

# THE Socialist

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Photo: Scott Taylor

**T**HE NATIONAL Union of Students (NUS) have called their first national demonstration for years bringing thousands of students from across Britain to London to protest against tuition fees and the abolition of the grant.

Kieran Roberts

It shows the pressure that the New Labour leadership of NUS have been put under as the movement against fees, especially for mass non-payment, gathers momentum. They need to be seen to be doing something.

The demonstration should give confidence to the students marching that tuition fees and the abolition of the grant are beatable.

Andrew Pakes, the Blairite NUS president, unfortunately, will not be providing any answers to how that victory might be achieved.

But Socialist Party and Save Free Education members will, following the demonstration, it is vital that we go back to the universities and colleges and build mass non-payment of fees. Every student who opposes the abolition of free education

should pledge not to pay their fees.

Every student who does not have to pay should pledge solidarity and take part in demonstrations and occupations to defend non-payers from sanctions by university authorities.

Mass non-payment, backed by such action, will make tuition fees unworkable and can force the government to scrap them while building a movement capable of winning back the grant.

The recent four-day occupation of the administration block by Oxford students after management stopped non-payers from sitting exams, shows that students are willing to take on the authorities.

There are 300 students at Oxford refusing to pay fees and despite the brutal eviction of students from the administration building, they have vowed to continue to build mass non-payment of fees.

Join Save Free Education today to help build a movement based on mass non-payment and mass action at your college

see feature pages 6&7;  
Swedish students take action, page 3

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Inside:



**Sleepless over Seattle**  
JANE JAMES looks at the World Trade Organisation summit.

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# Labour's uneasy compromise

**L**ABOUR ARE finally allowing Ken Livingstone onto the shortlist for Labour's candidate for mayor.

Jim Horton

The party's officialdom, fearing a possible damaging split in London's Labour Party, with the possibility of Livingstone standing as an independent, was forced to give way.

Frank Dobson, not wanting to be seen as a non-credible candidate selected by default, threatened to resign if Livingstone wasn't shortlisted.

After last Tuesday's fiasco both sides agreed a form of wording to allow Livingstone onto the ballot. Both Millbank and Livingstone compromised.

The selection panel backed down from forcing Livingstone to agree to Prescott's plans for London's underground, he can now campaign against this during the selection process. But Livingstone made a categorical pledge to stand by whatever manifesto is drawn up, including a Blairite manifesto committed to tube privatisation.

Within hours of this selection, Blair launched a vitriolic attack on Livingstone. Dobson is the Blairite choice.

The outcome will be very close. Dobson already has half

the votes he needs to win; he has overwhelming support amongst MPs, MEPs and Greater London Assembly (GLA) candidates.

Livingstone is well ahead in the trade union section of the electoral college, but needs at least 70% of London Labour Party members to stand a chance of winning.

Voting has been delayed until February to give Dobson's supporters time for a demolition job on Livingstone. This also gives Livingstone little time to mount an independent campaign if he loses the selection ballot.

There are few policy differences, aside from financing the tube, between the candidates. Blair wants this bitterly fought campaign to focus on Livingstone's record as GLC leader.

Incredibly Blair claims Labour remained out of office for 18 years because the left controlled the Labour Party. In fact Labour lost the 1979 general election because of the right's attacks against the low-paid.

Over 70% opposed the Tories' undemocratic abolition of the GLC. Livingstone's mistake was not to mount a mass campaign in defence of the GLC and its fares fair policy.

Blair fears that Livingstone

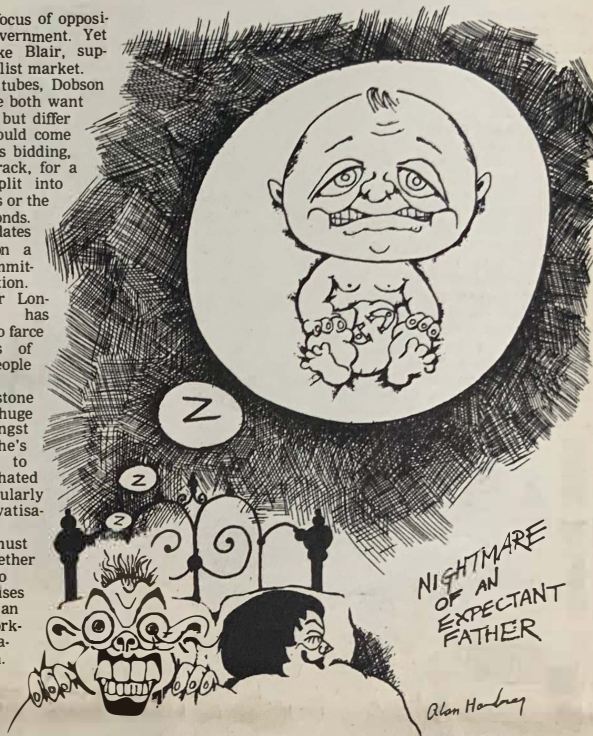
will become a focus of opposition to the government. Yet Livingstone, like Blair, supports the capitalist market.

Even on the tubes, Dobson and Livingstone both want private finance but differ on where it should come from: companies bidding, including Railtrack, for a tube system split into three companies or the issuing of bonds. Both candidates would stand on a manifesto committed to privatisation.

The race for London's mayor has degenerated into farce - the interests of working people barely feature.

But Livingstone has generated huge support amongst Londoners - he's perceived to oppose Blair's hated policies, particularly on tube privatisation.

Livingstone must now choose whether he capitulates to Blair or galvanises his support for an independent working-class alternative to Blairism.



**Livingstone must now choose whether he capitulates to Blair or galvanises his support for an independent working-class alternative to Blairism.**

## Archer misses the Private road to failure bullseye

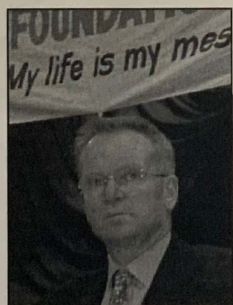
**"A**NY HOLE you can dig, we can dig deeper" should be the Tory theme song after Lord Archer withdrew from the race to be London's mayor.

It followed News of the World allegations that Archer had persuaded a friend to give him an alibi in a libel case involving a prostitute.

Archer scandals are ten a penny. But he's a favourite of party bigwigs like Thatcher so Tory leader Hague backed his candidacy, calling him a "candidate of probity and integrity".

Integrity? Archer may be a lousy novelist, but he's a bloody good liar. He has lied to cover up his tracks after the allegations of sex with a prostitute and about his Oxford education.

He's invested in a fraudulent firm and escaped bankruptcy proceedings and profited from



JEFFREY ARCHER

shares in Anglia TV where his wife was a director but escaped punishment for insider dealing.

Any support which Archer got out of Labour's problems has evaporated. He faces possible criminal charges. The party leadership could expel him, fearing that they could drown in a lake of sleaze.

No wonder voters are cynical about the mainstream political parties.

**T**HE GOVERNMENT'S proposals in the Queen's speech to tackle Britain's transport crisis don't begin to get to grips with the problem.

John Dolan

New Labour propose tighter regulations and more safety controls for the railways, but the government could have rationalised the railways with overwhelming public support after the Paddington disaster.

New Labour supports free-market capitalism, however. But if you rely on capitalism, what happens when there's a conflict between spending money on safety and public service and maximising dividend payments for private rail investors?

Serious problems face the roads. Too many car journeys are made and this will increase for years to come if nothing is done.

The government say councils should decide locally whether to bring in workplace parking charges or toll charges into

town centres.

Charging is a crude method. The poorest car owners - particularly low-paid workers who drives to work - will be hit hardest by these measures.

Alternatively, reforms such as reintroducing bus conductors would make public transport more useful for disabled people and parents of young children. It would also speed up traffic and reduce congestion.

A London opinion poll reported last week that most women are so concerned about their safety when travelling late at night that they have either cancelled plans to go out or bought a car.

Public transport should be made safer and more welcoming by putting guards on trains, increasing station staff and running more frequent services outside rush-hour.

But will Labour's favoured private-owned operators implement these changes? Not if it means less profits for them. And how do you force a company to invest money if you don't control it?

## Rail bosses police themselves

**"Y**OU REALISE Great Western pay a substantial part towards the British Transport Police budget, don't you?" First Great Western rail company's solicitor told Transport Police inquiring into their signalling system's safety.

The company, fined £1.5 million over the 1997 Southall rail crash, plans to withhold documents and "noble" the investigation into rail crashes.

Railtrack and the train operating companies control the British Transport Police budget! They pay officers' salaries, sit on the police committee, pick the chief constable and top policemen and decide their 'priorities'.

Obviously collecting information on crashes which could hurt their profits isn't a priority.

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Return to: Socialist Party, PO Box 24697, London E9 5FP or phone 0181 533 3311

**THE Socialist** Have you got news for us?

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# Swedish school students protest

ON 22 November, the city of Umeå, in northern Sweden had one of its biggest demonstrations ever when 1,500 school students protested against school cuts.

Ingrid Eriksson, Socialist Justice Party, Sweden

Teachers at one school started the protests with a wildcat strike, and a wave of school strikes followed against the Social Democrat/Left Party (ex-Stalinist) council.

School students were particularly upset at plans to abolish school nurses and welfare officers and to charge for lunches.

More cuts are expected. When a Left Party councillor blamed the cuts on officials, a student replied: "It is politi-

cians who say money must be saved."

Some students held a "sit-down strike" inside the council building. A few students (out of 1,500) threw eggs. A Social Democratic paper used that to give the ridiculous impression that the "protest got out of hand".

This demonstration was a marvellous show of strength. The Socialist Justice Party (Swedish section of the CWI) distributed leaflets calling for a one-day strike, where students, teachers and other council employees can participate.

We recruited 15 new members to Elevkampanjen (Swedish section of Youth Against Racism in Europe).

We're now preparing for a new demonstration on 29 November when the council decide about the budget.



Photo: Socialist Justice Party

ON THE protest in Umeå.

## University College Cork — Irish socialists suspended

THE SOCIETIES Guild at the University College of Cork, (UCC) Ireland, has banned the Socialist Party together with the Socialist Society, Socialist Workers Party and Sinn Fein.

These organisations were suspended until October 2002 after they took legitimate action to stop fascist historian David Irving speaking at the Philosophy Society.

Socialist Party TD (MP) Joe Higgins, said: "Irving has direct links with violent fascist groups in Britain and Germany... [who] have murdered and burned out immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities."

"It was absolutely correct for student groups to stop this fascist having a platform."

Stephen Boyd, Socialist Party National Committee, said: "We condemn the suspension of our society and others in UCC."

"The banning of political

organisations normally occurs under military and fascist dictatorships.

"Our democratic right to organise and protest has been removed. We will not accept this lying down."

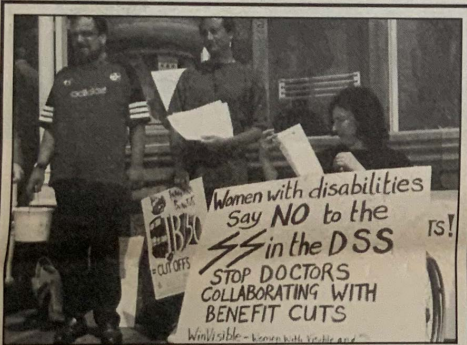
"The Societies Guild and the UCC Philosophy Society defended their invitation to the fascist David Irving by saying he had the right to free speech."

"Clearly these organisations' commitment to free speech is a sham. They support free speech for a fascist but they deny free speech and the right to politically organise to socialists and other anti-fascists."

fascist but they deny free speech and the right to politically organise to socialists and other anti-fascists.

"The Socialist Party will appeal against our suspension and we'll launch a national and international campaign to force UCC Societies Guild to lift this suspension."

Send protests to: Socialist Party, PO Box 3434, Dublin 8.



## New attack on sick and disabled

PEOPLE ON statutory sickness leave could soon have to prove that they're unfit to work after six weeks instead of six months, if the government brings in new rules.

Labour ministers want every GP surgery or hospital to have a "job retention officer" who would try to find the applicant "suitable work".

Will they be asking doctors to take over from JobCentre staff? If not, who's going to pay for thousands of these "job retention officers"? Would GPs and hospitals get any financial help in dealing with the extra work

involved? And most importantly would a "job retention officer" have any positive role in rehabilitating sick and disabled people who want to return to work? And what about sick and disabled people who don't feel up to the demands of a job?

Disability activists suspect these changes are merely meant to cut benefit costs and to increase their harassment.

No wonder government ministers are fretting. The backbench rebellion against this measure could be bigger than that against the Welfare Reform Act.

Steve said: "I didn't know what they were talking about. It turns out to be the J18 demonstration this summer."

"I wasn't on that protest but I felt my knees buckle when they produced this photo of someone who looked quite like me."

"They told me to pull back my hair and looked at my clothes to see if I had anything resembling the clothes in the photograph. They had a file of hundreds of shots."

"They said 'is this you?' I said you can see it's not me. They asked me about my politi-

cal affiliations. They repeatedly said 'you're coming back with us to London'."

"Eventually they said they were going, they 'de-arrested' me because I didn't look sufficiently like the photo. But they still said if we hear your name again we'll arrest you."

"Is this a big police operation designed to frighten the left? I'm making a formal protest about the police's behaviour."

Has anybody else suffered this treatment from the police? If so, contact us and let us know.

## fast news

### The fat of the land

HUGE PERKS paid on top of salaries have forced fat-cats' pay up to 94 times the average workers' wage. The TUC's submission to the government inquiry on top executive pay exposed British bosses' colossal wages and perks deals.

Bonuses have forced up average pay for the top 5% of chief executives to £2,108,420 a year - that's 94 times the average.

TUC general secretary John Monks said that such wide differentials send out "a negative signal to staff, resonant of them-and-us thinking."

Well, capitalism's a them-and-us society, isn't it, Mr Monks? Most trade unionists want the TUC to support them in struggles, to fight for the end of anti-union laws, and fight for a decent minimum wage.

That would help us build a socialist society which would, amongst other things, put the fat cats on a crash diet.

### Lore of averages

"AVERAGE EARNINGS" were £20,861 a year in 1999. Pay researchers Incomes Data Services say that figure hides more information than it reveals.

Two-thirds of all full-time employees earn less than this average, which is pulled upwards by a few top earners.

MPs are amongst the top one-tenth of earners. Their basic salary is just over £47,000 a year - £902 a week before tax. They take home more money than 96% of their constituents.

Members of the House of Lords are also likely to receive a package of pay and perks amounting to £45,000 a year.

New Labour's national minimum wage of £3.60 an hour for over-21s, would correspond to £144 for a 40-hour week, less than one-sixth of an MP's earnings.

### Airheads

LABOUR WILL go ahead with privatising the National Air Traffic Services (NATS), the Queen's speech threatened.

The government is ignoring opposition from air traffic controllers and the pilots union Balpa, who fear a worsening of airline safety standards.

Several unions, including civil service unions IPMS and PCS, threatened industrial action to keep the skies safe if Labour's mad sell-off went through.

## Police harass Socialist activist

BEFORE NEXT week's demonstrations against the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Seattle and in London, the police seem intent on intimidating left-wing activists.

At 7am on 23 November, Socialist Party member Steve German was awoken by three huge policemen who threatened to beat down his door.

They showed no identification but said they were from London. They barged through and immediately arrested Steve "for the City riot in London". "I've just moved to Bristol,"

"They told me to pull back my hair and looked at my clothes to see if I had anything resembling the clothes in the photograph. They had a file of hundreds of shots."

the Socialist

# Sleepless over Seattle

THE WORLD Trade Organisation (WTO) meets in Seattle next week. But as **JANE JAMES** argues it is still not clear whether the talks will get off the ground. Even if they do, world leaders will face a barrage of protest at capitalism's brutality.

**B**ILL CLINTON inadvertently described the WTO summit quite accurately recently. Referring to the thousands of protesters descending on Seattle, he said: "These folks feel like they've been shut out. They think the WTO is some rich guys' club where people get in and talk in funny languages and use words nobody understands, make a bunch of rules that help the people that already have and stick it to the people that have not."

The World Trade Organisation is indeed a "rich guys' club" that major capitalist countries use to break down any barriers to trade which get in the way of their profits. So when Europe refused to allow hormone treated beef to be imported from the United States, the WTO ruled against Europe. The labelling of GM foods may soon be 'illegal' as that too hinders trade.

It is supposed to be an impartial body designed to settle trade disputes but fundamentally rich countries influence and control it. The US will be taking along more trade lawyers to Seattle than all the specialist lawyers in Botswana.

For every official delegate to the trade talks in Seattle there will be five protesters representing 1,100 organisations from 87 countries. They believe that the WTO is one of the world's most powerful organisations acting against the interests of consumers, the environment and poorer countries.

Protesters, including environmentalists and trade unionists have been training in camps in the hills of Washington State and aim to stop the WTO talks taking place. Simultaneous protests will also be



THE LEADERS of world capitalism will meet opposition in Seattle.

taking place throughout European cities including London on 30 November.

These protests signify distrust of, and in many cases opposition to, capitalism as the J18 carnival against capitalism in London last June showed.

## Trade disputes

AS YET no proper agenda has been agreed because there is little ground for agreement on the most contentious issues.

Friction between the major players has been reflected in recent trade disputes; for example Europe will not allow certain American aircraft across its airspace as they are too noisy. Is this due to sensitivity for those living near airports or protection of Europe's Rolls Royce engines from those of

Boeing, which they claim cause the problem?

The US wants to liberalise agricultural trade, ending tariffs and subsidies on farm goods, while Europe and Japan still grant large subsidies to farming.

Health and education services which are still state owned in Europe could also be bought up by private foreign companies as the WTO could get the power to override national regulations.

When emerging markets collapsed last year, leading to a glut of cheap goods, the US soaked up a lot of excess production in the form of imports. The shipments of hot rolled steel sheet from China, Taiwan, India and Indonesia grew from 25,000 tonnes in the first six months of 1998 to 50,000 in the first half of 1999. This has

fueled the protectionist lobby in America, especially within Congress.

During the cold war, the US was forced to play the role of counterweight to the USSR seeing the need to glue together the capitalist countries. Now, despite attempting to play the role of world policeman, they see no threat to capitalism and certain elements in the US are saying: "Let's look after ourselves and to hell with the rest of the world". Such a mood is bound to grow with recession.

## Capitalist interests

FREE TRADE is still the dominant policy of the WTO and world capitalism today. But an economic downturn will see the big powers more determined to protect their own

national economic interests.

As socialists we do not favour one trade policy or another, protectionism or free trade, but see them as different policies to suit capitalism's needs in different situations.

National capitalist classes will generally adopt whatever policies they need to sell their goods in as many countries as possible, while protecting their own domestic market.

But now opposition is growing against the methods of capitalism and to capitalism itself. As government and business leaders come together in Seattle to protect their profits, we must work with socialists world-wide to struggle for a socialist world where goods are produced under democratic working-class control and management for people's needs not capitalist greed.

## Capitalist 'culture clash'

THE ATTEMPTED hostile takeover bid of German communications company Mannesman by Vodafone has exposed the tensions existing between the capitalist powers in the run-up to the WTO summit.

Bitter exchanges took place between German Chancellor Schröder and Tony Blair at the Florence summit of six so-called centre-left leaders. Ironically the summit had been convened to hammer out a collective approach to implementing a Third Way strategy.

But in an acrimonious prelude to the Seattle summit there was more disagreement than agreement. In particular, French leader Lionel Jospin and German Chancellor Schröder talked of a culture clash between Anglo-American capitalism and the consensual European model.



FRENCH WORKERS find their bosses lack 'consensus'.

German government, business and union leaders oppose the Vodafone bid because they say that such hostile bids do not occur in Germany, where they go against the German consensus tradition.

Many German workers, and French workers too, will have found this 'consensus' lacking in recent years as government and bosses have attempted swinging cuts in workers' jobs, rights and conditions. Also German companies have

taken over companies in other countries and carried out brutal cuts and redundancies.

This wrangle between thieves shows how little solidarity exists between the capitalist classes when their own national interests are threatened.

It also shows that workers in Britain, Germany or any other country can have no confidence in these political leaders and bosses to take decisions which are in our interests.

## Beef blow-ups

THE RECENT 'Beef war' between Britain and France blew up because the French government refused to lift its ban on British beef imports after the BSE scare.

\*\*\*\*\*  
Keith Pattenden  
\*\*\*\*\*

But governments in both countries are defending their own capitalist agricultural interests. So despite them being allies in the same trading bloc, the economic rivalry between these two capitalist powers rapidly rose above the surface.

Currently, the ruling class cannot openly introduce import controls so they search for pretexts to defend their trading positions in certain key sectors.

But in a future worldwide recession we will see more overt measures taken. The present Anglo-French dispute will probably blow over before long as a full trade war would not be in either party's interests at this stage.

However, the disgusting display of virulent nationalism in the press shows what could happen in the future, unless the working class intervenes to avert it.

The Independent commented that "the campaign of propaganda and vilification... has been reminiscent of the prelude to a real war, not a trade war". But historically, trade wars have been a natural precursor to 'real' wars.

In fact trade - competition for markets and therefore profits - is what most wars are all about under capitalism.

There is no immediate prospect of direct warfare between the advanced industrial nations, but proxy wars - for example between their former colonies - is possible.

The conscious action of the international working class can prevent this.

Don't be misled by the jingoistic ravings of the capitalist media, workers should join the fight for a harmonious socialist system of production and distribution.

# Parents protest at special needs cuts

**FIFTY PARENTS** of students with special needs protested outside Gloucestershire county council as Labour and Liberal councillors voted for the probable closure of four special needs schools and possible closure of 17 others.

Chris Moore, Stroud

Special needs teachers are likely to face redundancy rather than transfers as they are employed by individual schools.

The plan is to integrate special needs students into mainstream education but parents believe it is based more on cost-cutting than students' interests. "At present our children have access to trained special needs teachers all day, every day", said Graham Barton, chair of the Gloucestershire Special Needs Protection League. "These proposals would mean access for one hour a day, with one special needs teacher and two support workers for 20 children."

At present around 15,000 of 16,000 special needs students in Gloucestershire are integrated into mainstream education. But students affected by these plans have more severe needs,

including autism, and many of their attempts at integration have proved unsuccessful in the past.

"My daughter had 24-hour support but couldn't cope because she was expected to keep up with the curriculum", explained parent Rose Ellway. "Since she's been at Dean Hall (special school) she's been happy and more confident."

Within the mainstream, Sue Walters found her daughter being bullied and Christine McCann said her son felt "frustrated and left out because he couldn't keep up with the others." These are typical of parents' experiences.

Integrating vulnerable people into mainstream society is not a simple process. If carried out on the basis of cost-cutting it can leave many people feeling more isolated and stigmatised, as with Thatcher's policy of community care for those with a mental illness or disability.

With Labour's attacks on education, with performance-related pay, education action zones as a method of privatisation and the introduction of tuition fees and abolition of the grant, it is no surprise these parents have no faith in Labour promises.



"HELP NOT HURDLES" - parents protest at special needs cuts.

Photo: Chris Moore.



Photo: Chris Moore

## Brian Parsons - fighting for justice

**WRONGLY CONVICTED** of murder in Devon, 1988, Brian Parsons has had the decision on his appeal deferred. As his brother Philip says: "This case has destroyed any faith the family had in justice in this country. Too much is stacked to protect the system."

Chris Moore, Action Against Injustice

After a burglary and murder took place near Colyton, Devon in 1987, police appealed for witnesses. At the time police claim the murder took place Brian was nearly forced off the road by a van. He gave this information to the police and was soon turned from witness to suspect.

A pair of gloves and a hammer were linked to the murder. Meanwhile, police towed Brian's van away after it had been crashed and later called to his workplace taking away an old coat of his.

Fibres from the gloves were

subsequently found in Brian's van and coat but only after the gloves had been mysteriously moved from their original box in the forensic team's care to another box. Normally such events would be logged but this was not.

Campaigners believe that these fibres were planted by the police. This appears to be backed by forensic evidence.

Investigations by journalists after Brian's conviction, revealed the police knew of 29 similar burglaries in the area over four years.

There was a pattern. The victim would be an isolated elderly woman, the electricity and phone were cut and vomit or faeces were found.

The police denied vomit had been found, yet it was later revealed they had video evidence of it. Brian had no previous convictions, yet two professional burglars had been arrested, who fitted this evidence - one hated old women and had a habit of vomiting. A friend claims they talked to

him of a murder. They had a regular accomplice also called Brian Parsons.

Forensic evidence, including body temperature, also indicates that the time of death was later than stated, when Brian has an alibi.

This case like, so many others, shows the determination of family and campaigners to fight for justice. The police and courts cannot be trusted. Both need to be made accountable to the community and come under their democratic control.

Judges should also face election and juries should be involved in appeals, with all evidence available for presentation not just so-called 'fresh' evidence.

◆If you want to help fight corruption, brutality and racism in the Criminal Justice System contact: Action Against Injustice, PO Box 858, London E9 5HU.

## New Dealers take strike action in protest at suspension

**SOCIALIST PARTY** members JAMES PALMER and ANDY JOHNSON, Langwith, North Derbyshire, have started a campaign against the government's New Deal programme after one of them was penalised for being ill.

JAMES HAD his benefit suspended for two weeks for leaving a New Deal Programme 'voluntarily'. He had been forced onto an accountancy course he didn't want to do after his gateway period expired. (Under New Deal

claimants must find a placement within a set time or lose benefit).

James was then diagnosed as diabetic and felt he couldn't continue the course as the illness was affecting his concentration.

But the Employment Service wouldn't move him and said his only option was to make a fresh claim for Job Seekers' Allowance or sign off and go on the sick for 13 weeks - then he wouldn't have to do a New Deal option for two years as he is over 25. Unfortunately, his GP wouldn't agree to this.

Two months later, James had his benefit suspended for two weeks. He decided it was time to make a stand.

He contacted fellow Socialist Party member and 'New Dealer' Andy and they agreed to go on strike. James refused to job seek and attend New Deal interviews while Andy refused to attend his course in solidarity for the two weeks of James' suspension.

They picketed the Shirebrook JobCentre, petitioning against the New Deal and selling *The Socialistist*. In just one hour they collected over 20 sig-

natures, sold three Socialistists and found two new potential Party members.

They met with success inside the JobCentre too, as the staff agreed to turn a blind eye to James' refusal to job seek. They even rearranged his New Deal interviews so that he wouldn't have to 'scab' during his suspension.

The staff went on to explain some of the problems they were having with the Employment Service and agreed that one day they could also be in the same situation as James.

Andy also got an interview moved from his current placement to one which pays more than just benefits. So all in all it was very productive action.

Editors note:

Have you had any bad experiences on New Deal? What do you think about James and Andy's protest action? Write or phone and tell us - see page 2 for details.

# How to defeat tuition fees

## Fees deny access to education

**THE LATEST evidence suggests that the changes in student funding are discouraging precisely the people Labour most wants to see at university - adults, the poor and non-whites - from entering higher education.**

*The Economist, 30 October 1999*

**NEW LABOUR'S** claims that they want to widen access to Higher Education while abolishing fees occurs have been rubbished by a series of official statistics and reports.

The latest figures published by UCAS (the university applications clearing house) show that there was a drop of more than 11% in the number of over 21s who applied for degree courses in 1997-98. The number applying for HNDs also fell.

The number of students from the 'bottom' social classes (skilled manual, skilled non-manual, partly skilled and unskilled) who applied to do degrees or HNDs also fell. Applications from students from 'professional' families fell too, though by a smaller margin, suggesting that the abolition of free education affects the middle classes as well.

Black students were also disproportionately affected, with a larger drop in applications than from white students.

A report for the Committee of Vice-Chancellors recently said that the lack of financial support available to students "seems seriously to threaten access" for

adults, students from ethnic minorities and those from poorer backgrounds.

The Cubie committee, set up under pressure from free education campaigners to investigate higher education funding in Scotland, agrees. It also points out that most students have known for years - part-time working during university harms students' academic performance. This gives students from poorer backgrounds a double disadvantage.

Official statistics about university admissions in 1997-98 show that a huge class divide still exists in higher education. Students entering the old universities are more than twice as likely to come from middle- or upper-class families than those entering the polytechnics.

**TOP TEN universities with the lowest proportion of students from upper- and 'professional' class backgrounds:**

Central Lancashire (30%, with 11% from working-class families)  
 Thames Valley East London  
 Wimmerhampton  
 South Bank, Luton  
 London Guildhall, North London  
 Huddersfield (19%, with 6% from working-class backgrounds)

**TOP TEN with the highest proportion of upper- and 'professional' class students:**

Oxford (60%, 17% from working-class families)  
 Cambridge, Bristol  
 Edinburgh, Nottingham  
 St Andrews, Imperial  
 Durham, LSE

**LAST YEAR** £15 million went unpaid in tuition fees. This year the figure could be even higher as even more students find themselves unable to pay up to £1,025 in fees.

*Kieran Roberts*

The new system of no-fee testing the loans, the delays in paying the loans, the delays in paying students' debts will all make it harder for students to pay this year's fees.

But there is another reason why non-payment will reach higher proportions this year: that is the spread of organised non-payment in principled opposition to and defiance of the government's attack on students.

Save Free Education (SFE) are building a campaign for mass non-payment of fees, which we believe can embrace hundreds of thousands of students.

We are campaigning to make sure that refusal to pay the fees develops on a scale that will make them unworkable. If enough students withhold their fees the government would be forced to back down and scrap the fees, even reinstate the grant.

A decade ago the poll tax was defeated through a campaign of mass non-payment embracing 18 million non-payers. The fees can be defeated in the same way.

### 'Pay no fees'

**BORROWING** A slogan from the anti-poll-tax movement, students should unite under the banner 'Pay no Fees'. We have to ensure that across every campus in Britain students know that if they oppose fees then they should refuse to pay them.

If hundreds of students at every university refuse to pay, on principle and in solidarity with those who cannot afford to pay, then no university authority will be able to deny any student the right to a free education.

A university may feel it can kick out a handful of students



ANGRY AND FIGHTING BACK - one of last year's demonstrations against tuition fees.

but they will not be able to exclude hundreds. If a university authority tries to enforce sanctions against a student for not paying then we must organise mass action, demonstrations, occupations and walk-outs to defend them.

Last year, students at four universities organised occupations, which successfully stopped university management from excluding students who had not paid their fees.

SFE believe that it is not the universities' job to deny us education because we do not

have enough money to pay. The vice-chancellors should campaign alongside students for more money from the government so that all students can enjoy a decent and free education and so that staff can work in good conditions with decent pay.

The strength of opposition against them is already putting the future of tuition fees on the line in Scotland. There is a real possibility that the Scottish parliament will vote out of existence by spring 2000 if this happens, then a must only be a matter of time before fees will be finally put to

rest in the whole of Britain. But students cannot rely on politicians in any of the main parties, be it in Holyrood or Westminster, to scrap fees, let alone restore the grant and genuine free education. Even the Liberal Democrats, who say they oppose fees, reneged on this commitment when it came to forming the ruling coalition in the Scottish Parliament. They have since come under pressure to rethink this position.

The best chance of forcing the government to scrap fees is to build mass non-payment.

## What you can do

- If you pay fees - fill in an SFE pledge card committing to not paying them or not paying your remaining instalments.
- If any student is threatened with exclusion or other penalties such as fines or denial of facilities, SFE will organise alongside students to build mass action to defend them.
- After the National Union of Students' demonstration it is vital that we go back to the colleges and build this campaign.

## Work, work, work but no time to study



**"LABOUR'S JUST** widening inequality. The only way I can afford to study is to work part-time too. I get absolutely exhausted. I've had a headache for the last three days. My studies should be the priority but they can't be because I have to work.

Yesterday, I left university at 3.45pm having to be at work for 4pm till 10pm. On Tuesday I have an hour's lecture at 10.30am and again at 4.30pm. In between I have to go to work, supporting people with learning difficulties.

On top of this I'm trying to beat the fees and hold a relationship down. We're given reading lists which I simply don't get time for, whereas students from wealthier backgrounds can save all this time, to either study or socialise which is important for personal development too."

*Darren Ruskin, mature student Leicestershire University*

## FE students: a key role

**NEW LABOUR'S** Tory policies on education have hit students in Further Education (FE) as well as Higher Education (HE) students.

*Arvika Hughes, Stroud*

FE colleges nationally desperately need extra funding. They have been told to take on an extra 180,000 HE students to ease the 'strain' on universities and to provide lower cost education. Yet FE colleges' debt has quadrupled over the last five years. In 1994 the total debt was £51 million, the 1998 level was £228 million.

Financial support for FE students is minimal, with fees applying to most full-time students. There are no living allowances and grants of around £70 are only available to the very poorest students, forcing them to rely on their parents for accommodation and support.

Most students work part time as well as studying, often to pay

for extra course costs and transport. Pay rates are frequently below even the meagre £3.50 minimum wage, which does not even apply to under-21s.

FE students can play a key role in campaigning against tuition fees by supporting non-payers in local universities through protests, demos and other solidarity action, as well as national events.

Those who become involved with Save Free Education at college this year could play a vital role next year in organising and leading mass non-payment campaigns in their universities, if the fees are still in place.

Many working-class FE students have been deterred from Higher Education by fees, the lack of grants and the prospect of colossal debt on leaving. On top of this, many are angry about labour's attacks on young people in relation to employment.

They have every reason to join the movement to defeat tuition fees and restore the grant.

## The Socialist Party says:

- \*Scrap tuition fees.
- \*Reinstate the grant, free education for all.
- \*No exclusions, re-register all second years.
- \*Full access to all facilities and services, and to exam results, for all students whether they have paid their fees or not.
- \*Put education before business interests.

## Organise! Mobilise!

- **Post-demo meeting Under free education** Thursday 25 November, at end of demo, Surrey Tavern (by Oval tube), near Kennington Park.
- **Lobby parliament** Grants not fees. Thursday 2 December, 2pm, St Stephen's Gate, House of Commons (Westminster tube). Speakers include Tony Benn MP.
- **Save Free Education conference.** Build non-payment and mass action to restore the grant. Sunday 5 December, 12 noon, Winton School, Kilick Street, off Pentonville Road, London N1

# Analysis Shadow world government

**MORE EVIDENCE** has emerged this last week of New Labour ministers' involvement in shady international capitalist organisations.

*Ken Smith*

Recent issues of Big Issue, the campaigning magazine sold by homeless people highlighted the involvement of senior Labour ministers in the Bilderberg Group summit. This year's summit took place at the exclusive Portuguese resort of Sintra last summer.

It attracted 111 participants from 24 countries. Some of those who attended from Britain included Peter Mandelson, environmentalist and Prince Charles's associate Jonathan Porritt, Martin Taylor, former chief executive of Barclays and government adviser on the New Deal; Martin Wolf from the Financial Times and two journalists from the Economist.

International names who attended included Monanto head Robert B Shapiro, head of the World Bank James D Wolfensohn and banking billionaire David Rockefeller.

### Witch-hunter

**IRONICALLY,** in the same week as the Big Issue made these revelations, which were not picked up on by other media organisations, Louise Casey (Labour appointed homelessness Tsar) made a stinging attack on the Big Issue.

The Bilderberg Group's existence has been well chronicled since its inception in 1954 in the Dutch hotel which gave it its name. *The Militant* - forerunner of *The Socialist* - highlighted the role of Bilderberg members, including their involvement with the CIA, in witch-hunting socialists out of the Labour Party in the 1960s.

Bilderberg is a clandestine body where attendance is by discreet invite. No formal policy is set out but the high-powered discussions involve most of the world's elite 'movers and shakers'.

Some have referred to Bilderberg as a shadow world government. Will Hutton, the former Observer editor who was invited to the 1997 Bilderberg gathering, described it as a meeting of "the high priests of globalisation".

The Economist said of it: "When it has been scaled by the Bilderberg, you have arrived".

### Bleak outlook

**EACH YEAR** the group meets at different exclusive international locations to discuss vital issues for the international capitalist class. Until now no record has ever leaked out about the gatherings.

Now the Big Issue has obtained minutes reports of the discussions. These show how world capitalists' leaders have been given a very bleak perspective about world relations fol-

lowing Kosovo. They have given Russia a free hand in bombing Chechnya. They discussed further moves for globalisation and pursuing the neo-liberal agenda of attacks on working-class living standards especially in Welfare.

One senior New Labour politician at the gathering said that "New Labour is consolidating the victories of the tight" and that "it might be easier for somebody who claimed to be a socialist to impose change."

On the Kosovo War, the former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, the man responsible for carpet-bombing Cambodia and Laos during the Vietnam war, said that Kosovo "could be this generation's Vietnam" - he plaintively asked "how did one persuade countries like China, Russia and India that Nato's new mandate was not just a new version of the 'white man's burden' - colonialism".

### Jobs for the Bilderbergers

**ANOTHER UN-NAMED** British politician "wondered whether the [Nato] alliance could hold together after the war" and so their pessimism about their New World Order goes on.

Tony Blair last attended a Bilderberg summit in 1993, the year before he became Labour leader.

In the pages of *The Socialist* we have also highlighted the involvement of leading Blairites in another shadowy project, the British American project for a successor generation. This organisation, set up by Pressi Khan, would do all sorts of work for Rupert Murdoch and James Goldsmith in his current leading US and British cabinet members.

This Transatlantic body tries to also ensure that the neo-liberal agenda of global capitalism and anti-working class measures are implemented.

Such is the ineluctable closeness of US and British government interests, it now seems that all of the prominent international jobs like head of Nato (recently filled by George Robertson) and head of the IMF (for which Gordon Brown has been touted) go to those who have secured influence through one or other of these shadowy organisations.



# red letters

## Boot boys

A "DISILLUSIONED Labour Party member" has written to Red Letters disgusted at a letter penned by former Labour Party leader and now EU Commissioner, Neil Kinnock, on behalf of the Frank Dobson's campaign for London mayor, which attempts to rub-bish Ken Livingstone's candidacy.

"This is the second anti-Livingstone type of propaganda that I have received through the post - the first was from Frank Dobson. These people are supposed to be social democrats and yet they are adopting fascist-type tactics."

[Editors note: Kinnock's letter claims that Livingstone's stewardship of the Greater London Council "drove people away from Labour." This is ironic given his purge of Militant members (the forerunner of the Socialist Party) and of the Left in the Labour Party in the mid- to late-1980s. This witch-hunt, instead of making Labour electable, led the Labour Party into two successive general election defeats under Kinnock in 1987 and 1992.]

## New demand

EACH WEEK I read the *What We Stand For* column to see if the list of demands has changed.

It has occurred to me that the column must have a specific demand related to pensioners.

I would suggest, "A doubling of the basic rate retirement pension and its linkage to the rise in average earnings".

There are over ten million pensioners in Britain and many are disappointed with the 75p a week increase in their pension.

A specific demand related to pensioners would possibly result in some pensioners joining the Socialist Party or subscribing to *The Socialist*.

John Smithe, Wisbech, Cambs

## Marxism and religion

AS MUCH as I commend Stan Natrass' role in defeating the Poll Tax and salute his sincerity



JUDGE, JURY and expensive taste in wallpaper.

# Undermining democratic rights

JACK STRAW and the New Labour government are pushing their attack on the right to trial by jury even further. The rapidly diminishing list of criminal offences that can be tried by jury, if a defendant elects it, is going to shrink again.

Under new proposals more categories are going to be triable only by Magistrates Courts, where working-class and ethnic minority defendants generally have less chance of a fair hearing.

This is about cutting costs and increasing the conviction rate, and is an attack on a valued democratic right.

I work in the crown courts and this process, combined with other recent changes and cuts, has effectively legislated my job out of existence.

I'm not all right Jack!

An east London legal worker (name withheld)

## Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Red Letters, PO Box 24697, London E9 5FP, or phone Dave; 0208 533 3311, fax 0208 986 3036, e-mail socialist@dircon.co.uk

We reserve the right to shorten letters.

Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. (Confidentiality will be respected if requested).

\* Winners of letter of the week will receive a £5 book token from Socialist Books, PO Box 24697, London E9 5FP.

in describing himself a Marxist, I cannot agree with his attempt to marry Marxism with Christianity (Red Letters 12/11/99).

The contradiction in Stan's letter is that he denies the existence of God but subscribes to Christian ethics, citing as examples "love thy neighbour", "do unto others as you would have them do unto you", etc.

Surely these ethics describe certain human values that predated Christianity and which

also exist in a myriad of other religions and secular societies.

As a Marxist I can embrace the idea of a common humanity but that doesn't make me a Christian, a Buddhist nor a humanist.

The essential prerequisite of Christianity must be a belief in a God. Devoid of that central tenet it becomes no different to any other non-Christian value system.

Simon Carter, south London



# Building socialism in the colleges

**THIS TERM, the socialist student club at Southampton University has had more interest from students than for years. We regularly have new people turning up to meetings and joining at our lunchtime campaign stalls.**

Students are interested in our organisation not only because of our consistent campaigning against tuition fees. There is also much interest in our weekly meetings and the discussions about socialism and current affairs.

So far three students have joined the Socialist Party. Mark, Andy and Phil were all socialists before they came to Southampton. All three and quite a few others had read about Marx and Marxism. Andy already knew of the Socialist Party and was very interested in our past record. He described us as "the only serious organisation on the left".

Another new member has become the

secretary of the socialist club and is a leading figure in the anti-tuition fees campaign.

Mark has helped to set up our website, so every student on campus can access details of our meetings and campaigns. Every week we e-mail 50 students with our latest news.

At present we are involved in a referendum on affiliation to National Union of Students (NUS) which will take place on 9 December and, despite all the faults of NUS leadership, we are involved in the pro-NUS campaign. Andy is treasurer of the pro-NUS group.

Next week we will be holding a meeting on the lessons of the anti-Poll Tax victory, with a local activist from the campaign. We're very hopeful of some new members coming from the demo. As a report in the student paper said, "We'll keep the red flag flying here."

Nick Chaffey

## The Socialist sales league

Region	% target achieved - OCT-DEC
East Midlands	65%
Merseyside	59%
South West	58%
Yorkshire	55%
Wales	47%
South East	45%
London	42%
Eastern	36%
Northern	30%
Manchester/Lancs	30%
Southern	21%
West Midlands	21%
Miscellaneous	14%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36%</b>

## SPOTLIGHT

SALES NEWS FROM LAST WEEK - SOCIALIST PARTY members in Wales produced their first *Socialist Wales* supplement last week - another step forward for our party! Using the supplement, Swansea sold out campaigning against disability cuts, and Wales have increased their order by 200.

Look out for the Christmas appeal sheet that went out this week. Coventry aim to visit every member and supporter before Christmas and ask them to subscribe - a subscription only costs £2.50. Every region should follow their example.

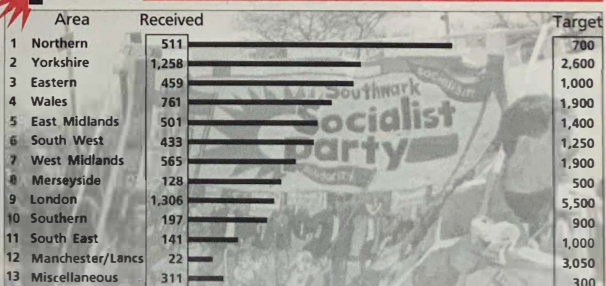
Hillingdon sold 15 *Socialists* campaigning for striking care workers. Medway sold 12 campaigning to Save Free Education. Finally, our first subscription from the Roger Bannister UNISON campaign came in.

Pete Mason

## Socialist Fighting fund - week 7

Total: £6,592

DEADLINE: 7 JANUARY



Total £6,592

£22,000

THERE ARE just four weeks left before the Christmas break. At present only Northern Region are on course to reach their target.

A great effort is required to reach our full target but with proper planning and the active participation and support from members and readers we can still get 100% of the target.

How to achieve the £22,000 target: organise extended campaigning activity at shopping centres at weekends; set a target of raising at least £50 per activity. Use appeal sheets to col-

lect donations off regular sales, around your workplace, college, etc.

We urge all our readers to support the Socialist Party by sending in a donation of a day's income to boost our funds (fill in the form below).

Organise parties, car boot sales, raffles, quiz nights, video nights in the run-up to Christmas and see in the new millennium with a fund-raising party.

John Reid

## THE SOCIABLE PARTY...

### ChrisMarx social

Saturday 11 December '99  
8pm till 12pm

@The Distillers' Arms, 64  
Fulham Palace Road,  
Hammersmith, W6.

nearest Tube: Hammersmith  
(District, Piccadilly, Hammersmith & City lines)

★ Disco ★ Food ★ Raffle ★ Late Bar

£5 waged. £3 concessions.

Proceeds to London Socialist Party Fighting Fund

## CLASSIFIED ADVERT:

The world of CLR James - His Unfragmented Vision by James D Young Just published by

Clydeside press, this new biography of the famous Trinidadian Marxist is available to our readers at a discount.

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Send cheques payable to: 'CLR James Offer' 17-23 Calton Road, Edinburgh, EH8 6DG.

AUSTRALIA IS portrayed in the media as the new long-haul tourist destination bursting with sun, surf and the unspoilt outback. But as John Pilger, veteran campaigning Australian journalist pointed out in his 1989 book *Secret Country*, there is another unspoken, darker side to his country. One of the most disturbing aspects of this secret country is the horrific growth in heroin abuse. Heroin-related deaths in Victoria state have leapt from 41 in 1991 to 261 in 1998.

# A socialist campaign to end drugs nightmare

## Australian heroin epidemic

**JIM O'CONNOR** is a member of Militant Socialist Organisation (MSO) [the Socialist Party's sister organisation in Australia] in Melbourne, Victoria and also one of the leading campaigners in the Community Campaign for Heroin Reform (CCHR), established with the help of MSO members a few months ago. He spoke to **ALEC THRIVES** about the campaign.

### What is the campaign aiming to achieve?

**T**HE AIM is to reform heroin laws and in particular, heroin policies in Australia. To introduce safe injecting facilities also known as "safe houses" where heroin users can inject their heroin and if they overdose they get resuscitated,

an addict who wants to detox and then be rehabilitated to find a place in a programme.

Another aim is for a broad-based drug education programme in schools and in the community generally so that people are more aware of the hazards of drug use and the addictive nature of drugs.

Also, we campaign for an increase in needle exchanges to prevent the spread of diseases such as hepatitis and AIDS amongst the intravenous (IV) drug-using population.

In Australia we have some needle exchanges but generally they are only open limited hours and only in a limited number of locations.

Finally, another objective of our campaign is the introduction of "heroin trials", by which we mean the

practices that was tried out in Switzerland; ie heroin addicts are prescribed by a doctor a regular daily dose of heroin, available in special clinics.

In Switzerland this policy has resulted in a tremendous decrease in a lot of related social problems, including crime. Also, it has helped spread of IV diseases

under control.

Users are not spending the whole day chasing around to get their next deal. Many users on this programme are able to find jobs and secure housing. Eventually, some of them in their own time solve their addiction problem but the first step is to keep them alive and healthy and to get them out of the hands of the dealers.

### What has been the role of Militant in this campaign? And what activities have been involved in?

**M**ILITANT INITIATED this campaign. We called a Militant rally on this issue and a lot of people turned up and were very enthusiastic and we followed that up with a public meeting the next week. At that meeting we launched the Community Campaign for Heroin Reform (CCHR).

Using our experience in other community campaigns over the years we've been able to help the campaign but it is a democratically-run campaign and it involves lots of people not just Militant members.

We have a weekly stall in Smith Street (a notorious area

## Grim conditions

**A** VISIT to the public toilets confirms the depth of the heroin problem. In almost every public convenience, including those at the ultra-modern Melbourne airport, there are yellow, metal boxes on the wall to dispose of used needles.

Many toilets have blue tinted lighting to make it difficult for users to locate their veins before injecting. In some restaurants and fast food outlets you have to ask for the key off the staff as the toilets are permanently locked.

One fast food outlet faced a barrage of complaints over the lack of privacy for customers when they cut the toilet doors so that they could drug out users who had overdosed.

for heroin use). This stall has been the backbone of the campaign. It goes on for about four or five hours and incorporates political action with a petition, distribution of leaflets, discussion with the general public about the issues and also we collect donations.

We've collected about 10,000 signatures now on our petitions and around \$2,500 (about £1,000) in donations.

At the same time we also have practical action to assist users in the area including the distribution of clean syringes and health information.

We've used this stall to get new activists and volunteers and we've had a series of public rallies, street meetings and vigils. These activities have generated a lot of media publicity including national TV.

We've also liaised with other community organisations and we've spent some time discussing the possibility of opening our own safe house on a community basis as an act of civil disobedience to push the debate along.

### How has the campaign impacted on the main political parties?

**I**N THE state of Victoria, the Labour Party has recently

### COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN For HEROIN REFORM

- ✓ CCHRs, freely co-ordinated
- ✓ secure and funding for broad based drug education programs
- ✓ increased needle exchanges and resources for them
- ✓ increased drug rehabilitation and treatment facilities
- ✓ introduction of safe injecting facilities
- ✓ introduction of legal heroin trials

We conduct street demonstrations, lobby politicians, deliver public relations and express ourselves creatively in thousands.

Everywhere we go our aim is to help people who are in trouble with their addiction at our weekly Wednesday evening meetings at CCHR (see next page).

To find out more ring us on 0340 9366, write to PO Box 716, Lower Boxwood, 3008 or visit our website <http://www.heroinreform.org>

revised its policy on heroin use in response to pressure from the community in which our campaign has played a role.

### What's the next stage of the campaign?

**T**O CONTINUE to mobilise community support to convince local councils to implement safe injecting facilities especially in the outlying suburbs. We will also have to deal with a right-wing backlash in the media. It's possible that we can achieve some safe houses in Victoria on a trial basis if we keep the pressure up.

In addition we will continue to fight for other demands of our campaign, some of which will rely on federal government action for instance heroin assisted treatment programmes.

Safe houses will keep people alive but in the longer run we need jobs for the young, working-class victims of heroin, more housing and better quality education, so that young people feel they have a future.

## world news

### Romanian protests

**MASS WORKERS'** demon took place throughout Romania on Thursday 18 November demanding the resignation of the government.

The workers were protesting against the collapse of their already meagre living standards caused by the government's neo-liberal policies. With average wages only \$100 a month, Romanians remain eastern Europe's poorest.

The protests were organised by the country's trade unions who have called for an autumn of labour unrest to denounce the government's slavish devotion to structural adjustment programmes of the International Monetary Fund.

Three years of privatisation, mass layoffs and mass poverty had twice earlier this year led to coal miners marching on the capital, Bucharest. Only the use of troops and false promises of reform prevented the miners from reaching the capital.

University students have also joined in the protests to air their grievances of low grants and poor academic conditions.

General and presidential elections are due in 2000, with the ruling party trailing far behind the ex-Stalinists they beat in elections three years ago.

### Workers' rights abuses

**ON THE** eve of the World Trade Organisation summit in Seattle, USA, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) has attacked new member China's "record of violations of its workers' rights".

The Chinese Stalinist regime crushed the newly emerging independent trade unions and workers' organisations after massacring democracy protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989.

The ICFTU's right-wing general secretary Bill Jordan (formerly of the British AEU union) appears, however, more concerned that the lack of workers' rights in China will give the country a competitive economic edge over its trading partners in the so-called 'developing world'.

### Clinton riot

**PRESIDENT** BILL Clinton provoked a huge anti-US imperialism protest in the Greek capital, Athens, last Friday.

The left-wing protest angry at the US/NATO bombing of Serbia and Kosovo was stopped from marching to the US embassy by riot police. This led to street fighting in central Athens.

The 24-hour state visit climaxed coincided with the 17 November anniversary when in 1973 student protests were brutally suppressed by the then military dictatorship.

10 www.nawa.com.au

**Herald Sun**  
EDITORIAL

overdue.

**STOP THE CARNAGE**  
ROAD TOLL HEROIN TOLL  
**314 246**  
Victorian deaths in 1999

There is an urgent necessity for such facilities here in Victoria because of the epidemic of heroin use. This is due to very cheap heroin and also the high level of unemployment especially among young people.

There are around 300,000 heroin users in Australia - about 1.5% of the population.

The death rate due to heroin use is about ten times the rate compared with Europe - a total of 242 deaths in the state of Victoria alone this year.

It's such a routine occurrence that heroin overdose deaths are listed in the daily papers as an annual toll alongside the annual death toll from road accidents. These two figures are approximately the same!

And, of course, for every person that overdoses on heroin there are thousands more who are addicted and whose lives are being ruined by this addiction.

### What are the other aims of the campaign?

**O**THER DEMANDS include rehabilitation facilities for heroin users. Here in Victoria it's very difficult for a user or

## Dealing with the Drug Problem

by Toni Bloodworth



A Militant Socialist Organisation Pamphlet

SOCIALIST PROGRAMME for the drugs problem.

the Socialist



# Socialist book choice for Christmas

**SOCIALIST BOOKS** are offering some bargain books for the Christmas/New Year holiday. Socialist readers will gain important political ideas and information from these suggested titles. These books will also make ideal seasonal presents for friends and family. Just make your selection, return the completed order form and take advantage of our free book offer. Alternatively, phone through your order to pay by credit card.

**Liverpool: A City That Dared to Fight** by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn.

Not only a commentary on the momentous events in Liverpool between 1983-87 which sent shock waves across the country, this book is also a penetrating political analysis of the growth and development of Marxism in Britain and particularly the role of Militant in Liverpool.

*Hardback at paperback price, only £6.95. Bargain Offer No.1*

**Banner Bright** by Tom Gorman.

**BANNER BRIGHT** A beautifully presented large format bound volume. Excellent colour illustrations and history of trade unions and their banners



*Only £7 (originally £20). Bargain Offer No.2*

**Sylvia Pankhurst: Portrait of a Radical** by Patricia W Romero.

A Suffragette, pacifist, communist, anti-fascist, pan-Africanist, an acquaintance of Lenin, a friend of the radical literati and lover of Keir Hardie, Sylvia Pankhurst's life was intertwined with the workers and protest movements in the first half of this century.

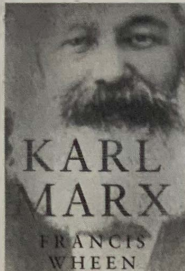
*Published at £24. Now only £7.50. Bargain Offer No.3*

**The Rising of the Women. Feminist solidarity and class conflict 1880-1917** by Meredith Tax, £7.

An excellent 330 pages of historic struggles and political arguments.

*Bargain Offer No.4*

**Karl Marx** by Francis Wheen. "There were only eleven mourners at Karl Marx's funeral on 17 March 1883. His name



and work will endure through the ages.' Friedrich Engels predicted in a graveside oration at Highgate Cemetery. It seemed an unlikely boast but he was right."

*Hardback £15. Bargain Offer No 5*

**The Rise of Militant** by Peter Taaffe.

30 years history of the forerunner of the Socialist Party. From its roots, through the events in Northern Ireland, the 1979 'Winter of Discontent' trade union struggles, Labour's purges of Militant and the Left, the fight of Liverpool city council, the great miners' strike 1984-85 and how the Poll Tax was beaten.

*550 pages. Full price £9.99. Now only £6. Bargain Offer No.6*

**Questioning the Millennium** by Stephen J Gould. £6.99.

In this fascinating and very readable little book, Stephen J Gould, renowned for his superb writings on evolutionary biology, takes us on an historical, astronomical, and calendrical journey through a myriad of millennial-related issues.

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A FREE gift of a book selected by Socialist Books will be sent with all orders.

Gould displays his skill in combining scientific analysis, philosophical insights and wonderful prose.(JH)

**If not now, when?** by Primo Levi

Based on a true story, this novel follows the adventures, struggles and dilemmas of a band of multi-national Jewish partisans during World War Two.

Momentous events are expressed with rare artistic honesty. The characters are subjected to the terrible conditions of war and bigotry but are not mere victims. The story of a desperate band of poor Jews resisting Nazism is sad and terrible, and optimistic and fulfilling.

Primo Levi survived Auschwitz death camp to write brilliant novels. It is said he was close to the ideas of Leon Trotsky. The "Old Man", an authority on literature, would surely have acclaimed this book.(NM)

**The Conformist** by Alberto Moravia, £6.99.

Filmed by Bernardo Bertolucci in 1969 this book follows Marcello Clerici from childhood to middle age as he battles with his sadistic desires

and his longing to conform to what he perceives as normal society. Becoming an assassin for Mussolini's government and sent to Paris on his honeymoon with a mission to murder a leading Italian socialist, Marcello's collapse is mirrored by the fall of the Fascist state.(MM)



## reviews

### DOROTHY HODGKIN - A Life, by Georgina Ferry

**WHY DO so few women do science? There is a general view that the male-dominated structure of science excludes women from the 'club', but is this the whole answer? This biography of the greatest British woman scientist of the 20th century gives some clues.**

Geoff Jones

Dorothy Crowfoot was born in 1910, the eldest of three girls. Her parents were middle class 'rolling stones', spending most of their life in Africa and the Middle East. Her father was Director of Education in the Sudan for many years, then director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem. Her mother travelled with him, leaving the children at home with their family.



Dorothy supporting the Vietnamese revolution.

Dorothy was interested in chemistry from an early age and went to Somerville College Oxford, where she discovered her life's interest.

In the 1930s the science of molecular biology barely existed. The structures of simple molecules (like water, H<sub>2</sub>O) were known, but molecules of substances important in biology like proteins or enzymes, contained many thousands of atoms and their structures were completely unknown.

It was becoming possible to study such molecules using the technique of X-ray crystallography - shining a beam of X-rays at a crystal and photographing the diffraction patterns produced. From these patterns it was possible in principle to work back to the structure of the molecules which made up the crystal.

The work was fiendishly complicated, especially before the invention of computers, but Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin (she married in 1937) became the leader in the field, not only because of her ability to carry out brilliant experimental work, but also because of her unrivalled ability to 'see' complicated three-dimensional structures out of masses of data.

In 1955 she and her team described the structure of the vitamin B12, work which won her the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1964. In 1969, they worked out the structure of Insulin, a result vitally important for the treatment of diabetes. She retired in 1977 but was active until her death in 1994.

She was active politically throughout her life. She went on demonstrations against

Franco in the 1930s and became a founder member of the left-wing Association of Scientific Workers (later part of ASTMS, now MSF).

She quite consciously used the prestige of her Nobel Prize as a supporter of nuclear disarmament and world peace and in opposition to the US war in Vietnam. Very much influenced by the Quakers, she fought to the end of her life for peace, against exploitation and for her idea of a socialist society.

Dorothy Hodgkin was a socialist egalitarian, loved by all who worked with her. For that reason alone, her biography is worth reading. But does her life tell us anything about science and women?

Obviously, she was a brilliant scientist. But she also had a steely resolve. For example, she heard that another chemist, Alexander

Todd, known as Lord Todd Almighty by his students, might be unveiling the structure of B12 at a conference without giving proper acknowledgement to her group. She dropped everything to go to make sure that he did not claim unfair precedence. Even so, Todd received a Nobel Prize two years before she did.

She also had two other great advantages. Her unconventional upbringing had given her an amazing self-reliance. Her family extended itself elastically to take in adults who could help bring up her three children while she was working and travelling.

Also the atmosphere of Somerville College in the 1930s was strongly supportive of academic women, even scientists, and her family connections gave her a confidence and an entrée into academic circles.

This is not to devalue her worth, but merely to realise that a woman without such a great ability, without such a supportive background and with a more fragile self-confidence could easily fail to reach the same level as a male scientist with no greater basic ability.



**Dorothy Hodgkin - A Life** by Georgina Ferry, (Granta) £9.99.

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# Support for drivers' stand

LONDON BUS drivers have held a series of one-day strikes which virtually ensured no buses ran in west London. On one of the strike days just 23 of the normal 446 buses ran. KEITH DICKINSON spoke to pickets at the Acton garage.

The strikes by drivers of First Centre West buses follow a rejection of a 4.5% pay offer. The strikers are also protesting about the threat to public safety from working long hours.

One Acton driver who can't be named because of a gagging clause in the drivers' contract said that drivers earned an average of £170 a week after stoppages. They told *The Socialist* that to reach the £170 for a week's "normal" work, you have to drive the first bus out at 4.38am. Drivers are forced to work overtime and rest days to push their pay above £200.

If you answer the management's adverts for new drivers they say "you can earn £400 per week" when new recruits find out the truth, they leave.

No wonder the company are about 100 drivers short. This exposes the government's proposal to increase the tax on car use. There are not enough buses to encourage people to leave their cars at home.

Over 90% of drivers came out despite management threats. A transport union, TGWU spokesperson told a local newspaper: "The turnout gives an indication of the strength of feeling... when you work 13-day fortnights and do excessive overtime to keep services running, something has to give."

The drivers say the travelling public are sympathetic to their strike despite the huge inconvenience and lack of advance warning. The next strike days are planned for 3 and 4 December, which will hit the Christmas sales.

One picket had already been sacked by another bus company for trying to organise, but there is anger developing across the whole of London. Strikes by bus drivers have already taken place in east and south-east London.

A steward from another bus



PICKETS AT Acton garage.

Photo: Ealing Gazette.

company who came to express solidarity said they were likely to be joining them in action soon.

there will be a feature on bus deregulation in London in a future issue

## Skychef workers out for a year

ON 20 November 1998 270 Skychef workers at Heathrow were sacked for taking a 24-hour official strike. Lufthansa Skychef is a multinational with a 30% share in world airline catering.

Paul Kershaw, TGWU

Last Saturday, 500 people attended a conference and picket, saluting the determination of the predominantly Asian workforce who remain solid one year into the dispute.

Speakers from Skychef plants in north America, Denmark, France, Spain and Germany expressed solidarity.

Bill Morris, leader of the Skychef workers' union TGWU, said that it would be hypocritical of the government to go round the world claiming to defend human rights, as in the Balkans, but fail to act on human rights in the workplace at home.

Stirring stuff but his limited response was to stress the workers' moral case and call for a boycott of Lufthansa.

Steve Brinkley, bringing a donation from Essex FBU, said that firefighters had learned the need to take national action to defend the right to strike. He called on the TGWU to put national action on the agenda.



STILL ON the picket line, one year on.

Photo: Paul Mattsson.

Socialist Party members will actively support the boycott campaign. But if the trade union movement is to defend these workers it will have to raise taking solidarity action, even where it would mean breaking anti-union laws.

Information from and messages of support to: Allen Green, TGWU, Transport House, Uxbridge Road, Hillingdon UB10 0LY.

Tel: 0181 573 9494, Fax: 0181 569 2292, email agreen@tguw.org.uk.

## Bannister wins 56 nominations

UNISON HEAD office have now received 45 nominations for Roger Bannister to stand as UNISON general secretary. 56 nominations have been made in total.

Apart from the London Regional Council, the nominations in London are: Bromley, Barking, Lambeth, Camden, Greenwich, Haringey, London Fire and Civil Defence Authority, Islington, Ealing, London Housing, Waltham Forest local government, Hillingdon, Hammersmith, Waltham Forest Health, University College London Hospitals, Guildhall University and London Voluntary Organisations. Elsewhere: Kent, Medway, Oxford City, Southampton Health, Southampton district, Plymouth, Bristol, Wiltshire Health, Doncaster, Wakefield

Health, Kirklees, Hull, Leicester City, NE Derby, Nottingham City, Ashfield local government, Nottingham County, Nottingham Health, Leicester Health, East Midlands Gas, Northern Housing, Newcastle, University of Central Lancs, Carlisle, Manchester Probation, Knowsley, Sefton, Liverpool City, Bolton, Liverpool Community College, South Manchester Hospital, Manchester Community Health, Blackburn Health, Burnley, Morecambe, Tameside, Telford and Dudley Health.

All Campaign for a Fighting Democratic UNISON members are urged to take up workplace collections. Send to: national campaign organiser Glen Kelly, 37 Linale House, Murray Grove, London N1 7QH. Tel: 0171 251 8449.

## in brief

### Postal workers fight back

POSTAL workers in Maidstone, north London, Bridgwater and Paisley, west Scotland all recently took part in unofficial walkouts. They were all over disciplinary action taken against fellow postal workers.

In three of the cases it was union reps who were either sacked or disciplined. In all cases the union reps were trying to defend workers who were also being disciplined.

### Crow re-elected

BOB CROW has been re-elected as assistant general secretary of the RMT railworkers' union. This was against a strong challenge from a right-wing Blairite candidate.

Bob Crow won by 7,137 votes to 6,6795. Crow's victory shows that the majority of union members still want a union leadership that is on the Left and fights for the members. But the recent inability of the union to stand up to the courts and mount an effective campaign against rail and tube privatisation has also left many railworkers with limited enthusiasm for the current leadership.

### PCS Groups Conference

CIVIL SERVICE workers, members of PCS, attended the groups conference in Scarborough this week. Since the break-up of the national pay bargaining system, groups like the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service have negotiated separately. This has caused a lot of tension at the conference and diverted attention from the shortcomings of the national union leadership.

more next week

### Fat cats' cream

BRITAIN NOW has the widest pay gap between chief executives and their workforce in Europe. The average pay for a top chief executive was £413,300 in 1997/1998, 18 times more than the average worker. With incentives, they get 26 times more.

### Asbestos ban

ASBESTOS IMPORTS to the UK are banned from 23 November, but 150,000 people are likely to die of asbestos diseases by 2025, due to exposure before that date. Millions of tons of asbestos still remain in homes, workplaces and other buildings.

### Turkey strike at Christmas?

WORKERS AT Bernard Matthew's turkey plants in Norfolk and Suffolk are balloting for action. The TGWU members are in pay dispute and may strike in the run-up to Christmas.

## All pals together

NEARLY 90% of the 775 workers at the Vertex customer service centre in Bolton have voted to support a union recognition deal with UNISON. The partnership agreement is in advance of the limited changes New Labour has made to the anti-union laws.

Vertex, a subsidiary of United Utilities which provides customer services to Norweb Energi, has refused to recognise the union for the last three years.

Dave Prentis, UNISON

deputy general secretary and the establishment's candidate for general secretary has welcomed the agreement. "It is in both our interests to expand the business and make it a success. The vote in favour of collective bargaining sends a clear signal that previous differences can be overcome if there is a willingness and co-operation on both sides."

Prentis didn't mention that UNISON's policy is to take these utility companies back into public ownership.

# THE Socialist

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## CALL CENTRE WORKERS FIGHT BACK

**T**HE STRIKE of BT customer service call centre staff against their intolerable working conditions was the first national strike of BT clerical workers for almost 13 years. Workers in Bristol and Leicester spoke to *The Socialist*.

"It's like going back to the last century in the way workers are treated. Technology was supposed to make life easier, but what it actually means is more pressure and increased monitoring of people.

"We are timed when we go to the loo. We have to key in a code whenever we leave the desk. If you are away from your desk for more than a certain percentage of the time you are 'spoken to' by a manager. If it continues you are threatened with the 'poor performance' procedure.

"I've known people sit there cross-legged because they are worried about leaving their desk, they just have their eyes on the board that says how many calls are coming in.

"The 'poor performance procedure' is to short-cut the proper disciplinary procedures, it is a fast track out of the company. Disciplinary procedures are much easier to defend and the union is called in at an earlier stage.

"We are not generally a militant bunch, we are not wildcat strikers. We have tried to resolve it but BT just don't seem interested, we have been left with no alternative but to take action."

MEREDITH CLARK, assistant secretary CWU, Leics and Northants Clerical Branch

"The depth of feeling and determination for the strike to succeed in Bristol was shown by only the managers turning up for work, with five agency staff. All

the permanent staff stayed away so the call centre was useless.

"Although the agency staff were not balloted, the agency allowed people to choose, without victimisation, if they wanted to come in or not.

"Public support was good and workers from other call centres came to ask for advice. CWU members who joined six weeks ago supported the strike wholeheartedly.

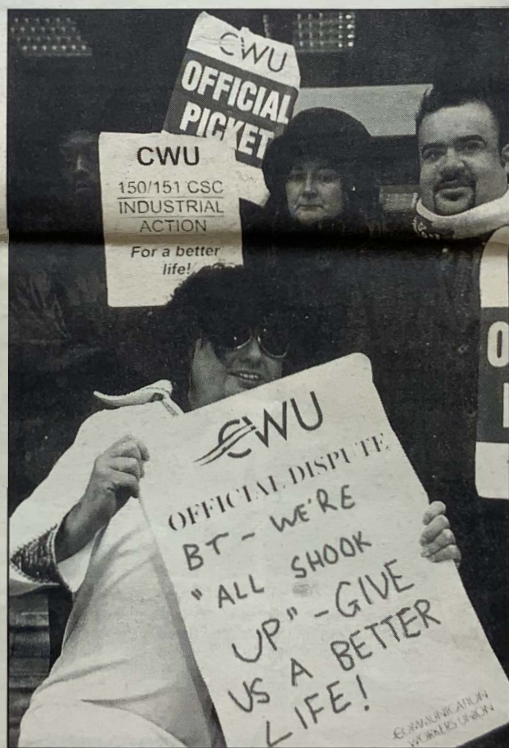
"The CWU has pencilled in 10 December and 10 January as further strike days. The union should campaign for the next strike, with no cancelling it unless the union demands are met in full.

"We should spread the strike to telemarketing call centres and ballot the agency workers as well.

"The CWU should organise a one-day conference to build a campaign, backed with industrial action, to improve working conditions for all call centre workers in telecoms."

BILL STEPHENS, CWU Bristol

**"We are not generally a militant bunch, we are not wildcat strikers. We have tried to resolve it but BT just don't seem interested, we have been left with no alternative but to take action."**



ELVIS SHOWS his support on the Wood Green picket line.

- ★ No partnerships, independent union action to defend jobs and conditions.
- ★ End the use of agency labour. All workers to have full employee status, with a decent minimum wage and conditions.

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- ★ Implement the trade unions' demand for a £5 an hour minimum wage as a step towards a £7 an hour or £280 a week minimum income (based on the European Union decency threshold), with no exemptions.
- ★ Reject Welfare to Work. For the right to decent benefits, training or a job for all without compulsion.
- ★ Policies for full employment including:
  - a 35-hour week without loss of pay.
  - a massive public spending increase for health, housing, education, childcare, leisure and community facilities.
- ★ Employment protection rights for all from day one of employment.
- ★ Scrapping the anti-union laws. Trade unions to be democratically controlled by members. Full-time union officials should be regularly elected and receive the wage of the average worker.
- ★ Free, high quality education for all from nursery to university; with a living grant.
- ★ Rebuild the National Health Service, free at the point of use and under democratic control.
- ★ Defend abortion rights for a woman's right to choose.
- ★ Decent housing, with affordable rents.
- ★ Investment in a cheap, accessible, integrated and environmentally friendly, publicly owned transport system.
- ★ For the right to asylum. The scrapping of the Asylum Act and of all racist laws.
- ★ An end to police harassment. For the abolition of the Criminal Justice Act.
- ★ An end to discrimination and prejudice on the grounds of race, gender, sexuality and disability.
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- ★ An end to the rule of profit, for a socialist society to meet the needs of all.

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