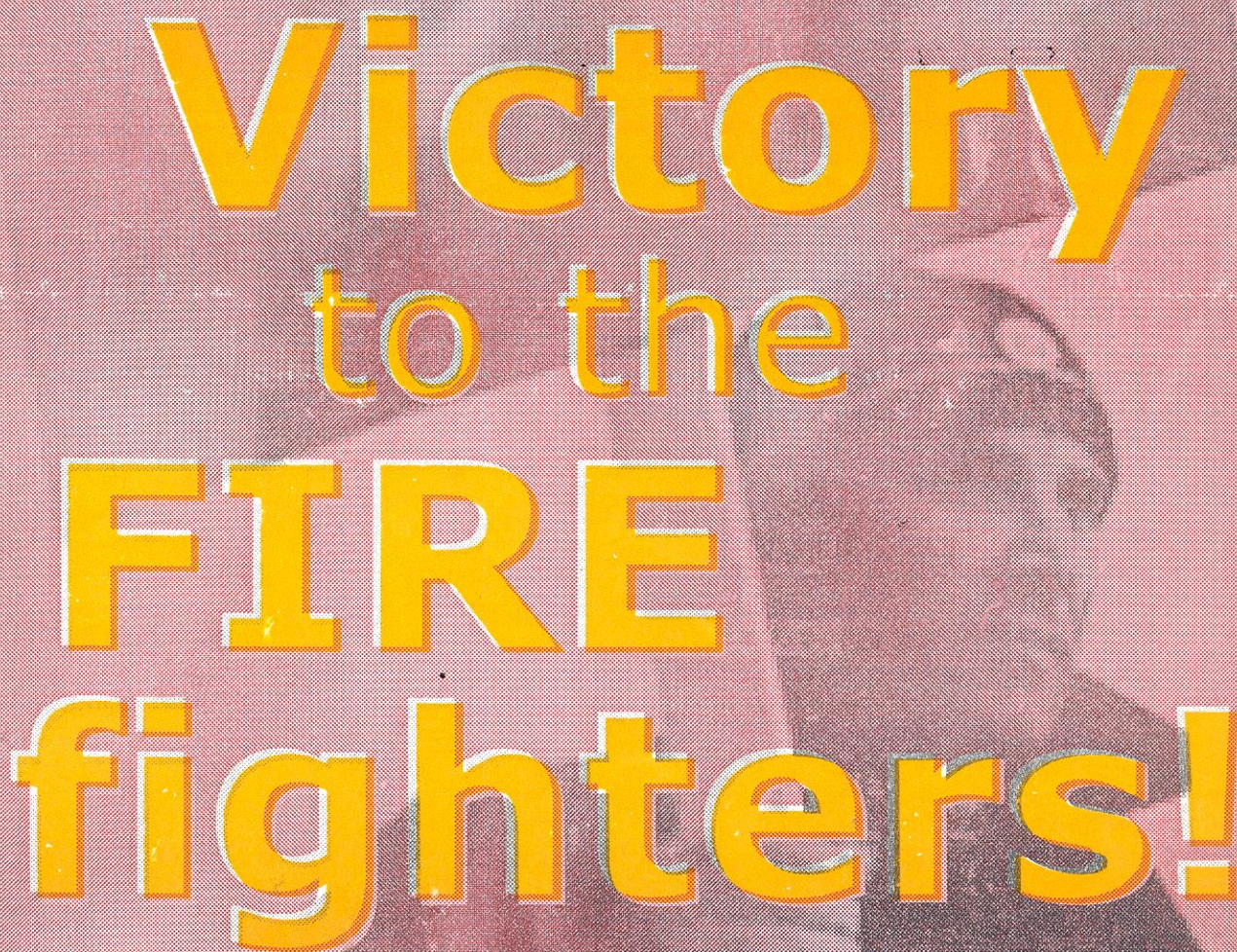


10th anniversary year

# SocialistAppeal

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

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**Victory**  
to the  
**FIRE**  
**fighters!**

**NO to Blair's "reforms"**

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**The deadline for articles for issue 108 is January 5th**

# Victory to the firefighters!

In a matter of days the entire political landscape of Britain has been transformed by the magnificent struggle of the firefighters. Their case is a simple one. They don't want the fire service undermined in the name of so-called 'modernisation' (Blairite newspeak for 'cuts') putting more lives at risk. They want a modern fire service with the resources to save and protect lives and they want to be paid a reasonable living wage. The justice of their case, and the respect which firefighters have earned from society for putting their lives on the line, goes a long way to explaining the enormous level of public support they enjoy. Despite the filth and lies spewed out by the media in recent weeks - The Sun claiming links between FBU leaders and Saddam Hussein, for example! - public support for the firefighters has grown, according to the Guardian/ ICM poll, from 47% at the start of the dispute to 53% at the beginning of the second strike. The latest poll by BBC London found 59% in support. Even these figures don't tell quite the same story as the non-stop hooting of horns at FBU picket lines, and the conversations in pubs and on public transport, which is now dominated by talk of the firefighters' struggle.

There is something more, too. After twenty years of constant attacks, privatisation, job cuts, wage freezes, speed-ups, and longer hours, finally someone is making a bold stand. We all feel the same. The firefighters struggle is our struggle - we've had enough, this far and no further! John Edmonds of the GMB is right when he says that "the government have turned this into a fight with the entire trade union movement."

The actions of Blair, Brown and Prescott only serve to stiff-

en the resolve. It is now clear to everyone that the government does not want to settle this dispute. They refuse to negotiate and block any move by the union and the local government employers to reach a deal. Negotiators for both sides talked through the night on the eve of the second strike to try to find a deal that could avert the action. At the last moment Prescott intervened to scupper the deal worth 16% over two years - not the full claim, but a big step forward - just as he had done months before. The blame for the strike having to go ahead

lies squarely at the door of the government.

Their real agenda is the complete reorganisation of the fire service for the purposes of cost-cutting. Firefighters are in favour of modernisation which helps improve their service, but the Bain proposals, backed by Blair and co, to abolish the watch system, introduce 'flexible' working practices, cut back on night shift numbers and introduce overtime have nothing to do with modernisation or saving lives, and everything to do with saving money.

The Blair government has picked this fight, they have

their own agenda for cutting and 'modernising' public services which has nothing to do with firefighters' pay. But they have picked on the wrong people. The determination of the firefighters to struggle for the pay they deserve and to protect the fire service is an inspiration to the entire trade union movement. They don't want to strike but they have been forced into it. The actions of the government have been one provocation after another. Blair's attempt to appeal over the head of the union to 'ordinary firefighters and their families' won't wash. The union is the ordinary firefighters. They voted for this action by nine to one. They have the full backing of their families and the vast majority of ordinary working people.

Just compare the arrogant approach of Labour ministers towards the unions with their snivelling and grovelling before the leaders of the bosses at the CBI, the very day after Blair's anti-FBU press conference. This is supposed to be a Labour government. It is supposed to represent the interests of ordinary working people, instead the Blairites in the leadership are faithfully representing the interests of the bosses.

The gutter press will try to blame any deaths during the strike on the firefighters. This will not wash either. Every day we hear how firefighters rush from the picket lines to try to protect lives, rescue people from burning buildings etc, and then return to the pickets. Despite the lies of the press, public opinion will place the blame for any deaths at the door of the government where it belongs.

Blair and co who introduced 'spin' to British politics are daily losing the PR battle, because of the honest and consistent way in which FBU



leaders and rank-and-file firefighters put their case. This has struck a chord with workers everywhere, not just because they respect the job firefighters do, but also because all sections of workers are feeling the same pressures, the same attacks.

At the time of the last election, the TUC's John Monks reported overhearing some 'bright young things' at Millbank discussing with relish the prospect of taking on the unions. It is now quite clear that Blair and co have provoked this strike. Their intention is to give the union movement a lesson preparing the way for wholesale 'reform' of public services. They have seriously miscalculated. Their latest claim that to pay the firefighters a decent wage would wreck the economy doesn't hold water. In the words of Charlie Whelan, former advisor to Gordon Brown at the Treasury, "there was no talk of economic Armageddon when MPs voted themselves a 40% pay rise" (BBC Breakfast 27/11/02).

Not a word of condemnation do we hear from Blair and Brown about the fatcat directors paying themselves huge bonuses. Instead they claim that to give in to the firefighters would inspire other public sector workers to fight for decent pay. For once they are right. But they cannot stop that fight taking place now anyway. Already teachers, nurses, postal workers, airport workers and others are preparing to fight back against cuts or for better pay. The firefighters are not alone, they are the front rank of millions of workers for whom a line in the sand has been crossed. Enough is enough!

Blair claims that to pay the whole public sector an extra 16% would cost £16 billion. To us that sounds like a bargain, certainly better value for money than bombing Iraq on which this money will otherwise be spent.

The government have backed themselves into a corner. The firefighters are winning the battle for public support. Their mood remains solid and determined. Meanwhile the Blair government comes under fire from all quarters. The attack on government policy by the Chief of the Defence Staff, Sir Michael Boyce must be unprecedented. In a press conference alongside defence minister Hoon, he expressed extreme concern at the fact that the armed forces were being stretched by their role in the dispute. They might not even be in a position to fight in Iraq. Admiral Boyce



made it quite clear that the army would not be crossing picket lines. Hoon and co immediately retreated arguing that the police and not troops would be used to cross picket lines. 'Oh no we won't' replied the police, themselves under threat of 'modernisation' in proposals they rejected by nine to one in a ballot last year. In desperation government sources claimed that 'ordinary citizens' would break picket lines to take red engines. Ordinary citizens overwhelmingly support the firefighters. What Blair is implying is the recruitment of a scab force, reminiscent of the 1926 General Strike. Such a step would have to be met with a concerted and united response by the whole movement.

To add to the sense of pantomime the real owners of many of the red engines have now demanded that no-one touch them because they would not be insured to do so. The real owners it turns out are in many cases, PFI companies. The Daily Mail and their friends like to talk about 'our red engines', without even realising that they have effectively been sold off.

There is even more desperate talk about using Tory anti-union legislation to ban the strike. This is an outrage. The TUC, who have declared their support for the firefighters, would have to respond to such an attack on workers' fundamental rights with decisive and united action on the part of the entire trade union movement.

Already workers in power stations,

chemical plants, on London Underground and elsewhere have correctly raised the danger to lives of working without cover from the fire service. Any workers attacked for refusing to work in these circumstances must be defended by the whole movement too.

Despite all their bluster, the government is running scared. If they do not back down then the struggle will escalate. The firefighters do not want to strike but they will not back down and see the fire service wrecked. The attitude of firefighters around the country is if these eight days don't force the government to back down then there will be another eight and another eight and eventually even all out action.

The entire labour movement must now rally to the side of the firefighters. Go to the picket lines! Move resolutions and take up collections! The fight must be taken into the Labour Party as well. The Labour leaders want a fight with the unions. The unions must give them a fight inside the Party too. Union leaders like Derek Simpson of AMICUS, Billy Hayes of the CWU and Mick Rix of ASLEF have all publicly called on their members to join the Labour Party and fight to reclaim it. We support that call one hundred percent. A section of workers are now questioning why they should be funding the Labour Party when it is attacking them. This is entirely understandable, but any move to weaken the link between the unions and Labour now would only play into Blair's hands. It is Blair who wants to break the link. The Blairites want to introduce state funding of political parties, to free themselves from the unions. They fear that the process of radicalisation and change taking place in the unions today will spread and be repeated in the Labour Party tomorrow. They are right. Exactly the same process will take place inside Labour, but it will not happen automatically. It must be organised and the unions must be at the forefront of that battle.

The firefighters can and must win their struggle. But to defeat Blairism trade unionists must fight the Labour leaders not only through industrial action, but also politically, where it counts, inside Labour. □

- **Victory to the Firefighters!**
- **For a Living wage - For the full claim - Pay Firefighters 30K**
- **No cuts - No attacks that put lives at risk**
- **For militant action to defend jobs and conditions**
- **Trade unionists reclaim the Labour Party - Fight for Socialist policies**

## London's Public Servants Still Weighting

Last month around 10,000 teachers, council workers, and firefighters marched through central London to demand an increase in the London Weighting for public sector workers. The teaching unions, the NUT and the NASUWT, are demanding £6111, the same weighting as the police, in the first joint action for decades.

As the march moved through central London it got a lot of support from the public, there were people waving from windows, and traffic beeping. The striking firefighters were a section of the workers who got a great response from the public and the marchers. The public support for the strike stems from the attacks which are being inflicted upon all workers, and especially those in the public sector. These problems are especially acute in London where workers face a much higher cost of living.

House prices are spiralling, a recent Guardian report revealed that a first time buyer must earn at least £49,000 to get a basic family home. Travel is also a problem, on average Londoners spend 3 hours more each week travelling than commuters in other cities. And for one parent families, or families where both parents work, child-minding costs are the highest in the UK. It is therefore difficult for many public sector workers to lead a normal life.

London schools have a recruitment crisis due to pay". The London Convenor for UNISON condemned the scandal of public sector wage restraint and pointed out that the MPs awarded themselves a 40% rise last year, taking their salary to over £55,000, plus £18,000 accommodation allowance. Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn received an excellent response when he said, "We are all in this together. Without decent London weighting, services will collapse. People simply can't afford to live in the communities they serve."

Workers are annoyed about the governments policy of holding down wages, while making cuts in public service budgets, and introducing new working practises. The discontent of the members is pushing the unions ever more into opposition against the government. This will inevitably begin to cause splits within the Labour Party itself in the coming period. These strikes are very important methods of struggle, but a strike on it's own is not enough to solve the problems which face working people. It is necessary for workers to have a genuine expression in parliament, we must take the struggle into the Labour Party, kick out the rightwing careerists who have hijacked the party, and put forward a socialist programme which can solve the problems of working people. □



# Firefighters' view

On the picket line at Ealing Fire Station, **Bob Gregory**, West Hampstead Fire Station FBU Branch Rep spoke to **Rob Walsh**

RW: How is it going?

BG: Well, there is an absolute determination here to see the dispute through to a successful conclusion. If anything the way we have been treated by the government has made us more determined to dig our heels in and win. Nearly all of us firefighters voted Labour; I don't know if that will happen next time!

When a firefighter finishes his or her training the pay is just over £18k per year, which increases to £21k after four years. Then you don't get your next increment for another 15 years. And there are no shift allowances, no pre-arranged overtime; you only get overtime if you are out on a call which goes over the end of your shift.

The Prison Officers have had bitter experiences after accepting an "independent review" which linked pay with changes in working practices. I was at a meeting recently in South London where a Prison Officers' union rep warned firefighters: "don't go down that road or you will regret it; it is a trap!"

RW: What reaction have you had from ordinary people in the street?

BG: The support from the pub-

lic has been spectacular. We have a fighting fund which will be used to relieve hardship if the dispute goes on a long time, and people have donated hundreds of pounds already. From what we've seen it's hard to imagine that any of the public at large don't support us.

Yet you open the papers and we're being hammered.

A few people have said that nurses and many other public sector workers are poorly paid and that a big settlement for us would open the floodgates. It is true that many workers get low wages - but that doesn't mean we have to accept it. I wish I could fight for nurses' pay (my wife is a nurse and they definitely deserve more), but this dispute is about firefighters.

The last thing we want is a settlement that leaves us in the position of having to strike again in a few years. The employers can't possibly imagine what it costs us emotionally to take action like this. When we attend emergencies we see the pain, fear and bewilderment on people's faces and it breaks our hearts every time. □

# London Labour Party conference - Revival of class politics

**Pam Woods, Unison Delegate (personal capacity)**

The conference was an inspiration to those of us who have consistently rejected the idea, put forward by those with no understanding of the history and traditions of the British working class, that the 'Blair project' has transformed the Labour Party into a 'bourgeois' party full of middle-class professionals and business people. Delegates from the traditional working-class unions - FBU, RMT, CWU, UNISON, GMB, TGWU... - were out in force, almost equalling the number of constituency delegates.

during a break).

However, the organisers could not succeed in isolating conference from the events taking place in the real world. A friendly lobby of firefighters greeted delegates as they arrived. An emergency motion, moved by the FBU and seconded by Unison, calling for full support for the firefighters, was passed with about eight votes against, from a total of around 350 delegates present. Mick Shaw from the FBU, moving the resolution, received loud applause before even reaching the rostrum. Referring to

the firefighters. He said FBU pickets had expressed to him their disappointment with a government they thought would improve living standards and working conditions.

A GMB resolution calling on Labour members of the Local Government Association, the council employers' body, to use their majority on that body to force through an increase in London Weighting payment for local authority staff was carried with only a handful of votes against.

Conference turned noisy, despite pleas from the chair, during what was intended to have been a relatively innocuous question and answer session involving a panel of MPs, MEPs and GLA members. Delegates rounded on the government for talking of sending troops across FBU picket lines. "Tony Blair is not the Labour Party!" declared one delegate, "The government is not the Labour Party!", another. Jim Mortimer, former Party General Secretary, demanded to know of the panel: "How do they reconcile their agenda {i.e. on child poverty, housing, etc.} with working with the Blairite tendency within the Labour Party?" Eddie McDermot from the TGWU said: "Let's take back the Labour Party conference now! Blair speaks not for us."

Just over 100 delegates, along with several striking firefighters, attended the Socialist Campaign Group's lunchtime fringe meeting.

Andy Gilchrist received a standing ovation after paying tribute to the striking firefighters and condemning the idea of any cuts to the service. Barry Camfield, who is standing for General Secretary of the TGWU next year, criticised the government for not repealing the anti-union laws. He pointed out that, in particular, they were preventing other unions taking secondary action in support of the FBU. He said the unions could not pay their affiliation fees to the Party and then just sit back and wait. They had to get into the Party actively, make alliances with the constituency parties and left-wing backbench MPs. Referring to those who sought to break the link with the Party, he said their views were "understandable, but wrong; we have to understand history in order to go forward". Jeremy Corbyn reiterated this view: "We have come too far to give up now. Let's reclaim this great movement."

The conference is symptomatic of the period we are entering. It is inevitable that the battles taking place in the trades unions will spill over into the Labour Party. Working class people are sick to the back teeth of privatisation, poor public services, inadequate pay and overwork. The unions must take the battle into the Labour Party, demanding socialist policies - the only measures that can guarantee their members and their families a decent and dignified life.



The draft agenda was predictably bland and could have allowed for a successfully stage-managed affair: policy forums and question and answer sessions (or all questions and no answers, as one union delegate put it to me

the Baine report, he reminded delegates that it was Professor Baine who had recommended the setting of the minimum wage at only £3.60 an hour.

Jeremy Corbyn, seconding from Unison, condemned the government for demonising

## Union Leader in call to overthrow New Labour

Derek Simpson, general secretary of Amicus, has urged union members to rise up and seize back the Labour Party from the Blairites. "We want to be engaging more, not less", stated Simpson. "If we are there in much

greater numbers we can take back Labour."

According to reports, this call for a "revolution" within the Labour Party is likely to be taken up by other union leaders in an increasingly organised opposition.

"People are saying that new Labour is

falling out of favour but the New Labour bubble burst a while ago, it is still expelling air. This Government lost its popularity with working people for not doing enough for them. Some may look back in the future at this point and say that was where New Labour's decline started."

## Control staff ballot for action

**A**ir Traffic Control staff are also balloting for strike action after two directors of NATS, the privatised National Air Traffic Service, were awarded huge sums as bonuses. 50 Delegates voted to ballot 2000 members on strike action. A union spokesman said "Even a 15 minute stoppage would cause havoc".

The huge bonuses - one got £62,000, and the other got £215,000 - are no doubt in recognition of the great job they have done in running the service into the ground since 51% of it was taken over by a coalition of comprising British Airways, Virgin, British Midland, Airtours, Britannia, JMC, Monarch and EasyJet. Despite claims that this Public Private Partnership (PPP) on a grand scale would lead to a "massive injection of investment" NATS only escaped bankruptcy earlier this year after Gordon Brown stepped in with his chequebook to bail it out.

NATS has a debt of around £3/4Bn, and is trying to make cost cuts of £200m. The union Prospect, which represents air traffic control staff, have serious concerns about the health and safety implications of making these cuts. The members have also identified problems with the technical equipment, for example badly placed VDU's which cause back problems, and eye strain.

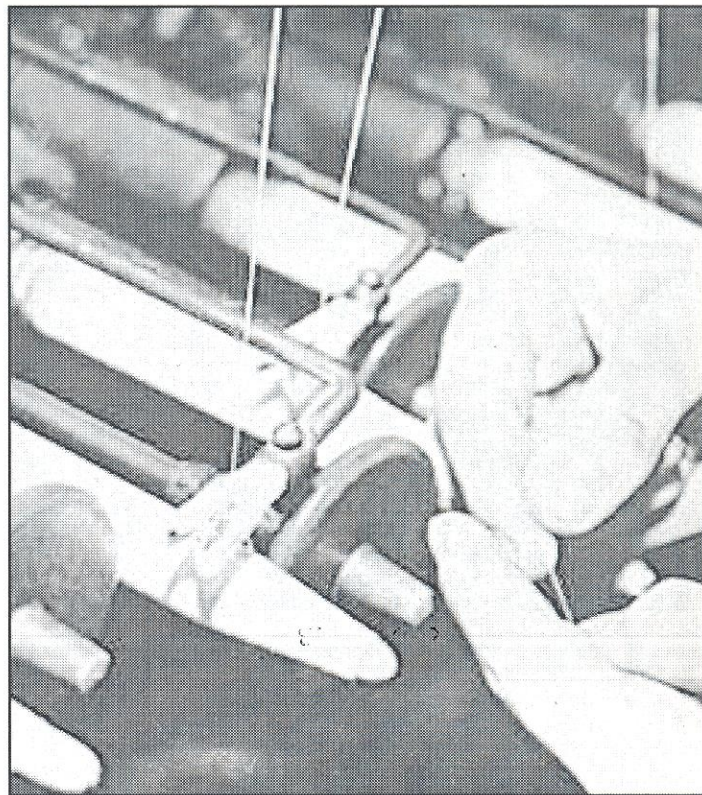
David Luxton, Prospect Aviation Officer said: increased income is vital to fund investment in equipment and staff. "The training, skills and conditions of air traffic controllers and engineers are crucial to the ATC system." □

## Fineline Cymru: Sewing the seeds of discontent

**W**hen Fineline Cymru, a high street swimwear supplier employing 35 women workers was taken over in 2000, by a new boss, John Potter, he was full of stories about his plans for the business. Once he had pocketed a Welsh Assembly assistance grant all the promises ended. Conditions in the workplace deteriorated, overtime payments were reduced to the normal hourly rate, and workers faced late payment of wages, and job cuts.

When the employees left work On Thursday 31st of October, they had not been paid for two weeks, and the workers paid monthly had not received pay for five weeks. When the workers demanded their wages a fax was sent to the factory telling them that they were all sacked. They immediately occupied the factory in protest, and vowed to stay there till they were given their back wages in full. The local community responded by, sending in food parcels, fried breakfasts and messages of support.

The Occupation ended after 6 days on Tuesday 12th November when the company, which has been placed into receivership, announced that all the workers were redundant and would be entitled to redundancy pay, money owed and pay for holidays owed. One of the workers said in a statement released by the GMB union: "The employer has put us through hell. Many of us have worked here 20+ years. The hardship we have faced and still have to face, has not broken our spirit." □



## BAA dispute: Reject the offer

**L**ast month T&G workers in seven UK airports voted 65 to 35%, (2:1) with a high turnout, to take strike action, against their employer, the British Airport Authority (BAA). They were offered a measly 1.7% + £150 backdated to April 2002, with 1% over the rate of inflation agreed for next year. This comes against the background of increased workload and responsibilities after the terrorist attacks of September 11th last year. The company wants an increase in duties, but are not prepared to pay for it, in spite of healthy profits this year.

The action will involve 4,000 workers, half of BAA's workforce. Those taking action are firefighters, security guards and operational support workers, in Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Southampton, Aberdeen, Glasgow, and Edinburgh airports.

The T&G quite correctly urged the employers to negotiate, while giving notice of strike dates, and stating their intention to strike if the offer did not measure up, giving the BAA 17 days to table a better offer.

The BAA have now tabled a revised offer which the union is going to ballot the members on with the recommendation that they vote against accepting it. Meanwhile the strikes have been postponed. T&G General Secretary Bill Morris has said: "We have suspended the days of industrial action until the ballot has been conducted, but should the members vote to reject the new offer - as we are encouraging them to do - then we will be announcing days when our members will be taking industrial action."

"Our members have demonstrated their concern for the travelling public in postponing the previously planned days of industrial action. Now it is for BAA to show their commitment to avoiding disruption by making a significantly improved offer." □



I left school at 16 around June 2001. I was chuffed at finishing school - it was boring and felt like being in prison for 11 drawn-out years. I didn't fancy college - all I wanted was a decent job so I could get my own place. I quickly realised things weren't quite going to work out that way, but anyway, that's skipping ahead. I went straight down to all the agencies, offices, advisers etc. but after a month's messing around with them nothing had happened, so when a friend told me about a labouring job in a local store, I went for it and managed to get taken on. At last I thought I was on my way.

I was doing heavy labouring at Carpet Right. It killed me. I was totally knackered when I got home in the evenings so my social life went out the window. After 4 weeks I'd had enough and had to quit. This was not an easy decision as it meant I'd have to leave my lodgings and move back in with my parents. £680 pay hardly seemed adequate. And after paying all my bills I was left with closer to

about £300. This put me down quite a bit as I felt almost cheated after all the hard work and hours I had put in. But I moved on and thought about what next. So I went back to the agencies and managed to scratch a measly 2 days work in a small warehouse at Novamedix. This was a job counting nuts and bolts and stuff like that - very exciting so I worked my 2 days there and thought ok what next?

So I went back to the agencies and managed to get another job, this time one week at Howard Tenens - probably the most demoralising job I have ever done. I was counting freebie sugar sachets for restaurants. I only got £150 for that. So by 3 months after leaving school I was thinking what I set out to do in the beginning was looking more and more distant by the day.

About a month and a half before Christmas I managed to get 3 weeks at Niceday Guilbert. Not a nice job but I needed the money. It was just as boring as all the other jobs but a little bit more physical. I was packing products into boxes for

## Sean's job experience

about 2 days then picking products for other people to pack before being moved to despatch, loading lorries. About £180 pw. I must have used 0.3% of my school training at work so far - what does that tell you about John Hanson School and what does that tell you about work?

The week before Christmas I got two weeks at Iron Mountain packing boxes in boxes!! Rocket science if you can imagine. The only way to get through the day was to put my brain in neutral. £180 pw for two weeks then unemployed again. Great, back at square one.

For the next 4 months all I hear is you're not old enough or you've got no experience. So from leaving school I have had 6 jobs, countless rejections and I'm broke and back living with my parents again. I felt like crap and was reduced to begging off my mum for money.

Finally I found a job on a building site and I was told I would be guaranteed steady work. But for 2 weeks I'm pissed around and nothing happens. A real wind-up. So

you can imagine how I felt - pretty much worthless, not to mention still skint.

I tried a new agency which had just opened up here in Andover. By pot luck I was given a job straight away - only 1 week and catering. It was only £150 but I was desperate. The week after I was placed with Stannah Stairlifts, would you believe it, for one whole week, operating a cardboard compactor. A totally thrilling experience, as you might imagine. £180 and straight back to the agency. Yep, you guessed it another whole week's work, this time at Powerbox. Easy work but bloody hell was it boring!! At least I got £190 for that.

Through a "friend of a friend" I got cash in hand jobbie not on the cards, as it were. £70ish a day heavy lifting, on and off for 2 weeks. Tomorrow, thrill of thrills, I start back at Powerbox. □

By Sean (Andover)





## Friction Dynamex workers win their case - Give them their jobs back!

In June 2001, 87 workers were sacked from the Welsh based car components firm Friction Dynamex after eight weeks of lawful industrial action - they have maintained the strike ever since. It was announced last month that after nearly two years on strike, the workers at Friction Dynamex have won their employment tribunal. It now remains to be seen whether they will now be given their jobs back.

The company seized the opportunity to sack the workers in accordance with employment law passed by the Labour government in the employment act 1999, which gives protection against dismissal to striking workers for the first eight weeks of action only.

The strike was called in response to deteriorating working conditions, a reduction in holiday allowance and changes in shift patterns. The problems began when Friction Dynamex was taken over by American owners in 1997, since the takeover they have had no pay rise year on year. In 2001 the company announced vicious attacks on terms and conditions, holiday entitlement and shift patterns were to be affected, and wages to be cut by 15%. At the same time they pushed for a 'no-strike' deal.

But the pressure the company had been trying to put the workforce under finally blew up in their face. In February 2001, the union balloted for strike action and 95% were in favour of action. Strikes began at the end of April on a week-by-week

alternating basis, and within a week those on strike were locked out (on enforced holiday), those who remained in work had the new terms and conditions imposed upon them. At the end of June, the employers gave the workers who were locked out three days to return on the new terms and conditions, and after three days passed with nobody going back, the 87 men outside were sacked.

It took over 6 months to get to the preliminary hearing of the industrial tribunal, it is only now one year after that that the industrial tribunal proper has taken place, and found in their favour. Over the whole time the picket has remained firm, and been very active building support throughout the movement, lobbying Parliament, and the TUC and Labour conferences.

The tribunal has finally found in the workers favour, but that does not automatically mean that the workers will be reinstated in their jobs, the union must bring pressure to bare to ensure that all the sacked workers are reinstated on their original wages and conditions. The union movement must take decisive action on the question of eight week rule' and other reactionary anti union laws. We cannot let the law stand in the way of the workers right to struggle to improve their conditions. If workers are compelled to break the law in order to defend their interests, the entire movement must be mobilised in their defence. □

## William Cook's official dispute AEEU/GMB week 82

**D**ear brothers and sisters, sadly we now find ourselves in the unenviable position of still being in dispute. Still without the security of a regular income, our second winter of discontent. Our families are facing a second bleak Christmas.

Our new industrial tribunal date is still over 19 weeks away, to be held on the 18th of March 2003. By this date we will have been in dispute for 101 weeks. The longest running dispute in Britain today.

All this because we refused to sign new contracts of employment that would have robbed us of between £80 & £120 per week. We did not down tools, we did not walk off the job. We went through the democratic process of a ballot which came back with a 100% majority in favour of taking industrial action.

- All this because we dared to stand up and be counted.
- All this because we held a one day official strike.

● All this because we dared to believe that in Britain today you can stand up for what is every working persons right to protect their jobs on original terms and conditions. We were not looking for a pay rise, we were not asking for better working conditions, more holidays or longer break times. How could this happen in 2002. This is the new Millennium not Victorian Britain. New Labour and the TUC must look closely at this dispute and ask themselves why any employer can blatantly get away with breaking todays so called union laws and regulations. Make no mistake employers are looking at this dispute with the hope that these laws and regulations will not be upheld at tribunal. This must not be allowed to happen!

The longevity of this dispute is now definitely taking its toll. How much longer can we maintain the picket at William Cook Parkway? When we started back in April 2001 we said we would see it through to the end. We are now wondering when the end will be. We have been let down throughout this dispute time after time, with delay after delay, poor excuses and unforgivable mistakes on the part of our legal team. We still believe we can win this fight, and with your continued financial support we hope to go all the way.

We need to somehow get our plight into the media, we have tried, but to no avail. Perhaps someone out there can get this dispute the public recognition it deserves. Let's hope so for all our sakes. This could happen to you next! It won't, if we stand together united in our fight for what is right.

Thank you to everyone who has supported us in this dispute!

For any further information please contact:  
Eddie Grimes on 0114 2432540 or 077 655 460 56

Or write to:  
The William Cook Strike Fund,  
C/o Eddie Grimes  
116, Richmond Park Crescent,  
Handsworth,  
Sheffield,  
S13 8HG

# Newcastle keeps up the pressure against privatisation

Around 5,000 people, including fire-fighters, rail workers and local government workers took to the streets of Newcastle upon Tyne on 2 November to protest about the threat to public services from privatisation. The demonstration, held under the banner of "Our City is not for Sale", was organised by the Newcastle Public Services Alliance and was supported by all the major public service trade unions, including UNISON, GMB, FBU, CWU, RMT and the college trade union NATFHE.

**Caron Walker**  
UNISON Steward, Northumbria Healthcare Branch  
(personal capacity)

**A**s Hilary Wainwright pointed out as chair of the rally, she had never seen so many trade union general secretaries on one platform!

Speaker after speaker talked about the need to defend public services from the onslaught of privatisation and how the trade union movement must stand together to protect our public services. Hilary Wainwright pointed out that "the multi-nationals hadn't changed their spots" and we couldn't allow democracy to die by allowing private companies into our public services. She felt the demonstration put paid to the idea that "the trade union movement was only concerned with pay and conditions - this was a wake-up call to say we can't take our services for granted.

Paul Mackney from NATFHE explained that his members were college lecturers and support staff. Although they are not usually regarded as at the forefront of the industrial struggle, his union had come top of the strike league two years in a

row. He explained this is due to the fact that 22,000 out of 77,000 of staff had been forced out of their jobs and those remaining faced massive increases in workloads. Pay has fallen 12% behind teachers and they were embarking on further strike action to improve their pay and conditions. His main message was the need to get rid of the Tory anti-trade union legislation, which had been strengthened by the Labour Government, to deny staff their rights to withdraw their labour. A member of the NUS Executive also spoke of the need to fight the privatisation of education to avoid the development of a two-tier education system. The idea of 'top-up' fees could lead to a massive increase for students and their families - to as much as £15,000 a year - a move that would force out working class students. As she said, "the only struggles we lose are the ones we abandon".

Derek Simpson, the newly elected leader of AMICUS, talked about the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) resolution passed at this

year's Labour Party conference. This resolution (supported by UNISON, GMB, T&G and AMICUS) showed what unity can do. Although his union's policy is to support PFI, their delegation supported the resolution - a move that inflicted only the second conference defeat for Blair since becoming party leader. He ended by saying that he wants "to see the day when my members and our banner is at these demonstrations".

Communication Workers Union (CWU) leader Billy Hayes continued this theme by saying that the fault line between the trade unions and Labour can be fixed if Labour was to drop the idea that privatisation was the best way to deliver services. Couldn't Labour see that they would reap the rewards at the elections? He explained how 100,000 jobs had been lost in the telecomms industry due to privatisation and that the British postal service, with two deliveries a day, was once the envy of the world. However, the lack of public investment and the pressures

to privatise amounted to the privatisation of the democratic process. He concluded, "PFI has passed its sell by date.... If there's enough money to go to war, there's enough money to pay the fire-fighters."

Gary Jarvis explained about the No Sweat/GMB campaign targeting Nike and how a recent survey they undertook showed that 65% of employers in the E1 postcode district of London were paying under the minimum wage. The speaker from UNISON, Heather Wakefield, reminded the audience that the city of Newcastle had been built on the sweat of working people in the shipyards, in the mines and on the railways but that the City Council was "hell bent on privatised urban villages". She explained that privatisation was pushing public service workers out of our cities because they can't afford to live there or the costs of travelling into the cities.

"This is my City and it's not for sale to anyone" proclaimed Bill Dodds, one of the Newcastle councillors



Picture by Carly Dawson

who had been fighting the privatisation of services. As a public service worker himself, he had been born in Newcastle and had always lived in Newcastle. Two weeks after he'd been elected, 17 years ago, the council had been rate-capped by the Tories. "I spent the next ten years fighting the Tories but I didn't expect to be still fighting to defend public services under a Labour government". He explained that the Labour Group was committed to protecting public services but national policies made this difficult. For example, if the council's housing stock remains with the council they have to find the investment needed but if it is given to an 'arms-length' company such as a housing trust then the Government will provide £160 million. He was under no illusion that any arms-length organisation is the first stage to privatisation and that "public services deliver the best for people". As one local councillor pointed out at the end of the rally, the first public owned housing in Newcastle was purchased in 1920 from money borrowed from the Boilermakers' Union - showing that the trade union movement still has a stake in

public services.

Alan McLean from the FBU explained that privatisation within the fire service means new fire stations with less staff. He felt that PFI is not the way forward - you only need to look at the railways to see that. The current dispute in the fire service showed democracy in action with an 87% turnout and 80% in favour of action. "You can't lead members without their will" he said and highlighted an unpublished report by Ernst and Young revealed that there needs to be a 100% increase in fire service personnel. "All we are asking for is recognition for what we do, we're not seeking special treatment, we're seeking fair treatment. United we will win". The importance of the fire-fighters dispute was recognised by the RMT speaker, Alex Gordon, who said that the safety of his members were at stake so they will be supporting them. He looked to the movements in Spain and Italy where general strikes had taken place, many of whom weren't even in trade unions. He also praised his members, train guards, who had been in dispute with Arriva for 10 months and were now in their 22nd day of strike action. He concluded

that only when the trains were re-nationalised would we get away from expensive fares, delays and dirty trains.

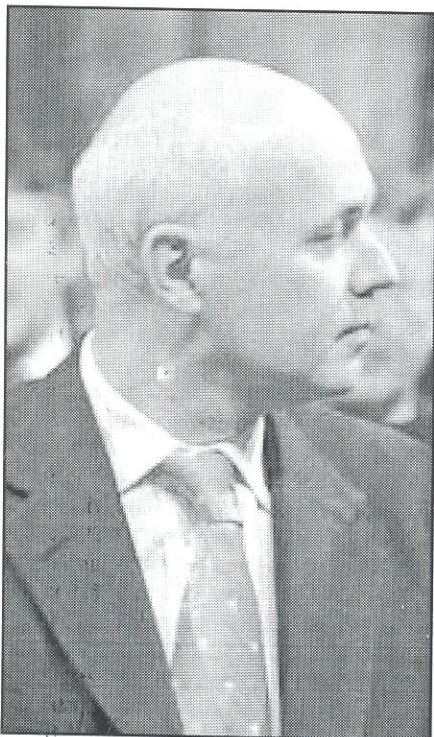
John Edmonds, as the last speaker, returned to the resolution passed at Labour Party Conference, passed by a 2:1 majority, by saying he was pleased to be here on the platform to promote Labour Party policy against privatisation. He explained that in the first three years of any PFI deal, 15% goes to the middlemen (accountants and the like) and that last year the largest 15 PFI contractors gave pay increases to their directors, on average, of 32%. On this basis, he said, "let's pay the fire-fighters!". He also rounded on the Labour leadership by pointing out that it was the trade union movement who had held services together for 18 years and we shouldn't be called wreckers! □

**Newcastle Public Services' Alliance - an organisation supported by UNISON - has grown from a small group of tenants protesting about the selling off of council housing stock to a cross community, joint trade union movement concerned about all aspects of public service provision. They published a report, "Our City is not for Sale" to warn of the consequences of privatising services, highlighting the dramatic effect on jobs, services and the local economy.**

**With the local trade unions, they were successful in September of seeing off a bid from BT to take over a number of council services such as rent collection, housing benefits, council tax, payroll services and IT. At £250 million, it is the biggest in-house tender to be won in local government.**

**Analysis of the two bids (in-house and BT), showed that in delivering the same level of service the in-house bid could:**

- Offer savings 4 times greater than BT - totalling £38 million
- Match the level of investment proposed by BT
- The full financial benefits generated will be available to the council because "the in-house option will not be obliged to deliver or facilitate profits for shareholders. □



## Tories in Crisis - The Plots Thicken

Iain Duncan Smith is "murally dyslexic," according to Tory backbench MP Anthony Steen, "he can't read the writing on the wall!" The "nasty party" as their own leading light Theresa May dubbed them, stumbles from one crisis to the next.

By Phil Mitchinson

The issue of adoption for unmarried and gay couples is an important one, but is not the root cause of this latest Tory debacle. The press make much of IDS (the Tory leader not the bowel disease) history as a plotter and a backstabber in the days of Major's leadership. He voted against the 'party line' more than 40 times over Europe. True as this undoubtedly is, the Tory leader's paranoia, seeing plots around every corner, is not the source of this crisis either. In reality the Tory Party, the most successful bourgeois party in history, is hopelessly split reflecting the divisions in the capitalist class about the way forward for their system. The Tory leader demands his party "unite or die" - for now, they can do neither.

With the vultures circling above his troubled leadership for months, Duncan Smith set this latest runaway train in motion himself. Unsettled by a second successive poor performance against Blair in the Commons, the Tory leader was in no mood to compromise with so-called modernisers over the issue of blocking gay couples from adopting. John Bercow resigned from the shadow

cabinet in protest.

"We cannot go on in this fashion," IDS retorted. "We have to pull together, or we will hang apart."

It was agreed that it would be a mistake to make his "unite or die" speech at a pre-arranged press conference to launch the Tories' latest right-to-buy policy in the East End of London. Presumably they feared the chants of "go on then, die!" from local tenants.

To reinforce his status as Tory leader, he would appear instead at Central Office, Tory HQ, flanked by senior members of the shadow cabinet. But the mess which ensued - two shadow ministers were left kicking their heels at an East End estate as Duncan Smith's trip was cancelled with 10 minutes' notice - showed that the leadership was floundering.

Following his "unite or die" plea, no doubt feeling reinvigorated by the sound of his own voice - which apparently prompted a flood of favourable faxes from grassroots Tories - the self-proclaimed "Quiet Man" made another error. The new 'champion of Britain's vulnerable people' (!) headed to London's prestigious Ivy restaurant for an engagement with television

executives. "Iain couldn't make it to the East End, but he could make it to the Ivy," one critic said. "What a dreadful message." Never mind, one imagines the tenants were not too devastated to have been deprived of the pleasure of his company.

### "Unite or die"

Thatcher then made her customary helpful intervention in the crisis. Asked about the future of the party and its leader she replied, "The Tory party will last. I don't know about Iain Duncan Smith because we all die ... but the party doesn't."

Rather than "unite or die", the feelings expressed in the press by leading and backbench Tories alike suggest a different slogan aimed at their present leader - "You die and then we'll unite."

"D'you think we've peaked too soon?" quipped one Tory peer. Graveyard humour is evidently all they have left. "Who persuaded IDS to make that crass, that catastrophic statement?" asked one front-bench MP, quoted in *The Guardian*. "He holds a press conference to say: 'I lead a party that is out of control, and there's nothing I can do!'"

Many Tory MPs recalled the 46 times IDS had voted against the John Major government. They staggered round the place blinded by fury and despair, telling any reporter who would listen what they thought of their leader. "He was a fifth-columnist, a saboteur," said one backbencher. "Now he asks for loyalty. Him! Loyalty!"

Another was even more blunt: "That bastard was the most disloyal bastard of all the bastards John Major had to cope with. And do you know why? Because he's a bastard!"

"Whatever IDS thinks, there aren't any cabals gathered against him. It's just a lot of individuals who think he's no good," commented one Labour MP.

Former foreign secretary Sir Malcolm Rifkind warned the party was in danger or "tearing itself apart" and said Mr Duncan Smith - who had no front bench experience before becoming leader - needed better advice.

"I hope there is a clear strategy there. I have to confess it's difficult to identify at this stage," he told BBC TV's *Newsnight*. Unlike in IDS's plotting days it seems Tory MPs no longer bother with backstabbing, preferring to stab the

## The present Tory leadership is all at sea precisely because Blair and co have stolen their clothes, spending limits, privatisation of public services, immigration control.

current leader in the front instead

They cannot unite, but, unfortunately, they will also not die. For the present the capitalist class is happy enough with the performance of the Blair government, which is assiduously defending their interests and their profits. However, with each passing day the outlines of the future crisis in the Labour Party are clear to see. The Labour leaders are happy to do the bidding of the bosses but the Labour Party has another side - its rank and file and its organic connection to the trade unions. Despite the efforts of the Blairites the party remains wedded to the trade unions, themselves already passing through the first stage of transformation after years of right wing stranglehold. The process of change taking place in the unions and the developing crisis in society must find a reflection inside the Labour Party at a certain stage. The ruling class will not always be able to rely on the Labour leaders to carry through their interests. They will turn back to the Tories.

The present Tory leadership is all at sea precisely because Blair and co have stolen their clothes: spending limits, privatisation of public services, immigration control. Whilst the response to crisis at some point will be Labour moving left and dumping Blairism, the Tories will move further to the right. They have within their ranks the outlines of future splits to the right too, in the shape of their most xenophobic, monarchist and racist elements.

Yet the Tories can get back in to office. That seems unlikely in the next election, at this stage. No-one would put money on the Tories, in fact, in the bookies you can get good odds on when Duncan Smith will be removed as leader. Yet

it is their own crisis rather than enthusiasm for Blair that leads some papers to ask whether they might be driven into third place behind the Liberals next time around. Disillusion with Blair led to massive abstentions at the last election. That can only grow as Blair and co continue with their devastating plans to privatise public services. Even by the next election many former Tory voters may decide to return to their roots, while Labour voters increasingly sit at home. A lot can happen before the next election.

Papers like *The Mail* mourn the death of their beloved party and blame the pygmies in the leadership. Major, Hague, IDS are compared most unfavourably with their great favourites, Thatcher and Churchill.

### Imperial purple

Lord Cranborne, the former Tory leader of the Lords, was withering. "They look increasingly like the latter days of the Roman empire, with six or seven dwarves fighting for the imperial purple, and the very battle will ensure that once one of them has got what remains of the purple, a rag, that there will be no empire to run."

So will there be a challenge. The Guardian reports that the 25 MPs needed to spark an election are on standby to move at any time. Supporters of Kenneth Clarke and Michael Portillo are going out of their way to talk down a leadership contest. That should be enough to make one suspicious.

Leon Brittan made it clear that a new election for leader would be damaging for the Tories, making them look as hopeless, hapless and divided as when they elected IDS last year. Instead Brittan strongly suggests that IDS should do the honourable thing and fall

on his sword. In their usual deceitful round-the-houses method he doesn't actually say this, but combines the statement that there should not be an election with the thought that maybe Duncan Smith wouldn't still be leader come the next general election. Only one conclusion can be drawn from that. He should resign and leave the choice of a new leader to the MPs, not allow the Tory party's hang 'em, flog 'em, and kick 'em out of the country rank and file to elect a replacement.

### Holding off

The prospect of taking over the leadership of the Tories is not one many relish at the moment. Even defeated candidate, and dumped Party Chairman David Davis wishes to hold off for a while yet. One of his supporters leaked to the press that he is desperate to avoid a challenge this side of the next general election because he fears that he will just inherit a "wasteland".

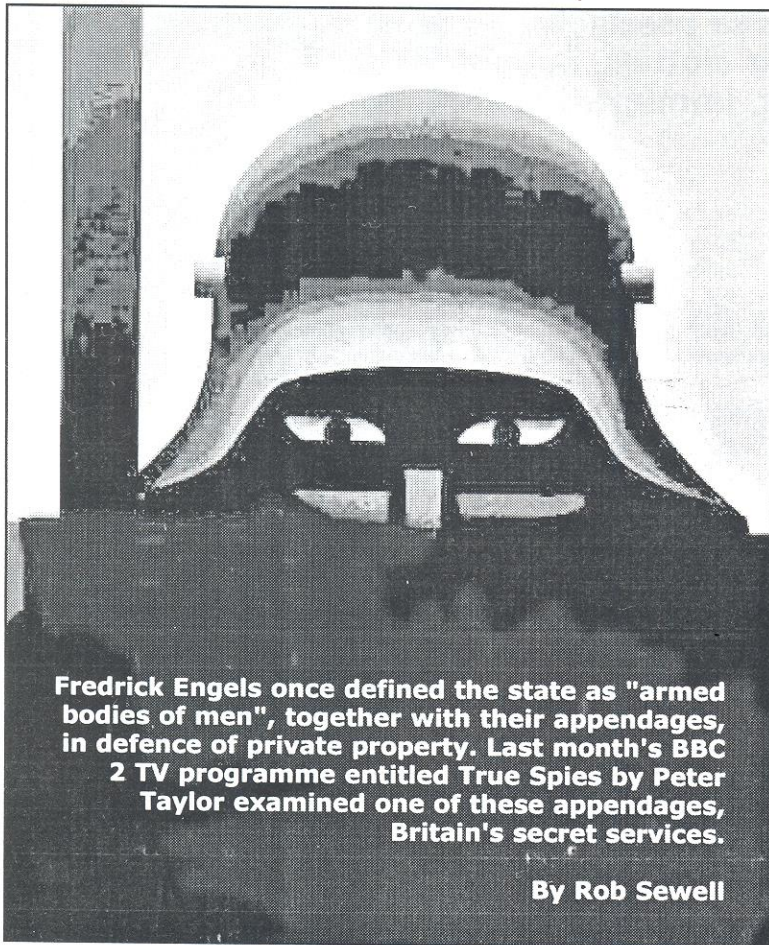
In any event whoever leads the Tory Party at the time of the next General Election doesn't make much difference. The key to that election will be events. It will be war in Iraq, the economy, privatisation of public services that will be decisive. The Blair leadership of the Labour Party on its present course will create more disillusionment, support for Labour will fall again, the turnout will decline too. All these events will play their part in a new process of radicalisation within the Labour Party in the next period. But even so it is difficult to imagine the Tories staging enough of a comeback to win that poll. It would be the greatest comeback since Lazarus.

The death of leadership in the Tory Party is not the cause of their crisis, but it is not an accident either. The failings of

these leaders faithfully reflect the impasse of their system. Nye Bevan once said of the Tory leaders (including Churchill) they have nothing to say about tomorrow, and harp on about the past because they have no part to play in the future. They are a doomed party representing a doomed class and a doomed system. The crisis in the Tory Party is symptomatic of the impasse facing the profit system. The sickness of that system spreads like a cancer affecting every aspect of society. The crisis of this system affects all classes in society. For us it means stress, low pay, a housing crisis and so on. The divisions in the Tory Party are part of this process too. In fact, the three pillars of the British Establishment, the three Cs - Church, Crown and Conservative Party - are hopelessly divided over how best to proceed. Up to their necks in sleaze, or corruption, scandal or intrigue, their crises reflect the inability of the system to offer any way forward for society.

The Tories will move virulently to the right in defence of diseased and decaying capitalism in years to come. Their electoral fortunes will rise and fall but scream and screech as they might in the end, united or not, they will die, along with their system.

The great Tory leader Lord Salisbury mused on what it would be like to be the last Tory. Salisbury, wrote in 1882: "It will be interesting to be the last Conservative. I foresee that that will be our fate." Duncan Smith won't be the man to find that out, but the sooner their demise the better for the rest of us. The writing is on the wall not only for Duncan Smith but also for the capitalist system and its most consummate representatives The British Conservative Party. □



**Fredrick Engels once defined the state as "armed bodies of men", together with their appendages, in defence of private property. Last month's BBC 2 TV programme entitled True Spies by Peter Taylor examined one of these appendages, Britain's secret services.**

**By Rob Sewell**

**T**he programme revealed how in "democratic" Britain, MI5 and the Special Branch systematically infiltrated political groups and organisations, and secretly spied on trade union leaders such as Arthur Scargill and Derek 'Red Robbo' Robinson. While none of the revelations are particularly startling, what was of interest was the use of first-hand interviews by ex-MI5 agents in explaining their sordid undercover activities.

Of course, the activities of the Secret Services are nothing new. According to Peter Wright, MI5's most famous director, agents "bugged and burgled [their] way across London at the state's behest." The ruling class uses these agents to spy on and disrupt so-called "subversive" organisations that are regarded as a threat to their system.

More than two hundred years ago, at the dawn of the British trade union move-

ment, the government employed spies and agent provocateurs to infiltrate and undermine the workers' organisations. Their reports led to the imprisonment, deportation and even hanging of trade unionists. Originally this spying agency was part of the Metropolitan Police. However, in 1916, the Secret Service Bureau was relaunched as part of the Directorate of Military Intelligence and renamed MI5.

After the First World War, it developed its network of agents to monitor "subversive" organisations, in particular the Communist Party. Later, this was broadened to include such organisations as CND and Liberty. In the 1960s, the Police Act introduced regional Special Branches, and by 1975 every provincial force had its own full-time Special Branch in operation.

In the early 1970s, the Special Branch set out to closely monitor the growing

## Spies and the British Labour Movement

industrial unrest that was sweeping the country. Within a few weeks of the 1972 miners' strike MI5 shifted its emphasis to "domestic subversion", particularly the "far and wide left". MI5's F branch acted as an anti-subversion section monitoring the trade union field and rapidly expanded.

MI5 even had the leader of the Labour Party, Harold Wilson, under surveillance in the run up to the 1974 election. MI5 had a file on Wilson codenamed "Henry Worthington". Though officially denied by MI5, the author of 'Spycatcher', Peter Wright claims he and "a few malcontents" within MI5 conspired to bring down the Wilson Labour government.

However, this didn't prevent Wilson using MI5 bugging transcripts and informers' evidence to denounce Communist influence in the 1966 seamen's strike. At that time, one National Union of Seamen committee reportedly consisted entirely of Special Branch informers, and the union's right wing officials were regularly informed about the activities of union militants. In his second term as Prime Minister burglaries were carried out against Harold Wilson and his senior staff by MI5.

The "secret state", which has no accountability to Members of Parliament, is regarded as a vital weapon by the Establishment in its

underground activities against all those who pose a threat to capitalism. The trade unions and leftwing organisations and specific individuals were marked out for special attention. Key right wing union leaders were identified by MI5 as possible recruits or informers. The BBC investigation revealed that Joe Gormley, former president of the National Union of Miners, was a Special Branch informant during the 1970s.

In True Spies a former Special Branch officer claims that Mr Gormley passed on details of Arthur Scargill's and other miners' plans for industrial action in the early 1970s. But, despite receiving warnings from the top of the union, MI5 and the government failed to head off the 1972 strike. In fact, the Special Branch officer - referred to only as Alan - claims that MI5 told the government the strike would not happen, with devastating consequences for the leadership of the day.

Edward Heath's government was toppled in 1974, following mass industrial action, in what became known as the "Who Runs The Country?" election.

The MI5 agent told the programme: "The extreme left were getting the upper hand and were dictating the policy of the unions to some great extent, then we found ourselves actually going to

unions and talking to the top union officials about what was going on.

"One of them would be Joe Gormley... certainly he was in a position of power and was in a position to furnish us with what we were looking for." He added that Gormley turned informer because "he loved his country. He was a patriot and he was very wary and worried about the growth of militancy within his own union".

Arthur Scargill himself was not surprised by Gormley's "patriotic" actions, saying: "The history of our movement is littered with people in leadership positions who were either connected with the Special Branch or connected with the State."

Joe Gormley, who died in 1993 and was president of the NUM until 1982, was not the only trade union leader to have links with the "secret state". True Spies reporter Peter Taylor discovered that Special Branch was talking to more than 20 senior trade union leaders during the early 1970s. Again, this revelation did not shock Scargill, who said correctly he was only surprised that there were not even more spies within the unions.

Another Special Branch officer claims that Ford, which had a giant car manufacturing plant at Halewood on Merseyside, only agreed to invest there because of a suspected secret deal with M15 and Special Branch.

According to Former Special Branch officer, Tony Robinson, the entire workforce was routinely vetted. He said: "My senior officer said: 'One of your responsibilities, Tony, is to make certain that the Ford factory is kept clean of subversives.'"

"And part of the plan drawn up was to make certain that work would carry on smoothly at Ford without the

expected Merseyside disease of strikes and layoffs."

He told the programme that every week Ford would secretly submit a list of the latest job applicants to the local Special Branch. "We were expected to check these lists against our known subversives, and if any were seen on the list then strike a line through it," he said.

He added: "It was very, very important that the unions were monitored, and I, as a Special Branch officer, make no apologies for doing it as efficiently as I could. We're talking about thousands and thousands of families dependent on continued employment... you have a small group of subversives who can bring that factory to a stop, then I think the ends justify the means."

The programme interviewed Tom, a former trade union activist and Communist Party member, who was secretly vetted by Special Branch and denied a job at Ford's Halewood plant. Obviously very bitter he said: "How can you be proud of Britain when there's things like that going on?"

A Ford spokesman said: "We cannot confirm that Police Special Branch officers were involved in any way in the checking of job applicants or the alleged agreement with M15." In any case, the vetted workforce did not prevent the Ford plan becoming militant. This was down not to "subversives", which is typical of the police mind, but the conditions imposed by Ford management.

In the 1970s Derek Robinson was the union convenor at the British Leyland plant at Longbridge, at the time Britain's largest factory. He was eventually victimised and sacked. The programme showed how managing director Sir Michael Edwards conspired with the government

and M15 to get rid of Robinson. Phones and meetings were bugged by the secret services and the transcripts were shown to Edwards, who used them to plot Robinson's downfall.

Special Branch Officer Tony Robinson, summing up his work, said: "I suppose the whole business of being a Special Branch Officer in many instances is based on lies, on deception or you can't do your job."

Today, despite the official pronouncements to the contrary, M15 continues to monitor "subversive" organisations and individuals on the left. This 2,000-strong domestic spying outfit is now housed in The Thames House on Millbank, especially converted for a trifling £238 million. Its resources have been switched from unmasking Soviet agents to the work of "counter-subversion" and "counter-terrorism".

In a public relations exercise, M15 was introduced into the public gaze, with Stella Rimington, M15's first woman director-general, (known affectionately as 'Mrs R'), even appearing on television speaking about the virtues of modern spying. She appears in the True Spies programme, and in the manner and tone of her interview, shows her utter contempt for so-called "subversive" leftwing ideas and groups, which she regards in effect as the "enemies within." Despite her air of reasonableness, she is, as are all the tops of the secret services, reactionary through and through.

Rimington made her name - the veritable Queen of Spies - within the "service" in the state's secret war against the miners in 1984/85. She was head of F2 section, which targets trade unions and industrial disputes, and an M15 assistant director, which gave her

overall control throughout the year-long miners' strike.

Admired by Margaret Thatcher, the secret services in conjunction with the other arms of the state, were used to undermine the strike and discredit the leadership of the NUM. While this is not the main reason for the defeat of the miners' strike, it clearly shows the lengths to which the ruling class will go to defend its interests.

While many in the programme said they were "shocked" by the M15 activities, Scargill took a more sober view. "I am not shocked. I am in opposition to capitalism. I am for socialism. For the establishment I am a subversive and will be, of course, subjected to this surveillance."

Again, the state is made up of armed bodies of men in defence of private property. For those fighting to change society, it is clear that they will be subject not only to surveillance, but all the dirty tricks that the ruling class can muster to maintain their power and privileges. We have to expose their role, including that of the CIA, and their subversive activities within the labour movement, and warn against the dangers they pose to democratic rights.

It is the duty of the trade unions to set up a monitoring group to investigate and expose the interference of the intelligent services within the labour movement, especially the covert activities of rightwing organisations and publications. And we should demand the disbandment of M15, M16, the Special Branch, Military Intelligence and other secret intelligence sections. In addition, the files kept by the Secret Services on millions of people should be destroyed. □

## From war to revolution and counterrevolution

by Rob Sewell

***"In history, war has not infrequently been the mother of revolution precisely because it rocks superannuated regimes to their foundation, weakens the ruling class, and hastens the growth of revolutionary indignation among the oppressed classes." Leon Trotsky, May 1940.***

The 1930s was a period characterised by revolution and counterrevolution. Throughout Europe, under the impact of the world slump and political crisis, events unfolded in rapid succession. In Germany, Hitler rose to power over the spines of the working class. In Spain, the fall of the monarchy ushered in an unfolding revolution, which culminated in a popular insurrection against Franco. In France, the popular front government faced a wave of factory occupations, which it was eventually able to undermine with the aid of the leaders of the Communist Party. Again in Spain, the failure to carry through the revolution to a conclusion, due to the misleadership of the workers' parties, resulted in the defeat of the Republic and the victory of fascism. These tragic defeats eventually prepared the ground for a new world conflagration in which seventy million perished.

Throughout the 1930s, almost single-handedly, Trotsky waged a battle against the erroneous policies of the reformist and Stalinist leaders that served to shipwreck the revolution. From 1928 to 1934, he sharply criticised the lunacy of "third period" Stalinism, where the Communist Parties denounced the social democrats as "fascists", and split the workers' movement in the face of Hitler fascism.

Trotsky predicted, "that if the most important organisations of the German working class continue their present policy, the victory of fascism will be assured almost automatically..." Unfortunately, his warnings went unheard. The insane policy of 'social fascism' was to lead to the splitting of the German working class - the strongest in the world - and the handing over of power to Hitler without a fight.

This ultra-left policy lasted up until 1934-35, when the Communist International under Stalin suddenly turned in an opportunist direction and adopted, not a Leninist policy, but the policy of Popular Frontism. This policy advocated an alliance, in reality the subordination, of workers' parties with those of the "progressive" liberal capitalist parties, to form a progressive bloc against fascism. This meant the abandonment of the principle of class independence that underpinned Leninism. Trotsky correctly described Popular Frontism as a "malicious caricature of Menshevism", and "a strike-breaking conspiracy".

### France

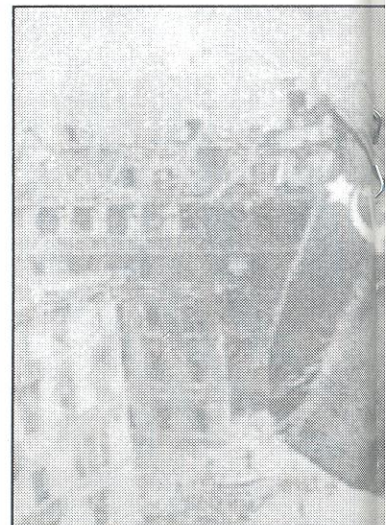
In France in June 1936, the revolutionary crisis resulted in a strike wave and factory occupations involving two million workers. "We were faced with an explosion of discontent by masses who, humiliated and repressed for

years, had been chewing on their discontent..." stated Jouhaux, the leader of the CGT (Trade Union Confederation). But in order to placate the Popular Front Government that had come to power in May, the French Communist Party deliberately derailed the movement. "While it is important to lead well a movement for economic demands", stated the CP leader Thorez, "it is also necessary to know how to end it."

In Spain, the uprising of the proletariat of Catalonia in July 1936 could have been the starting-point for the overthrow of capitalism throughout Spain. "Having confidence henceforth only in their own strength", stated the Soviet historian Maidanik, "they took control of the streets and, without waiting for the government's decisions, began to implement the People's Front programme from below, using revolutionary methods..." Unfortunately, Stalin did not want revolution in Spain, or elsewhere for that matter, and, using the policies of class collaboration, deliberately sabotaged the revolutionary struggle in the cause of 'unity' to save the Republic. This was part of Stalin's strategy to win support amongst the western bourgeois democracies, and reaffirm his "moderate" credentials. The last ditch attempt to halt the back-sliding of the revolution in Barcelona in May 1937 was

defeated with the full support of Stalinism, which demoralised the workers and prepared the ground for the victory of Franco.

Within the Soviet Union, fearful that the revolutionary events in Europe would rekindle the aspirations of the Russian workers, Stalin launched a series of bloody purge trials aimed at exterminating all those associated with the October Revolution. The old Bolshevik leaders were subjected to the greatest frame-up in history, accused of being agents of Hitler and then shot. Trotsky and his son, the main defendants, were sentenced in their absence and targeted for assassination. In 1937, in a further twist to the purges, the leadership of the Red Army was decapitated. In the end, millions perished in the Stalinist gulags and labour camps to prop up the Stalin regime.







Leon Trotsky, who understood clearly what was coming, attempted to gather together new revolutionary forces. The original Left Opposition that had been expelled from the Communist Party in 1927 had become the International Left Opposition, with groups in a series of countries.

These actions and defeats strengthened Hitler's hand and prepared the way for the blood bath of the second world war. The Stalin-Hitler Pact (August 1939), which carried through the partition of Poland, was a cynical attempt by Stalin to avoid war. "Our relations with Germany have radically improved", stated Molotov, "We have always held that a strong Germany is an indispensable condition for a durable peace in Europe." Within a year Molotov was describing Hitler's occupation of Norway, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands and France as "great successes", and blaming Britain for continuing the war! All that was to change in June 1941 when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, and the Communist Parties were forced to execute an abrupt U-turn.

Leon Trotsky, who understood clearly what was coming, attempted to gather together new revolutionary forces. The original Left Opposition that had been expelled from the Communist Party in 1927 had become

the International Left Opposition, with groups in a series of countries. After the German debacle, Trotsky turned his back on the CP and looked towards the radical forces within the orbit of the social democratic organisations.

## Ferment

With the world slump, the victory of fascism in Germany and the rise of mass unemployment, the traditional mass organisations of the working class were in ferment. In Britain, Trotsky attempted to collaborate with the leaders of the ILP, which had recently split from the Labour Party, hoping to win them to the idea of building a new International. While this approach bore few concrete results, the approaching world war instilled greater urgency into Trotsky's work of launching a new revolutionary International as the internationalists had done after the collapse of the Second International in August 1914.

In September 1938, the Fourth International was formed. "The Fourth International has already arisen out of great events: the greatest defeats of the proletariat in history", stated Trotsky. Although comprising small forces, it looked to the future with confidence and determination. Above all, it was

strong in doctrine, programme, tradition, and in the tempering of its cadres. It adopted a Transitional Programme on which it aimed to develop a mass revolutionary current internationally.

"In the last twenty years, it is true, the proletariat has suffered one defeat after another, each graver than the preceding one, became disillusioned with its old parties and met the war undoubtedly in depressed spirits. One should not, however, overestimate the stability or durability of such moods. Events created them, events will dispel them", stated Trotsky in the *Manifesto on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian Revolution*.

"War, as well as revolution, is made first and foremost by the younger generation. Millions of the youth unable to find access to industry began their lives as unemployed and therefore remain outside of political life. Today they are finding their place or they will find it on the morrow: the state organises them into regiments and for this very reason opens the possibility for their revolutionary unification. Without a doubt the war will also shake off the apathy of the older generations.

"There remains the question of leadership. Will not the revolution be betrayed this time too, inasmuch as there are two Internationals in the service of imperialism while the genuine revolutionary elements constitute a tiny minority? In other words, shall we succeed in preparing in time a party capable of leading the proletarian revolution? In order to answer this question correctly it is necessary to pose it correctly. Naturally, this or that uprising may end

and surely will end in defeat, owing to the immaturity of the revolutionary leadership. But it is not a question of a single uprising. It is a question of an entire revolutionary epoch.

The capitalist world has no way out, unless a prolonged death agony is so considered. It is necessary to prepare for long years, if not decades, of wars, uprisings, brief interludes of true, new wars, and new uprisings. A young revolutionary party must base itself on this perspective. History will provide it with enough opportunities and possibilities to test itself, to accumulate experience, and to mature. The swifter the ranks of the vanguard are fused, the more the epoch of bloody convulsions will be shortened, the less destruction will our planet suffer. But the great historical problem will not be solved in any case until a revolutionary party stands at the head of the proletariat. The question of tempos and time intervals is of enormous importance; but it alters neither the general historical perspective nor the direction of our policy. The conclusion is a simple one: it is necessary to carry on the work of educating and organising the proletarian vanguard with tenfold energy. Precisely in this lies the task of the Fourth International..."

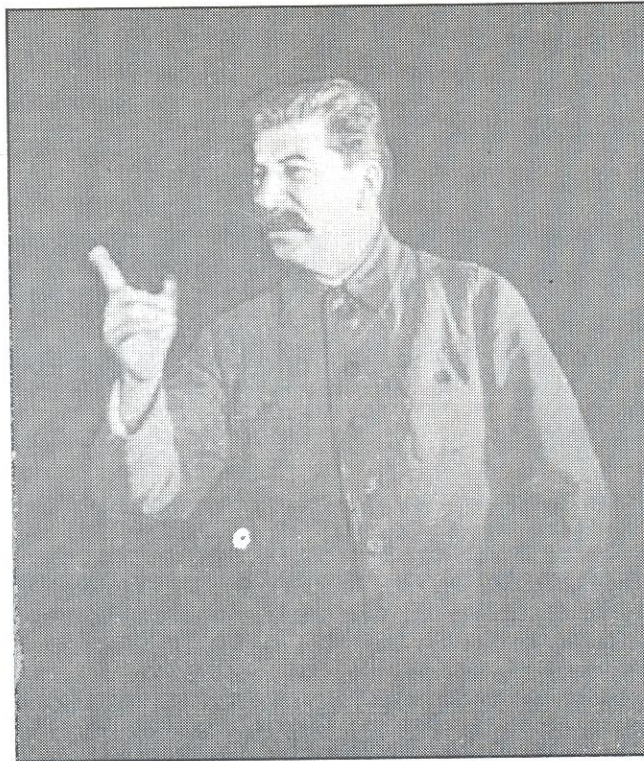
This revolutionary perspective, imbued with a burning confidence in the future, was based upon the experience of the First World War. At that time, the horrific bloodshed of the war shook the consciousness of millions and provoked a revolutionary wave throughout Europe. Trotsky understood that this new imperialist war would also provoke a revolutionary



crisis that would serve to transform the fledgling International into a mass force. Within ten years, Trotsky predicted, not one stone upon another would be left of the old organisations and the Fourth International would dominate the planet. In the process, the Stalinist regime within the Soviet Union would fall, either by capitalist counter-revolution or through a political revolution that would restore genuine workers' democracy.

The first part of Trotsky's prognosis was confirmed by events. The war produced a revolutionary wave in a whole series of countries. Unfortunately, the forces of Trotskyism - of revolutionary Marxism - were too small and isolated to take advantage of the situation. Given the way in which the war unfolded, the Soviet Union, rather than being overthrown defeated Hitler and emerged, colossally strengthened, which add to the prestige of the Communist Parties internationally. In turn, the Communist Parties, which had been transformed into mere mouthpieces for Russian foreign policy, played a counterrevolutionary role. They used their influence to sidetrack the revolutionary situations and helped to consolidate capitalism, which was in danger of being overthrown.

For example, in Italy in the spring of 1943, the workers of Turin led a massive strike movement that culminated in the overthrow of Mussolini. The Italian bourgeoisie in the guise of the Badoglio government, frightened by the mass movement, sought refuge in the south, while the German army occupied the north. The



working class took the initiative to drive out the fascists, launching a general strike in March 1944, where over a million took part. Eventually the fascists were defeated and the revolutionary partisans, under the leadership of the CP and SP, took control. Power was in the hands of 30,000 armed partisans, and through them the popular committees. However, this developing revolution went against the secret agreements made between Stalin and the imperialists to carve up Europe into spheres of influence. As a consequence, the exiled CP leader Togliatti was flown in from Moscow to impose the Stalin line.

### Prestige

Using the prestige of the Soviet Union he used the Italian CP, now a mass party of the working class, to undermine the revolutionary movement. As opposed to socialist revolution, he put forward a government of national unity under Marshal Badoglio, later to be replaced by Bonomi. The Allied armies, together with the CP led the way in dis-

arming the partisans. To facilitate this counterrevolution in a democratic form, Togliatti and other CP leaders were forced to enter the government as Minister of Justice, Finance, Treasury and Agriculture. By May 1947, after saving Italian capitalism, the CP Ministers were sacked from the government.

Again, in Greece, the Communist Party controlled the resistance. At the end of 1944 the resistance movement was practically in control of the whole country. However, Stalin had made a deal with Churchill to hand over Greece to the British sphere of influence. On 7th November 1944, Churchill wrote to Eden: "In my opinion, having paid the price we have to Russia for freedom of action in Greece, we should not hesitate to use British troops to support the Royal Hellenic Government under M. Papandreou... I fully expect a clash with EAM [the CP-led National Liberation Front], and we must not shrink from it, provided the ground is well chosen."

The battle between British forces and those of the resist-

ance lasted from December 1944 to February 1945, when an armistice was signed leading to the Varkiza agreement. This deal was used to re-establish royal power and begin the repression of working class organisations. Stalin declared, "I have confidence in the British government's policy in Greece." It was this treachery that prevented the triumph of the Greek revolution.

In France, the pro-fascist Vichy regime was discredited. The French resistance movement was under the control of the Communist Party. Prior to the liberation of Paris by the Allies, the resistance movement liberated the greater part of France, including Paris. The liberation committees almost everywhere became organs of power. The CP was the main force behind this rising, and once Vichy had collapsed France was convulsed in a revolutionary wave. The Anglo-American armies were faced with a fait accompli.

However, as soon as De Gaulle established a government he began to undermine the committees. Two representatives of the CP were rapidly drawn into the government, and despite their protests, De Gaulle signed a decree dissolving the militias. The General saw his task as to "trim the Communists' claws", with the eager cooperation of Thorez, the General Secretary of the CP. Thorez came out for law and order and the disbanding of the militias and all 'irregular' groups. Given the leading role of the Stalinists, the militias liquidated themselves into the French 'grand army'.

Thorez then came out as the champion of restoring French capitalism. A campaign was now launched to increase production, in which the workers should not make excessive demands or strike. The people must, said Thorez, "steel themselves for the battle for production as they steeled themselves for the battle of liberation. The

**Using the prestige of the Soviet Union Togliatti used the Italian CP, now a mass party of the working class, to undermine the revolutionary movement. As opposed to socialist revolution, he put forward a government of national unity under Marshal Badoglio, later to be replaced by Bonomi.**

task is to rebuild the greatness of France, to secure in more than words the material conditions of French independence."

In doing so, the CP propped up a government that was actively engaged in acts of colonial repression. They savagely repressed the Constantin district of Algeria in which thousands of Algerians were killed. Repression was also used against the peoples of Syria and Lebanon, who were demanding independence. The same was true of Vietnam. In fact the colonial war against the Vietnamese people continued for six months under 'Communist' leadership. From January 1947, the Minister of Defence in this government was a 'Communist'. When the National Assembly in March voted military credits for the colonial war, the Communist group abstained, but the five CP ministers voted in favour, in order to maintain 'government solidarity'.

The Communist Parties of Austria, Finland, Belgium, Denmark and Norway under

Stalin's orders also joined the governments in the immediate post-war period. In 1944-5 only the Communist parties could halt the revolutionary movement, and in practice this is what they did. They saved capitalism. They acted in the same fashion as the social democrats following the first world war.

This betrayal provided the political prerequisite for the recovery of capitalism, and the upswing that was to develop over the following twenty-five years. Stalinism managed to survive another 45 years, but collapsed ignominiously with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The Stalinist bureaucrats discard-

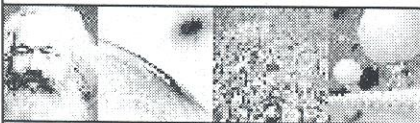
ed their 'Communist' Party cards and joined the bandwagon of capitalist restoration, as Trotsky had predicted.

After the war, with Trotsky dead, the Fourth International was not able to adjust to the new world situation and degenerated. Despite this, the ideas of Trotsky are a treasure-trove. They represent the defence of revolutionary Marxism after Lenin's death. The collapse of Stalinism has served to eliminate a massive barrier to revolutionary change. Today, the developing world crisis of capitalism is producing the most turbulent and crisis-ridden period since the second world war.

This will intensify in the coming period. With general strikes in Europe, and revolutionary crisis in Latin America and South East Asia, the working class has again ventured to make its mark on history. With correct ideas and strategy, learning the lessons of the past, this colossus can ensure the end of capitalism and open, in the words of Engels, "a new epoch of history, in which mankind itself, and with mankind all branches of its activity, especially the natural sciences, too, will experience an advance that will put everything preceding it into insignificance." □



## Education for Socialists



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# Education for Socialists

# UK: emergency call

**As I write the Blair government continues its campaign of denigrating the firefighters. By the time you read this, the dispute could have been settled. But whatever the outcome, the dispute illustrates graphically that UK capitalism is making an emergency call.**

**By Michael Roberts**

**O**n the one hand, Blair prepares to send troops into Iraq behind the coattails of the Americans to overthrow Saddam. On the other hand, he and 'two Jags' Prescott prepare to send in troops to break the picket lines of the firefighters. If you adopt the policies of capitalism abroad, inevitably you will adopt them in domestic policy.

There we have it. The British comrades of the heroes of 9/11 in New York are to be attacked and vilified as overpaid, underworked and just plain lucky to have a job. And on this occasion, it's not only Prescott and Blair who conduct this campaign, but also the silent man of New Labour - the

man who stays who stays quietly in No 11 plotting the overthrow of No 10 - Gordon Brown.

Gordon has nothing to say about whether the UK should join the Eurozone. He has nothing to say about whether the UK should join the US in attacking Iraq (except that British capitalism can afford it). But he had plenty to say in parliament about how if the firefighters won their claim, it would encourage other public sector workers to do the same and then his struggle to drive down the national debt (by paying off the rich and keeping taxes for lower and middle incomes high and introducing the 'private finance initiative') would fail.

Along with the *Daily Mail* and the *Sun*, Gordon and the government trot

out the story that there are 40 applicants for every vacancy in the fire service, so it must be a good job and firefighters should be happy with it. But who are these eager applicants? Almost certainly, they are the unemployed, those with poor, low-paid temporary jobs, and those with unsocial working hours, above all, those desperate to find a relatively secure job that is useful. One of the key features about firefighters, unlike many other public sector jobs in the health service or education, is that there is no academic qualification to join. After much training, you can become a skilled firefighter and you needn't have passed your GCSEs. Only the police are similar.

It is the rule under capitalism that the worst paid jobs are the ones most

useful to society but least useful to making profits. So the low-paid are nurses, teachers, school and hospital ancillary staff, garbage collectors and firefighters. And it is no accident that the best-paid public sector service is the police. They are needed by capitalism to keep law and order (although their detection and conviction rate is abysmal). Indeed, they are

vital to keep the trade unions under control, bust picket lines and carry out spying against British citizens.

The best paid in our society are those who manage big capitalist companies or bet on the stock market in the City of London (using our hard-earned pension savings and making a hash of it most of the time). But they contribute little or nothing to society. Indeed, they are positively damaging. Of course, these people are never the target of Gordon Brown's anger. Listen to the silence and wringing of hands from Brown and his Treasury crew as the pensions crisis and thievery of the pension fund managers go past unchecked.

Up to now, Gordon Brown and the government have been telling us that the UK economy is in great shape. It is growing faster than in Europe or even the US. Inflation and unemployment are low. Boom and bust is over. The only danger is with the rest of the world. If the world goes into recession, it will be difficult to resist joining them.

But the firefighters dispute reveals that this analysis of UK capitalism is just not true. Apparently, the British economy is so poor that it cannot finance a living wage for firefighters, or for that matter, for most public sector workers. There is rottenness in the state of Elizabeth and it is not just in the Royal House of Windsor (nee Saxe-Coburg) and its sleazy but-



## There has been so little investment over the last decade that despite working the longest hours and having the shortest holidays in Europe, the productivity of British workers remains well below that of France, Germany or the US.

lers.

We know that UK industry has been on its knees for some time. Manufacturing output is falling at a 3% annual rate, bringing overall growth in the economy down towards just 1%. Of course, the forecasts for next year remain optimistic. The economic experts expect 3% growth in manufacturing and 2.5% growth in the economy as a whole.

But leaving aside the likely economic recession in the rest of the world, there is little justification for expecting the UK to resume 2-3% growth next year. UK businesses resolutely refuse to invest in Britain.

Investment is falling at a near 10% rate and imports flood into the country to compete with UK industry.

Gordon and his Treasury acolytes know the real truth about British industry. There has been so little investment over the last decade that despite working the longest hours and having the shortest holidays in Europe, the productivity of British workers remains well below that of France, Germany or the US.

The Treasury's own recent study shows this clearly. According to that, American workers are 30% more productive, French workers are 25% and German workers are 15% more. Only Japanese workers do worse. And things are not getting any better. In the last five years, productivity has improved by nearly 2% in the US and Germany, but only by 1.4% in the UK.

The reason for this is also revealed in the study. US capitalists invest 46% more in

capital equipment per worker than British capitalists do. And in the high-tech sector they invest nearly three times as much!

The French invest 75% more and the Germans 50% more.

The other factor that drives productivity is the skills of the workforce. But British capitalists don't bother with that. They prefer cheap unskilled labour. According to the Treasury study, 57% of UK workers have no qualifications compared with 54% in the US, but only 32% in France and just 20% in Germany. No wonder the profitability of UK companies has fallen sharply in the last five years and is now back to the lows of the early 1980s.

### Industry

Another of the big reasons that UK productivity and company profitability is so poor is that British capitalism and its politicians gave up on industry and manufacturing a long time ago. Investment is not into the productive sectors of the economy or even into the public sector to maintain the infrastructure (railways, roads) and services (health, education) that are vital to make the private profit sector work.

Instead, the UK has become a rentier economy. It is an economy that does not make anything any more. Instead, it sells things others make or it lends money to others to make them or it lives off the income 'earned' from investments it makes abroad. This is increasingly an economy that survives

through business services and finance. That sector alone now contributes nearly 29% of each year's national income.

Financial services contribute 9% towards annual income and they now provide the single biggest area of employment outside the public sector.

The UK's success story under New Labour since 1997 was made possible by the great stock market boom of the late 1990s. That boom drove up the wealth of the rich massively. On average, the wealth of UK households reached four times their annual income. Of course, that ratio was much higher for the rich. With the rich and the middle-class feeling rich, they spent money and the economy went forward.

But the bubble of the stock market has well and truly burst. Stock market prices are down 60% since their peak in March 2000 and the bonuses of the fat cats in the City of London have been cut, while the big investment houses are sacking their workers (the lower-paid ones of course). That wealth ratio has fallen back to just three times, a 25% loss (on average and higher for the rich).

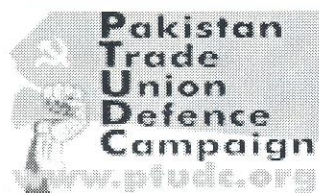
But there is still one bubble left in UK capitalism - the property market. While UK industry stagnates and the financial sector cuts its throat, house prices go on rising at a 30% rate. That helps to keep estate agents and other business services in employment and keep sufficient numbers of people willing to buy all those electronic gadgets and new cars.

But the firefighters of capitalism are worried. This cannot last. And while it does, in the words of the deputy governor of the Bank of England, Mervyn King, it is causing 'major imbalances' in the economy.

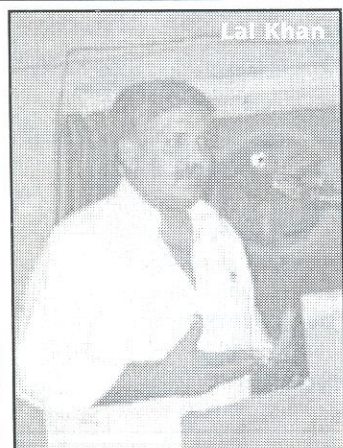
Every bit of surplus value created by British workers is being sucked into property speculation or investment overseas. Little or nothing is going into improving productivity and profitability in productive sectors or into exports. As a result, the Bank of England fears that inflation will stay higher than in Europe or the US because of the property boom, forcing the Bank to keep interest rates higher than in Europe or the US (UK 4%, US, 1.25% and Europe 3.25%). And these high interest rates will stop companies borrowing to invest, so economic growth will weaken.

Then jobs could be lost and the property boom could go bust. And all this could happen just at a time when the world slips into a new recession.

That's why the New Labour government and Gordon Brown are being so pigheaded about the firefighters. They can see the real fire coming. Next year we could have the Middle East in a mess with oil prices rocketing, the world capitalist economy slipping back into recession. Then the rentier economy of the UK will show that it is made of chicken legs. The firefighters must pay the bill for this coming mess in advance. The rest of us will pay to bail out capitalism later through rising taxes and disappearing jobs. □



# Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign



Lal Khan

## PTUDC leaders in national speaking tour

**A**t the beginning of January two leaders from the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign, will be in Britain to conduct a speaking tour, in order to raise the profile of their campaign. The PTUDC is made up of a group of leading trade unionists, and PPP members in Pakistan, who are waging a campaign of struggle against the attacks of the bosses and the military regime. Some details of the work they have been doing are given in this new bulletin. Further information is available on the PTUDC website.

Lal Khan, the PTUDC international secretary based in Lahore, will be available to attend Labour movement meetings from the 1st - 9th of January, and then again from the 17th until the end of the month. Manzoor Ahmed MP and honorary president of the PTUDC will be in Britain and available to speak from the 17th of January until the end of the month. Manzoor was elected to parliament in the recent elections, on a Pakistan Peoples Party ticket. He won the seat in spite of all the governments attempts to keep it's opponents out by rigging the election; He won by connecting

with the concerns of the ordinary people in the constituency and by putting forward a programme of socialist policies.

Lal Khan and Manzoor Ahmed will travel to Britain to build the profile of the PTUDC, to build links with workers, and workers organisations in Europe, and to collect affiliations and financial assistance for the campaign. Please consider what your branch can do; are you willing to affiliate to the campaign?

Would you like to organise a union branch/workplace meeting with one of these speakers? Would the branch or any of the individual members like some additional information about the campaign and activities already planned in your area?

Please let us know as soon as possible if you are interested in getting involved with the campaign.

Contact Kris on mobile number 07990628769.



### Sponsors of the campaign in Britain include:

Tony Benn, Alan Simpson MP, Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs, Jeremy Dear, General Secretary of National Union of Journalists, Phil Waker, CWU, NEC (personal capacity), Merseyside Assoc. of TC, Lancs Assoc of TC, Greenwich TC, Blackpool TC, Essex County Assoc. of TC, Shipley TC, Glossop TC, Huddersfield TC, Ellesmere Port TC, Keighley TC, Peterborough TC, Pendle TUC, Camden TC, Wakefield&District TC, Hyndburn TC, CWU National Broad left, SE Wales AMAL CWU, Birmingham NUJ, North Tyneside UNISON, 212, Birmingham UNISON, Gateshead LG UNISON, Leeds LG (10) UNISON, Cumbria county council UNISON, Vaxhall Luton AEEU, Vauxhall Ellesmere Port TGWU, London Central GMB APEX, Adamsdown branch LP, Preston Ward (Brighton) LP, Castle Ward (Leicester) LP, Leicester South CLP, Freemantle ward (Southampton) LP, Stockland Green LP, Stonegate branch (Leicester South) LP, among many others.

## An appeal to support the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign, from Jeremy Dear

General Secretary of the NUJ (UK and Ireland)

As the British Trade Union Congress meets, I urge you to support the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign (PTUDC).

The Campaign was set up following the assassination of Arif Shah, the President of the Punjab Labour Federation by hired agents of the employers in 1995. That brutal act highlighted the harsh situation faced by the trade union movement in Pakistan.

The conditions faced by workers in Pakistan are miserable. Millions are unemployed and there is no unemployment benefit or welfare state. Brutal exploitation is rife. Over one million children work in the carpet industry, another million are employed as domestics, over 300,000 as bonded labourers in brick kilns together with many more in soap factories, small garages, shops and so on.

As a result of the assassination of Arif Shah, leading trade union activists established the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign, sponsored by the Punjab Labour Federation, the United Labour Federation, the Progressive Workers Alliance, the Railway Workers Union, the Nation Union of Postal Employees, Manzoor Ahmed (Information Secretary, PPP Labour Bureau (Punjab)), and many others. The aim of the PTUDC is to defend trade unions from the physical attacks of the employers and to defend their right to organise!

Since then the PTUDC has worked to support trade union struggles and campaigns in many sectors including the rail-

ways, telecoms, post, banking, sugar, steel, ports and many others.

The most recent campaign they have been involved in is the defence of the leader of the civil servants in Quetta, Hameed Khan. This workers' leader was arrested on April 22, together with other union leaders and protesting workers. After an international campaign of solidarity, trade unions all over the world protested against this action and brought enormous pressure to bear on the Pakistani authorities, which finally conceded and the strikers were released.

I urge all trade union activists to back the struggles of our fellow workers and trade unionists in Pakistan, and to give them the maximum support in their fight against military dictatorship and oppression.

Yours in solidarity,

Jeremy Dear,  
General Secretary,  
National Union of Journalists



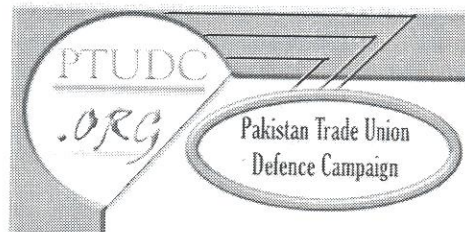
Donations by credit and debit card can be made at <http://wellred.marxist.com/ptudc.asp> (Courtesy of Wellred Books.)

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[www.ptudc.org](http://www.ptudc.org)

## Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign

Name..... Organisation.....  
Address.....

We wish to affiliate to the campaign:

National organisation £500     Regional organisation £100     Local organisation £25  
I/We want to make a donation of £.....  
Total enclosed £.....

You can also make your contribution online going to [www.ptudc.org](http://www.ptudc.org)

Return to Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign, PO Box 6977, London N1 3JN

All cheques payable to *Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign*



## Students and education workers fight right wing plans

**On October 29, more than half a million students and education workers went out on the streets to show their opposition to the counter-reform of the education system which the Spanish right wing government wants to introduce. It was not the first time that the students, called by the Students Union went out on strike against the mis-named "Quality Law".**

**By Juan J. López  
Executive Committee of the Students Union  
(Sindicato de Estudiantes)**

Even before the final draft of the reform law was published, already aware of the aim of the government to privatise education and to exclude students from working class families, the Students Union proposed a plan of struggle to the leaders of the teaching unions, CCOO and UGT. Unfortunately, at that time the proposal was rejected and we had to go out on the streets on our own. The leaders of the teachers' unions thought that since the final draft had not been published yet, it was not possible to mobilise against it.

A year ago, the government decided to divide its counter-reform plans in three different laws, one for each education level. First it was the turn of the university. We witnessed the largest university students demonstrations since the 1980s (300,000 march to defend state education in Spain). The Students Union explained the need not to fall into the trap of the government of dividing the laws in order to prevent a unified struggle. However, the trade union leaders did not think it was the right moment to call a general strike of the whole of the

education community. Finally, despite massive opposition from university students and teachers, the university reform law was passed. The second law, affecting technical education was negotiated directly with the trade union leaders.

The third law, the so-called "quality law" affected the rest of the education sector, pre-school, primary and secondary education. The government thought that after the defeat the movement had suffered with the universities' law, that they would have an easy ride in introducing the "quality law". But many things had happened since then. There was an accumulation of anger and at the same time the government had increasingly exposed itself as an openly right wing government. Meanwhile we had seen the general strike on June 20 (The General strike in Spain) and the worsening economic situation, factors both which helped workers and youth raise their level of understanding and left less room for agreements on the part of the trade union leaders and the government.

This situation led to the [students and teachers joint] strike on October 29

(Students on the streets against the right wing). That was big success with mass demonstrations. But it was not enough. The government was risking a lot. The general strike on June 20 had forced them to backtrack on a number of points, and a new climb down would have been fatal for them. The CCOO and UGT leaders, under pressure from their own members, proposed a national march on Madrid for Saturday, November 23. The Students Union wholeheartedly supported this initiative, but we said we needed also a further strike, which we proposed for November 21, also as a way of preparing the national march. The trade union leaders rejected the proposal and we had to call for the strike action on our own. Everything was against us: the media silenced the call for strike, they linked the Students Union to ETA, and the reactionary headmasters in many schools were used to intimidate the students.

Nevertheless more than 70,000 students participated in demonstrations and the strike was followed by a majority of students. Unity with other sections of the education system (teachers and parents) would have provided the massive numbers we saw on the October 29. Many in the movement understood that, as the Students Union had explained, the only road to victory was through nation-wide massive mobilisations, united with the teachers and parents. Despite the fact that this unity had not been achieved, many students showed again their willingness to strug-





gle on November 21. This is an important step forward which would not have been possible two years ago. The whole movement now understands clearly the character of this government and what interests it defends. The very militant mood on the demonstrations on November 21 is a proof of that.

Why did they trade union leaders not continue with the mobilisation? Already in October 29 they did not trust the teachers would participate in the strike. Reality proved them wrong. This despite the fact that they did not put all necessary resources into calling the strike. In most schools there were no mass meetings of teachers to explain the reasons for the struggle and in the whole the trade union leaders lacked a worked out alternative to the government's plans. The UGT for instance, with many members in private sector schools did not have clear arguments to oppose the "quality law". The main aim of this law is the privatisation of education. From their narrow point of view they could not explain this clearly for fear of antagonising their members in the private sector. They should have put forward the idea of the incorporation of private sector schools into the public sector. The national march on November 23 was a reflection of all this.

The day started with a

new example of the repressive character of the Popular Party government when they declared the planned demonstration illegal. Using as an excuse the transport problems that would ensue they established a very dangerous precedent by taking away a fundamental right conquered by the working class. The Students Union proposed to fight back against the banning order, that we should go ahead with the demonstration and that members of parliament from the Socialist Party and United Left should march at the head of the demonstration. But the trade union leaders were cowed by the threat of a fine and decided to go ahead with an authorised rally instead of a demonstration. Incidentally it is quite likely that the Students Union will be fined for the demonstration on the 21 in Madrid. This obviously created a lot of confusion and many thought that the march had been called off. But this was not the only problem. While the union leaders of CCOO and UGT spent more than 80,000 euro in hiring music bands and buying flags, they had not enough money to rent coaches to bring people to Madrid, with the result that tens of thousands were left behind.

To all this we must add that during the campaign to prepare for the national march, the trade union lead-

ers signed yet another agreement with the government. This agreement for civil servants (including teachers) means a wage cut and a worsening of their working conditions. All this had a dampening effect.

After the partial retreat of the government on the issues that led to the June 20 general strike, the trade union leaders thought that they would be able to go back to the previous situation of social partnership. The mobilisations of the education sector were an obstacle to their plans. That is why they did not want to take a step further in the struggle. But this will not be easy, they would not be able to go back to a situation of social partnership. Workers and youth have shown once and again their willingness to struggle. This time it was the "quality law", but we must also give an answer to police repression, and tomorrow we will have to fight Aznar's imperialist adventure with Bush and Co. Increasingly, more sections are participating in mobilisations against the government. Furthermore, wider layers of the youth are looking for revolutionary ideas able to provide an alternative to this system and to the trade union leaders who are not up to the task. The struggle against the PP has barely started. □

## Solidarity Appeal

Dear comrades,

We have received an appeal for solidarity from the Mexican Committee in Defence of State Education (CEDEP). The comrades are playing a leading role in the struggle against the privatisation of the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN). The IPN was originally set up by the state in order to provide students from peasant and working class families with free education (this is actually enshrined in the IPN's constitution). The government wants to introduce wide-ranging reforms (introduction of tuition fees, private finance, etc) which would destroy the character of these university where tens of thousands of students are studying.

The CEDEP has already organised one successful day of strike on November 7th and is committed to step up the campaign. As a result the authorities have started using the "porros" (gangs of thugs) against the student activists, particularly those who are involved with the CEDEP.

The CEDEP has asked people to sign a letter of protest which is addressed to the IPN authorities, the Human Rights commission and the Ministry of Interior, with copy to the CEDEP.

You just have to go to their web page following this link:

[http://www.ceph.militante.org/alternativa.php?index=noticias/carta\\_vs\\_represion\\_ipn.htm](http://www.ceph.militante.org/alternativa.php?index=noticias/carta_vs_represion_ipn.htm)

Put your name and organisation and press "enviar" and the letter will be sent automatically. It will only take you a few minutes but it will help the comrades a lot, so don't be lazy!

For more info on the CEDEP see their web page: <http://www.ceph.militante.org>

# Israel and the Holocaust

Letter to Austrian comrades from an Israeli Marxist

A few weeks ago in Vienna I heard from my friends in the Austrian young socialists an amazing story about some anarchist sect that defends Sharon, the Likud and the Israeli government policy in general. These groups call themselves "anti-Germans" and they support the idea that there is a collective guilt of all German people for the crimes carried out during the Holocaust. Starting from this position, these sectarians have reached the conclusion that it is the duty of the German and Austrian left to defend the policies of the state of Israel always and in every case, and they don't condemn the methods of the Israeli government.

For some all this may sound like a joke, it would seem madness because the anarchist doctrine is against any state in general, and especially militarist, clerical and racist states. The Israeli regime is guilty of innumerable crimes against its own civilians and against citizens of its neighbouring countries.

Considering this idea of the "collective responsibility" of the German and Austrian people for the Holocaust and the latest escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict I was asked by my friends in the Austrian Young Socialists to present my position on this question.

First of all we must understand what the Holocaust was. About six million Jews were massacred during the Holocaust, and about one million of these were children. The Holocaust had no analogous event in history in terms of the number of victims involved, but, unfortunately, it was not the first massacre of this kind and

unfortunately will not be the last, so long as class society continues to exist and thus breed further ethnic conflicts.

The bourgeois historians stress the number of victims and the irrationality of this incredible massacre of innocent people without really explaining that such a terrible crime flowed from the very contradictions of the capitalist system at the time. They fail to explain how this kind of crime was repeated several times in different parts of the world. And the reason was always the same: the impasse of capitalism and the blind alley the ruling class found itself in necessitated scapegoats, a minority on which to put all the blame for the ills afflicting society.

During the First World War about two million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were killed in a barbarous manner by the Young Turk regime. About 200,000 Jews were massacred by the White Army and the Ukrainian nationalists during the civil war in Russia. Since WWII we have witnessed terrible crimes during the Indo-Pakistan wars, in Indonesia, in East Timor, in the ex-Yugoslavia, in Rwanda, etc. etc.

The responsibility for the Holocaust, as well as the other Nazi crimes, first of all lies on the Nazi leadership itself and on its bourgeois supporters and allies. They planned and carried out this horrible crime. Part of the responsibility however also lies on the shoulders of the

bourgeois regimes in the western countries who knew about the mass killings of European Jews. These regimes were prepared to ignore what was going on in order to appease local anti-Semitic movements or to maintain economic contacts with Germany. We must not forget that the hangmen that carried out the Holocaust came from the lumpenproletariat, the petit bourgeoisie and the collaborators among the East European nationalists.

But the German people themselves and especially the German proletariat that was lied to, betrayed and sold out by the Stalinists, the Social-Democrats and the bourgeois parties, have no guilt to bear. The capitalists like the principle of "collective responsibility" because this gives them the opportunity of banding together the workers and their bosses under the idea of mutual responsibility. The capitalists push this idea in order to cover up for the responsibility of capitalism in this terrible crime and also to hide the fact that millions of German and Austrian workers were opposed to Hitler, and many Socialists, Communists and Trade Union activists also died in his camps.

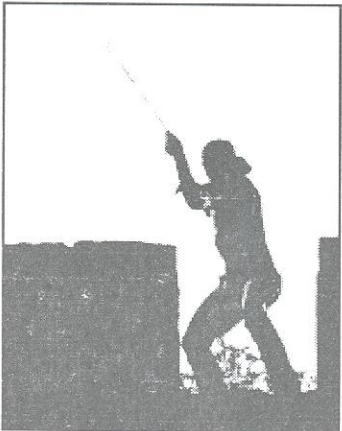
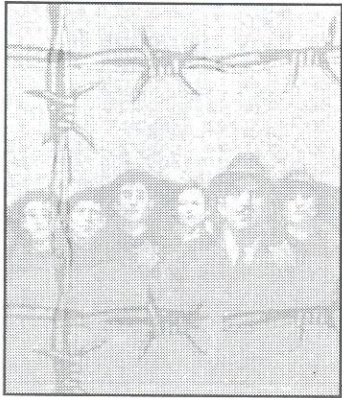
This principle of "collective responsibility" was, and is, used to justify new crimes of capitalism. Basing himself on the principle of mutual responsibility Churchill planned to transform Germany into a "potato-

field". Even Stalin could not openly support this "theory" of mutual responsibility and he publicly said that "Hitlers come and go, while the German people stay". (However this did not stop him from deporting the Tartars, Chechens, Volga Germans and others as "Nazi collaborators". And after the end of WWII thousands of Germans were deported from East Europe by the Stalinist regimes.)

Thus, the German and Austrian workers have every right to discuss the situation in the Middle East. They are not responsible for the crimes of the Nazis. In the same way, the murdered Jewish workers in the Holocaust do not justify the present crimes of the Tel-Aviv capitalist government. The people of Russia or the people of Yugoslavia paid a huge price in human lives during WWII, but nobody would use this to justify the crimes of Milosevic and Tudjman, or of Yeltsin and Putin.

The Zionist capitalists and politicians of today are not protecting the Jewish people. For them the Jewish workers are cannon fodder in their dirty games. In the 50-year history of the state of Israel more than 20,000 Israelis have been the victims of wars, terrorism and clashes caused by the adventurous policies of the Israeli bourgeoisie. Israel's policy of confrontation with the entire Arab world, is not a way out of the Holocaust, it is the road to a new Holocaust. Every person

**The responsibility for the Holocaust, as well as the other Nazi crimes, first of all lies on the Nazi leadership itself and on its bourgeois supporters and allies. Part of the responsibility however also lies on the shoulders of the bourgeois regimes in the western countries who knew about the mass killings of European Jews.**



that is really concerned about Jewish workers' lives must put all the blame at the doorstep of the present Israeli regime! We could list the crimes of Israeli capitalism against the Jewish workers - how it exploits religious beliefs, its long history of victimisation of workers and left activists, the racist discrimination against Jews from Asia and Africa. Israel is not a state for "all Jews", it is the state of the Jewish bourgeoisie. The Jewish proletariat is exploited like the proletariat in all countries. This must be clear to everybody.

It is especially stupid and criminal to support the Israel right wing. For example, the "Likud" party, the main right wing party in Israel, is rooted in the so-called "revisionist tendency" of Zionism. This tendency was established by Vladimir (Zeev) Zabotinsky, and got the support of Zionism and Italian Fascism. One wing of this movement - the LEHI (Lohamei Herut Israel) - even contacted Nazi Germany (!) in 1942 and

informed the German embassy in Istanbul that they supported the main principles of Nazism and that LEHI wanted to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. Shamir, a member of this group, became Israeli Prime Minister in the second half of the 1980s. Surely support for these people is not the "best way" of paying one's respect to the memory of the Holocaust victims! All these facts are very well known inside Israel. And the Israeli right wing have never apologised for these actions.

People in Israel are very well aware of the fact that for many years the Holocaust survivors were discriminated against by the Israeli establishment. The authorities presented a miserable vision of the Holocaust victims. They were presented as a humble mass that succumbed to the slaughter in contrast to the "new Israeli Jews". Their name for these survivors was "Sabonim", which means "soap". The very good Israeli film "Aviva's summer" (Kaiz shel

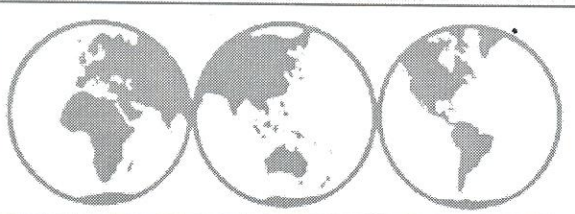
Aviva) gives an idea of how these people that emigrated after the Holocaust to Israel must have been feeling.

Supporters of the Israeli regime on the "left" assert that we can't criticise Israel because that would mean giving credence to the anti-Semitic views of the right wing and Nazis. But it has long been a well-known fact that the extreme right use social demagoguery to deceive the masses and then to betray them. Sometimes some of the slogans of the left and the right can appear to be similar, but they have absolutely diametrically opposite aims, because they represent opposing class interests!

Only the Jewish working class in Israel, in alliance with their brothers, the Arab workers, can offer a way out of the Middle East conflict and butchery. And it is they, and not the butcher Sharon, that needs international help and solidarity.



A Kramer



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## Hungary shifts to left

Hungary moved further to the left in last month's local authority elections. Electors went to the polls to elect mayors and members of both city and county councils. Participation was high, with nearly 50% voting, the highest percentage in post-Stalinist council elections.

By Juliana Grant

Prime Minister, in post since the April General Election, thanked the country for the vote of confidence and promised to deliver on all MSZP (Socialist Party) promises. Whether on the ground this vote was a vote of confidence in the new MSZP/SZDSZ (Free Democrat) coalition government, only time will tell. However, what is not in doubt is the strong wish by town and country alike to break with the rule of the right wing, with its religious, chauvinistic and jingoistic tone and policies of the last four years and a clear shift towards policies of social justice.

The trend of the towns favouring more left wing candidates against the countryside was less marked in these elections than in the General Elections in the spring. This was caused not by the towns shifting to the right, on the contrary: they are even more solidly socialist than in the spring, but this time round both county and county borough assemblies followed them in a leftward direction. In fact, there was a significant shift to the left in the county authorities and country towns all over the country. The Mayor of Miskolc, an old industrial town, which has suffered considerable unemployment and decline in the last 12 years, was a right winger until these elections. This time he could only muster third place, getting 10% of the votes. The victorious

candidate supported by the Socialist/Free Democrat coalition polled 64% for his runaway victory. Other solid bastions of the right in the countryside: the cities of Szeged and Sopron - the latter near the Austrian border - have fallen to left wing candidates. Szombathely, another Western town, voted in a Socialist/Free Democrat Mayor, after the incumbent right wing Mayor discredited himself with a corruption scandal. These, and other, results showed a clear trend of the towns shifting further to the left and the countryside joining them in the same direction.

Budapest has re-elected its Free Democrat Mayor, more by tactical voting, than anything else. Analysts believe, that large numbers of socialist voters voted for him in order to keep out the FIDESZ (Young Democrats)/MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum) right wing candidate. However, the true views of the Budapest electorate can be seen when the votes for the Assembly itself are analysed. The coalition of MSZP/SZDSZ polled 58.75% against 31.25% for the right coalition of FIDESZ/MDF and - what is even more telling - the percentage of successful independents was the lowest in the country at 10%.

Overall the jury is still out on how successful the current MSZP/SZDSZ coalition government will be in deliver-

ing on its promises and addressing the burning problems of Hungary in high inflation, low wages, stagnating countryside, ethnic strife, declining public services, increasing crime rate and ever increasing unemployment. This election has put it on record, if it ever needed to be put on record again, that the pressure is on the forces of the left to break with capitalist policies and tackle the ills of Hungary brought about by a return to capitalism. A large proportion of the electorate is expecting their lives to improve in the next four years. That is why they voted for socialist candidates to represent them both in Parliament and in the city and county halls this October.

While the socialist and free democrat programs are progressive and show a real willingness to acknowledge the losses of the last 12 years and a desire to put them right - only a break with capitalism and a return to workers democracy in the spirit of 1956 with its free workers councils and workers democracy would be able to achieve that. A move towards those solutions would carry overwhelming support from the people. This is the time to take that bold turn with the full support of the majority of Hungary behind them. □

### Iraq: Bomb 'em anyway

Richard Perle, a top security adviser to President Bush, told MPs at a recent all-party meeting that the United States intends to attack Iraq - even if United Nations weapon inspectors fail to find weapons of mass destruction.

Perle said that a "clean bill of health" from Hans Blix, who heads the UN inspectors, would not stop the US from bombing Iraq. "All [Blix] can know is the results of his own investigations. And that does not prove Saddam does not have weapons of mass destruction," Perle stated.

"Suppose we are able to find someone who has been involved in the development of weapons and he says there are stores of nerve agents. But you cannot find them because they are so well hidden. Do you actually have to take possession of the nerve agents to convince? We are not dealing with a situation where you can expect cooperation," he continued.

In *The Guardian* newspaper Perle blurted Bush's real attitude: "There are some people you can't do deals with. You could not do a deal with Hitler, and you can't do a deal with Saddam Hussein or with North Korea."

# The Project

by Mark Turner

F. Scott Fitzgerald, in his classic novel 'The Great Gatsby', satirised the so called 'American dream' by showing the impossible romanticism of it's protagonist. Gatsby's fantasy of the shallow, self obsessed, socialite Daisy, was ultimately broken in the final, tragic realisation of the truth. Gatsby's rose coloured vision of a corrupt, decadent and degenerate ruling class symbolised American capitalism's awful reality compared with the dream. 'The Project,' a 'docudrama' about New Labour, whilst disappointing from a political perspective, was Leigh Jackson (writer) and Peter Kosminsky's (Director) update; a kind of 'Gatsby in Millbank'.

'The Project', heavily hyped by the BBC, had its broadcast delayed, then the press were denied previews; all of which led to expectations that libel lawyers were salivating at the mouth in anticipation of the feast. This was fuelled by the revelation that over 120 people close to New Labour, were interviewed in the research for the film. In the end it proved to be little more than an amalgam of stories anyone with the remotest interest would have read or heard already, which makes you wonder how much still lies on the cutting room floor?

The problem of political drama, from Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar' onwards, is that, momentous political events, and the forces in society that bring them about, are always condensed into a conflict between a few individuals, so that, in this case, the biggest General Election landslide in British history appeared to be the direct result of a group of ex-public school, university graduates doing the political equivalent of 'Hey Kids! Let's put on a show!'

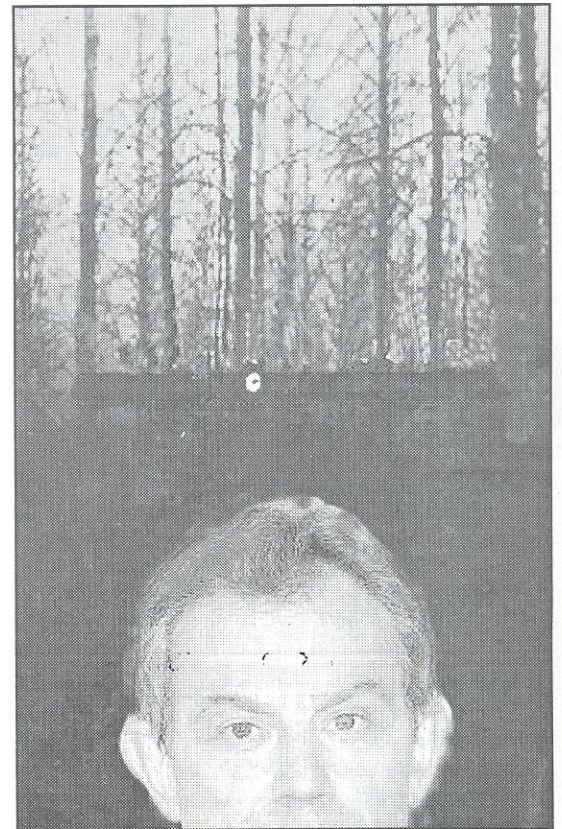
The story followed a group of middle class students who, following the 1992 election defeat, decide that, enough is enough! They are going to personally ensure that Labour does not lose again, and with not much more effort than to walk in to Walworth Road and say 'hello', are recruited as full time employees in the heart of New Labour. After the '97 election victory they steadily become disillusioned with the Blair

regime as 'the dream' crashes around their ears. The two main characters, Paul (Matthew McFadden, who's one facial expression appears to have been stolen from silent film star Harry Langsdon) and Maggie (Naomi Harris) follow different career paths- Naomi is parachuted into an apparently safe Tory seat and Paul is mentored by the sinister Harvey, and becomes a 'Special Adviser'. They both become compromised and face the dilemma of whether to safeguard their careers within the Party -by toeing an increasingly right wing line- or their principles.

The second part of the film was better than the first, because it is easier to chronicle the betrayals of New Labour than to actually detail, sympathetically, the 'principles' that they began with. Despite the knowledge that trades unionists and the left already have of New Labour, it is nonetheless a depressing experience to watch the relentless right-ward march and each successive betrayal of the working class by the leadership condensed into a few hours. Like Gatsby, Paul is a naïve idealist, who does not really believe the New Labour philosophy, but accepts the fallacy that they have to go along with them to win power and does not realise that he will have to jettison his beliefs to enjoy a career in the Party.

Jackson does try to show the reality of the outside world affecting this circle of friends, by Paul having a relationship with a nurse. When he defends the cutting of single parent benefits, with the argument that unemployed people need 'a nudge' to make them work, she responds 'I thought when you lot got in, things were going to get better! Do you know how much a pint of milk costs? Maybe you should find out before you give nudges to people!'

Paul's belief in the good intentions of these New Labour people are eventually shattered, and his belief in the superficially 'left' Naomi is broken, when despite her acknowledgement of the reality of New Labour- she gives into the whips and votes for the government for the promise of a junior ministerial post.



All Paul's dreams are broken.

In effect, it was a pretty damning indictment of New Labour, the 'dark forces' and shadowy advisers more than the leaders themselves, and their methods of smearing opponents and bullying supporters and individuals in the media. However, you were left in no doubt that the villains of the piece were these people who really operate as a party within a party, and are actually bigoted Tories. As a drama it proved, eventually, to be compelling and convincing, but the rank and file Party, the trades unions, the electorate, and even the Cabinet were little more than 'noises off'. Clause Four was referred to in an off hand way by a Tory researcher at a dinner party, but that was it! It also failed to articulate what 'the project' actually is - to dismantle the Labour Party as we know it. Though the film certainly had it's heart in the right place, it seems that Jackson and Kosminsky buy the idea that 'the project' was both necessary for and responsible for the '97 victory, just that it went wrong somewhere, and that is the biggest fantasy of all. □

## Give us an Xmas present

First of all I wish to thank all readers, subscribers and sellers for your much valued support over the year and, on behalf of the editorial board of Socialist Appeal, wish you all the compliments of the season and a happy new year.

This last year has seen struggles developing both home and abroad. The firefighters strike is just the latest in a series of actions by workers across the whole of industry and the public sector. More will follow. The press are openly talking of a new 'winter of discontent - mark two.' Opposition inside the Labour and trade union movement to Blairism is growing - only 8 delegates voted against supporting the firefighters action at the recent conference of the London Labour Party. This follows the earlier critical mood both at the TUC and at the annual Labour Party conference, where Blair was defeated on PFI and came close to losing the vote on Iraq, despite rigging the debate and having to rely on a card vote rather than a show of hands.

Around the world also we are seeing one crisis after another - in Latin America, in the Middle East, in Russia and so on. The world under capitalism has become a world of instability, exploitation and despair. The choice is stark - socialism or barbarism.

The role of Socialist Appeal is not just to report on what is happening but

explain why and what can be done about it. We defend the ideas of Marxism and fight for the programme of socialism amongst workers, students and youth. But to keep doing this we need your support - we have no big business backers and do not want them! Instead we are relying as always on the support of our class, the working class.

We have launched a Xmas appeal for £5,000 to be raised by the middle of January 2003. With your help we can make it. As we come towards the end of November we have raised just £536 so a big push is needed during December. Thanks to those who donated including £10 Cllr. Lee Waker, £5 John Cooze, £10 Angus MacDonald, £13.80 Steve Wood, £10 Midlands reader, £5 C. Baugh, £10 Greg Cefai, £425 from London readers and all the others who contributed during the month. Please consider donating whatever you can so that we can produce more material, develop our resources and raise the red flag still higher in the coming period. Send what you can to us at PO Box 2626, London, N1 7SQ.

Thanks in advance.  
Steve Jones

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## History of British Trotskyism

by Ted Grant

This book is a unique contribution to the history of British Trotskyism. Ted Grant joined the Trotskyist Left Opposition in South Africa in the late 1920s. He emigrated to Britain in late 1934 and joined the Trotskyists in the Independent Labour Party and subsequently the Labour Party.

During the war, Grant became the chief theoretician of the Workers' International League, and later the Revolutionary Communist Party. The historic events of the period are fully covered, including the author's personal recollections, and his role in events.

The book begins with the debate on Trotskyism in the British Communist Party in 1924 and ends with the break-up of the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1949 and the beginning of more than thirty years of work within the Labour Party.

Ted Grant was the founder and political leader of the "Militant Tendency", which haunted the Labour leadership, and was eventually expelled along with the Militant editorial board in 1983. A postscript by Rob Sewell, who was the national organiser for the Militant throughout the 1980s, brings this unique history up to date.

Ted Grant is the longest surviving Trotskyist of any prominence alive today. His contribution has served to preserve the unbroken thread of genuine Trotskyism. This book is a first-hand account of the life of a Trotskyist pioneer, and will be indispensable to students of political history, and above all, an inspiration to all those seeking to change the world.

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notice board

Dec/Jan 2002/3

**Don't attack Iraq**

**Demonstrate**

**15 Feb 2003**

1pm central London

**Mass lobby of Parliament**

21 January 2003

## Socialist Appeal Stands for:

✚ **For a Labour government with a bold socialist programme!** Labour must break with big business and Tory economic policies. Vote Labour and fight to reclaim the party.

✚ **A national minimum wage of at least two-thirds of the average wage.** £6.00 an hour as a step toward this goal, with no exemptions.

✚ **Full employment!** No redundancies. The right to a job or decent benefits. For a 32 hour week without loss of pay. No compulsory overtime. For voluntary retirement at 55 with a decent full pension for all.

✚ **No more sell offs.** Reverse the Tories privatisation scandal. Renationalise all the privatised industries and utilities under democratic workers control and management. No compensation for the fat cats, only those in genuine need.

✚ **The repeal of all Tory anti-union laws.** Full employment rights for all from day one. For the right to strike, the right to union representation and collective bargaining.

Election of all trade union officials with the right of recall. No official to receive more than the wage of a skilled worker.

✚ **Action to protect our environment.** Only public ownership of the land, and major industries, petro-chemical enterprises, food companies, energy and transport, can form the basis of a genuine socialist approach to the environment.

✚ **A fully funded and fully comprehensive education system under local democratic control.** Keep big business out of our schools and colleges. Free access for all to further and higher education. Scrap tuition fees. No to student loans. For a living grant for all over 16 in education or training.

✚ **The outlawing of all forms of discrimination.** Equal pay

for equal work. Invest in quality childcare facilities available to all. Scrap all racist immigration and asylum controls. Abolish the Criminal Justice Act.

✚ **The reversal of the Tories' cuts in the health service.** Abolish private health care. For a National Health Service, free to all at the point of need, based on the nationalisation of the big drug companies that squeeze their profits out of the health of working people.

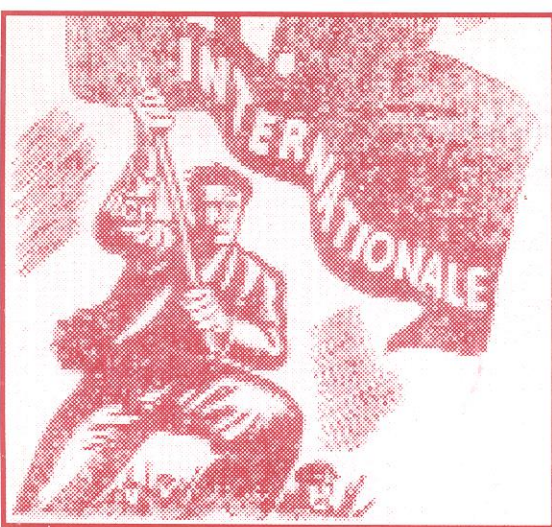
✚ **Reclaim the Labour Party!** Defeat Blairism! Fight for Party democracy and socialist policies. For workers' MPs on workers' wages.

✚ **The abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords.** Full economic powers for the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, enabling them to introduce socialist measures in the interests of working people.

✚ **No to sectarianism.** For a Socialist United Ireland linked by a voluntary federation to a Socialist Britain.

✚ **Break with the anarchy of the capitalist free market.** Labour to immediately take over the "commanding heights of the economy." Nationalise the big monopolies, banks and financial institutions that dominate our lives. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of need. All nationalised enterprises to be run under workers control and management and integrated through a democratic socialist plan of production.

✚ **Socialist internationalism.** No to the bosses European Union. Yes to a socialist united states of Europe, as part of a world socialist federation.



# Socialist Appeal

Marxist voice of the labour movement



**"I would urge members to go into branches, to step up their work within Labour and take this party back..."**

**Derek Simpson,  
General Secretary of Amicus**

## FBU dispute: No job losses!

Following hot on the heels of the stunt they pulled last month - when they put the public in danger because Prescott was too lazy to get out of bed and look over the opening agreement between the employers and the union, which would have postponed the strike - Prescott let slip that his 'modernisation' would mean up to 11,000 job cuts.

This can only serve to increase the anger and the resolve of workers. The FBU have been willing to enter constructive talks the whole way through, but time and again they have been treated with disdain by the government, a Labour government!

The government is making a song and dance over the FBU's 'resistance to modernisation'; any substantial pay rise will have to be funded through "more efficient utilisation of labour". But how is it possible to make savings through modernisation? Modernisation should mean investing in equipment and training to get a better service. The word 'modernisation' is one that politicians like because it has lost its meaning - it can mean whatever they want it to mean! Andy Gilchrist said the government has "come clean" and admitted its modernisation plan will axe fire engines, close stations and cut jobs "It is obvious this will result in a much worse service to the public". In other words the government does not want to go forward; they want cheap public services, so they can fund wars, and tax cuts in the interests of business.

After two eight-day strikes, if the government still does not listen it will be necessary to step up the action with an all out strike in order to achieve the aims. But even then strike action is limited in its scope, to make a fundamental improvement to the conditions of workers the economic struggle must be accompanied by a political struggle. The shift to the left in the unions reflects the discontent of the membership with the attacks of the employers and the government. This is beginning to be reflected within the Labour Party itself - the Blairites are becoming, and will become, more and more isolated. It is imperative that the unions wage a campaign within the party to kick out the rightwing clique at the top and push for socialist policies as the only way to solve the problems which all workers face.

For the full 30K!  
Oppose the government cuts!  
Trade unions fight to reclaim the Labour Party!

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