From all over Europe, workers and unemployed converge on Amsterdam

Marching against Maastricht Misery
Hard Labour gets tough on unemployed

Paul McGowan

PROJECT Work, the Tories' workfare scheme is to be ditched by Labour. Yet under the new government, the unemployed still face the choice of working for peanuts or losing their benefit.

David Blunkett has promised to keep and "improve" all aspects of the delivery of the hated Job Seekers Allowance. The jobless will be increasingly subject to sanctions through its provisions for refusing to take menial, dangerous, low-paid work.

Labour's Welfare to Work programme will offer youth education or training, a work trial with a company, or a placement with an environmental task force. If the young jobless reject these options they will also suffer benefit cuts. Single parents are likely to face similar treatment.

Labour would scrap the JSA if it were serious about providing opportunities for the unemployed. The JSA limits the hours the jobless can work, and only lower rates of JSA awarded to under 25s are barely sufficient for them to buy food, let alone pay for stamps or fares to interview jobs.

The JSA is designed to get claimants off the register - not to work. Anybody can be penalised for taking insufficient steps to look for jobs under the legislation. Through 'directions', Employment Service staff can demand their clients do almost anything or have their money stopped.

Many claimants are coerced through the JSA into taking jobs well below any decent minimum wage. However, Jobseekers' Allowance often pays more than those displayed in Employment Agency offices, which the jobless are increasingly forced to visit to comply with their Jobseekers' Agreement.

Tony Blair should be creating jobs through improved public services. Yet he is sacking firefighters, nurses and teachers to keep within Tory spending limits.

His ridiculous faith in private enterprise is shown in Welfare to Work. It will provide generous handouts to bosses to take on the long and low-term unemployed. The same companies that have made vast profits by laying off workers are being paid vast sums to reemploy a few of them at crap rates of pay.

Undermined

Labour's adoption of the Tory economic package means to undermine Welfare to Work. Blair hopes it will take 250,000 youth off the dole, but if he can't offer any more money to colleges soon they will cut their places by the same amount next year.

Labour seeks to pay for its scheme through a welfare tax on private utilities. Although we welcome a slice out of the profits for the common good, why shouldn't we all have their profits - which they have amassed over the last few years - charging us exorbitant prices and making people redundant?

Another after two decades of mass unemployment, Blair's policies are a laudable attempt by Labour to embark on a massive programme of welfare reform. The JSA enables private agencies to profit at the expense of the unemployed and civil servants.

The death of Project Work was a large extent due to workers and the ineptness of the department to boycott the slavish labour scheme. Socialists must struggle against Labour's replacement and the JSA.

We need public sector jobs not private ones where the CWU conference has made no decision.

This should mean that the union's executive will not be able to impose policy and the union's delegates will be able to modify the order of business.

The Telecom section of the conference expressed militant opposition to two key initiatives being made by BT in respect of the workforce.

The company is dividing its operations into "trading units" and is also proposing a new grading structure. Activists fear these proposals will lead to service-related pay and a worsening of terms and conditions.

Another motion expressed solidarity with the 31 BT Hitchley Labels workers, and a mass demonstration is planned to be held at a subsequent company meeting on June 25. Further corresponding meetings also saw important victories for the left on the Telecom side.

John Stevenson

THE NATIONAL conference of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) is taking place in the third week of May and promises to be marked by a series of important resolutions.

The resolution expected to command the most interest is one calling for a CONFERENCE to be held at a subsequent company meeting on June 25. Further corresponding meetings also saw important victories for the left on the Telecom side.

John Stevenson may well be rather relieved this week as he is now a Labour MP - sadly he is likely to have a far more uncomfortable existence in the Parliamentary Labour Party.
Blair: a dazzling star — or just a Clinton clone?

TONY Blair's hectic round of European summits has culminated in the Clinton smile-in at Downing Street.

Grasping with praise, every leader from Kohl to Chirac to Clinton has stood in line for the photo opportunity of the month. With President Clinton taking his share of reflected glory, Tony Blair has shown that he is no sitting star, he has already arrived in the firmament. Nothing succeeds like success it seems.

But is all the toasting just a desire to associate with success, or is there substance to all the rhetoric about 'new generation politics'?

It is Tony Blair the first of a new breed of leaders, steering a new course for a new era of policies—celebrating enterprise without excluding the poor—, as the sources say.

Dead centre

Or is it just a re-run of the American 'radical centre' which also started energetically but soon slid down the road into the inertia and paralysis of Clinton's current 'dead centre'?

Blair's own theme of the 'radical centre', which is neither left nor right, but hails to the worlds of leaders at a time when they increasingly confront resistance from the public, from the working class and the youth.

The current crisis of the welfare system, growing unemployment and social and environmental degradation have led to a widely held public perception that the fabric of society and the planet itself are under threat.

Blair also enters the stage at a time when there is a realisation among politicians of a growing disenchantment with the European Union. The economic and political integration of the single currency and its cost-cutting convergence criteria.

The French elections, even more than the British election before it, was dominated by the single currency. Resistance has been felt directly in mainland Europe, in the mass mobilisations and strikes directed against the effects of the Maastricht process. This could challenge and even derail the bosses' Europe.

Blair's theme for the Euro summits, after agreeing to sign up to the social chapter (as long as it doesn't imply a raft of new legislation in favour of workers' rights), was the need for a 'Peoples' Europe' that would tackle the issue of unemployment and job creation.

It was a warning shot against the danger of politicians losing the support and confidence of the people of Europe for this most central capitalist project. Without a hint of embarrassment he then proceeded to crusade for 'labour markets flexibility', the effect of which will be to drive down wages and increase unemployment.

A proposed "jobs summit" will now be led by Blair and Clinton together. The pragmatic policies of the 'radical centre', which is paralysis as neither left nor right, but by definition something of both, is the strategy of the centre and the stick (like the donkey we are unlikely to get much carrot—unless there is an unexpected new economic boom).

Rich and poor

Blair explained to en approving Clinton that a fair society is one in which the rich and the poor can benefit: "We can't prosper as a nation unless we prosper together" he said. But then almost in the same breath he insisted that "Progressive parties today are parties of fiscal responsibility and prudence. You do not do anything for anybody by making a wreck of the economy."

Brown and Blair seem to believe that they can square the circle and avoid the issue of contradictory class interests. They seem to believe that really it is possible to celebrate free enterprise without excluding the poor, and to maintain profits while carrying out some social reforms.

While the Blair team has learnt much from Clinton and his aids, several of whom were sent over to advise on slick political marketing, they failed to learn the most important lessons.

Clinton's refusal to tax the rich and take control of the banks, left the government financially hamstrung when it came to implementing their major health reform, which was a total failure. The fiscal and all but destroyed Hillary Clinton's political credibility.

Although the Workfare programme, their second flagship policy, is credited with helping to create 4 million new (mainly low-paid, or unpaid) jobs, this was as much to do with a favourable trade cycle and five years of economic recovery. Speaking at the White House, President Bush was obliged to admit that they had done little to improve the welfare state. Overall the Clinton administration has succeeded in shifting wealth from the poor to the rich to such a degree that today the gulf between them, in a nation which has traditionally seen itself as the land of opportunity, is greater than in any other developed economy.

Here in Britain a tough fiscal policy, which includes taxing the rich, and aims to meet the Maastricht criteria, will mean preserved only as the condition of a welfare state and at the expense of the poorest sections of our society.

Dr Frank Field today charged with increasing costs and terminating the welfare state as we know it. As one of Britain's main manual workers, in the House of Commons he told the Observer, "People here in Britain did not vote for this.

Marches show solidarity with single parents

TONY Blair's hypocrisy knows no bounds. If he wanted to assist single mothers in getting a job then he would put real resources into the welfare provision. A few million pounds of lottery money distributed to a few work clubs is more than a joke — it's an insult.

The fact that current benefit rates exempt single mothers with children under 16 from any obligation to consult job offers or training is the situation where nearly 50 per cent of lone parents are working less than £100 per week in 1994. Britain has one of the lowest levels of child care provision in Europe and one of the highest levels of unemployment of single mothers. Funnily enough.

While the detailed sanctions being given the government proposals are yet to fully emerge, the tie-in with the 'Work for Work' initiative looks likely to make clear that the motivation is cutting the benefits still not giving women choice. The Job Seekers Allowance has already "disappeared" the largest number of people since the poll tax — Labour will continue with it and bring in these new attacks on people.

Apart from childcare, the other main reason for the pitiful situation of so many single parents in Britain is down to that favourite hero of Blair — Margaret Thatcher — and her policy of "flexible labour market".

Wages have been driven down with child care and other essential costs like housing and food go up, reducing the possibility of being able to afford to work.

Yet this is the direction in which Blair wants to continue to steer Britain — and take the rest of Europe with him. The British Eurocracists had already raised slogans around the rights of single parents as they wound their way through the north before these latest attacks were announced. The Maastricht convergence criteria will lead to a further undermining of what few services and what little childcare provision exist.

The marchers on the road, and their supporters in the cities and towns they are passing through, are fighting against all forms of social exclusion.

We may be relatively few in numbers, but we are tapping into a mood that wants a different Europe to that on offer from the bosses and bankers. That mood led to the Europe-wide strikes and demonstrations against the closure of the closure of Rookrode, and to the defeat of Chirac's right wing government in France. Here in Britain not only have we won the support of many labour movement organisations and interest and money — from many on the streets we have received — but NUM leader John Monks has been put under enough pressure to agree to debate with us.

Positive measures to support the 70 per cent of lone parents who are dependent on benefits in Britain today would focus on serious investment in childcare and affordable quality, childcare charged with reducing hours that parents need it and 52 weeks of the year. They would mean a commitment to a minimum wage and job guarantees that would end the poverty trap that so many are caught in.

Such demands need to be made right across the labour movement. The slogans that have been chanted by the Eurocrats sending their way to Amsterdam would have been needed after the Euro summit on July 14 and we intend to make sure they are still heard.
**Socialist Outlook**

**Single Status - why UNISON must vote NO**

Fred Leplast

A NEW set of harmonised conditions for both blue and white collar council workers has been negotiated by the TUCW, GMB and UNISON. Although the Single Status, as it is known in principle to be welcomed, the deal that has been eventually negotiated should be rejected.

A conference of local government UNISON branches on May 20 came to the conclusion that the national leadership only obtained a majority of 72,000, out of 700,000 votes cast, to recommend acceptance of the Single Status in a ballot of the membership.

The main areas of concern are:

- Despite this being a national agreement, employers will be able to negotiate changes, in particular for the care sector.
- No additional finance is available, thus forcing councils to make cuts in order to pay the deal.
- The reduction in 37 hours (36 in some) for some workers will not come into force until 1999, and then on the basis of increased productivity.
- A new national job evaluation scheme will not be compulsory, and according to the employers’ own briefing “after reviews councils can move away from national scales and grades”.
- The pay rise which is part of the package is only 2.5 per cent above while the minimum hourly rate is £4.72 well below UNISON’s minimum wage claim of £4.42.

Opposition to the deal was led by the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Union, who produced a special pamphlet, which was sent to all UNISON delegates.

UNISON’s leadership will now try and sell this deal as a “historic offer” and will flood the membership with publicity to convince them to accept the offer.

UNISON is launching a campaign for a “No” vote, demanding improved job evaluation with a Single Status which would not lead to the break-up of national negotiations, which would not be financed by cuts or yet more increases in productivity.

**After the landslide UNISON needs action, not words**

Fred Leplast

UNISON’s conference in the second week of June will indicate the mood of trade union activists and the leadership after the Labour’s landslide election victory.

Local government and health, the two main areas where UNISON orients, have been cut back 18 years of Tory government cuts and privatization. The defeat of the Tories has been welcomed by all those who dedicate their working lives trying to deliver a public service, and there is clear disappointment that Labour will not break from Tory policies — indeed sticking to their cash limits for the next two years.

Although the conference agenda was finalised before the election, there are some resolutions, including some from the NEC, calling on a Labour government to rebuild public services, introduce a minimum wage and abolish Compulsory Competitive Tenders.

The mood of the conference is likely to be cautious, with the feeling that there will be little support for a direct confrontation with Labour. Conference may well revise a lot of progressive demands but fail to demand that the NEC organises serious national campaigns to achieve them.

UNISON does not need to react to its western policies, such as taking the privatised utilities back into public control, abolishing the

Rank and File support for Hillingdon strikers: but not from the NEC

Hillingdon strikers fight on despite betrayal

Fred Leplast

UNISON’s National Executive are responsible for a despicable betrayal of a heroic dispute, similar to that of the Liverpool Dockers case, politically and tactically.

In June, a conference voting to call a strike was overruled and the NEC went ahead and sanctioned the strike and negotiated a deal.

Conference then unanimously adopted a resolution instructing the NEC to organise a series of demonstrations and to spread the dispute against the employers’ company, Pall Mall.

Yet they called only one demonstration, a week-long vigil outside the HQ of the parent company, and the meeting of union reps in Pall Mall was eventually convened in December.

However the most shameful episode was the acceptance by an NEC sub-committee of a cash offer from the employers, without a ballot, and with a vote of the NEC on the front page.

The majority of the strikers did not receive the offer and continued their strike. UNISON members and branches increased their financial support to sustain the strikers since official backing and strike funding were being withheld. Even film maker Ken Loach has given valuable support.

Darren Williams, Branch Secretary and NEC member for London South (personal capacity)

THE ISSUE of inter-union merger dominated the recent meetings of CPFEU and PTC between which they represented the majority of civil servants.

A merger would create a £270,000 super-union, which would supervise the merger of regional sections, and could create a force capable of challenging management and the new Labour government.

A stronger union presence in the civil service would be more needed; civil servants need more understanding, particularly from a Labour government.

**Ballot to come**

With the final merger ballot due to be held later this year, there is still everything to play for.

At this year’s annual conference the left in both unions tried to win a delay to the proposed ballot so as to discuss the implications of the merger.

If the ballot is called, the union members will decide whether this was a vote on the principle on merger rather than on its terms.

Civil Service unions: don’t let them merge away our rights!
Harsh reminder of the rights we don’t yet have

Terry Conway

LYNNE KELLY was finally able to have her abortion on May 29, but the horrendous way she was dragged through the courts by her estranged husband stands as a stark reminder of how fragile women’s abortion rights are in Britain today.

OK, so the courts agreed that Lynne had the right to decide under the 1967 Act but this did not stop a situation where the pregnancy had been forcibly extended for weeks including by court rulings.

During these weeks, despite the 1967 Act, Lynne Kelly’s body had not been her own. This is a bar-

This statement and others like it are a distortion of reality – and one that puts men and women who for whatever reason have been unable to get an early abortion through needless agony.

know – because I had an abortion at 22 weeks – and didn’t in the end have to go through labour. My nightmare started not when I discov-

A change in the law would massively reduce the number of later abortions – abortion that no one, especially the woman having them – wants to be late.

covered I was pregnant but after a day care clinic threw me out when I was in bed waiting for a pre-med because they didn’t have the apparatus to deal with the fact that I had asthma – not something they had bothered to ask me about in the six weeks I had been waiting for an appointment.

I was twelve weeks pregnant. I had expected a simple operation. I had, it’s true, being acutely con-

The Guardian (May 31) commented

She was fourteen weeks pregnant. The letter said the woman in the Liverpool clinic. But worse was to come as when I approached my doctor to try for a NHS abortion – where I had been informed the necessary equipment would be available – I was told that by the time I was likely to get to the top of the waiting list I would be 16 weeks preg-

Harsh reminder of the rights we don’t yet have

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Field: the unspeakable in pursuit of the unthinkable

Harry Sloan
MARGARET Thatcher may have struck up an unlikely friendship with Tony Blair – to give him an extra chance to annoy the left – but Labour's most dogged Tory is now a fixture in the new political establishment, and much more dangerous.

Frank Field is now enunciated as Minister for Welfare Reform in the new Labour government - perhaps the only minister who can make his immediate superior, Harriet Harman, appear liberal, even leftish.

Harman, after all, correctly denounced the proposals of then Social Security Secretary Peter Lilley for compulsory privatised pensions as a "chilling prospect". What will this new Labour's voters and others that Field, now her junior minister, welcomes the Lilley plan and is best known for advocating similar policies, based on the measures introduced by Chile's brutal military dictatorship.

Favourite
Field has repeatedly praised and supported Thatcher herself, including Chancellors Nigel Lawson and Arch-Thatcher Denis "Two Brains" Willetts who describes him as "many Conservatives' favourite Labour politician."

Three weeks after the May 1 election, the extreme right wing Social Policy Foundation published a pamphlet Beyond the Welfare State, which calls for the dismantling of the welfare state and the introduction of fee paying into the health and health care - a pamphlet carrying acknowledgements to Field and fellow Blairite Barbara Businesswoman.

We are told that both of them - as well as Peter Lilley - read its draft and made comments. Its author praises Field as a man who "dissects effectively the social security system on character more deeply than any other British politician" and quotes Peter Lilley directly.

Tory "reforms"
Field has eagerly repaid each compliment, offering fulsome praise of Thatchers, support to the Tory market-style "reforms" of the NHS, encouragement to the Tory sell-off of council housing, and enthusiastic backing to privatisation as the way to see as a "people's capital".

Blair announced that Field's qualification for government office was that he is "capable of thinking the unthinkable": so too of course was Adolf Hitler.

Behind its many features, Field is a vicious witch-hunter, and a right wing religious zealot, with no shred of respect or compassion for working class people or the labour movement.

Leave school at 14?
Among the "unthinkable" notions he has pushed up - eagerly purveyed by the Tory press - have been the introduction of a "flexible school leaving age", on the grounds that schools are failing many working class youth who "at 14 are ready for work". This scarcely coincides with new Labour's mantra of "education, education, education".

Field has also suggested that married mothers should be allowed to cash in their child benefit, using the "new found wealth" to buy training or set up small businesses.

Ten years ago Field suggested that young people and the unemployed should be given "training accounts", with which they could buy their own training package. This was too radical even for Thatcher's government to implement. Now he proposes to privatise the public sector deficit shackle.

But the common factor is that the radicalism is always directed against capitalism, for which Field has a fawning respect verging on adoration, but the spirit of capitalism, the working class people exploited by business interests, is wrung out by 18 years of Tory government.

Field's immediate target is to carry through Peter Lilley's plan to scrap the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme (SERPS), and funnel contributions into private pension schemes.

But his influence as a dogged proponent of privatisation and the "tough love" notion of press ganging the unemployed from the dole into low-paid jobs will permeate beyond his own department.

Far from being a "maverick" as the press still label him, Field represents the bruised essence of New Labour drawn out to its logical conclusion.

He is, to borrow Oscar Wilde's famous phrase on fox-hunting, the unspeakable in pursuit of the unthinkable.

Bloody horrors behind Chile's pensions fiasco

John Lister
Frank Field's book How to Pay for the Future: Building a Stakeholder's Welfare State draws heavily on the model of the Chilean economy. The architect of Chile's pension reform, Dr Jose Pinera, is one of his heroes.

But what really happened in Chile?

The reforms were introduced in 1981, after the Chilean trade union and labour movement and all political opposition had been ruthlessly crushed by General Pinochet's military dictatorship.

Pincher's troops seized power in September 1973, determined from the outset to implement the most ruthless and comprehensive programme of economic policies.

To clear the path for this constitution was suspended, congress was dissolved and the electoral register destroyed. All political and trade union organisations were declared illegal, political activity was banned, civil liberties suspended, strict censorship and a curfew were imposed.

Hundreds of thousands of people who were caught up in the membership of left wing political organisations or linked with the previous regime were killed, imprisoned, tortured or driven into exile.

Between 20,000 and 30,000 were killed in the first four years, with another 2,500 "disappeared", and tens of thousands passing through prisons and concentration camps.

The architects of the economic policies ushered in on the bones of a devastated workers' movement were dubbed the "Chilean boys" after the Chicago school of monetarist economics had led by Milton Friedman, who visited Chile in 1975 to give personal supervision and support to the "shock treatment" being meted out.

The shock came in 1982 when the economy plunged into chaos and recession, the Chilean boys had Pincher's complete support, and he boasted in 1981 that "in this country no left moves unless I move it."

The Chilean boys worked ruthlessly to a rigid ideology: the free market was to be the means through which all relations had to be mediated: Chile had to be forced into the world market, regardless of the cost in jobs and living standards.

The currency had to be stabilised, and the public sector deficit slashed.

Privatisation was at the centre of the agenda from the outset. At the time of the coup there were 464 firms under state control; by June 1980 all but a few had been sold off at bargain basement prices. Unemployment doubled in a year.

Public welfare was virtually wiped out. School spending was slashed by 44% in five years, and charges were introduced for primary and secondary school education, with the result that 30% of young Chileans were receiving no education at all in 1978. Higher education, too, was devastated, and the rapid growth of private universities never materialised.

Those who benefited were course the super-rich. By 1981 even the US Embassy in Santiago reported that Chile's private sector was "an oligopolistic market dominated by six major conglomerates", two of which controlled over 50% of the country's private capital.

This was the Chile in which Frank Field's hero, a chosen Chicago boy protege of Pincher, introduced his pension reforms, industrial workers were left to contribute themselves to a private scheme, replacing the old system in which the state and the employers had contributed.

Workers were offered the right to switch their accumulated savings in the old state scheme into a private alternative.

Eight years later, inequality was greater than ever in Chile. 44% of the population was living in poverty. By 1991 a United Nations' review found that only 52% of the Chilean workforce were paying into their pension's scheme. Many of these would end up with "acquired benefits" less than the guaranteed minimum. But the private pension schemes were coming in profits and levying extensive fees and commissions.

Among the heaviest losers had been workers forced into casual and part-time employment and the self-employed.

Predictably, a pensions policy born out of monetarist dogma and imposed by a ruthless dictatorship has served further to exploit and impoverish those on the lowest wages, and to deepen social inequality.

The question is why a Labour politician should look with such affection on this excrescence of the Pinochet regime, and whether Tony Blair will try to implement the same thing here.
Post-election syndrome grips Labour left

Pete Firmin

The Conference held by the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups on 'A Socialist Strategy for Labour' on Saturday 31st May was attended by around 80 people, most of them probably supporting some form of another. This is an indication of the dearth of the Labour left about which to move forward.

Nevertheless, important issues facing the Left both inside and outside the Labour Party were discussed. Key among these was the question of economic policy and the European single currency.

In the opening plenary both Alan Simpson and Tom Livingstone of Labour MPs, and Gill Lee, fresh from the British leg of the Euromarch, spoke of the importance of the Euromarch in shifting the debate on Maastricht and the single currency involved in the Labour movement.

Issues

Workshops on a variety of other issues such as local government, racism, women, lesbian and gay rights and the unions, showed both the range of issues which the left needs to take into their Party and the campaigns around which they need to be involved.

The plenary on Defending Party Democracy produced a lively discussion on the tactics involved in fighting the 'Labour into Power' proposals which would effectively abolish the right of CLPs and trade unions to influence party policy. Pam Tatlow from the Labour Women's Action Committee pointed out how the Labour women's conference was being carried out of any input into the discussion, and Maria Exall from 'Keep the Link' pointed to some of the lessons of the way in which the 'Labour into Power' proposals were overwhelmingly defeated at CWU conference.

While Anne Black from Labour Reform argued the need to submit amendments to the final 'Action Plan', and others saw some positive aspects of the proposals, the major thing is how they should be rejected altogether.

A more nuanced debate took place around the issue of whether the Left should go for outright defeat of the proposals at conference or attempt to get a decision deferred for a year.

Many speakers felt that whilst we should argue for rejection, delay was a useful fallback where this could not yet be won.

Alan Simpson and Tom Livingstone in the opening plenary, and Greg Tucker and Tony Benn in closing the conference spoke of the wider issues facing the Left following the election victory, particularly how to campaign around key issues without cutting ourselves off from those who think Blair will deliver.

Tom Livingstone made clear that the Campaign Group-IFMF has no intention of dissolving into a larger formation, and Tony Benn talked of the need for the refounding of the Labour Party, incorporating environmental groups, pensioners, peace campaigners as well as the trade unions.

However, this was left rather absent rather than spell out a strategy for the Left.

Stressing Euromarch: Alan Simpson

Labour hands over to bankers

New dogs revert to old tricks

Duncan Chapple

New Labour is copying the economic policies of right wing 1980s US President Ronald Reagan. Giving control over interest rates to the Bank of England encourages high rates. But New Labour's sloppy attempts at deregulation will lead the bank to increase interest rates.

The Labour government is wrong to give up control of fiscal policy. Even in today's global economy, national governments have a significant room for manoeuvre. The former Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, kept interest rates lower than the Bank of England wanted.

Under capitalism lower interest rates help people to spend and invest. Higher interest rates encourage saving and gambling on commodities in the share market. They push up housing costs and slow down the economy.

The Bank Of England is even less likely to keep interest rates down than the Tories. Politically and economically, the bank is part of the speculative casino economy of the City of London. Economically it is cautious even by capitalist standards. That's why there has been a real questioning of Labour's granting of bank independence by Clarke and many economists.

New Labour is adapting the economic policy known as monetarism. Monetarism grew up in the late 1960s and 1970s when prices inflated rapidly.

The economic recession that started then cut down the profits of capitalists. In response, bosses put up prices to counteract the reduced profits. Price rises led to higher wages claims and to more militant trade unions. The bosses needed a way forward.

Monetarist

Monetarism was their answer. Monetarists argued that inflation was caused by too much money chasing too few goods.

Bringing down the supply of money would reduce inflation and stabilise the economy. There are two ways to do this: to reduce the amount of money in existence, and to take money out of circulation by using high interest rates to discourage inflation, imports, spending and investment. They led to less demand and the deep recession of the early 1980s in Britain and the US.

New Labour's policy uses the monetarist idea that high interest rates keep down inflation by forcing money out of circulation. Labour's priority is low inflation - not high.

New Labour thinks the Tories have let the economy grow too much. Labour's upcoming budget will add a new twist to their neoliberal policies. It is possible that tax allowances will be reduced, excise fuel increased, mortgage relief cut, and BT included in the upcoming windfall tax.

These tax increases could give the government an extra £6 billion. Unlike the classical monetarism of Margaret Thatcher, Labour is pledged to using much of this money to slightly inflate the economy, by putting an extra 250,000 into cheap labour schemes.

Reagonomies

Labour faces the same problem as Ronald Reagan's inconsistent experiment with monetarism. Reagan aimed to cut both taxes and the government deficit and bring down inflation.

But the deficit could not be cut. Income from taxes continued to rise. The increases in government spending provoked increases in interest rates from 1982.

It led to serious pressures on borrowers and companies. It brought about a collapse of the financial system and the bankruptcy of a huge proportion of the US debt. The result was a massive increase in powerlessness in forming state policy, to the extent where the leaders of the German and US central banks are presented as having more control over the economy than their governments!

It is quite possible that Labour will face the same dilemma. Labour must increase taxes if it fails to cut state spending. Higher taxes will mean less saving and more money in circulation.

The Bank of England will raise interest rates in order to prevent inflation. High interest rates will contract the economy, increasing the budget deficit still further.

The cycle can be temporarily avoided by a basic attack on state spending much more profound than that considered by the Conservative government.

Socialists argue for all banks, not just the Bank of England, to be nationalised and put under fully democratic control. Parliament's Treasury Select Committee could be expanded to include delegates elected by trades unions, women's organisations, consumer groups, the unemployed groups combating homelessness, environmental bodies and every other part of society.

These elected representatives should ensure banking works for full employment, invests in community projects, develops fair trade with countries in the East and the South and serves the interests of working people in this country and abroad.

The 1945 Labour government nationalised the Bank of England - as part of its effort to restore British capitalism. From 1945 onwards (Haavard Wold's government, which had denounced the "Gnomes of Zurich", bowed to the British and international bankers, scrapped his election promises and devolved the pound. In 1976 Labour Chancellor Denis Healey vowed in a letter to the International Monetary Fund that the Bank of England would impose stringent cuts on public spending. Gordon Brown's collapse is the quickest yet.

"See how much better you can do without going to college? You've got a job, you're working in the great outdoors ... What more could you ask?"
TNCs rule OK?

B. Skanthakumar
The Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) which is being prepared by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) will increase even further the power and privileges of trans-national corporations (TNCs) by undermining national regulations.

The Ecologist magazine (January/February 1997) quotes World Trade Organisation Director-General Renato Ruggero: "We are writing the constitution of a single global economy." The MAI would compel countries to treat TNCs as favourably as domestic companies without being subject to commitments that had previously bound them including the employment of local managers and compulsory purchase of domestically provided goods and services.

Many TNCs are attracted to countries through public subsidies, tax holidays and the waiving of customs duties.

In return some countries imposed performance requirements on them which included an obligation to meet employment goals such as equal opportunities for women and minorities, and a living wage and re-invest in the community.

These would be banned under the MAI as anti-competitive.

Capital flight

Obligations to retain investments within a country for a certain period would also be barred allowing corporations to use even the threat of corporate flight to low wage areas to undermine the bargaining power of unions.

Standards to protect workers and consumers are absent from the MAI even the customary token mention they receive in other trade and investment agreements like NAFTA and GATT.

George Monbiot, writing in The Guardian (13 January 1997), pointed out that the far-reaching nature of these provisions would reduce national parliaments to rubber stamp bodies and the status of elected representatives to that of filing clerk.

So this is living in a democracy? The decisions that matter are taken by unknown, unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats and company directors.

French left hook floors flagging EMU

By Geoff Lowe

THINGS are not going entirely to plan for Europe's bourgeois. After welcoming the victory of Tony Blair as Britain's man most likely to enter the Euro-currency, the wheels have come off the wagon as a result of the stunning victory of Lionel Jospin's Socialist Party in France.

French President Jacques Chirac's gamble on calling elections a year early back-fired spectacularly.

The first round of voting brought a foretaste of the disaster pending for the right-wing alliance, and triggered the resignation of Prime Minister Alain Juppé.

Chirac now faces five years as President with the government controlled by a left-wing alliance of the Socialist Party, Communist Party, Greens and smaller left organisations.

French capitalists certainly seemed convinced that the left could win: panic selling on the stock-exchange with the inevitable drop in the price of shares and bonds as a response to the likely formation of a Socialist Party-led government elected on a policy of unemployment and seeking a reinterpretation or renunciation of the Maastricht Treaty.

A victory for the right depended on the winning voters coming from the far-right Front National, which won 15 percent in the first round. But this did not materialise, nor least because the FN was itself divided over election tactics.

FN leader Jean-Marie Le Pen favoured contesting the second round where it is eligible to stand. This split the right-wing vote and gave extra seats to the left, which has overthrown the right wing's 200-seat majority.

However Le Pen was not without his critics, for example Gaullist Bruno Megret, who scored 35 percent in the first round, wanted the FN to stick to its in favour of the traditional right-wing parties. But even where the FN was not standing many of its supporters abstained: some even voted for the left.

The elections are a clear rejection of Juppé's government's attempts to meet the Maastricht criteria for monetary union. They reflect, as a Parliamentary level, the massive campaigns by French workers over the last few years against attacks on living standards and the welfare state.

Despite the undoubted commitment to Maastricht by Juppé and President Chirac the right-wing government has been unable to impose its policies. It has frequently had to retreat in the face of determined opposition.

The Socialist Party coalition has had to partly reflect that hostility. SP leader Lionel Jospin has been pushed into calling for a change in the Maastricht criteria so that monetary union is accompanied by measures to reduce unemployment. The 'social Europe' envisaged by both the Socialists and the Communist Party (which is openly opposed to a single currency) is profoundly at odds with the Europe of the Maastricht Treaty.

Indeed the left majority in the National Assembly now depends upon the backing of Communist deputies, suggesting that Jospin could be forced even further into opposition to the EMU process. If the left attempts to put their policies into practice there would be no chance whatsoever of France being able to meet the criteria for monetary union.

Indeed, French opposition combined with Chancellor Kohl's current problems in Germany could now call the possibility of European monetary union into question. Hence the hostility of the stock-exchange to even the prospect of a government of the left.

If the left are the winners of the election the second biggest winners were undoubtedly the Front National. Their average score of 15 percent was their best ever and in a number of seats their poll was much higher.

The FN was the only clearly anti-Maastricht party, which explains some of their support. They also attract support because of their racist, which has been legitimised by the government's adoption of ever harsher measures against immigrants.

But the FN also attract support because in some towns where they have influence they do try to provide solutions to the problems faced by workers and small business people (so long as they are white, of course).

Some of their highest scores, in fact, were in areas with few immi-
grants where the main issues were unemployment and the effects of the government's attempts to meet the Maastricht criteria, rather than immi-
gration.

An incoming left government has no face up to the problem of the FN.

It has to learn that there must be no compromise with the FN on racism and immigration controls. Conces-
sions to le Pen only strengthen him.

However, the left has to take note that many people vote FN as a protest against government attacks on their living standards and deteriorating conditions of life.

The left has to tackle these eco-
nomic and social issues if it is to halt the rise of the FN.

Get the facts, from around the world

International Viewpoint, monthly publication of the Fourth International, carries all the background information you cannot find in the bourgeois press. IVP's normal selling price is £2 per month, but British readers can subscribe jointly to IVP and Socialist Outlook for just £30 per year.

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Gordon Brown's "courageous" decision to hand control of interest rates over to a banking body headed by the Bank of England is a crucial preparatory step along the road to European monetary union.

The rules of admission to EMU include the establishment in each member state of an independent central bank, which can then be made subordinate to a Eurogovernor, the European Central Bank. In Britain, the Bank of England has been controlled by the government since Labour nationalised it in 1947. Brown's effort to step back from control is a prelude to legislation which would be required to establish its complete independence if Labour goes ahead with a single currency.

The European Bank will effectively control the economies of member states by dictating interest rates and vetoing the various policies implemented by governments. Its powers are reinforced by sweeping powers for the EU to levy massive fines on member states which exceed agreed limits on public sector spending and the level of national debt.

The political crisis unleashed in Germany by the Bundesbank's clash with Chancellor Helmut Kohl gives a foretaste of the likely role of the European Bank. It is the larger proponent of the single currency among the major economies, was keen to cut Germany's burgeoning public sector deficit without further austerity measures. Its finance minister obediently suggested revaluing the German gold reserves, and using the extra cash as a one-off boost to the budget.

The Bundesbank announced the manoeuvre, throwing a spanner in the works of the convergence process, and triggering a crisis in Kohl's fragile governing coalition. If Germany's right-wing government is again caught in a crisis, what hope would there be for a socialist government seeking to implement progressive policies if a single currency is ever introduced?

All of these should be at the highest existing levels. This is a programme that not only provides an alternative to the pre-Maastricht position of the TUC and Blair's desire to reduce European workers to the level of those in Britain. It provides an alternative to the xenophobes of the Tory Party, and helps expose the opportunism of the other European governments who have seen the single currency as a way to level down, not level up workers' rights and living standards.

It will allow us to build on the success of the Euroschemes in bringing workers throughout Europe together in common action.

Chapter of evasions

DURING the harsh years of Tory rule, many union leaders effectively gave up any hope of fighting or winning defence of British employers.

A growing school of thought emerged within the TUC and union bureaucracy which planned the future hopes of the British trade union movement on developments in Europe.

This was, we have to explain, nothing to do with the continued militancy of the working classes across Europe, or borrowing from the fighting spirit of the French lorry drivers and others who have repeatedly flouted the la dyddef gaidfynys to win their demands: no the TUC focus was on the bureaucratic intrigues of the European Parliament as the saviour of working class interests.

This was intensified when first Thatcher and then Major refused to sign the so-called "Social Charter", which gives the EU a waiver-thin veneer of concern for "social" issues while driving forward towards a single market and single currency designed to increase competition and facilitate the free movement of capital.

The same mythology has been used by a close alternative to the xenophobes of the Tory Party, and helps expose the opportunism of the other European governments who have seen the single currency as a way to level down, not level up workers' rights and living standards.

Europe's bankers flex muscles

GORDON Brown's "courageous" decision to hand control of interest rates over to a banking body headed by the Bank of England is a crucial preparatory step along the road to European monetary union.

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The European Bank will effectively control the economies of member states by dictating interest
Fighting social exclusion

Pete Burnett, one of the marchers on the North East leg, explained to the public meeting in Middlesbrough some of the ways in which social exclusion affects people's lives in Britain and across Europe today.

Across Europe there are 20 million out of work, 50 million are living in poverty. We've seen the re-emergence of poverty on a mass scale. That's what this march is about.

For every job that's lost a new job is created but these are jobs with no rights. We have part time jobs, jobs in any content. They're jobs people can be exploited and can be unemployed with no notice at all.

A good example is banking: 150000 jobs have been lost in the last five years. 10000 jobs going to be lost between now and the end of the century.

But jobs in banking have actually increased - they're part time jobs they're zero hour jobs - they're jobs which specify a certain number of hours and if they run out of hours, they're called at an hour's notice to do those things so the person that phones you about your overdraw or your account - usually a woman - is on performance related pay - she's got to get money in or else she loses her job.

And for more jobs in the civil service have become jobs of this nature where they have to achieve certain results. They're on six monthly contracts and their contracts will end unless they achieve these results not re-employed. This is a new world of labour - it's very different from the world of our fathers and grandfathers of our mothers and grandmothers.

So amongst the people most sorely affected by these developments are women because most of the new developments in the labour market affect women's jobs - the most insecure short term jobs, after hours, usually sold on the grounds that they are suitable for busy women with children - something in supermarkets and so on.

And of course women are the first ones that suffer from cuts in benefits.

Across Europe immigrants workers - since 1985 we've had the Schengen agreement which basically was an outline plan for immigration policy to keep out immigrants from Europe. Its real intent and its real effect has been to cast a shadow over the lives of immigrants in Europe.

One in every seven workers in Europe is a migrant, from Morocco, from Mores from North Africa, from various parts of Asia, from Sarinians from various parts of Latin America.

Some of them have got papers - some of them think they have got papers but haven't got adequate papers, some of them have no papers at all - some of them had papers that have been confiscated by unscrupulous employers.

Racism and immigration laws cast a shadow across the lives of these millions of workers when they cannot actually take action because they can go on strike they can fight for their rights without drawing attention to themselves and inviting the question "where are your papers" Another case of what we mean by social exclusion.

Young people in Britain now have virtually no rights at all. They're being kept off the schemes, they're being deprived of benefits.

In many ways when you look at the praetice of the Tory government you see the statements coming from Labour political union a whole generation has become criminalised.

There's a watch on young people now - how young people in particular are being curfew in certain areas to get people off the streets.

Young people can be stopped in the same way as migrants can be stopped in Europe, asked where they live, what they're doing there. It's the rise of a law and order society.
A marcher's diary

Legacy of Jarrow March still strong

Terry Conway

FOUR DAYS can be a long time in politics. Certainly I may only have been on the Jarrow to Amsterdam march for its first four days – but it seemed like at least four years.

Nothing exists outside the world of the march, and the comradeship we developed on the road means that I have made a bunch of new friends I will treasure in the months and years ahead.

The financial support and welcome we've had in the various places we've marched through has been overwhelming by the fact that we're another march from Jarrow. Unemployment has always been a burning issue in the North East – I grew up with it and that's why I was determined to be on this leg...

My blisters may have healed but the memories remain strong – enhanced by the fact that I got through 3 rolls of film in four days. I'm looking forward to restarting the march in the next week as it approaches London, and deeply regretting the fact that I will miss the Amsterdam demonstration because I'm a delegate to my union conference which starts the same day.

Monday May 19

Assembled at 9am outside Jarrow Town Hall, Jimmy McAuley, one of the original Jarrow marchers, was there to see us off. Speakers at the rally included Shirley Winter of Magnet Support Group, Stephen Hepburn MP for Jarrow and Andy Robinson speaking for the marchers. Set off with contingents from Magnet and South Tyneside Trades Council and some supporters from Jarrow as well as the permanent marchers.

The rally and beginning of the march are filmed by the BBC for their local news programme "Look North" and look like "The Journal" also give us coverage.

The positive mood continued all day despite the toll on everyone's feet of sixteen miles on tar mac - give me a country stroll any day. Collecting went well – "Spare some change for the Jarrow marchers" seemed to work.

Tuesday May 20

Sleeping on a floor seems more uncomfortable now I'm in my forties than it did in my exuberant youth. Maybe not going to the pub last night was a mistake – I should have slept better after a few drinks.

Today's challenge – other than getting the marching – is that we are going to be in Blair's constituency of Sedgefield for a good part of the day.

We are all a little apprehensive that the reception here might be less friendly. In fact we are worried – we get a lot of support going through places like Scarborough, Whiton Gilbert and Spennymoor and the collecting tins are pleasantly full. Maurice on the loud hailer explaining why we're marching in French, Spanish and Arabic also gets us noticed!

A warm reception, filling lunch and lots of march posters at Bearpark Artists Co-op. On to Durham where we spent some time in Market Square petitioning, collecting etc. Much less friendly reception but some support never the less.

Then to Bishop Auckland where we are met by local Trades Council and Labour party activists who marched with us to the community centre where we are staying. Dinner, then social they had organised at Crook Cricket Club.

Wednesday May 21

Breakfast at a different Community Centre. Most marchers went back into Bishop Auckland to collect a few stayed to talk with users.

Late morning marched from Bishop to Shildon for our first Civic reception. Welcomed by the Deputy mayor who was the mayor was out of town. Shildon was devastated by the closure of the Railway work shops a few years ago – unemployment is high.

On the outskirts of Darlington where met by Magnet strikers for march to picket line. Arrived at picket line in time to greet scabs leaving on the day shift. Maurice, our-tornado camera man tried to interview one of the scabs about why he was a strike breaker.

The man grabbed him – and the police responded by threatening to arrest Maurice for swearing!

We are impressed by the strikers' camp with its portacabins, barbecues and home built structures - and from over and we're off again – this time to a social at the Navy Club organised by the strikers, with a good song and dancing.

Thursday May 22

Up at 6am for mass picket at 7am. Scabs even more arrogant than previous night but we give them our vocal reception and remind them that "Magnet's going down and you're going down with them". Delicious breakfast on picket line – can't remember when croppers last tasted so good.

We're sorry to leave – and determined to do more to support Magnet both on the march and when we got home. Strikers marched down the road with us several miles on our way to Stockton. Met by activists from the Welfare State Network. Civic reception at Stockton Town Hall, collected in town centre.

On the way out of Stockton the police tried to arrest Maurice! First they came up with a list that there was an escaped Group 4 prisoner (yet another one) answering to his description – then it transpires woman had been annoyed by him asking for money, so maybe that's why they came!

Policeman eventually backed down and put 50p in collection! Marched into Middlesbrough – occupied the Job Centre, but were a little disappointed by the fact that the manager shook one of the marcher's hands!

Started collecting in Town Centre but then Connor was taken ill and we had to call an ambulance. He's taken to hospital and John goes up with him. Concerned about him – he'd been carrying the banner a good deal of the day and it had been pretty hot – put the dampeners on things a bit.

Then to Town Hall for Civic reception, met by more activists including a student whose grandfather had been one of the original Jarrow marchers. She and Harry Clarke had a lot to talk about.

Marched to unemployed centre where we were staying Public Meeting there with speakers included Harry Clarke, Shirley Winter from Magnet, Cathy Nugent from Welfare State Network and Pete Burnet representing the marchers. Good meeting, though audience smaller than we'd hoped. Hear that Connor has been kept in overnight.

Friday May 23

Well known Jarrow marchers go off to visit Connor before breakfast. Not sure when he'll be out or whether he'll be able to come back on the march.

Today I'm leaving to visit family and then back to work after the weekend. I don't want to go – al told he says that last thing he'd want to do is go back to Newcastle with Harry who's also going home makes it easier.

He says he'll be back, and I'm looking forward to seeing everybody again when they get to London... Manage to take less of phoms of every one together first. Wave the march off on its trek out of town... This has certainly been a week to remember.

Help keep campaign on the road!

A HUGE job of work has been done already to get the marchers this far. But when you're on the road for days you don't need the worry of wondering whether there will be enough money to finance the journey, so please help by making donations provided – let alone for the transport to Amsterdam.

We need to raise every last bit needed to ensure that the march ends in a Public Meeting in the Hague on July 10, and that the work of the campaign against unemployment, job insecurity and social exclusion can continue beyond this point.

We need donations however large or small you can manage. Sponsor a marcher for a week – or for the whole thing. Organise a collection in your area. Send a bit in your area and collect signatures for the petition and memos.

Make cheques payable to European Marches 1997 and send to Genn Voyce, c/o St Hubert, TyEC Resource Centre, 21-31 Bar- row St, St Helens, WA10 1DB.
On the March

Simple reasons to back Euro-march

Ian Crummond, sacked Magnet worker

I'm often asked why I support this march to Europe and why the Magnet workers support it. Well, I haven't got a job and it's a march for the unemployed. I'm struggling with benefits and it's a march in favour of decent welfare benefits.

I have a home, but there's a lot of people in the country don't have a home, and there's a lot of people across Europe don't have a home and they need to be helped and supported and some of them might fight for themselves.

It's not just in the North of England that people are being deprived and mugged in Germany, France and Italy being denied work. Too many are fighting against the same things as we are - poor working conditions, poor pay, poor recruitment, poor benefits, and so on.

I'd like to welcome all the marchers here today, I think they must be very brave.

They've got to have a lot of strength, that's why at the end of the march they're still there, still singing.

I hope everyone is coming to the social tonight and bringing lots of money - because we need lots of money both for the marchers and for the Magnet strikers.

The marchers need money to keep marching and get across to Amsterdam and attend the Inter-governmental Summit on June 14.

Lyne Fawcett from the Magnet Support Group spoke at the rally to welcome the Euromarchers in Darlington. She had a clear message for Tony Blair...

'I was extremely proud to be in Jarrow on Monday. My grandfather actually walked from Jarrow 100 years ago with his family. He was about 9 or 10, and there were ten of them who walked down from Jarrow to Darlington to live.

My great-grandfather had been made a police sergeant here. It took them a week to get here and they were quite a family because he had a secure job and somewhere to go and live and a roof over his head.

A hundred years later nothing much has changed, has it? People are still having to walk miles for jobs, and they're lucky if they can find one...

The men of Magnet were sacked for principles, and you people are marching for 100 years, and I can only support you totally.

I have three children of my own in a flat and I'm extremely lucky they're all working. What Magnet have done - I'm terrified the same thing could be done to my son and my two daughters.

I'm extremely grateful that my last child is female - not because the hormonal monster is easier to handle than boisterous boys - but because at least she stands some chance of getting some sort of work. I'm ashamed to say that a sixteen year old lad today in Darlington doesn't have a cat in hell's chance.

Then they wonder why the lads all are absolutely demoralised. If you give people prospects and jobs they will turn round and look after their own. All we want is security. Why are quarter of a million just wasting? These kids aren't bad, there are very few bad kids around. OK so they drink and they're up to all sorts - we've been up to all sorts when we were younger. They're no more vicious than we were.

It's just that when you were fifteen or sixteen you got a kick up the backside, and you went out to work and you earned the money and you went home proud and you gave your mum some housekeeping, and then you went out and spent your money.

You became self-sufficient and proud of yourself and got some self respect and self esteem. And you wonder why these kids between fifteen and sixteen have nothing except drink, drugs, misery, poverty and absolutely no hope. It's because we have actually failed them. We're really guilty.

And now we've got rid of the Tories, Tony Blair is not going to fail us is he? I understood that he had something like a 60% majority - now if my sums are right that means he can push through anything that he has a mind to do - anything at all.

GCNQ - he's sorted them out after thirteen years. Well I'm not waiting thirteen years for him to sort Magnet out. We all deserve self esteem.

When you take men's jobs away their whole self esteem and self worth collapses. Your motivation goes out of your family life, you lose your security and the knock-on effect for the whole town is less money, less prospects and more poverty.

There's enough poverty in Darlington - we don't need any more. They say there's at least ten per cent unemployed - well we know the figures are massaged so much they might even as well just make a figure up. So shall I just say there's 35 per cent unemployed in Darlington - that's as good a guess as their 10 per cent, I'm sure. We're probably much more of this. Everybody in this town deserves the chance of a job.

Whether you've got a million pounds in your pocket or only got one pound you've only got one life, twenty four hours in every day. Everybody deserves the chance to do something.

While it might be the case that full employment is my ideal and the dream is just utopian but it's got to be better to aim for because of unemployment, no rights, no welfare state, the health service crumbling and just poverty spreading right across the town...

During the election I read that Alan Sugar was prepared to vote Labour because Labour was prepared not to put up taxes. Now as far as I'm concerned that's millions of pounds why should he bother?

I haven't got millions but I'm quite prepared to pay a little bit more if it's spread more evenly so that everybody gets a fair share instead of the rich man keeping so much for themselves.

So I support you very much on your principle of walking from Jarrow all the way to Amsterdam - and I hope you all enjoy the night tonight when we have a social.

"We won't wait thirteen years for justice"

Magnet strike attracts fresh sabre violence

Terry Conway

The nine-month strike at Magnet in Darlington has seen a legal action taken against which is fortunately unusual in industrial disputes in Britain.

The latest and most violent incident took place at 11.20 pm on Sunday May 25 when a tarmac mob surged up at the picket line and seven hooded men carrying iron bars attacked the picketers.

The six men in their fifties who were on picket duty at the time approached Magnet security to call police. It seems as if they may well have delayed the action by 5.60 as the police took 15 minutes to arrive when their normal response time is only 8-10 minutes.

In the meantime the thugs smashed up much of the legroom on the picket line and challenged the strikers to a fight. They were told to stop or be arrested so that it burnt down the portacabin. One tried to pick up a gas canister to throw at the pickets as they were being arrested to spread the blaze further but was unable to do so.

They were then able to escape in the waiting taxi before the police arrived, leaving several strikers needing hospital treatment.

The workers recognised some of their assailants as scabs. However the Magnet security cameras had been tampered with so that the film of the incident is too blurred to be any use as evidence. The police do seem to be taking this outrage seriously: a pleasant change from the last time the picket was attacked.

A few months ago one scab threw petrol at one of the cabins on the site. In order to avert the danger of fire this was carefully washed away with water. As a result the man who was only charged with causing an affray and got away with being fined for an offence which had been carried out by the strikers would undoubtedly have resulted in a far more serious charge of manslaughter.

The workers at Magnet were originally sacked in September 1989 for going on strike for a modest pay rise. Since the dispute started, support committees have been set up in many areas of the country and regular actions called outside Magnet showrooms.

The determination of the strikers and the solidarity they have received has put the company under increasing pressure. In the days before the attack on the picket line the strikers had heard that the scabs were having their hours reduced and benefits cut. Some even had the audacity to ask for union help — which fortunately was not offered.

It is a scandal that the local Labour MPs have failed to take action in the face of the disgusting treatment the strikers have faced both from management and scabs.

Neither Alan Milburn, in whose constituency the factory is, nor Tony Blair, in whose constituency the majority of the strikers live, has even bothered to visit the pickets.

Magnet strikers and their supporters are determined they should not have to wait thirteen years like workers at GCNQ.

Since the recent attack the numbers on picket duty have been increased by a mass solidarity action called for Saturday May 31 in Darlington.

A picket of Beresford's (the owners of Magnet is being planned at the Baker Street Headquarters in London. Actions at Magnet showrooms throughout the country need to be organised as well as pickets in support of the workers at labour movement meetings. This dispute can be won — lets organise one last push.
International youth camp: underlining democracy Europe

ON JULY 19-26, revolutionary groups from 15 countries will organise the 14th youth camp in solidarity with the Fourth International.

This year's camp focuses on the European integration process governed by the Maastricht and Schengen accords. The development of the "bosses' and 'cops' Europe" involves the looting of the public sector, privatisation of state enterprises, degradation of social welfare, and the replacement of full-time jobs with part-time work and short-term contracts.

This camp is an occasion to share our ideas, to co-ordinate our activities, and to come together in opposition to the bosses and cops Europe of Maastricht and Schengen.

This camp is about preparing the social and political movements which are the only way to impose an alternative, independent, internationalist, ecological and democratic.

For most of the organising groups, European integration is an important theme.

"Belgium is in the centre of Europe. Therefore, the difficulties in campaigning on European themes, the choice of focus for this 14th Fourth International camp is unimportant," says the International Revolutionary Socialists Party (IPSR) campaign.

Over 600 young people from all over Europe will come together to exchange their experiences, discuss the developments in their countries, and identify the possibilities for co-ordinated international struggles against the capitalist system.

As well as current struggles, we will also discuss our project for a better society, the need to be a revolutionary today, and how to organise so as to bring about the changes we want.

Come to Brioude, France, 19-26 July for a real revolutionary party!

This year's Fourth International youth camp is hosted by the French JCR-RED, and will take place in Brioude, in Haute-Loire, near the Mediterranean Sea.

Over 600 young people from all over Europe will come together to exchange their experiences, discuss the developments in their countries, and identify the possibilities for co-ordinated international struggles against the capitalist system.

As well as current struggles, we will also discuss our project for a better society, the need to be a revolutionary today, and how to organise so as to bring about the changes we want.

But this camp is more than that. For one short week, we will try to unite liberals, leftists, and radicals. This event, however, is a focus for ongoing discussions and activities.

The evening cultural programme includes video, a nightly discotheque, and a special meeting on George Gavara. A Fourth International meeting will be held on the final evening, Register now, for Europe's largest international revolutionary festival!

A full menu of events for a liberating week

Saturday 19 July
- Opening forum
  - The political situation in France (A. Rivière, JCJ) - The situation in Europe (A. Rivière, JCJ)
- "Against the EU" - Fighting against unemployment "Student struggles in the UK"
- Workshops - "Education policies in Europe - Cutting the working week - The struggle in Renault Belgium - Information, new technologies and the reorganisation of the labour market - AIDS and health policies - Pre-capitalist China in the Eastern European countries - Ahumad

Monday 21
- "Fascism, freedom, moral order, and the far right in Europe" - Advance of the far right and the moral order - Echegaray agreement and racist policies in Europe - "The sans-papiers" in France

Workshops - Local government - "Right-wing Fascism in Germany" - "Far Right in the student movement" - Racism against gypsies - Drugs and repressive policies in Europe - Struggles of lesbians and gays

Tuesday 22
- "Women in the eye of the storm" - Attacks on women's rights - Women and public life - The hearings for women's rights in the USA (Daniel Senado)

Workshops - The right to choose - Situation of women's right to the pill - Situation of women in Algeria - Sexual exploitation, symptoms of the capitalist crises - Men and feminism - Cultural relativism and imperialism

Wednesday 23
- No morning forum - Inter-delegation meetings
- Workshop May 1988 - Foundations of the Fourth International - Alain Rivière - Experience of youth movement reorganisation - Mass consumption and the creation of new needs - Genetics, biotechnology

Third World, the African example - Che Guevara, Jean-Baptiste - Current struggles in Latin America, particularly Chiapas

Women's assemblies: Sexualities - Violence against women

Video space
Two videos on the dockers in Liverpool. Breaking the waves.
"The promise" (la promesse) - French/Belgian film on immigrant workers - "Michelin Collies" - Wild Rides (Les Roseaux Sauvages) - Lesbian gay, Land and Freedom

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Name: __________________________
Address: ________________________
Phone: __________________________
Age: ____________________________
We condemn Lima embassy massacre

Statement of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, 13 May 1997

THE UNITED Secretariat of the Fourth International expresses its indignation over the assassination of 11 people at the Lima embassy of the United States. The assassination was carried out by a guerrilla commando which had killed no-one, injured no-one, and made no attempt at intimidation. But President Fujimori decided on a massacre, using the combined forces of the army, air force and marines, with the aid of the USA, Britain and Israel, and with the complicity of the Japanese government. He wanted no prisoners. His goal was to break the militiants inside the embassy.

The bourgeois media all over the world, like the US, hasten to spread their satisfaction, and join in with the congratulations which their governments addressed to the president of Fujimori. This sinister individual has succeeded in polishing his tyrant’s badge — which the MRTA action had tarnished. Fujimori is a monster, and his gang have sent the Peruvian people a clear message: the state has a monopoly of force of whatever kind, and the “state interest” has priority, at any price.

Those who challenge these “principles” will be punished mercilessly. The framework of the capitalist system must be respected. Participation by Latin America, those who are not disposed to accept this should know that they are not protected by the democratic guarantee.

The “law and order” pattern against the people has already caused so much damage in Central America and elsewhere, that this is the other message which Fujimori and his imperialist allies want to send out, to the oppressed and exploited of the continent.

Each revolutionary organisation that  does not or does not adopt the same choices as the MRTA. To ask itself whether or not the methods used by its militians are useful. Whether they contribute effectively to the legitimate action against “national” and foreign oppressors.

But as a moment when the dominant classes in Latin America and their imperialist patrons are saying “victory” is, it is our duty to express our solidarity with the MRTA in their mourning.

At the same time, we demand an end to the scandalous detention of political prisoners in Peru in unacceptable and inhuman conditions. International solidarity with all those prisoners is a moral.

Charlie van Gelderen

A CAUFORNIA has been launched by the Cape Town based Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC) for the abolition of debt and the reduction of poverty by the Apartheid regime.

Although this campaign is specifically aimed at the legacy of apartheid and its far broader political ramifications, the so-called developing countries are crippled by these debts. The approach being adopted here may give a new boost to existing campaigns against debt and help stimulate new ones.

Post apartheid South Africa has inherited a foreign debt of $18.7 billion. This debt is considerably on the vast sum — between $1.5 billion and $2 billion annually — could be used to better use funding and public health and social services that South Africa so badly needs.

It is estimated that $18.7 billion (90 million rand) could go a long way to achieving:

- 200,000 new homes (R10bn)
- Water and sanitation for 21 million people (R26bn above 5 years)
- 18,000 new class rooms for 1.5 million children (R18bn)
- Health and education of 2.5 million people (R1bn over 5 years)
- 100 new health clinics (R1bn)
- Employment of all those unemployed (R28bn per annum)
- In their structure Challenge Apartheid Foreign debt AIDC stresses that they have both moral, and international law on their side in waging this battle. They base much of their argumentation on the Doctrines of Debt, a doctrine of jurisprudence the United States government and the US Chief Justice helped to develop.

The US government, in the aftermath of the American-Spanish War of 100 years ago, used the doctrine to repudiate Cuba’s debt to Spain, arguing the debt was "odious" and unenforceable since it had been incurred for the benefit of the Cuban people and by means of force of arms.

At the end of 1990, 87% of South Africa’s outstanding debt was owed to banks of five countries, with Britain heading the list. British banks accounted for 28 per cent of these loans.

Will the Labour government in Britain rise to the golden opportunity that this issue presents to demonstrate its real concern for the poor of the world, or are we to be left to a Cook and Clare Short’s sound bites on a new climate of international relations not meant to be taken seriously?

These issues must be exerted on the British government to head the international campaign for the repudiation of these odious debts.

The campaign for the cancellation of Apartheid’s debt is an urgent task for the international labour movement, as is supporting the battle against debt and the structural adjustment policies which accompany it.

South African activists pose challenge for Labour

Charlie van Gelderen

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Troops out of Albania!

IN RECENT years Albania was presented by the international institutions and imperialist propaganda as a country which served as an example to its neighbours, because of its economic growth, and its spectacular progress in the construction of a modern state.

In just a few days, a powerful popular movement swept away this myth, exposing the perverse mechanisms, the savage exploitation, and the financial fraud by which these allegations were obtained and against which wide sections of the Albanian people revolting.

They also rose up against the political regime symbolised by President Sali Berisha — a regime which hid its profoundly anti-democratic, police-state nature behind the facade of largely fraudulent election victories.

Spokesmen for the imperialist countries and the media at their service presented the protagonists of the Albanian mass movement as (at best) Inspired by clan allegiance, or (at worst) criminal or mafia gang.

Insurrection

In fact, the insurrection covered the whole country, thanks to massive, active popular participation.

The criminal gangs, which exist in Albania like in all other countries, only exploited the conditions created by the rotting Berisha regime: consolidating their links with the mass of international traf- fickers, and shamelessly exploiting all those who saw a passage across the Adriatic sea to Italy as their (il-)lucrative salvation. By crude mystification, these bandido have been falsely presented as the main actors of the Albanian drama.

In fact, the mass movement put forward completely legitimate demands: restoration of the money stolen through “pyramids” financial operations authorised by the government, Berisha’s resignation, the dissolution of the secret police, and fair elections.

The democratic revolutionary character of this movement was expressed in the formation of popular committees, in open session, coordinated in a national public salvation committee.

These committees did not become organs of a real dual power, challenging the regime. They demanded Berisha’s departure, but limited themselves to the role of pressure-group on the new Fiona government.

The committees also accepted the deployment of the “Alba” multinational armed force. This is largely due to their lack of experience, the widespread illusions in the existing political parties, and the absence of political kernels with a general overview of the situation.

Solidarity

The Fourth International expresses its militant solidarity with the insurrectional movement which has shaken Albania.

It calls for mobilisations in support of the following demands, particularly in those countries which have launched the military intervention:

Immediate and unconditional resignation of President Berisha.

Reimbursement of the money stolen in the financial scandals of the regime.

Recognition of the popular committees.

Withdrawal of the “Alba” multi-national force, the main goal of which is to reconstruc- tion of a repressive, anti-democratic state structure, and the maintenance of Albania’s “market economy.”
And it’s not over yet!

McLell - Burger Culture on Trial, by John Vidal
(Macmillan £15.99), reviewed by BRIAN GARDNER

MCDONALD’S food is not nutritious, and can kill you.

Although the multi-national corporation deny this, there is an overwhelming weight of scientific evidence that foods such as those produced by McDonald’s which are high in fat, sodium and sugar can cause cancers of the breast and bowel as well as heart disease.

And if you draw the conclusion that the company has little respect for human life, then it will hardly shock you to learn that they also condone the inhumane factory farming and slaughter of animals.

To add to their sins, in order to facilitate the mass breeding of livestock for their products, they are complicit in the mass destruction of tropical rainforests in order to provide grazing land.

If that isn’t enough, the packaging produced for their produce necessitates the cutting down of even more areas of forest.

So, you may ask, if they have so little respect for both animals and humans, how then do they treat the vast majority of their employees, who are often pushed down to work for them in their millions of outlets throughout the world, the vast majority of them women.

Let us then consider the situation of the workers and the union movement.

There is, in two words - LIKE SHIT. McDonald’s crew employees are paid on the “pie-poor wages - in the UK £3.10 to 4.10” by the World Health Organisation in 1994. What’s more, throughout the world, McDonald’s employees are often in the forefront of unionizing.

If they try to, there is firstly persuasion not to, secondly coercion and finally the sack.

Before I go on, I wouldn’t like you to think that these are my allegations. After all, this publication could also be sued.

Although I may have added some additional hyperbole, they are essentially the same allegations as were contained in a fact-check released by the London Greenpeace group (no relation to the international environmental organization) in 1986.

In 1996, McDonald’s began legal proceedings against five activists who they believed were key to its distribution.

And in writing this book about the McRib trial, the Environmental Editor of the Guardian, John Vidal, is at pains to point out that he does not necessarily share the view of the defendants.

You can hardly blame him; McDonald’s method of stalling its critics is often that of the SLAPP - a phrase first used by two American academics and meaning Strategic Lawsuit against Public Participation.

Of the five people who were originally in the frame, three eventually gave McDonald’s what they wanted - an apology.

The other two, Helen Steel and Dave Morris stuck it out and so began the trial that was to become as 313 days the longest of any kind in English history.

This does not take into account the numerous preliminary hearings and various appeals which took place before the actual trial commenced.

And it’s not over yet. On December 13 last year, after he had heard the closing speeches, Mr Justice Bell MIdl: “I will say now that I propose to reserve my judgment... I don’t mean it to be difficult when I say I don’t know when I will deliver it because I don’t know.”

Not surprisingly, given that he has to review some 58,000 pages of documentary evidence and transcript testimony.

During the preliminary stages, the plaintiffs’ barrister persuaded the judge that on the basis that much of the scientific evidence would be too complex for a jury to understand, the trial should take place without one. The judge would be arbiter of both fact and the law.

In late 1990 the McLib Support Campaign was established. From an early stage it would be organized into an organization with significant support from people in many different countries. In February 1996, it established its own McSpotlight website on the Internet.

Vidal: “The act of taking people to court was having the exact opposite of the desired effect: it was exacerbated the situation...” By April 1996, the McLib Support Campaign was claiming that more than half a million people, along with McDonald’s, left their leaves had been handed out since the trees were written.

To counter this McDonald’s started the following a “Why McDonald’s is going to court” leaflet from its restaurant outlets. This effectively branded Steel and Morris as “liars”, and in a deft move they countered this for libel against McDonald’s.

Now there were to be two trials taking place at the same time. Effectively McDonald’s was on trial, and Justice Bell would have a doubly hard task, eventually having to rule not on sixteen cases but three.

As might be expected, by far the greater part of Vidal’s book is given over to trying to encapsulate the long tortuous process of the trial. McDonald’s executives were pushed back into court order to defend every aspect of corporate policy. Both sides called large numbers of expert witnesses and their evidence was often contradictory if not confusing.

For McDonald’s, the crucial part of the allegations was whether or not their food was nutritional and the allegations of a link between it and the development of cancer, heart disease and strokes.

The defendants had scored an early victory when they trapped a McDonald’s witness on nutrition into admitting that just such a link existed. The corporation were then allowed to move the goal posts by amending their claim in such a way that Morris and Steel had to prove that the consumption of McDonald’s actually caused the ailments which had been cited.

Although this was much harder, McDonald’s were still worried. Late in August, 1994 they made an offer to settle the case out of court. There was to be no payment of compensation or costs to either of the parties but a substantial sum of money would be paid to be paid to a mutually agreeable third party.

So far so good but the agreement foundered when McDonald’s refused access to Steel and Morris’ demand that they apologised to those who had ‘been wronged’ for the way they treated the company in the past.

Furthermore they refused to accept that in the future, they undertake not to make any public statements about McDonald’s in any form, communications other than private communications.

And so the case went on with separate sections of the trial addressing all of the issues which had been contained in the fact sheet.

One of the most bizarre revelations was that McDonald’s had hired two private investigation companies to infiltrate the London Greenpeace group and spy on its members. As neither company were aware that the other had also been retained, sometimes the investigators were unknowingly gathering information on each other.

In order to establish their credibility with the genuine members of the group, many of the agents assisted with the production and distribution of anti-McDonald’s material. Parts of Steel and Morris’ defence was that the company had thus actually colluded in the dissemination of the literature they claimed had defamed it.

The testimonies of McDonald’s executives were often ludicrous. More so than in this book, this was plainly apparent in a dramatic re-construction of parts of the trial, recently shown on Channel 4.

Robert Bever, a senior vice president of the corporation broke down in tears while describing how a teenager who previously had never achieved anything, won a crew member of the year award.

When another executive was asked if he knew what a typical tree in the rainforest might look like, his reply was that they were tall and slender, somewhat like himself.

It would be wrong to see the trial merely as an amusing circus. Vidal locates the actions of McDonald’s within a strategy pursued by many other multi-nationals, some of it much more sinister than the pursuit of two anti-monopolists through the vast labyrinth of the English legal system.

He links as an example the complicity of the Shell corporation in the Nigerian regime’s persecution of the Ogoni people and its execution on trumped-up charges of flouries such as writer and political activists, Ken Saro-Wiwa.

He points out how, because of their crossing of national boundaries, the multi-nationals are now beyond regulation by national governments and even emergent supra-states such as the EC.

While we have not been looking, global capitalism has been re-inventing itself. It works now not only through nation states but through the World Bank, the IMF and the GATT, now transmitted into the World Trade Organisation.

Grass roots

What, however, can be done about these shadowy and unaccountable organisations? Vidal seems to see the answer in what he terms ‘screw society’ - a loose grouping of oppositionists who range from the likes of Steel & Morris to those in the West who set up grassroots systems of barter and credit unions.

Into this he also includes Steel and Morris.

It is true that many of these groups and initiatives challenge the increasing hegemony of global capitalism, Vidal fails to answer the vexed problem of how these disparate groupings can be brought together.

He claims the politics of both the left and right have failed but fails to define terms which are after all the same. Its true that some on the left have been dismissive of the fight to save the planet, so of those activities working for this new beginning.

But a real socialism for the future must be an analysis of capitalism’s latest global phase and must be able to involve all those who fight it and its accompanying destruction of the environment.

Ireland: The Promise of Socialism

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Saving Our Countryside: Dave Bangs reports a victory
Brighton Downland defended

BRIGHTON-based environmental activists are seeing considerable success in their campaigns to halt further degradation to the South Downs landscape and to secure their protection at national level. The South Downs were on the original list of landscapes drawn up by the Atlee government for National Park status in 1949; they were dropped 7 years later, ostensibly because damage to their appearance by modern farming had gone too far.

The South Downs was long famous for its freedom to roam; its open landscape provided and for the richness of its prehistoric heritage and wildlife. Rare species abound and up to 60 species of wild flower can be found within a square mile of its turf.

Yet modern farming has in the last 20 years destroyed 80 per cent of these pastures and their ancient monuments, and many species have become desperately rare or locally extinct.

This picture of damage and threat to historic landscape and wildlife resources is one that can be replicated nationwide. From the Cotswolds to the East Anglian coast, and from the Welsh boarders to the Chilterns, ancient beeches and downs, woods, marshes and meadows have been blighted, bulldozed and drained.

**Feetable Protection**

Yet since 1957 only one new quasi-National Park, the Norfolk Broads, has been put back by the National Parks system has been largely gerrymandered in upland areas where land values, biodiversity and development opportunities are low.

Possession for particularly rich centres of biodiversity and cultural heritage has been minimal, and government and community strategies have sought to channel and confine access to existing paths and "honey-pot" sites to inner urban areas or the broad "right to roam".

For the movement for protection and for public access has historically been held back by many factors. Widespread ownership have been socially and politically marginalised in the countryside itself, and farmers and landowners have legitimised themselves by a clever use of archaic cultural notions of stewardship and custodianship.

In the cities and towns where 80 per cent of us live, people have lacked the means, knowledge and confidence to organise around these issues.

**A New Movement**

Yet in recent years the influences of mass re-migration of city people back to the countryside, raised cultural levels and the persistent public exposure of farming's destructive practices have power new urban-based demands for natural and for its conservation.

In Brighton the movement has reached a considerable level of organisation.

Two years ago a broad coalition of wildlife activists, Labour, Green Party and Friends of the Earth succeeded in halting plans for the privatisation of Brighton Council's 13,000 acre Downland estate. The conservation and possibility of older rural-oriented access and conservation organisations, "Keep Our Downs Public" petitioned, lobbied and campaigned until the ruling Labour Group shelved their sell-off proposals.

The coalition was able to take advantage of a large network of local urban conservation groups based on a range of middle class and working class communities. The movement's focus of activity was in the central Brighton area rather than the edge of town, however, and in the central St Peter's ward a Green Party candidate was able to win a Council seat against the unpopular architect of the privatisation proposal.

Brighton's huge Downland estate had been built up in the interwar years to provide strict control of urban development, conservation of pure water resources and public open spaces, in the absence of proper planning legislation.

Yet conservative and productivist management of the estate in the post-war half century had caused levels of destruction of the wild habitats which matched those in private ownership.

In the last 8 years since they gained control of Brighton Council in 1987, the Labour Party had demonstrated the positive potential of social ownership with a series of recreational and conservation initiatives.

When the right wing of the party developed the proposal to sell off the Downland farms to their existing tenants, it was thus easy to demonstrate the anti-social and destructive management practices of these farms, and the positive benefits of public management.

The KODP campaign was also successful in highlighting the negative moves towards the privatisation of the National Nature Reserves system.

Our victory was a significant step in "holding the line".

**National Park**

Using the energy generated by this summer's environmental activism, stitch have now launched a new campaign for National Park status for the Downs. The material for this project is very strong. The empy Downland landscape is bound by colossal coastal conservations and 10 million people live within 90 minutes drive of the Downs.

Two thirds of central Downland are already in social or quasi-social ownership. A serious project of landscape and habitat restoration would thus be able to call on the support of large numbers of people who would have no natural sympathy with farmers who put their private profits before public need.

Activists have found that demands for National Park status - on a par with Dartmoor, the Peak District or Snowdonia - have a ready appeal, particularly in urban areas. A 12,000 strong petition has been built up. All the major conservation and amenity organisations - including the National Trust - support the demand, and the ruling Labour Party in Brighton, as well as in neighbouring towns, has been won over.

The Labour Party's environmental policy document "The Right to Tomorrow" speaks of the need for new National Parks, and the Party has proposed a new "freedom to roam" law on "open land" - heath, moor, down, wood, river and stream.

**Rural opposition**

Activists face, however, the near-united opposition of rural-based District Councils, Parish Councils and farm owners and operators.

Whereas these rural networks are quick to respond to any proposals which imply access improvements or planning changes to farming, environmental activists have to construct their support slowly and laboriously amongst urban communities which are not familiar with the countryside or confident in asserting their rights.

A further measure, though, of the resonance of Downland conservation issues locally was given in the recent successful campaign against the destruction of a chalk grassland site of "special scientific interest" near Lewes.

Campaigners physically blocked the ploughing of the site, set up camp on the endangered ground, and in a highly creative piece of direct action, set about systematically "unploughing" the grassland by mimicking the turfs.

Their furious national campaign of lobbying forced Gummer, in one of his last acts as Environment Minister, to slap a Nature Conservation Order on the rogue farmer.

**Land Reform**

It is now 50 years since the issue of rural land reform has been seriously debated in this country. Till that time land reformers clearly linked rural land reform with the urban problems of rack renting, congestion and urban landlessness. The marginalisation of working class people in the countryside has destroyed the possibility of such alliances in the present.

Yet for social ownership and democratic management of the countryside is as great now as it was then, though the alliances have changed. Our demands now must link questions of ownership with environmental imperatives.

Only with social ownership of land have we the tools to sustain the biological richness of our countryside, to produce food sustainably and healthily, and to satisfy people's deep recreational and cultural needs. We need to construct to reclaim our countryside will this time have to be done by the people as a whole.

We can learn from the modern successes in Germany, Norway and Sweden, where the state owns the land in varying proportions. Only the broadest, most vociferous campaigning, linked firmly to urban needs, will stand a chance of holding the Labour government to even its small manifesto commitments for countryside reform.

**Underground revolt wins grassroots support**

**THE RESISTANCE of the protesters at Manchester Airport, dug deep in their tunnels has not only had sympathetic media coverage but tapped into a grassroots campaign among ordinary people. In Manchester, who have not been in a position to join those activists in the tunnels have never the less protested in support of their aims.**

The April trial's joke was that Swaggerty was to stand against the hated Graham Stringer in the General Election: had he done so he would have failed. The next week, stringily was a wide swath of support. Not only is ex-Council leader Stringer one of the prime advocates of the airport, but he has gained fur- ther contempt of his vicious attacks on the campaigners.

The Coalition against Runway 2 (CAR) points out that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says we must reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the UK by over 50 per cent "to avoid potentially catastrophic consequences from climate change". Aircraft emit 35-65 per cent more carbon dioxide than even passenger vehicles. Seven steps of current business passenger flights from Manchester Airport are within the UK. A second runway project produces projections estimated to increase local road traffic by more than 100 per cent.

Stringer pledged that "£1 million a week will be spent between now and 2005 on tarmac and terminals". It is estimated that the eviction of the protesters would allow the airport infrastructure scheme at F arrive in Devon cost £200 per annum. Stringer did not have to much of the £200 per annum there, and the evictions were ever in a week.

The assault on the camps at Manchester has already taken its toll as the protesters have learnt from previous battles. The money spent on the runway and the evictions could be much better spent on health care and education that people really need.

Contact CARZ, Manchester Friends of the Earth office, One World Centre, 6 Lecture St, Manchester M2 5NS tel: 0161-834-8221 fax: 0161-834-8187.
Five years after the fine promises of Rio summit

More hype than hope?

B. Skanthakumar

Five years ago this month a giant, three-week conference known as the Earth Summit assembled in Rio de Janeiro. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development as it is properly called, was attended by representatives of almost every nation on earth, and by an estimated 100,000 environmentalists, politicians, corporate executives and others from various walks of life. The meeting was opened by President George Bush's的话说, "Endanger the American way of life.

Then US President Bush went on to respond to demands for a redistribution of wealth and resources away from rich countries.

In addition to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Climate Change Convention and the Bio-Diversity Convention, a Framework for Environmental policy within countries known as Agenda 21 was hammered out.

All these documents contain important and various commitments which were weakened by the absence of timetables for implementation, targets for achievement and sufficient funds.

Progressive rhetoric was under-mined by the rich countries' failure to reconcile their complex and the unrestricted reach of transnational capital which reduces environmental standards and trade in plant and animal genes.

The concept of sustainability and its fate is in a case in point. What scientists have proved and millions of others know is that the global warming is taking place.

But no-one really knows what the long term consequences could be if this is not halted. Already many storms, floods, droughts, avalanches and heat waves are blamed on climate change.

We certainly know that the polar ice caps will melt and that sea levels will rise. This could easily flood entire countries like the Maldives, low-lying parts of Bangladesh and other vast areas – mainly in the poorest parts of the world.

The increase in emissions of gases like carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide largely through the burning of fossil fuels like oil and gas and industrial processes is the cause of the problem.

Twenty five per cent of the global population, a rich 20 percent accounts for 75 per cent of all carbon emissions.

In a 1990 survey showed the United States as the largest single source of emissions, according to the European Union and then Eastern Europe. In recent years carbon emissions have declined in Eastern Europe because of the disintegration and ravaging of their economies.

The major "commitment" made by advanced capitalist countries at Rio was to restore carbon emissions to their 1990 level by the year 2000. They promised to stabilise but not significantly reduce their emissions.

This failure was the key point of contention at the follow-up conference in Berlin in 1995. There, small island states pressed for timetables and targets beyond 2000. In particular they asked rich countries to achieve a 20 per cent reduction on 1990 levels by 2005.

No action was taken on this and further negotiations postponed to the December 1997 conference in Kyoto.

There is a desperate need to redress the current production and consumption is organised and to switch from reliance on fossil fuels to renewable and cleaner sources of energy.

But this was precisely the sort of thing George Bush was so desperate to avoid. After all, he did make his fortune in the oil business. What rich countries are doing is shifting the burden onto poor countries using "global cost-benefit analyses" and arguing that climate change should be managed and not reversed.

They say that "the right" for countries to emit carbon gases should be in proportion to the contribution to global wealth of national income as measured in Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The larger the GDP, the larger the allowance made for carbon emissions. Poor countries with smaller GDPs obviously lose out here.

Meanwhile under a scheme or perhaps scam known as "joint implementation" a country which finances another's environmental projects, leading to a reduction in the recipient's carbon emissions, can credit that amount and maintain or increase its own carbon emissions accordingly.

One of the working groups of the Panel on Climate Change recently presented another illustration of the extension of cost-benefit analysis.

The harm of global warming including the loss of human life, they suggested, could also be calculated through valuing the contributions of humans as a proportion of their contribution to GDP.

An individual in western Europe - a resident of a rich country - earning a real income many times larger than a person in a poor country makes a greater contribution to global prosperity and through premature loss of life would have a more adverse impact on the global economy.

The economists on the working group (could it have been anyone else?) proceeded in an obscure exercise to value a human life in the west at one million pounds and a human life in say China at one hundred thousand pounds.

Ten to one.

That is where things are at the moment. All this and much more will be released again in Tokyo.

No decisive action is being taken by offending countries because it is simply not in the interest of the rich and powerful there.

Neither scientific advice nor rational briefing papers and cocktail parties will shake them.

The environmental movement in Britain used to have a slogan, "Neither Red nor Blue but Green". That was some sort of breakthrough but an evasion. It is not the ignorance or intransigence of a few but the logic of capitalism that is hurting humanity to ruin.

It is not only the lobbying of non-governmental organisation but the organisation and movement of the majority that will alter that course.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the environmental movement which reminded us of nature and the ambivalences towards technology and "progress" in our ninetysenineth century forebears like William Morris.

Will the environmental movement remember the question of class - and support the right one?

Empty Shell promises mask Peru pollution

Amid great publicity Royal Dutch Shell has portrayed a commitment to human rights and sustainable development in its statement of business principles throughout its recent shareholders meeting it rejected transparency through external audits.

However, it has recently come under attack for its activities in Peru.

Here they are preparing to drill for natural gas but are accused of disrupting the lives and livelihoods of the inhabitants.

While Shell claims to have drawn up an eco and community friendly strategy for their drilling operation, which will include a 500 km long pipeline built to the capital Lima, locals believe that they are less than sincere in its implementation.

"It doesn't appear to have fully informed and consulted with those affected by its plans. The compensation that has been offered for the occupation of hunting lands is pitifully small. Some agreements have been signed in their English language original without translation. When drilling starts in July the problems will really begin."

The burning of excess natural gas into the atmosphere (gas flaring) will become as common a sight as it is in Orinoco, Nigeria.

Waste substances brought to the surface will apparently be re-injected into the earth below the water table. There is no guarantee that it won't leak into the water supply.

Shell's fine words have yet to be matched by its deeds in Peru.

Ecuador fightback

INDIGENOUS peoples in Ecuador have been at the forefront of popular mobilisations in recent years. Their grievances are common ones ranging from fair wages to bilingual education.

Land ownership is extremely unequal. In the highlands 1.6 per cent of farms occupy 43 per cent of the land and on the coast 3.5 per cent of the farms occupy 55 per cent of the land.

In 1994 the Ecuadorian Congress passed a bill called the Agrarian Development Law which sought to reform land holdings by eroding communal ownership in favour of private property. This would have accelerated the concentration of land.

Indigenous groups and peasant farmers led mass protests against the new law forcing the government to make some significant concessions.

In the Amazonian region of Oriente, indigenous groups have been protesting for decades about the devastation and despoliation of their lands by oil companies.

At the end of the 1980s it was estimated that 450,000 barrels of crude oil had been spilled or leaked on the soil and into waterways.

While the main culprit was the US company Texaco, the state owned PetroEcuador is no better.

The oil industry has deforested one million hectares of forest, induced disease and eroded indigenous culture.

It is now being confronted about this within Ecuador and abroad, in the forests, on the streets and in courts of law.

The illegitimacy of the indigenous is being challenged and Ecuador is faced with demands for political and cultural democracy and a pluralistic state.

These communities have become political actors in a system which has historically excluded them.
Where we stand

IN THE NINETIES, millions of women and men have taken part in mobilisations against the evils of capitalism and the bureaucratic dictators. This reflects the fact that humanity faces widening dangers. Ecological, military, social and economic devastation faces millions of people.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Absolute Power, the new film by Clint Eastwood reviewed by Brian Gardner

COINCIDENTALLY, Clint Eastwood's new film as producer, director and star is released here in the same week that has seen Paula Jones win the right for her claim of sexual harassment against Bill Clinton to be heard.

Absolute Power takes as its starting point the adultery of Alan Richmond (a fictional president of the United States played by Gene Hackman) with the young wife of his octogenarian friend and financial backer, Walter Sullivan.

Eastwood plays Luther Whitney, decorated hero of the Korean war and veteran car burglar, who while breaking into Sullivan's mansion, accidentally witnesses the President's seduction of Christy Sullivan, then behind a two-way mirror. When the President's advances become too rough, Christy stabs him with a letter opener and in the resulting commotion, two secret service agents enter the room and shoot her dead.

Enter now, White House Chief of Staff - Gloria Russell - who tells the agents, Burton and Colen to smirce the scene and make it appear that a thief has committed the murder. The three however bungle the cover-up and leave behind the bloody opener which Whitney now steals.

Whitney contacts his estranged daughter, Kate - now a successful state prosecutor - and intimates to her that something has happened which may necessitate his re-locating on a permanent basis. We sense that it is parties her difference which helps him make up his mind to flee but just as he is about to do so, he witnesses a press conference given by the President in which the latter vows that he will do everything in his power to help bring his killers of the billionaire's wife to justice.

Whitney is disgusted by this and now sets out to trap the President and his accomplices.

If you think that so far the plot sounds pretty preposterous, you're right - and it doesn't become any more plausible.

Classic

The film is largely a vehicle for its star, with Whitney as yet another variation on a classic Eastwood type - the morally ambiguous outsider who is forced to make a choice between good and evil.

It's a character type with a long lineage - through Sergio Leone's and Eastwood's own Westerns and the Dirty Harry movies of the seventies.

Eastwood the performer doesn't need dialogue to act and sometimes a mere quizzical look or the raising of an eyebrow says something more eloquently than can a hundred words.

It seems however in this instance that Eastwood has paid less attention to the other performances and indeed, to the overall style of the piece.

Hackman, whose own abilities are not inconsiderable, is allowed to sleepwalk through the entire film and most of the characters seem like insubstantial entities merely revolving around the star.

We sense that in reality Eastwood knows that the plot is ridiculous and so attempts to inject some satire into the process.

To some extent the bungling threesome of Russell and the two secret service agents (Jackie Earle, Scott Glenn and Dennis Haysbert) play it for laughs but mostly the comedy is insipid and doesn't go far enough.

Another problem is that while we might think we have come to see a political thriller, there is no real political context. It is not simply a matter of knowing whether President Richmond is a Democrat or a Republican.

Without in fact injecting a large dose of satire, you simply can't get away with portraying one of the most powerful figures in the world and his Chief of Staff as weak cartoon villains.

Socialist Outlook is On-line!

You can send us letters or articles by e-mail: foulide@aol.com

Look up our Web page. You can find us at: http://www.gn.apc.org/a-bourne/so
We are writing to you about the bitter industrial dispute currently taking place between Montepet workers and the management of French-owned multinational car components plant in Dungannon.

The Montepet plant opened here in Dungannon, Northern Ireland in February 1989, attracted the leftovers of the West Belfast unemployed blackspot by the lure of large government subsidies.

The government-financed Industrial Development Board is believed to have provided the Montepet project with around £140 million.

Today the company is locked in an acrimonious battle with its workforce.

The seeds of the dispute lie in a pay claim lodged last November for an approximate 4 per cent pay rise.

When this was refused by the management, the workers bailed out for limited industrial action.

Work to rule

By March, the overwhelming majority of the production workers were supporting a general work-to-rule and occasional half-day strikes.

On 13 April two flippers were suspended for refusing to work without the presence of a union representative present.

A series of arrests was made over by supervisors who were breaking the ten-day lock-out.

The next day the workforce walked out and began their all-out action.

Many of the workers reacted to the strike action by demanding that the union (Montepet) make it clear to the public that their strike action was wholly illegal. The Union officials immediately disowned their members – on the grounds that a secret postal ballot of the workforce had not been taken to authorize the work-to-rule action.

The strikers ignored the directive from the union because they felt that they were already justified in it to stay within the law over the first ballot. The company used chaos in the traffic so that the first ballot was null and void.

The AEU told the strikers to return to work and promised a properly run ballot in three or four weeks' time. The strikers voted to stay because they had no little respect for the word of the AEU official involved. A week into the strike, the same senior union official led 17 saboteurs workers through the gates.

Beckoning scabs

He went well beyond keeping the union on the side of the law when he made an unambiguous gesture of support for the Montepet company by standing shoulder to shoulder with the senior plant management.

The AEU bosses urged its scabs to come forward, all in full view of the incensed strikers.

The following morning the Union issued a public statement disassociating its members from the scabs.

The strikers reciprocated by tearing up their union cards. After a mass council meeting, most of the 270 workforce decided to continue with the strike.

On 22 April, Montepet sent out a letter offering a two-year pay deal to the strikers but this was below the original company offer that the strikers had long since rejected.

The letter reminded the strikers that their dispute was illegal and that the company had the legal right to sack the entire collection of strikers.

To reinforce its threat, on the very morning of the letter, it was reported that the company sacked 20 strikers and told them they would never get their jobs back.

Horribly, the local SDLP MP, Joe Hendron, who had lobbied for the plant to be brought to Dungannon, stepped in to try and bring the two sides together, a meeting was set up at the Labour Relations Association to which the strikers sent their representatives.

The meeting was to be chaired by Joe Hendron, and helped along by the professional negotiators of the LRA.

The Montepet management never turned up to the meeting. While the strikers' delegates sat twiddling their thumbs at the LRA, the Montepet lawyers were busy being handed 26 writs against the strike leaders.

The company lodged a legal suit alleging £4 million in damages against the strike leaders and obtained an injunction preventing 26 workers from approaching the picket line.

Joe Hendron felt humiliated by the Montepet entanglement and accused them of an "outrageous" breach of faith with him.

On 8 May, the strikers were told that they were being given one final chance to return to work or face the sack. About 30 workers took fright and went back to work the next morning but the majority refused to be intimidated.

New deal

That afternoon, the AEU announced that it had agreed a new pay deal with the company on behalf of the秘书长 of the union and made another call for the strikers to return to work.

The company, in turn, sacked the 20 sacked workers despite the coating of the union.

It was then discovered how the Montepet company was managing to stay in reduced production.

It was sepa- rate group, in the public domain of our undemocratic elec- toral system. Roughly speaking, the Tories got 2 votes for every 3 Labour votes yet won only 1 MP for every 4 MPs. The Tories' victory was certainly down to new Labour, Labour's share of the vote is still less than it averaged in the 1960s and 1970s, when the Conser- vatives usually governed.

Secondly, Labour failed to win a majority of votes yet won two-thirds of the seats. This is entirely a product of our undemocratic electoral system. Roughly speaking the Tories got 2 votes for every 3 Labour votes yet won only 1 MP for every 4 MPs. The Tories' victory was certainly down to new Labour, Labour's share of the vote is still less than it averaged in the 1960s and 1970s, when the Conser- vatives usually governed.

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Tough on services: tough on the users of services

New Labour — new cutbacks!

THE HONEYMOON was over before it even started. It took just three weeks of a Labour government to achieve the seemingly impossible: in Oxfordshire the Tory Party has produced car window stickers (on blue paper) demanding "STOP THE CUTS!"
The Tories have jumped aboard a bandwagon that unites all of the main political parties in Oxfordshire against John Prescott and the new Labour government, after Prescott opted to uphold the Tory "cap" on council spending for the three counties which had asked permission to spend more.

It's a case of New Labour No Difference for those campaigning in defence of vital public services. While David Blunkett and his colleagues pride on about standards in schools, Oxfordshire children face even larger classes in a fifth successive year of education cuts.

"Reasonable" cuts

Blair's deputy prime minister pronounced the Tory cash limits to be "reasonable", despite the fact that they mean additional cuts of £1m in Oxfordshire — on top of a £14m cuts package already being forced through, asking almost every area of council services from school budgets, social security and road repairs to the already decimated arts and leisure budget.

The councils were not asking for any more money from central government, only for Labour to carry out its promise to end the capping of council spending, and allow democratically elected councillors to decide the level of council tax.

But thanks to John Prescott, the county council could be required to refund the princely sum of £56 per week to each Oxfordshire Band D council tax payer, in exchange for sacking more teachers, and closing the school meals service (cutting almost 1,000 jobs), closing up to 15 libraries, and closing old people's homes.

Smaller, similar cuts will be imposed on the other two counties, Somerset and Warwickshire. Campaigners are pressing Oxfordshire councillors to push the issue to the limits, by appealing against Prescott's ruling, forcing the final decision to a vote in Parliament. But few of Labour's new MPs seem likely to stick their necks out and vote to defy the deputy prime minister's Tory policy.

The continued clamp on council spending is just one glaring example of New Labour's indifference to the defence of public services and the welfare state. The apparent "radicalism" of the first 30 days in office has been strictly confined to window-dressing and gestures rather than the broad and bolder concerns of working people, pensioners and the unemployed.

Blunkett has set out to antagonise teaching unions, promising the hated OFSTED boss, Tony Azzopardi Chris Woodhead [the subject of a unanimous vote of no confidence by the National Association of Head Teachers conference] to the forefront of his crusade for educational standards, while offering not a penny extra to enable "failing" schools to retrain teachers, reduce class sizes or improve conditions.

Frank Dobson, Health Secretary, won a standing ovation from the serile Royal College of Nursing for boasting that Labour will be as tough as the Tories on NHS pay. Labour's pre-election promises to sweep away the internal market and GP fund-holding have been postponed to the distant future: the promised halt to hospital closures in London has been dropped. The only legislation on the NHS will be a Bill to encourage more private firms to invest in lucrative NHS development projects.

Meanwhile health authorities and Trusts, squeezed by last November's spending freeze, are contemplating massive cash deficits and draconian cuts, making a nonsense of Labour's claims that they will cut waiting lists.

Oxfordshire health authority, £8m in the red this year, has cut back on all non-urgent operations and is warning that local Trusts could run out of money to pay wages.

Millions of pensioners struggle on in poverty, the unemployed face increased hardship under the Jobseekers Allowance, and higher education is constrained another round of cuts, triggering disputes like the 5-week strike at Southwark College.

Disaster

One month of New Labour is already enough to show that it threatens disaster for working people.

It doesn't have to be like this. A Labour government with a 179-seat majority could easily find the money to rescue and improve the welfare state.

Instead of a government tough on services, tough on the users of services, Labour should be looking to implement some of the many ways they can raise money for welfare spending without taxing individual workers.

A tax on the turnover of multinationals, or on the speculative dealings in the City of London, could deliver billions to fund the services we need and deserve.

This summer's union conferences and Labour conferences must break free from the mindless euphoria of the election victory and focus on the fight to make the new Labour government deliver a real break from the old Tory policies.