

workers POWER

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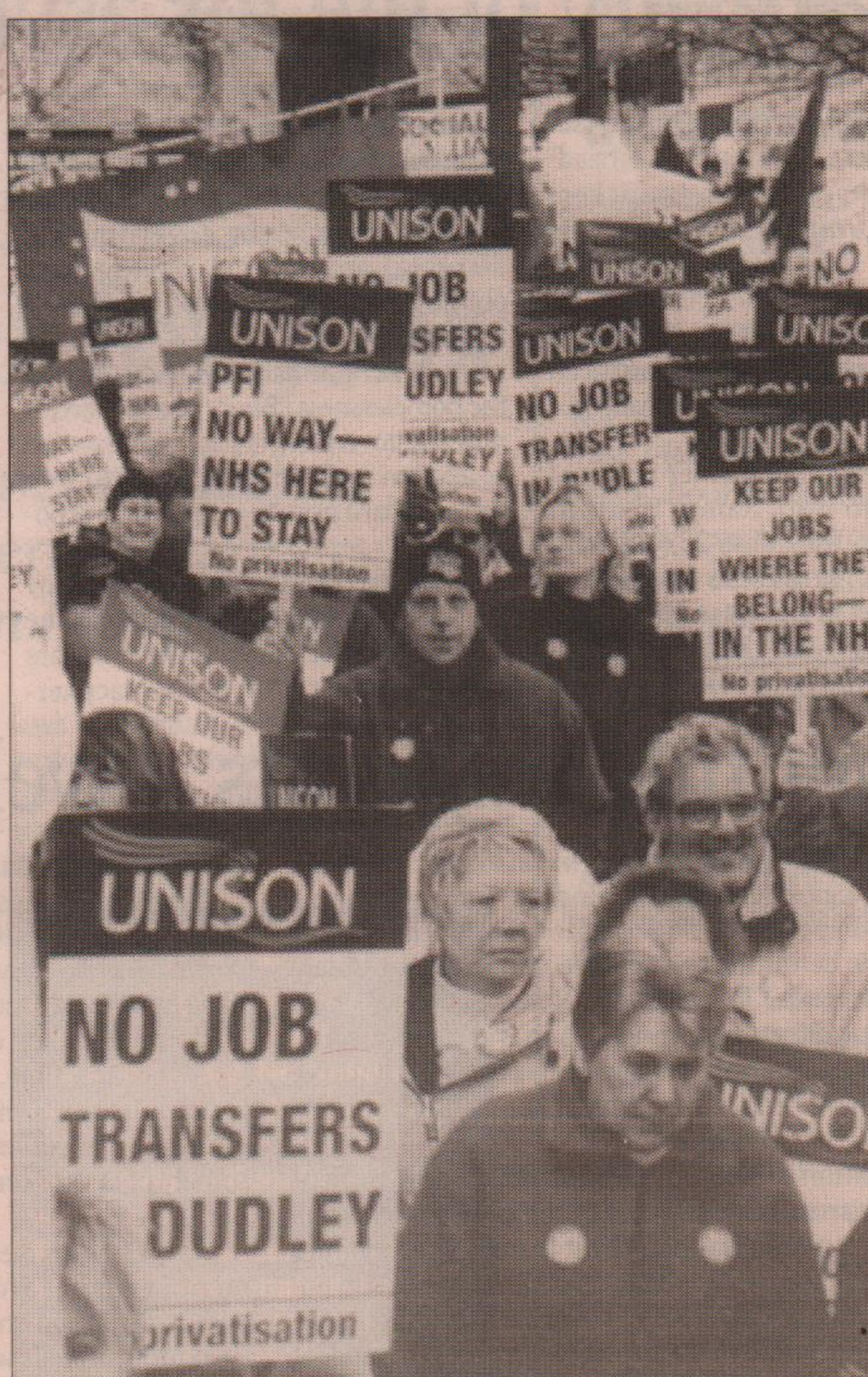
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Asylum rights denied

Labour and the Tories agreed last month that they would not use the issue of race for electoral gain during the coming general election. *GR McColl* explains why their asylum policies are racist to the core

HYPOCRISY OR what? Having just pledged not to play the race card during the election campaign, Tory leader William Hague then gave the green light to a television broadcast depicting East European asylum seekers as scroungers. New Labour squealed, but any cursory examination of their record on asylum seekers will show that they certainly have nothing to boast about.

Make no mistake: the anti-asylum seeker furor is racist to the core. The aftermath of the Steven Lawrence case meant that traditional racism against Britain's black communities has had to go partly undercover. But the bosses need racism to divide us – so asylum seekers, whether they be from Africa, the Middle East or Europe, are being targeted as the new scapegoats.

New Labour came into office in May 1997 pledged to repeal parts of the Tories' Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 and to conduct a review of asylum policy. While many anti-racist activists were sceptical, they also believed that "things could only get better" for refugees with a Labour government. That hopeful assumption has been proved badly wrong.

The government's 1999 legislation reinforced the framework inherited from the Tories. Jack Straw, with an ironic sense of timing, brought it before Parliament in the very same month as the Macpherson report highlighted the institutional racism of the British state, particularly the police.

The government launched its package of measures to deal with the asylum "problem" under the slogan: "Fairer, Firmer, Faster". Jack Straw's undisguised intention was to implement measures that would deter refugees from ever coming to Britain.

The key elements of the Immigra-



Asylum seekers – the facts

The total number of applications for refugee status in Britain rose to 76,000 last year (2000), despite the deterrent measures pushed by New Labour. This partly reflects the fact that Britain's previously existing arsenal of immigration controls has made it almost impossible to gain legal entry to the UK without a visa. Even so the number of refugees globally has risen dramatically over the course of the last decade. Fewer than one refugee in 20 comes to Western Europe. Only one in every 20,000 comes to Britain.

An analysis of where people have come from reveals that most are fleeing from persecution, civil wars and "ethnic cleansing". The single largest source of asylum applicants last years was Iraq, followed by Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Iran and the former Yugoslavia.

tion and Asylum Act 1999 included:

- The voucher scheme, with payments equivalent to 70 per cent of the miserly levels of Income Support (see below).
- The dispersal programme to compel asylum applicants to move away from Greater London and existing refugee communities.

- The increased use of detention, both in purpose-built centres and in prisons.

In addition, the government demonstrated its desire to create an equality of misery. All asylum seekers, whether they applied for refugee status as soon as they entered Britain or sought asylum at a later stage, would be denied income support and most other state welfare benefits. This went a step further than John Major's government had done in 1996.

If Straw's aim was simply to stifle Tory attacks on New Labour as "a soft touch" on immigration, he failed miserably. In fact, the home secretary and the government as a whole simply encouraged the hapless William Hague and his vicious sidekick, Ann Widdecombe, to even more outrageous positions. The two major parties have been slugging it out ever since to see who can take a harder line on refugees. The result of this battle has been to create a climate that encourages the scapegoating of refugees and fuels racist violence.

Late last December Widdecombe unveiled the Tories' latest proposal for the compulsory detention of all asylum applicants. In its recent briefing guide to election agents and campaign organisers, New Labour does not offer any argument against Widdecombe's line other than a crude economic one: locking up all asylum seekers "is unworkable and unaffordable. It would cost £2 billion to build 50 new detention centres and another £1 billion to run them."

At present, the government holds at

least 1,100 asylum seekers in custody – actually more than under the Tories. Their only crime in virtually every instance is to have applied for refugee status in the first place. The home office has published its aim to double the number in detention, and this year to remove 30,000 asylum seekers and immigrants.

These consistent attacks on asylum seekers show that racism isn't just part of the election campaign, it is ingrained into the political life blood of Tories and New Labour alike.

Socialist Alliance supporters in the election campaign must be bold and forthright in raising this issue. As much as any question on the political agenda it gives us two crucial opportunities to argue with and persuade workers. We can point to the grossly unequal distribution of wealth in the world's fourth biggest economy and highlight how New Labour, a political party still funded to a very large extent by trade union contributions, acts on behalf of global capital even as it panders to the most narrow and vicious prejudices in British society.

WHAT WE THINK

- Scrap the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act, along with all other immigration controls.
- Abolish the voucher scheme and restore the right to claim Income Support and all other benefits.
- Full citizenship rights for refugees and immigrants including the rights to work and vote.
- Cancel Third World debt and IMF structural adjustment programmes.

Food voucher scandal

An asylum applicant aged 18-24 receives a weekly allowance of £10 cash and £18.95 in vouchers to spend on food and toiletries.

A single adult is entitled to the equivalent of £26.54 in vouchers and £10 in cash.

A couple is granted the princely sum of £47.37 in vouchers on top of £10.

The major supermarket chains such as Tesco and Sainsbury's have been allowed to refuse change to asylum seekers using the vouchers.

Meanwhile, the French-based multinational, Sodexo, which administers and promotes the voucher scheme, rakes in an undisclosed profit. Jack Straw declared to the House of Commons that "the contractual details are commercially confidential."

Sodexo, through its large shareholdings in the Corrections Corporation of America, is involved in the operation of private prisons in 26 US states, as well as in Australia and Britain through UK Detention Services.

The reality of life for asylum seekers

WHILE THERE is almost universal condemnation of Chinese "snakehead" gangs and other human traffickers engaged in smuggling immigrants into Britain, the government wilfully denies that immigration controls create the conditions in which such gangs flourish and where 58 immigrants can die excruciating deaths in the back of a lorry.

In mid-January a former political prisoner from Iran, Ramin Khalegi, took his own life. This 27-year-old was found hanging above his bed in a decrepit hostel in Leicester. His suicide came only days after the Home Office had notified him of its rejection of his

asylum claim, despite medical evidence to show that he had been the victim of physical torture. Ramin had also been a victim of the government's dispersal programme, having been obliged to leave friends and relatives in London.

A report published in February by the homelessness charity Shelter reveals how the government's policies have led to asylum seekers being dumped into sub-standard private rented accommodation.

There has been evidence from many parts of Britain of an increase in the number of racist attacks in the two years since the publication of the Macpher-

son report. The government would have us believe that this reflects a commitment on the part of the police to address racist crime and growing public confidence in the police. The evidence shows something very different.

Turkish asylum seeker, Cumali Sinangili, was left on a life-support machine after a group of thugs had beaten and stabbed him near a south London pub on Christmas Eve. From Dover to Hull there have been numerous attacks on asylum seekers, while race attack monitoring groups in London and the West Midlands have reported rises in incidents of up to 150 per cent in the past two years.

Economic migrants – welcome here!

Both the Tories and New Labour have sought to brand refugees as "economic migrants". Indeed, some who come to Britain and apply for refugee status do not necessarily conform to the definition of a refugee. But can a legitimate distinction be made? For example, Roma asylum seekers have enormous difficulty getting jobs in the Czech Republic due to systematic racist discrimination. Nearly three dozen Roma have been the victims of racist killings in the Czech Republic since 1993.

The imposition of IMF-authored structural adjustment programmes across huge swathes of the developing world, the sharp shock marketisation of East European economies in the wake of Stalinism's collapse and New Labour's hypocritical pursuit of an "ethical"/old imperialist foreign policy: all have contributed to the growing numbers of refugees and to the desperation that leads hundreds of thousands to

seek a better standard of living in the west.

New Labour hails the potential of the market and the institutions of globalisation for freeing the masses of the Third World from poverty. In fact, the policies of the IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organisation have acted to compound human misery and create poverty.

At the same time, New Labour wants to place ever stronger barriers in the way of people who are fleeing the consequences of neo-liberal policies imposed by bankers and their handsomely paid economists in London, Washington, Paris and Berlin.

Its message is clear and brutally simple: unfettered movement of capital around the globe for the multinational bosses; detention and deportation for workers, peasants and even professionals who dare to come to Britain whether for refuge or economic survival.

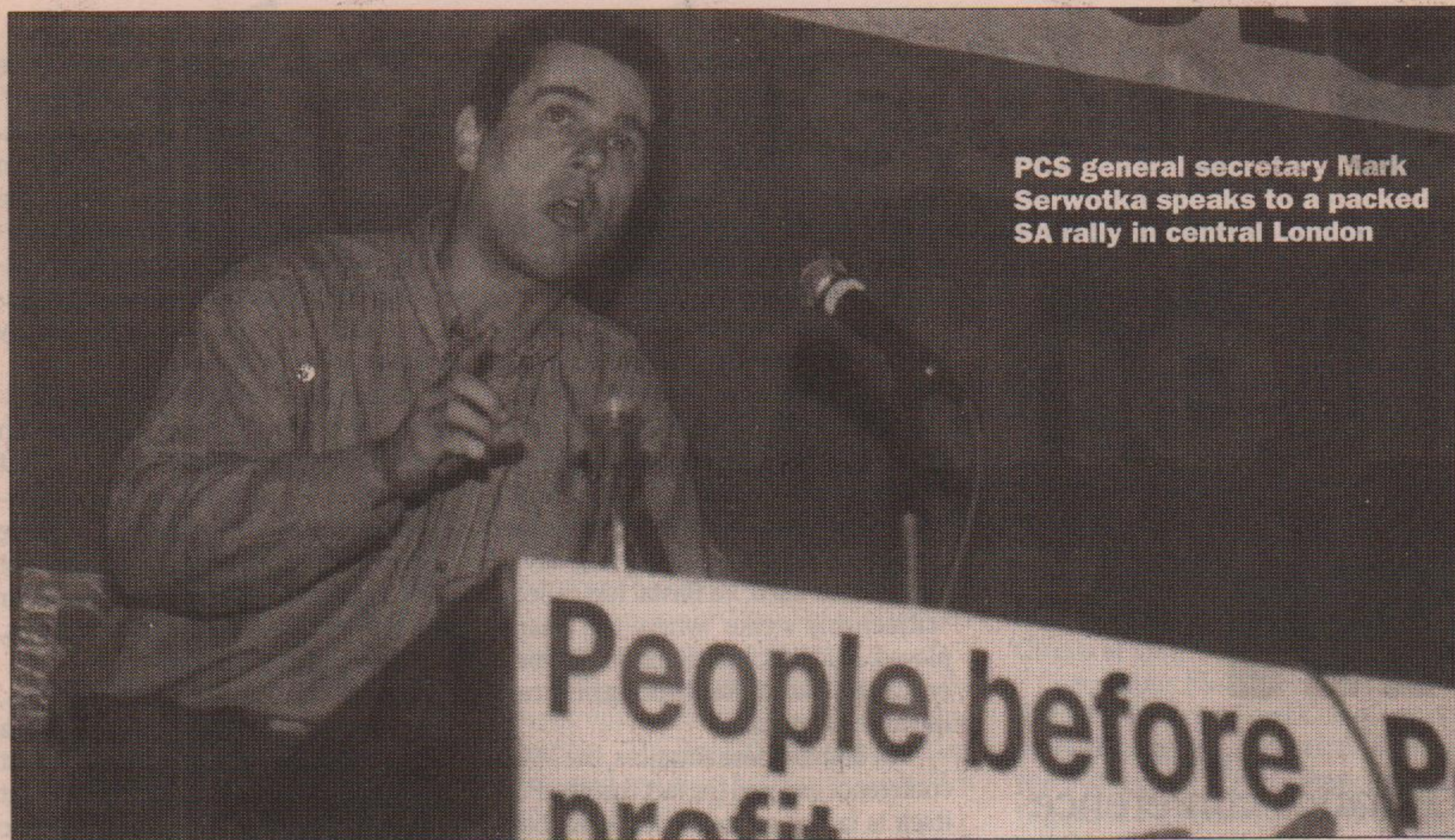
Barbed wire Jack...

The Geneva Convention of 1951 defines a refugee as a person with a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

Jack Straw wants to amend the convention in order to eliminate the obligation on states to at least pretend to give serious consideration to asylum claims. Straw envisages the creation of camps for refugees in so-called "safe" countries beyond the borders of "Fortress Europe". European Union states might then be able to choose such refugees with skills currently in short supply in the west. Anyone who did not apply for asylum through one of these camps would automatically be deported.

BUY THE BOOK!

The Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers (CDAS) has recently published a useful booklet, *No to the race card*, that rebuts the lies retailed by the press and politicians around questions of asylum and immigration. Bulk orders (£20 for 50 copies) are available from CDAS. Cheques payable to the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, c/o BCFM Box 4289, London WC1N 3XX. E-mail: info@defend-asylum.org



PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka speaks to a packed SA rally in central London

Election challenge gathers momentum

The Socialist Alliance election campaign is gaining momentum – despite Blair's decision to delay the election

BLAIR MAY have delayed polling day but the Socialist Alliance has not delayed building the biggest left challenge to New Labour since the war. We now have 88 candidates selected and in a number of areas constituencies are still discussing the possibility of standing.

Not only does this mean a television broadcast, which Ken Loach, the left wing film director has offered to make free of charge. It also means that we are talking about a real national campaign. Taken together with the candidates of the Welsh Alliance and the Scottish Socialist Party, there is now no doubt whatsoever that the Socialist Alliance has in a matter of months become a credible working class alternative to Labour.

We now have time to step up the campaign to build the alliances locally in advance of the mass leafleting and canvassing that will dominate the election campaign itself.

Over the next three to four weeks we should:

- Turn weekly stalls into weekly events around big political issues dominating

the headlines – Save Our Planet from the oil burning Bush, exposing anti-Chinese racism around the foot and mouth crisis and so on.

- Visit, talk to and consolidate as active supporters everyone who signs up on the stalls.

- Raise money – the longer campaign means more leaflets, placards, activities, meetings, every one of which has to be paid for.

- Visit workplaces, trade union branches, community, anti-racist and pensioners' groups to talk to them about their needs and what the Alliance can do to help their campaigns as well as trying to win them to support the alliance.

- Organise fringe meetings at union conferences between now and the election.

- Get active! Protests – against Star Wars, around asylum campaigns, around Mayday's anti-capitalist protests – all help to build the Socialist Alliance not just as an electoral force, but as an effective political force for the future.

The Socialist Alliance is having a big impact in working class communities.

Many labour movement activists are still resistant, though, to a clean break with Labour. Few realise how right-wing Labour's election campaign is going to be.

The official politicians have been wrong footed and can only mouth off about the delay. The Socialist Alliance can build, win support and make sure that the biggest left challenge to Labour in years is also the most successful.

Get involved

Send money and to join write to: PO Box 121, Coventry CV1 5DA Phone: 020 7536 9696

For the latest on the campaign visit: www.socialistalliance.net

And subscribe to Workers Power Global Week, the e-mail newswire of Workers Power, which will carry regular election updates throughout the campaign: subscribe@workerpower.com.

- **Kirstie Paton, Socialist Alliance election candidate in Greenwich, south London, writes in Workers Power. Turn to page 11.**

- **The way forward - the mass party and the united front, page 12**

Corus workers fight for jobs

The steel industry in Wales is worth 60 times as much as Welsh agriculture. Yet New Labour's concern for farmers far outweighs any shown for steelworkers. *Jon Bevan reports*

AT THE TIME of going to press, the steel giant Corus is considering a jobs rescue plan drawn up by the government and steel unions to save up to 6,000 jobs. The omens are not good.

Corus has already dismissed petitions, pleas from Welsh assembly members (AMs) and plant-level proposals. Now the steel unions are suggesting that workers will work part-time during the present steel crisis, spending the remainder of their time retraining. The government will subsidise this to the tune of £90m, subject to EU approval (the EU has strict limits on state aid).

So far Corus has shown breathtaking arrogance. At the same time as 6,000 jobs were being axed as uneconomic, three executives walked away with £2.6 million in payoffs.

Corus has already asked for voluntary

redundancies, and workers at Llanwern are receiving redundancy counselling. The decision to run down Llanwern and other plants has been in the offing for years – ever since British Steel decided to concentrate its resources in Port Talbot. Those at the sharp end know best, and in a highly significant move, Llanwern workers recently requested strike ballot forms from the ISTC steel union.

Workers Power supports this call for strike action.

Despite a few token threats of action, both AEEU and ISTC officials have sought to mollify Corus – backed by politicians on all sides. Plaid Cymru AM Helen Jones criticised as unhelpful any inflammatory language against Corus – such as calling them butchers.

Steelworkers must take control of the dispute – breaking the anti-union

laws if necessary. Massive public support exists for strike action. The Socialist Alliance has collected hundreds of signatures in Newport against the threatened closures.

WHAT WE THINK

- **Yes to state aid – in defiance of the EU if necessary. But No to bailing out the bosses. Instead of nationalising their wage bill we should nationalise the whole company.**

- **The whole steel industry should be nationalised and run under workers control – with no compensation for the likes of Sir Brian Moffat.**

workers POWER

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Break with Labour

When former Labour NEC member Liz Davies joined the Socialist Alliance, many on the traditional Labour left accused her of “ducking a fight”.

Labour's always been a battleground between left and right, goes the argument – but you can't abandon the party, no matter how bad the leadership gets. It's the party of the unions, say Labour stalwarts, and we can't give it up.

This is head-in-the-sand politics. It is strongest among people who are involved in the Labour and union bureaucracy that they do not hear the pain of capitalism's victims.

But we need to meet the argument head on.

Today, although Labour is still bankrolled by the unions and supported by millions of workers, it is self-delusion to believe the party can be reformed to meet the needs of working people.

The year 2001 will see Labour for the first time in its history collect more money from millionaire donors than from the unions.

That fact tells us where Labour is going.

Labour is set to run its most right-wing election campaign ever: activists will be told to go on the doorstep and justify doubling the prison population; the most repressive anti-union laws in Europe; racist asylum laws; attacks on civil liberties.

In its first two years of office Labour spent less than even the Tories had planned on public services. It has jailed more people than the Tories. It has privatised £16 billion worth of public services where the Tories privatised only £4 billion. Where it has delivered more spending there is always a bitter price to pay in the destruction of public ownership and local control. Schools, hospitals, housing benefit systems,

council estates – you name it, they've ripped it open to the private sector. And the result is the destruction of working class solidarity and the continued devastation of our communities.

If you want to stop it, you can try democratising the Labour Party. You could try convincing the corrupt right wingers who run unions like the AEEU and MSF to mount a principled stand against their mate Gordon Brown. You could try moving a motion at the next Labour conference – if you can get past the private-sector security guards and corporate publicity stalls in the foyer.

Or you can get organised to confront New Labour's pro-capitalist offensive head on. If Labour's second term coincides with a recession, their choices on public spending will be harder: the millionaires who have donated to Labour will be expecting pay-off time, in the form of harsh attacks on working class living standards.

There are still people who think that, faced with that, a closet “old Labour” front bench team of Prescott, Brown and Beckett will tear off their capitalist disguises and reveal themselves as lefties after all.

Dream on. Labour will govern for the bosses in slump as well as in boom-time. The only way to force it to deliver is to fight.

And that's why we've formed the Socialist Alliance. The Socialist Alliance is a direct action party dedicated to socialism from below.

One vote for the Socialist Alliance is worth 20 resolutions to Labour party conference.

That's why we say to Labour activists and loyalists: don't just boycott the campaign, as many did in the Euro elections. Come and join the Socialist Alliance. Help us strike a blow against the corrupt capitalist clique that runs New Labour.

PGA says Ya Basta! to capitalism

Jeremy Dewar reports from the People's Global Alliance conference

A WEEK AFTER leading the 20,000-strong demonstration and street battle in Naples against the IMF, World Bank and OECD, Ya Basta! hosted the first European conference of the Peoples Global Action (PGA).

More than 300 delegates from across Europe spent a March weekend locked in discussions in the Leoncavallo social centre in Milan. Activists from all over Europe gathered to discuss areas of work and prepare for the PGA's third world conference in Cochabamba in Bolivia. Individuals from further afield – Israel, Bolivia, Colombia and the USA – also participated.

The main forces included a sub-group from Reclaim the Streets in London and groups inspired in their wake such as the Global Resistance Movement (MRG) from Spain, and Ya Basta! and its supporters across Europe.

Alongside these major forces, there were a smattering of autonomous groups that were very localist in their outlook, often based on squats, and

sometimes completely opposed to any structure whatsoever as being inherently oppressive. Most interestingly, a few left Stalinist, Trotskyist and anarcho-communist groups with a serious orientation to the working class were also present.

Ya Basta! despite their post-modernist dismissal of the working class have, uniquely among the European PGA groups, significant roots in the working class and urban poor.

Unfortunately, this is not true of almost all the other organisations at the Leoncavallo; a fact that was reflected in a deeply sectarian attitude towards the working class and its so-called "authoritarian" and "hierarchical" organisations (see box). Once this had failed, the PGA conference set about its business, in particular preparing for the global days of action in Quebec, Salzburg, Gothenburg, Barcelona and Genoa, and for the conference in Cochabamba.

Due to language problems, the nature of consensus decision-making (a

tiny minority can prevent a conclusion being reached) and the political diversity of the participants, the conference did not decide much. Nevertheless it provided an interesting exchange of ideas and information, and an insight into the workings of one of the most influential of the anti-capitalist wings.

The Global Days of Action (GDAs) are not being abandoned though there was a serious discussion on how to link them more effectively to the proliferating struggles.

The Catalans and Spanish in the MRG want Barcelona's mobilisation to last two months, culminating in a blockade of the World Bank conference on 25-27 June. But they do not want anyone else to come to Barcelona! The Austrians, fearing repression, are planning a very limited protest action on 1 July against the WEF.

On the other hand, the socialist, syndicalist and anarchist Swedes in Globalise from Below and Ya Basta! are clear-

ly trying to involve wider forces, immigrants and trade unions to recreate and even surpass the mass international mobilisations in Prague and Nice. For this reason, Gothenburg's EU counter-summit in June and Genoa's G8 blockade in July will be the main focal points for the European anti-capitalist movement this summer.

Ya Basta! continue to lead the way forward in developing imaginative tactics. On 19th July in Genoa they plan to co-ordinate an illegal immigrants' demonstration, protected by the Red Cross and NGOs to highlight the plight of those who are usually too repressed to protest. And on the opening day of the summit itself, Ya Basta! has called a "citizenship strike" where the unemployed, students, immigrants and workers can all take strike action against capital and its agents.

But despite these advances, the Milan conference exposed the fact that the PGA itself is facing serious questions about the way forward. These were revealed when the activists reported on discussions concerning the world convention in Cochabamba.

The PGA organisations from the south include mass movements such as the landless peasants' movement Sem Terra in Brazil. They do not fetishise the non-hierarchical structures of the anarchist and petit-bourgeois activists in the north. Indeed, they know these structures are impossible to maintain once the masses are engaged in direct action.

By imposing a 70-30 split in favour of delegations from the Third World countries they hope to limit the influence of tiny groups from the major capitalist heartlands who represent no one. After all, if your delegation has been funded by the subs of young women working in sweatshops, you won't want to return reporting a beautiful discussion process but no concrete results.

Secondly, the PGA organisations from the semi-colonial world almost certainly do not share the same post-modernist vision of anti-capitalism as

RTS, MRG and Ya Basta!

While Sem Terra and Korean trade unionists have signed up to the "anti-capitalist" tag in the PGA, like the Zapatistas themselves their anti-capitalism is closer to reform than abolition. The KRRS, for example, the Indian indigenous peoples' movement, which hosted the 2nd PGA conference in Bangalore in 1999, is quite clearly heavily influenced by Stalinism.

In fact, the PGA is in danger of developing an international network which is broadly left Stalinist in Asia, left nationalist in Latin America and anarchist in Europe. Not only is it quite deceitful to claim political agreement with tendencies that do not share your vision in order to boost your own kudos, it is also very dangerous.

In the coming six to 18 months, the anti-capitalist movement will face a recession in the the USA. The reformist NGOs will run a mile from any militant defence of workers' and democratic rights when push and shove turns into baton and bullet.

The socialist far left and anti-capitalist anarchists will, on the basis of the previous 18 months' battles, stand firm. The fate of the movement will depend on winning the large mass of people and organisations who fit into neither of these two categories.

Building an international tendency where the distinction between reform and revolution is blurred and fudged by a populism masquerading as anarchism or anti-capitalism ducks the responsibility for preparing the ground for the coming battles. The LRCI sees in the current situation both the urgent need and the possibility of building a new revolutionary international, democratic in its internal proceedings but centralised around agreed of action.

**FOR MORE ON ANTI GLOBALISATION MOVEMENT see: www.workerspower.com/wpglobal/Nice-summit.html
www.workerspower.com/wpglobal/globalisation.html**

Stop banning socialists!

THE PGA sub-group of Reclaim the Streets (London) led a witch-hunt at the beginning of the conference against Workers Power, the Socialist Workers Party and Globalise Resistance. Offering no evidence whatsoever of our disruptive, undemocratic or uncomradely behaviour despite being challenged to do so, the RTS sub-group threatened to leave the conference if we were not excluded.

Their reasons? We are organised on a hierarchical structure internally; we favour revolution; and we had turned up despite the sub-group of the RTS saying they did not want us to attend.

Workers Power exposed each of these allegations to be a smokescreen for political exclusion. Although we organise in a hierarchical way (as do the Zapatistas with their 22 sub-commandantes and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers with their full-time officials paid out of the subs of worker members), we do not impose that on the PGA. Will the RTS sub-group and their allies seek to exclude the CUPW and denounce the EZLN at Cochabamba? No.

Secondly, the fact that the witch-finders explicitly turn their back on revolution says more about their trajectory than anything else.

And finally, we explained that since no other participant in the PGA had a veto over the inclusion of other groups, it was authoritarian in the extreme for the RTS sub-group to seek one. On the strength of these arguments the RTS sub-group relented and we agreed to participate but not intervene on internal PGA matters. In the end, the attempt to exclude us failed.



Anti-capitalist protesters in Brazil this month took over the Argentine embassy – see opposite

At Milan there was some debate about liaison with the Bangladesh Garment Workers' Union, which has been involved in various anti-globalisation initiatives. After circulating a report of the PGA meeting by email we received this worrying letter.

Dear Workers Power

We read with interest the article "From the jungle to the streets" in WP 252 in which you mention that the PGA meeting in Italy in February, 1998, was attended, among others, by the "750,000-strong Bangladeshi Garment Workers Union".

There would not be many garment workers in this country who have even heard of the meeting! We would like to know the names of the delegates who were at the Genoa meeting, as no such organisation exists to our knowledge.

As is common practice, some enterprising souls have used their creativity to impress the organisers of the PGA event. This is the tragedy of the workers' movement and the left in Bangladesh. The majority of the leaders aim to create a nice position for

themselves on the backs of the workers. Middle class men with no better career prospects set up NGOs or trade unions or left parties to rule over like a private kingdom. Naturally, the more members they claim to have, the better the opportunities for receiving invitations to junkets and funding from organisations in imperialist countries.

In fact, out of a total of about 3,000 garment factories around the country only about 10 factories have registered trade unions. The largest umbrella group of garment unions is Bangladesh Garments Sromik Okko Parishad (Bangladesh Garments Workers Unity Council), comprising 11 or so registered and unregistered unions. They boast a total membership of 100,000 but in fact, like the fictitious Bangladeshi Garment Workers Union, it is largely a paper

membership. We estimate a more accurate figure is 3,000 members. Earlier this year the Bangladesh Garments Workers Unity Council split, and both sides are competing to snuggle up to the bosses. Like most garment workers' organisations, the reason for its existence is to improve the personal lot of the leadership, not the rank and file.

It is high time that these fake unions are exposed at home and abroad. We know of countless cases of money donated to workers' organisations from overseas, with the best intentions, going straight into the pockets of individual leaders. This is exactly the same as what happens to foreign aid and loans to Bangladesh: a reputed, mainstream economist estimated recently that 70 per cent disappears in this way.

We urge workers and left

organisations that donate money to groups in Bangladesh, and elsewhere, to demand accountability and responsibility, and to withdraw funding if such cooperation is not forthcoming. Not giving a damn where the money goes simply encourages corruption and secrecy and prevents organisational democracy. It is to the direct detriment of both rank and file donors (after all, the money comes from them but is spent by the leadership) and recipients (who never even get a whiff of the money).

Yours truly,
Alamgir Shikder
Secretary
National Garments Workers Federation
– Bangladesh
Reg no-B1997
8/4 A Shegun Bagicha, 3rd Floor,
Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh

Police plan Mayday mayhem

Last month the police attacked an anti-capitalist organising centre in London. Next month they will attack the planned Mayday protest. *Jeremy Dewar* calls on the wider labour movement to defend the right to protest

Over the past two weeks the press has mounted an accelerating campaign of hysteria against the anti-capitalist movement and the upcoming May Day protest. This campaign has been orchestrated by the Metropolitan and City of London police forces, Special Branch and MI5. Its purpose is to divide the movement, isolate its militant core and deal it a crushing blow.

On Saturday 31 March, 150 tool-ed-up riot cops smashed their way into the Button Factory in South London. The Button Factory was a squatted social centre, used for planning meetings and activities and benefit gigs for the anarchist and broader anti-capitalist movement. The centre was physically

destroyed.

The next day the *Sunday Telegraph* applauded the raid claiming that the leadership of the anti-capitalist movement had passed from Reclaim the Streets, a "peaceful" organisation, to hardcore "violent" protesters in the London Monopoly Mayday Collective (www.monopolymayday.org).

The *Independent* followed up the next day, quoting Scotland Yard as saying: "The operation was to disrupt planned criminal activity by anarchist groups for May 1."

It claimed that 150,000 anti-capitalists attended last year's May Day guerrilla gardening in Parliament Square – a wildly inaccurate figure (estimates of the real number range from 5,000 to

10,000) designed to magnify the threat of serious mayhem on May Day.

But the most specific threat of a clampdown on May Day protests came from the *Financial Times* on 5 April. It identified "a core of 70 activists" who were "potential troublemakers" co-ordinating a centralised protest at Oxford Circus at 4pm.

An earlier *Financial Times* article from 29 March said that City of London authorities, police, bankers, brokers and the MI5 secret service were working together on security operations. It specifically linked the May Day activists to the Real IRA.

When campaigners telephoned the FT journalists confirmed what most activists had guessed: these reports came

from Special Branch briefings, which warned that May Day could turn into a "holocaust".

These tactics have been used before. Exaggerate the threat of violence both to intimidate newer forces from joining the movement and to justify in advance extreme brutality in repressing those who will not be intimidated.

Anti-capitalist affinity groups and organisations must challenge the police and the press to prove there is any "criminal activity" being planned and expose the threat to the right to protest. Reporters and camera crews should be invited to join the protests so they can accurately show who starts any violence.

We should call on left MPs and trade union leaders to protest at these

unfounded insinuations and the threats.

Workers Power and the youth movement Revolution have been involved in the planning of the May Day protests from the beginning. We will not be deterred from making our protests on the day.

We will be marching with British, Turkish and Kurdish workers, including the Kurdish Workers Party which has recently been banned by home secretary Jack Straw under the provisions of the new "anti-terrorist" legislation.

If we don't redouble our efforts, all meaningful and effective protest against capitalism in Britain will be labelled "terrorist" and be banned.

For the latest on May Day visit: www.destroyimf.org

Argentina erupts

PROTESTS IN Buenos Aires, Argentina have demonstrated yet again that summit meetings of international capitalists will always be met by angry counter demonstrations.

Some 10,000 people took to the streets of the Argentine capital on 6 April as delegates of 34 countries met to plan a pan-American free trade area. Such an agreement would create a market worth more than a trillion dollars.

But, as the workers and youth of Argentina know, free trade across the Americas can only mean super exploitation and submission to the USA and its global corporations, and the IMF,

WTO and World Bank.

Thousands of students and trade unionists poured into the city's main square, the Plaza de Mayo, to make sure the delegates got the message – "No to Free Trade", "No to the International Monetary Fund", "Down with International Capitalism", "Down with Globalisation" – loud and clear.

The police came under attack by youth armed with rocks and petrol bombs. Nearby banks and shops had windows smashed. It took the police about an hour to control the situation. International trade meetings just aren't as cosy as they used to be for the big capitalists.

GET GOING TO GENOA

The G8 summit is due to be held in Genoa, Italy, on 20 July. They are so worried about protests that they are planning to meet on a luxury liner in the middle of the bay off the coast of Genoa. So book your place now to make sure the parasites get that sinking feeling. Book a seat on the train through Globalise Resistance, PO Box 29689, London E8 2XR. Tickets cost £120 and you will need a deposit of £40 to reserve a seat. For more info e-mail Revo at revo@workerspower.com

BLOODSUCKERS OF THE MONTH

How Balfour Beatty kiff£s

BALFOUR BEATTY, the multinational construction giant, has its fingers in many a lucrative pie. Increasingly, the corporation is looking to profit from New Labour's obsession with the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and public/private partnerships (PPP).

The company was implicated in last October's Hatfield rail crash and the Heathrow Tunnel disaster in the mid-90s. But, Balfour Beatty is now a key participant in the race to privatise our hospitals and schools and the London Tube.

PPP and PFI are very profitable – the government predicts a bonanza worth more than £20 billion over the next three years. The corporation is near the front of the queue if Labour proceeds with the carve-up of the London Underground.

Balfour Beatty is also a key partner in a consortium looking to build the Ilisu Dam in south east Turkey (northern Kurdistan), which will drive anything between 25,000 to 75,000 Kurdish villagers from their land.

The Turkish government has made only token attempts to consult the local population and has no resettlement plans. In reality, this means people will be forced into the slums of neighbouring cities. The electricity that the dam will generate is not to improve the lives of the local people, but is destined for the larger, wealthier cities of western Turkey.

The dam is politically crucial to the Turkish government. Its construction will legitimise the ongoing ethnic cleansing of the Kurds that has been de facto policy since 1984. The area has been devastated by the armed conflict between the Turkish state (armed in part by the UK government) against the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). More than 30,000 people have been killed and more than three million have been displaced.

The dam will also dramatically curtail the water supply to Syria and Iraq. Turkey has already threatened to limit water to its downstream neighbours.

The British government is only too happy to help the dam go ahead by underwriting Balfour Beatty's work with the Export Credit Guarantee Department to the tune of £1 million of taxpayers' money. Nick Raynsford, the housing minister and Labour MP for Greenwich and Woolwich, was flown to Turkey by Balfour Beatty to see what the fuss was all about – he couldn't see that there was anything wrong with the proposal.

But anti-capitalist activists and Socialist Alliance supporters are making sure that New Labour's collaboration with this corporate killer does not go unchallenged. Demonstrators protested outside Balfour Beatty's central London HQ only days after Nick Raynsford received a surprise visit from Socialist Alliance parliamentary candidate, Kirstie Paton. In both cases, the messages were clear: the Tube is not for sale, and no to the Ilisu dam!

■ What is PFI – turn to pages 6-7

ANTI-FASCIST DEMONSTRATION

Oldham puts Nazis on the run

AROUND 1,000 people attended an anti-racist rally in Oldham, on Saturday 31 March, called by Oldham United Against Racism and Oldham NUT, supported by the TGWU.

After the rally, a delegation of 100 people went into the centre of town to leaflet and became an impromptu march through the centre of Oldham. Despite some very heavy-handed policing (with over twenty police vans and twelve horses, nearly five hundred police and not a single black officer) effective stewarding and force of numbers prevailed: we marched, despite being banned by the police. The fascists didn't even show up. No arrests were made on the march or rally, despite intimidation by the police.

Later two fascists turned up at a pub and started racially abusing a group of Bangladeshi youth. The police turned up and made two arrests – both arrested were Asians, underlining the racist nature of policing and the error of calling on the police to protect us.

The threat of the NF marching has

by Jason Travis, president, Oldham National Union of Teachers

sent shock waves throughout Oldham causing many community groups to call for a police ban of the NF and increased policing for Asian areas. However, the call for a ban led the council to pressure the police to ban us from the town centre – without success.

Now there is growing support for the demand that estates are policed by community defence patrols under democratic control. We must clearly expose the racist and anti-working class nature of police, arguing for their disarmament and disbanding. Like the RUC in the north of Ireland, the police cannot be reformed – they must be replaced!

The events of the last few weeks begin to show the way forward to building a mass movement against racism and fascism. Mass meetings of three, four and five hundred people have taken place in various communities. The council executive, through the chief education

officer, tried to pressurise us not to march claiming in a letter to me that "any march would be a catalyst for violence" and equating us with the fascists. However, because of the mass meetings all the councillors came out in favour of the march and rally and we were able to demand:

■ That the council make a clear anti-racist anti-fascist statement in the local press.

■ Democratic community control of the housing and education moneys and policies to end the apartheid style segregation of communities in Oldham.

■ Community defence patrols to defend areas from racist attacks and to control and curb the police.

The council immediately complied with the first demand and then did their best to demobilise the event by getting the LEA to contact head teachers to advise staff not to go to the rally, despite

being called by the biggest teachers union, the NUT!

The mood of the rally was decidedly left. We remembered Blair Peach, President of East London NUT, murdered by police in 1979 on an anti-fascist mobilisation in Southall, underlining the need for defence against racists and the police. We celebrated the battle of Cable Street when in the 1930s 100,000 people prevented the fascist blackshirts from marching. We welcomed the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, including a contingent of Kurdish refugees, who postponed their Manchester demo to come to Oldham to show solidarity.

Lots of people took Socialist Alliance stickers and were urging us to stand in the area, sick as they are of the betrayals of Labour and their racist policies.

Saturday was just the beginning. We need to reconvene the mass meetings and elect from them an action com-

mittee to begin to implement our demands. We need to organise to ensure the council begins to undo the effects of years of institutionalised racism.

Already a left caucus is being organised in Unison to oppose the £10 million of cuts and privatisation that Oldham's Liberal Democratic council is trying to force on working class communities. A Socialist Alliance meeting is being called, exposing the local Labour MP, Phil Woolas, who tried to pose as an anti-Nazi and then promptly called for benefits to be withdrawn from anyone not registered to vote. We are organising an anti-racist Unity festival for the summer where bands can play, uniting Asian and white youth in anti-racist struggle.

The march showed that the mood exists for action to defy the police and go beyond the strategy of social democrats who wring their hands in response to the fascists but have no answers about how to smash them and win real power for a united black and white working class.

Exposed: the g

John Major introduced PFI but New Labour is its most zealous supporter. Here we look at one PFI project in London that brings home the costs for workers and patients of New Labour's love affair with the market.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) in Greenwich, which was rebuilt under a PFI scheme that involved the closure and sell-off of two local hospitals, opened last month. It lies in the Greenwich & Woolwich parliamentary constituency, a seat held by housing minister, Nick Raynsford. Kirstie Paton, a Workers Power supporter, is battling against Raynsford for the Socialist Alliance and the hospital is set to become a dominant issue in the campaign.

There are already reports of transport chaos, day patients waiting hours for treatment and cracks in the walls. The indictment against the PFI scheme at QEH is staggering.

This is a summary of the case against the QEH PFI scheme:

1. It has cut beds.
2. Taxpayers have paid more money for poorer services.

3. The extra money goes straight into the pockets of shareholders in Meridian Hospital plc and now John Laing plc, the construction giant, which acquired a big stake in QEH in February.

4. The "risk transfer to the private sector" that is supposed to justify PFI has not happened.

5. Doctors' planning decisions about levels of care are being made based on dodgy statistics, not clinical need.

The 571-bed hospital cost £95 million to rebuild under PFI. This was more than three times above the original estimate of £30 million, including the cost of buying the site. With the introduction of PFI, the cost estimate immediately increased to £60 million.

This is normal with PFI. According to a leading academic, Alison Pollock, writing in the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) in 1999: "Total costs (construction plus financing costs) in a sample

NICK RAYNSFORD AND QEH

When on the opposition benches, Nick Raynsford opposed the PFI project at QEH. He said it was right for the NHS to buy the hospital "but not as a substitute for two existing hospitals, whose combined capacity is more than twice that currently available at QEH". (Hansard 28 January 1994).

Now, Raynsford is PFI's most enthusiastic supporter and denies he ever supported the "Two into One Won't Go" campaign. At a recent surgery where Kirstie Paton confronted him over his links to some of the big players in PFI projects, he accused her of "being prejudiced against procurement and profit". She pleads guilty as charged. See page 10

of PFI hospitals are between 18 per cent and 60 per cent higher than construction costs alone. The construction companies charge fees of between 11 per cent and 18 per cent of the construction costs."

Shareholders in PFI schemes can expect real returns of 15 per cent to 25 per cent a year. If the Treasury had financed the building of QEH it would

have paid a real rate of interest at a maximum of 3.5 per cent a year.

The British Medical Association (BMA) has called for a halt to all PFI deals because they "greatly increase the cost to the taxpayer of NHS capital development". The high cost of PFI "translates into service and workforce cuts" and is "likely to increase inequal-

How PFI is killing public services

1

The odds are stacked in favour of PFI by rigged Treasury accounting rules

2

Hospitals built with private money but leased back to the NHS at between 15% and 25% higher cost.

3

Private shareholders pocket the extra money

4

SCHOOLS: NUT CONFERENCE PREVIEW

Crisis, what crisis?

Blunkett fiddles while comprehensive education burns

There won't be many happy bunnies at the annual Easter teachers' conferences.

Thousands of teachers voted for New Labour in 1997 but after four disappointing years most have had enough.

Remember "read my lips" Blunkett's promise of no selection? Even the Tories must be stunned at the plethora of differing schools being suggested for different aptitudes and abilities of children.

You can have a technology college or a languages college or a performing arts school. If you are really lucky then your child might be identified as Gifted and Talented and that means they get more money spent on them - not that this has anything to do with rationing resources, says New Labour, it's just that some children are more equal than others.

The biggest Blairite promise was a decrease in class sizes for primary school children. This was the big priority; it could be tested, it was measurable.

What they didn't tell us was

that they might have to make secondary classes larger in order to deliver on smaller primary classes.

Class sizes in secondary schools have not fallen under New Labour, they have actually slightly increased.

New Labour will value teachers, we were told. Yet, since getting into government they have done little other than hammer us. They didn't even try to get rid of Chris Woodhead: they pleaded with him to stay even as he prepared to hammer them from his new pulpit in the *Daily Telegraph*.

Meanwhile they introduced performance related pay, refused to restore negotiating rights and presided over the steady decline in teachers' pay resulting in a spectacular teacher shortage. Which, of course, they like to pretend doesn't really exist.

It is no surprise that in recent months the similarity between Nero and Blunkett has begun to seem particularly striking to teachers. One of the agencies which provide replacement supply teachers to cover

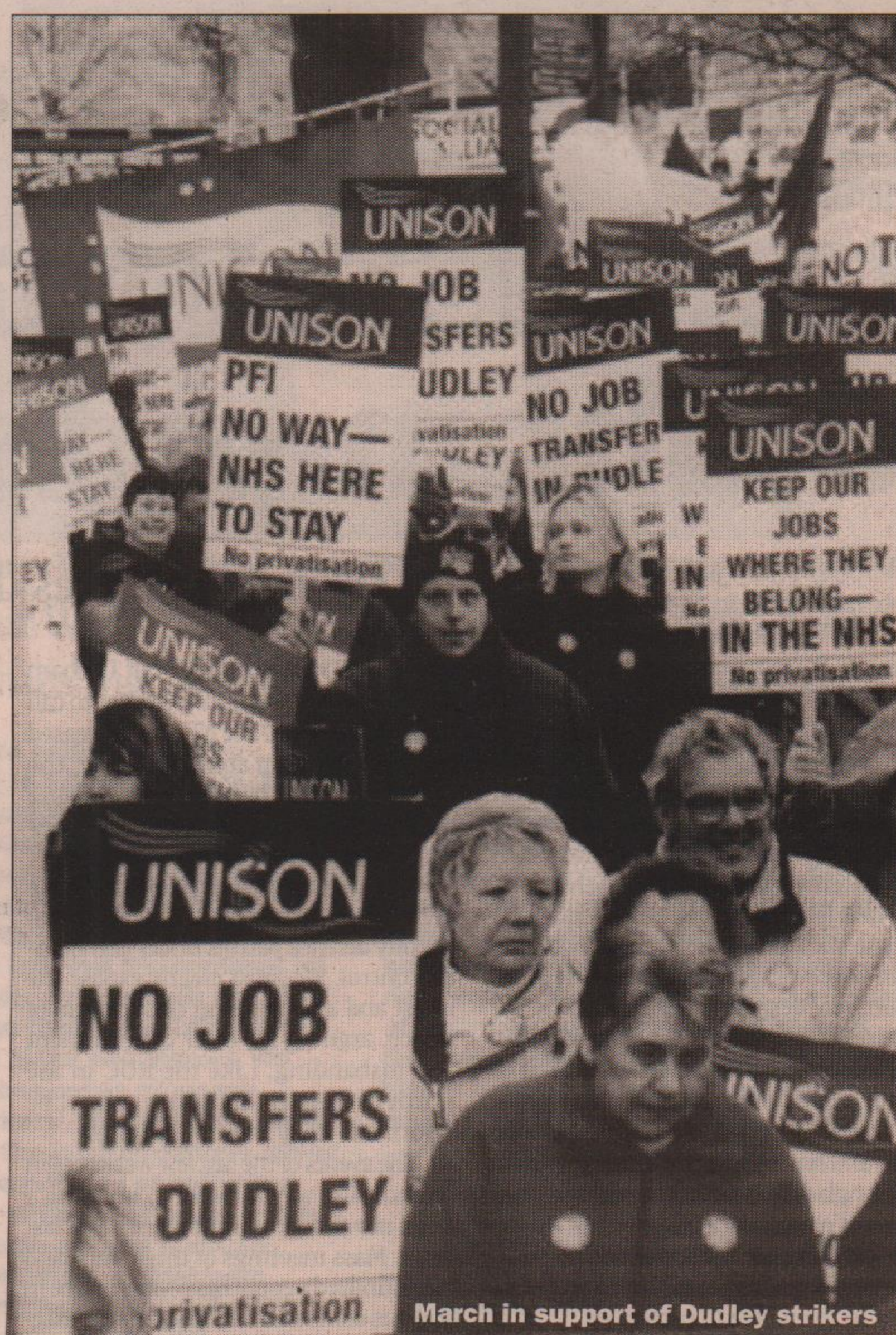
vacancies and absences announced that it is turning down over 6,000 requests a week from schools simply because it doesn't have the teachers. Crisis, what crisis?

But then when it comes to sticking their collective heads in the sand the union bureaucrats could show the Blairites a thing or two. This year's National Union of Teachers Conference in Cardiff looks likely to be railroaded by the union's leadership in a desperate attempt not to discuss the "s" word: strikes R not us, say the union leaders.

They have stuffed the agenda with their own motions at the last minute to ensure the conference won't get a chance to debate motions calling for strike action. Yet this is exactly the action we need if teachers are to get decent pay and our kids get a decent, free, non-selective, high quality comprehensive education.

■ Going to NUT Conference? Don't miss the Socialist Alliance fringe meeting. Details from your Workers Power seller.

INTERVIEW: DUDLEY STRIKERS



March in support of Dudley strikers

reat PFI rip-off

ities in health and wealth", according to the BMA. Alison Pollock argues that PFI will open the way for the eventual privatisation of NHS care itself, not just the buildings and support staff.

Along with fewer acute care beds, PFI means job cuts in the NHS. One health analyst has calculated that for every £200 million spent on PFI deals, there will be 1,000 job cuts for doctors and nurses. In practice, PFI has meant the transfer of NHS domestic and ancillary staff to the private sector. In turn, this means the creation of a two-tier workforce.

Technically, the transfer of staff from the NHS to private sector bosses had ceased in late 1999. In practice, however, it has continued.

Many plans are based on assumptions of improved productivity by current NHS workers that according to the BMJ "presuppose truly heroic levels of

productivity" and ignore the distinctive needs of patients – effectively "dehumanising" care.

Because the QEH site is too far away from where many of its potential patients live, the local NHS trust has agreed to pay excess public transport costs to local bus companies, for a maximum of 18 months. But what happens after that? Will the buses and car ambulances be stopped?

Kvaerner, the construction and engineering company that pioneered the QEH PFI, sold its 50 per cent holding in 1999 in the Meridian Hospital Company, which owns the site, to an Australian property group called Macquarie Infrastructure Group (aka ITA Group). Describing the combined PFI assets of Kvaerner, the top boss of the new developer said: "each of the acquired assets has solid earnings potential". Describing the QEH scheme he said: "These

IT'S NOT JUST GREENWICH

Hundreds of PFI schemes are already under way and New Labour is committed to hundreds more in a second term.

■ **Norfolk and Norwich: Originally billed as a £90 million project, the price-tag has soared to £193 million. The contract with the private sector consortium is for 60 years. The number of hospital beds has been chopped from 1,600 to 1,000.**

■ **King's College Hospital: A 36-year deal in 1999 for a complex that would incorporate services from the Dulwich Hospital and Mapworth House. The overall cost was estimated**

at £96 million, of which £75 million comes under the PFI scheme. Among the key players is Sodexho, which also runs the Home Office's asylum voucher scheme and has a major stake in private prisons in the US, UK and Australia.

■ **South Manchester Healthcare: Sodexho has a contract for domestic, catering, portering and laundry services at this PFI complex with 320 acute care and 77 psychiatric beds. Built by Alfred McAlpine the lease is for 35 years. A projected £520 million in revenue is due to flow to the corporate rip-off merchants.**

types of investments are characterised by high levels of fixed costs and revenues. The acquisition enhances the group's growth opportunities and with this its ability to increase cash distributions to share holders over time."

PFI is a core condition of structural adjustment programmes imposed by

the IMF and World Bank. It will not lend to poor countries unless they use PFI to finance health and education programmes. The same blackmail takes place here. Effectively, New Labour is saying if you oppose a PFI scheme in Britain then your local hospital, school or housing estate can continue to rot.

The government justifies the high cost of PFI on the grounds that the private sector takes on "more risk" than the government can afford to take. Greenwich NHS Trust paid Meridian £20 million extra on grounds that it had assumed more risk. But Meridian tells its shareholders a different story. It "structured the contractual arrangements for the project such that there are intended to be few risks inherent in the project which are retained by the issuer (i.e. Meridian)."

And a construction industry report on the QEH scheme said: "Experience proved that a logical discussion shows where risks can best be managed. The trust focused on the risks that were key to sustain high quality healthcare delivery and which enabled maximum flexibility for the future. Within the context of the deal it was not cost effective to place risks with the [private] consortium which they could not influence and which could not either be passed out to subcontractors or insured for good value for money or balanced against the equity investment."

This is a vague way of saying no decisive risks involved in running the hospital were passed to Meridian – only the "risks" involved in building it. According to Alison Pollock, this is common in PFI deals: "Risk transfer remains unlikely in practice because private contractors seek whenever possible to protect their income from uncertainty".

No NHS PFI has yet collapsed, but where PFI has been used to fund Whitehall computers that have then collapsed, the government refused to fine the private companies involved. The Public Accounts Committee said this means risk has effectively been transferred back to the public sector.

The QEH PFI scheme was approved because, on paper, it looked like better value for money. But the Treasury regularly cooks the books, using accounting methods that knock 6 per cent a year off the real cost of PFI schemes for accounting purposes. The choice of 6 per cent is "at the top of the range" of possible accounting adjustments and was made "to ensure there is no bias against private sector supply".

When the QEH PFI was decided we were told that doctors had made the key decisions on the number of beds needed. But in another PFI hospital at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, where this was also reported, the doctors revealed they were only allowed to divide up a privately agreed maximum into different specialities. (*Glasgow Herald*)

Doctors believe clinical priorities are now subordinated to the economics of PFI. The *BMJ* said PFI hospitals are: "planned not on the basis of healthcare needs but on the basis of local affordability and cash savings...The planning process has effectively been reversed, with services being designed to fit predetermined reductions in capacity. The high costs of PFI entail major reductions in service provision, acute bed capacity and clinical staffing."

Clinical decisions are dictated by the economics of PFI. Fewer beds, fewer staff, fewer hospitals

MPs say PFI makes no sense unless it brings better value for money and more risk-taking by private firms

6 Experts say little risk is transferred: the whole scheme is a massive handout to the bosses

The Socialist Alliance will abolish PFI and bring all services back into state ownership under workers' control

"We don't want to work for the profiteers"

Four hundred health workers in Dudley are set to start another three weeks of strike action on 13 April. The strikers are resisting the sell-off of their jobs to the private sector as part of a Private Finance Initiative deal to build a new hospital in the town.

Workers Power spoke to Patricia Robins and Bev Perry who work in trade services at Russell's Hall Hospital.

During the current round of action, you will go beyond 150 days of strike action since last August. Why are you still so determined to support the strike?

Patricia: This will be the second time I have been redeployed, with all the upset of being taken over by a new management.

I have worked nearly 20 years in the NHS, more or less ever since I left school. I don't want to work for a private profiteer.

Bev: The NHS is supposed to be from the cradle to the grave. Why should my two kids have to pay for what my grandparents worked for?

They are already going to be expected to pay out for a private pension. If this goes through they will be have to pay out for private health care as well.

Mr Blair is always going on about giving the kids a future. Privatisation through PFI isn't giving kids much of a future.

How would the PFI scheme affect the work you do?

Patricia: They are bringing all the sites down on

to Russell's Hall site, which means 70 beds lost.

We've had lots of details showing how catering is going to change.

They're going to prepare the food off site and transport it in, instead of preparing it on site like they do now. When the petrol dispute was on, I saw an NHS chief executive being interviewed on TV. He said he had never heard of a hospital running out of food before. The changes they are planning are just asking for problems like that to happen.

Bev: They are also going to get rid of good equipment.

Patricia: About five years ago the restaurant was refurbished at a cost of £250,000. Now all that is going to be demolished. Instead they are going to have a MacDonald's style fast food bar at the front of the hospital, to encourage people to come in from outside. It's a sheer waste of money.

What support are the strikers getting locally?

Bev: At the beginning there was a lot of support. The longer we have gone on, the more we are slipping from notice. At the start, we were on page one in the local papers. Now it is page 18. A lot of people don't read that far. But this is a public issue, it affects all the public, so all the public should be involved. If this PFI goes ahead, it will remortgage the hospital for another 40 years. The rich will get better, the poor will die.

Patricia: As Bev said, if this goes ahead the health service will be worse for everybody. We need more support.

What about support from other groups of workers?

Bev: I'm disappointed in a lot of the staff at the hospital. A lot of the nurses are just saying they will prefer the new menus.

Us, the catering staff and the cleaners and the rest, we're at the bottom. What a lot of the nurses and the other medical staff don't seem to realise is that it will work its way up. We'll be first, but in the end it will affect them as well.

Patricia: I've been on some delegations where we have taken coaches to other groups of workers, and it's been great. Just recently, I was part of the group who went to the UNISON Health Conference. We saw lots of our union leaders, and told them they should be supporting us!

Bev: Council workers, teachers, they should all be supporting Angela, [Angela Thompson is the Socialist Alliance prospective parliamentary candidate and a Dudley striker], voting for her when the election comes. It's us now, but if PFI isn't stopped it will be their jobs to be privatised next. Council tenants will have their homes sold off too.

Patricia: In five years' time, when it has hit home and affected them, that's when people will look back on the Dudley strike and say we were right.

At this point in the interview, another striker walks past and adds a comment that sums up the feeling in Dudley.

"This is just a foot in the door for private health care. That's why we have to stand up against it."

Greens vs anti-nukes

When the German Green Party joined the coalition government, environmentalists were told it would help "green" the capitalist system. Then a train full of nuclear waste appeared. Our sister group in Germany tells what happened next.

IN MANY ways the original struggle against the nuclear waste storage facility in Gorleben gave birth to Germany's contemporary green movement and the Green Party.

In 1996 a mass protest took place against the transport of nuclear waste to Gorleben amid the revelation that radioactivity had leaked out from the supposedly "secure" trains. The CDU government was forced to announce a moratorium on further shipments. It is the current "red-green" government that restarted them after a deal was struck with the nuclear industry: the "nuclear consensus" to "phase out nuclear energy production" over the next 30 years!

This "compromise" allows plants to operate until the end of their lifespans. At present, an end to nuclear-generated power is no big deal since there is a tremendous glut of electricity on Germany's grids and the nuclear power plants are simply less profitable than gas-fired ones.

The nuclear compromise, however, allows the capitalists to choose which plants to close, which to run longer, according to profitability, and to recoup their investments.

Gorleben had become the focal point for those determined to show their anger at the government's contempt for its own supporters and the environment. A demonstration of up to 20,000 the week-end before the shipment started its journey to Gorleben revealed how deep that anger was. Green Party flags and banners were destroyed, and Green Party leaders pushed out of the demonstration.

The Green leadership tried to "forbid" party members from joining in the protests. Under pressure from its membership, the party congress changed that position, only to face both ways as

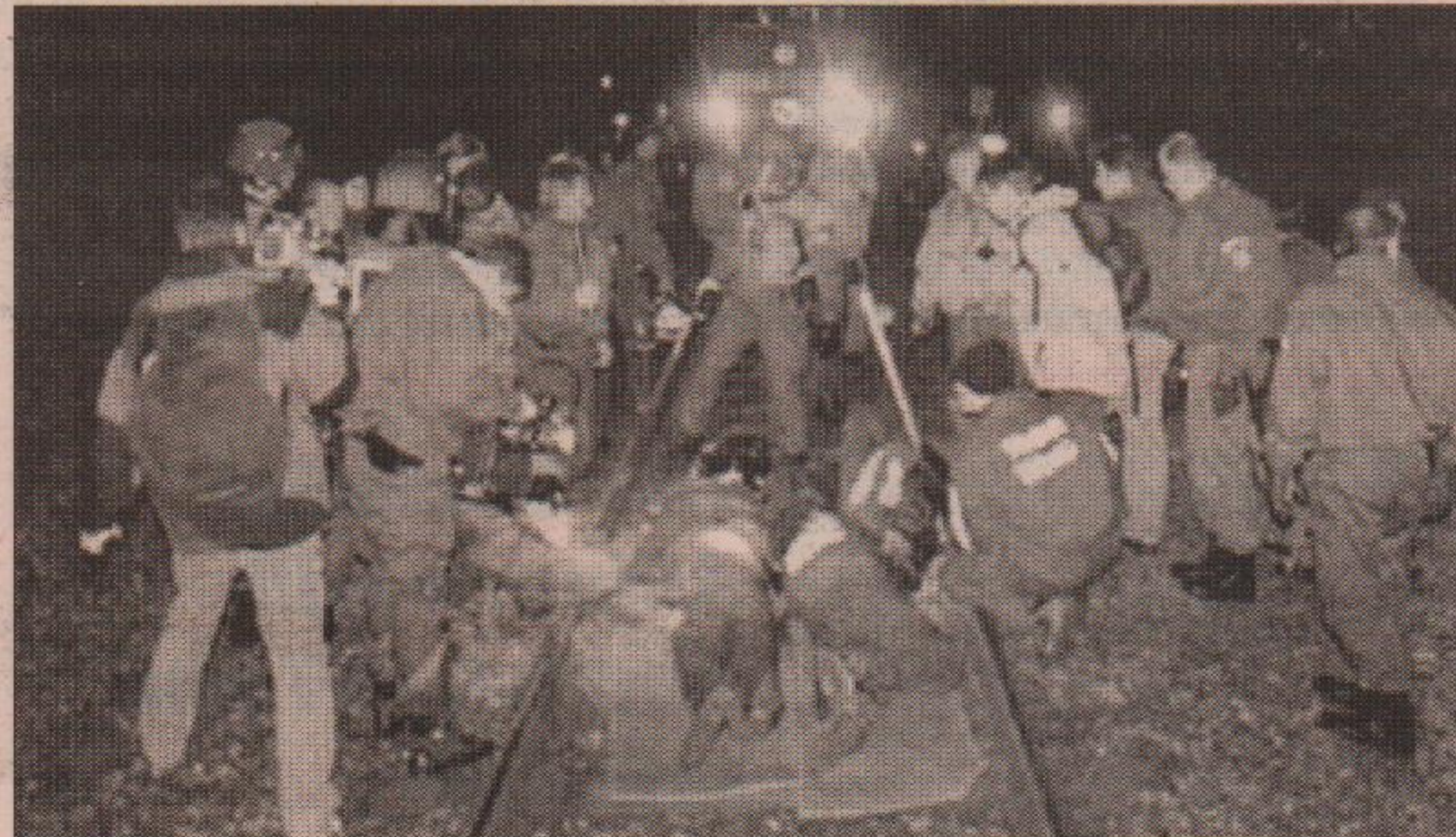
Gorleben has become a dumping ground despite the high risks associated with the location. Most of the nuclear waste stored there is recycled plutonium with the potential for further use in risky fast breeders or in the production of nuclear weapons.

Gorleben also has an additional EU-wide importance for the nuclear industry, since it is a key link in the chain of the nuclear recycling industry. Therefore, securing the

successful transport of the waste was an another acid test for the Greens in government. Once more, they proved that they are party loyal to the bosses.

The SPD-Green government which had promised the rapid (if not immediate) end of nuclear energy production before the elections thought it could defuse resistance by the shoddy cynical "consensus".

They were, of course, proved very wrong.



it called for support of the "compromise" as well as the protests against it!

Jorgen Trittin, environment minister and a "left winger", had already made clear what this meant: the order of the day, he said, is "to govern not to demonstrate".

And that's, what the Greens, together with the SPD, did. In order to secure the Castor transport, they deployed a police force of 18,000 to the region to secure "de-escalation". Already during the weeks before the protest, the cops had been highly visible, and stopped and

searched people "who looked like protesters". Since almost everyone living in the region was against the shipment, they obviously had a lot to do.

During the week, around 10,000 tried

to blockade the railway along the 40-kilometre stretch from Lüneburg to Danneberg. The police tried to prevent the building of camps along the rail line and issued a ban on all demonstrations and pickets within 50 metres of the track. And they enforced it with water cannons, batons and gas.

During the week the cops went wild. Some 700 demonstrators were temporarily arrested, hundreds injured. Demonstrations of hundreds were attacked by thousands of police almost as soon as they gathered.

But despite the brutal and massive police presence the protests scored some successes. Time and again, small groups of 50 to 100 got through the police lines and blocked the track. Members of "Robin Wood", a mainstream environmentalist NGO, managed to stop the processed waste for 24 hours by tying themselves to the track.

In the end the armed might of the police and the Bundesgrenzschutz (a special paramilitary unit) won. It forced the processed waste through to the nuclear waste storage facility in Gorleben.

But most people recognised that the protest was unlikely to stop the transport itself, faced with the massive police presence. They clearly signalled that the struggle against the nuclear industry in Germany is alive and kicking. The Green Party failed to defuse the protests. It may even be one of the victims of its leaders' betrayal.

WHAT WE THINK

The determined, militant environmentalists, who spearheaded the resistance to the shipment, have to make the movement against nuclear energy production an international one and link it to the organised working class.

Just a look at the sheer size of the Gorleben shipment demonstrates the problem: 58 tonnes of nuclear waste is a tiny proportion of the waste produced by Germany's nuclear power plants. The whole problem of waste storage remains unresolved.

The nuclear industry is qualitatively more dangerous than any other form of industry and cannot be developed safely under capitalism.

Our fight is for the planned closure of all nuclear plants under workers' control, to ensure they are safely decommissioned and that environmentally friendly sources of alternative power are developed to replace them. All the industry's workers would be transferred to other jobs at equivalent rates of pay.

The need for workers' control in the struggle for closure goes hand in hand with the struggle for planning of energy production. The rational use of energy will be central. The relation between capitalist production and waste has to be made clear and related to the need for a global economic planning.

The anti-capitalist youth organisation REVOLUTION (and Gruppe Arbeitermacht) intervened with a leaflet. We had placards denouncing the nuclear "consensus": "Nuclear consensus = nonsense! Immediate phasing out of nuclear power! Expropriation of the energy industry under workers' control!"

Max, a member of REVOLUTION, described the scene: "As soon as one of us moved a bit, the police immediately came in with batons. You felt deeply wounded, almost defenceless, when they surrounded you with large forces. You could not move. Whenever they outnumbered a group of demonstrators, they attacked."

News from the Intifada front line

An Israeli anti-Zionist sent us this account of the Israeli regime's brutality against the Palestinians

WHILE THE world's attention focused on helicopter gunships bombarding Gaza, another wave of destruction goes on virtually unnoticed.

Palestinian homes are being systematically bulldozed all over the West Bank. The houses destroyed belong to ordinary Palestinian citizens, whose only crime is the wish to have a roof over their heads.

Recent reports mention the arrest of Rabbi Arik Asherman, while trying to resist the fourth demolition of the Shawamreh's home. Salim Shawamreh and his family at Anata had already seen their home destroyed three times and always rebuilt with the help of Israeli peace activists.

Activists of ICAHD (Committee Against House Demolitions) hurried to Anata in response to an early morning call. Among them was Rabbi Asherman of Rabbis for Human Rights, who was arrested while trying to block a bulldozer.

The military government has long restricted Palestinian construction on the West Bank to small enclaves, and denied building permits to Palestinians whose land happens to be located outside these overcrowded, designated areas ("ghettos", in other words). Under ex-premier Ehud Barak, the destruction of such "illegal" houses was temporarily stopped. Now, however, the mil-

itary authorities have gleefully embarked on a major wave of destruction. The previous day four houses were destroyed at Issawiya, just outside Jerusalem. While this morning we heard of four houses destroyed at Anata, another Palestinian suburb of Jerusalem, followed by another two demolitions at Issawiya.

Four more Palestinian houses were flattened in the Hebron area, between the settlement of Kiryat Arba and its offshoot enclave of Giv'at Haharsina. (The

settlers have long wanted to "get rid" of these Arab houses, which prevent the creation of a "territorial continuity").

Cynically, all this took place at the

For more on the Intifada
www.workerspower.com/wpglobal/resonitifada.html
www.workerspower.com/wpglobal/israelelections2k1.html

What is going on in Palestine?

The town of Abu Sneineh had the bad luck to be located in the immediate vicinity of the Hebron neighbourhood where a group of fanatical Israeli settlers set themselves up, under massive military protection. The Hebron Agreement of 1997 cut up the city, leaving Abu Sneineh on the very front line. Since last October, it has become hell indeed.

Last week, an infant from a settler household was killed by a bullet fired from Abu Sneineh - a terrible tragedy by any standard, though no proof was offered for the assertion that this was a murder committed by "a sniper who deliberately drew a bead on the baby's head", as repeatedly claimed by Israeli politicians and commentators.

The tragedy could also have been the result of random shooting, of which so much had taken place in that area in the past six months.

The Israeli side, by the way, also engages in such random shooting - and with firepower many times

greater than anything in Palestinian hands. This kind of random shooting resulted, for example, in the death of 11-year-old Mahmud al-Darwish, by heavy machine gun fire, which penetrated his parents' home in the Hebron suburb of Dura, a killing which took place one day and a few kilometres away from where the baby was killed, but which drew scant media attention.

Whatever actually happened, Abu Sneineh has become a prime target. The settlers are stridently demanding that the army send in troops and effectively conquer the whole neighbourhood, however many casualties it would take.

Sharon and his Labourite allies have not (yet?) gone this far, but some "down payments" are delivered every day; the army has warned the inhabitants of Abu Sneineh to move away "for their own good", and the neighbourhood is subjected to daily tank bombardments.

This evening, the Israeli TV commentator remarked casually that several Abu Sneineh houses were destroyed in the day's bombardment; the news item was followed by a long report on the international piano competition currently taking place in Tel-Aviv, supposedly showing what a cultured and enlightened country we live in.

The Hebron settlers are a very determined and ruthless group, capable of leaving that poor baby unburied for nearly a week as a grisly kind of political demonstration, capable of turning even on the very soldiers on whom their enclave's existence depends, insulting and physically assaulting them.

They have friends in high places - especially in the present government - and they have a decades-long record of eventually getting what they want from the government, whoever the prime minister. So, Abu Sneineh, with its 15,000 inhabitants, is under a very direct and concrete threat.

Profits.gone

Mark Abram explains why the Wall Street brokers have run for cover and the potential impact on the rest of us

THE LONGEST economic expansion in US history marked its 10th anniversary last month. But nobody was celebrating. In fact, the definitive figures for the first quarter of 2001 may show that the US entered a recession. Unemployment rose in March, while the total number of jobs fell by some 80,000 – the biggest monthly drop since 1991.

Manufacturing was certainly contracting by late 2000, but output as a whole was propped up by a service sector, which was still growing modestly in early 2001.

So what's happening? Can the US government save the world from recession or are we facing a 1930s style slump?

Underlying the end of the upswing has been massive over-investment in most lines of plant and equipment. Technology spending in the United States in 1998 grew by 42 per cent and jumped a further 37 per cent to \$820 billion in 1999. Much of the money came from fearful investors who had sought a "safe haven" in Wall Street after the East Asian collapse in 1997.

On the back of this boom profits soared. Average revenue growth in the top eight US technology firms tripled from 30 per cent to 90 per cent annual growth in the year ending June 2000.

During 1999 the massive excess capital poured into the dot.com economy, swept along by pie in the sky claims made for its future profitability. Frenzied speculation was the result, which could only end in the bubble bursting. It came in April last year when the first poor profit results and warnings began to herald a bear market.

The end of internet fever in April 2000 led to a controlled slide in stock markets and hence profits. With some time lag this worked its way through the rest of the year to a downturn in manufacturing. Business fixed investment growth was 10 per cent in 1999 and 17 per cent in first half of 2000; then it collapsed and was negative by November 2000.

Only now is it working its way through to a slow down in consumer spending. This is a critical moment in the cycle. Consumer spending accounts for nearly two-thirds of total demand in the US economy and a middle class shopping spree in the 1990s was crucial to the long boom.



This month Turkish workers marched against the IMF

But there was a paradox. Real wages were stagnant for much of the last decade. This certainly helped to make profits strong but did not help consumer demand. This square was circled by making middle class households feel wealthy by a rising stock market.

A majority of Americans are shareholders, directly or through their pension funds. Many people could borrow on the basis of rising paper wealth, or make a killing by buying cheap and selling dear; all this fuelled demand.

But behind the façade something was eating away at this "virtual" prosperity. Savings were going down all the time. And by the time the stock market boom was over the ratio of income to savings in the USA was negative for the first time ever – household assets were less than their debts.

Obviously, the stock market fall would feed through into falling profits and falling spending and so bring recession nearer. Many millions of people may curb spending for some time to come – as they fear unemployment and will have to rebuild their savings.

At this point the brokers and pension fund managers looked to their hero – Alan Greenspan of the US Federal Reserve to take action. He announced emergency interest rate cuts in January, which stabilised stock market sentiment until early March. His refusal to do so a second time sent New York stocks to two-year lows.

A further 0.5 per cent cut in March

was seen as too little and the market slide continued. By 22 March the Dow Jones was 20 per cent down on the January 2000 high; the bears had driven the bulls from Wall Street. The Nasdaq index of technology stocks had plunged 60 per cent from its all-time high in less than a year. By 6 April nothing much had changed. Each promised revival has fallen back in the face of profit warnings from major corporations.

As a result of the steady slide in share prices since April 2000, more than \$10 trillion in paper wealth has been taken out of the US economy. Are the Federal Reserve's measures enough to stem recession or at least shorten its duration? There is scepticism about the efficacy of either more interest rate cuts or Bush's trillion dollar tax cuts. Lower interest rates are always welcome to companies that borrow, as many do, for investment.

But they are unlikely to borrow more

If the stock market stabilises around current levels, if US firms downsize like crazy and if the rest of the world stays in expansion mode then the recession may be short. But these are big ifs.

The organised working class response to the onset of recession in the US and Europe is crucial. The revival of American union militancy from 1996 and the modest growth in unionisation have now to face the severe test of recession and the associated attacks on jobs and conditions.

Bush blundered into the White House, bankrolled by some of the biggest, most virulently anti-union bosses in the world.

His administration is already trying to tear up union recognition clauses in federally funded construction projects. The new post-Seattle generation of anti-capitalists that has already protested alongside trade unionists needs to come together with rank and file union activists in a powerful movement to resist sackings, attempts at union de-recognition and the ripping up of contracts.

in the short term. Massive overcapacity will have to be destroyed first. Similarly, the banks do not want to lend until new corporate debts – exposed by falling stock market valuations – are restructured.

Personal tax cuts will help boost households' savings ratios, but they will take nearly a year to have any impact in the larger economy.

So a recession has certainly taken hold. How far will it reach and how long will it last? A further collapse in profits and consumer spending could prompt a renewed stock market rout and prolonged recession. In turn this would inevitably draw Europe and China into recession, with unforeseen consequences.

On balance, the conventional wisdom about currency markets suggests a short recession. Normally, a cut in interest rates and stock market fall would lead to a big sell-off of dollars and a weakening US currency. This would also help boost US exports as domestic demand faltered and so narrow the large US trade deficit. But this isn't happening.

The dollar, if anything, has got stronger against the euro, despite the fact that the US is the source of contagion and the EU economies will grow more this year. The only rational explanation is that the financial markets expect a short recession, while the US remains far more competitive and profitable than the EU in the medium term.

Maybe the market's big players take a perverse comfort in the wave of sackings under way. US companies started axing jobs – as in 1990 – with the first sign of recession. Last month Cisco Systems declared its first ever mass redundancy programme with 8,000 shown the door; the day before Intel had sacked 5,000. Motorola cut 7,000 jobs.

If the mass sackings by US firms and the cull of the dot.com failures serve to restore profitability quickly, then investment could pick up by mid-year and a further fall in stock prices avoided.

If the stock market stabilises around current levels, if US firms downsize like crazy and if the rest of the world stays in expansion mode even as US markets for their goods decline then the recession may be short.

But these are big ifs.

Globalisation and the spread of recession

"Never has so much been lost in such a short time". So said the *Economist* last month, bemoaning the \$10 trillion global stock market wipe-out.

This paper wealth amounts to around 30 per cent of world GDP. The stock market slide started in the US last April, but globalisation has ensured that it spread more swiftly than foot and mouth disease.

In two weeks last month 38 of the top 40 stock markets fell in unison.

Research has shown that during the 1990s the correlation between Europe's stock markets and those of the USA was higher than ever before, except for the 1930s when they were all pinned to the floor.

The elimination of barriers to the movement of capital, combined with the almost simultaneous deregulation of stock markets world-wide has ensured that a crisis in one market spreads quickly.

What will the impact of the US decline be on the rest of the world? Last year the world economy grew by a shade under 5 per cent – at its fastest lick for 16 years. No

chance of that this year. But global output has not declined absolutely in any one year since the Second World War.

Serious recessions hit in 1973-75, 1979-82, 1989-91 and slashed output in large parts of the world economy. But never since the 1930s has a synchronised downturn put the whole of the capitalist world into reverse; only in 1974 were Japan and USA briefly in recession together.

This year, however, could be very different. The USA and Japan account for 46 per cent of world output. More than 25 per cent of non-Japanese Asian growth last year depended on exports to the US. This year growth rates will be cut by 50 percent or more in the region. Countries like Indonesia, still reeling from the 1997 crisis, will be hit again, fanning political flames. South Korea's GDP fell in the last quarter of 2000.

While Europe's exports to the USA may only account for 3 per cent of its total GDP, this masks Europe's enormous exposure to the fall-out from a US recession.

Europe's stock markets are sensitive to

Wall Street falls. In fact, the German and Swedish markets were even more overvalued than Wall Street last year. Also EU firms have built up their presence in USA, either with their own plants or through investments in US companies. Continued decline will certainly feed its way through into falling profits, a cut in investment and attack on jobs.

Japan is about to enter its third recession in five years. It certainly is in no position to prop up the world economy. Further decline in Japan will only hit US exports and strengthen the dollar – all tending to worsen the US recession.

A serious, protracted global recession would undoubtedly strain relations between Europe, Japan and the USA. It would test all three blocs' commitment to the World Trade Organisation's neo-liberal framework of free trade. The return of widespread protectionist measures cannot be excluded. At the same time, however, a collapse of free markets in capital (return of exchange controls, etc) is only likely in the midst of a very deep slump.

KIRSTIE PATON



ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

Kirstie Paton, Socialist Alliance PPC for Greenwich & Woolwich spoke to a packed meeting of 600 people in central London this month. She slammed the Private Finance Initiative and outlined why workers' control is central to the SA's manifesto. This is the full text of her speech:

“ This Labour government will go down in history as the one that privatised what the Tories could not privatise. We've had the £95 million health PFI at Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH). We've had the PFI-built student accommodation at Greenwich University. This month, I was called into a meeting at my school and told that we too are going to be PFI-ed.

The Tories only managed £4 billion of PFI deals. New Labour has agreed £14 billion and is on the point of signing-off another £20 billion. They've put a 'For Sale' sign on the whole public sector.

So who benefits from the PFI?

Not public service users: at QEH we've got fewer beds under PFI and a whole area now miles from the nearest casualty unit.

Not public service workers: their terms and conditions are being attacked relentlessly by their new private bosses – because in addition to doing a service, they have now also got to generate a profit.

Not taxpayers: they will have to pay back billions more than it would have cost to rebuild and modernise these services with public spending.

Who does benefit? Let me quote you the boss of Kvaerner, the construction firm that has more employees seconded to the government than any other firm, and which part-owned the Queen Elizabeth PFI. When Kvaerner turned itself towards the PFI business, the boss said said: 'Kvaerner is now aligned on a new course. One where profit is pivotal and cash is king.' That sums up PFI.

That's why the Socialist Alliance will stop PFI. We'll return the hospitals, schools, the London Tube, Air Traffic Control and the Channel Tunnel rail link to public ownership.

Most trade unions, many Labour party members, have condemned PFI. We say to them: the Socialist Alliance is the only party pledged to stop it. Instead of handing billions to the big corporations, we'll get them to hand money over to us. We'll fund a massive increase in public services with massive taxes on the rich and on big business.

And we'll do more. One of the worst aspects of PFI is the way it removes control from local communities over the services they need; how it strips workers of their rights.

We'll bring back control. We'll run public services under workers' control - that means under the control of the people who work in these services and the people who use them.

Workers control runs through the Socialist Alliance programme because twenty-odd years of cuts, privatisation and union bashing have left working people with no control over their own lives. When people ask: why is there so much despair in deprived working class communities, so much anti-social crime, so much truancy... We answer, because the bosses have done their best to smash solidarity and deny control.

We are going to change all that.

We fight for workers control because we know socialism won't come through parliament. It will come from below.

It will come from the small, isolated struggles that communities and trade unions are waging across Britain. The tenants' campaigns against housing stock transfer; the parents' campaigns against school closures and privatisation; the Tube strike against PPP, from the Dudley strike and others like it.

Our aim is not just to represent these struggles in parliament. It is to fuse them together into one giant struggle that can give workers control over their own destiny for the first time in their lives.

The Socialist Alliance is a direct action party; I went to Prague last September and joined people on the streets against the IMF and World Bank whose economic diktats demand the relentless privatisation of our services and stripping away of our rights.

In Prague we were faced with armoured cars and a ring of steel: but we broke through – to the horror of the world's bosses.

The Socialist Alliance will bring the spirit of Prague and Seattle to this election. We will fight for a government based on workers' democracy - not the parliamentary puppet show. We'll break the ring of steel that capitalism will put in our way when we try to carry out our programme.

And we will insist - whether it's in Greenwich or Dudley or Bangladesh or Mexico: our world is not for sale!

Email Kirstie on: kirstiepaton@hotmail.com

Trial set to blow the lid off MI5

Colin Lloyd reports on the MI5 whistleblowing trial that is set to reveal how spies target trade union activists

THIS MONTH MI5 whistleblower David Shayler will start a court battle that could see him imprisoned for up to six years. But if Shayler wins, it could be senior Labour ministers who end up in the dock.

Over the past five years, says Shayler, the government has consistently lied about the involvement of security services in an attempt to assassinate Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi.

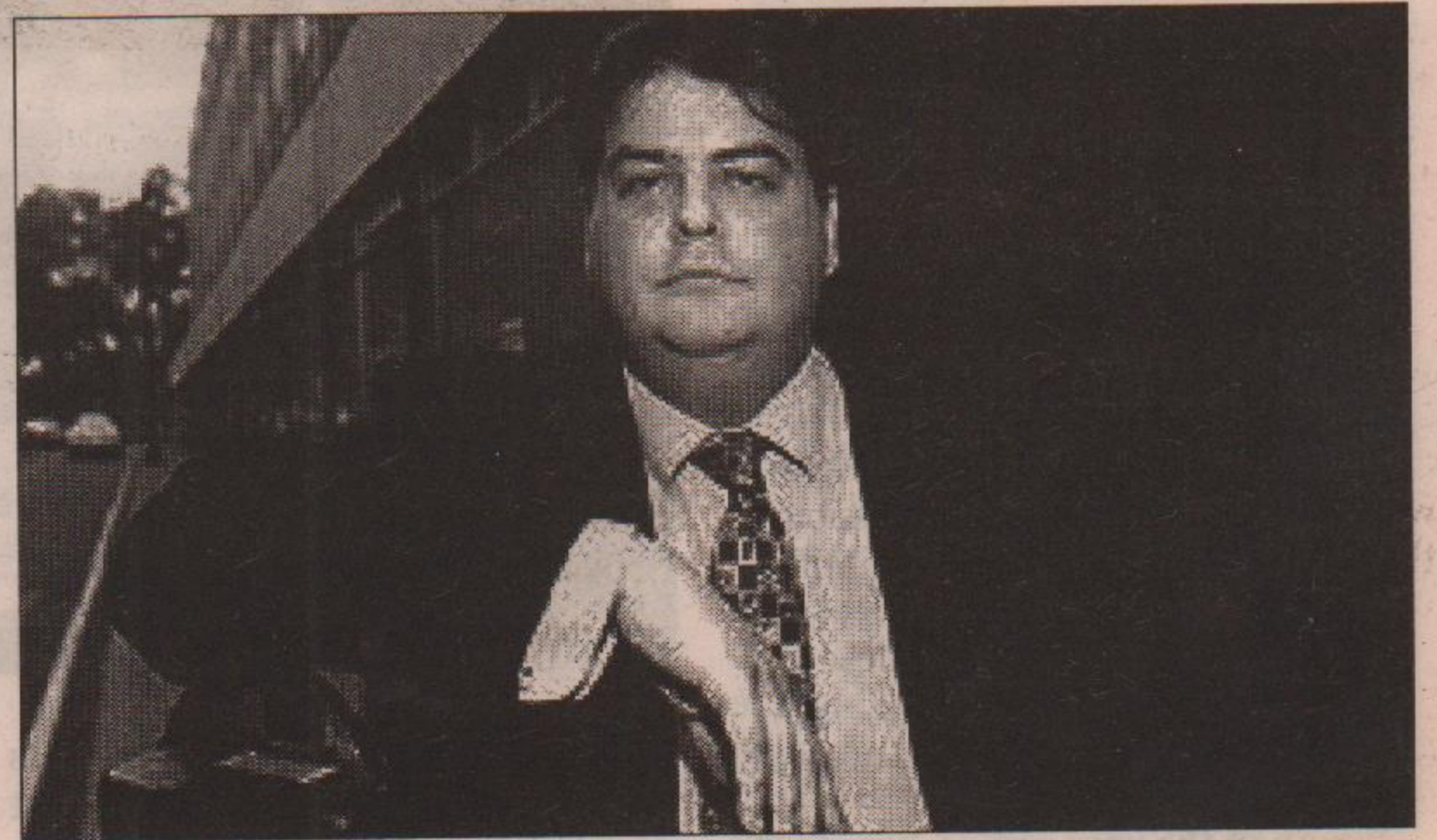
Shayler blew the whistle on the involvement of MI6 in a murder plot that failed to kill Gaddafi but did kill innocent bystanders. The plot was funded with £100,000 of taxpayers' money, he said. Shayler fled the country after going public but was jailed for three months in France, during a failed attempt to extradite him.

He returned to Britain voluntarily and was immediately charged under the Official Secrets Act. He is working with the civil rights group Liberty and has joined the National Union of Journalists (NUJ). At the recent annual conference of the NUJ, Shayler told a packed fringe meeting about the way MI5 targets the labour movement and anti-capitalist campaigners.

Shayler said he was shocked when he joined MI5 and discovered that the domestic intelligence service kept files on individuals "for ridiculous reasons". He claimed he had been involved in ending the surveillance of the Communist Party of Britain and the anarchist group Class War.

He also revealed that MI5 holds files not only on the "Trotskyists and Communists" but anyone associated with them.

Shayler also says MI5 is responsible for a major miscarriage of justice in the UK. Two Palestinians remain behind bars convicted of bombing the Israeli embassy. But Shayler says MI5 was warned days before the bombing that



Shayler: security forces are a threat to any radical government

an Iranian group would attack the embassy – a warning that was then "mislead". At the trial neither the judge nor lawyers knew of the existence of this warning, so it counts as new evidence. It was only confirmed by foreign secretary Robin Cook after Shayler blew the whistle.

Shayler also revealed that the recent claim that Sinn Fein leader Martin McGuinness had "fired the first shot" on Bloody Sunday 1972 was probably an MI5 planted story. He said the source of the rumour was known inside MI5 as a "bullshitter" and he has given evidence to the Bloody Sunday Inquiry over this.

Shayler – who attended the Socialist Alliance meeting at the NUJ conference – confirmed that any government that attempts a radical shift of wealth and power towards the working class will meet with resistance from unelected state bodies like MI5. "It would have problems not just with MI5 but with the civil service who are very clever at using words to mislead people," he said.

Shayler clearly still believes in

"British democracy" and is proud of having "put IRA terrorists behind bars".

But his revelations give a fascinating insight into the world of the spooks. Despite their claims to have reformed and to work within the law, Shayler says they consistently flout it.

He is campaigning to open MI5 files from before the collapse of the Soviet Union under the Human Rights Act 1998.

"When these files are open they will be full of comments from one Colonel Bufton Tufton to another saying 'this chap is not one of us, don't give him a job at the BBC'," he said.

He added that Arthur Scargill's file runs to 40 volumes. He claimed to have seen reports from MI5 agents within the NUM during the miners' strike: "They were clearly passing info on strike strategy, not fulfilling their official mission of detecting communist involvement in the strike," he said.

He revealed that file number one in the MI5 office, founded in 1909, belongs to Lenin. Eammon De Valera, later premier of Ireland, was number two, and Leon Trotsky number three.

FEEDBACK ■ Contact us on 07730 220962

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The Socialist Alliance and the anti-capitalist movement have prompted a new "turn" by the SWP, Britain's biggest left wing group. Here we survey the issues at stake.

THE SOCIALIST Workers Party is undergoing one of its periodic "turns". Its reorientation towards the anti-capitalist movement in the wake of Seattle has already led to a split with its co-thinkers in the USA and Greece. And the scale of the turn is signalled in articles by John Rees and Alex Callinicos.*

At the heart of both articles is a new insistence on the need for revolutionaries to deploy the united front tactic.

We can agree with that. But the SWP's latest turn is not just about united action with reformist-minded workers and anti-globalisation activists: it involves the deliberate refusal to criticise the ideas and methods of reformist leaders.

In the name of the "united front" the SWP leaders are constructing a political bloc with the reformist wing both of the Socialist Alliance and the anti-globalisation movement – against those fighting for revolutionary politics.

Instead of helping build a larger revolutionary party – the ultimate aim of the united front tactic – the SWP's determination to "build to the right" is getting in the way of it.

The new turn poses three basic questions:

■ Does unity in action with reformist activists mean gagging our criticisms of their leaders, their ideas and their methods of struggle?

■ Can the Socialist Alliance become a revolutionary party – and if not, what is the limit to political concessions the SWP will make in order to maintain it as an electoral alliance?

■ How should we engage with the tens of thousands of activists in the anti-capitalist movement who want to smash the system but mistrust Marxist forms of organisation?

Rees argues "It is through joint struggle that the differences between revolutionaries and reformists become apparent to reformist workers. It is not in the first instance because revolutionaries differentiate themselves or counterpose themselves to the reformists inside the united front." Revolutionaries have to show in practice that their methods can win the desired aim of the movement, he says.

Callinicos drags up various quotes from Marx to the effect that a sect is always trying to distinguish itself from the movement by emphasising "the particular shibboleth which distinguishes itself from the movement".

But all this is only half the story. The insistence on the united front and avoiding "shibboleths" has become an excuse for obscuring the differences with reformist, liberal and in one case chauvinist leaders within protest movements.

In the Socialist Alliance: At the Socialist Alliance conference on 10 March, called to finalise the election manifesto, the SWP consistently blocked with the minority of reformists in the SA to ensure that key revolutionary positions were defeated: calls to disarm and disband the police; the call for a revolutionary workers' government that will take on and break up the capitalist state machine; the call for workers' self-defence organisations. In fact the SWP itself advanced no programme at all for the SA: it originally wanted the programme conference to be turned into a training day.

At Coventry it was happy to rely on people it used to sneer at as "orthodox Trotskyists" to provide the rationale for chopping the revolutionary head off the manifesto in the name of "unity" with the reformists.

In the Kosovo War: The biggest sectarians, according to Alex Callinicos, are his own former comrades of the American ISO, who insisted on emphasising the "shibboleth" of Kosovo national rights while opposing Nato's intervention. Since both Workers Power and Socialist Outlook advocated the same point in the UK movement it is a swipe at us as well.

Callinicos claims the US move-

A turn to the right?

ment against the Balkan war was smaller than in Britain because the ISO insisted on raising Kosovan self-determination. That is false. The fact is – as was recognised by many SWP members in Britain – the SWP's refusal to raise Kosovan rights severely limited the impact of the movement in Britain, because it could never answer openly the objection of reformist workers and youth: what about the Kosovans, who will protect them? For Callinicos, revelling in his united front with Serb nationalists, this was just a "shibboleth" to be avoided – or, even better, theorised into a non-issue.

In the Seattle movement: When the SWP got stuck in to the anti-capitalist movement it had to face two ways: towards the liberal intellectual leadership of the movement – Susan George, Walden Bello, Naomi Klein etc – and towards the anarchists and eco-warriors who form the backbone of the movement.

On countless platforms the SWP has refused to criticise the reformist politics of the liberal leaders: for example at Marxism 2000 it reserved its biggest applause for Klein's attack on Workers Power for wanting to turn the movement towards socialist revolution. Sure, it publishes learned critiques of their ideas in its theoretical journal, but its main emphasis is to accentuate the common ground and attack those who criticise the liberals from the left.

This is not the method of the united front. And it will not help show in practice why revolutionary methods are better than reformist and liberal methods.

Revolutionaries strive to be the best and most consistent fighters in the united front for every limited and partial goal. But they do not restrict themselves to this. Joint struggle is vital to win revolutionary a hearing, but this begs the question – a hearing for what?

For us, it is a hearing for relevant,

practical revolutionary politics: demands, forms of organisation and goals of struggle that go beyond the initial united front aims.

If we are to convince people that we are right we need to argue for and explain such demands and goals – not keep them hidden from view.

This does not mean we counterpose revolutionary goals to limited agreements of struggle. It does mean that we seek openly to push the limited agreements further forward. If we fail, but we can all agree on a minimum basis for action, so be it. But if we do not try then we are saying in advance that it is impossible to win reformist workers, or liberal-influenced, anti-globalisation protesters to bolder and more revolutionary goals in the here and now. But it's far from impossible.

THERE IS a common theme in the SWP's newfound enthusiasm for the united front: ally with the reformists against the revolutionary left; tone down your criticisms of them in the name of unity.

Take Callinicos' analysis of Susan George's politics. Callinicos says it would be a "big mistake" to say Susan George's speeches are "the expression of a settled reformist position".

Now Susan George has been prominent on the left wing of liberalism and third worldism for decades. She may well be moving further left under the impact of the Seattle movement. But unless we criticise her ideas, and the methods of struggle that flow from them, George – and more importantly the masses of people influenced by her – will not complete the transition to revolutionary socialism.

And getting reformists to make that transition is supposed to be the aim of the united front tactic.

The SWP sees the Socialist Alliance as a permanent bloc between revolu-

tionaries and reformists – within which we can only go as far as reformists are willing to go.

"The Socialist Alliance is thus best seen as a united front of a particular kind applied to the electoral field. It seeks to unite left reformist activists and revolutionaries in a campaign around a minimum programme," says Rees.

But the Socialist Alliance, whether the SWP realises it or not, is increasingly posing the question of a new party point blank.

Likewise, the SWP would be happy for the anti-capitalist movement to remain a permanent bloc of street activists and liberal intellectuals – and has basically set up Globalise Resistance (GR) to provide the organisational form for that alliance.

But events conspire against it here too. Outside GR are thousands of anti-capitalists who have been doing the business for much longer than most SWP members. The SWP at present is in denial about their importance – and underestimates the challenge involved in winning them to revolutionary socialism.

All ideas have an impact in the physical world. Up to now the SWP has not had to choose in action between the demands of class struggle and the words of the SA's reformist figureheads; nor has it had to choose point blank between the street activists of the Seattle movement and the liberal thinkers who have claimed to be its spokespeople.

But one day the contradiction will open up. That is inevitable in any united front.

When that happens it is essential that the masses of activists – in the SAs, in future anti-war movements or in the anti-capitalist movement – see that revolutionary politics are a better guide to action; that revolutionary forms of organisation are more effective than reformist liberal ones.

The SWP's understanding of the united front is beginning, even now, to put an obstacle in the way of developing the movement.

In the Socialist Alliance it insists on a united front, not a party. But the question of a party is objectively posed.

In the anti-capitalist movement, the main task is to deepen the anti-capitalism of the direct action-ists, not to build the literary reputations of the liberal intelligentsia. But the SWP fawns over the intellectuals and denies the importance of debating with a much broader mass of youth who are pro-revolution but, at present, anti-Leninist.

The two problems are linked: the SWP stands as an obstacle to the Socialist Alliance becoming a revolutionary party, and without revolutionary politics the SA will find it harder to attract the anti-capitalist youth.

We think there is a real possibility to taking the SA forward now towards a revolutionary party that could number tens of thousands. It could act as a pole of attraction for the outraged anti-capitalist youth who want to tear down the whole system – and for rank and file workers fighting to defend their jobs and conditions.

The condition for realising this possibility is simple: that revolutionaries openly fight for it.

Revolutionaries have to place this fight above all deals that are inspired by purely electoral calculations. We have to take the fight for the programme into the working class and not relegate it to theoretical journals.

What do you think?

■ Are we being sectarian to raise the revolutionary workers' government in the election?

■ Can we attract anticapitalists to the Socialist Alliance?

■ Email your views to: paper@workerspower.com

* John Rees, "Anti-capitalism, reformism and socialism" *International Socialism* No.90; Alex Callinicos, "The anti-capitalist movement and the revolutionary left", published on the Internet.

The issues at Coventry

The SWP blocked with the right wing at the Socialist Alliance conference in Coventry because it wants to avoid an overt revolutionary position on the workers' government driving away potential SA recruits moving to the left from Labour.

In the first place this contrasts with what the SWP rightly did over immigration controls. It resisted a move by the Socialist Party to scrap the demand to "Abolish immigration controls". Why is that a point of principle and the call to disarm the police not a principle?

We predict that the more left MPs and union leaders look towards the SA, the more of the Manifesto the SWP will be prepared to abandon in the name of the "united front".

The other objection raised by the SWP is that the Alliance can never become a party. But the vast majority of activists moving towards the Alliance want precisely that.

We say: fight for a new party. Let that be a joint project between revolutionary socialists and those left reformists who really want a break with Labour – and let the struggle show who is right. How can we ever show reformist workers that we're right to say the state cannot be reformed while we systematically vote down the call for a revolutionary workers' government?

The SWP's self-denying ordinance on revolutionary positions will hinder our ability to attract activists from the anti-capitalist movement. For them, revolution is not a dirty word – it's a way of life. They won't faint if someone says "disarm the police" – because they took on the police with serious intent in places like Prague and Naples.

For every Labour councillor who is scared off by talk of revolution, 20 anti-capitalist youth will join us.

Finally, the SWP's practice conflicts with their own understanding of how Marxists acted during the formation of the Labour Party 100 years ago. Writing in *International Socialism* (No.87), Mark O'Brien explained how the Marxist SDF put forward a revolutionary programme at the founding meeting of the Labour Representation Committee. When it fell, they walked out. This was wrong, but were they wrong to argue the case for revolution? O'Brien says not:

"It was not wrong of the SDF delegates to have put up such a motion. It was important that they fought for the most socialist position achievable with the committee."

The demand for a workers' government remains in the SA Manifesto. But thanks to the SWP, the working class will now have to guess what it means. For us it means smashing the capitalist state and building one based on workers' councils. What does it mean for the SWP?

AS BUSH DUMPS KYOTO PROTOCOL...

Stop the bosses destroying our world

TWO MONTHS after his inauguration, the man that the multinational oil companies wanted in the White House has declared war on the global environment. Within days of this announcement he had also begun sabre-rattling against China (see box). Clearly it's going to be George W Bush versus the rest of the world.

On 29 March Bush, who gained the nickname the "Toxic Texan" during his years as the state's governor, effectively tore up the Kyoto protocol of 1997. Many politicians had hailed Kyoto as an historic step towards reducing the emission of "greenhouse gases" that erode the ozone layer and so fuel global warming.

Now European heads of state are left to wring their hands in despair and mutter under their breath about a "maniac" running Washington.

The USA, though home to only 4 per cent of the planet's population, pumps out 25 per cent of all greenhouse gases. The Clinton administration, which oversaw a 12 per cent rise in emissions over a five-year period, had failed to gain ratification for Kyoto in the Republican-dominated Senate. Initially, there were mixed signals coming from Bush's cabinet, but Bush himself declared that the protocol "exempts many countries

from compliance and would cause serious harm to the American economy".

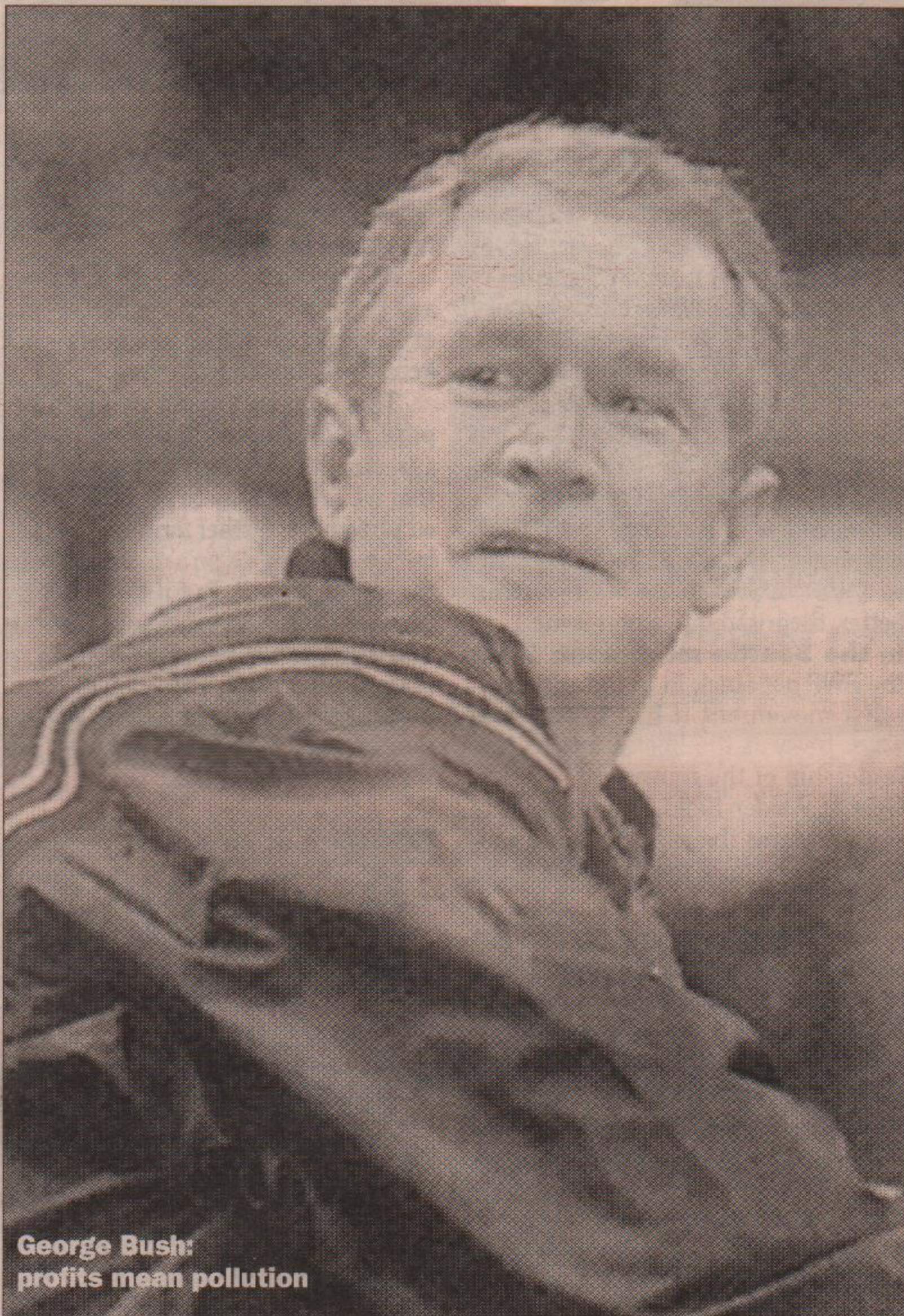
In other words, the Republicans are determined to defend the profits of US-based industries at the expense of destroying the world's ecosystem.

The decision also reflects just how keen Bush is to repay his debts to his corporate backers in the oil and coal industries. Some \$10 million of the \$14 million officially donated by oil and gas industry bosses in last year's US elections went to Republican candidates.

The single biggest corporate contributor to Bush's campaign was the electricity and water corporation, Enron. In Britain, Enron took over Wessex Water and was a patron of New Labour's 1998 party conference. Just coincidentally, Enron figures among 26 companies that gained exemptions from laws curbing air pollution in Texas.

The Kyoto agreement was massively inadequate to the task of saving the environment for future generations. It would still have allowed the USA to buy its way out of having to cut back emissions.

But the Kyoto price was too high. Bush's policies are a clear warning that the capitalist system will kill the planet - if we don't kill off capitalism first.



George Bush: profits mean pollution

Hands off China

China is now enemy number one for the Bush administration.

Early this month, Bush was striding before the White House press corps issuing thinly veiled threats of retaliation against China unless the 24-member crew of a US spy plane was immediately released from Chinese custody.

As we go to press, Bush has toned down his rhetoric, much to the disappointment of some senior Republicans. But the collision between a Chinese fighter jet and the US naval spy plane marked the start of a new "cold war" that could turn very hot indeed.

We have no truck with the Beijing bureaucrats who restored capitalism to China and brutally repressed the Tiananmen Square demonstrations in 1989. But we should stand with China against US imperialism's attempt to dominate Asia.

The same aircraft carriers and spy planes that today stand off the Chinese coast will be used to smash resistance to the diktats of the IMF and World Bank if the region plunges into an economic slump

CND DEMO: No to Star Wars

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has called a demonstration to oppose Washington's National Missile Defence (son of Star Wars) programme

Assemble at Downing Street on Saturday 14 April from 12 noon

Workers Power Summer Event

Our world is not for sale! Revolution Against Global Capitalism

AFTER MAYDAY comes the election. After the election there will be huge protests against Bush and the leaders of the European Union in Gothenburg in June. After that we'll rock the leaders of the world's economic super powers in Genoa in July.

The anti-capitalist movement has shaken the world's multi-millionaires and ruling politicians. Everywhere they go, we go. We hammer home the message again and again: stop making our lives miserable with your greed, your pollution, your exploitation of millions in the name of profit.

This movement is a fantastic

response to globalisation. It's been

described as "one No and many Yes-es" Come and hear what we say yes to: the struggle for working class power and the replacement of capitalism with planned production to meet human need.

Revolution Against Global Capitalism is two days of discussion and debate including:

- Hear this brother...Women and the fight against globalisation
- Capitalism.com - can computers save the system from collapse?
- Steel-hardened cadres...Were the Bolsheviks an authoritarian party?

■ Bullets, bulldozers and balaclavas - the real face of the Israeli state.

■ The world's most powerful maniac: Is it George Bush vs the rest of the world?

■ A swing to the left? The Socialist Alliance after the general election

■ If I can't dance, it's not my revolution - Marxists debate Anarchists on the way ahead.

■ Where next after Suharto? An eyewitness report from Indonesia

■ Turtles and teamsters - the anti-capitalist movement and the new International.

For the complete programme, and to

book your ticket email event@workerspower.com

Two days of workshops and debates to change the world
Saturday and Sunday
23-24 June
Starts - 11.00am Saturday
Ends - 5.00pm Sunday

Venue: Caxton House,
St John's Way, London N19
Nearest Tube - Archway (Northern Line)