

An injury to one is an injury to all

Solidarity

& WORKERS' LIBERTY

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SICK!

**The USA's health
"market"**

**New Labour's push
down that road**

SICK!

SICK!

**Unions slow to
fight back**

**Special
NHS
feature
pages
6,7 & 8**

REJECT ROYAL MAIL'S DEAL! see page 5

Iranian regime blinds Osanloo

BY PAUL HAMPTON

MANSOUR Osanloo, the Iranian bus workers' leader, has lost the sight in one eye after being denied the urgent medical treatment he needed in prison. Apparently he has now received medical treatment... too late to save his sight.

Osanloo, President of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (Sherkat-e Vahed) has been detained in the brutal Evin prison in Teheran since July this year. His eyes were first injured in May 2005 after he was attacked by government security forces, who also cut his tongue, leaving him with a lisp.

Osanloo has been repeatedly harassed by the Iranian government because of his trade union activities. He was imprisoned for eight months from December 2005 to August 2006, and also for a month from November to December 2006. He was threatened with five years in prison earlier this year.

Hanafi Rustandi, from the Indonesian seafarers' union the KPI (Kesatuan Pelaut Indonesia), recently visited Iran to complain about Osanloo's incarceration. While there, although

he was not allowed to visit the prison, he was told by the regime that Osanloo had received treatment.

The maltreatment is part of a wave of repression against independent union organising that has swept Iran since the teachers' strikes in March. Apart from imprisonment and torture, the regime now appears to be using assassination to beat down its working class opponents.

Last week in the city of Sanandaj in Iranian Kurdistan, three hooded plain clothes agents attempted to assassinate Majid Hamidi, a member of the Coordinating Committee to Form Workers' Organisation as well as a member of the Committee in Defence of Mahmoud Salehi. Hamidi was shot seven times in his arm, shoulder and neck and is in a critical condition in hospital.

Other activists have been visited at home or threatened by armed members of the security services. Socialists and trade unionists should be joining the protests in solidarity with Iranian workers and help to build the independent Iranian labour movement.

For more information on solidarity actions see itfglobal.org/solidarity/osanloo2.cfm

Northern Iraq: Turkey threatens invasion

BY DAN KATZ

ENERGETIC US diplomacy may have headed off – for the time being – the threat of a Turkish invasion of northern Iraq.

Turkey wants to see the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) guerilla bases in northern Iraq closed down. The PKK, a Stalinist-nationalist organisation based in the Kurdish areas of Turkey – and now with bases in Iraq – launched an armed struggle against the Turkish state in 1984.

37,000 people have died during the PKK-Turkish conflict. In the mid-1990s thousands of villages were destroyed in the Kurdish south-east of Turkey, and hundreds of thousands of Kurds fled to cities in other parts of the country.

In the 1990s, the PKK organisation stepped back from its demand for an independent Kurdish state, calling instead for more autonomy for the Kurds. More recently the PKK declared a cease-fire, which broke down in 2004.

Recent PKK attacks have killed both Turkish soldiers and civilians.

On 17 October the Turkish parliament passed a motion allowing the government to use force against the PKK in northern Iraq. The Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, leader of the Islamist-lite Justice and Development party (AK) and the secular-nationalist army leadership have other reasons – beyond destroying the PKK – to consider an invasion of northern Iraq. The existence of a largely autonomous Kurdish region in Iraq is unsettling for them – giving, as it does, the 15 million oppressed Kurds in eastern Turkey a possible example to follow.

The US is eager not to see foreign armies openly intervening in Iraq. A Turkish invasion would not only open the Turks to the possibility of being bogged down – much as Israel was in Lebanon – but widen a rift with the US.

Turkey defied the Americans when it signed a gas-pipeline deal with Iran last July, and has been angered by a US government committee's decision to label the mass murder of Armenians by the Ottoman empire (between 1915-23) as "genocide".

Turkish opinion polls now show that only 10% of Turks hold a "favourable opinion of the US".

NHS Scot-free?

BY JACK STAUNTON

THE 23 October edition of the *Daily Mail* featured a rant by the odious High Tory Max Hastings, the boldface of the title screaming "How much longer will we put up with the Scots spending so much of our money?"

The basic rationale of his piece is that Scottish people live a life of luxury – yes, not only do they not have to pay tuition fees, but Alex Salmond "plans to abolish" NHS prescription charges – which "the kindly, stupid English" have to shell out for, but do not benefit from themselves. Westminster is paying for the Holyrood government's "largesse".

The attempt to scapegoat the Scots for the wave of cuts in "our" "English" public services is preposterous. Before Thatcherism took hold "London governments" were far less unwilling to tolerate the principle of universal, free education and health care – and this right surely transcends simple budgetary calculations. The Tories and New Labour did not close hospitals down south so that they could build more in Scotland.

And even on the level of Hastings' own argument, it is obvious that the £70 million cost of abolishing prescription charges is a pittance – particularly if we consider the severity of health problems north of the border. In Calton, an inner-city district of Glasgow, life expectancy is just 54. The NHS is no "excess" – it is fundamental, and its survival cannot be compromised by efforts to balance the books.

The *Daily Mail's* characterisation of the Scottish National Party administration is comical. Hastings tells us that Scottish people are "instinctive socialists and centralisers". And yet such is Alex Salmond's "socialism" that the SNP dropped its former manifesto commitment to re-nationalising the railways upon the receipt of a hefty £500,000 donation from the co-owner of Stagecoach! The tartan-capitalist SNP's case for independence is largely based around the idea that it will free up Scottish business and open up more EU trade.

Rather than moaning about the idea that the Scots might get a marginally less bad NHS, we need to fight, north and south of the border, against all cuts and in favour of a fully funded service for all – no matter what the budgetary rows at Westminster and Holyrood.

LRC NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Labour Representation Committee's national conference: "The Next Steps for the Left"
Saturday 17 November, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London (Holborn tube)

This event offers an important opportunity for political reorientation, coming after Brown's moves to abolish the trade union voice in the Labour Party and at a time when the Labour left has lost the momentum it gathered in the John McDonnell campaign. Confirmed speakers include Tony Benn, Katy Clark MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, John McDonnell MP, Mark Serwotka (PCS) and Matt Wrack (FBU).

Tickets cost £15 for waged individuals, £10 unwaged – see www.l-r-c.org.uk

Scottish Socialists depleted

BY STAN CROOKE

Around 150 delegates and members turned up to the Scottish Socialist Party's 2007 annual conference, held in Dundee last Sunday (21 October).

Overtaking a previous and well-established policy, the conference passed a motion in support of scrapping religious and denominational schools. Underlining its commitment to this policy, the conference also voted to delete a clause in the motion which allowed for "inclusive assemblies which could draw on religious and non-religious traditions."

A motion opposing the abolition of weekly rubbish bin collections proved more controversial (even though large parts of Scotland have already introduced fortnightly collections). The basic counter-argument, albeit unsuccessful, was that the SSP should be campaigning for the measures and resources which would allow for refuse collection to be done on a fortnightly basis.

Proposed by the Republican Communist Network, a motion proposing that the SSP initiate a conference to bring together socialists from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland generated some discussion, although (on the surface at least) it was a discussion concerning availability of resources rather than political

issues.

Pro-union (i.e. the Union of Scotland and England, or Wales and England) and pro-partition (i.e. the partition of Ireland) socialists will not be invited to the conference. Invitations will, however, be extended to "individuals in England who uphold the right of socialists to form their own national organisations, and the need for all-Ireland socialist organisations."

Although there was never any real chance of it being defeated, given that it followed on from policies adopted in previous years, a motion backing a boycott of Israel and collaboration with the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Committee did, however, see a relatively respectable number of abstentions and votes against.

The only motion defeated at the conference was one motivated by a desire for the SSP to return to its earlier staffing levels, once financial resources allow this, and an end to part-time staff working full-time for a part-time wage (as is the case at present), as well as having to find a second part-time job in order to have a decent income.

The formulation used to express the latter point, however, was: "We believe that full-time staff are preferable to part-time staff." But since part-time employees are more likely to be female than are full-time employees, this would constitute an employment practice

which would give preference to male applicants over female ones.

Most of the other motions adopted by the conference went through 'on the nod' – variously proposing support for various initiatives in trade union work, support for the Hands Off the People of Iran campaign, support for the No-One is Illegal campaign, and support for a new SSP-initiated housing campaign.

But the problem with any motion going through "on the nod" is that this may signify indifference rather than enthusiasm. The ease with which such motions sailed through conference is therefore not necessarily a reflection of the energy with which they will be implemented.

An attendance of 150 at a conference in Dundee on a Sunday is not a poor turnout, even if it was a lot less than turnouts at "pre-split" conferences. But the attendance at the preceding day's "Socialism 2007" event – also around 150 – was well down on attendance at similar events in earlier years.

Sunday's turnout indicates that the SSP has maintained a solid, even if much reduced, core of membership. But Saturday's turnout indicates that the SSP is certainly not the "pole of attraction" for the left in Scotland in general which it was in earlier years (even making allowance for various other factors which depressed Saturday's turnout).

The state of SSP branch life is also clearly depressed, although not consistently so. Some branches still maintain a pattern of weekly or fortnightly meetings and a routine of street stalls, while other branches meet less regularly (if at all) and struggle to maintain a public profile.

Overall, last weekend's rather uneventful conference gave little indication of how the SSP is likely to develop politically over the next twelve months.

Inequality and how to end it

BETWEEN fifty and sixty per cent of the population identify as "working class". Despite the term "working class" vanishing completely from the language of the Labour Party, the proportion claiming this now-unspoken identity has been fairly stable since the 1950s.

To be "working-class", whether you know it or not, is to be at one pole of a pair. The other pole is the capitalist class.

The picture is blurred by what Marx called "the constantly growing number of the middle classes, those who stand between the workman on the one hand and the capitalist and landlord on the other. The middle classes maintain themselves to an ever increasing extent directly out of revenue, they are a burden weighing heavily on the working base and increase the social security and power of the upper ten thousand".

But the two main poles are clear. Most people sell their labour-power to capital (or try to), and receive in exchange a more-or-less "living wage", but not enough to accumulate wealth.

At the other pole, another group, small numerically but very weighty in society, own or participate in capital. They live from property income (shares, interest, and so on) or from high "wages" which they allot themselves. They accumulate wealth.

That core class division is what defines capitalism. A sufficient level of organisation and mobilisation of the working class can reduce the gap between the classes somewhat. Without that organisation and mobilisation, inequality breeds inequality. As in Britain today.

But there's more equal opportunity, isn't there? Even if not equal outcomes? You can "make it" if you're smart and hard-working.

That's what the myth says. Barrow-boys become bankers, as long as they have the wit and the energy for it. If you fall behind, it's because you're idle or stupid.

Actually, Britain is at the bottom of the league for social mobility, among the richer countries. We rank alongside the USA, another country where free-market economics and union-bashing have been unleashed with exceptional force, for low chances of bright kids from poor families getting ahead.

A survey by researchers from the London School of Economics in 2005 found that Norway has the greatest social mobility, followed by Denmark, Sweden and Finland - all countries where social provision and the union movement have held their own a bit better.

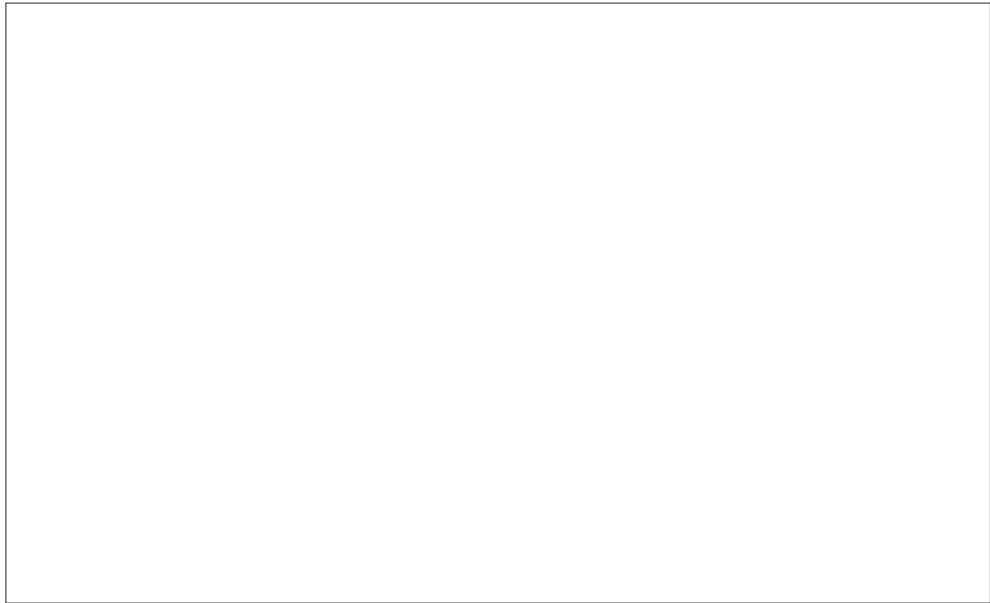
In Britain, if A's dad has twice the income of B, then, on average, A is likely to end up with 40% more income than B. In Sweden, A would end up with only 10% more income.

And social mobility is getting less. Born in 1958 into a family in the bottom quarter of income-earners, you had a 17 per cent chance of getting into the top quarter of income earners by the age of 30. Born in 1970, your chance was down to 11 per cent.

That can't be right. Lots of working-class families are sending kids to university for the first time ever.

But nowadays a run-of-the-mill university degree will not get you out of the working class. To compound it, the rise in university education means that doors previously open to poorer kids are closed. Top jobs once open to people "working their way up" are reserved for graduates.

The proportion of people from the poorest fifth of families obtaining a degree has increased since the 1950s, but only from 6 per cent to 9 per cent. Meanwhile, kids from the top 20% of families now make sure they get there. The proportion of them getting a degree has risen much faster, from 20 per cent to 47 per cent.



The myth says he's made it because he's smart, she's not made it because she's not. Actually the capitalist system creates inequalities. Photo: Jess Hurd/www.reportdigital.co.uk

Well, not everyone has the brains to go to university.

There's a mountain of evidence that kids from poorer families lose out just because they are poorer, not because of lack of brains. And they start to lose out very early.

Part of it is that their parents can't afford to win the "postcode lottery" by buying a house in the catchment area of a high-achieving school. But that is not all of it.

A detailed survey by the Joseph Rowntree Trust found that the UK has one of the steepest socio-economic "gradients" in education among similar countries. Children from poor backgrounds do worse (on average) than those from well-off backgrounds by a greater amount than elsewhere.

Just 14 per cent of variation in individuals' performance is accounted for by school quality. A kid from a better-off home will manage all right in a "difficult" school; a kid from a poor home may just feel helpless in a "good" school. Most variation is explained by other factors: lack of security at home; lack of the sort of things at home that help you learn; reduced support from shiftwork-stressed, harassed, and unconfident parents...

"Children from all backgrounds see the advantages of school", Rowntree reported, "but deprived children are more likely to feel anxious and unconfident about school". And of course kids from poor families tend to lose out at the pre-school stage, too.

OK, so you think that we should aim for a fairer "meritocracy"?

No. Everyone should have an equal right to education, but there is no reason why those who do well academically should be paid more than others. They get many advantages just from having learned more: why should they also be paid more?

Michael Young, the writer who coined the term "meritocracy" in 1958, saw it then as a danger, not as a hope! In a recent article he explained why: "Those who are judged to have merit of a particular kind harden into a new social class without room in it for others... Education has put its seal of approval on a minority, and its seal of disapproval on the many who fail to shine from the time they are relegated to the bottom streams at the age of seven or before".

In other words, the education system has become — as much as anything else — an ideological machine for sealing the self-confidence of the well-off and trashing the self-confidence of the poor.

Inequality may be bad, but it's an engine of growth. Competition to get ahead stimulates growth, and you can't have competition to win unless some lose.

In the first place, not all growth is good. In the second place, the wasting of talent through inequality inhibits growth. Economies grew faster in the less unequal 1960s and 70s. All other things being equal, they tend to grow faster in more equal countries now.

Inequality in capitalist society has very little to do with the inescapable "inequalities" between individuals. It is a class division.

To be bothered about inequality is just envy. We should be charitable to the poorest, but let the tall poppies grow tall.

Let Einstein be Einstein, of course. People can't all be "equal" in scientific knowledge any more than they all have the same shape of face. But Einstein didn't get rich, and he didn't do science in order to get rich.

Inequality in capitalist society has very little to do with the inescapable "inequalities" between individuals. It is a class division. It is not just that some grow taller. They grow taller by pushing others down.

Thirty years ago poorer men died 5.5 years before the well-off; now the gap is 7.5 years. The gap has increased despite a general improvement in housing and in availability of food, and despite a relative decline of heavy manual work. The evidence is conclusive: poorer people are more stressed and less healthy because they are unequal, not just because they are poor. Being part of an exploited class is bad for your health.

And you propose complete and exact equality? Everyone the same?

You couldn't even calculate that, let alone impose it. As Engels put it, "As between one place and another, living conditions will always evince a certain inequality which may be reduced to a minimum but never wholly eliminated". "The real content of the proletarian demand for equality is the demand for the abolition of classes".

Why does capital tend to increase inequality?

The best conditions to raise wages are those of high profits. As Marx put it, "to say that the most favorable condition for wage-labor is the fastest possible growth of productive capital", is the same as to say: the quicker the working class multiplies and augments the power inimical to it — the wealth of another which lords over that class — the more favorable will be the conditions under which it will be permitted to toil anew at the multiplication of bourgeois wealth, at the enlargement of the power of capital, content thus to forge for itself the golden chains by which the bourgeoisie drags it in its train".

So, if profits are low, capital slumps, and wages are pushed down too. If profits are high, wages can rise, but capital grows too. And, in growing, it gains the strength to bring in new technologies to reinforce its power and cut jobs.

And how to abolish classes?

By abolishing the pivotal exchange between capital and wage labour; by the working class, collectively and thus democratically, making the productive wealth social property.

The labour movement is far from ready for that, as yet, in Britain. It will become ready by fighting against and pushing back the increased inequality which capital is pushing onto us.

Marx: "The general tendency of capitalistic production is... to push the value of labour more or less to its minimum limit. Such being the tendency of things in this system, is this saying that the working class ought to renounce their resistance against the encroachments of capital...? If they did, they would be degraded to one level mass of broken wretches past salvation... By cowardly giving way in their everyday conflict with capital, they would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement."

IMMIGRATION

Second trade union conference

CAMPAIGNERS are urging trade unionists to sponsor and attend the second "Trade union and Community Conference Against Immigration Controls" which will be held in London on Saturday 29 March 2008.

In March 2007 No One is Illegal organised a similar conference in Liverpool. This was attended by over 100 trades unionists. The Finsbury Park Branch of the RMT has called for a second conference to take place in London which will be a "trade union and community conference", to ensure that migrant and refugee communities have a central role. For more information or statement e-mail davidlandau9@aol.com

New No One is Illegal pamphlet

FOLLOWING its pamphlet Workers' Control Not Immigration Controls, on immigration controls and the class struggle, No One is Illegal has published a new pamphlet on Campaigning Against Deportation or Removal.

Sponsored by a wide range of union branches and trades councils from across the country, this is 23 pages of practical and political advice for running anti-deportation campaigns, from how to decide whether to organise a campaign, to learning to become a political speaker, to winning trade union and school student support. It also includes contact details for all the main migrants' rights campaigns and a number of other useful bodies.

For copies of the pamphlet, or if your organisation would like to sponsor it, email No One is Illegal at info@noii.org.uk — or see www.noii.org.uk

MEDIA

BBC strike plans

UNIONS representing workers at the BBC have agreed a basis for negotiations with management over massive proposed cuts and job losses (up to 3,000 job losses have been threatened). Those unions, including the NUJ, and BECTU, have said they will ballot for industrial action if the talks do not produce results.

The BBC plans compulsory redundancy, but was going to start the cuts process by trawling the organisation for voluntary redundancies. All this was going to go ahead without negotiating with the unions.

The BBC has now said it will go ahead with a two-week voluntary redundancy trawl in News and BBC Vision but will talk to the union before any redundancies are agreed. The talks appear to only delay a process with the BBC management are fixed on. Strike action may be inevitable.

On 5 November National Union of Journalists has organised a series of events around the country, all under the title "Stand up for Journalism". The protest is against cuts in media and the "deskilling" of journalism. Events include both ITV and BBC days of action and a march and rally at the Society of Editors conference in Manchester, as well as activities organised by many local newspaper chapels.

RAIL

Bakerloo strike

BAKERLOO line detrainment staff are to strike again on Friday 26 October — postponed from 22 October following an administrative cock-up by RMT.

The case for selective action

BY A PCS ACTIVIST

THE civil service union PCS is undertaking a critical national consultative ballot of members to find out whether they support the executive council's strategy in the national dispute over jobs, pay, privatisation and other issues.

In strict legal terms the union does not need the ballot as it secured a legal mandate for discontinuous strike action when it balloted members late last year. Indeed, even if the ballot is lost, that would not nullify the existing legal strike mandate.

Nevertheless, it is vital that there is a large turnout for the ballot and that members vote "yes". Anything less than a "yes" vote on at least something approaching the level of turnout with which the national dispute was launched will cast a serious doubt over whether there is sufficient support to win the dispute — a dispute about big, civil service wide, issues.

Once again pay awards this year for many PCS members will be below inflation. Pay rates for the same level jobs continue to vary wildly throughout the civil service as the government persists with the policy of dividing the service into a huge number of "bargaining units". Jobs continue to be cut, piling the pressure on those who remain, compulsory redundancy notices have been issued in a number of areas and more are likely — at a time when the Government is planning cuts to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme. It is vital that the ballot is won and won well.

Nevertheless, activists and members are questioning, and do need to question, the Executive's "strategy". We should not be deterred from doing so by fear of being labelled "defeatist" or "pessimistic" or we thereby give up the right to democratic debate and control in PCS.

Having carried out a large number of membership meetings (involving, they say, 25,000 PCS members), the leadership has concluded that there is no mandate for escalating the national action. (There is a serious issue here as to the way the Executive prepared the dispute. For years the Executive rejected proposals to prepare carefully amongst members for a national pay and jobs campaign, and then found themselves bounced into it in December of last with minimal prior preparation, no clear industrial strategy. Since then have given virtually precious little feedback on the national negotiations to members).

Once again, these workers deserve full support and solidarity for their efforts to defeat management's plan to impose lone working. As they have shown such resolve in continuing the dispute, drivers should give some serious thought to rejoining the action. After all, lone working is a potential threat to all grades.

UNISON

Unison local government ballot

THE strike ballot of 850,000 Unison local government workers finishes on 26 October, with the union leaders calling (though not so as you could tell) for a 'yes' vote to authorise action over the pay freeze. The government's highest offer so far, 2.48%, is well below the 4% inflation rate — but if the workers were to take strike action on 14 and 15 November as proposed, they could hope to undermine seriously Brown's plans to hold wage increases at 2% for the next four years.

The previous local government strike, over pensions, was not capitalised upon with further action — and again the union leaders' tactics are awry. We are yet to see any co-ordination with other unions affected by the pay freeze, while the leadership's refusal to extend the vote, despite the fact that the postal strike has delayed

The Executive is therefore now describing national action as being "designed to have a political impact. It should be taken on a particularly important day...[such as] the opening of Parliament or the Queen's Speech...Or it might be coordinated with other unions, or as a quick response to a specific attack — like compulsory redundancies."

By definition, the leadership are saying, such days will be few. Yet it is hard to see them being fewer than they already are — a one day strike on 31 January 2007, another on 1st May, and the next planned for some time in November.

Even the most loyal Executive supporter should realise that Brown is not about to concede major national demands on the basis of a one day strike every five months or so. Thus, despite the national action so far, and the November 2004 one day strike was also about jobs and pay, not just pensions as some people later tried to claim, the civil service jobs cull has deepened. Indeed tens of thousands of jobs were lost before the Executive relaunched the industrial action over pay and jobs last January.

Similarly Brown will not concede the demand for a "fair and equal national pay system", radically overhauling the current divide and rule structure of some 200 so-called "bargaining units", and "eradicating the huge pay gaps" between members of the same grade and granting inflation proof pay increases, on the basis of sporadic one day strikes.

The difficulty for the Executive is that it rightly does not believe that members are willing to take the level of all out national action required to shift the Government, it also rightly recognises that many activists and members are not persuaded by its previous "strategy" of national one day strikes, but it has for years set its face like flint against even investigating the possibility of centrally planned selective action, designed to hit the government in key services and infilling between the national strikes along with demos and other political action.

The Executive has therefore fallen back on the claim that the national campaign will be escalated by "targeted action" which it explains as "...intended to have a serious industrial impact by causing disruption to work. The timing, the type of action and duration will be chosen to have maximum effect on the employer. Designed at group or branch level, this will take up members' issues which are part of the national campaign. So they might relate to departmental pay, job cuts, office relocations, privatisation or redundancies..."

It is good that the Executive will encourage

branch and group fightbacks. The problem is that a Group or branch fightback against a local attack, albeit driven by Brown's centrally dictated policy, is at best capable of resulting in a group or branch solution (although many Groups and branches do not believe they have the industrial muscle, on their own, to force their management to force Treasury to give them the funding they need to protect living standards and jobs).

"Local" (Group or Branch based) action cannot and will not result in a national agreement that addresses the problems caused by the Government's national policies. We have had years of the Executive being willing to one degree or another to back members who want to take action without denting the government's national drive to cut pay, jobs and services.

Moreover the Executive is not in fact "targeting" anything — if we understand that to mean somebody centrally determines what action and where will best support the fight for our national demands as part of an Executive planned national campaign. If the Executive was targeting in this true sense then the "targeting" would in fact be selective action by another name.

In truth it will be for the Groups and branches to determine whether, on their own, they have the muscle and membership support to defeat their local management on policies largely driven by central decisions (on pay remit levels and job funding for instance). For its part the Executive hopes that there will be sufficient such local actions to make the Brown and the Treasury believe that they should radically overhaul their anti-public service, anti-worker policies. I share the hope, but hope is not a national strategy.

Back in August a PCS activist wrote in these pages, "If selective action is not to be allowed then the PCS campaign will need a great deal more national action, and more frequently, to win our just demands on jobs, pay and services. However the leadership does not believe it is capable of delivering that level of national action. Such a judgement is not unreasonable — it has to be based on the feedback from membership meetings. But dogmatically ruling out selective action is a mistake members should call on the Executive to rectify." That analysis was spot on. The consequence is that the Executive is now boxing the union back into the bargaining units, Brown's divide and rule bargaining units, which the national dispute was supposed to be releasing us from

the distribution of ballot papers, will surely harm turnout and thus weaken the mandate for action.

Vote yes to strike against Brown's pay cut!
Fight for unity with other public sector workers!

Fremantle demo 10 November

STRIKE action by Fremantle Trust staff who work in care homes in Barnet, North London will continue with a one-day action on 10 November.

The dispute started in April when the bosses announced that there would be a new regime of longer hours, slashed annual leave and sick pay, along with pay cuts of up to 30%. This despite the fact that Fremantle staff were already paid a pittance and on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Fremantle campaign has already seen four days of strike action, the sacking of Unison steward Andrew Rogers (and a fight to reinstate him) and an attempt to censor the LabourStart solidarity website through libel threats.

Fremantle workers, some of whom spoke in a session at the recent Feminist Fightback conference, are holding a demonstration at noon on Saturday 10 November, in Watling Park, Burnt Oak, London. See barnetunison.blogspot.com for latest details as

they are finalised.

- Support Fremantle workers — email the bosses! Fremantle Chief Executive Carole Sawyer at carole.sawyers@fremantletrust.org; Catalyst Chief Executive Rod Cahill at rod.cahill@chg.org.uk
- Messages of support can be sent to maggi.myland@barnetunison.org.uk
- Sign the online petition at <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/Fremantle/>

ON 20 October over 3000 people marched through the streets of Bridlington, East Riding of Yorkshire, demonstrating against threatened cuts in vital services. Protesters turned out in force to oppose the local NHS Trust's plans to close the Cardiac Monitoring Unit and two acute medical wards at Bridlington Hospital, which will force patients to travel the 22 miles to Scarborough for emergency treatment.

Vote no to Royal Mail's deal!

BY SACHA ISMAIL

THE final text endorsed by the Postal Executive of the postal workers' union CWU on 22 October seems to differ from the terms negotiated between CWU leaders Billy Hayes and Dave Ward and Royal Mail bosses on 12 October mainly in added warm words. The core is the same.

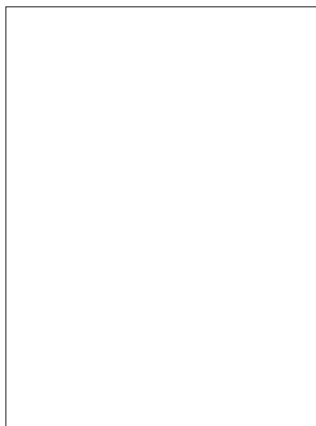
CWU postal workers will now be balloted on the deal. The timetable for the ballot has not yet been set. A senior reps' meeting was due to meet on 25 October, the day after *Solidarity* went to press, but it is unlikely to vote on the deal.

The CWU leaders obviously didn't think the deal was likely to be accepted back on 12 October; but the greatest weight in favour of a yes vote in the ballot will come from the simple fact of delay. Industrial action has been demobilised, and the members have scandalously been left for two weeks with the message: "Trust us. Complicated negotiations. About what? Oh, can't tell you that yet. It's only your jobs and work conditions and pay we're talking about. Complicated things, which you'd best leave to us".

The final sticky point was the unilateral changes introduced by Royal Mail bosses after the four days of strikes on 4 to 9 October. On that the terms are: "All managerial executive action notified to take place on and from 24 October 2007 will be returned to stage 3 of the IR Framework and any disagreements previously at Stage 3 will be returned to Stage 2 for resolution. All parties will work together in a positive way to resolve outstanding issues within the spirit of the national agreement and to facilitate this any CWU representatives who have had their facility time suspended will have it restored. Any revisions introduced during week commencing 22 October will be reviewed in line with the IR procedures".

What about the changes introduced on 10 October, including the new, later start times, the imposition of which provoked unofficial strikes across the country?

The main agreement says: "Royal Mail has introduced later start times for operational reasons. CWU note these changes. Given that there has been little or no opportunity for discussion about these changes at local level, both Royal Mail and CWU are committed to resolve any outstanding issues. Royal Mail and CWU will urgently review these arrange-



ments at local level in line with the following: Henceforth the normal start times will be between 0600 and 0630..."

In other words, total capitulation by the union.

The terms include a wide-ranging drive for "flexibility".

- Bosses can vary your daily hours within a weekly total, so "individuals could be scheduled to work 7 hours on a Tuesday and 9 hours on a Friday".

- "Individuals may be asked... to vary their duty times by up to 30 minutes on a swings and roundabouts basis".

- You may have to work in another office nearby instead of your normal workplace, or "to undertake other work outside [your] normal duties".

- Following on, there will be "new arrangements to cover for one another and develop sensible options to absorb absences, and increased workload... annualised hours or banked hours, flexible working".

The problem is here is not only increased management control, and decreased control by workers over their own work conditions, working hours, and daily lives. It is also that in Royal Mail, with low basic wages, many workers depend heavily on overtime to make ends meet. The terms are designed to cut overtime, and thus effectively cut pay, without

Why postal workers should oppose the deal

Solidarity spoke to Pete Firmin, branch vice-chair and political officer of London West End Amalgamated CWU

THE deal is a crock of shite, to put it as politely as I can. If you look at it, Royal Mail have got just about everything they wanted.

The union is endorsing the new start times and giving the green light to management's plans to promote "flexible" working, a series of changes that for many postal workers will mean a real terms pay cut. At the same time, if you go beneath the headline figure, the pay deal is actually almost identical to what we were being offered originally. If you discount performance bonuses they owed us already and a one off payment, it's less than 3% a year for two years. It's not even a buffer against the offensive on flexibility.

On pensions, the union and Royal Mail are giving very different pictures of the deal. Royal Mail says the changes are already agreed, while CWU insists there's consultation under way. But given the union's abandonment of its fight to defend the final salary scheme, who believes that management won't get their own way? "The right to retire at 60", even for existing workers, will mean the right to retire with with a worse pension.

At the root of all this, there is no evidence of serious opposition to liberalisation. Instead

reducing toil.

Two other measures will also cut back workers' access to payments above the basic: "the majority of night shifts will cease by March 2008... Royal Mail will cease Sunday collections from 21 October".

The "flexibility" is to be negotiated locally, but with the proviso that offices will get the next pay rise — 1.5% from 7 April 2008 — only after they have implemented the "flexibility" to Royal Mail's satisfaction.

The headline pay deal is 5.4% from 1 October 2007. But that covers the whole period from April 2007 to April 2009, supplemented only by a lump sum of £175 per full-time worker to cover April-September 2007 (but that comes from the Employee Share of Savings Scheme, i.e. it is double-counting money already supposed to be available) and the conditional 1.5% in April 2008. With the losses of overtime and bonuses, it looks like many postal workers will suffer a cut in real pay.

The pensions issue has been separated from the pay agreement. A 90-days "pensions consultation process" will follow. But, if the pay-and-conditions deal is accepted, that "consultation process" will take place with Royal Mail bosses knowing that it is very unlikely indeed that the CWU will try new industrial action however bad the pension terms. Or, to put it another way, the deal means the union terminating its most powerful industrial action for over a decade without securing something solid on pensions.

The agreed terms for the "consultation" include "the final salary scheme to be replaced for the future by a similar defined benefits scheme" and "a new scheme for new entrants". In other words: the final salary scheme will go for all workers; and whatever protections existing workers gain, new entrants will be on something worse. The terms include "the right to retire at 60 for existing scheme members", but don't say what level of pension those existing workers will be able to get without working to 65.

Vote no, and organise to defeat the deal!

we've heard demands for a "level playing field". There's been no serious desire to organise workers in Royal Mail's competitors to drive up standards throughout the sector, let alone to fight for the nationalisation and consolidation of these firms.

Now the first thing for postal workers to do is to organise for a no vote, and that is already underway. There'll be a meeting in London on Saturday [27 October], called by a network of activists from across the country that has come together specifically around the calling off of this dispute. Largely people from a left background, but it reaches out further than that too.

What are our chances? Well, both the CWU and Royal Mail machines will go into overdrive to sell the deal, but on the other hand most postal workers think this deal is rubbish. So we have a lot to work with.

Beyond the vote, there's talk of no confidence in both Billy Hayes and Dave Ward at next year's CWU conference. Furthermore, Dave Ward is coming up for re-election, so it may be that there's a left challenger to him. Activists, particularly in London, have maintained more illusions in Ward than in Hayes, but some of that has rubbed away with this dispute.

The elections for the postal executive should be interesting too. What I hope is that out of the opposition to the deal a more permanent rank-and-file network will emerge.

Fight liberalisation: for a publicly owned postal service!

BY MARIA EXALL, CWU NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

AT the root of the recent dispute in Royal Mail is the issue of the pace and scope of the liberalisation of the postal industry brought in by the Government. The full opening up of postal services to competition in January this year has led very quickly to downward pressure on costs in Royal Mail. The profitable parts of the business and the functional operations of bulk mail sorting are being cherry picked by other operators. Royal Mail will increasingly rely on the door-to-door delivery business (on which the whole network relies) which is the most labour intensive and least profitable part of the postal service.

The current regulatory set up is based on a model of commercial freedom for a publicly owned Royal Mail in a liberalised market. The changes in regulation to "open up" the market for competition in the UK are far ahead of what is happening in Europe. These changes are a logical consequence of the Postal Services Act 2000. At the time the CWU embraced this model of commercial freedom as the way forward for the Post Office. Then General Secretary Derek Hodgson was a key

advocate of this policy within the union, having adopted it from the previous General Secretary (now Blairite MP and Health Secretary) Alan Johnson.

Since Billy Hayes has been General Secretary the union has formally changed its stance; our policy is now to ask for a rolling back of the liberalisation agenda. However to reverse changes is sometimes harder than fighting them in the first place. We have an uphill struggle. The union did secure a commitment in the 2005 Labour Party manifesto to "review the impact on Royal Mail of market liberalisation", alongside the commitment not to privatise, but needs to do more.

We need a real fight for public ownership, democratic public ownership based on workers' control over the service. Now is the time to advance our policy: against privatisation and against the market, for public ownership of both Royal Mail and its competitors as the beginning of the rational reorganisation of the sector. We need to develop models of developing the post as a public service, and assert them vocally against the pro-market policies of the Government.

REJECT THE DEAL!

An open meeting to discuss the campaign to win a "No" vote in the CWU ballot.

2.30pm, Saturday 27 October.

Vernon Square campus of SOAS, Penton Rise, London WC1X, just off King's Cross Road (nearest tube, King's Cross)

Initial signatories include:

Dave Warren, PEC member
 Angela Mulcahy, Area processing rep East London postal
 Paul Turnbull, Area processing rep Eastern No 4
 Dave Chapple, vice-chair Bristol & district amal
 Pete Firmin, vice-chair London West End amal
 Geoff Breeze, Southampton CWU member
 Merlin Reader, Local rep, Mount Pleasant
 Presley Antoine, Delivery unit rep WEDO
 Paul Garraway, political officer South Central No 1

The past, present

BY MIKE FENWICK

NEXT year is the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the NHS. Two generations of British peoples' lives have been affected by the NHS in one way or another — as health workers, patients or carers. It's difficult to imagine a time in the past without it, or a future with it gone. For the labour movements that fought for it, free healthcare for all at the point of demand, expressed an notion of social equality and solidarity. All that is now under threat.

The trade union-organised demonstration on 3 November is an opportunity to prepare ourselves for the battle ahead to save the NHS.

Before the Second World War health care in Britain was dependent on how much money you had to spend on it. The government had little role in provision beyond public health information on hygiene or communicable diseases. It was assumed that the individual, not the state was responsible for paying for the health of themselves and their families.

Health care was available in a patchwork system of local GPs, voluntary (charity or church funded) hospitals or Poor Law hospitals set up in the 19th century. Only in the 20 great teaching hospitals would specialities like surgery be available. Elsewhere have a go GPs would be holding the knife, often with terrible consequences.

If you were rich health care was available. If you were poor your options were limited to charity or running up big debts. Contemporary insurance schemes covered only male workers and were not available in every workplace. Women and children needed to have the support of a local dignitary or a philanthropic GP to get consultation, never mind treatment. Often charity hospitals would only treat the "deserving poor". The majority of Britain's workers could literally not afford to be ill.

The lack of health care was made worse by problems of poor housing — rapid industrialisation in the nineteenth century had created huge slums — poor sanitation and poor nutrition. Life expectancy in 1936 was sixty. One in fifteen children would die before the age of eleven. Funerals for children, nowadays an unexpected tragedy, were commonplace. The poor health of the working class was only noticed by the ruling class when it was bad enough to affect their own interests. During the Second Boer War (1899-1902) the generals had become immensely concerned because almost half of those volunteering to fight were medically unfit to do so.

Early attempts — initially under Lloyd George — to set up a comprehensive system

of unemployment and other benefits collapsed as the economic crises of the 1920s struck. As unemployment grew, benefits were cut again and again; and a proposed cut (of 20%) led to the collapse of a Labour Government under Ramsey MacDonald. Many Cabinet members resigned. MacDonald formed an "all-party" (effectively Tory) national government. The cuts went through. The now opposition Labour Party and labour movement, those who had faced up to the betrayal, were virtually annihilated in the 1931 election.

In the absence of a health service, and a strong labour movement to fight for it, the

If you were rich healthcare was available. If you were poor your options were limited to charity or running up big debts.

working class had to hope their illnesses were minor and would go away. In the 1930s chronic illness could land you in an under-funded, understaffed municipal hospital — it was somewhere you went to die. People would use home cures or quack medicines, often just sedatives, to try help themselves. Even these "tinctures and potions" were a handy source of profit for the chemists and doctors who would provide them.

The imperative for change came with the Second World War. With large civilian casualties expected from German air raids there was a pressing need to create a national health service to keep the country working.

The Emergency Medical Service provided 1,000 new operating theatres, and tens of thousands of new beds. It created a National Blood Service (now next in line for privatisation). At the start free treatment was limited to war casualties, but over the course of the war was extended to war workers, child evacuees, firemen etc. Although the elderly and others were still excluded from free care, by the end of the war the principle and feasibility of a national health service had been comprehensively demonstrated.

THIS wartime health service was consolidated and expanded by the radical Labour Government of 1945. Coming to power after a landslide victory it was mandated to "build a land fit for heroes", something originally promised after the First World War.

A militant and expectant working class

Talking therapies in the new NHS? No chance!

Make the unions fight!

BY ANITA DAVIS

TWO events over the next few weeks could put new impetus into the campaign to defend the NHS.

Firstly the release of the film *Sicko*, by US documentary filmmaker Michael Moore will help demonstrate to a general audience the reality of a privatised healthcare system. In the US the movie has helped generate a new national campaign for socialised healthcare. It is a damning indictment of the inequalities and mistreatment of patients where profit not compassion is the motive.

Many local Keep Our NHS Public groups, trade union branches and others are leafletting screenings, block booking seats and providing speakers at some showings to get the message out about the dangers of privatisation in Britain. Big multinationals exposed in the film are now starting to get a foothold here.

The film showing will also be an opportunity to build support for the London demonstration for the health service on 3 November called by a coalition of trade unions in "NHS Together". The demonstration is a step up from the regional action organised this March, but it seems most of those attending will be from the local community groups, rather than directly from the trade unions.

The lack of a united national campaign around the NHS is a huge weakness. NHS Together does include most of the important trade unions and professional associations in health but seems to be based full time officers and general secretaries on getting together and not on a network of local branches and activists.

Keep Our NHS Public on the other hand has been suffering from a lack of funds and active hostility towards it from some unions. It has been difficult for it to fulfil its promise to become a national coordinating centre for local campaigns.

However renewed interest and debate may push the NHS back to the top of the political agenda. We certainly need that to happen. A report by Lord Darzi, surgeon and new junior minister for Health, on the future of the NHS in London has made clear that cuts and privatisation remain the focus of government policy.

In a critique of Darzi's report by John Lister, of London Health Emergency, outlines the future reality in London: further cuts in beds, the downgrading of the District General Hospitals, closure of A&E departments and the handing over of more work to the private sector in new polyclinics and treatment centres. Local access to services will continue to be reduced as specialist services are

centralised and the market is let loose to turn local hospital trusts into competitors.

As the market becomes the sole regulator of healthcare provision further cuts and mergers will follow, as big trusts swallow up smaller hospitals and the private sector cherry pick the low risk, high turnover, "profitable" procedures. This NHS will be left to deal with the higher risk more complex cases. It will become a dumping ground for people when their illness is too chronic to make any money out of it.

This plan for London will be the testing ground for similar changes throughout England. Old principles that used to inform the NHS, such as having local and comprehensive services, accessible to all, will be replaced by a new set of beliefs. This is despite the fact that public opinion is surveyed about health choices people say they want a decent local NHS hospital not a choice of four, or the private sector. Because such results fly in the face of government policy this question has been dropped from NHS opinion polling.

NHS managers are scrambling around to find a business model to work to. They have fixed on the concept of "lean production" developed by Toyota to make their car production line more efficient! Any sense that this is inappropriate to healthcare, that reducing treatment to a set of set procedures done to a product rather than a person, has passed them by. The concept of care, the basic humanism and compassion that helped create the NHS, is being bled out of the system as patients become numbers to be counted and audited on standardised spreadsheets.

Michael Moore's nightmare picture of our possible "privatised" future should motivate more people to get involved in the campaign. We now need to organise public meetings, local rallies and get our message into the local press. We need a recall conference of Keep Our NHS Public to create a democratic, accountable and national campaign to carry on our fight in a more organised way.

With the same process of cuts and privatisation going on across the public sector, in education, housing and social services the time is right to draw them all together in broader campaign against privatisation.

The forthcoming Labour Representation Committee conference will have the opportunity to take the lead in that process by turning out its Public Services Not Private Profit campaign into the communities. Socialists serious about the future of the NHS and labour movement should support that effort in order to create a pole of opposition to the market and competition driven policies of all three

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION IN DEFENCE OF THE NHS

Saturday 3 November 2007

Assemble 11.30 am Embankment, London

Present and future of the NHS



Nye Bevan does battle with the doctors and dentists over the shape of the NHS

made sure Labour kept to their promises. When the Beveridge Report, the blueprint for the Welfare State, was first produced in 1942 it had enjoyed cross party support in Parliament. At the war's end the Tories started to backtrack, wanting to restore capitalism and the rule of profit to normal. They objected to, amongst other things, the nationalisation of hospitals.

Nye Bevan, as Minister for Health, fought to have the full plan implemented. His biggest battle was with the medical profession, who did not want to become employees of the state. That battle ended with a compromise: doctors would remain independent but contracted to the NHS. This is now being exploited by New Labour as it seeks to recreate a private health service.

Accounts of the NHS's inauguration day, 5 July 1948, demonstrate both the depth of previously unmet needs and the joy of a class at last able to claim as a basic right decent, free, healthcare. One story from a rural GP illustrates this. The doctor was asked to go and visit a woman who had been bedridden for 15 years, never able to afford for a doctor to visit.

Women in particular benefited as they had usually been excluded from the various previous "insurance schemes". Gynaecological problems going back 20-30 years were at last treated. Getting surgical treatment was now possible. Free prescriptions, dentistry and glasses were also available on that first day. Those things are now, of course, lost to us.

Despite the fact that Britain was all but bankrupt with the cost of war, the NHS overspent massively in its first year, as a huge backlog of medical complaints came to the attention of doctors for the first time. But there was never an issue about the NHS producing a surplus, and no profit by proxy. The government had a duty to provide health care and the cost was secondary to the moral principle.

But the financial squeeze would get tighter. Bevan eventually resigned from government rather than introduce prescription charges. Cut backs on the NHS were to finance rearmament. Bevan thought that a betrayal of principle and denounced it as the "arithmetic of bedlam".

THE story since 1948 has been one of a constant battle to maintain and develop the health service against its critics. Yet it still remains remarkably cheap and efficient compared to health services elsewhere in the world. Spending on the NHS has recently increased in order to bring it back to the European average. But much of that money has been wasted on creating an internal market, or given over to the private sector through "modernisation" projects.

Bevan said that the NHS should be "always growing, changing and improving". During the 1950s, 60s and 70s, despite tight budgets, it did do that. New district general hospitals were built, bringing together a range of services under one roof, making available some specialities in rural areas, things never before seen outside of London and the big teaching hospitals. Starting in the early 60s old asylums were closed as new medicines enabled the treatment of mental illness in the community, changes that went on into the 1990s.

Despite a raft of pre-election promises Blair's first Health Secretary, Frank Dobson did little to restore the service from the ravages of the Thatcher years. A succession of New Labour Ministers have set about dismantling the NHS. Many of them have had close links with the private sector firms that circle the NHS, vulture like, ready to feed on the rich pickings that may be offered up. They now echo the Tory critics who at the creation of the NHS said such an institution has no place in the modern world, that health care is a personal rather than social responsibility.

Continued on page 8

"Sicko" exposes the profit system

Healthcare has become a hot political subject in the US, and even more so since Michael Moore's film *Sicko* went on general release. It is now due to be shown in cinemas around the UK from 26 October. Pat Longman explains how the film is having an impact.

S*SICKO* has successfully tapped into the US public mood of deep unease and anxiety about the way that a majority of the population are forced to resort to private insurance companies to gain access to health care. Government sponsored health care plans, such as Medicaid and Medicare, cover only the poorest, and plans to extend coverage have recently fallen foul of neo-conservative demagogue George Bush.

Bush has used his presidential veto to block legislation that would have given insurance to ten million poor American children. He justified his action by saying that the legislation would "move health care in the country in the wrong direction" and would have the effect of displacing private health insurance in favour of government coverage for many children. The State Children's Health Insurance Programme is a joint state-federal effort that subsidises health coverage for 6.6 million children and extends to those that earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but not enough to afford their own private coverage.

It's a common story. As the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, an increasing number of people find themselves without access to healthcare. To obtain health care you either have to be very rich (and get very good healthcare) or very poor (and get the basics). 44.8 million Americans are uninsured. Moore notes that 18,000 people die each year as a result of restricted access to healthcare, and the Institute of Medicine believes that many people do not get the healthcare they need and die prematurely. Fears about a recession in the US and rising unemployment are also making people more insecure, alarmed that they will lose their job and with it the medical cover that it provides.

The reaction to the news that Michael

Moore was met with barely concealed horror by the medical insurance and drugs industries. They attempted to prevent him from speaking to their employees, and PR specialists and political lobbyists were geared up to rubbish the film's content. However, their efforts appear to have had little effect.

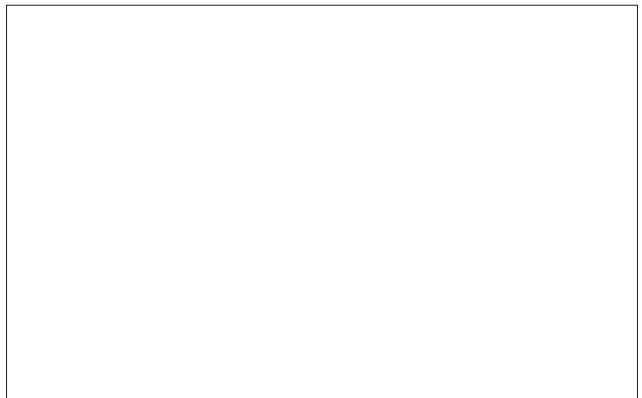
Thousands of people contacted Moore about being denied health coverage, including employees from many insurance companies. Moore's focus on the life stories of those most affected has, as with his other films, made for a hard-hitting documentary about the consequences of having no insurance or having insurance with so many opt-out clauses that it is worthless. Moore cites one company which makes anyone with diabetes, heart disease or cancer ineligible for coverage.

Moore's film graphically shows what happens when you make profit the driving force of people's healthcare; not only does it make for a very sickly population, it is also complicated, wasteful and immensely costly. The people who gain the most out of it are the chief executives and shareholders of the drugs, insurance companies and hospitals.

Moore compares the US system with those that exist in Canada, Britain, France and Cuba. These systems all have their flaws, but are a massive advance on the US profit-driven healthcare system. The film will hopefully have the effect of building a head of steam among US health workers and communities for a properly funded health care system, which provides healthcare as a right and not as a privilege to be paid for.

In the UK people may pause to consider how dentistry in this country already resembles the US healthcare system and how some of those private healthcare providers cited in *Sicko* are now over here – Aetna, Humana, Health Dialog Services and UnitedHealth are advising and are being given a role in Primary Care Trust commissioning.

On 3 November several unions have organized a march and rally, ending in Trafalgar Square, to celebrate the creation of the NHS. The celebration must be turned into a demonstration against the increasing privatisation of healthcare and for a properly funded healthcare system.



Michael Moore visits the NHS

A guide to the “modern” NHS

BY MIKE FENWICK

TALK about the NHS “reform agenda” and you end up knee deep in a flood of acronyms and abbreviations. Below we try to define what some of them mean. Our definitions are hopefully more to the point than DoH (Department of Health) circulars which prefer to hide the detail of what’s going on by using a private language of “modernisation”

EBP-Evidence Based Practice.

All clinical interventions must be justified on the basis that they work and are backed up by research and other evidence.

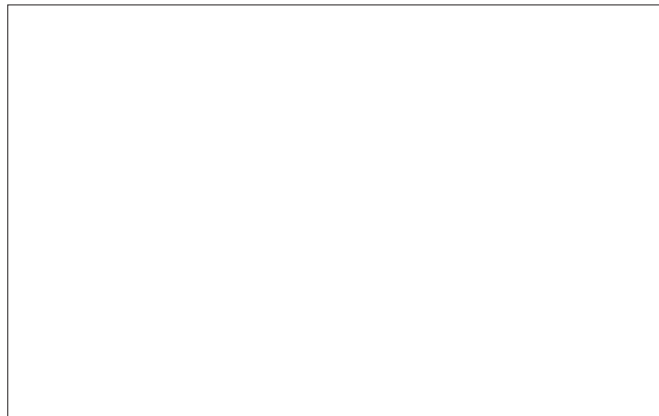
All drug treatments, operation techniques, talking therapies etc must have been proved to have an effect and are safe before they can be used.

This means that many “alternative therapies” such as homeopathy which don’t have scientific backup will not be funded. If a doctor or nurse uses them, they could be struck off. If such things work at all, it’s because of wishful thinking, the “placebo effect”.

But most of the following reforms such as PFI have no evidence base, and the governments belief in them is based on the idea that the private sector and the market are better than public services. Despite growing evidence demonstrating that they don’t work,

From page 7

The pace of “reform” is gathering. It is a process of creating a parallel private health service by imposing competition between individual hospitals, breaking down the national system of mutual support and collaboration that Bevan helped create. Instead of



None private-run parts of the NHS will become services for the chronically ill — will these be properly funded?!

communities and health authorities. Then they became trusts, one half of the provider-purchaser split, accountable to the Primary Care Trusts who commission their services.

Foundation Trusts are a further step towards making hospitals/ secondary care into independent business units responsible for their

ers’ movement and suffering from some of the biggest social inequalities, was the one major industrial nation not to have socialised medicine. There health is still a business, a big business at that. In the US the 1930s never went away. Michael Moore’s movie *Sicko* should be seen by everyone as a warning for

so undermining national agreements.

ISTC-Independent Sector Treatment

Centres. Despite the use of the word “independent” and their supposedly “complementary” relationships to NHS hospitals, these are basically private hospitals performing simple, low risk operations in bulk. Or that’s what they are supposed to do. Unlike hospitals inside the NHS, they are paid up front at rates above the national tariff and keep the money whether the operations are done or not. Last year they fell short of their contracted operations by 50,000. Nevertheless they will receive £1.4 billion of public money on their existing contracts.

LIFT-Local Improvement Finance Trust.

Basically PFI for primary care. New GP surgeries etc are being built under this scheme.

National Tariff.

This gives the guide price that local PCTs will pay to a hospital trust for carrying out an operation for example under PBR (payment by results). Of course working from an average means smaller hospitals are losing money as they aren’t as efficient as the big teaching hospitals. They complete fewer operations, and costs are higher. So despite providing a decent local service they are penalised by this new system.

NICHE (Previously NICE) - the National Institute for Clinical Effectiveness.

This organisation is meant to test new treatments and their cost effectiveness in an objective scientific manner, in line with the drive for EBP.

However they have been charged with fiddling their figures and are open to external pressure particularly from the big drug companies. On one occasion they concluded a new drug was ineffective and shouldn’t be used only to change their mind under government pressure when the company threatened to pull out of the UK.

PCT-Primary Care Trust.

These continue to provide local community based services such as GPs, District Nurses etc, but they now have a commissioning role buying services from secondary care (hospitals). They spend the vast majority of the NHS care budget and are of great interest to the private sector keen to pick up this commissioning role on a tendered basis. When this happens, private sector commissioners tend to opt for private sector providers rather than public services, so boosting the private health care sector.

PBR-Payment by results. This is the heart of the new funding system and the basis of the internal market. The main effect has been to raise the admin costs of the NHS to something near 20% of the overall budget, £20 billion in England, as everything now has to be costed, counted and invoiced. That’s compared to the

5% annual admin costs of the old “bureaucratic” NHS.

PFI-Private Finance Initiative. Originally a Tory idea, this is the main source of funding for all new hospitals etc. It’s also found in education and other areas of the public sector. Money for building is raised by the private sector working alongside a contractor who does the actual building. This is at an interest rate much higher than the government would pay on its own borrowing. The private contractor takes over the servicing of the building, meaning porters and cleaners leaving the NHS. So far the private sector has put in £15.5 billion. At the end of the contracts they will have received £90 billion in repayments.

There are other elements of the “reform agenda” that we can’t go into here. Taking together, all the above mean the government are directly handing over sections of the existing NHS to the private sector (NHS Logistics last year and the National Blood Service soon); preparing other parts such as the PCTs and Foundation Hospitals to float free of NHS control; and funding the creation of a parallel private system of healthcare (ISTCs etc).

The end result will be the breakdown of a national system and the recreation of healthcare inequalities, with specialist services only to be found in a few regional and national centres. Big hospitals will swallow up smaller ones and then asset strip them as the motivation changes from providing a universal service to producing a profit. Overall the effect is to make health a commodity, something to be bought and sold.

The introduction of charges for seeing a GP and other services is being discussed, as is the need for everyone to have some private medical cover.

Having successfully undermined the principles of a public pension system without any fightback from the unions, the government is quite confident of getting away with it.

This process has already been seen through in social housing. It is underway in education and social services. It means a rolling back of the gains of the 1945 “welfare state”. Imperfect as they were by the standards of working-class socialism, they should be defended as against a market system unrestrained where misery, poverty and illness are opportunities for profit, not evil giants to be slain.

Further reading:

Campaigners have at hand a few very good books that give further detail and history.

Anything by Allyson Pollock particularly *The New NHS: A Guide: A Guide to Its Funding, Organisation and Accountability* by Allyson M. Pollock and Alison Talbot-Smith and *NHS Plc: The Privatisation of Our Health Care* by Allyson M Pollock (an academic who has consistently undermined the arguments for PFI and the market in healthcare). Sometimes too many facts, but both books include a clear narrative of how New Labour’s links with the private sector have shaped present policy.

The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State by Nicholas Timmins. Needs updating to keep up with the times, but a very readable history of the welfare state.

The Political Economy of Health Care: A Clinical Perspective by Julian Tudor Hart. A passionate defence of the principle of social solidarity which created the NHS by a long time GP and member of the Socialist Health Association

Keep Our NHS Public have a short pamphlet, *Patchwork Privatisation*, published this year, which gives good overview of the issues. Available to download on their website:

www.keppournhspublic.com/pdf/Patchworkprivatisation.pdf

The past, present and future of the NHS

social solidarity, the business model is now the template for the NHS’s future. New Labour now really does “think the unthinkable”. The scale and scope of these changes can be bewildering and the real costs are well hidden. As chancellor, Gordon Brown was the architect of much of the new system.

The health horrors of the 1930s are creeping back into everyday life. Diseases such as TB can be found again in the inner cities. The growing gap between rich and poor is recreating the grinding poverty in working class communities that the NHS and the welfare State went some way towards abolishing. One of the most rampant new epidemics of the poor is mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. Treatment with effective talking therapies rather than pills is largely the preserve of the middle classes. We have, in mental health at least, a two tier health service, one for the haves and one for the have-nots.

Whn it was created the NHS was an example to the world. It was copied, with some countries, such as in Scandinavia, going even further in developing fully integrated social and health care systems. The British NHS is no longer a model to follow. New Labour is following another model — that of the United States. The US, lacking a strong enough work-

they are being persistently pursued. Applying their own principles to ministers would mean bringing a case of “gross clinical negligence” against them.

Foundation Trusts. Once upon a time there were hospitals under the control of local

the future and echo of the past state of health care in Britain.

The actual experience of living in a Britain without the NHS now rests in the memories of our older generation. But the memories are vivid, their anger and worries about the future explain why some many of them are involved in fighting for it now. The foundation of the NHS was not inevitable and its future never been guaranteed. From the very start it needed to be defended against those that would see it fail, would like to rip it apart as an affront to the holy principle of profit. That fight goes on, and it will require a militant labour movement determined to stand up in the face of the capitalist “common sense” view of the world where everything must have a price in order to have a value.

We need to reestablish the NHS on the principle that human need and the right to life are more important than profit. The campaign for the NHS should be one of the major elements on which we rebuild our labour movement, and instill in the labour movement the courage to go beyond reform, to challenge the basis of capitalism itself. For as long as capitalism creates and defends amarket where life can be bought and sold, the NHS will be under threat. Although support for the NHS is broad and deep, its existence will only be secured when

own finances, as long as they are financially viable and able to raise funds directly from the private sector. This financial independence allows them to start competing for contracts to deliver services previously provided by other hospitals. It will also allow them to start negotiating local terms and conditions for workers,

300 at feminist conference

BY ANNA LONGMAN

THE second Feminist Fightback conference took place on Saturday 20 October at the University of East London. Almost 300 people attended and there was a real buzz at this year's event. It was organised by a group of socialist feminists including those from the Education Not for Sale network. Fightback was a chance for rarely seen debate on the left about socialist feminism, with sessions on women and low pay, eco-feminism, women workers' struggles in Latin America, sexual liberation and feminism, imperialism and women in the Muslim-majority world.

The conference featured speakers from RAG Irish pro-choice activists who reminded us that abortion is still not an option for some of our

closest neighbours living in Northern and the Republic of Ireland. They highlighted the fact that a reduction in the time limit for abortions in Britain would have a disastrous effect on Irish women who have to travel to Britain if they want to have an abortion. Florence from the "Florence and Michael must stay" campaign also spoke of her battle against a racist and sexist immigration system. She is fighting to remain in this country and not to be returned to Sierra Leone, where being gay is illegal.

But Feminist Fightback was not only a chance for debate but also an opportunity for activists and women and men interested in fighting women's exploitation and oppression to organise direct action. Plans were made for action against the new criminal justice and immigration bill that targets asylum seekers and

sex workers. Further plans were made for action to fight for abortion rights following on from the torch-lit march held earlier this year.

A set of demands also came out of the "gender pay gap", low pay and the class struggle session, and people were urged to take part in the action organised by the Fremantle care workers currently fighting against their employer – a privatised trust which has made massive cuts in their pay and conditions.

The demands included access to free childcare, a significant rise in the minimum wage, rights for agency workers and parity of working conditions between full and part time workers.

There is currently something of a revival of feminism, especially on university campuses and around the issues of the pay gap. Feminist Fightback and the actions that will follow on from

it play a vital role in this revival because what is needed is not just a feminist wave that will push for equal pay between male and female executives or that will argue to censor "sexist" publications because they are offensive, but a socialist feminism that fights for an end to low pay for all women. A socialist feminism that fights for women to have a real choice of whether to have an abortion or not, and stands in solidarity with women no matter where they are in the world or what religion they live under.

• If you would like to join the Feminist Fightback email list please contact feminist.fightback@gmail.com

• www.feministfightback.org.uk

• Fremantle care workers demonstration, Saturday 10 November, 12pm, Burnt Oak, London.

Education for Freedom

FORTY activists attended Education Not for Sale's "Education for Freedom" dayschool at the University of East London on Sunday 21 October.

There was a practical session to plan ENS's activity for the period ahead, as well as a very useful forum on the campaign to defend NUS democracy (which three people from the SWP/Respect, one person from the CPGB and several extra non-aligned activists also attended).

But the main focus of the day was on discussing ideas around education in depth — something which rarely happens in the student movement. So low is the level of political culture at present that debate is almost entirely around issues like grants and fees — with many activists not even rising to the level of demanding free education for all. "Education for freedom" discussed things in a lot more depth.

We began with a discussion on how capital is reshaping our education system, with speakers

on New Labour's education agenda, racism in education and how education relates to Marx's idea of a "realm of freedom" beyond the confines of exploitative productive relations. This served as a basis for a very productive initial discussion.

Participants then divided into workshops, including one on education, alienation and the environment, and one on the revolutionary ideas for transforming education developed in struggles such as the French general strike of 1968 as well as by theorists such as Paulo Freire.

Much more of this is needed. We would like to organise further discussion alongside an ENS policy — and a decision-making conference in the spring. If you would like to help, please get in touch!

ENS will be having an open steering committee meeting on 9 December. For more information, or if you would like an ENS speaker or materials for your campus, visit www.free-education.org.uk

Protest at the Saudi state visit!

Wednesday 31 October, 6pm-8pm

Saudi Embassy, 30-32 Charles Street, W1 (near to Green Park station)

Join the demonstration and make clear that British support for this vile dictatorship will no longer be tolerated! And lobby your MP to sign EDM 2102 (tabled by John McDonnell) condemning the State Visit of King Abdullah.

Organised by Socialist Youth Network — see socialistyouth.org.uk

NO SWEAT ANNUAL GATHERING 2007

The anti-capitalist workers' rights campaign No Sweat is holding its Annual Gathering on the weekend of 1-2 December, with the theme "beating big brand exploitation".

The event will feature sessions on organising migrant workers in this country, combating privatisation, the human rights of workers involved in preparations for the Beijing Olympics, and a host of other workers' struggles around the world. The Sunday will be an activist training day, with workshops on campaign skills, street theatre and direct action techniques.

The gathering is being held on Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 December, at the Unite/T&G building, 128 Theobalds Road, London WC1 (Holborn tube). Tickets for one day cost £6/£3 concs., or for the whole weekend £10/£5. Please visit www.nosweat.org.uk, where you can buy tickets and find more information including the agenda.

INSIDE THE STUDENT MOVEMENT

We need a mass campaign to save NUS

BY SOFIE BUCKLAND, NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS NATIONAL EXECUTIVE (PC)

ON 16 October the NUS National Executive Committee voted with only two votes (myself and SWP member Rob Owen) against to endorse the proposals of the "Governance Review" for slashing internal democracy, and, with only four votes against, to call on member unions to authorise an Extraordinary National Conference to rush through the changes.

The fight, in other words, is now definitely on. What is being planned is not just a bit more chipping away at NUS democracy, as has happened almost continuously for the last twenty years, or even a dramatic attack like the abolition of the second (winter) conference in 1993. The very existence of NUS as a national student union is at stake.

The Blairite leadership of NUS want to destroy activist involvement and rank-and-file control in national structures so that they can convert NUS from a (albeit inadequate) representative and campaigning organisation, into a professionalised lobbying group of the NGO type.

At the same time, they want an Extraordinary Conference so that rank-and-file activists can be largely excluded from the decision on the proposals (extraordinary conferences, called at short notice, tend to be small and there are no delegate elections); and so that the whole package can be presented to the spring 2008 conference as a fait accompli and done and dusted by the end of the year.

Already, several of the leadership's pet unions have passed calls for a conference; since it only takes 25 to convene one, it will certainly go ahead. (November 29 has been suggested as the likely date; this clashes with NUS FE training so may be changed, but in any case it will be around then.) All this makes it even more urgent that we get a real campaign for NUS democracy launched as quickly as possible.

At a special session of the ENS conference on 21 October, activists from a number of groups (including Student Respect/SWP) agreed to launch a united campaign at a meeting in London on 4 November. We need the biggest and broadest possible turn out for that meeting, from activist groups as well as student union officers.

The political basis of this campaign is very important. On 21 October, Rob Owen and other SWPers argued for a strictly defensive political orientation, limiting ourselves to defence of the status quo for fear of alienating right-wing student unions that nonetheless oppose the

changes. (Presumably this is a reflection of the SWP's recent tack in the trade unions: steering hard to the right in order to maintain a relationship with bureaucrats sympathetic to Stop the War, Unite Against Fascism etc, or who might have been won to support Respect.)

As a number of ENS and other speakers pointed out, such an approach is not only wrong but self-defeating, since it rules out involving large numbers of students in the campaign.

The fact is that NUS is irrelevant to most students, because it does barely any campaigning activity, let alone anything inspiring or creative. We cannot defend what democracy does exist within our national union by denying this basic truth. In fact we need to make our criticisms, and our demands for a different kind of NUS, louder and more insistent if we are to be successful. If this alienates some student union bureaucrats from the campaign, too bad.

A grassroots activist campaign, based on mass activity and raising the necessary political answers to NUS's real crisis, is what Education Not for Sale is attempting to build. If you would like to help, get in touch —

- volsunga@gmail.com
- For more information, model motions etc see the ENS website: free-education.org.uk
- Defend NUS Democracy: www.nusdemocracy.org.uk
- For more on the review see my blog: free-education.org.uk/?cat=22

Meeting to defend NUS democracy

Launch meeting for a united campaign to defend NUS democracy — **12-4pm, Sunday 4th November, Room 405, Birkbeck College (Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX)**

Sponsors include Education Not for Sale and Student Respect For more information ring 07815 490 837 or email volsunga@gmail.com

- nusdemocracy.org.uk

Sign this statement!

Education Not for Sale has launched a statement for not just the defence but the *extension* of NUS democracy. It is gaining widespread support.

See free-education.org.uk/?p=397 for the full text and latest signatories

To add your or your organisation's name email NUS NEC member Sofie Buckland at volsunga@gmail.com

Japan, 1945-52 When US impe

Rediscovering workers' control

BY DAVID BRODER

MARX'S aim of transforming society into a "free association of producers" has long been ignored by large swathes of the "Marxist" left. Not only Stalinists and social democrats, but also avowedly Trotskyist organisations such as the Militant Tendency (forerunner of the Socialist Party) have equated nationalisation with socialism, with the state bureaucracy substituted for the working class as the vanguard of social transformation.

Sometimes with gestures made towards democracy through formulations such as "public ownership", the dominant trend of the left in recent decades has been to move further than ever from the perspective of workers' management of the economy. The Socialist Workers Party have for instance abandoned their former commitment in their "where we stand" column to "workers' control and international socialism".

To avoid perpetuating the culture of "top-down" socialist planning, it is necessary to promote an alternative vision of workers' power — that of grassroots control. A new contribution to this important task is Pete Burton's Workers' Control blog (workerscontrol.blogspot.com) which features discussion of worker-managed businesses in Argentina like FaSinPat/Zanon and the Hotel Bauen, a film about the Sanitarios Maracay in Venezuela, as well as articles from across the twentieth century featuring different conceptions of workers' control.

The opportunity to compare the very varied ideas of what workers' control actually means is the strongest point of the new website.

The Zanon workers operate their factory under their own steam, with decisions made by a democratic assembly of all its workers (who are all paid the same basic rate plus experience bonuses). This is a method sharply counterposed to that exhibited in texts like Jaroslav Vanek's 1975 collection *Self Management*, which does not distinguish between trade union supervision of the bosses, a market system based on undemocratic co-operatives, or the deeply hierarchical Yugoslav system where votes were staged for workers to give their assent to management plans.

The problem in such conceptions is that all of them leave ownership rights and decision-making powers entirely in the hands of bosses and unaccountable state bureaucrats, with workers offered a limited ability to voice criticism but no right to take any initiative for themselves or subjugate specialists to their own authority.

Meanwhile, Trotsky's 1931 article *Workers' Control of Production* is careful to guard against class-collaborationist trade

union participation in bourgeois management structures. This was later most sharply posed in West Germany's "co-determination" system, where worker representatives were co-opted onto boards and served as a labour movement face for the employers, taking responsibility for keeping up profitability. Trotsky however sees workers' control as a prelude to socialist revolution:

"What state regime corresponds to workers' control of production? It is obvious that the power is not yet in the hands of the proletariat, otherwise we would have not workers' control of production but the control of production by the workers' state as an introduction to a regime of state production on the foundations of nationalisation. What we are talking about is workers' control under the capitalist regime, under the power of the bourgeoisie... the regime of workers' control, a provisional transitional regime by its very essence, can correspond only to the period of the convulsing of the bourgeois state, the proletarian offensive, and the failing back of the bourgeoisie, that is, to the period of the proletarian revolution in the fullest sense of the word."

This is a view echoed in an article written by the Melbourne Centre for Workers' Control also featured on the blog. It adds another layer of argument — workers' control is portrayed as a necessary reform in the sense of Lenin's *State and Revolution* (workers being able to hold capitalist bosses to account), but then the task comes to extend workers' own ownership of the economy through "workers' management".

"Workers' control implies a series of measures which increasingly challenge the power and authority of the bosses and the capitalist state, whereas workers' management implies the rule of the workers after this power and authority have been overthrown."

The creation of organs of economic dual power such as factory committees and workers' councils is proposed as the means by which workers' management can ultimately be achieved. This is the key point for Marxists. Rather than looking to build islands of socialism within a capitalist economy, extend trade union involvement in management boards or merely see workers' control as veto power over the bosses, the task is to fight for industrial democracy and workers' rights in the here and now in preparation for direct workers' management of the economy — for participatory and democratic working-class rule — in a socialist society.

To contribute to discussion and read the articles referred to above see workerscontrol.blogspot.com

Parts of the left back any opposition to US imperialism around the world dogmatically, without qualification, and with little attempt to examine what the effects and actions of the imperialist power are. Or what the political character of the local alternatives to imperialism are. These leftists might be surprised by the story of the US imperialist intervention in Japan, contradicting as it does, some preconceived notions of how an imperialist power behaves. Dan Katz looks at the history.

JAPAN'S Second World War had most brutal end. On 6 August 1945 a US Superfortress bomber, the Enola Gay, dropped an atom bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. By the end of 1945 140,000 people had died from the immediate blast, or from disease and radiation poisoning in the aftermath.

Two days later the Soviet Union entered the war against Japan, using battle-hardened troops to rapidly over-run the million-strong Japanese army in China.

And on 9 August the US used a second atom bomb on Nagasaki, killing around 80,000.

Finally, nine days after Hiroshima, Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's surrender. Hirohito told the nation by radio that the Total War, a "holy war" in which the Japanese had been encouraged to "give themselves courageously to the state", had "not turn[ed] in Japan's favor" and that the people must "endure the unendurable and bear the unbearable."

On the eve of the Emperor's announcement military officers from the War Ministry and Army General staff broke into the palace and attempted to find and destroy the recording of the declaration; others set fire to the Prime Minister's house. When all failed and Japan had surrendered around 500 officers and the War Minister, Anami Korechika, committed suicide.

The "unendurable and unbearable" was Allied military occupation — in reality American occupation. Large numbers of US troops began arriving in late August 1945 and the occupation continued until April 1952.

Ruling through Japanese governments, using the existing bureaucracy and maintaining the Emperor, the US achieved a "democratic revolution from above" in Japan.

US imperial power was used to break the power of the fascist military caste that had dominated Japanese politics in the 1930s to create a stable bourgeois democracy.

The period of the American intervention had three distinct phases: from the 1945 to 1947-8 (when the US turned against the workers, and the Cold War began); from 1948 up until the start of the Korean war in 1950; and the final phase leading up to US withdrawal in 1952. Following a period of reforming zeal at the start of the occupation, the US shifted more and more towards backing and shoring up conservative organisations and parties, including reliance on members of the former regime and those opposed to previous US-directed reforms, while increasingly repressing the left and the pseudo-left Communist Party.

JAPAN ON ITS KNEES

BETWEEN 1939 and 1945 Japan suffered two million military and 580,000 war-related civilian deaths, or 3.7% of the population of 71 million (1939).

Most of what was left of Japan's fleet had been sunk at the battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944, and by 1945 three quarters of commercial shipping had also been destroyed. A quarter of all rolling-stock and motor vehicles had gone. Nine million people were homeless. Four and a half million servicemen were declared ill or disabled.

At the war's end one-quarter of the country's wealth had been wiped-out. Sixty-six major cities had been heavily bombed and 40% of these cities had been destroyed. Rural living standards stood at 65% of their pre-war levels; non-rural were down to 35%.

The defeat left 6.5 million Japanese stranded across Asia. In the winter of 1945 nearly a quarter of a million Japanese died in Manchuria alone.

When the Emperor declared the end of the war it was the first time most Japanese had heard his

voice. The declaration punctured his status. Post-war most Japanese still believed in keeping the institution of Emperor, but they did so with little enthusiasm. The Emperor had presided over an enormous disaster, leading to the shock and humiliation of foreign occupation.

The Americans decided to keep the Emperor in place because they were concerned to maintain political stability, but the Emperor's role was now set within the framework of a constitutional monarchy.

War crimes trials followed. The trial that attracted world attention was the Tokyo Tribunal. Twenty five senior Japanese leaders, including former prime minister General Tojo Hidecki, faced charges including "conspiracy against peace" and counts of permitting atrocities. Seven were sentenced to death and hung.

Across Asia the British, Dutch, US and others put Japanese accused of war crimes on trial. Excluding the USSR, the Allies executed about 920 prisoners. The Russians may have killed up to 3000 more following short, secret tribunals. Most of those convicted were relatively low-level figures in the military and almost none of the leading civilian bureaucrats, journalists or politicians were brought to trial. And although there was some popular support for bringing the Japanese war leadership to justice — especially amongst leftists — American justice seemed somewhat arbitrary.

There was a big hole in the US's case. There was no comparable organisation to the Nazi party in Japan, and the only ever-present leading figure throughout the wars of Japanese expansion was the Emperor. If a "conspiracy against peace" did exist amongst the Japanese leadership, then the Emperor was at the centre of it. However the Americans had decided they needed Hirohito — and the US went to extraordinary lengths to protect him, re-inventing the Emperor as a pacifist and democrat.

The first raft of US-direct reforms including the release of political prisoners, the legalisation of the Communist Party and pro-union legislation.

THE AMERICANS BRING WORKERS' AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

THE first raft of US-directed reforms included the release of political prisoners, the legalisation of the Communist Party, and pro-union legislation (the Trade Union Law, passed December 1945). The Peace Preservation Law (1925) under which thousands of leftist critics of the government had been arrested, was scrapped. The Special Higher Police force — or "thought police" — was abolished.

The vote was granted to women, and the US began a drive to break up the huge zaibatsu corporations and an agrarian reform which would smash the landlord class in the countryside. The state-sponsored cult of Shinto, a buttress of right-wing nationalism, was abolished in December 1945, and the rising-sun flag was prohibited.

Over the next two years the US would abolish laws which discriminated against women, reform the law and purge education, decentralise the police and impose a constitution that committed Japan to democracy and explicitly forbade Japan from resorting to war to solve international disputes.

And the US began to purge members of the old regime and elites. They would eventually prohibit 200 000 individuals from holding public office.

Among many ordinary Japanese there was real enthusiasm for the US democratisation. 2,700 candidates belonging to 363 political parties contested the Diet elections of April 1946. 95% of the candidates had never held office before. Women got the vote for the first time and 39 women were elected.

Encouraged by the changes imposed on Japan,

Capitalism forced democracy

workers, women and students began to organise. A few weeks after the Diet elections on 1 May, two million marched to celebrate May Day – an event that had been banned since 1936.

By the end of 1945 the unions claimed 380,000 members; a year later that figure stood at 5.6 million, peaking at 6.7 million in mid-1948.

Between the beginning of 1946 and the end of 1950 6,432 disputes involving 19 million workers were recorded.

And workers began to occupy workplaces as a mechanism of forcing management to concede to their demands – at first mainly wage increases. At the end of 1945 workers took possession of railways, mines and newspapers, running them briefly under workers' control. Later, workers took over factories belonging to owners who were believed to be sabotaging production as a method of undermining the US's democratisation plans. Incidents of "production control" increased in the first months of 1946, concentrated in the Tokyo area and in particular in the machine tools sector.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND COMMUNIST PARTIES EXPAND

COMMUNIST Party leader Nosaka Sanzo claimed he wanted to see a "loveable Communist Party", and spoke of the need for a "democratic people's front". He explained that this did not mean "that we are trying to realise socialism by overthrowing capitalism today." The Communists, he said, "are the true patriots and the true service brigade for democracy." Communists and Socialists were elected to the Diet in April 1946. In future years the left would be the staunchest defenders of the changes the US had forced on Japan.

The Socialist-led Sodomei and CP-led Sanbetsu were both founded in August 1946. In October a major industrial offensive was mounted by the CP unions against the threat of job losses on the railways and in the public sector. A general strike, initially backed by all wings of the labour movement, was set for 1 February 1947. Despite assurances from the strike leaders that the movement would not directly affect the occupation forces, and that the railways would continue to run, the US stepped in and banned the strike.

The US opposition to the strike shocked many of the left and union leaders and delighted members of the old ruling class. Ii Yashiro, a central member of the strike's organising committee, said later that this was the point that it became clear that the Americans were "deceiving the Japanese people with democracy only at the tip of their tongues."

In the summer of 1948 US Supreme Commander in Japan, General Douglas MacArthur, banned strikes in the public sector and began helping the formation of anti-

Communist organisations within the unions – leading to the formation of a new anti-Communist union federation in 1950.

Beginning in 1949 purges were directed

Alongside the "Red purge" came the return to public life of many reactionaries who had previously been purged.

against the left and the Communists. Close collaboration began between occupation officials, managers, and conservative politicians in a drive to break the unions. Eleven thousand union activists were purged from the public sector between the end of 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean war on 25 June 1950.

After the war started the witch-hunt was extended to the private sector.

Alongside the "Red purge" came the return to public life of many reactionaries who had previously been purged "for all time" for association with the old regime.

The Communist Party changed line, ending their "loveable JCP" period and taking up a more militant attitude to the occupation. Following a small confrontation between CPers and US troops, MacArthur ordered the Japanese government to "remove and exclude from public service" the 24 members of the CP's central committee and 17 editors of communist newspapers. Although the CP and its paper were not banned, most of the CP's leaders went underground for the remainder of the occupation.

LAND REFORM AND INDUSTRY

FOLLOWING obstruction in the Diet from the representatives of the landlord class, MacArthur forced one of the most radical land reforms in world history on the Japanese government. Legislation went through a reluctant lower House in October 1946.

The new law saw the compulsory purchase by the state of all land held by absentee landlords. "Owner-farmers and resident landlords were allowed to retain from 12 cho (about 12 hectares) in Hokkaido, to 3 cho elsewhere, not more than a third of which was to be let to tenants. Everything above those limits was to be sold to the government [... at 1945 rates], which were artificially low and had long since been overtaken by inflation in order to be offered to existing tenants on easy terms... more than a million cho of rice paddy and 800,000 cho of upland was bought from 2.3 million landlords by August 1950 and sold to 4.7 million tenants.



Hiroshima. After the war Japanese economy and society was devastated.

Land under tenancy agreements, amounting to over 40% in 1946, dropped to a mere 10%... land committees, each consisting of five tenants, three landlords and two owner-farmers were set up in every village to oversee the operation... the reform made Japan substantially a country of peasant proprietors. Their natural conservatism was to be a key factor in sustaining a succession of right-wing governments, while their improved economic status helped to create a wider domestic market." (WG Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan*).

Over half Japan's population then lived on the land and in 1945-7 many depended on families in the countryside to get food. The US carried out land reform because it believed a large small-farmer class to be the best bulwark against "communism" and resurgent oligarchic militarism; but it had a huge economic and social impact.

Initially the US's policy was not to "assume responsibility for the economic rehabilitation of Japan." Up until 1948 the US intended that Japan would "stew in its own juices." America did provide \$2bn in economic aid, but that was mainly food aid donated for political reasons, designed to head off serious social unrest.

In the first three years of occupation the US confined itself to identifying targets for potential reparations, drawing up lists of capitalists to be purged and identifying "excessive concentrations of economic power" to be broken up.

The big Japanese capitalists were – generally – pleased to see the war end and glad the Americans had removed the "national socialist" militarists who had attempted to impose total control over the economy.

At the end of the war Japanese capitalism was highly concentrated. Ten corporations controlled nearly 50% of capital in mining, machinery, shipbuilding, chemicals, banking and 60% of insurance and shipping.

At first the US intended to radically break up these corporations in the name of "economic democracy". In the end the reforms were mild as the US turned towards re-floating the Japanese economy as a strategic political response to the beginnings of the Cold War.

In December 1948 Washington sent Detroit banker Joseph Dodge to Tokyo with the task of creating a functioning market economy. The "Dodge Line" cut the welfare and education budgets, curbed inflation and promoted exports. Dodge's policy seemed in danger of creating a

depression in Japan, which was averted by the start of the Korean war, which led to a war boom in Japan.

The treaty that led to US withdrawal in 1952 confirmed the loss of all territories seized by Japan in the 20th century. The US maintained bases in Japan, and Japan began being re-armed as a Cold War ally of America.

In the final years of occupation America had shifted from reform to reconstruction. But, despite the qualifications, Japan had been substantially re-molded by the US – and for the better.

Japan in the war

1931: Japanese forces occupy Manchuria, northern China.

1932: "Manchukuo" was declared an independent state, controlled by the Japanese Kwantung Army through a puppet government.

1937: The Japanese forces succeed in occupying almost the whole coast of China committing war crimes on the Chinese population, especially in Nanking.

1940: Japan occupied French Indochina (Vietnam) by agreement with the French Vichy government, and joined the Axis powers Germany and Italy.

The United States and Great Britain impose economic sanctions, including an oil boycott. The resulting oil shortage was one factor leading to Japan's decision to capture the oil rich Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) and to start a war with the US and Great Britain.

December 1941: Japan attacked the US at Pearl Harbour. In the following six months Japan expanded its control over territory that stretched from the border of India and south as far as New Guinea.

June 1942: the battle of Midway, the turning point in the Pacific War. From then on the Allied forces slowly won back the territories occupied by Japan.

1944: intensive air raids start over Japan.

Independent labour gets organised

CATHY NUGENT CONTINUES A SERIES ON THE LIFE AND TIMES OF TOM MANN

IN 1887 Keir Hardie called the leaders of the trade union movement “holders of a fat, snug office, concerned only with maintaining the respectability of the cause.” He might have been talking about the trade union leaders of today. Unfair? Why else, except a burning desire for respectability, have they acquiesced in the hollowing out of the democratic and political life of the Labour Party, the party, which Hardie helped to establish? The trade union leaders’ relationship to the Labour Party is like that of the trade union leaders of the 1880s to the Liberal Party.

It was Hardie’s and others’ tremendous achievement to establish an independent political voice for workers at the end of the 19th century, first through the setting up the Independent Labour Party. They began a long process where the working class could and would become electorally and, through the trade unions organisationally, attached to a “Labour Party”, and break from the straight-down the line bourgeois parties, especially the Liberal Party. Today’s trade union leaders have done their best to reverse the ILP’s achievement.

The Independent Labour Party, when it was set up in 1893, was the culmination of years of political agitation by the socialists. It was crucially the product of “new unionism” — the building of unions of unskilled men and women, and the reforming of old trade unions so that they were more capable of fighting class battles.

The Independent Labour Party was never the mass united socialist party that Tom Mann — who was its secretary for a few years after 1894 — hoped for, but it did represent an exciting new beginning for working class politics. In this era of majority male suffrage, workers were beginning to join new political clubs and societies, build stable union organisations, set up women’s suffrage societies, and read newspapers aimed at workers. This working class political culture was all based on better access to education.

Engels had the following assessment of the ILP’s start. In retrospect, to my mind, it seems too rosy (and is overly prejudiced against the SDF), but it is essentially right.

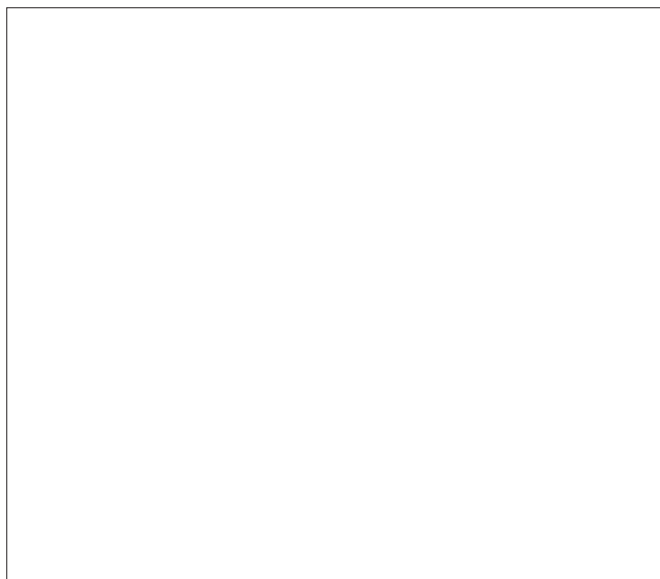
“The rush to Socialism, especially in the industrial centres of the North, has become so great that this new party right at this first congress has appeared stronger than the SDF or Fabians, if not stronger than both together. And since the masses of the members make good decisions, since the weight lies in the provinces and not in London, the centre of cliques, since the programme in its main points is ours, [Edward] Aveling [one of Engel’s close political associates] has done right to join and to take a seat on the Executive.” (Letter to Sorge, 18 January 1893).

A GOOD place to start this account of the ILP formation is a by-election of 1892 when Keir Hardie won the West Ham seat in Parliament. He stood as an independent, but the Liberal Party had (reluctantly) stood down in favour of his candidacy. By this point he was thoroughly disenchanted with the Liberal Party, but it had taken him some time to get to that point.

Hardie’s life story was quite similar to Tom Mann’s; both from very poor backgrounds, they had made great efforts to educate themselves and both had become union organisers.

A miner in his youth, Hardie was black-listed by the mine owners, becoming a union organiser and journalist. His mother and step father were atheists, but Hardie, like Mann, became very religious. Hardie joined a church sect that made human “free will” central and depicted Jesus as a social activist. Like many workers before him (and Tom Mann), he was also a temperance activist. So Hardie and Mann’s lives were all about self-improvement, and for a time in the mid-late 19th century this, for some workers, “fitted” with an allegiance to the Liberal Party. Hardie joined the Liberal Party, Mann did not.

Mann had met the socialists early on and was living and working in Britain’s socialist centre



The ILP balloon

— London. Keir Hardie, coming from the mining district of Lanarkshire in Scotland, would share that community’s association with the Liberal Party. Lanarkshire miners’ leader Alexander MacDonald was a “Lib-Lab” MP, one of a group of trade union leaders who from 1880 onwards were accepted as Liberal candidates for Parliament, and had pledged to serve the interests of working class people. It was from this background that Hardie had to break.

Hardie became disillusioned by the “Lib-Labs” and the Liberal Party essentially because they had delivered nothing for the workers — no eight hour day, no necessary democratic reforms such as Irish Home Rule staunchly supported by Hardie and very many like him, despite sectarian divisions in Scotland.

In 1887 Hardie saw just how vicious towards the workers the bosses could be. At the end of a long strike in the Lanarkshire coalfields, the bosses brought in scabs from Glasgow along with army Hussars who raided miners’ cottages. Hardie wrote of “mounted policemen riding down inoffensive children nearly to death, and felling quiet old men with blows from a baton.”

Eventually Hardie came into contact with socialistic ideas. His great mentor was Don Roberto Bontine Cunningham Graham, Scottish landowner, globetrotter and avowedly socialist MP! Cunningham Graham was a longtime believer in independent working class Parliamentary politics and he hated the Liberals.

But what kind of working class politics? Even in 1888 when Hardie stood for Parliament in a by-election in Mid-Lanark, he did so as an independent Liberal. His handbills said “a vote for Hardie is a vote for Gladstone.” Yet at the same time, 1888, Hardie and Cunningham Graham were planning to set up a Scottish Labour Party!

Labour in name, but was it socialist in its programme? The programme called for disestablishment of the Church, reform of the Civil Service, graduated income tax, free education, national insurance for workers, social housing, land reform, the eight hour day, and nationalisation of banking, railways and mineral rights. Ideologically it did not represent much of a step forward, yet it was more detailed than socialist programmes of the early 80s, and in that respect it represented the accumulation of working class struggle and experience.

Cunningham Graham encouraged Hardie to stand in West Ham in the east London, where socialists like Tom Mann had for years organised and agitated. Caroline Benn describes how Hardie “[addressed] mass meetings throughout the area, not only at factory gates but also in local fields and streets. These meetings were where he aimed to contact the newly enfranchised poor electorate. The largest meetings, running to thousands, were at the dock gates, as

workers waited for the revived version of the ‘call on.’” (Keir Hardie)

Hardie was always sure that Parliament was a useful arena for working class politics. But when he got to Parliament, attending in his home-made suit, he felt out of place among the booted and expensively suited that populated the Palace of Westminster.

WHERE was Tom Mann in 1892? He was also standing for election — for secretary of the engineers’ union (which he narrowly lost). Mann was still focused on organising in the unions. Having resigned in 1891 as president of the dockers’ union he was spending time on the election but also campaigning for the eight hour day, working alongside socialists such as Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx who had set up the Legal Eight Hour Day Campaign — focussing mainly on Parliament to win the demand.

Mann saw the progression of the demand slightly differently — he thought the unions could apply the pressure without necessarily fixing on Parliamentary representatives to deliver; the demand could also be taken up by socialist local government members (of which there were to be more and more).

Mann was still sceptical about Parliament, but also agreed to be member of the Royal Commission on Labour set up in 1891 to look at the conditions behind the rash of strikes in the 1889-90 period. Mann never believed that the Commission would deliver anything for the workers, yet he still wanted to press the workers’ claims.

Mann’s scepticism was rooted in his different journey to socialism, through membership of the SDF. Although the SDF had regularly stood for Parliament, they had done it as a propaganda exercise, as a way to make recruits for socialism.

On the other hand there was no way that someone like Mann would remain unaffected by the new mood for independent working-class politics. When in 1891 Mann was approached by the Colne Valley Labour Union, an important example of many similar “Labour” organisations of the time, to stand as their candidate in the 1895 election, he at first turned them down. He said, “My aim is to spread amongst workmen a knowledge of industrial economics and the channels for the diffusion of this knowledge and the trade unions and co-operative movement, especially the productive branch of co-operation... I am therefore not especially anxious to run Labour candidates for Parliament.”

Eventually, after lots more contact with the Colne Valley people, Mann agreed to stand but only on the proviso that the local workers got better organised! In April 1893 he published this

“Appeal to the Yorkshire Textile Workers”.

“I dare not allow anyone to suppose that I can do anything of value to raise the standard of any district in Parliament, unless the electorate are prepared to back up any effort made with the full force of a capable and vigorous organisation. I don’t want to go into Parliament to take part in 1001 generalities signifying next to nothing, and by hiding my incompetency by blaming somebody else in Parliament for blocking Progress legislation... I shall be delighted to work with and for the Colne valley men [sic]... now they are... alive to the fact that it is essential to organise as trade unionists.”

Mann was not present at the founding conference of the ILP in January 1893.

THE ILP was the culmination of different political impulses, and these are well illustrated by the different political pasts which Keir Hardie and Tom Mann brought to the new organisation. But the organisational catalyst came mainly from the Bradford Labour Union and a specific drive by the weekly *Workman’s Times*, whose editor Joseph Burgess had for two years been convinced of the need to organise “independent labour”. In the paper he called for a national body linking groups and individuals who were for “Labour” and for anyone interested to write in.

The groups that were already in existence included the Colne Valley Labour Union and the Scottish Labour Party, the Newcastle Labour Union and the Manchester and Salford Independent Labour Party. The Manchester group was set up by journalist Robert

Blatchford, who began a newspaper which was to become enormously popular — the *Clarion*. The Manchester ILP people did things such as organise “cinderella clubs”, events where poor children would get good food and entertainment.

The final push for the conference was made at a meeting at the TUC conference in Glasgow in September 1892. On the arrangements committee were people like Pete Curran, an organiser for the gasworkers’ union, SDF member and London tailor James Macdonald, and Katharine Conway, a Fabian lecturer. A mixed bag indeed. As was the conference itself. Representatives — mostly from the north — of the labour unions; some “new unionists”; some Lancashire-based SDFers; the dockworkers’ leader (and now alderman on the London County Council) Ben Tillet; and Fabian George Bernard Shaw (who said the new move was premature!).

Henry Pelling describes the typical delegate. There was “a new type of political delegate — the intelligent, respectable, working trade unionist of the new labour clubs. Men [we can suppose it was mostly men, though many women were to join the ILP] of this type, young and friendly, their countenances gleaming with good humour above their loose red ties, dominated the scene. They were not politicians for politics’ sake; they were the working class in earnest, the product of the new education and the widening franchise. Their enthusiasm and discipline impressed the observers in the gallery and the reporters who crowded at the press table. They were the tangible evidence of a new factor in British politics.” (*Origins of the Labour Party*)

What should they call the new organisation? The Scottish Labour Party suggested the Socialist Labour Party. Katharine Conway and Joseph Burgess spoke against that, and won the day. “Socialism” was not yet the ideology of the masses, said Conway. Tillet said he “wished to capture the trade unionists of this country, a body of men well organised, who paid their money, and were Socialists at their work every day and not merely on the platform, who did not should for blood-red revolution, and when it came to revolution, sneaked under the nearest bed.”

There is no doubt that the move to establish a party that stood for “independent Labour” and would set out to break the workers from the bourgeois parties was a tremendous step forward. But what did the ILP want to achieve and what had happened to the socialist ideas? How did all these different kinds of socialists see socialism coming about? That will be the subject of the next instalment.

How to rebuild the US unions

PAUL HAMPTON REVIEWS US LABOR IN TROUBLE AND TRANSITION, KIM MOODY, LONDON: VERSO

WHY is US labor in decline and how can the situation be turned around? Kim Moody, a prominent Marxist participant and commentator in the US labour movement over the past three decades, has produced a coherent answer to these questions, with implications for the revival of trade unionism everywhere.

The absolute membership of US trade unions peaked in 1980 at 20 million members. Union density peaked a lot earlier; in 1953 unions accounted for nearly a third (32.5%) of non-agricultural workers.

By 2005 US unions organised just 12.5% of the workforce, with 16.5 million members. In that year the labour movement split down the middle, when the Change to Win coalition broke away from the AFL-CIO trade union centre, taking some six million members with it.

Moody's explanation starts from the worsening economic situation from the 1970s and after the election of Ronald Reagan, the harsher political climate, which made labour's ability to fight more difficult. The economic situation is described as the "Great Transformation" — a fall in the rate of profit led to intensified competition, the acceleration of global economic integration, outsourcing, new technologies, lean reorganisation — what Moody rightly describes following Marx as the concentration and centralisation of capital.

The consequences were the shrinking of the manufacturing workforce by 4 million workers, the brutal intensification of work, the reorganisation of America's industrial geography — principally the migration of many industries to the South, longer and more irregular working hours and greater control by the capitalist class over the labour process.

All these factors worked to ratchet up the rate of exploitation, leading to the transfer of wealth and income from the working class to capital. The change is epitomised by the stagnation of real wages: in 2006 real wage levels were 13% below the 1972 level, giving most US workers a standard of living little different from the 1960s.

The period also saw a recomposition of industrial demography, with the US labour force becoming more diverse ethnically and by gender. In particular the growth of Latino workers from 4 to 13% of the workforce marked a significant shift.

BUT Moody does not simply attribute the decline of American unionism to objective circumstances. For one thing the objective situation was not all bad. The number of auto jobs actually grew from 575,000 in 1980 to 770,000 by 2000, with foreign and US car makers shifting to or starting production in the southern states. Yet over this period the UAW auto workers union lost thousands of members.

More importantly, the book highlights the failures to fight back in 1980-81 and again in 1989, when most union leadership gave up on any kind of militancy, surrendered workplace organisation to the employers and backtracked into partnership strategies when the bosses were conducting a one-sided class war. Unions took refuge in mergers with no industrial logic that merely increased the income and assets of the bureaucracy and diminished rank and file democracy. At the same time unions made more and more concessions to employers — such as signing longer and more austere contracts. Unions became hollowed out, lacking the basic democratic structures to involve members in fighting back. At the same time US labour remained tied politically to the Democrats, just as business lobbyists tightened their grip on the Democrat machine.

What is the current state of play is in the unions? Moody characterises this approach as "bureaucratic business unionism", the direct ancestor of the "pure and simple" trade unionism that has soiled US labour since its inception. Such an approach has no ultimate ends, just immediate objects, is concerned with day to day matters and overseen by "practical men". Unions like these are run like businesses and

infused with business culture, believing in a community of interest with capital, committed to economic growth while creating a "private welfare state" around members.

Not all unions went this way. The services union SEIU under John Sweeney turned to organising — notably with the Justice for Janitors campaign, which recruited 35,000 cleaners in LA and elsewhere. It turned aggressively towards increasing its membership, adding to its full time staff and hiring radical college activists.

In the decade after 1996, when Sweeney left to head the AFL-CIO, the SEIU under Andy Stern doubled its membership to 1.8 million members, mostly through new organising (though 350,000 were added through mergers). Stern continued the centralisation of SEIU, its corporate organising norms and its creation of mega-locals, branches stretching over huge geographical areas grouping workers in unrelated areas.

Moody therefore explains the SEIU-led breakaway Change to Win coalition from Sweeney's AFL-CIO as essentially a split between rival versions of what he calls "bureaucratic corporate unionism".

This is epitomised by the continued semi-institutional alliance with the Democrats. In 1996 unions spent \$25 million on electoral

adverts. In 2000 they spent \$40 million overall — less on adverts (\$10 million) but more on paying activists to do face to face and other work in marginal seats. SEIU for example gave one Democrat \$800,000 in 2004 in return for support for granting health care workers bargaining rights.

Moody is able to critique both bureaucratic business unionism and the new corporate unionism so thoroughly because he has a well worked out alternative conception, what he calls "social movement unionism". This conception, worked out through the *Labor Notes* journal since 1979, is based on workplace power, membership mobilisation, union democracy, independence from the employer and alliances with other workers organisations.

Moody acknowledges the influences of South African and Brazilian unions in pioneering social movement unionism. He also highlights the role played in the US by other journals and activists, such as the *Union Democracy Review* edited by the old Shachtmanite Herman Benson and other activists like Mike Parker. He is characteristically modest about his own contribution in developing the perspective within US conditions in the heat of successive battles.

The key has been to base himself on the actual rank and file struggles and movements

within the existing unions. The book highlights examples, such as the UAW caucus in Delphi, the United Action teachers' caucus, Teamsters for a Democratic Union, the Committee for Real Change in the AFSCME and the Longshore Workers' Coalition.

Moody also points to the kind of mobilisations and organising that could help turn the tide. He highlights the May 2006 "Day without Immigrants" marches, which drew five or six million workers — a quarter of the foreign-born population, as well as the 137 Workers' Centres that have sprung up to defend workers and their communities.

But the book goes even further. It argues strongly for unions to turn strategically to industries such as auto and meatpacking, which means organising in the southern US where density is less than 6%. The idea is to fight for democratic, internationalist unions in key industries, avoiding token campaigns such as around Wal-Mart, coupled with a renewed drive for political independence through the Labor Party, including standing candidates.

In short, it is a plan for the renewal of the labour movement in the US, based on ideas with wide application. Socialists and militants in the unions in Britain would benefit from a similar honest assessment combined with grounded answers for how to rebuild.

Revolution in the twenties and thirties.

And here in the UK Edith Tudoe-Hardt worked with the National Unemployed Workers' Association to highlight the consequences of mass unemployment in depression Britain.

The iniquities of apartheid South Africa were wonderfully represented in Ernest Coles' famous "House of Bondage", while Sebastian Salgado's photos of "Workers" has undoubtedly contributed to a worldwide struggle for social justice.

But the medium has not escaped the retreat from class politics which has been underway from the Thatcher period onwards, and it is not obvious who, if anybody, has replaced documentary photographers like McCullin, Bresson, Capa, and Salgado.

Whatever the aims of the photographer, it is undeniable that the documentary photograph has been seen, and continues to be seen, as a threat not just by dictatorial regimes but also increasingly by late-capitalist Western liberal-democracy.

The first big example of censorship was the banning of photos of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the Americans during their seven-year occupation of Japan at the end of World War Two. The photos of Yamahata, Domon and Tomatsu brought the horrors of the atomic age to the world's attention only after the occupation ended.

Don McCullin, Philipp Jones Griffiths, David Douglas Duncan, Tim Page and Larry Burroughs' negative representation of Vietnam were significant in turning public opinion against the war.

Crucially, the impact of Eddie Adams' photo of the cold blooded execution of a North Vietnamese by the Saigon Chief of Police dramatically increased the numbers of Americans on anti-war demo. The numbers increased again as the smuggled photos of the My Lai massacre emerged.

Government reaction has seen much tighter control, with Don McCullin infamously being denied a press pass during the South Atlantic War over the Falklands. Photographers in Ireland during "The Troubles" were "embedded" with army units — a practice repeated in the ongoing conflict in Iraq.

But further technological advances have made absolute control impossible, as the images of the Abu Ghraib tortures ably demonstrated.

It remains to be seen if there is a downside to the greater availability of high quality images.

Will the fantastic quantity of photographs undermine the medium's power both to shock and also to provoke much needed protest and dissent? Or will the widespread availability of easily usable digital technology at ever falling prices make oppression and cover-up increasingly difficult?

Lewis Hines exposed child labour

The document

BBC4 have just started a series on the history of photography, entitled *The Genius of Photography*. Peter Burton outlines how sometimes photography has served social causes

CRITICS of early documentary photography employed the same arguments that had been directed against the founding father of documentary film, John Grierson — that working-class people were represented simply as passive victims of industrial capitalism.

At best, the photograph aimed to pressurise

governments into a charitable response to poverty, slum housing or bad working conditions. At worst, the goal was simply to display the skill and humanity of the photographer.

Nevertheless, documentary photographs have led to progressive social change that might otherwise have been delayed or not occurred at all.

Lewis Hines' photographs in the opening years of the twentieth century were used to help end child labour in US factories, sweatshops and mines. Tina Modotti made an empathetic representation of the Mexican

Why Northern Ireland split on communal, not class, lines

THE last two issues of *Solidarity* started a series about the events in Northern Ireland in 1968-9 — the start of the long-running turmoil there, still not resolved today — and the debates and disputes as the left tried to orient itself.

The first article described the situation in Northern Ireland on the eve of the crisis, and outlined the main events there in 1968-72. The second article set out the political currents involved in the turning-point discussion on Ireland at the National Committee of IS (forerunner of the SWP) in January 1969, their previous interactions and disputes, and their connections with left-wing activists in Ireland. By Sean Matgamna

AS THE IS National Committee at the beginning of January 1969 was discussing Northern Ireland, dramatic events of great consequence were erupting in Ireland as a direct result of the activities of IS's co-thinkers there, the leaders of People's Democracy (a loose mainly student-based group formed in late 1968).

After the outcry that followed the police assault on the 5 October 1968 civil rights march in Derry, Northern Ireland's prime minister Terence O'Neill appealed for the public confidence that would allow him to press ahead with reforms. The leaders of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association were inclined to give O'Neill "time". These were men like John Hume — future SDLP leader, future godfather of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, and in 1969 generally believed to be a member of Opus Dei, the quasi-secret elite Catholic lay association — and women like Betty Sinclair, long-time Stalinist, early-1930s student at the Moscow "Lenin school", and secretary of the Belfast Trades Council.

Whatever may have been the inclinations of people like Hume and Sinclair, however lacking in gut militancy they may have been, there was very good reason for taking a "moderate" approach. There was a real danger of an Orange backlash that might be strong enough to paralyse moves for reform centred, as in the circumstances they had to be, on the Unionist party.

O'Neill was a weak and unskilled bourgeois politician, bred in a political system in which the ruling Unionist bloc had been kept together by fear of the Six Counties minority and of the 26 Counties state. The Unionist party, for half a century, had a built-in majority that needed only a few judicious thumps on the Orange drum to keep it loyal and mobilised.

O'Neill's efforts to bring in the reforms London was demanding were fumbling and ambivalent. But more than that: the whole system, as events were about to show, had become volatile and unstable.

The "ultras", the Paisleyites, were a fringe minority, outsiders. Ian Paisley was a Protestant Savonarola scourging the Orange and Unionist Six Counties Establishment,

accusing them of lack of zeal and vigilance in the Protestant cause, and, some of them, of being "Lundys", sell-out merchants.

An Orange equivalent of the IRA, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), recently organised and named after the successful armed mass movement against Home Rule of the years before World War One, had already "made its bones" in the killing of a Catholic barman, Peter Ward, in 1966. Whipped into a hysterical alarm by the big celebrations in the South on the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising, they had sought targets for their zeal and mistakenly identified Ward as an IRA member.

O'Neill had banned the UVF. However, in any national/communal conflict, the "ultras" can, by "sparking off" their equivalents on the other side, create conditions in which large numbers, or most, of those whom they consider to be "their own" are pulled behind them by alarm and fear at an offensive by that "other side".

SMALL GUERRILLA armies can, by triggering over-reaction by the state, win mass support. That sort of thing had already occurred with the 5 October Derry demonstration, banned by the Northern Ireland Home Secretary, William Craig. It would happen in Northern Ireland again in 1971 when, after a few months of an IRA bombing campaign, the introduction of internment — exclusively for Catholics — threw the majority of Northern Ireland Catholics, even those who had opposed the bombings, on to the side of the Provisionals.

That can work on both sides. The ultras on both sides can, by their actions, evoke responses on the "other side" that will strengthen them on their own. In fact, it can be as if the ultras on both sides act in tacit alliance to polarise the communal/national relations.

We saw that most gruesomely in the 1990s, among the component parts of the former Yugoslavia; we have seen it in Israeli-Palestinian relations in the last seven years.

The "moderate" leaders of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association were aware of the danger, and were inclined to respond to O'Neill's implicit appeal — back me, or you may have to face far worse. The problem was that O'Neill, while willing to reform, to moderate the sectarianism of the Northern Ireland state, was not committed to root-and-branch equality for Catholics; and increasingly, as the anti-O'Neill Orange backlash it became doubtful that he could deliver any major reforms at all.

Northern Ireland was a minefield. Any sharp movement could trigger explosions, and explosions that, like 5 October in Derry, would bring on others. It may well be that — even leaving aside the fact that the basic civil right the Six Counties Catholics lacked was national self-determination — reform that would satisfy the Catholics was simply impossible in the Northern Ireland sub-state.

The system had been created to be the self-

rule of Ireland's Protestant-Unionist minority. It had an assured Protestant majority. Its territory had been engineered to ensure that it had. The large size of its artificially created Catholic minority, and the fact that the Catholics were the majority in large swathes of the state bordering on the 26 Counties, deprived the Six Counties "Protestant state for a Protestant people" of the claim to democratic validity it would otherwise have had, at the same time as rendering the Unionists insecure and fearful for the future.

Once Britain had abolished the majority rule system, in March 1972, it would prove impossible for decades to replace it with any system with built-in Catholic-Protestant power-sharing. The most important such effort before the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 and what has followed was from January to May 1974. It was destroyed by a Six Counties general strike.

But that was in the wake of the first stage of the Provisional IRA war, which led to a mass mobilisation of Protestant Unionist forces in a (legal) mass movement, the Ulster Defence Association (UDA).

Sections of the Six Counties labour movement had backed civil rights and reform. But events from 5 October 1968 on alarmed increasingly wide layers of the Protestant-Unionist working class. They widened and deepened the split in the working class, thus paralysing any possibility of progressive political action by the labour movement.

A far better course within the Six Counties state — if the continued existence of that Six Counties state is taken as given, and it is still "given" four turbulent decades later — would surely have been a succession of reforms that allowed decisive shifts towards full Catholic equality without the convulsions of the decades after 1968. For that the Unionist "centre" would have to control events, and it didn't happen that way.

The "moderates" were willing to have a "truce" with O'Neill. They had their own "militant" alternative policy, if a "truce" with O'Neill did not produce results: the demand for the abolition of Belfast Home Rule and "direct rule" from London.

Things being as they were in Britain and Ireland, direct rule was the only alternative to hoping that the Unionist party would bring reform through the Northern Ireland government. Those who pushed things to a breakdown and low-level civil war were, all things considered, and whatever they intended, working for direct rule from London. That was their role in Northern Ireland in the first eight months of 1969.

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY rejected the "truce" with O'Neill. On 1 January they set off, perhaps 40 of them and sometimes more, extremely brave young women and men led by Michael Farrell and Eamonn McCann on what they called the "long march". In four days they marched for civil rights from Belfast to Derry, much of it

through very hostile Unionist territory.

They suffered attacks and harassment in which the police, the RUC, instead of protecting them and their right of peaceful political demonstration, was sometimes obviously in collusion with those who threw deadly missiles at the marches and assaulted them with nail-studded clubs and iron bars. Members of the "B Specials" — the RUC "Reserve", an Orange-sectarian anti-Catholic militia — took a direct part in some of the assaults. A number of marchers were seriously injured by clubs and missiles; at a number of points marchers feared for their lives.

At Burntollet Bridge, a few miles from Derry City, they experienced the worst assault, again with the RUC playing at best an ambivalent role. James Chichester-Clark, a Unionist MP, a first cousin of O'Neill, who would within a few months be O'Neill's successor as prime minister of Northern Ireland, was photographed with one lot of anti-civil-rights demonstrators.

The analogy between Northern Ireland and the Southern States of the USA, and between Northern Ireland's Catholics and black people in the US South, was greatly strengthened in the minds of many Northern Ireland Catholics and in the eyes of the now vigilant international media observers by the events of the long march. The ambushes, the hostile demonstrations, the blatant bigotry and murderous thugery of sections of Unionism, and the unabashed outrage of Unionists along the route from Belfast to Derry at their "taigs" being uppity, were recorded along the way by press and cameras. Protestant-Catholic relations at the grass roots in the Six Counties were "exposed" to British and international mass media that were almost uniformly friendly to civil rights and the Catholics.

Northern Ireland was depicted as a political land that time forgot, a world ruled by archaic strutting creatures out of the 17th century that had long been extinct in Britain and Western Europe. A pamphlet entitled *Burntollet* by Bowes Egan and Vincent McCormack, which detailed the events of the march, had a very wide circulation.

On that level, the Long March was an outstanding success; but the propaganda victory carried a very high price in terms of communal polarisation.

When the march got to Derry, fighting erupted between local Catholics and the police. A mere two months after the fighting that followed the events of 5 October 1968, the police invaded the Bogside, the Catholic slum built outside the still perfectly-preserved 17th century walls of the City, and beat a middle-aged local man, Samuel Devenney, to death in his home. The Bogsideers threw up barricades to keep the police out and declared that their area was now "Free Derry".

It was the first attempt at "internal secession" from the Six Counties state by a Catholic-majority area. There would be others before 1969 was out.

These events were the overture to what

would follow on a much bigger scale. Though the Long March was a triumph of “exposure” propaganda, the exposure was enlightening only to the world beyond Northern Ireland. Inside Northern Ireland, the intense light beamed on Orange militancy acted not to repel and inhibit but to stimulate and render self-righteous the Protestants, at the same time as it stirred up Northern Ireland Catholics.

The Catholics were Northern Ireland’s underdogs, the oppressed, the main victims of Partition. It did not follow that they were free from sectarian bigotry of their own. In such a situation, one side’s bigotry and sectarianism can be expressed in the guise of a denunciation of “the other side’s” bigotry, sectarianism, and racism. Some of the worst sectarianism-breeding features of Northern Ireland society — sectarian “faith schools”, for example — were mainly the work of the Catholic hierarchy.

The events of early January 1969 greatly spread the alarm in Unionist Northern Ireland that O’Neill’s “soft” reform was turning an encouraging “Taig” uprising. Though premature, the alarm was not inaccurate: the Catholic civil rights mobilisations would, in history, prove to be the build-up, the unprecedented Catholic political mobilisation, from which would come an IRA war on Northern Ireland’s Protestant-Unionist that would last for 23 years. PD’s Long March was, in the history of Northern Ireland, a prelude to the IRA’s long war.

THE YOUNG leaders of the militant, uncompromising Catholic civil rights advocates — Michael Farrell, Eamonn McCann, and soon Bernadette Devlin — were by now well-known media figures in Ireland, Britain, and way beyond. They had a wide audience for their politics. The question was, what were their politics? What were they trying to do?

What did they think they were doing? What did they think would come from the communal polarisation they had helped create and which their militancy was sharpening, could only sharpen?

These were young people, educated under the British welfare state far beyond what had been available to their parents. They held a broader overview, with socialist aspirations for Catholic and Protestant alike. Through their own lives, back to infancy, they had experienced a thousand daily slights, insults, suspicions, and threats. They had been talked down to as “inferior” and “backward”.

They knew the system they revolted against in their bones, and bore its psychological consequences for the Catholics deep within themselves. The lines of the mid-19th century nationalist poet Thomas Davis about the “Penal Days” of the 18th century, when Irish Catholics lived under a system remarkably like South Africa’s apartheid, had for them been not only about a distant past: “What wonder if our step betrays/ The freedman born in penal days?”.

Their lives really did have a lot in common with the experience of the black people in the USA with whom they identified. The discrimination was not as intense and all-pervasive as in the USA, and Catholics were not subject to casual lynching, their bodies hung from trees or set fire to; but there was occasional lethal B-Special violence, and there were incidents like the killing of Samuel Devenney. It was in the same order of things as what US black people experienced, the PD leaders themselves had a lot in common with the US black civil rights leaders.

But the differences were no less important; and from people who were Marxists, as some PD leaders were, more was required than gut militancy and indignation, however justified. The November 1969 Trotskyist Tendency pamphlet *IS and Ireland* commented on this.

It should also be admitted that the whole Northern Ireland set-up probably ruled out any attempt to do what the PD tried to do, and certainly in the way they tried to do it. It precluded unity; it precluded a simple attempt to change the relative situation of Catholics and Protestants in a united struggle: in fact sectarian division had been programmed into the state at birth.

Thus even the social slogans — one man one job, one house, etc. — appeared, against the background of extreme stagnation, to the Protestants as demands to share the little there was. The very attempt to use social slogans and demand to rally a united mass movement of Catholic and Protestant workers called forth only a Catholic civil rights movement — and a violent Protestant backlash.

“Man makes his own history”, teaches Marxism — but according to conditions he does not control, and which ultimately determine whether or not the result of his actions will be as he desires. Man can, of course, heighten remarkably the chances of achieving a desired result by understanding the laws that operate in the particular field.

That is why Marxism is so useful for those who want to change society. That is why a comprehensive Marxist programme, based on a serious analysis, is a useful weapon in any situation. And particularly useful where the situa-

Transitional demands which might have drawn the Protestant workers into the struggle were hardly used at all

tion is very complex and where struggles at different levels (e.g. nationalist and socialist) are superimposed and criss-crossed on top of each other.

PD started out without a serious analysis, and without clearly defining their aims and the appropriate tactics and strategy needed to achieve those aims. going along empirically, ignoring the national question, they evoked a movement of protest from a section of the population whose whole reason for protest, whose whole social condition, was determined by the point at which the national struggle of 50 years ago stopped.

They did evoke a class struggle, but a muffled one; a class energy from the oppressed Catholic masses, which in turn brought forth only a violent hostility from the majority of the Northern Ireland working class.

Transitional demands which might have drawn the Protestant workers into the struggle by showing up the real enemy and indicating a path of struggle which did not appear to threaten them were hardly used at all. Instead they talked of the Workers’ Republic, as if in some mystical way it was immediately connected with the present struggle, as if the far-distant prospect were enough to unite the class now. In the event they were using it like a deodorant or shroud.

Instead of prising apart the horizontal division which exists between the classes in Northern Ireland, their blows produced a crack

vertically down the middle of Northern Ireland’s flawed society; it split along the lines of religion and nationality.

THE AGITATORS FOR black civil rights in America demonstrated, marched, and organised within a political framework in which they looked to the Federal Government to protect their rights — and to intervene physically against the racist State authorities in the Southern States. In Northern Ireland? The equivalent policy was direct rule. That was the policy of the British Labour Left. It was not the policy of PD, though it was what flowed from the polarisation and breakdown which was the certain consequence of their militancy.

It was not the policy of IS, either. IS’s policy was simply incoherent hand-to-mouth agitation with no thought beyond the immediate impact. For practical purposes, they recognised no values beyond “militancy”. They had a politically senseless determination to ignore the complexities and pretend that the communal differences counted for nothing.

The Trotskyist Tendency inside IS (forerunner of AWL) was highly critical of PD’s tactics and called IS’s policy “Catholic economism” — by analogy with IS’s (straightforward) “Economist” delusion that militant trade unionism in Britain was socialist politics.

Events would soon impose an unexpected political “logic” on IS’s “demands”.

THE JANUARY 1969 IS National Committee added to the slogans put forward by the Executive Committee — troops out, no British military equipment for the B-Specials, end subsidies — a call for “the right of the people of Ireland to self-determination”. That was carried by the National Committee against the votes of all the Executive members other than Constance Lever, and it gave the slogans a certain coherence.

But here the National Committee could “propose”, even “impose”, but the Executive Committee would “dispose”, that is, decided on a day-to-day basis what the slogans meant, how they were construed, and so on.

In any case, the formula we put forward — “the right of the people of Ireland to self-determination” — was itself inadequate and misleading. Ireland was a unity only geographical. Politically, the problem that could not be evaded was that the compact Protestant-Unionist majority of north-east Ulster (not of the whole Six Counties, but of the north and east of that area) was British and thought of itself as British, not Irish, or anyway not Irish in the Dublin or Northern Ireland Catholic sense. That compact majority did not encompass the Six Counties state — that is why it broke down — but it dominated a distinct corner of Ireland, and that (then) the most economically and industrially developed part of

the island.

They would not agree to be in a united Ireland, and it was neither desirable nor possible to coerce them into a united Ireland.

In part, the formula of self-determination for the whole of Ireland, as a unit, was for the Trotskyist Tendency (for me, anyway) a way of challenging, rejecting, and denying the validity of the division into Six and 26 Counties. “Self-determination... must mean to regard the existing Irish state structure as fluid... [to deny it means] declaring... that the existing border is sacrosanct this side of workers’ power” (*IS and Ireland*).

But without some notion of how the two peoples on the island — and within Northern Ireland — could relate to each other, of a democratic settlement that would allow for coexistence, “self-determination” had a built-in Catholic-majoritarian meaning. In fact I did not believe in such an approach, and had in the Irish Workers’ Group magazine *Workers’ Republic* explicitly condemned the notion of any attempt, or even the implicit notion of an attempt, at “conquering the Protestant workers”. I will come back to this question.

Out of that contradiction would come the idea that a united Ireland could not but be a federal Ireland, though not a federation of six and 26 counties. This idea had in fact been raised in 1948 by the tiny Irish Trotskyist (Shachtmanite) organisation, but nobody knew that in 1969. There was no continuity. We had to grope our way.

The worst inadequacy of the Trotskyist Tendency in early 1969, however, lay in our response to “withdraw subsidies”. The Trotskyist Tendency pamphlet of November 1969 carried the criticism we had of that demand — “this slogan, acceptable to no workers in Northern Ireland, Catholic or Protestant, disguised the real nature of the relationship [between Britain and Northern Ireland], and could legitimately be accused of miseducating British workers”. But at the National Committee we did not oppose it, choosing instead to argue positively for self-determination and a call for an Irish workers’ republic. And the criticism in our pamphlet was shallow and routine.

YET ANALYSIS of that “withdraw subsidies” slogan opens up the whole question. What did the slogan mean? And what, for Northern Ireland, did “British imperialism” mean? Northern Ireland was an artificially carved-out sub-state. Senselessly, it incorporated large areas whose Catholic majority wanted to be part of the other Irish state; but its majority was, they insisted, British; and it was a compact majority in a sizeable chunk of the north-east corner.

Where did the idea of withdrawing British subsidies come from? What did it mean? Another of the three demands concerned the supply of guns to Stormont, so “subsidies” did

not refer to that aspect of things. If it was other than a pseudo-militant noise, it was a call for the British to expel the Northern Ireland working class, Protestant and Catholic, from the post-1945 welfare state!

It was a demand on Westminster that it stop subsidising the social services — dole in the (mainly Catholic) areas of high unemployment; the NHS; education (the education system, vastly superior to that of the South, that would produce the generation of young Catholics who spearheaded the civil rights movement).

That it act to savagely reduce the living standards of the people of Northern Ireland, Catholic and Protestant. That it impose cuts and counter-reforms that would do to Northern Ireland what Thatcher would do in Britain 20 years later! A drastic hammering down of the Northern Ireland working class!

I repeat: the expulsion of the Six Counties working class from the modern British welfare state! Did anything so bizarre ever appear in the pages of an honest socialist newspaper — even as discussion — since the German Stalinists in 1933 greeted Hitler's coming to power with mad triumphalism, proclaiming, "Our turn next"?

Where might this call for the driving down of the working class of Northern Ireland originate? It could possibly come from some Southern bourgeois whose brain had been pickled in Catholic chauvinism for too long, who had been in a lunatic asylum since 1921, if you could find one! Its honest meaning would be the cry: "Stop corrupting our workers", a sort of adle-pated nationalist "ultra-leftism".

Or it could come, as indeed it did, from pseudo-Irish nationalists, eager to display their ardour for a cause they don't really care about, which they embrace to serve some other goal, people really concerned entirely with something other than Ireland, her peoples or her working class.

People who had never encountered James Connolly's dictum: "Ireland apart from her people means nothing to me".

That is where it came from. As far as I can establish, the idea originated in a 1955 pamphlet of the Communist Party's Irish front organisation, the Connolly Association. It had appeared briefly in a discussion piece in *Socialist Worker's* predecessor *Socialist Review*, a pro-IRA article by the Republican-Stalinist folk-singer Dominic Behan (Easter 1959), but he picked it up from the Connolly Association.

The Trotskyist Tendency's criticism of the demand was grossly inadequate.

IN *SOCIALIST WORKER* of 11 January 1969, an editorial supposedly summing up the conclusions of the National Committee discussion was flagged up across the top of page one under the masthead: "Northern Ireland and the British left: the enemy is at home".

The main story on page one was by Michael Farrell, reporting on the Long March from Belfast to Derry, under the headline: "Ulster Cops Versus Marchers". That was true — but radically misleading, consigning the grass roots Orange response to the march to the status of marginal detail, and focusing on liberal expo-

sure of the cops. The sectarianism of the RUC was very important, but it was itself a product of something far more basic, and far more important — the communal antagonism and the growing Orange grass-roots mobilisation.

The editorial underlined the same emphasis as the lead-story headline.

"Some readers may have thought *Socialist Worker's* definition of Northern Ireland as a police state was 'rather extreme'." Those readers would surely change their mind after Burntollit. "The demonstrations must go on. The demands of one man one vote, and an end to religious discrimination in housing and unemployment [sic] must be won."

British socialists and trade unionists must realise that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, and is financed and supported by British capitalism. The British left must act in solidarity with their Irish comrades by fighting to end British capitalism's role in Ulster.

Our job is to fight the enemy at home, not to tell Irish socialists what to do. The geographical nearness of Ireland tends to confuse British socialists about their role.

The attitude of most British socialists to the struggles for national liberation in Africa and Asia follows the basic Marxist approach of fighting to expose the complicity of British Imperialism in those parts of the world.

But where Ireland is concerned too many British socialists unconsciously accept its colonial status by ignoring the grip of British capital over the country and instead insist on instructing the Irish left to call for a 'Workers' Republic North and South'.

The only crosshead in the editorial followed: "Repudiated", it declared.

The National Committee of the International Socialists, meeting in London last weekend discussed the Irish situation at great length and repudiated any suggestion that in expressing our solidarity with the Irish comrades we should include demands concerning the socialist reorganisation of the 32 Counties.

That is for the Irish working class to decide. Our duty in Britain is to fight British capitalism and its hold over Ireland.

*The National Committee called for a campaign on Ireland based on public meetings throughout the country to explain the situation, backed by pamphlets, leaflets and articles in *Socialist Worker* and *International Socialism*.*

The Campaign will be based on the following demands...

The editorial repeated the three demands that had appeared in *Socialist Worker* before the National Committee discussion:

1) The withdrawal of all British troops from Ireland;

2) An end to the supply of British military equipment to the Northern Ireland Tory party and paramilitary Black Hundreds, the B-Specials;

3) Stop British subsidies to the Tory police state in Northern Ireland..

The editorial was a crude and true report of the National Committee decisions. The word "repudiate" conveyed a notion of a decisive rejection. That was, perhaps, too strong for a decision carried only by the chair's casting vote, but repudiated it was.

The editorial was very much at variance with the much self-praised "IS style" of that time, which decreed that they could only boast about their "modesty"; and one of whose political defining ideas through the 1960s was summed up in an article by Michael Kidron. Referring to Lenin's idea of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism, Kidron entitled his article "Highest Stage But One".

At the December IS Executive discussion on Ireland, *Socialist Worker* editor Roger Protz was one of those who called for a Marxist

Analysis of the "withdraw subsidies" slogan opens up the whole question. What did the slogan mean?

analysis of Ireland. Perhaps he was making the same point in the editorial, obliquely, by showing what the lack of a Marxist analysis could lead to!

The editorial led to something of an outcry, and that in turn to an Executive Committee decision that from then on Richard Kuper, a member of the "subtle faction", would write the editorials in *Socialist Worker*. (On this, I am forced to rely on memory).

I immediately wrote a reply to the editorial. It did not appear for two weeks, while the Executive Committee, perhaps, was sorting out what it would do.

The editorial summed up what might be called "IS Executive position no.1". My letter summed up what might be called "Trotskyist Tendency position no.1". Both sides would shift ground.

A strange editorial indeed! You entirely ignored the case (supported by fifty per cent of the National Committee and only "repudiated" by the Chairman's second vote!) in favour of propaganda in Britain for an Irish Workers' Republic — the fact of one million Irish workers living in Britain. A very high proportion of those interested in our campaign will be Irish.

IS's slogans have some educational value for British workers: but their effect on nationalist Irish workers will be to hinder them in grasping the real problems of Ireland and the real — working-class — solutions. To play a positive role with this large group we need more than the simplistic "Bring the Troops and Subsidies home" approach.

The idea that if Britain vanished everything would be fine in Ireland is the basic political miseducation of those Irish workers we will reach with our demands. Without a class, socialist approach, we can't even talk to Protestant Irish workers in Britain. You reinforce this camouflage which protects the Green Tories North and South from politics — the politics that will finally unify the workers of all Ireland against their Green and Orange exploiters.

The confused thinking behind your approach is well expressed in your editorial: "The British left must act in solidarity with their Irish comrades by fighting to end British capitalism's role in Ulster". How?

Its role depends on no way on the direct control of Northern or Southern Ireland; even less on the anti-Catholic laws. Nor will it end if Ireland becomes a united bourgeois republic. It will end only when the market ceases to rule the relations of small nations and large ones.

Again: "Too many socialists unconsciously accept its [Ireland's] colonial status by ignoring the grip of British capital over the country". And "neo-colonialism".

Like the majority of Irish workers, the editorial clearly thinks that the slogans raised are a solution to the basic problem of Ireland — the grip of British and Irish capital. They are not a solution. For a country like Ireland, overshadowed by Britain, only the workers' revolution can change the basic situation.

We must fight for limited gains (i.e. British withdrawal) — but we must not sow, or endorse, illusions. The beneficial effect of complete British withdrawal would only be to clear the Nationalist roadblock that has stopped Irish labour in its tracks for 50 years. No more than that.

It is a cross oversimplification to call Northern Ireland a "colony" — it is semi-autonomous, ruled by a sub-section of the British capitalists. Direct British control is increasingly unimportant; there is evidence of British desire for Northern and Southern Irish bourgeois rapprochement (in preparation for entry to the Common Market [European Union]). Orange bigotry today benefits the Northern Ireland employers, who are not all English.

We need a class explanation as well as a nationalist explanation. Yet you stick to demand appropriate to Vietnam, or to Ireland in 1920, ignoring the effects of these demands on Irish readers and others.

To take this into account, the proposal for a Workers' Republic slogan was raised at the National Committee: it could have taken the form of an IS expression of support for the left in Ireland, and in no way would it have qualified the demand of "Britain out".

We don't tell Irish socialists what to do. But should we, out of contrition for Britain's role in Ireland, past and present, trail after people who see Ireland in national terms, or liberal terms, to the exclusion of class terms?

IS needs a line, an independent judgement. Lenin, while arguing with Luxemburg, was by no means a supporter of Pilsudski.

For instance, do we not have a duty to criticise the apparent lack of concrete unifying working-class demands in the Northern Ireland civil rights movement? No Irish socialists (except a few reactionary expatriate chauvinists) would object to this, nor to socialist propaganda amongst Irish workers in Britain.

*We must stand with revolutionary socialists in Ireland who combine Luxemburg's determination not to be deflected from socialism by nationalism (a big danger in Ireland as in Poland) with Lenin's sensitivity to the feelings of a people on whom oppression has stamped a sharp national consciousness. At the moment IS is reproducing the line of Irish socialists who on this question are habitually to the right not only of Luxemburg but also of Pilsudski! (*Socialist Worker*, 25 January 1969).*

WHERE WE STAND

TODAY one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class has one weapon: solidarity.

The **Alliance for Workers' Liberty** aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, a workers' democracy with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for the labour movement to break with "social

partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

WE STAND FOR:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression.

Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.

- Open borders. The labour movement must organise all workers, migrant or born in Britain, legal or illegal.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

Why I left the Socialist Workers' Party

BY TOM UNTERRAINER

Many people reading this article may ask themselves "why join the SWP in the first place?" Others still will ask "why go on to join the AWL?" These are legitimate questions. In fact, the answer to the question "why I left the SWP" revolves almost entirely around answering the other two.

Some people fill hours of their lives writing lists of incidents, outrages and 'crimes against socialism' carried out by the SWP. This documentation is a time-consuming and important work, but this article will be no such list. Others have provided us with impressionistic sketches of leading SWP 'personalities'. These sketches have some value, but the eccentricities, downright rudeness and misanthropy of the likes of Alex Callinicos and Chris Bambery do not determine factors in my leaving the party – you can find strange behaviour across the Left. Some people proba-

bly think I'm strange!

My relatively short membership of the SWP taught me the valuable basics of revolutionary activity. I learnt the rudiments of organisation, how to engage with people on the streets and how to mobilise them. I gained the confidence to speak in front of large meetings and lead demonstrations, to write leaflets and have an argument. It was in the SWP that I became immersed in politics, an immersion that lasts to this day. The SWP formed me, as they have a great many others, into a revolutionary. So what went wrong?

WHY I JOINED THE SWP

The answer to this question is fairly straightforward and is a lesson to any revolutionary group. I first came into contact with the revolutionary left in the aftermath of September 11th 2001. It's a cliché, I know, but that day really did

change my life. My previous political life had been centred on the Labour Party; I thought of myself as a "Labour leftie" but had never come across any organisations inside the party. I'd been busy helping return Alan Simpson (the left-wing MP for Nottingham South) to parliament before the summer and had settled back into student life quite happily until that day in September.

Shortly afterwards I got involved in the local "Stop the War" (StW) group. The SWP, Socialist Party and AWL were all active around StW, but only the SWP went out of its way to recruit me and stamp its presence on whatever it was involved with. I'd be followed to the pub after meetings, people would be sent to argue with me, ask questions and ask me to join. They'd pop up in the most unlikely of places. *Socialist Worker* was a ubiquitous presence.

I could easily have joined any one of the

groups at the time but only the SWP put real effort into recruiting an awkward character like me. After three months I'd torn up my Labour Party card. Five months later I eventually asked to join the SWP. They seemed pleased that their hard work had paid off. Like many people at the time I threw myself 100% into campaigning and educating myself about the world – the energy I put into StW was quickly absorbed by the SWP.

Within four months I ended up working for the party, first as an organiser in Leicester, then in the membership department at the national office. During this time I helped organise and lead demonstrations, spoke at meetings around the country and personally recruited scores of people to the party.

I had a fantastic time but was also exposed to some of the darker aspects of life in the SWP. It quickly became clear that decision making was not a democratic process. Each Wednesday the Central Committee would meet in a room at the far end of the print-shop and shortly afterwards the office workers would be "told" what needed doing. Basically, if something had to be done, someone was expected to put up their hand and say they'd do it. No questions asked. This person would then go off and tell others what to do and the message would eventually filter down. For places with full-time organisers, Bambery would get on the phone and with his usual charm offload the latest instructions.

This is just one example of the top-down, commandist way the SWP interprets "democratic centralism". As a local organiser I was expected to "sort out" comrades who lagged behind the latest instructions. This could range from having a direct argument to "going around" (excluding) those who stood in the way. For someone used to being a dissenter in the Labour Party, used to asking questions, this proved to be too much.

Whilst I didn't want to be a "leader" in the SWP, I wasn't ready to leave either. I returned to Nottingham and went back to university. I threw myself into local activity again and started reading more and more – this time in a systematic way.

I quickly came into conflict with the new organiser in the city. The "new turn" in the SWP was to "go around" the central StW group and set up independent, local committees. Likewise, every area of Nottingham was to have its own 'Marxist Forum', local SWP committee and paper sales. No real explanation was given for this, but I had a feeling for what was going on – I heard it all before.

The local SWP had basically stalled. After two years on a constant war footing the majority of comrades had become less regular in their activity, one leading member had decamped abroad, others were drifting away. The proposed solution was rather like raising yield targets in times of drought. Pure Stalinism.

Around the same time Respect began to emerge as a central area of activity. In the run up to the European elections I, along with some non-SWP members, raised concerns about how Galloway had intervened to ensure that a Muslim man topped the candidate list. This was obviously done to exclude a woman candidate.

After that I was all but shut out of Respect organising. The last major "difference of opinion" was over the establishment of a local "Social Forum" by a group of students and activists from the StW

Socialist Worker blasts Galloway; conflict in CPB?

BY COLIN FOSTER

The Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) has finally gone public on the impending split in Respect, the coalition it set up with George Galloway MP in early 2004.

An editorial in *Socialist Worker*, posted on the web on 23 October, claims:

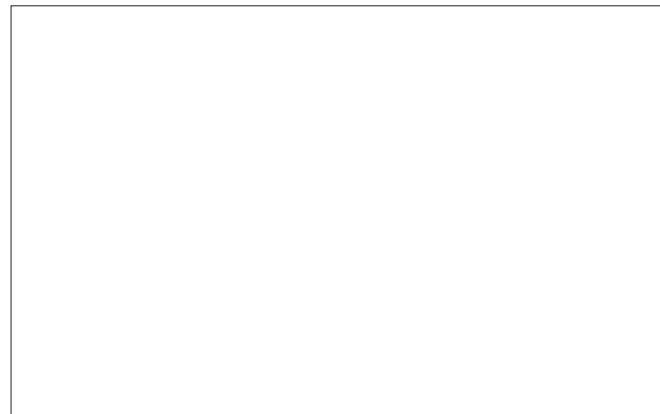
"Galloway has begun to attack the core of the left in Respect. He has decided that the political vision which has sustained the project no longer fits... Inside Respect a campaign has been launched against the SWP in an attempt to drive us out... Galloway has announced that he does not want to speak at Respect meetings where SWP members are present."

Missing from the editorial is any suggestion why Galloway should want to do such bad things. In fact Galloway has never been anything better than a Stalinist-minded one-time Labour "soft left" with dodgy connections to the Saudi and Emirates monarchies and successive Pakistani governments and to Saddam Hussein's hideous regime in Iraq.

The SWP leaders know that, and have known it all along. Only, they can't say it, because for five years they have been dishonestly boosting Galloway as a great anti-imperialist and a good socialist.

As a result, they can give no more credible account of the row in Respect than that Galloway is trying to "drive out" the SWP. How could he do that, when the SWP controls the machinery of Respect and probably has the absolute majority of Respect's small membership of about 2000?

"We need to defend Respect as a project that has socialism as a central part, that will not make endless concessions in order to win votes, and that stands up for democracy", says *Socialist Worker*. Some SWP members will remember how the SWP trashed the Socialist Alliance, ditched socialist approaches in elections in favour of the claim that Respect were the best "fighters for Muslims", and steamrollered the rejection



Galloway praises Hezbollah, demonstration against war in Lebanon, June 22 2006

tion of mildly-worded pro-secularist motions at Respect conference with the allegation that they were "Islamophobic", all with the excuse that this was going to get the SWP into the political "big time".

Meanwhile, there are signs of conflict within the CPB (the rump Communist Party of Britain, the force behind the *Morning Star* newspaper). Galloway has long been keen to get the CPB in to Respect, and some CPB people are keen too.

The *Morning Star* carries a monthly column from Galloway. But on Monday 22nd it carried a long letter denouncing Respect, and Galloway in particular for his anti-abortion line. "If Respect does support an attack on abortion rights or any reduction in the time limit, we should demand that the SWP and others break with Respect. It is impossible for the left to support a party with such a position."

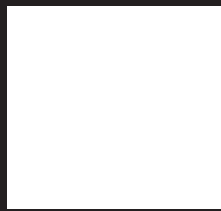
"Respect was founded on two wrong positions - the belief that religion could in some

way be progressive force and that right-wing Islamist movements were in some sense left wing".

There have been other signs of conflict in the CPB. For example, at the Unison conference this summer the CPB put out a leaflet not only stridently supporting the motions for a boycott of Israel, but specifically insisting that the boycott must include breaking links with the Israeli unions. In the same union conference season, leading CPB member Mary Davis spoke strongly for an amendment at UCU conference, moved by an AWL member, opposing a boycott.

CPB member Andrew Murray signed the Stop The War Coalition's letter refusing affiliation to the left-wing campaign Hands Off The People of Iran because it criticises the Iranian regime; yet Mary Davis has supported British trade-union aid to the unions in Iraq.

www.workersliberty.org/gallowayrespect



workers' liberty & Solidarity

Rich and poor: the gap widens

BY GERRY BATES

“Britain remains a nation dominated by class division”, reported the *Guardian* on 20 October. The division is dramatised by David Cameron’s Tory front bench, which includes no fewer than 15 men schooled at Eton. The Lib Dem leadership contest is being fought out by two men schooled at Westminster, a school almost as posh as Eton.

Thirty-two per cent of current MPs went to fee-paying schools, which educate just 7% of the population. 43% went to one of the 13 poshest universities and over a quarter (27%) to Oxford or Cambridge.

The Tories are what they always have been. New Labour is becoming more like the Tories or the Lib-Dems; among Labour front-benchers, 25% went to fee-paying schools and 23% to Oxford or Cambridge university.

That’s Britain in 2007, not 1807 or 1907!

The problem is probably not so much unreasoning snobbery, as the underlying increase in inequality of wealth and income since Margaret Thatcher’s Tory government took office 38 years ago, and the huge cumulative advantages of the wealthy over the poor and those who are “just getting by”.

The inequality of income and wealth has increased further under New Labour, though not as fast as under the Tories.

The Gini coefficient measures inequality of income, calibrated so that it is 100 when one person gets all income and everyone else zero, and 0 when everyone gets exactly the same. The UK’s Gini is 35 (on the latest figures, 2003); was 33 in 1996, and around 25 in the 1970s.

Nearly 600,000 individuals in the top one per cent of the UK wealth league owned assets worth £355bn in 1996, the last full year of Conservative rule. By 2002 that had increased to £797bn.

The top one per cent increased their share of national wealth from 20% to 23% in the first six years of the Labour government.

The wealth of the poorest 50% of the

BY

Organise to defend abortion rights

AMY FISHER

Over the last year assorted anti-choice forces, from the Catholic and Anglican churches to conservatives and doctors who drafted the original laws, have launched a concerted campaign to roll back abortion rights. Their main focus is the time limit, currently set at 24 weeks (although in practice much lower due to waiting lists and lack of universal provision).

This week, the 40th anniversary of the Abortion Act, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor called for a “change in attitudes” to reduce the number of abortions carried out annually, currently around 200,000. He put emphasis on opposing sex outside marriage as a strategy. David Steel, the architect of the original bill, also weighed in, saying women are “irresponsible” and feel they can turn to abortion if things go wrong.

Both are calling for greater support for young mothers, and Steel supports better sex education and access to contraception to reduce the number of abortions. Of course, these are strategies socialists should support; a real right to choose means being financially able to bring up potential children, and the less women who experience unwanted pregnancy in the first place, the better — abortion is hardly a pleasant or easy experience for women.

But none of these demands can be traded for a reduction in the time limit. The Commons science and technology committee inquiry is currently questioning whether the requirement for two doctor’s permission in order to obtain an abortion is necessary. Removing this requirement would certainly be a gain for women, and is supported by pro-choice groups, but we can’t take our eye off the main area of attack — the time limit. Although Health Minister Dawn Primarolo is expected to tell the committee the government, in line with British Medical Association advice, does not support a reduction in the time limit, campaigners shouldn’t trust this government,

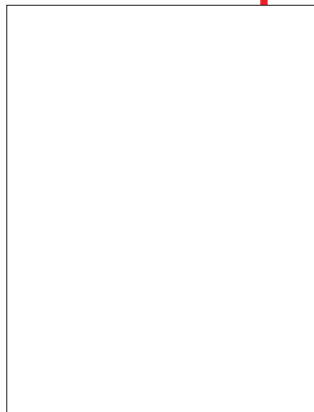
or ignore the mounting pressure it’s under from anti-choice campaigns to reconsider.

The science and technology committee is investigating abortion law because of scientific developments affecting the age of viability and foetal pain. Neither the medical advances which allow doctors to save some premature babies at 24 weeks, nor the research into the age at which foetuses feel pain, should have any implications for the time limit. It’s positive that medical science has developed to allow wanted, premature babies to survive at earlier and earlier points in pregnancy, but to allow this to frame abortion debate is dangerous — if the point of viability was 16 weeks, should we roll the time limit back to there?

And the foetal pain debate, dealt with by the incredibly biased and emotive *Dispatches* documentary this week, has impact only for how abortion procedure is carried out, not for the point in pregnancy at which it should be illegal. *Dispatches* chose to gloss over this (no surprise they’re rightwing after their hatchet job on the postal workers), adding to the growing conservative consensus that a reduction in the time limit is the next goal for anti-choice campaigners.

Pro-choice activists should be ready for an attack on the 24-week limit, and we need to start organizing now — Abortion Rights do good work lobbying in the back rooms of Parliament but we need to challenge the massive anti-choice movement with a campaign of mass direct action, that involves the women who really suffer when abortion is limited. Working-class women, with no access to private healthcare, have always borne the brunt of attacks on reproductive freedom — not to mention needing a living minimum wage and a strong welfare state in order to have a real right to choose. We need a movement that organizes these women to fight for their rights, instead of just coordinating lobbies of a few MPs.

Feminist Fightback are planning more direct action on abortion rights, after our successful march for Abortion Rights earlier this year. If you’re interested in getting involved, come along to our open steering meeting, Sunday 9 December — more details on feministfightback.org.uk soon.



Eton: alma mater of the Tory frontbench, 2007

population shrank from 10% in 1986 to 7% in 1996 and 5% in 2002.

As *Solidarity* showed in our last issue*, a push from inequality comes from world trends. But it is not just that. Many capitalist countries fully immersed in the world market are less unequal than Britain.

Government policies are not rigidly determined by “globalisation”; and New Labour’s policy choices have been choices guaranteed to keep inequality high.

A strong labour movement can reduce inequality, even within capitalist limits. Go figure: Sweden and Finland, with trade union movements bearing up relatively well under the stress of sharper global capitalist competition, have Ginis of 23 and 25; the USA, where the trade unions are punch-drunk, has a Gini of 46. The UK, at 35, stands midway.

To tame inequality, we need to rebuild the trade unions — at every level from detailed workplace organisation upwards — and restore proper independent political repre-

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