



Steve Godward of the SA executive: for a socialist working class party

- Awkward squad
- Rail criminals
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Towards a new workers' party

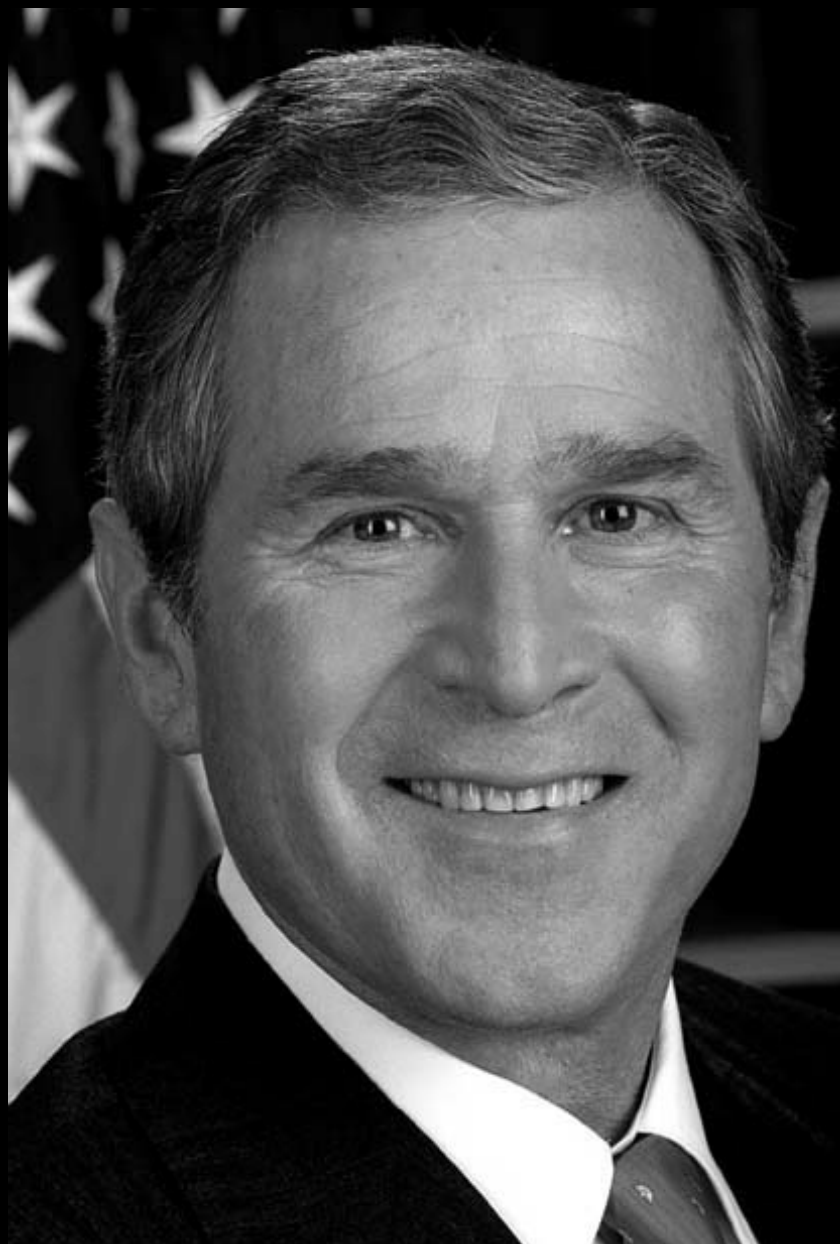
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Weapons of mass destruction: exposed by their own lies

- **Manny Neira throws the words of Bush and Blair back at them - pp 8-9**



PARTYnotes

Why we need an SA minority paper

In the last issue of *Socialist Worker*, staff writer Kevin Ovenden reports on recent meetings of the Socialist Workers Party's Marxist forums. According to the comrade, a repeatedly asked question concerns the need for a paper: "Why do you produce a paper and spend time selling it?" asks the apocryphal fresh-faced youth from the "anti-capitalist and anti-war movements" (May 31).

Comrade Ovenden proceeds to answer. Establishment political parties have ready access to the mass media. Combined they went to great lengths to "corral" the anti-war movement safely into parliamentary channels: "That shows why we need an alternative to the official media." I agree.

There are "other reasons" too. The anti-war movement saw millions drawn into direct political involvement for the first time. Naturally arguments developed about the way forward. There were those who simply sought to exert "polite pressure" on the "powers that be". Others wanted a minority to "confront the state" on behalf of "everybody else". The SWP in contrast thought that the anti-war movement "should encompass all those who opposed the war". And comrade Ovenden proudly upholds the role played by *Socialist Worker* in winning "those arguments."

His paper does not simply provide facts that would otherwise be "buried in the mainstream media". It "seeks to connect" a whole range of issues. It looks at the "best experience" of activists to try and offer a way forward. It also "draws on the history" of previous struggles. As the comrade rightly points out, it would be the "height of arrogance not to". The great issues of today are "new takes" on questions thrown up in every social movement in history. Again I agree.

Finally comrade Ovenden notes that *Socialist Worker* is sold "through networks of people". That "helps pull" those networks together into an "organised force" that can mobilise wider numbers on every battle the system throws up.

Once more, I cannot but agree with comrade Ovenden. But, as they say, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Put another way, what is good for the SWP is good for the Socialist Alliance.

Besides a national office, election candidates, regional and local structures, a programme and rules, in our opinion the Socialist Alliance requires in addition - as a matter of urgency - something else. A common political paper. Such a paper would send out an inspiring message to our natural constituency amongst the politically advanced section of the working class. At last the fractious left is seriously getting its act together. That alone would produce an influx of hundreds of experienced veterans.

A paper would do more than that though. Far more. Yes, an SA paper must strive to learn from and teach the lessons of history. Not to do so would be "arrogance". A paper also provides the organisational girding and agitational voice necessary to support and massively extend our political activity

and scope. So a paper more than complements the SA's electoral interventions. It qualitatively enhances them.

Disingenuously it has been suggested that we should learn to walk before running. That the SA lacks the necessary money and resources. Better stick with amateurish and inconsequential local bulletins. Yet, though the SA itself suffers from collective poverty, there is a veritable overabundance of factional papers. Each component of the SA, even the smallest, maintains its own publication. There must be well over two dozen papers and periodicals inhabiting our SA space.

Besides *Socialist Worker* there is that other widely read weekly, the *Weekly Worker*. There is one fortnightly, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty's *Solidarity*. The above factions also publish *Socialist Review*, *International Socialism*, *Red Watch*, *Postal Worker*, *Workers' Liberty* and *Bolshevik* as monthlies or quarterlies. Going down the evolutionary ladder, there are the cold-blooded monthlies, *Resistance* and *Workers Power*. And at the lowest depths the intrepid explorer will find *Republican Worker*, *Workers International* and a host of other equally worthy print or electronic publications whose names do not spring to mind or still remain to be discovered by science.

Yet none of them, neither the *Weekly Worker* nor *Socialist Worker*, nor the lot taken together, can lift the Socialist Alliance in terms of education, organisation and rapprochement to the necessary state of readiness and combativity required if we are to do our duty by the class in whose name we all speak.

Factional centres and publications will persist within the Socialist Alliance and for a considerable length of time at that. Expecting anything else is to indulge in simple-minded or bureaucratic utopianism. However, we communists earnestly hope for, and strive towards, a situation where factional differences are, stage by stage, resolved into little more than the differences of shade that are inevitable in any class party. A common SA paper, in which all main strands have an editorial seat and find journalistic expression, would help unite the sum of our parts into a greater whole. Herculean financial, journalistic and logistical efforts undoubtedly go into maintaining our present *divisions*. Pooling resources and talents is surely guaranteed to produce results way beyond the dreams of any existing circulation department.

Of course, at May's SA conference a sea of SWP and International Socialist Group/*Resistance* hands outvoted us. Nevertheless the composite for an SA paper received support from around a third of those present.

This division reflects profoundly opposed approaches. The SWP/*Resistance* majority envisages no long-term future for the SA. It is to be traded off for a new "broader" coalition with imams and 'official communists'. Meanwhile it is to remain nothing more

than an on-off SWP electoral front. The pro-party minority, on the other hand, seeks a multi-tendency workers' party. A common political paper is essential for such a project.

Though we lost out to Chris Bambery's SWP voting fodder, the CPGB proposes a bold interim measure. As the majority is intent on pursuing a course that points directly to the final liquidation of the SA, the pro-party minority must take the initiative. Let us publish a minority paper. Whatever we end up calling ourselves - Campaign for a Workers' Party is one suggestion - we can build a viable alternative.

I have often argued that such a project would best be advanced through close cooperation between the CPGB and the AWL. Unfortunately that has been rejected out of hand by the AWL's patriarch, Sean Matgamna. He now insists that two "propaganda groups", putting out what he calls "radically different propaganda", cannot unite (*Weekly Worker* May 29). The AWL is being cohered into a narrow sect. Railing and ranting against George Galloway in the midst of a vicious rightwing witch-hunt lends itself to that well trodden and completely sterile end.

Of course, this hostility to plurality is the exact opposite of what the AWL once preached. Eg, at the SA's December 2001 conference the comrades presented a motion calling for a "regular Socialist Alliance paper" which would include on its editorial board those who represent our "political diversity" (*Pre-conference bulletin* 2001 p27). The CPGB had no hesitation in giving support.

So regrettably, advancing in tandem with the AWL is impossible for the time being. But advance we must. Hence we shall seek to develop an ever closer working relationship with the SA's independents. Recently they have excluded from their ranks the likes of Will McMahon and Nick Wrack who happily serve as tame auxiliaries for the SWP. Ideologically and organisationally a healthy development. Factional splits can strengthen and clarify. The independents are hardening into pro-party independents.

To build trust, foster mutual understanding and as a preliminary measure we make the following offer. Pro-party independents can take one or two pages in our paper for their sole use. They would be free to edit and use this space as they see fit. All that needs to be done is hammering out the practical details.

In our view we should not only strive towards common objectives in the SA but energetically reach out to, and engage with, other forces in the movement - the Labour left, the European Social Forum, anti-war activists, the Scottish Socialist Party, the Socialist Party in England and Wales and above all the trade unions. That way the minority can become the majority and thereby lay a foundation stone for a new workers' party ●

Jack Conrad

The composite for a paper was supported by a third of those present

LETTERS



Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed

Stay divided

Educational standards have fallen to a pitiful level when basic arithmetic is beyond the abilities of your correspondents. As an irregular reader of the *Weekly Worker* I expect little more than gossip and an eclectic politics lashed together by the nebulous conception of partyism.

However, I do expect your correspondents to be able to count. Therefore I was amused to note that comrade Marcus Ström seems to believe that 25 comrades signed a resignation statement from the International Socialist Organisation in Australia ('Shape of things to come', May 29). In fact 21 comrades signed the document, which was published on May 25.

Were this the only error of fact in the article, we could pass it over with a smile. Yet Marcus also claims that the Socialist Alternative group is both anarchistic and ultra-left, and consists of some 90 members based in Melbourne. Happily this is not the case and SocAlt has recently grown considerably - to some 200 members - due to the disciplined interventions of its militants in the anti-war movement and on the campuses. It also engages in some limited work, where able, within the unions.

There is no ultra-leftism or anarchism. SocAlt stands firmly on the Marxist tradition on all questions in any of this work. Marcus is clearly either misinformed or does not understand this organisation and its ideas that he so blithely dismisses.

Marcus also discusses the Democratic Socialist Party, the largest tendency in the Australian Socialist Alliance and comments that it has not fallen for petty nationalism - along the lines, it is implied, of the Scottish Socialist Party, whose electoral successes it wishes to emulate, and indeed it has not. No, the DSP is happy to go the whole hog and has in the recent past embraced imperialist nationalism, as when it backed Australian military intervention in East Timor.

Nothing petty concerning this unprincipled stance, which Marcus passes over in a fashion I can only describe as curious, given that an article appeared in the pages of the *Weekly Worker* denouncing this reactionary capitulation to imperialism at the time. In fact the DSP is a former orthodox Trotskyist (sic) grouping, which has adopted many of the hallmarks of pseudo-Leninism - in fact an ideology fabricated by Zinoviev that is a left version of Kautskyism, that the *Weekly Worker* also espouses.

Marcus sees fit to argue that those comrades who have now left the International Socialist Organisation have done so because the formation of the Socialist Alliance has acted as a "democratic acid", breaking down the "bureaucratic centralist" sectarianism of the ISO, which is described as a "micro-control organism", no less!

The reaffirmation of the former ISO comrades to the International Socialism tradition is also described, obscenely, as comparable to the lip service made to Stalin by the victims of the great purge of the 1930s. This coming from a journalist on a paper which claims to be that of the Communist Party of Great Britain, a party which supported the purges, is a disgraceful lie. Despite too many years of political and organisational degeneration, the ISO and the allied Socialist Workers Party (Britain) remain opposed, formally at least, to the Stalinist politics and method which the founders of the *Weekly Worker* have never fully broken from.

The importance of a relatively small number of comrades leaving their organisation may not be clear for many socialists living in Britain, so it is worth explaining why events in the Australian left should concern us. Briefly the Aus-

tralian left finds itself in a very similar situation to that here, although with significant differences. As here, the Australian left is faced with a bureaucratised union movement which is linked to a rightwing Labour Party. Although the formal link with the unions does not exist in Australia, the real linkages are more alive than here and the Labor Party not quite as rotten, and, as in Britain, a decaying milieu of ageing Stalinists retains some influence within the union bureaucracy. Again just as in Britain, the far left finds itself marginal to the workers' movement and split into a multitude of competing groups.

Faced with the impasse of a low level of strike action and social struggles, the far left has sought ways to break out of its isolation and unity based on the lowest common denominator of electoral campaigning has appeared attractive to many. Given that the far left is divided into a myriad of competing groups, organisational unity is an attractive prospect for many. The relative success of the SSP also seems a path forward which merits emulation.

This unity of the assorted left groups, based on electoral work and little else, should be the beginnings of a 'partyist' project, according to Marcus's schema. What kind of party this needs to be and what the nature of the politics it should fight for is left vague - as it must be if this sectarian schema is to gain any audience amongst the existing left, some token revolutionary phraseology being confined to the pages of the *Weekly Worker* at best.

In Australia the DSP has long participated in elections to no discernible effect within the working class and the opportunity to emulate the perceived success of the SSP provided them with the impetus needed to launch a Socialist Alliance. Their project was boosted by the turn of the ISO, the second largest far left group in Australia, to working in such an alliance, this turn being based on the rather over-optimistic basis that the 1990s was to witness struggles of a similar magnitude to those of the 1930s.

Such a perspective has since been seen to be as witless as SocAlt and others within the IS Tradition argued it was. Nonetheless the Socialist Alliance did draw in almost all the disparate groups and individuals of the far left in Australia and its success has been as minuscule as the Socialist Alliance's in England and Wales. In short, the Socialist Alliance in Australia has been a dismal failure in its own electoral terms and as a project to construct a new mass workers' party.

None of this has deterred the DSP, which dominates the Socialist Alliance in a fashion only marginally more democratic than the suffocating leadership of the Socialist Workers Party in England and Wales. The Socialist Alliance is then declared a success and steps are taken to convert it into a fully-fledged party, in which the affiliated groups will become factions. All this at the behest of the DSP and a grouping of independent members of the Socialist Alliance, who on closer inspection turn out to be close friends of the DSP and in many cases its former members.

This is what has precipitated the revolt in the ISO, as it has meant that tensions in that group, which arose as a result of the '1930s in slow motion' perspective foisted upon them by our own SWP, have reached boiling point. Contrary to Marcus's assertion that the comrades leaving the ISO will work within the Socialist Alliance, they have been united on little beyond opposition to the Socialist Alliance becoming a fully fledged miniature party. It is not then the "democratic acid" of the Socialist Alliance which has produced this rupture, but the failure of the Socialist Alliance to be anything other than an electoral front for its leading faction.

This has served to illustrate the failings of perspective and organisational structure, and the implied failings of demo-

cratic functioning, within the ISO. These same failings exist within the Socialist Alliance in England and Wales, where the SWP plays the leading role. Despite years of campaigning, the Socialist Alliance has won only a single council seat in its own name and its second largest component, the Socialist Party, has left in disgust at its non-democratic structures. In fact it has had far less impact at elections than the British National Party.

But, most importantly, the SWP's rationale for joining the Socialist Alliance, which was that it would provide a political space for former Labour lefts and youthful anti-capitalists, has proven a fantasy. Its one legacy being that the alliance has campaigned on a platform, reformist in both form and content, far to the right of those adhered to by almost all its constituent parts.

Politically the alliance has proven to be far less than the sum of its parts. Having led the SA, a parody of the united front, away from any meaningful activity apart from electioneering, the SWP now plans to subsume it into a wider radical alliance with muslim obscurantists and via the remnant Communist Party of Britain with that wing of the trade union bureaucracy which reads the *'Fading Star'* - a parody, if you like, of the popular front.

Mike Pearn
email

Manic burn-out

Mark Fischer's call to arms in support of the CPGB's fundraising Summer Offensive doesn't go nearly far enough in castigating comrades who refuse to give every drop of blood to the movement (*Weekly Worker* May 30).

Is it reformist weakness that means the CPGB has not yet started its own campaign of 'exes' (Bolshevik-style armed robberies) to raise funds? And what sort of amateurs don't publish their paper abroad and then smuggle it in so as to practice for (their longed-for) working underground?

God forbid that people should do things other than full-time politics, like work long hours or have kids, relationships, etc, or spend money on petty bourgeois pursuits like foreign holidays. But then if you want to trundle along, never appearing to increase in size, burning out comrades through periods of manic activity, this is the tried and tested way to go.

I also knew a slightly deranged socialist in the 80s. This guy from the Workers Revolutionary Party found it harder and harder to sleep. I don't know what kept him awake - worrying about his burgeoning paper debt, or the fact that his mattress was getting lumpier every day, hiding ever-increasing mounds of unsold *News Lines* from his comrades.

I also personally remember (shamefully) calling a comrade a 'dilettante' because she missed a conference to look after her sick mother. But then I was a very raw 18-year-old and I sadly doubt that either of these people are still active socialists because of the unthinking regimes that they worked in.

It would be great for thousands of 18-year-olds, or any other age, to become revolutionary socialists, but that isn't going to happen if they can only contribute by expending every moment of their free time or large slabs of their income in political activity.

I wonder what will be the look on the face of the Young Turks in the CPGB who unceremoniously show Mark the door for some future disagreement, and in spite of his years of hard work. Perhaps he will feel like he is looking in the mirror?

Clive Power
London

STWC sabotage

For the past six months the national Stop the War Coalition steering committee has systematically censored and sabotaged virtually all forms of direct action.

From the international significance of USAF Fairford, to the mass sit-down on the February 15 national demo, to the

'Reclaim the bases' weekend on April 5 and 6, the steering committee has used and abused the national email list and website to squeeze out, downplay or just plain censor these and many other actions.

The censorious agenda of the steering committee was most plainly exposed during the lead-up to the March 22 Fairford national demo. Stop The War groups around the country were telephoned by someone claiming to be from the national steering committee, who was spreading the message that Fairford had been cancelled. Whether this individual was genuinely from the steering committee is unclear, but the issue remains that the steering committee refused to use resources at its disposal to refute this sabotage, as it clearly suited their censorious agenda to allow Fairford to be damaged in this manner.

The steering committee has therefore made it absolutely clear that it has no intention of representing the full spectrum of opinions which make up the coalition, but only those opinions and actions they narrowly approve of. This is the definition of a hijacking, and that is exactly what has occurred.

The steering committee still has the opportunity to pull back from this active censorship and sabotage of the movement. If it does not, then the calls to bypass the steering committee will continue to grow.

James Venables
Bristol STWC

G8 injured

As a result of actions by the Swiss traffic police as part of the repression of protestors against the Evian G8 summit on Sunday June 1, a UK national, Martin Shaw, has been severely injured and hospitalised.

The protestor, part of a 15-person international collective blockading a bridge in Switzerland to prevent G8 delegates passing from Geneva to Lausanne, was participating in a banner-drop with the slogan "G8 illegal". Martin and another protestor, who doesn't wish to be named, were hanging from both ends of the same rope from a 30-metre-high bridge over a small river alongside the banner.

Two traffic police arriving at the scene panicked about the build-up of traffic and cut the supporting rope of the two protestors despite repeated warnings about the danger of this from everyone present. The police later admitted to their actions in a press statement. Following this, there will be a judicial enquiry.

Martin currently remains in hospital in Geneva, where he has undergone an emergency three-hour operation on his vertebral injuries and ankles. The doctors have stated that his back will slowly recover, but it looks unlikely that he will be able to walk properly again as a result of his leg injuries.

Please send your thoughts on this despicable action by the police to your nearest Swiss embassy and help support Martin.

Lila Roja
email

Wake up

I don't think we should be too worried about who failed to turn up to a republican march (Letters, May 29). After all, what has Irish nationalism actually got to offer workers in Ulster?

I know that Phil Kent's letter mentioned Sinn Féin's lack of desire to protect a British-Irish minority in a united Ireland, but how likely are unionist workers to ever accept any reassurance? How exactly are republicans going to persuade them? A nice chat with Gerry Adams perhaps? I did not know that 'demand the impossible' was a communist as well as an anarchist slogan!

It is difficult to see why a British-Irish minority inside an Irish state would be less problematic than an Irish minority in a British state. Would there be riots and 'armed struggle' by unionists? Of course! We can start to remedy Ulster's

problems of discrimination against Catholics now. And quite right too. Similarly, we can hope for a successful peace process.

A united Ireland? Forget it. Wake up to reality!
Graeme Kemp
email

Independence

In contrast to what you argue in 'Separatist road to Scottish socialism', John Maclean called for a socialist republic (*Weekly Worker* April 24). Was he not a true socialist?

The existence of Scotland and Scotland's right to self-determination are indisputable facts. Scottish independence should be as much a goal of socialists as Irish independence is. Both are a part of breaking up the monopoly of the right-wing British state.

Joe Middleton
email

Homesick

The now-strong housing market will hurt in the coming second recession. Those who got easy mortgage loans won't be able to handle them. It will all ripple upward. Sad that your share portfolio is in a shambles? Glad your house is rapidly appreciating in value? Don't be too glad. The housing boom is soon to go bust. And the way it will come to an end will affect everyone, even affluent homeowners.

The implosion will start among first-time homebuyers with few other assets. They support the whole housing market through the move-up chain, whose links are tenuous. What will burst the bubble? Don't look for the usual suspects - interest rate hikes or overbuilding. Look instead for a second recessionary dip brought on by wealth losses and P45s, pressuring consumers to retrench.

As housing demand dries up, prices will fall and the whole mechanism will work in reverse. Those with big mortgages will see their equity wiped out, forcing them to sell, pushing prices still lower. Up to now, house appreciation has been offsetting share losses for many people. That helpful phenomenon will then be history. As already-rising dispossession rates go higher, lenders will withdraw. Bankers are reluctant to begin widespread foreclosures, a PR no-no, yet they surely will no longer be as loose with lending as they are today.

John Smithee
Cambridgeshire

ACTION

London Communist Forum

Sunday June 8, 5pm - '1945, climax of Labourism, part 2', using Ralph Miliband's *Parliamentary socialism* as a study guide. Phone 07950 416922 for details.

Cardiff Communist Forum

Friday June 13, 7.45pm - 'Israel/Palestine: which way forward for unity?' Clwb Ivor Bach, Womanby Street, Cardiff.

Defend Iraqi refugees

Public meeting, Friday June 6, 7pm - 'No to forced repatriation of Iraqi refugees'. Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester (behind Central Library). Invited speaker: Beverley Hughes, immigration minister. Organised by Federation of Iraqi Refugees Britain.

Defend Galloway

Lobby Labour Party national executive meeting, Tuesday June 10, 9am, outside Labour Party HQ, 16 Old Queen Street, London WC1 (nearest tubes: St James Park, Westminster). The NEC is to discuss a motion which will call for the immediate lifting of George Galloway's suspension from the party. Supported by Stop the War Coalition.

Defend Iraqi refugees

Picket home office, Tuesday June 17, 12 noon, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1 (nearest tube: St James Park). No deportations, full refugee status for Iraqi asylum-seekers. Called by International Federation of Iraqi Refugees: 07734 704742; d.jamal@ukonline.co.uk

Stop The War Coalition

Activists' conference, Saturday June 21, Hammersmith Town Hall, West London. 020 7053 2153-6.

North-East Social Forum

Durham University, June 20-23. Panels on anti-discrimination, the environment, anti-oppression, international cooperation, people over profit and education; plus seminars by various groups and individuals. £10 waged, £5 unwaged and students. Accommodation arranged. Organised by Durham University Social Forum - www.dur.ac.uk/durham.socialforum/NESF/

NCADC AGM

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns annual general meeting, Saturday June 21, 12 noon to 5pm, Carrs Lane Church, Carrs Lane, Birmingham. Open to all anti-deportation campaigns (reasonable travel expenses paid) and their supporters. Crèche and lunch provided. Confirm attendance to nearest NCADC coordinator: London and South East England - Allison Bennett, ncadc-london@ncadc.org.uk North East England and Scotland - Kath Sainsbury, ncadc-ne@ncadc.org.uk North West England and Greater Manchester - Tony Openshaw, ncadc-nw@ncadc.org.uk NCADC, 110 Hamstead Road, Birmingham B20 2QS, 0121-554 6947; ncadc@ncadc.org.uk; <http://www.ncadc.org.uk>

Party wills

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RDG

To contact the Revolutionary Democratic Group, email rdgroup@yahoo.com.

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TRADE UNIONS

Tony Woodley - <http://www.tonywoodley.com>

Virtual promises

The first leadership contest in the Transport and General Worker's Union for eight years marks a further advance for the left as a whole. Deputy general secretary Tony Woodley convincingly won, securing 43.5% of the postal ballot. In contrast Jack Dromey, the left-talking Blairite candidate, could only muster 29.4% - 20,000 behind Woodley.

Looking at the relatively slick tonywoodley.com, it is not difficult to see how his campaign materials struck a chord with the atomised and (for the most part) uninformed TGWU membership. Under the slogan, "Vote for change and make a difference", we are greeted with a letter from Woodley himself. Featuring a couple of photographs, this letter talks about his record as a union activist, his desire to rebuild the union as an effective organisation and sets out six commitments he asks the membership to judge his tenure by.

The next item on the top page navigation bar is Woodley's manifesto, *Winning at the workplace - an industrial strategy*. This is split into eight parts. The first is a preamble, dealing with the kind of philosophy that should be at the heart of union policy. Summed up by Woodley's campaign slogan, "Members want a union that will do the business - not a business union", he attacks the Blairite rhetoric of 'social partnership' and reasserts the need for organisational independence in theory and practice. Emphases are found throughout the text to highlight both political points and policy objectives, and it is neatly broken up by pithy but assertive soundbites - a format that serves throughout the website. The next item goes into his approach toward the food, manufacturing, service and transport sectors. These are pretty uncontroversial, advocating the strengthening of union rights, the combating of low pay and keeping private money out of the public services - with the possible exception of "carefully targeted protection for industries facing unfair competition" (what constitutes this "unfair competition" is left unanswered).

The remaining sections are more focused on the union itself. 'A growing T&G' sketches out the bare bones of a grassroots recruitment strategy to break out of the "culture of decline" the union has been trapped in for so long. 'T&G in the movement' discusses the kinds of relations the union should have with the

TUC and other unions. 'A united T&G' talks about a rejuvenation of internal democracy and makes a number of oblique criticisms of the clique culture that has thrived under the outgoing general secretary, Bill Morris. 'Politics for a purpose' makes similar points, and pledges the union to put "members before ministers". Woodley is also determined to make the union-Labour link work ("breaking the link is a rightwing agenda with which I will have no truck"). 'A T&G equal for all' and 'An international T&G' both emphasise the need for a dynamic policy promoting equality and solidarity across borders, within the union and at the workplace.

Returning to the navigation bar, we find the following item, 'Tony's profile' - a short, potted political biography with some contact details tacked on. However, quite why he feels the need to stress his "relationship built on mutual respect with Labour cabinet ministers" in light of the manifesto's tough talking is mystifying.

The 'Correspondence' section is somewhat misnamed, but does allow site visitors to view and download the campaign's nine leaflets. 'Want to help?' provides the opportunity to download a poster and gives an address to send donations to. But that is all that is on offer - for a candidate committed to grassroots activism this should really have included a lot more material to assist workplace campaigning. 'News' carries some pretty anodyne articles covering the campaign, leading with the announcement of Woodley's victory and a few militant-sounding comments. Finally, the bar concludes with a slightly better contacts section. There are telephone details for the North West and West Midlands campaign offices, postal and email addresses, and a ready-made form for the submission of comments.

Overall the site design is consistent throughout, which is something lost on too many leftwing webmasters. But despite the appearance, there is very little depth to it: all the material here could be read in less than 10 minutes. Nevertheless, it is better than the TGWU home page (no mention of the leadership election) and at least an effort has been made - none of the other candidates could be bothered to set a site up. As to whether Woodley lives up to his online promises, that remains to be seen ●

Phil Hamilton

Awkward squad at union helm

In a bad week for Tony Blair the Transport and General Workers Union delivered more bad news by electing self-confessed "fully paid-up member of the awkward squad" Tony Woodley as its general secretary. In a four-way contest Blair's preferred candidate, Jack Dromey, was defeated by a large margin.

There has been a flurry of commentary and analysis in the media and this election is widely perceived as a significant event. It is. Blair has been seeking to spike the rise of the left amongst union leaders. Their increased willingness to publicly criticise the government and its policies, to contemplate industrial action, their success in attracting more union members *because* of a more militant and leftwing stance - all this has given Blair a headache.

Having mercilessly engineered a head-on confrontation with the firefighters, Blair sought to emasculate Andy Gilchrist, a leading 'awkward squad' member, and teach the rank and file a lesson. This has not quite worked in the way Blair hoped. Although Gilchrist (and the Fire Brigades Union executive) can be criticised for poor strategy and tactics, the vicious role of the government helped to maintain sympathy for the firefighters and generate tremendous bitterness and resentment towards Blair's gang across the whole labour movement. Thus the TGWU poll was now of particular importance - "an election is underway that will determine both the future direction of organised labour and, as the more prescient in No10 privately acknowledge, to some extent that of political Labour too" (Kevin Maguire, *The Guardian* May 16).

The last thing Blair needed was the election of another opponent of New Labour - especially not in the 850,000-strong TGWU, the union that sponsors Gordon Brown and Blair himself. The TGWU has always been an important union in the Labour Party and has a significant block vote. A left general secretary in such an influential union would also tilt the balance at the TUC and pull some of the more moderate union functionaries leftwards. In fact the big four - Unison, TGWU, GMB and Amicus - could between them determine TUC policy. There is talk of a potential merger between a financially strapped GMB and the TGWU. This would push a TGWU-GMB union to the top slot ahead of Unison and concentrate power within a big three.

Tony Woodley, the favourite in the TGWU election, had been making statements that were worrying from New Labour's point of view. Despite declaring his loyalty to the Labour Party, Woodley is hardly a Blairite and announced he wanted to "put labour back into the Labour Party" and rescue it from the "hi-jackers". To this end he promised to convene a "council of war" with other left union bosses. He opposed privatisation, questioned social partnerships, opposed the war in Iraq (and continues to oppose the occupation), wanted the minimum wage raised to £6 and demanded the repeal of anti-trade union laws. However, he has also said he is likely to have more contact with Downing Street than other members of the awkward squad - and is known to have worked closely with ministers in the past. Perhaps he is more like a 70s-style union baron, determined to collaborate and negotiate to get the best deal on offer - more wheeler-dealer than class fighter.

A candidate viewed by many as more leftwing than Woodley was Barry

Camfield. A Eurosceptic, he called for constituency Labour Parties to be won over away from Blair. He had the support of the Broad Left but was dumped by his natural allies, the Communist Party of Britain (*Morning Star*), in favour of Woodley (although this appears to have caused internal problems for the CPB). Leading CPBer Andrew Murray, chair of the Stop the War Coalition, was Woodley's press agent. Traditionally, the Broad Left was bureaucratically dominated by the 'official' CPGB - it was very successful at 'doing the business'. This type of union activity was carried over into the CPB, but obviously on a much smaller scale. Nevertheless one wonders if some deal was done with Woodley, perhaps involving a boost for the *Morning Star*.

Blair's hope lay in Jack Dromey, husband of ex-solicitor general Harriet Harman. When Dromey challenged Bill Morris and lost in 1995, he was an aggressively pro-Blair moderniser. This time round he employed former Labour Party press officer Don Brind to head his campaign. As an astute union bureaucrat, Dromey could see which way the wind was blowing and sought to resuscitate his long-lost left image and distance himself from Blair and Blairism. His only real chance of getting elected was coming through the middle of a split left vote between Woodley and Camfield.

It is possible that Dromey's votes were squeezed somewhat by the fourth contender, Jimmy Elsby. Although Woodley achieved a clear victory and the overall 'left' vote was about double Dromey's, it is worth noting that Dromey picked up support from a substantial number of branches and apparently did well in the Midlands. This may reveal a weakness in the organisation of the TGWU Broad Left alluded to above - among other things. The also-ran Elsby, favoured by outgoing Bill Morris and a fellow ally of Gordon Brown, came in last.

To look at the election addresses anyone not in the know would have found it difficult to distinguish between the four

candidates - all talked left to some extent. But I suspect that a large proportion of those who voted (turnout - 21%) would, to some extent, be in the know. If you disregard the functionaries and activists, those who would have known at least one contender through their union activity; if you disregard those small numbers of regular branch attendees who would have asked their local officials who they should vote for - how many voting members would be left? Not many, I would guess. I would also guess that their decision would have been mainly influenced by (a) the number of branch nominations for each candidate; and (b) their own branch's nomination.

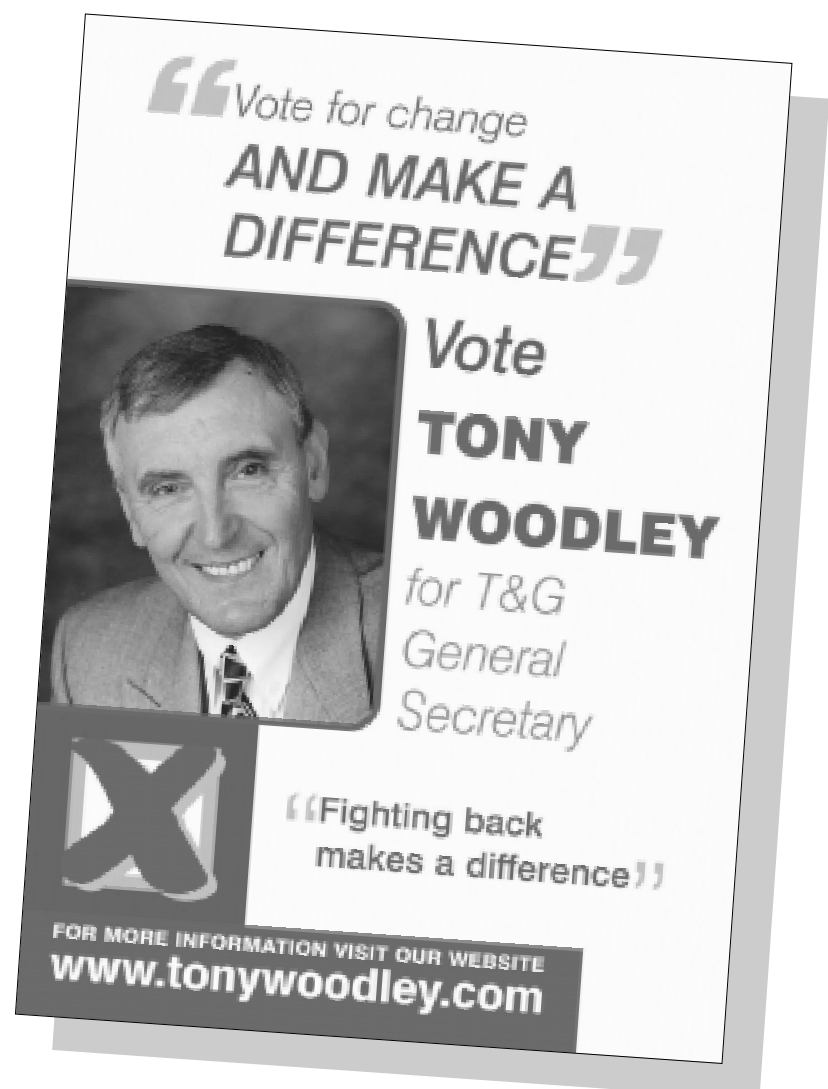
In the TGWU - and it is fairly typical - we have the rise of left bureaucrats who are driven by a whole range of positive and negative motivations. Below them is a layer of activists and local bureaucrats. These interrelated layers act as top-down organisers of a relatively passive membership - you could call them voting fodder except that most do not bother. A lot of business can be done out of sight of most members, but when action is needed, the bureaucracy is not up to the task of relating to and organising the rank and file. The left groups are particularly poor in this regard.

Although we must be highly critical of the old 'official' CPGB, it had the resources and knew how to mobilise the membership. The vacuum left by its demise has not been filled by today's left groups - they have fewer resources and, as a result of many years of very little militant activity, insufficient experience: in fact their experience is one of (imposed) bad habits. We need to develop a democratic and vibrant rank and file movement that can assert class independence and exert pressure upwards to ensure that left-talking union bosses do the business the rank and file want.

As the old slogan runs, 'Support leaders while they fight; oppose them if they don't' ●

Alan Stevens

around
THE WEB



PCSU

Conference advance

Group conferences of the civil service-based Public and Commercial Services Union (PCSU) took place in Scarborough last week. The largest was that representing members in the department for work and pensions (DWP).

There were approximately 250 branch delegates present for the two-day group conference, on behalf of some 75,000 members working in the DWP. This represents a decent majority of the 120,000 workforce, but shows in itself that there is still a lot of organising to be done.

The centre-left, around the Socialist Party-led Left Unity, started the conference on a high, having just dominated the executive committee elections. With their allies in a centre grouping - PCS Democrats - they had almost swept the board, taking 32 out of 36 seats. A heavy defeat for the right. However, the fact that only 12.9% of members returned ballot papers should be a major concern for all activists. People were elected into senior positions with 4,000 votes - just five percent of the membership! Hardly a vote of confidence.

Conference itself was relatively flat. The right wing were nowhere to be seen and the opposition to the Left Unity-dominated executive came from Socialist Caucus. Socialist Caucus is a healthy rank-and-file grouping that has members and supporters of the CPGB, Alliance for Workers' Liberty, Workers Power, International Socialist Group/Resistance, Workers Action, Socialist Alliance, Labour Party, as well as non-aligned individuals, belonging to it.

The main areas of contention came around a censure of the executive for recommending to members a poor pay deal last year and a debate over the relative merits of flat-rate and percentage increases in future pay claims.

The censure motion on 2002 pay was fortunate to be heard. The standing orders committee, which supports the executive, buried it in ninth place in the section for guillotined motions. Fortunately Socialist Caucus comrades were able to organise the floor to quickly move through the other resolutions in order for it to be heard - it was the last to be taken at the conference. It was powerfully moved by Chris Ford (West London branch) and seconded by George Thompson (North East London). Also making a strong speech in favour was Charlie McDonald (East London). All of these comrades are members of Socialist Caucus.

The comrades argued that many members were still on levels of poverty pay - tens of thousand earn less than the European decency threshold of £15,750 per year - and that the executive had broken conference policy in recommending acceptance of such an offer. The main speech defending the executive came from John McNally (Avon branch), a member of the Socialist Party. The speech from McNally was a comedy routine and, as usual for this individual, completely devoid of political content. The seven or eight Socialist Workers Party delegates made no contribution to the debate.

The role of the SWP comrades was bizarre and rather pathetic. They were unable to put out a leaflet criticising the executive on any

issue. At least four of their delegates made speeches during the two days, but not one of them made any critical comments about the executive. Their policy is clearly one of sucking up to the Socialist Party in the hope of obtaining seats on the executive for themselves. Their convenor - Martin John (Sheffield Head Office) - went so far as to speak against a motion moved by Lanarkshire branch that called for flat-rate pay increases rather than percentage increases. The SWP position was that we must not alienate middle management, as they are members of the union and we need their support for our campaigns!

Speaking for North East London branch, I opposed this nonsense and argued the socialist position in support of the motion: flat-rate increases benefit the lower paid and our campaigns will be fought by the lower grade members, who make up the vast majority of the membership, not the office managers. The motion was very narrowly defeated on a show of hands. This was a very encouraging vote, taking into account that the executive and Left Unity were opposed to the motion and the SWP were providing left cover.

Another important debate was around an emergency motion from Sheffield that called for a campaign to oppose plans to lengthen opening hours for local job centres and social security offices (SSOs). Management intends to extend the hours in job centres from 4.30pm to 5pm and SSOs from 3.30pm to 4.30pm. They are also pushing for many offices to stay open until 6pm one evening a week, and Saturday mornings is also a possi-

Socialist Caucus provided the only opposition to the passivity of the executive

bility. Socialist Caucus had a well-attended fringe meeting in the lunchtime prior to the conference debate, where a campaign to oppose extended opening hours was launched.

At the conference itself the motion was moved by Socialist Caucus member Bev Laidlaw (Sheffield). I also spoke in favour of the motion and pointed out that members faced two dangers: the employer and the inactivity of the executive. I stated that branches would need to organise at an office level to oppose management plans. This organisation and campaigning would of necessity involve not just work-to-rules but also walkouts. The motion was overwhelmingly carried.

Other important motions carried included: campaigning against staff cuts; opposition to performance-related pay; defending victimised reps; opposition to management sick rules; and opposition to the proposed new facility arrangements.

Socialist Caucus had a very successful conference. It provided the only opposition to the passivity of the executive. A number of excellent activists joined the organisation, including two SWP comrades! Several quality bulletins were issued to delegates. Two well-attended fringe meetings took place (where 25 copies of the *Weekly Worker* were sold) and the best social of the three nights was, once again, Club Caucus, where 150 delegates and observers continued the debates in a variety of ways long through the night ●

Lee Rock
PCSU DWP London regional
organiser
(personal capacity)



Communication Workers Blairite booted

New Labour suffered another blow last week, when Blair loyalist John Keggie, a member of the party's national executive committee, was ousted as Communication Workers Union deputy general secretary (postal) by militant activist Dave Ward.

Although originally elected as a leftwinger, Keggie soon became known as one of Blair's most reliable lieutenants in the unions. However, faced with accusations from his opponent that he was pursuing "a political career on the back of the union" and therefore needed to be replaced by someone who would work "for the CWU, not the Labour Party", Keggie rediscovered his left face. He claimed to have "spent the last 12 months confronting the current government in order to maintain and sustain the post office and our members' jobs within it".

Where Dave Ward, the union's chief negotiator with Royal Mail, pledged to "stop the headquarters gravy train" and "end the high-flying lifestyle that has seen some leaders become increasingly remote from the members", Keggie reacted in increasingly vitriolic fashion, accusing Ward of being the leader of a 'Southern Alliance' that was only interested in London members.

This was a reference to the strike ballot - declared unofficial by the national leadership - in pursuit of a £4,000 increase in London weighting. Yet there was a 68% turnout amongst London's 30,000 postal workers, who returned a 99.5% majority in favour of action in the result announced this week.

During the election campaign, Keggie responded to criticisms of his close relationship



Dave Ward

with Blair by equating his opponents with "those who continually attack their own organisation" and demagogically proclaiming: "They shall not be allowed to destroy a great and proud trade union."

However, in the current union climate, where being associated with the Labour leadership is a considerable handicap, it was all to no avail. Dave Ward polled 19,404 votes against Keggie's 16,814 in a 22% turnout and will now work

alongside left general secretary Billy Hayes. He described his victory as "a mandate for us to represent the views of members when we deal with the Labour Party - rather than represent the Labour Party when we deal with our members".

This week's CWU conference in Bournemouth now looks set to give the go-ahead not only for an official ballot of members in the capital over London weighting, but to consider national action in the dispute over the ending of second deliveries. The union has rejected a proposed £20-a-week increase plus £1,000 lump sum for 80,000 staff in return for longer shifts and lengthier rounds. Dave Ward has promised that there will be "no more playing with industrial action. If we ballot, we will mean it."

However, it is no easy matter to translate the anti-Blairite atmosphere within the unions into solid militancy. And, as Fire Brigades Union members have found out over the last year, the ability to talk a good strike is no substitute for the application of sophisticated tactics based on a political strategy for the class ●

Peter Manson

Communist University Wales

Day 1 - Saturday June 28 Day 2 - Sunday June 29

Session 1:: 11am - 1.30pm

The New American Century and its opponents

Tina Becker looks at the politics of the new American imperialism, reactionary anti-imperialism and the anti-war movement. Was it ever in the position to stop the war? What role can a united left across Europe play?

Session 2:: 2.30pm - 5pm

Lessons of the Scottish Socialist Party & the failures of the Socialist Alliance

The recent electoral success of the SSP is there for everyone to see. But what about the SA in England and Wales? Should we fight to transform it into a democratic and effective party - or is its current manifestation as a loose electoral alliance good enough?

Session 3:: 5.30pm - 7pm

The myth of the Celts

Scottish and Welsh nationalists find historic justification in the idea of the Celtic peoples as the dispossessed inhabitants of Britain. Is this fact or fiction? Do the Celts survive in Scotland, Wales and Ireland or was the idea of a Celtic Britain an 18th century invention?

Session 4:: 11am - 1.30pm

When was Wales a nation?

Wales is often said to be an ancient nation. Plaid Cymru says it is an oppressed nation. Wales is undoubtedly a geographical expression. But its people have been traditionally divided. Between north and south, between Welsh-speakers and English-speakers, between protestants and catholics, between rich and poor. Bob Paul leads the discussion.

Session 5:: 2.30pm - 5pm

Society of the future

Karl Marx did not leave us a ready-made blueprint for a post-revolutionary world. While we cannot plan every detail of a future society, we can, however, make provisions on how to get there - and influence the future. Mark Fischer looks at the debates around 'dictatorship of the proletariat', the question of the 'withering away' of the state and the role of communists to achieve this.

Details

Weekend: £20/£10 :: One day: £10/£5 :: Session: £5/£2.

Clwb Ivor Bach, Womanby Street, Cardiff (five minutes walk from Cardiff Central rail station).

DEBATES FOR THE SERIOUS LEFT

SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

Tyneside Candidate for mayor

Tyneside Socialist Alliance is standing a candidate for the mayoral by-election being held in North Tyneside on Thursday June 12.

International Socialist Group member Louise van der Hoeven is contesting the position left vacant after the Conservative Party's rising star in the region, Chris Morgan, resigned as mayor less than a year after being elected, following his arrest on suspicion of possessing pornographic images of children. Morgan denies the allegations.

Comrade van der Hoeven, one of six ISGers elected to the Socialist Alliance's expanded national executive committee last month, faces competition from the three mainstream parties plus a fascist candidate (standing on a 'National Front, Britain for the British' platform). Following the British National Party's success in achieving 13% support in nearby Sunderland in May's local elections, there is a real worry that the NF will register a significant protest vote.

Last month's council election results in North Tyneside suggest that Labour has regained a marginal lead since last year's shock loss to the Tories. The SA polled 3.5% of the votes in the mayoral contest of 2002.

Under the legislation for mayoral elections, voters are able to cast two votes - for their first and second choices. In the event of no candidate receiving 50% of the first preferences, all but the top two candidates drop out and second-choice votes are taken into consideration. If, as seems likely, the contest goes to a second stage count, the final result should be announced in the early hours of June 13.

Remarkably the Socialist Alliance website makes no mention of the North Tyneside election. While the activities of Michael Lavalette, our newly elected councillor in Preston, are deserving of the attention afforded them, the absence of any coverage of the SA campaign in the north-east's main urban centre is regrettable.

With this election coming hot on the heels of council elections, Tyneside SA is appealing for donations from comrades to help them cover the costs of a high-profile campaign. Cheques, made payable to Tyneside Socialist Alliance, should be sent to the SA c/o TUC Unemployed Centre, 4 The Cloth Market, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1.

Steve Cooke

Aim for socialist working class party

National executive committee member **Steve Godward**, who chaired the May 10 Socialist Alliance conference, gives his views on the way ahead

It was not until about an hour afterwards that it sank in what had happened at the Socialist Alliance conference. Chairing means you are concentrating on quite technical questions.

I was not entirely picking up on the flavour of things and, being up on the stage, I did not hear some of the barracking. If I had, I would have jumped on that much earlier, because, at the end of the day, everybody there was a member of the Socialist Alliance and we should treat each other with dignity and respect. From what has been fed back to me, the barracking appeared to be directed at our comrades in the Alliance for Workers' Liberty for talking about George Galloway. You have the right to disagree with what somebody says, but Galloway is not a member of the SA and the AWL are.

Anyway, I think we must ensure that the acoustics are of better quality in future conferences.

I read the *Weekly Worker* the following week literally to find out what had taken place and remind myself what had been said. I was very taken with John Rees's speech, reproduced in the paper. I had no idea that he had had meetings with various people and

We should learn from the SSP and replicate where appropriate

organisations and, as a member of the SA executive at the time, was unaware that this was going to be discussed at conference. I was not too happy about that and I will be taking it up at the June 7 executive meeting.

He talked about an alliance with the muslim community that the Stop the War Coalition had built up. But, as an independent whose only political home is the Socialist Alliance, I would like to ask the groups how many SA members have actually been picked up from the STWC and the anti-war movement - I am not sure there are many. It seems we have done a lot of marking time, with everything subordinated to the war. We lost our way - not having SA speakers on platforms was a great mistake. The STWC put the Liberal Democrats up there and the Liberal Democrats got the votes in the local council elections.

I believe politics should be secular. Everybody is entitled to their belief, including religious belief, so long as that belief does not harm anyone; so long as it is not on the extreme right wing. I believe that you must uphold your principles and people will come to you on that basis - that was the way I was taught. I do not think we should subsume our politics. It does not matter what your religion or your culture is. Personally I do not pander to anybody, but in Birmingham, if you question the politics of some of those in the muslim community, the comrades in the Socialist Workers Party call you an islamophobe - read racist - and I would deny that vigorously.

I did think the conference took us forward, but, at the end of the day, are we a political body that is trying to give people a real left-wing alternative to the Labour Party, or aren't we? There is a risk of chasing shadows. The contacts with the Communist Party of Britain and the muslim community were fine - for the Stop the War Coalition. We are the Socialist Alliance and I do not think we need to create these blocs. Perhaps I am naive - I came to politics quite late in life - but it seems to me there is a need to become rooted rather than jumping from one tactic to another. You have to get the basics right first. At the moment the internal battle seems to be the order of the day, without getting on with the business of creating that alternative to Labour.

If we set out the aim of becoming a political party, that would be an antidote to a lot of the internecine warfare. The Scottish Socialist Party has been able to develop grassroots

politics, react to events and fight for the community: that is the kind of socialist organisation I would be looking for - one that actually gets into the working class. I would like to go to Scotland to discuss face to face with the SSP comrades how they are taking things forward. That is my idea of a workers' party. That is my idea of the future. We should learn from the SSP and replicate where appropriate.

The reason we could go out onto the streets and defeat fascism in the 70s was that we had a very strong workers' movement which called itself socialist. At the moment we do not have that. That is why I believe that the CPGB's motion at the SA conference about moving forward towards a workers' party was excellent, and it is something I will be working for on the executive. At the end of the day we would all be in the same organisation and working for the same aims. Some comrades are constantly talking about what happened in the past. While it is important to learn from history, politics should be dynamic and we should use the past to move forward.

Trust would be a good first step - I think we have to start trusting each other. I have had some feedback regarding the size of the new executive and the dominance of the SWP. But you can look at the cup as being half full or half empty. If the SWP has committed so many people and so many resources, let us give them a chance. It is easy to attack, but harder to try and work through problems and get them sorted. There can be positives if we are accountable and more transparent. As I say, it was a bit of shock to find out that John Rees had come to Birmingham for discussions and had not thought to invite anybody from Birmingham SA. We need to operate in a more professional manner with each other.

I have never before been in an organisation that did not have its own paper. The only SA paper I have sold is the *Left Turn* broadsheet for 20p. I believe we need to have a collective voice. Such a paper would have to be regular. Even if we decided it would be quarterly, it would be an advance. There needs to be a commitment to something that carries the aims and the ideas of the Socialist Alliance which members could carry with them and use in their work.

I am looking forward to June 7, which, as the first meeting of the new exec, will be an important occasion. It will be good to meet the new faces, but we will need to have a few things out. Socialism is not a hobby of mine, but something I believe in. It is not a dirty word any more amongst the working class and we need to start moving forward with that understanding.

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SCOTTISH SOCIALIST PARTY

McCombes: focus on independence

On Sunday June 1 the Scottish Socialist Party's national council met for the first time since the Scottish parliamentary elections. Although various issues were discussed, the first major debate was around three documents written by Allan Green, Alan McCombes and Tommy Sheridan, collectively entitled 'After the May Day uprising', which offer an analysis of the election campaign and results and the way forward following the election.

Allan Green's document concentrated on the results themselves: the breakdown of the votes regionally, the effect of the second vote, and the intervention of independents and other fringe candidates, including the Socialist Labour Party.

Alan McCombes's document dealt more with the way forward. He mentions the failures and splits, as well as the successes of other leftwing parties across Europe. The most interesting section of the document calls for "deepening our ideology" and better policy research - made necessary by the greater level of media scrutiny resulting from the SSP's May 1 success.

He states: "The socialist left has to conduct serious academic research into the workings of modern capitalism and the development of an alternative socialist system. We need to carry out the same rigorous research to develop our alternative to capitalism as we have done at a more basic level to develop our alternative to the council tax." This is a fair point: the SSP seriously does need to theorise its politics in a much more sophisticated manner, although it has to be said that 'policy research' based on the latest opinion poll has already led to the rather unsophisticated embrace of nationalism.

Tommy Sheridan's document deals mainly with plans for linking the campaigns of the party with the SSP's parliamentary bills. These will include the replacement of the council tax, the relaunching of a free school meals bill, a higher minimum wage, linked to a shorter working week - all of which were central to the election campaign. Other areas for parliamentary intervention in the short term include free eye tests and dental treatment, smaller class sizes, fairer voting based on PR, publicly owned public transport, a bill based on the SSP's drugs policy and another on women's equality.

Comrade McCombes, in moving all three papers, focused on the need for education that anticipated an independent socialist Scotland "without the Achilles heel of the British state". Ian Ferguson of the Socialist Worker platform argued that, contrary to Alan McCombes's opinion, the SSP's position on independence was not a key reason why people voted for us: they did so because they wanted to vote socialist. In that case why did the SW platform vote at the SSP conference in February to make independence a key element in all the



Sheridan: getting carried away

party's campaigning work? However, comrade Ferguson found an unlikely ally in Jim McFarlane of the Committee for a Workers' International.

When my turn came, I stated that it is the duty of socialists to counter growing support amongst sections of the working class and youth for Scottish independence. In response to comrade McCombes's assertion that 40% of the electorate voted to the left of the Lib-Lab coalition, I made the point that we have to be careful how we define 'leftwing'. Comrade McCombes's figure included the Greens and the Scottish National Party, both of whom have a decidedly pro-capitalist right wing and only a small minority of members who even define themselves as socialist.

Alan McCombes responded to the points raised about the national question by saying that the issue has been debated extensively and that comrades should put it behind them and focus their political thinking on achieving the established SSP aim of independence. For example, "What about the flight of capital?" However, turning your attention to such questions merely reinforces the absurdity of an "independent socialist Scotland" in the first place.

There were two branch motions before the NC. The first, from Anniesland, called for SSP members to consult their branches when organising "political activity". This resulted from the actions of SW platform comrades in directing Fire Brigades Union speakers to a fire-fighters' support group meeting instead of an

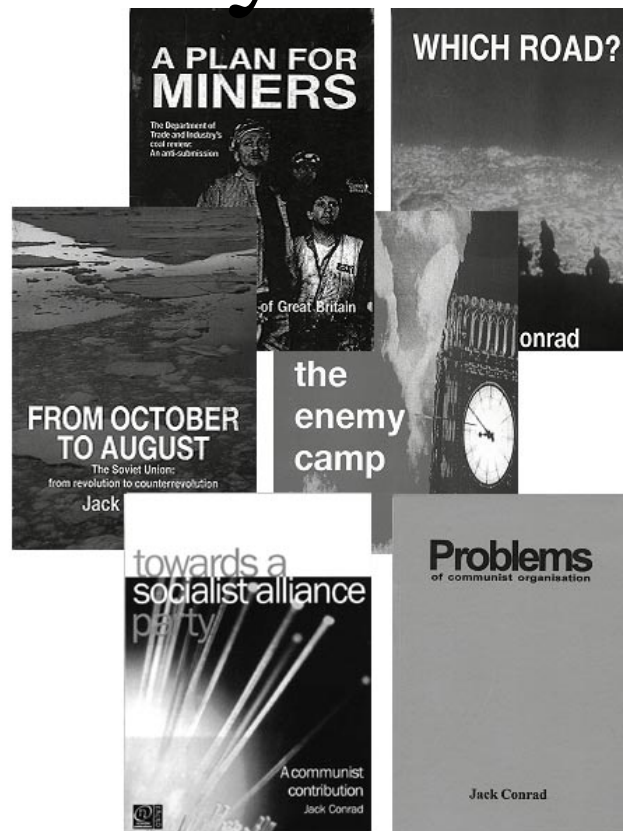
SSP-organised event, depriving a large SSP public meeting of any FBU representative. Throughout the debate the SW was never actually named, but referred to as "a certain platform".

The second motion, proposed by Dundee East and supported by many other branches, dealt with comments regarding support for a mixed economy made by Tommy Sheridan, when he got carried away in interviews during the election campaign. It called for clarification of the party's position on the issue and stated that the "SSP should stand for the public ownership under democratic working class control of the multinationals that dominate the Scottish economy". Comrades, including comrade Sheridan himself, tried to justify his statements by saying that the term 'mixed economy' referred to small businesses, not transnationals. However, comrade Philip Stott pointed out that in, for example, comrade Sheridan's interview published in *The Herald* there was no mention of small business. Both the Anniesland and Dundee East motions were carried.

Several motions remitted to the NC by the conference were also taken. These included a call for greater cooperation with the Greens, a motion calling for the party to take a decision on pay bargaining and another on campaigning against the euro. Lastly Morag Balfour, Nicky McKerrill, Les Robertson, Philip Stott and Alison Kane were elected to the parliamentary committee ●

Sarah McDonald

Communist Party books



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Yes, we have no WMDs

In the research for this article I owe an unusual debt of thanks: to the US department of defence. Whether for carefully laid Machiavellian reasons or through a kind of appalling verbal incontinence, both secretary of defence Donald Rumsfeld and his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, have been unusually frank over the last week, and have prompted many revealing reactions from our own government. If anyone still suspected that the left's description of the invasion of Iraq as a cynical imperialist exercise was down to 'knee-jerk anti-Americanism', they can now hear the story from the horse's mouth.

“Everyone could agree”

Vanity Fair is a lightweight American features magazine which promises you “access to people, personalities and power like no other magazine”. The July issue delivers: US deputy defence secretary Wolfowitz talks about the aftermath of the atrocious attack on the World Trade Center of September 11 2001, and reveals that he pushed President Bush to consider an immediate attack on Iraq rather than Afghanistan.

His argument was that, in order to police Iraq, the US had to keep forces in Saudi Arabia: something tolerated by the government, but hated by the people. He explains that “their presence there over the last 12 years has been a source of enormous difficulty for a friendly government. It's been a huge recruiting device for al Qa'eda.”

As history records, his arguments were not ignored, but their conclusions merely delayed. War on Iraq remained on the US agenda for

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reasons entirely unconnected to weapons of mass destruction. He goes on: “The truth is that for reasons that have a lot to do with the US government bureaucracy we settled on the one issue that everyone could agree on, which was weapons of mass destruction, as the core reason.”

So a suitable legal pretext had been found. UN resolutions passed after Iraq had been forced to withdraw from Kuwait demanded disarmament. The enforcement of this demand could be used to justify invasion. Whether Iraq had WMDs or not, of course, they would find it almost impossible to prove themselves innocent.

Dossier “made sexier”

The British government responded to the new US policy with its own attempt to substantiate this pretext, producing its notorious dossier *Iraq's weapons of mass destruction - the assessment of the British government* on September 24 2002.

In February 2003 it became clear that this document was not based, as the government claimed, on careful intelligence gathering. Rather it was largely plagiarised, indeed even ‘cut and pasted’ with typographical errors intact, from other documents months or years old. One of the articles copied was published in the *Middle East Review of International Affairs* and was the work of Ibrahim al-Marashi, a Californian student.

Last week, though, the reputation of this document, and the government which published it, achieved the impossible and fell even lower. On May 29, the BBC quoted a “senior British official” as saying that the

dossier as originally compiled by the intelligence services was rewritten to make it “sexier”.

He said: “The classic example was the statement that weapons of mass destruction were ready for use within 45 minutes. That information was not in the original draft. It was included in the dossier against our wishes because it wasn't reliable. Most things in the dossier were double-source but that was single-source and we believe that the source was wrong.” The official went on to say that “most people in intelligence” were unhappy about the changes because they “didn't reflect the considered view they were putting forward”.

So the false pretext was now supported by a false document, which combined a mixture of outdated plagiarised material and politically doctored assertions running counter even to the views of the government's own intelligence services. This collection of lies was then solemnly offered to the British people as evidence for war.

In an incredible attempt to muddy the waters, leader of the Commons John Reid retorted that journalists had been “fed false information” by “rogue elements” within the security services. Those who doubted the existence of WMDs should “put up or shut up” - like the Iraqi regime, they were told they must prove a negative.

‘Explosive’ evidence

No one who saw US secretary of state Colin Powell at the UN on February 5 2003 could have failed to be impressed by his confident, statesmanlike manner. He praised the British

dossier described above, saying: “I would call my colleagues' attention to the fine paper that the United Kingdom distributed yesterday which describes in exquisite detail Iraqi deception activities.” Presumably either the British had not told the Americans or the Americans had not told their front man how it had been written.

But this week it transpired that Powell was a worried man even without this knowledge. It seems that a transcript has been circulating of a brief meeting he had with British foreign secretary Jack Straw in the New York Waldorf Hotel and that, having done the rounds of “Nato diplomatic circles”, it has fallen into the hands of *The Guardian*.

Apparently Powell was well aware of Wolfowitz's hawkish views, and was therefore particularly wary of intelligence assessments presented by a team assembled at the Pentagon by the deputy secretary of defence himself.

According to *The Guardian*, the transcript reveals that “he told Mr Straw he had come away from the meetings [with Wolfowitz's intelligence team] ‘apprehensive’ about what he called, at best, circumstantial evidence highly tilted in favour of assessments drawn from them, rather than any actual raw intelligence. Mr Powell told the foreign secretary he hoped the facts, when they came out, would not ‘explode in their faces’.”

By the time the spotlight turned on him at the UN security council meeting, though, it seems he had overcome his scruples. As he readied his slide show, he said: “My colleagues, every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. These

are not assertions. What we are giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence ...”

Illegal engagement

The UN had by now already passed the famous resolution 1441, demanding Iraq disarm itself of weapons of mass destruction. The resolution was won by dubious means and was of dubious meaning. After Powell’s speech, the Syrian representative said flatly that he had only supported 1441 after assurances from the Americans that it could only lead to war if supported by a second resolution. The French and Russians had refused to allow the resolution to threaten military action explicitly: 1441 instead referred to “serious consequences” should Iraq fail to comply with its terms. It was, in short, a fudge - won by a mixture of sleight of hand and political bullying.

As opposition to the war mounted around the world, and in the wake of the historic demonstration in London on February 15, the prospect of the US and UK pulling the same trick again seemed to be receding fast. The US government clearly did not care. The UK government was somewhat embarrassed: even within Blairite New Labour, a considerable number of MPs and the mass of the population could not easily be ignored. Indeed the sheer size of the mass movement produced a domino effect. MPs rebelled because their constituents wanted nothing to do with the war, ministers wobbled and the prime minister desperately manipulated the truth to the point of lying.

There was speculation that the US might have to fight alone. With a lack of regard for Blair’s political problems which seems to have become habitual, Rumsfeld famously said that it did not matter: the US could quite comfortably fight and win the war without the UK.

When Blair sent British troops into battle alongside US forces, therefore, he had at least to be able to claim he was acting within international law. The responsibility for determining this fell to the attorney general, Lord Goldsmith. On the eve of the war, Goldsmith delivered the goods, advising that the invasion was legal. Blair, in his relief, published his advice: an unprecedented step.

Blair was less happy a week later when Goldsmith delivered a second memorandum of legal advice, addressed directly to the prime minister, which was not to his taste. This he did not publish.

Last month, though, the memorandum was leaked to the *New Statesman*, and it makes fascinating reading. It bases its opinions on the Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Hague Regulations of 1907. It concludes that: 1. The US and UK forces could not legally change the laws or system of government of Iraq, or establish a new government: it could merely carry out basic policing. 2. Any military action is legal only in as far as it is necessary to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction.

This first opinion was disastrous for Blair. Essentially it means that all the activity which has taken place since the defeat of the Ba’athists has been, in the opinion of the British government’s own first law officer, illegal.

The second opinion might, at first sight, appear to be less of a problem. After all, if the war was fought to disarm Iraq, it would seem to indicate that this, at least, was legal. However, since the end of the war, no evidence of weapons of mass destruction has been found, and it is difficult to claim you fought to remove weapons which did not exist. Blair has desperately repeated the mantra that Iraq is a large country and evidence may turn up at any time, but this formula is sounding increasingly thin. It seems ever more likely, therefore, that the war itself was, on the government’s own advice, illegal.

With friends like him ...

It seems that there is no problem Blair faces so serious, though, that Rumsfeld cannot make it worse.

On May 28, under increasing pressure to explain the lack of evidence of WMDs, Rumsfeld said: “We don’t know what happened. It is also possible that [Saddam’s government] decided they would destroy them prior to a conflict.”

One can only imagine the tone of the transatlantic phone calls which must have taken place between Blair and Bush after this astounding admission. The US department of

defence was quick to release a statement attempting to play down this view, arguing that its secretary had said nothing new, and so the comment was not really newsworthy, but it is doubtful that this helped much.

Ignoring the advice that, once in a hole, one should stop digging, Rumsfeld then decided to try to undo the damage he had done by offering a counter-argument, rather bizarrely by personally calling a radio phone-in programme. He claimed that he remained confident evidence of weapons of mass destruction would be found, and that the war had not been waged under any false pretext, but had been guided by ‘good intelligence’.

General confusion

Any hope either the US or UK governments had that this issue might be quietly news-managed away was rather rudely squashed by one lieutenant-general James Conway. The general, commander of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, said he had been convinced that before and during the war chemical weapons had been distributed to the Republican Guard units around Baghdad.

He went on: “It was a surprise to me then - it remains a surprise to me now - that we have not uncovered weapons, as you say, in some of the forward dispersal sites. Believe me, it’s not for lack of trying: we’ve been to virtually every ammunition supply point between the Kuwaiti border and Baghdad, but they’re simply not there.”

He added: “We were simply wrong. Whether or not we’re wrong at the national level, I think still very much remains to be seen.”

Executioner in waiting

Blair is now not so much on the ropes as hanging from just one. At the front of the queue to kick the chair away is Robin Cook, the former foreign secretary. With the two top cabinet jobs securely filled, leaving Cook at the most senior position he was likely to achieve under the current administration, and with few friends in the party unless he could find a quick way of gaining a constituency of sup-

Clare Short failed to attain even Robin Cook’s standard of integrity

port amongst other disgruntled career MPs, Cook took a principled stand: the killing of innocent Iraqi people would only be morally acceptable to him if the UN security council could be bullied and bribed into voting for it a second time. He resigned from the cabinet when this was not done.

He must be delighted that the political benefits he never stopped to calculate have fallen to him so quickly. Claiming leadership of a group of Labour rebels, he insisted that Rumsfeld’s statement “blows an enormous, gaping hole in the case for war made on both sides of the Atlantic.” Blair faces moves by his own backbenchers to call an emergency session of parliament to call him to account.

Short: sulking

Clare Short, the former international development secretary, failed to attain even Robin Cook’s standard of integrity. She threatened to resign if Britain joined the invasion of Iraq, and then was persuaded not to do so in order to work with the UN to repair the destruction the invasion she opposed would create. She then resigned when - as everyone expected except her, it seems - the US took over control of Iraq entirely alone after the war.

Short now attacks the prime minister bitterly. She claims that the decision to go to war was agreed between Bush and Blair long before it was seriously discussed by the cabinet or by parliament, and that she and fellow ministers were “duped and deceived”. She sounds surprised. It seems she has made a fine political judgement: she would rather be remembered as a fool than as a coward.

Blair’s secret proof

Blair himself is not blinking. In response to the various attacks made on him, he said that he personally knew of evidence of weapons of mass destruction arising from the interview of Iraqis captured during the war, but could not yet reveal it.

Slightly paradoxically, in a later interview he replied to accusations that he had misled the nation with the demand that “if people have evidence, they produce it”.

Will they find WMDs?

Quite possibly. But will those ‘Made in the USA’ labels be on them because the US sold them to Hussein in the first place, or because they were transported to Iraq rather more recently?

Regime change

Every quote and every criticism in this article has come from the top brass of British and American imperialism. The grubby calculations of power and influence, the deliberate lies, the contempt of the people: these have all been reported in the bourgeois press and attributed to our politicians and military leaders.

It is clear that no system of international law, nor the wishes or injunctions of international courts or conferences, can constrain imperialism: the pursuit of the interests of rich and powerful capitalist states abroad. All those speakers who called on the international courts or the United Nations from the platform of the Stop the War Coalition should reflect on the reality of world politics, particularly now that only a single superpower remains, and is intent on remaining the only superpower.

Those few Labour MPs who opposed the war drive deserve our support, inasmuch as they continue to speak up against the occupation of Iraq, and every means should be pursued to call Blair to account for the lies he has told and the crimes he has committed. Ultimately, though, while we should not scorn the democratic rights working people have secured for themselves through ages of struggle, we should have no illusions in parliament.

The fact that the war was fought against the clear wishes of the people, and the glimpse of the reality of British government which the aftermath of the war is now affording, is making the democratic deficit clear. The overriding need now is for a new workers’ party, to bring together all those who fought with the anti-war movement, those who oppose capitalism, and those trade unionists betrayed by the Labour Party, into a single movement for consistent democracy, so that the garbage of international realpolitik described in this sorry tale can be consigned to the dustbin of history by our own, working class, regime change ●

Manny Neira

Worse than Galloway?

The speech of John McDonnell, MP for Hayes and Harlington and chair of the Labour Party’s Irish Society, which he delivered to the Connolly memorial rally on Saturday May 24, finally began to catch up with him almost a week later.



McDonnell

Ulster Unionist Party leader David Trimble appears to have been reading press releases put out after the meeting, and he told *The Guardian*: “To label terrorists as brave and to lay blame for the murders, bombs and beatings of Irish republicans at the government’s door is a disgusting accusation. Mr McDonnell’s statement is much worse than any comments made by George Galloway on the Iraq war” (May 30).

Trimble called for McDonnell to be expelled from the Labour Party - an action that was not ruled out by an unnamed Labour spokesperson, who said: “These comments do not represent the views of the Labour Party [which] condemns unreservedly all atrocities perpetrated by the IRA and other paramilitaries. The actions of terrorists [were] never justified in Northern Ireland.” *The Guardian* remarked that McDonnell’s speech is being “looked into” and could lead to his eventual expulsion.

Putting aside the question of Galloway, Trimble is guilty of spinning the speech to his own ends. I did not hear any mention of “murders, bombs and beatings of Irish republicans” at the May 24 meeting. McDonnell actually said: “We are in the last stage of imperialist intervention in Ireland and only the armed struggle has stopped it. It is about time we started honouring those people involved in that armed struggle. It was the bombs and bullets and sacrifices made by the likes of Bobby Sands that brought Britain to the negotiating table. The peace we have now is due to the unilateral action of the IRA.”

McDonnell did not suggest any IRA return to the armed struggle, but called for the diplomatic process to be supplemented by popular protests and actions to get the peace process ‘back on track’ - ie, in the direction of Irish independence. In his days as a Militant stalwart he would have said that catholics and protestants could unite around bread and butter issues on a socialist platform. Nowadays, he has signed up to the nationalism of Sinn Féin and given up on the idea of unity around any kind of working class programme - even an economic one.

To bring George Galloway back into the frame, the British establishment regards calling for the defeat of your ‘own’ imperialism in the middle of a war as the crime of all crimes. In the case of John McDonnell, retrospective support for anti-imperialists is not quite so serious. What really makes Trimble tremble and Blair blue is not an obscure speech made to a couple of hundred people in London, but the campaign of Sinn Féin (not to mention Ian Paisley’s Democratic Unionist Party) for elections to be held in Northern Ireland - elections which could well end Trimble’s personal political career and leave British policy in Northern Ireland in disarray. Bourgeois democracy has its limits (as far as Blair is concerned, the more, the better). Only ‘moderate’ parties can be allowed to win Stormont elections, it seems.

McDonnell may believe that we are in “the last stage of imperialist intervention”, but the British government seems determined to continue controlling Northern Ireland for as long as it can get away with it. The problem is that it is an artificial statelet founded on the denial of elementary democracy to the Irish-catholic section of the population. That is why communists argue for a united Ireland in which there is a two-county, two half-county province in the north through which the British-Irish, who constitute a majority on this territory, can exercise self-determination ●

Phil Kent

Competition time

If you can’t hide the truth, complicate it: a standard spin-doctor’s approach

Perhaps Blair hopes the sheer amount and absurdity of government misinformation will throw us off the track. So, here is the Weekly Worker’s handy summary of what we learnt during Blair’s longest couple of weeks in politics. See if you can spot the statement least likely to be true ...

1. Weapons of mass destruction were merely an easily agreed pretext for a war planned since 2001.
Source: US deputy secretary of defence, Paul Wolfowitz

2. The British dossier on WMD was politically doctored to present a stronger case than the intelligence services thought true.
Source: ‘senior British official’, talking to the BBC

3. Colin Powell was not confident of the case he presented to the United Nations security council, and feared it might ‘explode in their faces’ later.
Source: secretary of state Colin Powell

4. The assumption of government by the US and UK forces and their attempt to establish a new government in Iraq is against international law: and in the absence of WMDs, the war was too.
Source: attorney general, Lord Goldsmith

5. The Iraqis may have destroyed all the WMDs before the war anyway.
Source: US secretary of defence Donald Rumsfeld

6. The Republican Guard did not have chemical weapons the US forces were told they would have.
Source: lieutenant-general James Conway

7. The British cabinet was misled and manipulated to support the war.
Source: former international development secretary Clare Short

8. There is evidence of weapons of mass destruction, but it’s secret.
Source: prime minister Tony Blair

Answer: If you had to look, you weren't paying attention.

THE LEFT

SUMMER
OFFENSIVEIt can
be fun

A few days into our 19th Summer Offensive we have more positive news. Yet more supporters and sympathisers of the Party have submitted pledges, which brings the total promised to £20,500. This is excellent news - and unprecedented! Never before has so much been pledged at the very start of the SO.

Now the task begins of actually getting the money to us. And here things are no different from previous years: the start is always a little slow. So far, Party centre has received £752 - £550 from Party members, the rest donations from CPGB supporters and readers of the *Weekly Worker*. Thanks this week go to GE, KO, WP, NP and FR.

Proof that raising money for the Summer Offensive does not have to be one long, hard slog is given by two students from Wales (one a member, the other a sympathiser of the Party). Like all students they are not exactly wealthy. However, they are planning to organise a big bash - or, in their words, a "commie party" - in order to raise money for the organisation. "We don't just want to work overtime. We're knackered after our exams and want to have some fun," they explain. Quite right too. In previous years, comrades have organised SO socials around the World Cup, the Eurovision Song Contest and their own birthday. They have charged an entrance fee, sold drinks and often made a healthy amount of money.

Don't forget to let us know of your own money-making ideas. Perhaps they will serve as inspiration for others ●

Tina Becker

Target: £25,000

EuroTrotskyism

What is the Fourth International for? **Mike Macnair** discusses the recent congress of the USFI

The May issue of *International Viewpoint* carries reports of the 15th World Congress of the Fourth International, the international organisation to which the British International Socialist Group (ISG) is affiliated. The ISG's *Socialist Resistance* newspaper contained a briefer report by Greg Tucker in March, with a slightly different slant; but *International Viewpoint* is the house organ of the Paris bureau of the Fourth International, so its report is more 'from the horse's mouth'.

It tells us, to start with, that the February congress had around 200 participants, representing sections and sympathising groups from 35 countries, with eight sending apologies, and a diverse range of "guests", including among others the Australian Democratic Socialist Party, the Italian Partito della Rifondazione Comunista and our own Socialist Workers Party. From the number of participants and the delegate ratio usually employed for these congresses, we may guess that the organisation regroups something around 5,000 members. These will be overwhelmingly in the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) and the Brazilian Democracia Socialista (DS), with the other groups considerably smaller.

'Relaunch'

Both the *Socialist Resistance* and *International Viewpoint* reports call the congress a "relaunch". This is unsurprising, given that eight years have passed since the last one - nearly three times the three-year time limit provided for by the Fourth International's 1946 and 1974 statutes. The new congress has revised the statutes, among other changes extending the period to five years.

In addition, the new statutes provide for an executive bureau to be directly responsible to the international executive committee, removing the old 'unified secretariat', which in turn elected the 'bureau of the unified secretariat'. This gave the organisation the name, 'Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International' (USFI or Usec to outsiders), which distinguished it from other 'Fourth Internationals'. It reflects, belatedly, the departure in the late 70s and 80s of the coalition partners who made the USFI 'unified'. On the other hand, the organisation's main competitors in claiming the name of the Fourth International have collapsed into groupuscules (notably the 'International Committee of the Fourth International', led by Gerry Healy, which imploded in 1985-86). Though there are other Trot 'internationals' as large as the Fourth International, by and large they do not use the name.

The USFI-Fourth International has therefore re-inherited the name of the organisation founded by Trotsky in 1938 - effectively by being the last man standing. It had a slightly better claim to the name than the competitors anyhow. The organisation founded by Trotsky and his co-thinkers in 1938 collapsed in 1939-42; a large minority of the survivors reformed an international organisation under the same name in 1946, and the recent congress is the 15th, counting from the first in 1946. In 1953 the British, French and US majorities and some other groups split, claiming that the 'Pabloite' majority led by Michael Raptis, aka Pablo, was engaged in liquidating the international. In the end, the 'Pabloite liquidators' of the USFI turn out to have succeeded in maintaining the organisational forms of an international organisation where their anti-Pabloite opponents ... liquidated them.

There is a clear link to a second positive dis-



Greg Tucker: member of an 'international' without parties

tinctive feature of the USFI-Fourth International: that is, that it maintains at least some of the forms of internal democracy. Greg Tucker in *Socialist Resistance* comments that, as a result of a 'process of convergence', "no-one found it necessary to organise factions or tendencies at this congress - the first time for many years that this has been the case" (March). It is certainly true that the USFI-Fourth International has been for many years and still is an organisation in which political debate takes place to some degree openly, and in which the struggle of organised tendencies and factions does not lead to short-term expulsions.

But if the USFI-Fourth International has preserved the *forms* of an international organisation, and to some degree a democratic organisation, the question it has never succeeded in answering is: what are these forms *for*?

The answer offered by the 15th World Congress, as quoted by François Vercammen in *International Viewpoint*, is that, "Our principal task as the Fourth International consists in contributing to a vast reorganisation of the labour and social movement on a world scale with our perspective: the constitution of a new internationalist, pluralist, revolutionary, militant force with a mass impact." But if the task is simply one of "contributing", why bother with an international organisation with its own press and apparatus and national sections, each with their own press and leadership? And what would *make* the hoped-for "new internationalist, pluralist, revolutionary, militant force with a mass impact" "revolutionary"?

These questions may sound rather abstract. But the need to "relaunch" the Fourth International reflects the fact that (as the reso-

lution quoted by Vercammen delicately notes) "there is a significant gap between our underlying influence within movements and the political and organisational strengthening of our organisations". Others have put it more crudely. The SWP's Alex Callinicos a couple of years ago commented that "... the LCR in particular sometimes gives the impression that its activists in specific movements operate fairly autonomously, while the Ligue itself until recently took a low profile outside elections" (International Socialist Tendency website, 'Regroupment, realignment and the revolutionary left', undated). The ISG is also pretty recognisable in this portrait. A document put forward in 2000 by leaders of the ISG said:

"... there were already [in 1991] practical consequences, some of them disastrous. The clearest examples were in Germany and the Spanish state, where fusions with formerly Maoist groups led to a liquidation (virtual in the first case, explicit in the second) of FI forces. In Switzerland the section simply disappeared, without any process of fusion whatsoever (and without any report to the membership, or even to the leadership, about what had happened). In the USA the decision of one wing of FI supporters there to help create Solidarity was more ambiguous. Solidarity as an organisation has continued, and even (in the context of US politics) made some modest gains. But the identity of an explicitly FI current has been completely submerged, and the numbers of individuals who remain members of the FI has shrunk year by year.

"Latin America felt the effects of the 'new' thinking as well. The Peruvian section disappeared into the PUM. And during the course of the 1990s our Mexican section, the biggest

in the International at the start of the decade, broke apart, as different wings started warring with each other, chasing after alliances with either the Cardenista movement or the Zapatistas” (ISG draft resolution to the USFI, 2001).

In short: the particular version of ‘regroupment’ - most recently ‘reorganisation of the labour and social movement’ - espoused by the Fourth International’s leadership since 1985 gave no political reason for its organisations to exist and consequently has led to a creeping tendency for them to dissolve.

Equally, the question of what counts as ‘revolutionary’ is not merely abstract, but rather concrete. The Brazilian DS holds (so far) a ministerial post in the popular front and presidentialist government of Lula in Brazil. Comrade Tucker reports doubts about this among the delegates to the world congress: good, but the fact that the Fourth International’s section winds up taking partial responsibility for a bourgeois government says something about its political ideas.

The French LCR calls for a vote for Chirac to keep Le Pen out, subordinating class independence to lesser-evilism. And, on a far smaller scale, the British ISG turns itself into a ‘less sectarian’ tail to the British SWP in the Socialist Alliance. It even writes and moves the resolution to give the SWP leaders a free hand for manoeuvres with the Communist Party of Britain (*Morning Star*) and the mosques. And these manoeuvres, in turn, attempt to feebly replicate the popular front strategy practised by the old Stalinised CPGB in the middle 1930s and episodically between then and its collapse.

What’s it for?

There can be no justification for maintaining a political organisation which has nothing to say to the workers’ movement which is not already being said by someone else. A Communist Party is not a substitute for the class movement: thus Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*:

“The communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement.

“The communists are distinguished from the other working class parties by this only: (1) In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality.

(2) In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

“The communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the lines of march, the conditions and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.”

The Fourth International founded in 1938 offered a clear line of march to the workers’ movement. They expected World War II to display the same general military, economic and political dynamics as World War I, with the altered element that it was necessary to defend the USSR and to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy, which they expected to split down the middle between revolutionary defencists and pro-Nazi defeatists. The *Transitional programme* they adopted in 1938 was adapted to this expected line of march, but the course of the war comprehensively refuted their assessment and as a result *politically* smashed the 1938 international to smithereens.

The 1946 congress claimed to be the continuity of the 1938 international, but this ‘continuity’ was founded on a refusal to draw up any critical balance sheet of pre-war Trotskyism. In the result, all its descendants have been characterised by a brittle, dogmatic, formal adherence to the 1938 programme, coupled with a practice which plays this programme down in favour of one or another sort of get-rich-quick ‘party-building’ scheme - whether it is the voluntarism of the ‘anti-Pabloites’, the

strategic entrism of the Grant tendency, or the ‘regroupmentism’ of the ‘Pabloites’. By *pretending* to stand on the 1938 programme and line of march, they in fact cease to propose *any* programme or line of march. Sooner or later the brittle, dogmatic orthodoxy collapses into something else.

USFI’s political collapse

By 1979 the USFI had been holding out to its militants for more than a quarter of a century the illusion that ‘our time will come’: that is, that the politics of the 1938 programme would somehow become relevant if the international could just make the ‘breakthrough’ somewhere. Trotskyism - including the USFI variant - had, however, remained stubbornly politically marginal through the Portuguese revolution in 1974-76, the Iranian and Nicaraguan revolutions in 1979, the Polish events of 1980-81, and the rise of the South African workers’ movement in the 1980s, leading to the fall of apartheid. The brittle Trotskyist orthodoxy of the USFI’s formal positions, undermined by its theoretical errors, was due for collapse, and collapse it duly did.

The first phase, in 1979, was an abandonment of the Marxist conception of the working class in favour of a sociological conception of the working class as ‘industrial workers’. The initiators of this turn were the US Socialist Workers Party, who used it to motivate a voluntaristic effort to ‘proletarianise’ the sections by sending everybody to take industrial jobs.

Exactly alongside this development and also proposed by the US SWP (and initially resisted by Mandel) was a ‘new understanding of class alliances’ in Latin America: that is, a shift away from the ‘permanent revolution’ (and, for that matter, Leninist) politics of the leading role of the working class in national and democratic revolutions, towards the inter-class blocs beloved of third world Stalinism. Once the Marxist concept of class is revised, the *grounds* for supposing that the working class has to take the lead are gone.

The abandonment of the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat began a little earlier, but took longer. The ‘Resolution on socialist democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat’ was drafted in response to the triumph of the social democrats in the Portuguese revolution. In its initial form it argued that revolutionary politics could only attract the masses through the masses having the experience of a ‘higher form of democracy’: ie, a dual power with soviets. This schema (not unlike the Revolutionary Democratic Group’s) was provisionally adopted in 1979. In the same period Eurocommunism was explained as a left turn of the European CPs in response to the pressure of the working class ...

By 1985 the majority had drawn further lessons from the Polish events: the rule of law, separation of powers and parliamentarism were now necessary learning experiences the masses had to go through. The idea of the class rule of the proletariat, still maintained in the original draft, was beginning to mutate into a synonym for classless ‘socialist democracy’. With this background, it was unsurprising that the USFI identified first Gorbachev and then Yeltsin as representing moves to the *left* in Soviet politics.

By 1992 the ideas of ‘the social movements’ and the ‘alliance of the dispossessed’ had found their way back from the policy for the third world into the policy for Europe, and the USFI had embarked on the course of ‘regroupment’ on the basis of vague sentiments, rather than any definite programme,

which animates its current policy. The result is certainly a “radical non-sectarian current”, as Vercammen describes those with whom the current Fourth International seeks to regroup. It is less clear that it actually has anything to offer the workers’ movement except the fatuous advice to ... resist the bourgeoisie’s attacks, be active. Thus Vercammen again, on the international movement against globalisation:

“How to impose the strong claims of the ‘movement of movements’? For that a force in society is needed, which is none other than the mass of the exploited and oppressed on a world scale, whose decisive core is located within American and European imperialism. We need one or more political formations with a mass character which are within the movement and which propose a strategy.”

But *what* strategy? The truth is that without an understanding of the need for class politics and for the independent political organisation of the working class there can be no strategy which is not either a reprise of social democracy or of Stalinism.

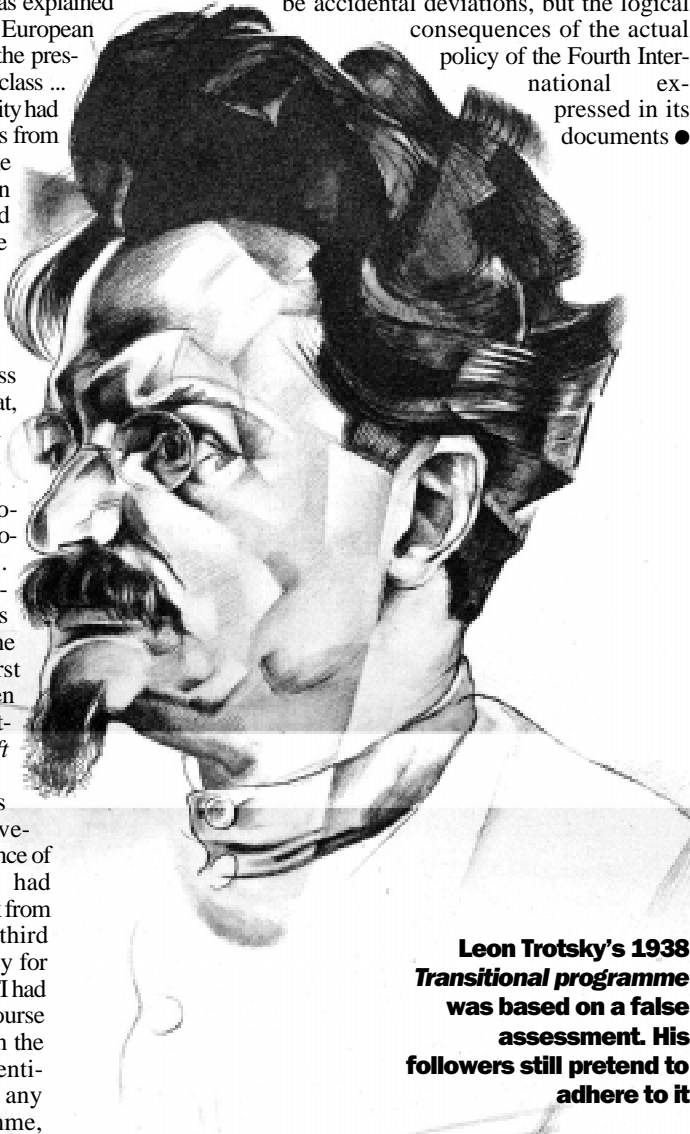
Nor does the policy even offer concrete regroupment: “... our congress opened the way to debates, initiatives, meetings with the currents of the revolutionary left to test the convergences, without that leading to a new structure in the short term.”

Unsurprising! The truth is that the sort of ‘non-sectarianism’ proposed - “a fraternal debate within the radical, revolutionary left against sectarianism and ‘vanguardism’” - is actually directly opposed to the sort of democratic regroupment on a clear, even if limited, programme which could possibly escape the wilderness of sects.

EuroTrotskyism

The brutal fact is that when we decode the Fourth International’s documents and place them in the context of the historical evolution of this movement, what we find is not a new politics at all. It is merely a left-talking variant of Eurocommunism. The ‘rejection of Stalinism’ turns out to be adherence to the bourgeoisie’s concept of democracy under the rule of law. Class politics is dissolved into a grand alliance of the “exploited and oppressed”. “Non-sectarianism” means shoddy manoeuvres and diplomatic agreements in back rooms behind the backs of the rank and file militants and the rotten anti-democratic methods of the Social Forums, and is, in fact, profoundly sectarian.

The Brazilian DS’s participation in the Lula government, the LCR’s call to vote Chirac and the ISG’s tailism of the SWP turn out not to be accidental deviations, but the logical consequences of the actual policy of the Fourth International expressed in its documents ●



Leon Trotsky’s 1938 Transitional programme was based on a false assessment. His followers still pretend to adhere to it

What we fight for

■ **Our central aim is the organisation of communists, revolutionary socialists, anti-capitalists, anti-war activists and all politically advanced workers into a Communist Party. Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.**

■ **The Provisional Central Committee organises members of the Communists Party, but there exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called ‘parties’ on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed ‘line’ are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.**

■ **Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.**

■ **Communists are fully committed to building the anti-war movement but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.**

■ **Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of anti-war, working class and democratic parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, ‘One state, one party’. To the extent that the European Union becomes a state then that necessitates EU-wide trade unions and a Communist Party of the EU.**

■ **The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.**

■ **Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.**

■ **Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally. All forms of nationalist socialism are reactionary and anti-working class.**

■ **The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote. They will resist using every means at their disposal. Communists favour using parliament and winning the biggest possible working class representation. But workers must be readied to make revolution - peacefully if we can, forcibly if we must.**

■ **Communists fight for extreme democracy in all spheres of society. Democracy must be given a social content.**

■ **We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.**

■ **Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.**

■ **Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women’s oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.**

■ **Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin’s Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.**

■ **Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.**

■ **All who accept these principles are urged to join the Communist Party.**

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Renationalise the network under workers' control

Jail rail killers

This is not just a scandal. It is a crime (or should be), called corporate manslaughter. Though corporate *murder* would be a more accurate, if a less legalistically acceptable term.

The directors of companies who rake in grossly inflated salaries, dividends and perks by running businesses in which their workers and even their customers end up getting killed should pay with their liberty - not with 'compensation' payments, or fines, which come from the accumulated fund of surplus value extracted from the workers themselves, together with massive tax handouts from the government. How much does one human life mean in terms of a slight reduction in the next bonus payment to the parasites?

More than a year after the Potters Bar rail crash, Network Rail (formerly Railtrack) and one of its myriad of maintenance contractors, Jarvis plc, are still trying to shuffle off responsibility for the fact that it was *their* criminal negligence and *their* greed for a fast and easy buck that led to the death of seven people - seven families bereft of their loved ones; scores of others maimed or seriously injured; all of them destined to bear the physical and psychological scars of that horrific experience for the rest of their lives.

It was the sixth major rail accident in six years, one for every year since the break-up of British Rail. As if we needed telling, it showed us what happens when public services are run on half-market, half-bureaucratic lines and managers and sub-contractors are virtually given a free hand to enrich themselves. The privatisation of the railways was a politically motivated attempt to diminish the flow of tax subsidies and break the power of the rail unions. As a result, everything, including safeguarding human lives, took second place to the interests of city fat cats and coupon clippers.

Let us briefly remind ourselves of the facts. On Friday May 10 last year, the 12.45 Kings Cross to King's Lynn service passed over points outside Potters Bar station at around 100mph. A catastrophic derailment occurred. It was subsequently found that at least two of the vital nuts that secure the stretcher bars operating the points were totally detached, just lying there by the rails.

Railtrack's first response was to prevaricate and frantically try to pass the buck. Understandable in a way, because they did not have a clue as to which of the more than 1,500 of their subcontractors was actually responsible for maintaining the track around Potters Bar. Remember that from the City's point of view Railtrack was not really about railways at all, though they were happy to benefit from the small investors' enthusiasm for yet another privatisation. It was in reality a wonderfully juicy and supposedly risk-free property asset - hundreds of thousands of acres of very valuable development land lying idle in decaying goods yards and sidings, all of it sold off via privatisation for relative pennies.

At the same time it emerged that Jarvis Rail, part of Jarvis plc - one of the 'princi-



Potters Bar rail crash: false allegations

pal contractors' who have made millions out of maintaining the physical infrastructure of the rails since privatisation - was the company responsible for the fateful bit of track.

What was their first reaction, when they were finally cornered by the press? Sabotage. Blame disaffected workers. You know - the sort of people who have the knowledge, the skills and the sheer bloody bravado to set foot on a busy main line track just yards from a station and, using the necessary specialist tools, set about 'sabotaging' the line.

Without going into the details, the latest - the *third* - report from the health and safety executive (May 29) finally blows this politically motivated, anti-working class piece of nonsense out of the water. There was, unsurprisingly, no evidence of 'sabotage' whatsoever. What happened was that Jarvis Rail, who evidently does not give a flying fig for anything but profit, used inadequately skilled and insufficiently trained workers on the vital task of track maintenance. Somebody made a mistake, no doubt. But the responsibility rests with management.

On the night before the disaster occurred, a driver reported a "rough ride" on the track where the accident occurred, but his warning went fatally unheeded by a management too preoccupied as always with the bottom line. The cost of shutting down that section of track and subjecting it to a thorough examination would have been prohibitive. The fact is that similar warnings about the state of the track had been reported by an RMT member more than three weeks earlier - simply damning.

Jarvis evidently did not do anything because they were too incompetent, too stupid or just too greedy to be bothered. So the cover story of sabotage had to be maintained. Witness a certain Mr Steven Norris, director of Jarvis plc and the man the Tories want to see as mayor of London: "It's pretty clear - certainly for anyone who understands the railways - that some tampering has been going on here."

Whether Norris understands the railways is something I would doubt, but he can certainly understand a plummeting

share price when he sees one, and the recognition is even more acute if you happen to be a director in the company concerned. What do seven human lives mean when your own capital is threatened?

Amazingly, against all the evidence, the company still asserts that, "The maintenance of the points was carried out by trained and competent personnel, in accordance with industry guidelines" and urges the police, even now, not to rule out sabotage as the cause of the crash. Why? Because the last thing on earth Jarvis plc or Network Rail will ever do is admit that they were negligent, that they were responsible for the deaths and horrendous injuries and trauma that resulted from this crash.

If you talk to CPGB comrades who work on the rails, you get the real picture. I spoke, for example, to Derek Goodliffe (RMT train crew and shunting executive member and Eastern Region Socialist Alliance), who confirmed that Potters Bar, just like Hatfield, was bound to be pinned on 'sabotage' or 'vandalism', whereas the real cause was poor maintenance by inadequate, undertrained staff. Only recently there was a letter in his local paper in Peterborough, complaining about the 'rough ride' into the town on the main

line. What has been done about it? Nothing.

Another, Peter Grant (Manchester Piccadilly Aslef and Greater Manchester Socialist Alliance), pointed to the continuing catastrophic fall in the standards of maintenance and safety inspection on the rails caused by privatisation. As a driver, he experienced a recent incident in Dewsbury where poor communication between track maintenance and signal box workers could easily have led to major fatalities. It was not a one-off but a regular occurrence. If anything, things have got worse since Potters Bar.

Relevant and important as such pieces of anecdotal evidence may be, it is surely clear that what we are dealing with is a *political* rather than an *industrial* problem.

Of course, it is absolutely right for Aslef general secretary Mick Rix to condemn Jarvis: "First, it must answer the prime responsibility for the dreadful Potters Bar crash, caused by poor management of maintenance work. Secondly, it has tried to obscure its own failings by raising entirely unsubstantiated allegations about sabotage." It is also right, as RMT general secretary Bob Crow proposes, that corporate killing legislation should be introduced to forestall further deaths of workers sacrificed on the altar of profit. It is right when lawyers like Louise Christian tells Network Rail and Jarvis that they are going to be sued because they still, after everything, will not accept responsibility for their incompetence.

As all the above would no doubt agree, we are dealing with a government that was and is morally complicit in what happened at Potters Bar. Stephen Byers was happy to go along with the lies about sabotage; the current transport secretary, Alastair (I'll do anything you want me to, Tony) Darling, blithely assures us that "it must never happen again".

Obviously, we all agree on that particular truism, but the question is, how can we make sure it does not? From some of our respected comrades on the left, the answer appears to consist of a return to a mythical golden age of state ownership. In the leader column of the *Morning Star*, for example, we read the following: "All

rail maintenance should be brought back in-house as the first step in returning the whole rail network to public ownership, and corporate manslaughter legislation should be introduced to jail company directors whose failure to operate a safety culture kills people" (May 30).

As regards the second part - fine. But the concept of a return to "public ownership" as some kind of mystical panacea is just the old reformist, left Labourite crap that we have heard a thousand times. As if it would make any difference to the emancipation, the self-empowerment of our *class*. We have been there before, remember?

Who actually *owned* the rail, the coal and the steel industries, for example? Not the 'people', whatever that is supposed to mean. Certainly not the working class. Ownership passed from the hands of some relatively few capitalists into the hands of a small army of bureaucrats and managers acting on behalf of the state, in the interests of capital as a whole.

So it is full circle back to Network Rail. Some people actually convinced themselves *somehow* that this was a triumph of renationalisation. That was, of course, rubbish. Thanks to the total mismanagement of the company, including the horrors we remember at Hatfield and Potters Bar, Railtrack's share price collapsed, and a large number of those parasites called investment managers and analysts, who between them either control or influence the movement of billions of pounds on a daily basis, were made to look fools. Their Christmas bonuses, worth more than any worker could dream of earning in a lifetime, were out of the window.

The central executive committee of capital, currently headed by New Labour, had to do something, not least because Blair and co rely rather heavily on retaining capital's trust and, more to the point, capital's hefty donations, while the influence of the trade unions is for the moment almost entirely marginalised.

The rail network is crying out for full, open and democratic control by the working class itself: in this case by those who work on it and those who use it - those who have a real interest in its efficiency, comfort and above all safety ●

Ernie Shenton

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