. If a capitalist decides to impose harsher working conditions, we don't just say it's still capitalism - we are in favour of opposing the new conditions. When workers in the post office are faced with a new management plan to cut jobs we don't just say "it's all capitalism" - which it is. We campaign to get it defeated.

Of course the AWL go on from this into a strange logic to argue that to oppose a new form of capitalism rule is to endorse the existing form of capitalist rule. To oppose the EU, they say, is to support the the existence of the European Union, so to oppose the CPGP is, they say, to support the pound.

Again this makes no sense. To be opposed to a new, worse form of rule does NOT mean that we support or endorse the old form of rule.

If workers reject new more harsh working conditions, it does not mean they support what previously existed - which they might have been fighting to improve anyway. It means they are opposed to something worse. If we are opposed to military rule, it does not mean that we endorse liberal democracies, only that we are opposed to military rule as an alternative.

The referendum when it comes will not be a choice between the Euro and the pound, but for or against the Euro. Obviously we would still have the pound if the Euro were rejected - just that the pound would be the case if everyone abstained, since the Euro would only come in if Blair gets a positive mandate for it.

So if we vote against the Euro - as a vote for the pound - so it is an abstention!

The AWL position also implies that socialists should only support socialist options. A bit like (as someone said in a debate) the ultra sectarian Socialist Party of Great Britain, who refuse to campaign over wages. This is outright against the wages system, with a memorable slogan "Don't work for wages!"

I would be very nice to have a socialist who votes more often, but most choices the working class are faced with are capitalist options, and they have to decide which one is in their best interests. In any case revolutionary socialists are not opposed to reforms: far from it, in fact Marxists should be the most effective fighters for reforms, seeing them within the context of a revolutionary programme.

The pamphlet also advocates the strange "active boycott" argument. The AWL claim that they are not in fact calling for an abstention, but an "active boycott" - something of a contradiction in terms, in such a referendum.

It is hard to be credible saying that the single currency is such a big threat to jobs and wages - we have to abstain! But to accept the logic of this, says Magannna, would be defeatist.

The problem the AWL face is that if the issue is worth campaigning for it must be worth a positive vote. Whatever spins you put on it, an abstention remains an abstention in real terms. It means you have decided not to vote and not to vote no but, yes, to abstain - "actively" or otherwise.

"One reason the problem that the Euro is a huge issue in European politics, but they have nothing to say about it in a referendum - because they are neutral between capitalist policies.

They have decided to make a fuss about it even if they are calling for an abstention.

That's how they wind up with the idea of an "active boycott"!

It be difficult the AWL face in this is to define what the "active" part of such a campaign be. It is hard to be militantly in support of something - just doing nothing. An active campaign implies mobilising people around something you saying is important and makes a difference.

If voting one way or the other makes no difference - which is what an abstention means - what is there to campaign about?

You can picket the WTO - there are demonstrations against the WTO. But do nothing about the CPGP - who work with the AWL in the debate - a number of wild proposals (even by their standards) - such as "mobilising the workers to burn their ballot boxes", and calling for strike action in the workplace in favour of - yes - an abstention in the referendum!

We can look forward to seeing in which workplaces the CPGP even make a serious proposal along these lines. Not many, we can confidently predict.

Sean Magannna's own proposal in this wacky campaigning view is that socialists should have their OWN ballot papers, and ballot boxes, and run their own completely different ballot - calling for votes in favour of workers' rights.

Wow, that will get the bosses on the run - particularly if they message to find out that something is happening. But this is still essentially an abstention in the actual ballot which is taking place, and on which such antics will have absolutely no impact.

There are several other arguments which the AWL advance: 4) We will have cuts anyway - with or without the Euro.

This is a passive and complacent position to take. Yes we would still have cuts with or without the Euro. There is a neo-liberal politics going on that does not rely on the existence of the Euro. And new Labour have their own attacks to carry out on the welfare state.

But with the Euro we will get extra cuts, organised and co-ordinated through the EU Stability Pact. Double trouble, as it could be called. Why would we want that?

On top of the cuts organised at the national level we will have more cuts organised at the European level as soon as problems arise with the Stability Pact. It is like saying to workers: don't bother to oppose the job cuts which have just been announced at the European level, because they will still attack you at the national level anyway.

What kind of position is that?

2) Socialists can't vote the same way as the Tory right.

Why not? Why should we allow the Tory right to decide how we vote? That is completely unacceptable. They will be voting 'no' from a position which has nothing to do with us. Their motivations are British nationalism, ours is the defence of the interests of the working class.

There is a constituency of people who oppose the Euro from a socialist anti-nationalist point of view, workers in the public sector unions for example. Who is representing to them if there is no socialist anti-nationalist campaign?

In fact the existence of what will undoubtedly be a strong right-wing anti-nationalistic campaign even more important - since without it the right-wing will dominate the debate and challenge.

This is where the abstention position plays into the hands of the Tory right. It would leave us wringing our hands on the sidelines with nothing to say, whilst the Tories hold the whole stage. There would be no socialist voice in the debate - other than on the sidelines, calling for an abstention.

This would be a disaster in a referendum.

3) A no vote would 'boost nationalism'

They argue that a win for the no position would be a disaster because it would boost nationalism. What is the evidence for that?

It is true that a referendum campaign in Britain would boost nationalism, at least to some extent. That is because of the nature of the Tory right and the tabloid press in Britain. But this could be the case whatever the result.

It is not the result, but the campaign that would do it. The thing which would have the biggest boost for nationalism is not to have a no-nationalist campaign for a no-vote. That would hand the whole thing over to the nationalists.

4) A no vote would result in a Tory government

This looks even more unlikely given the state of the Tory party and the depth of their split over the Euro.

But what is certain is that a 'no' vote would throw new Labour into crisis, whilst a 'yes' vote would give it a new lease of life. Is that what the AWL want?

In the same time a 'yes' vote would be a major boost to the European project, with an historical obstacle to its future development being removed - i.e. British capitalism's lack of commitment to its central project.

Each of the AWL's arguments lead the left towards a cul de sac, would isolate socialists from a major debate, and strengthen rather than weaken the nationalism and the right.

That's why we say what is needed is a campaign against the Euro, based on the interests of the working class, and with the socialists at the centre of it.

This would be impossible on the basis of abstention.

NEW! The socialist case against the euro

Hot off the press - a new, up to date analysis by Alan Thornett of this key political issue, as Tony Blair decides whether to chance his arm with a referendum.

Available £1.20 including P&P from T1 Research, PO Box 1109 London N4 2UU.
Tony Richardson

On arriving at Tel Aviv airport, the security cannot understand why anybody would want to come to Israel for a holiday.

For the first two days I stayed in Jerusalem, waiting for training. So I walk around the old city looking at the various religious sites. This is extremely difficult because the traders are desperate for customers, and I appear to be the only tourist. So I elect a Palestinian tour guide.

We reach a position overlooking the Wailing Wall, and as we look at the Al Aqsa mosque, an Israeli man, seeing that I was accompanied by a young Palestinian, said, "That is where we are going to build our Third Temple." Since this would mean knocking down the third most holy building in the Moslem world, this was quite a statement.

Apart from all the soldiers watching the Palestinian peace talks, this area also has armed settlers, with their hands on their Uzis.

Later on, as I walk past Damascus Gate, I notice some soldiers have lined up a group of Palestinians, and occasionally kick them, whenever they seem to protest. Apparently this is because they have the wrong colour identity cards. Palestinians from the West Bank are not allowed into Jerusalem. Never mind the importance to them of this day.

I then head for Biet Sahour, for training. The International Solidarity Movement training involves agreement on our activities being non-violent, on avoiding cultural offence, and making it clear that we're here to support the Palestinians, and not tell them what to do. It also involves measures to maintain our own safety. We are all assigned to affinity groups, who look after each other, and we

Bombed-out house in Nablus (above): Internationalists help clear the way for long-awaited water tanker in Iraq Borem (centre): kite-flying and cratering break (right)

each have a buddy, who specifically watches the other in demonstrations or other activities.

One thing I learned, while here, is that there are large numbers of Christian Palestinians, something you would never hear in the media. Obviously this is because this goes against the idea of some kind of cultural war.

We make a visit to Deheish camp. Here we visit the home of a suicide bomber; the Israeli army is threatening to knock it down. It is a large house with the mother living on one floor, and three brothers each having a floor with their families. In these refugee camps the houses are built together, with only a narrow roadways between them. If the house is knocked down, at least six other houses will be heavily affected. Even the neighbours have moved some of their furniture away, because the Israeli army comes in every day and guarantees a 20 minutes notice to get out. So the residents have no time to take their possessions.

When we talked to one of the brothers, he said that if he had known his brother was going to do what he did, he would have stopped him, as would their mother. But he also explained the mental state that his brother had been in. It was at the time of the Jewish attacks by the Israeli army. He himself said that he was in favour of discussing with the Israelis to achieve a peaceful settlement, as he would still be even if they knocked down his house.

As we looked from the roof of the house at the surrounding hills, we could see two large Jewish settlements. But he also pointed out a car park on the hill facing us. He explained this was the start of a new settlement, and it was on Palestinian land. There was nothing they could do about it. Our guide explained that he had an area of land, that he had been trying to get building permission for seven years.

The settlements dominate everything. In the area of Beitlehem these settlements now cover 87 per cent of the water and during summer the Palestinian areas have varying periods of water shutdown. This of course never applies to the settlements, which contain, to quote their spokesmen, swimming pools etc. Special roads, which only the settlers are allowed to use, are built to the settlements.

Whilst I was there, we were a case reported in the newspaper, in which some Palestinian families had gone to court to try to stop the Israeli army knocking down their houses, for a road to a settlement. The judge argued that the fact the settlement was illegal, that the army had a duty to provide security for Israeli citizens, and therefore could knock down these houses.

When I left for Nablus, we also left behind a campaign, including a woman with an obviously sick baby, who were forced to leave their home.

The problems of the village were not exactly the same as the Nablus. We could talk in the streets, but not really leave the village. The Israelis had blown up their well, so they had to get their water from another village. But the Israelis had built two new escalators between the two villages, and so they were desperate for water.

The peace talks in Nablus could not go on too much problem. The town had been under a 24 hour curfew for 55 days at the point. The curfew was only lifted for a couple of hours every few days. It has wide streets, and looked like one of those movies after a nuclear holocaust deserted. Then the children started coming out to greet us, asking the question that was near to our hearts, "What's your name?"

Then came a disorientating noise, and it was a cannon shelling the streets cleared again. This was tanks, which ignored us, and thundered past.

We met up with the ISM organiser, and we were allocated various duties. The following day I was two young Americans were to go to a village, and hear about their problems.

New Nablus, which contains, what the University, and this is the starkest of the problems, one cannot understand unless you see it. We saw its meaning at the checkpoints, people unable to visit their fiancés, or their mother in hospital, or at a wedding. Such things as eating out, going to the cinema, or their children's schools are out of the question. One is imprisoned in one's home, or village. No wonder many have no homes, and TV, and what a surprise is Mr Bean so popular.

Another problem is the difficulty of having any kind of family life. One woman described how her husband goes away for 4 weeks at a time, to work, then comes back for one day. Another man told how his wife had a Jewish identity card, and went to visit her parents in Jerusalem, but was not allowed back, he has not seen her since. (Compare this to people fleeing to the hills or from Jewish grandparent's, to come from anywhere in the world to Israel.)

Threat to houses. At the end of June two villagers from Iraq Borem, and one from Nablus, Tel were shot dead by IDF forces. They had been drinking away, and were returning to their families; one was 21 and another 20. As they were returning the IDF forces were carrying an operation, and took them for fighters, and shot them dead. Then they did the usual cover-up, putting guns alongside them, and hanging the dead men were fighters. But everybody I spoke to in the village assured me that they were not, and people tend to be predisposed to fighters. The Israelis are now threatening to knock down their family houses.

It should be explained that the Palestinians consider anybody killed by the Israelis as a martyr, while the IDF threaten to knock down the houses of anybody known to resist, though the media presents it as though they are only threatening the houses of suicide bombers.

That evening we sat and drank tea on the roof of a house from which, on a clear day, you could see the

Palestine diary

NABLUS: We went through the checkpoint at Nablus without too much problem. The town had been under a 24 hour curfew for 55 days at the point. The curfew was only lifted for a couple of hours every few days. It has wide streets, and looked like one of those movies after a nuclear holocaust deserted. Then the children started coming out to greet us, asking the question that was near to our hearts, "What's your name?"

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The IDF could not enforce the curfew within the camp. So the market stalls continued, and the cafes, chemist shops etc. opened. Every so often the stalls would come to the entrance, fire in the air, and the kids would come out throwing stones. The rights were different, there was firing throughout the night on the Tuesday night, sometimes as close as two city streets away. Nearly every night somebody was shot dead in Nablus. One night three were killed.

A demonstration of young people within Nablus took place without incident. A lot of the international’s activities were with the young people. One particularly symbolic activity took place on the Thursday. One of the few things that young people can do in their houses, from the roof is fly kites, and every night the skies of Nablus are filled with kites. So an event was organised, in a large field next to Nablus, flying kites.

The Israelis tried to disrupt the start of this breach of the curfew, by sending tanks, and drawing out the kids to throw stones. But a group of internationals chased them away. For the rest of the afternoon a large crowd of children, and their families came out, with the food vendors, a great family day. The internationals stood in the way of any returning tanks.

As a group of us left Nablus on the Friday morning, the internationals had just completed knocking down a barri- cade between Balata, and another refugee camp Akena.

Jerusalem: shops and cafes function normally... with guards on the entrances

Tony in Nablus: “If they’ll do this in an ambulance, till this tourist that really protect me?”

Mediterranean. We watched the sun go down, and realised how beautiful this would be if the Palestinians were free.

On the Tuesday morning we were going to Nablus, by bike, to check the checkpoint. The soldiers would not let them through. A fire engine arrived, to pick up a worker from nearby. The army stopped it, and made the workers all get out, and open up the sides. The driver said he had permission from the military commander. They were still made to wait for 20 minutes.

Community workers like these, ambulances, refuse workers, are supposedly allowed to function, but the previous day a power worker had been stopped in Nablus, and when he got out of his vehicle was shot in the head. This was on the same times the IDF said they had made a “mistake”.

At the checkpoint the soldiers had said to us that while we just saw four Palestinians, they saw four potential bombers. Could there be a clearer state- ment of collective punishment? It speaks no one is innocent until proven guilty!

When we arrived back in Nablus we learnt that the army had come to evict the houses in Balata camp, that internationals had been staying there at 2.30 in the morning. Ever since the Israeli court judgement that declared the IDP’s housing as “illegitimate”, the army has been trying to evict the houses, the ISM had been allowing the people to stay, to try to stop them being destroyed, or at least publicise the IDP’s activities.

The particular house that was that of the Alti family. One brother had been killed on a mission in Israel, and the army was searching for Allah, another brother. They had been firing against the walls, and then had sent in a human shield. The army had agreed to stop the dawn-to-dusk siege on the Israeli court, 3 months earlier. All they did was to change its name to “neighbour practice”. (3 days later a 19 year old Palestinian was shot dead, when the IDF used this tech- nique to prevent themselves, they also bulldozed the house with the militant inside it.)

The IDF had told the Alti’s that they would have to back to destroy the house. So the next night 15 of us were allowed to the house. The houses were devised, such as some agreeing to be chained to the walls, to make it difficult for the IDF. The

Realisation of a significant set off for Ramallah, from East Jerusalem. This shows the situation in Ramallah, which is the tell off of Ramallah, from East Jerusalem.

Ramallah may decide to distribute food and aid to work- ers through the unions. So although the unions don’t touch the money, they issue the cheques. The unions aid money, and donations from Arab countries etc. Whilst I was there they were issuing people with cheek (about £70), and they sometimes issue food vouchers. But Mohammad tells me that they don’t get enough to do the frequency enough for people to survive on this money.

They also issue health vouchers, which mean their mem- bers get free basic treatment in state hospitals. For 25 shekels a week I arranged it and wonder that he can claim that union membership has gone from 30,000 to 1,000 in 15 years.

The union also runs courses on the new Palestinian Labour Code (the first they have had), ten in Ramallah this month, and get the people to them. They want help with a project to teach staff, and legal dept about International labour laws, ILO conventions, and labour rights. Had coffee with Mohammad in beautiful art cafe. Then back to hotel.

In the morning a guide took me around. Went to Arbil’s compound, and back past bombad school, then in to cen- tre. Here there was a demonstra- tion, complaining about the continued encirclement. Consisted of several dignitaries, including interior minister, and Mossad Bichir.

JERUSALEM: I returned to Jerusalem, staying in a hotel with a radical Jewish activist. He was quite delusional, believing that the war was going to end, rolling down a slope, with nothing to stop it, and receiving the backing of the US.

He said that many of his friends were considering leaving Israel, or at least sending their kids elsewhere. He told me that on previous occasions they had been ideologically opposed to some of the state’s activities, but this was now very small.

I walked back west through Jerusalem, where the shops and cafes are functioning nor- mally, albeit with guards at their entrances.

In the morning I had a last look around the old city there you could buy any ID cards for small children, as well as hats. Will be on the front of the Sun.

Then off to the Airport and home.

National day of action
14th September

Boycott Israeli Goods
Details: email big@palestinecampaign.org
www.palestinecampaign.org

28th September

Palestinian Solidarity section of anti-war march. Aim of March includes Justice for Palestinians.

Jerusalem: shops and cafes function normally... with guards on the entrances

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Benchmarking Report on public sector pay - what does it mean?

Joe Craig

The long awaited Report of the Public Sector Benchmarking Body set up under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) was published in June. It is a grandiose claim that such an exercise had never been attempted in Ireland, or overseas (Irish Times, 27/07/22), as it is or is it documented. Not only will the payments of 230,000 workers pay for the foreseeable future. It destroys the framework of relationships between jobs that had determined pay rates up until now.

Originally set up in July 2000, the process behind the Report was an attempt to determine pay rates to public workers across the height of the Celtic Tiger boom. It aims to facilitate the employment of private sector terms and conditions on workers in the public sector. It is recommended that the concept of 'adaptability, change, flexibility and modernization.' It therefore received the enthusiastic endorsement of the ICTU hierarchy. Indeed it was hailed by Joe O’Toole, former head of the teacher’s union INTO, as an ATM machine out of which workers simply withdraw money. The average worker’s pay arising from the report is 8.94%, which considering the South is now the size of the US GDP would be in the euro zone, according to a recent release from the Office of the Eurozone, makes nonsense of this remark.

The terms of reference of the report listed a number of criteria that were to determine its findings. They are: comparability to the private sector; equity; rewards, recruitment, retention and motivation; modernisation and effectiveness; and implications for national competitiveness.

Since these criteria are not necessarily compatible, are ideologically driven or entirely subjective, it is not clear how the recommendations arose from them. The economist Jim O’Leary who was originally on the Benchmarking Body, but who later resigned, has raised questions about how the criteria were applied and the findings arrived at.

He questions the rationale for the recommendations. First, he argues that the need for increases in public sector wages in order to attract workers who might go to the private sector in a period of low unemployment is not borne out by the growth in public sector employment which is rising at a higher than that of the private sector.

Secondly he says there is no evidence that equity considerations apply as 'breadly speaking' public sector pay has kept pace with the private sector.

His last point is that the requirement for changes of conditions of public sector workers is unclear and does not appear to relate to level of awards. Some workers are recommended a 2% per cent increase while others 15 to 18 per cent or higher but presumably they are required to change 'just as much.' This criticism from the right will not stop the leadership of ICTU in selling the report but the fact that such criticisms can be made only exposes the thinking behind benchmarking. It is possible to reply to O’Leary that the level of vacancies and staff turnover as well as issues of motivation and morale must be taken into account when judging the relative attractiveness of public sector employment - but this is only to argue on the grounds of the enemy.

Worker’s attitude to what constitutes equity should not be that of ex-creation union bosses, ex-employer representatives, management consultants or High Court judges. If workers in the public sector felt they were being lost, a worker might not be in public sector pay should have been set up, one made up of the workers themselves. By combining the collaboration of their private sector colleagues. Such an enquiry would be those paying the Benchmarking body isn’t: open, transparent and accountable.

Bertie Ahern has said it must be agreed in total or not at all. This is a selected approach by a welfare but a divided one by the workers where every individual union has to take its own view under pressure from ICTU and other unions, where workers may have done better, to accept.

Not only is there no justification for any of the recommendations given but the whole exercise was designed to ensure none would have to be - the Benchmarking Body dissolved after the report and made clear no clarification would be given.

The total spurious reasons given for this approach, that the confidentiality of those who assisted and advised the body should be maintained and that it was set up as part of the PPF and must therefore fold, only reveals the cynical nature of the exercise. Explaining the figures does not require revealing anyone’s identity and since the PPF is still going why isn’t the Benchmarking Body not given the smoothing deficit in the public finances.

Making competitiveness a criterion for awards might not have seemed problematic during the height of the boom, but once it is accepted, what defence is there when the government claims it as justification for changes, now that the economy is doing much less well and government finances consequently squeezed?

Even the 25 cent which was supposed to be automatic and backdated to December last year will only now be paid when ‘solid negotiations’ are underway on the conditions for paying the remaining 75 percent.

This obviously means that when the government is happy with the conditions upon which it will be accepted.

Crucially, they have made clear this means acceptance of a new social partnership deal to follow the first June. So the 8.94 per cent will not just be a part of the current deal but of the next one. In this context, the increases seem much less impressive. They don’t only cover claims that built up before the body was set up, in July 2000, and not just the two years it took to put unexplained figures together, but also the unknown period over which the next deal will apparently run.

This paper is based on ICTU’s hurried embrace of the report and threat to any section of workers who might want to reject it. Acceptance will be part of a larger agenda as was seen the last time the public finances were in difficulty, in 1990.

At that time the new partnership debacle, the Programme for Economic Recovery (PER), was delivered wage restraint, tax increases, privatisation, unemployment and public services cuts. A new partnership deal this time round will tie workers to renewed wage restraint and cuts in services. Privatisation is already under way but will be accelerated.

Charlie McGuire has already said that the PPF is dead. The rich taxes are on the way. Just as the 1990 average increase for the rich while taxes for workers increased, we are about to witness union bosses back to their carrots detailing how the rich broke the back of the deficit.

This is highly appropriate because the real meaning of social partnership is to suppress the rich. The rich will get away with it. The government has the power to buy the votes of the union bosses will stand in the way of effective political outrage by workers because these people are, after all, their partners.

I would be comforting if resistance to all this had grown or developed over the last dozen years but sadly this has not been the case. The working class is objectively stronger - for example there is less unemployment - but now a minority of militants have not organised strongly to oppose the partnership deals. While the left has created rank and file campaigns, they meet less often and are therefore less democratic than the bureaucracy they claim to oppose.

The benchmarking report is a major change in this way in 2000. It can effectively divide the workers while uniting the state with the trade unions.

There will be a lot of pressure on disaffected sections of workers to accept less increases at an unacceptable price. To resist this will require a strong independent movement. Whether there is any section of workers able to achieve this unity remains to be seen but the price of not doing so will be great.
You must do more

John North
As Loyalist sectarianism and violence are to be put "out of Blair's warrants? "You must do more."

The mass sectarian intimidation of schoolchildren at Holy Cross school in Ardoyne, Belfast last year has been followed by a growing number of sectarian wars by the UDA and UVF, focusing mainly in North and East Belfast but extending across all of the North of Ireland.

The situation has become so serious that Northern Ireland Minister Tony Blair has had to issue a formal warning to the republican movement.

This has led to furious complaints from Irish nationalists and republicans, protesting Blair's leniency.

Yet given what Socialist Democracy has consistently argued in relation to the strategy behind the Good Friday agreement, Blair's statement is entirely logical.

The Good Friday agreement was not meant to mean sectarianism but to normalise and stabilise a new sectarian state. In order for this to happen, the agreement and the structures that come out of it had to move further to the right and become even more sectarian.

The republicans had to retreat further than the initial capitulation involved in accepting partition and the new sectarian state.

So the process of the Good Friday agreement has been a process of setting sectarianism up for a tormented and prolonged sectarian war. The republicans must do more and they must be given the support they need, to retreat until they can demonstrate a commitment to ending the sectarian division and to rebuilding the democratic institutions of society.

There has been a lot of working class anger at the loyalist offensive, especially when it involves the killing of workers in their workplace or on their way to work. There has also been a lot of anger at the loyalists' attempts to stifle the democratic and workers' movement.

Karen O'Toole and Julia Brodrenth
The Fourth International's summer youth camp, held in Brussels in France at the end of July, was both an uplifting and sobering event to attend as youthists independents in the English Socialist Alliance. Uplifting because of the quality of debate, enthusiasm and belief that the hard left can win every important battle - and sobering because of the lack of similarly strong structures for youth on the British far-left.

500 socialists from Fourth International groups all over Europe and beyond came together for a week of discussion, debate and drinking.

LCP presidential candidate, Olivier Besancenot, addressed the opening rally with a rousing and well-balanced speech about the importance of engaging as socialists in united fronts: working with as wide a spectrum of groups and individuals as possible, whilst never losing sight of revolutionary goals.

The week was split up into a series of educational and workshops, on a wide range of subjects, including Trotskyism, autonomism, imperialism, women's liberation, the economy and Palestine.

Participation in united fronts was a central issue in the week's debates, which focused around the anti-capitalist movement.

Delegations from Europe, north Africa and south America gathered to debate the tasks for the left.

A recurring theme was the role the left should play within this movement: should revolutionaries involve themselves at all and if so in what ways? It was interesting to see the diversity of opinions within the Fourth International.

The majority position was that revolutionary socialists should have a strong presence in the anti-capitalist movement, some rejected the anti-capitalist movement as not a workers movement and as a distraction from revolutionary struggle.

The diversity was played out in the permanent commissions, which focused on thrashing out more detailed strategies for intervention. We attended the commission on the anti-capitalist movement, where comrades reported from Italy, France, Spain and Brazil.

The aim by the end of the week was to plan a united intervention at the European Social Forum in Florence in November.

One concern put was that reformist organisations such as the DS in Italy and ATTAC in France would be influential at the ESF. The strategy of those organisations, and of NGOs, has been for inclusion in committees that determine international policy.

More recent events at the Earth summit in Johannesburg show how problematic even such moderate demands for a place at the table are. We can be sure that the failure of those groupings to solve basic questions of human survival such as access to clean, safe water mean the most important feature of the world's summits - the protests - will continue to grow.

Given the recent success of the LCR amongst young voters in the French Presidential election (13.9% of the vote of 18-24 year olds) and the fact that the camp was in France, it isn't surprising that French delegates were out in force: the LCR, IPCR and Socialisme et la Terre were all represented. It was interesting to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of youth self organisation as seen in the JCR.

There appeared to be different influences in policy between the LCR and its youth organisation, comrades from the LCR seemed more immersed within the anti-capitalist movement, so what was the role of the youth wing?

Strong women's and Lesbian Gay Bianceutu and Transgender self-organisation was also in evidence. It was impressive that self organisation of women and gays was right at the heart of the week's activities, in a way that was very different from the usual practice of the British left. However, the expression of self-organisation at the camp wasn't always as clearly politically focused as it could have been: we spoke to many delegates who didn't understand the purpose of the women's and LGBT spaces.

Black and ethnic minority self-organisation was not prominent either. When brings us to the issue of the anti-war movement, which has been incredibly successful in the UK, but not in France. Members of the LCR did not attend the anti-war work shop, citing as a reason their opposition to the approach of the British anti-war movement, which they felt had adapted to Islamic currials. Some in the LCR organisational fundamentalism at its worst akin to fascism.

Arguments also emerged as to the very future of the Trotskyist tradition. Should the FI explicitly identify itself with the term Trotskyist or identify with a broader definition of revolutionist socialism, and if so, what does this mean for the future of revolutionary Marxism?

We think that the left is in a period of flux from which it will only emerge as a strong force through its relationship to anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, socialist movements and the labour movement.

The Four International youth camp was a valuable debating forum for activists wrestling with involvement in united fronts. In the end unity won out over purity: let's hope this points the way to the future.

END
Nepal: goodbye to colonialism?

For South Africa’s Mbeki, the evictions of land protesters and the drive towards a new, liberal society are central to his vision of a supposedly modern South Africa in a supposedly modern Africa. The privatization of the road he is travelling is the role Mbeki has played in the replacement of the Organization for African Unity (OAU), which for all its weaknesses promoted itself as a tool of liberation struggles, with a new neo-liberal institution, the African Union. Here we print a article written for Indymedia South Africa, by Terry Conway, in half of the Anti-Privatization Forum (Johannesburg).

RECENT ISSUES in the South African mainstream media can give the impression that there are no serious racial problems. South Africans offering dissenting voices aimed at the soon-to-be-cancelled construction of the road are, the African Union (AU), and its programmatic activities, has the responsibility. The consistent and lavish praise heaped on both of these endeavours, and on their main architect, President Mbeki, is a generally uncritical picture (save for a few disgruntled northern NP-ists).

We are led to believe that the AU and Nedpac present an unparalleled historic moment in which Africa will say goodbye to the “epoch of colonialism and neo-colonial-ism.” We overlook a majority of mutual respect and familiarity with the core capitalist countries (on both sides), and embark on a fast track path towards “good governance”, economic growth and social equality. We do not see the security backing the South African (or African for that matter) want to go and spoil this great moment. There is no sense of critical dissent.

The answers are simple. First, the ideological basis for both the AU and Nedpac, a supposedly African version of a “reformed” and/or “ethical” capitalism, is grounded in exactly the same exploitative productive and social relations that have historically underpinned the real (not metaphorical) relationship between the capitalist North and Africa. In other words, capitalxddash;and any other name is still capital, whether it is labelled post-colonial or post-apartheid.

While a sugar coating might make things inside and abroad more palatable, the result is the brutalization of Africans. The Africans are the ones who will be left eating the bitter core of a re-made imperialism. South Africans, and especially those of the so-called “coloured” and “Indian” populations, are naturally ripe targets for neo-liberal and neo-colonial policies. They are the most vulnerable, unique, grown-up or maturely affirming about their existence and need for an international political economy to fit the contemporary “rules” of the global capitalist game: it is simply a matter of saying and doing what the US demands.

The sovereignty is an extremely poor cousin of effective capitulation, no matter how hard the US and other African politicians like to believe that their numerous international boondoggles and agreements represent something new in international relations.

The idea, as expressed by an eminent South African, that the AU and Nedpac, such as “free trade”, privatisation and labour market reforms, are simply a matter of “decolonising”, or better, a simple failure to implement the empirical “test” of improving their lives, is one of the major failures of African politics.

Like GEAR here in South Africa, there will be very little trickle-down but plenty of trickle-up combined with lots of talk about entrepreneurship and self-help minus the political, fiscal imperatives and public sector institutional support necessary to make the AU and Nedpac work for the majority of Africans.

While the political and economic elites celebrate the launch of the AU and Nedpac, residents of Soweto will continue to resist electric cables. While the “development” of the people will not halt their struggles against foreign policies, popular mobilisation in places like Chatshop will persist in the battle for free water. There are many dissenting voices here and across the continent, and they will increasingly be heard.

Landless People’s Movement march for bread land and jobs and on August 31, a mass of 40,000 protesters marched on the summit

Terry Conway

With the eyes of the world’s media focused on the Johannesburg summit, the brutal contrast between the plush suburb of Sandton and the poverty in which most South Africans continue to live has become visible to more people than at any time since the end of apartheid.

What has received less attention is the fact that the current South African government is trying to impose the same neoliberal policies as their friends in the rest of the world. The struggle against the proposed privatization of electricity and the fight for land are two of the key demands that have animated protests over recent months.

The South African electricity company, Eskom, is a major sponsor of the WSHE, and has worked diligently with the ANC government to increase corporate influence in the meetings, portraying itself as responsible in its growing African business. It is linked to the recently established South African Business Co-ordination Forum (BCC), a business body that is working in the preparations for the summit.

Record of abuse

ESKOM has also increased its negatively record of abuse poor electricity users across South Africa. Campaigns against this and the proposed privatization of the company have been growing. Eight years after the first democratic elections, the government has failed to deliver free basic services as promised.

Living conditions have worsened as water and electricity cuts off now occur on a regular basis. With an unemployment rate of 75%, households are not in a position to purchase pre-paid electricity cards and many have resorted to bribing electricity boxes.

Most recently, anger and determination to act is growing among the residents of Orange Farm, a poor community on the outskirts of Johannesburg, as members of the ANC Youth League and Sanco, subcontracted by ESKOM, continue to spy on their neighbours, seize electricity boxes, and extort bribes from their fellow community members in the case of “illegal” consumption.

Landless struggles

The Landless People’s Movement (LPM) is one of the other major organisations that has attracted attention at the summit and linked up with international protesters including on one of the big marches held on August 31. The demands of this march included an end to forced removals in urban areas, an end to the market-led approach to land reform, and a land summit with governments where landless will be given an opportunity to discuss and decide on their own future.

“The agenda of Sandton is the agenda of the multinationals, the corporations, that land must be sold as a commodity, that water and energy must be privatized,” says LPM leader Andile Magtisit. “They have been losing legitimacy, and now they are trying to get new legitimacy through the United Nations.”

The protests in South Africa during the summit itself have followed the pattern of mobilizations at other international summits – most of the protesters are local and the key issues are those that concern their daily battle for survival. Counter-summit events and international participation in the actions build solidarity with these campaigns which have a life beyond the media glare.

While the summit itself seems extremely unlikely to have any positive results, the protests have recorded victories. The original agenda of the South African government was to ban the main demonstrations from August 31, due to marches from Alexandra (township to Sandton, as well as to mete out repression to protests taking place earlier.

Demonstrators were only to be permitted in one small - 1,800 metre square, a “struggle zone” in which demonstrators could be legally controlled.

In this, the ANC seen not only to want to establish themselves as up to the task of defending the eyes of the rest of the capital- ist club, but also as an essential of decent of the US or Indian state. Revolution had any race been building up against the most effective opponents of the govern- ment – for example 50 anti-electricity privatization activists in Johannesburg were jailed in April following a march they organ- ized. While bail was granted one week later following massive protests, these campaigners together with 36 others are still facing charges arising out of these events.

Arrests

This wave of arrests began before the summit itself, with around 100 veterans of the ANC being arrested in advance of a planned march in Cape Town on August 16 and two days of mass arrests mobilizations from the Landless Peoples movement on August 21 and 22 in which hundreds were jailed.

All in all, in the next 2 months lead- ing up to the summit more than 500 protesters were imprisoned. The Anti-Privatisation Forum also came under the spotlight when its Johannesburg office was visited by the head of the South African National Intelligence Agency.

On Sunday 25 , the police fired stun grenades on a peaceful demonstration by candle-light outside Wit University, sending four people to hospi- tal and leaving children traumatised on the scene. The march was itself calling for the right to protest in the end of censorship. This act of vicious repression was conducted despite the presence of noted international NGO activists and intellectuals and the global media. To say that there was widespread condemnation of the police action is an understatement.

As well as using the heavy hand of police, the 500 South African police was happy to enlist the support of the local media. Anti-globalisation activists were dismayed that papers like The Spectator seemed to be swallowing the government’s line. On August 27, the front page of the paper carried the banner headline “Government warns marchers” and a photograph carried the caption “militant groups” that will stop at nothing to disrupt the WSHE.

Violent police

As a reply written by Indymedia South Africa pointed out, the police actions shown themselves prepared to stop at nothing were the South African police in their violent attacks on demonstrators. The South African government followed in the footsteps of previous host countries by utilising lumpen in spreading ridiculous rumours as to what was being planned by protesters to justify their own actions.

They attempted to suggest that the protesters were mainly white middle class international summit hoppers – an only slightly new twist on the misinformation spread by other international protests. But all these attempts at intim- idation were clearly targeted at silencing voices opposing the government’s policies. In fact they awakened still louder protests, not only in South Africa but across the world.

Actions took place demanding the release of the prisoners and supporting the rights of the protesters. In Britain, Argentina, Mauritius, Canada, Germany and else- where, a result the government was forced to release the detainees and allow the A31 marches to go ahead as planned.
Phil Ward

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg was convened in pursuit of "progress" in meeting the commitments made by governments resulting from the Rio summit in 1992.

The Rio summit met amid a flurry of environmental activity following the 1990 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which convinced scientists who model world climate change resulting from greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Global concern over global warming led to heightened ecological awareness.

The 1997 report "Our Common Future" by Labour ex-Prime Minister of Norway Gro Harlem Brundtland was also influential. This report gave a new meaning to the term "sustainable development", and tried to analyse the role of poverty and income inequality in environmental destruction, in contrast to its environmental studies, which were basically completely reactionary in their approach.

This growing environmental awareness was expressed in the UK in the Green Party obtaining an incredible 15% of the national vote in the 1989 European elections. Rio may have played a role in increasing the pressure for action as a result of these events, but the WSSD finally exposes the limitations of the "expert reports and international diplomacy" approach to dealing with a global crisis.

Any review of Rio can only have missed the complete failure of intergovernmental diplomacy, with its commitments in the four areas of discussion, to live up to what was meant to be some action:

- Stabilising CO2 emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000 (for industrialized countries) and reducing by 5% to 10% on 1990 levels by 2010, which in turn is nowhere near the Kyoto target for developed countries.
- Implementing "national sustainable development strategies" (Annex B).
- Increasing overseas aid to developing countries (above 0.7% of GNP).
- Setting targets to reduce CO2 emissions by 50% by 2050 and implementing a convention to protect biodiversity.

This may have caused friction at the conference, but the issue is largely symbolic, as the multinationals and their client governments are going to continue carrying on with business as usual, irrespective of the piecemeal declarations coming out of the WSSD.

The Johannesburg summit is likely to affect the beginning of the end for the strategy of lobbying for more radical international agreements, adopted by many environmental and development campaigners and NGOs. This is likely to impact on the anti-globalisation movement, which has been an uneasy coalition of reformist "lobbyists" and anti-capitalists.

Already, a debate on the issues of development, globalisation, trade and the environment has arisen as an aspect of Oxfam launching an international campaign for the South to have more access to the North's markets. Oxfam argues markets, like national markets, can be made to work for the poor by challenging power relationships.

In a complex debate, the Philippines' activist Walden Bello challenges Oxfam for playing into the WTO's hands byproving an excuse for the latter to exchange some access to the North's markets for increased liberalisation in agriculture and services.

Bello argues that the mass movement in the North and South must be mobilised to prevent this. Green socialist Colin Hines adds, "Instead of dovetailing the conclusion that more control over the domestic economy is the best way to ensure poverty reduction, [Oxfam] calls for countries to increase dependence on exports'.

This debate has a direct bearing on several environmental issues. Hines points out the transport (and therefore carbon dioxide emissions) implications of increased focus on North-South trade. To this can be added degradation of land, which is generally more fragile in the South, and increased deforestation. George Monbiot has drawn attention to the obscenity of white landowners in the South growing tobacco for export during the famine. Finally, increased emphasis on exports will be accompanied by increased power of the large landowners in the South.

These debates about the environment and non-liberal globalisation pose a number of questions for revolutionary Marxists. We have to be able to provide a series of concrete political demands that address the central contradiction of sustainable development that capitalism is incapable of overcoming: how to ensure a lasting quality of life for the masses of the world, while at the same time protecting the environment.

The demands must not conflict with the immediate interests of the working class and their allies, who are the only forces that can challenge capitalist power. We therefore oppose measures, such as fuel tax increases, or congestion charging, which discriminate against poorer people. Instead, we propose a range of collective solutions, such as free public transport.

Our cities must be restructured to reduce the need to travel for work and school. Housing must be socialized and flexible so that people can move more easily.

More collective forms of living, the sharing of consumer goods and the use of energy through efficient use of space, must be developed.

Laws that defend the bourgeois model of economic growth must therefore be repealed in favour of one that promotes collective living. Any reduction in production (which could benefit the car industry and all its supporting industries) should be met with a reduced working week, with no loss of pay.

A radical land reform should be programmed to promote collective agriculture and the repopulation of the countryside.

This land reform is essential if agriculture is to be flexible and food production is to be protected from the ravages of climate change. Such demands are relevant both in the North and South.

Blair's Junket

Blair's junket to Johannesburg contains a number of his corporate cronies, including Bill Alexander, chief executive of Thames Water, Sir John Wilson, executive chairman of mining company Rio Tinto, and Craig Pay, non-executive director of Anglo American, the world's number one mining giant.

These companies have been involved in a number of high-profile and damaging accusations over their environmental performances.

In June, Thames Water, the largest water company in the UK, and its American customers, has been prosecuted by the UK Government's Environment Agency for pollution more than 20 occasions since 1996. It has also been fiercely criticized in the press for operating in South Africa while President Suharto was in power.

Rio Tinto, the largest mining conglomerate in the world, is well known for its poor records on human rights in many parts of the world – including in Southern Africa. It is currently pursuing a mine adjacent to a World Heritage Site in Australia.

Mining giant Anglo American has been embroiled in widespread operations in Peru and pollution in Zambia. The company, once seen as South African, has left behind a legacy of billions of dollars of damage to the environment and the health of communities affected by its operations, and is only beginning to respond to community protests against the privatisation of AIDS treatment for employees.

A leaked EU report shows where they are making their profits. Companies under GATS is on the table in Sandton, as well as an opportunity for business to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Meanwhile, most South Africans will continue to suffer the effects of these policies cutting off water and electricity to millions of people, as the privatised Earth
Brazil elections – Revolutionary candidate refuses to stand alongside her mother’s old bosses!

Helena Helena: “If this alliance is imposed in Alagoas, albeit with a broken heart, I will not be able to stand for Governor of the state.”

Heloisa Helena is a member of the Socialist Democracy, the tendency of Fourth Internationalists within the PT. Below we print a part of the morning speech she made in the Brazilian Senate to explain why she could not stand for election alongside the local representatives of the PL.

The geography of the houses for example. We lived in the maid’s quarters. We weren’t allowed beyond the kitchen. I remember peering down the length of the corridor at a beautiful shelf of books, which no one ever touched, and trying to make out what they were about. It was in Alagoas too that I found my first real sources of knowledge, from a communist and from the history of God. The communist was that great Brazilian novelist, Graziniano Ramos.

The other learn from the Dutch mass movements out of poverty in my home town. They taught me the meaning of solidarity, the power of women, the excluded, the humiliated, of the survivors.

Then there was the IMF bail out of Brazil’s flagging economy — when the much more acute situation in Argentina has been constantly turned down for funds. But three quarters of the money will only be paid out after the elections — a clear message that anyone who deviates from current austerity measures will be punished.

The surprise election to the senate a year later, on the back of this campaign, turned her into one of the best known figures on the left of the Workers Party. She regularly comments on the news with the grandees of the Brazilian political establishment, making the connection from her own northernmost region.

WTO and privatisation as priority targets

In the course of the discussions in Bangkok, Walden Bello of the Philippines and Focus on the Global South, won much support for his suggestion that the World Trade Organisation is currently trying to widen the chain corporate globalisation.

He said “It is vital to stop the train of trade liberalisation …and the only way to stop that train is to derail it at the next WTO ministerial summit in Cancun next September.”

The priority fits neatly with the decision of ATTAC in Europe — another group taking part in the meeting during the SVIU Summit — to make a top priority their campaign against CATS (the General Agreement on Trade in Services), in other words the WTO’s attempt to force governments to privatise public services.

Marching against neo-liberalism in Buenos Aires

on their agenda, the organisation of the 3rd World Social Forum, to be held again in Porto Alegre from 23-28 January 2003, as well as two thematic forums around the movement’s two main themes of neo-liberal globalisation and war.

Argentina

Thematic Forum

The move to Buenos Aires is an important international event which focuses on the most dramatic proof yet of the bankruptcy of neo-liberal politics; secondly, the laboratory of alternatives that the extraordinary process of social organisation amongst the Argentine people has become.

Palestine

Thematic Forum

on war — is perhaps even an even more audacious initiative. The forum is scheduled to begin discussing again the possibility of organizing a third world social forum in the Palestinian city of Ramallah the December.

The Palestinian Forum, indeed, is an unparalleled platform for Palestinian organisation and London — another world is possible.

Ralph de la Fuente is a member of the Palestinian Forum, and was asked to go it alone. But there are limits to superpower; there are limits to alliance with Israeli’s occupation and London — another world is possible.
Bacardi: shooting more than the breezers?

Killer firm that hates Castro

The Rich at Play: Fox hunting, Land ownership, and the Countryside Alliance. Published by Revolutions Per Minute, £4. Reviewed by John Lister At the SO-Called Countryside Alliance provides a complex web of thousands in another march through London of supporters of the right. By the end of the month, the booklet is a useful reminder of the politicians and practices defended by this strange organization.

"Neither green nor pleasant" is the summary headline for one chapter, which points to the eagerness with which few and far right organisations have been keen to latch onto what is essentially a rural backlash movement in defence of fox hunting.

Populist

Just as fascist parties sometimes make use of the middle classes, so the right, in order to build more populist support - but also turn these classes in a populist way - the Countryside Alliance has expressed concerns about the loss of rural population, the break-up of rural communities and the affordability of rural housing. But as The Rich at Play points out, the US and its involvement in terrorism, while we wait for the present president of the US, George W Bush, to bomb Iraq in the name of "fighting terrorism", it shows the US and its relations to the world for what it is - and the US itself as a terrorist state.

In fact Bacardi is the bit player in all this - the book unmasking the sophisticated tactics in the terrorist web, in which the US government, Cuban exiles and the Mafia are all linked to the Bacardi company, in the one aim they all share and that is profit.

At the players in the game, wish Cuba to return to the "good old days", the Castro island that it was under Batista.

Mind you, some of the terrorist attempts were completely innocent. Fidel and the boss of Bacardi, the police, turned his attention to Bacardi's rum resulting in a bombing raid on Cuban oil refineries to leave Cuba in darkness and energy and the state of nationalisation would have been catastrophic.

Unfortunately for Bacardi, the 26 bomb bomber he bought did not go off. He searched most of South America to find him, but the Brazilian dictatorship gave him two hours.

With the plane ready to take off from Cuba's port, it was shot down with the loss of over 400 lives. The bombing was revealed due to the fact that on the second page of the New York Times was a picture of the Soviet aeroplane. Facing a scandal, the Costa Rican air force had the plane withdrawn. For the most part, military approach was not the norm. The Bacardi company was to make use of the US congress and especially senators senators Sargent and Burton, who gave us the Helms Batton Law which imposes the extra 20% boycott of Cuba.

Bacardi had been admitted that "it has historically supported the embargo", and that they made their lawyers available on request to advise on technical aspects of drafting the Helms Batton Law. By supporting such laws, Bacardi and the American Association of World Health has said causes dying among children.

The fact that all this evidence is in the public domain sheds light on the true nature of the so-called "free world". Information is probably the most powerful weapon the capitalists have. They control the flow of information for governments and the media.

There is no doubt that without Bacardi, there would be no Cuban American National Foundation (CANNF). CANNF was set up in the 1980s with the help of the Reagan administration. Its foreign policy is to support the Cuban Representatives in Exile (CRE), which was set up in 1961 in the US.

Still a thorn in the side of US imperialism: Castro (left) with Venezuelan leader Chavez

Up by Bacardi boss Pepin Busch - himself a minor in Batista's government.

The CRE were involved in the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, in which a CIA-led force of over 1,200 mercenaries and supported by US warships, was defeated by the Cuban people and armed forces led personally by Fidel Castro.

Bacardi has also been involved in other terrorist atrocities, constant assassination attempts on leaders of the resistance, and of course the infamous CIA agent later admitted bringing the virus Cuban.

Pinoccho

Prochet's regime in Chile funded and trained counter revolutionaries, including terrorists. Prochet was born in Chile and the son of a Cuban Airplane, which was dynamited in mid flight in 1976. The bomb blast killed 13 people were stricken across Barbados. The only thing about this book at which I would point is a big critical finger, the absence of the presence of the Cuban representatives in Exile (CRE) which was set up in 1961.

Aid to Cuba Solidarity Campaign, 124 Red Rose Lane, London N7 9QJ

Students voted to accept a three-day strike by their supply deal with Bacardi. The deal, worth around £65,000, means that student bars will in future only stock Bacardi while run and not Bacardi Club, which is produced by the Cuban government in partnership with French drinks giant Pernod Ricard.

Last year, student unions from Oxford, Sheffield, London and Middlesex universities asked the NUS to stop buying Bacardi, in line with its ethical marketing. It is vital for all students to support the call.

Whatever your view of the Cuban leadership, we must support the Cuban people and defend their revolution against Bacardi, the US and all imperialist aggression. We must oppose the neo-liberal blockade, the continual presence on Cuban soil of imperialist troops (in the Guantanamo base).

Washington's support to terrorist squads operating out of Florida, and any direct or indirect attempts by those people to deal with Cuba.

Down with the multi-nationals and HANDS OFF CUBA! At the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, 124 Red Rose Lane, London N7 9QJ

Cuba, a socialist country, has withstood the forces of reaction and exploitation. Its people have shown how the socialist revolution can create a better future for all.

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 profoundly changed economic and social life in Cuba, creating a planned economy, with virtually all industry, large commercial enterprise and land being removed from private owners, and introducing a system of common welfare instead of private profit.

For over 40 years revolution Cuba has been a thorn in the side of the Yankee imperialists. And since the fall of the Soviet Union, it has stood alone against history's most ruthless and brutal imperialist behemoth just 90 miles from US shores.

Cuba, with a population of just over 11 million, has been under a "blockade" for nearly half a century, as the US government backed by its big business handlers has tried to drive the Cuban people into submission.

Failed seal: despite immense pressure from the US and global capitalism - the Cuban people have defended their gains. They stand firm, and are unlikely in the region who had sold out their beliefs and their people, has remained a fighter for communism in a world of capitalist nations.

It is important to understand that the imperialist empire had left Cuba prior to the revolution. The repressive efforts of the post-revolutionary regime.

The report highlights the Yankee domination of the Cuban business, which includes sugar, tobacco and uses its "Cuban roots" to hide what is essentially a Yankee imperialism. But really is a nationalistic base, it is neither Cuba nor the Bahamas, but the United States of America. Ogina's book also sheds light on the "US and its involvement in terrorism, while we wait for the present president of the US, George W Bush, to bomb Iraq in the name of "fighting terrorism", it shows the US and its relations to the world for what it is - and the US itself as a terrorist state.

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Ceri Evans, 1965 - 2002

"The most complete Welsh revolutionary"

Terry Conway

The celebration of Ceri’s life that took place in Pontypridd two weeks after his death heard an outpouring of love and respect from very diverse backgrounds. Pay tribute to both the enormous political influence that Ceri had on Welsh politics, but also to the personal impact he had on everyone who had the privilege to know him as a friend.

The irony was that almost no one else could have forecasted this as among the leading members of Plaid Cymru and of the Welsh Labour Party with militants of the Fourth International from both Wales and England as well as messages from further afield. Ceri would have loved to join in the celebrations.

The Fourth International and the International Socialist Group are weakened by Ceri’s death. While for us an understanding of the national question is key to our marxism, those who can develop a concrete analysis of their own country and so enter into our overall understanding are a particularly valuable asset.

I treasure the book of Lorca’s writings Ceri gave me when I visited him earlier this year in the Rhondda. Here was someone who had a passionate relationship with the place he was from but was also a confirmed internationalist. Here too was someone for whom political ideas were not just found in theory but in song, in dance, in all the small things of everyday life.

I remember Ceri as one who was never satisfied that he fully got across his message, impatient to know that he had fully convinced one crucial element. I on the other hand always wanted more to reflect.

I remember him as I remember him as a friend as well as a comrade. I hope he knew how much he meant to so many people.

Donations can be made to the Ceri Evans Memorial Fund c/o Wellington, Treforest, CF41 9BE or online.

"Though I am personally filled with despair I know there is hope in the political ideas that we share with millions around the world".

Ceri Evans August 2 2002

Ed George, Darren Williams, Leanne Wood and Brendan Young

It is difficult to make an objective assessment of the kind of person Ceri had become in his last two months. He was a man of extreme contradictions. He was a man who had a strong sense of self but was also someone who was deeply committed to the idea of building a better society. He was a man who was passionate about his work but was also someone who was deeply committed to his family and friends.

Ceri was first drawn to revolutionary politics as a teenager in the 1980s with the anti-nuclear movement and the anti-racism movement.

Ceri became a member of Plaid Cymru in the late 1980s and remained a member until his death.

Ceri was a man who was deeply committed to the idea of building a better society and was always willing to put his beliefs into practice.

Ceri was a man who was deeply committed to his family and friends and was always willing to help others.

Ceri was a man who was deeply committed to his country and was always willing to fight for what he believed in.

Ceri was a man who was deeply committed to his community and was always willing to give back.

Ceri was a man who was deeply committed to his religion and was always willing to serve others.

Ceri was a man who was deeply committed to his hobbies and was always willing to spend his free time doing what he loved.

Ceri was a man who was deeply committed to his career and was always willing to work hard to achieve his goals.

Ceri was a man who was deeply committed to his health and was always willing to take care of himself.

Ceri was a man who was deeply committed to his identity and was always willing to be true to himself.

Ceri was a man who was deeply committed to his beliefs and was always willing to stand up for what he believed in.
A thread is broken

I lost one of the basic threads of my life with Ceri's death. He was the French reviewer for the Welsh political review. I learned Welsh at the age of 13 or 14 back in the early 1950s when I was a student at a Welsh-medium school. Welsh was the first language I learned from a book. I made the acquaintance of a Welsh bookdealer who sold me a Welsh dictionary and a Welsh songbook. I fell in love with the world of Welsh culture and books.

I learned the dilemmas of the Welsh people early and saw in connection with the dilemmas of my own people, the Irish, as did Ceri, who as his understanding of the Welsh national question deepened took up the study of the Irish language. I think that he had this in common with the modern Welsh cultural activities.

When I first arrived in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s, I looked for Welsh revolutionists. I was directed to Ceri, and we started a lifelong friendship and correspondence. A shared knowledge of an oppressed culture also provided an intimate bond. When I was working as a full-time journalist for the Independent and the New Statesman, I sometimes wrote to him in Welsh.

He was delighted to be able to communicate with an international revolutionary movement in his own language and to adopt his own language as a deep sense of the oppression of Welsh speakers in imperialist- and racist Britain. He came to understand it more and more intensely as he grew older.

In the late years of his life, he came to a more complete understanding of the revolutionary meaning and potential of the Welsh national liberation movement. He was excited about his conclusions, which he shared with me. He wanted me to write a Welsh review and help him to disseminate them with the influential figures in the liberation movement that he was meeting, and help to put the question in a broader international context for them. I am very disappointed that I could not meet. My expulsion from Britain some years ago under the Thatcher regime made travelling to Wales just too difficult when the opportunity was there.

All working class and progressive movements have suffered severely from the reactionary governments put in power by the capitalist offensive that began in the 1970s. The Welsh nation suffered grievous wounds from Thatcher's regime, from the miners strike. There is no telling how many people have suffered because of the running down of the National Health Service, which the capitalists had to do not dare to destroy outright. This seems to be what finally cost Ceri his life.

When the workers and the oppressed regained their breath and fight back against this capitalist offensive, there is manifest the power of the working class. But the capitalists cannot be overcome. One of them is Ceri's life. But in fact I do not write either about my life or about the Welsh revolution, about the Welsh struggle for national liberation. What I write is about the attitude towards Welsh literacy, the Welsh language, which is a human right. The struggle for Welsh literacy is an international struggle, not just for the Welsh people, but for all oppressed nations and peoples.

Goodbye, Ceri. And may all the Welsh workers and oppressed fight back against the capitalist offensive and the reactionary governments.
Support the fire fighters!

Stand up for public services

It has been a summer of struggle for public sector workers – with the prospect of an autumn of unrest if the Fire Brigades Union proceeds as threatened with strike action in support of their hard-won 40% pay claim. They already have a clear majority of public opinion behind them.

Two million local government workers have staged their first coordinated national strike since the 1970s. London council staff have planned four days of strike action, but they have demanded a big increase in £6.80 an hour minimum wage. Hundreds more have fought the scab-herding multinational Sodexho to a standstill and secured a big increase and the restoration of NHS pay at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary. And elsewhere in Scotland the fight is being stepped up to drive out the handful of private contractors clinging on to hospital contracts.

But while public sector unions feel their new strength and begin to flex their muscles, evidence keeps coming that the private sector and Private Finance Initiative bring an expensive, embarrassing series of failures – whether it be gerrycranted hospitals, or the chaos of the privately-run Criminal Records Bureau.

The fight must be stepped up to defend the public services and the staff who work in them against further waves of privatisation.

As the conference season looms again onto the horizon, the message to delegates at TUC and Labour Party conferences must be loud and clear: stand up for public services!

DON'T ATTACK IRAQ
Freedom for Palestine
DEMONSTRATE SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER, 1PM, EMBANKMENT,
CENTRAL LONDON
Organised by the Stop the War Coalition and the Muslim Association of Britain. Supported by CND, Tribune, NUJ, ASLEF and many others.

URGENT FINANCIAL APPEAL
In order to ensure the maximum turnout for the crucial demonstration, the Stop the War Coalition needs your help. We urgently need donations to meet the many costs involved in organising and organising the demonstration. Please send cheques made payable to the Stop the War Coalition PO Box 3718, London E1 8EJ. For more information on the demonstration and to find out more about how you can help build the movement to stop the planned war on Iraq, please phone the Stop the War Coalition office on 07965 225 955.

Stop the War Coalition • www.stopwar.org.uk • office@stopwar.org.uk