

FRANCE ROUTED IN AFRICA - AND A GOOD THING TOO

The end of the cold war and the election of the Clinton regime in the US saw a massive shift in attitude by western countries towards Africa, with the exception of a couple of the former major powers such as Britain and France. A key factor in the destabilisation of a number of African countries was Zaire. The end of the cold war saw the US essentially withdraw their active support from the vicious and nasty Mobutu regime. But France, with a bit of help from Britain and with the support of Morocco stepped into the gap left by the US. They supplied military equipment and a range of covert and less covert support. In doing so they used the position they hold in the UN to help this process, a position they gained by virtue of their possession of nuclear weapons.

Zaire is poor but has immense mineral wealth. It's poor because countries like France have maintained a deeply corrupt and incompetent government in power while

exploiting the mineral wealth for themselves. Zaire was also responsible for making it possible for Savimbi to destroy the Angolan economy, bringing that country to its knees.

The so called civil war in Rwanda has been heralded by the media as a tribal dispute when in fact it was an attempt to maintain the repressive military regime in Rwanda against popular opposition. The lengths to which France was prepared to go, in funding and facilitation an attempt at Genocide of at least 2 million of the population in Rwanda makes ones blood run cold. The french plan was defeated half way through this leaving only a million dead, but still they attempted to continue the scheme by their support for the defeated armies in camps in Zaire. France, with a bit of help from Britain, successfully lobbied European governments to make sure that any aid coming from those countries to Rwanda was in fact channelled towards the camps in neighbouring countries, which housed the

defeated armies and militia from Rwanda. The intention was clearly to apply the same formulae to Rwanda that had been applied to Cambodia, to Angola and to Mozambique. Armies supported by foreign aid holed up in bordering countries intervened in the country destroying the economic and agricultural base and so destroyed the country's ability to function. In the process anti-personnel landmines were used extensively.

France's interests in Rwanda were actually more to do with maintaining control over Zaire than in Rwanda itself. A popular and progressive regime in Rwanda would have formed a base for the opposition forces from Zaire and would have proved an example for people in Zaire that it is possible to have a progressive government.

What actually transpired was that, clearly with the support of Rwanda, Burundi and a number of other african government's the Zaire former governments forces from Rwnada and the Zaire army were challenged

militarily and defeated. At the time of writing the it is clearly only a matter of time before the Mobutu regime is defeated in Zaire. This represents a major defeat for policies pursued by France over the past ten years in Africa, of exploitation and of destabilisation.

Two countries remain which continue to afford the type of support traditionally sought by countries such as France and Britain. These are Morocco and Nigeria. Both of these face serious long term democratic and military challenges. The fall of Zaire will, hopefully, speed the process of establishing democratic regimes there too.

As the Financial Times, in an article by Michela Wrong on the 26th April this year, put it "History will probably look back on Mobutu's fall as the death rattle of cold war involvement in Africa. Dealing a shattering blow to France, the last colonial power still heavily involved in the continent, it could herald a new, unpredictable era in which Africans set their own agenda".

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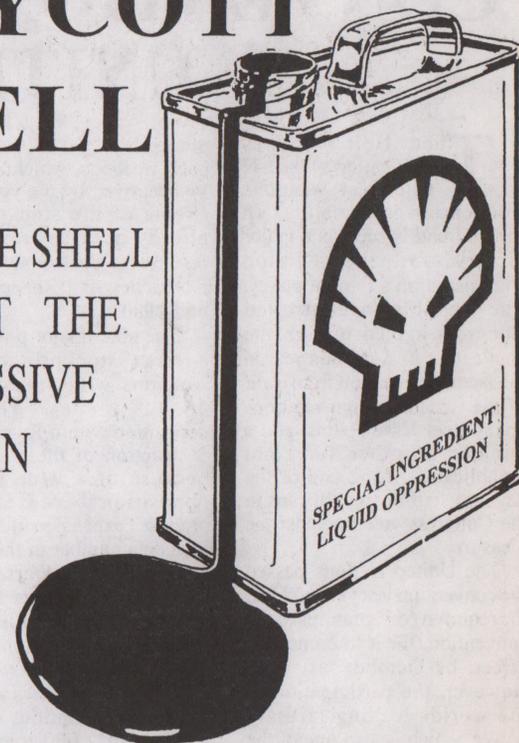
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Issue 18

Spring 1997

DUMB AND DUMBER STILL - BRITAIN BUYS MORE NUCLEAR SUBMARINES

The final stages of the contracts to buy three more 'Astute' class Trafalgar nuclear powered submarines were being discussed between the Ministry of Defence and the GEC Marconi - who currently own the VSEL yard in Barrow - about a month before the general election was called. Part of the pressure for this order has come from VSEL itself because of shortages of orders and the need to retain its skilled labour force. There is no military strategy behind this order. In fact there are a number of serious military flaws in the concept.

This class of submarine was conceived of as what is referred to as a Hunter-Killer submarine. The idea was that it would stalk Russian ballistic missile submarines and, in the event of a thermo-nuclear war, would destroy it before it had a chance to let off its missiles.

However, this would be logical only if Britain started the war, because otherwise the 'enemy' submarine would be able to destroy it and let of its missiles before the hunter-killer was aware of what was happening. It was at best a suicide mission, given what would have happened if a nuclear armed submarine was blown up.

Nuclear Submarines were fashionable with the military for a while up to the early part of this decade but they have since been overtaken by technology. What is worse is that it is clear that as submarine detection technology develops nuclear powered submarines will become increasingly vulnerable.

The theory behind them is that since they do not depend on air to fuel their propulsion systems and so can remain submerged for extended periods of time, and they can, in theory, have a very long range. But they also have to be big to fit a reactor in them. There are a number of major disadvantages with them.

The reactor is used to boil water and the steam is used to drive turbines. Condensing the steam means a large amount of water has to be passed through the cooling system which. The heat from this can be detected by satellite. The noise from the cooling system can be detected by suitably equipped surface vessels and, with sophisticated satellite technology, the disturbance on the surface both from the size of the sub and the water being circulated through its coolers can be picked up. They were originally meant to operate under the polar icecap, but the cold war is over and there is no one under the ice pack to track anymore.

Other countries are developing modern versions of the conventional submarine with what is referred to as air independent propulsion systems. There are a number of types of these - the Sterling engine and electric boats powered by fuel cells. Fuel cells create electricity through a chemical reaction. Other types of submarine have been developed where the exhaust from internal combustion engines is stored in pipes in the hull of the boat and air is stored in liquid form in the same pipes. Such vessels can stay submerged for about a week,

which is easily long enough to avoid detection. They are smaller, much quieter and give off minimal amounts of heat compared to a nuclear submarine. All major maritime nations who operate submarines are keenly examining this type of vessel - all except Britain.

The Astute class are to be equipped with American

range in their detection systems as the Tomahawk - but its a gamble and there is no point in it if there are better types of system available to achieve the same ends.

Since the conventional submarine systems are cheaper and use a smaller crew, losing one of these in conflict would not be nearly so damaging,



The covered sub construction shed in Barrow

Tomahawk cruise missiles which is also a fairly foolish decision. There are more potent forms of anti-ship missiles available, like the Excoet.

The Tomahawk is subsonic which means it is possible to shoot it down. Having launched the missile, if the opposition is reasonably well equipped they will be able to pick up where the missile came from and counter attack. Since submarines depend heavily on the fact they can not easily be detected to protect them, revealing the position defeats their purpose. The would not, for instance be able to defend themselves from attacking aircraft or surface vessels. The Navy would be gambling on the opposition not having the same

notwithstanding the appalling environmental damage that having a reactor blown up could do.

For the Royal Navy to go in the direction of what is a hugely expensive and already obsolete technology is very foolish indeed.

What should have placed a big question mark over this order, but appears not to have done, was then refusal of planning permission for the nuclear storage facilities in Cumberland. That means the nuclear industry has no where is can store the reactor fuel once it is spent or the boats are scrapped in 20 years time. To pursue the technology in these circumstances is now astonishingly irresponsible.

ON THE DEATH OF BROTHER DIDSBURY

Brian Didsbury, who has been the Chair of TUCND for a number of years, died of a heart attack two weeks before TUCND's AGM this year. This is a major blow to us. Brian was a dedicated worker for TUCND and has been a source of energy and inspiration for the organisation for the past ten years.

Brian was a full time officer for the T&GWU but was not traditionally regarded as being of the left within the union. He, for instance, supported the loser in the T&GWU General Secretary election. That did not stop him from having a friendly and constructive relationship with others who supported the general secretary in that election. He had a consistent reputation for being a democrat and non sectarian in his work

in the union.

He also had a reputation as an able and hardworking official who got results. He was the full time official responsible for negotiations with Manchester Airport and guided the workforce through a long and difficult dispute which culminated in a strike in 1995. They won the bulk of their demands and most attributed this to Brian's leadership.

Brian was a member of TUCND's EC since its establishment in 1984. He was a vice chair since 1988 and the chair of the organisation since 1992. He worked solidly and consistently for the organisation throughout his participation in it. TUCND has always enjoyed a difficult, sometime turbulent, relationship with CND. Brian believed the cause of this friction lay in the difference in

political culture between CND and trade unions and struggled consistently against threats of closure and of interference in our work, while many others became confused and fell by the way - this is very much to his credit.

He was also a mainstay of Labour Action For Peace, acting as chair of that organisation for a number of years.

His death is a major blow to TUCND and, we are certain, to the other organisations he was involved in.



BRITAIN CAUGHT EXPERIMENTING ON HUMANS WITH NUCLEAR MATERIAL

In perhaps one of the most astonishing revaluations towards the tail end of the Tory Governments life it was revealed that the MoD were exposing human beings to radiation in experiments relating to the effects of nuclear weapons.

In material released in the United States under their freedom of information legislation, CND discovered references to experiments on human beings with a range of different nuclear materials. At least one of the experiments is still continuing now and the practice of doing them on humans has been going on for a considerable number of years.

There were, apparently, a range of different experiments and some of the experiments themselves lasted a number of years. In some of the experiments people inhaled different materials. Others involved having people swallow nuclear material and in others they were injected. Since it would be necessary to find out what the effects of one single type of nuclear material in

different dosages and of the different types of exposure and it would also be handy to discover the effect of mixtures of different types of material. For such an experimental programme to be effective a fairly large number of people would have to be involved. Since there would be a need to keep such experiments secret it can be assumed that a large number of animals were experimented on and the human experiments used to verify the results of animal experiments. But since the people running the experiments were clearly short of a few ethical principles it is probable that the number of experiments was limited only by cost or the need for secrecy.

According to the documents revealed a range of different age groups was concerned, with some of those experimented on being quite elderly people. The documents say that the human guinea pigs were volunteers, but it is impossible to assess from the documents what information was given to them about what was being done to them. There are two reasons to believe that

this information was scant. The first being the need to keep them secret. The second being the need to get accurate results. In tests for new drugs, for instance, people are not told what the expected results are of the drugs in case they develop psychosomatic symptoms which could distort the result - called the Placebo effect. So there would be strong reasons for those conducting the experiment not to keep the guinea pigs properly informed.

These experiments relate to Britain's nuclear weapons programme and are carried out under the supervision of the nuclear weapons plant at Aldermaston.

The US documents express concern at the fact such experiments were being carried out and said the US Governments should make sure that no US citizens were involved in any such practices, either as guinea pigs or as the doctors carrying out the experiments.

In order to train and qualify in medical practice in any reputable manner, in Britain or

anywhere else in the world you have to take what is known as the Hippocratic Oath. Its named after the first recorded medical practitioners in ancient Greece. This commits the doctor to dedicating themselves to working for the health of the individual person and not involving themselves in experiments which would harm people or threaten their lives. To do so is in fact a criminal offence. In trials of new drugs a great deal of care is taken to make sure the benefits of taking the drugs are greater than the side effects. Since there can be no circumstances when swallowing Tritium, or any other radiative isotope, could be regarded as improving someone's health those involved have broken this country's laws, have broken the oath they took as Doctors and have broken international law.

Not surprisingly the British government have for years consistently denied that any such experiments were taking place.

TUCND'S AGM

TUCND held its AGM recently where a new EC were elected, including a number of new members and officers. The political direction was mapped out and debated by the conference - in some cases heatedly - and a full report is

available from TUCND's national office. Below is a considerably shortened account of the keynote speech delivered by George Brumwell, General Secretary of UCATT, which gives a fair assessment of the direction TUCND are going in.

GEORGE BRUMWELL'S SPEECH TO THE CONFERENCE

There are few moments in history which hold so much hope for peace as the period we are living through currently. Nuclear disarmament is for Britain, well within our grasp yet the forces who would so desperately wish to cling to Britain's possession of nuclear weapons are trying their damndest to make sure they stay. The possession of nuclear weapons runs hand in hand with a foreign policy which has Britain supplying weapons to some of the most repressive regimes in the world and a domestic industrial policy where the only area of industry which has the sort of government support needed to compete in global markets is the arms industry.

Colleagues, these policies have brought us to a point where our manufacturing base is deteriorating at an alarming rate. The rate of skilled people being trained, the ability to function with modern techniques and materials, the level of research and development, the age of the machine tools in Britain all fall well behind that of our industrial competitors.

There was a policy under Thatcher and Reagan to support industry by spending huge amounts on arms but this policy has brought us to the brink of disaster.

What is clear to me is that the issues which come under the general heading of peace and disarmament have a direct and vital relationship to the health of Britain's economy as well as the morality of our foreign and defence policies.

The deindustrialized and low wage economy, with adequate support only for the arms industries have failed us terribly. If these policies worked

at all then the fact that female factory labour in South Wales costs less than in Korea would mean Britain would be a tiger economy - but it isn't. If low wages had any real impact on heavy industry then Britain would be a world leader.

The concentration on weapons spending while underfunding other parts of industry has not happened in isolation from what is happening in the rest of the world. Britain has ended up in the invidious position of being the third largest arms exporter in the world. Almost a billion people live in terrible poverty throughout the world much of it caused by armed conflict fuelled, to some, extent by British made weapons. It came as no surprise to me to hear that a British company had been supplying arms to the defeated Rwandan forces well after the genocide had begun and well after it was clear what was happening there.

This is not just wholly immoral, it is a product of government policies which have stripped our economy of the capacity to function on any other level.

And yet there is room for a great deal of hope.

The Tory Government were clearly doing whatever they could to undermine the international process towards disarmament.

There is hope in the fact that the process has reached a point where, even with all the diplomatic efforts Britain could muster, they have probably simply delayed the process.

There is a great deal to feel optimistic about when we bear in mind the fact that this process is well under way and has not been reversed or stopped by our government.

There is a great deal to feel optimistic about when we look at Trident. It can no longer be argued that money on Trident is cost effective in creating jobs.

We are entering new phase in history. For the past ten years Britain has been pressing policies which have been out of step with the progress of history and for the past 20 years it has been pursuing a defence policy which didn't defend our industry, our environment, our services or our future. A foreign and defence policy which fuelled rather than resisted wars throughout the world, arming dictators and repressive governments.

I have no doubt that the new labour government will make a difference. It is already clear that they recognise the very significant effect upon the civilian economy of how military procurement is carried out and that is a major step forward.

It is clear they will be approaching international moves towards disarmament with a much more positive attitude.

I don't think I have any illusions about what to expect in the future but I do expect a move away from the extremely damaging policies pursued by the current government.

How far away from the current course the new governments practice turns out to be is up to us which is why I think TUCND has a very important role to play.

There is a link between what happens in the building industry and government spending priorities or industrial policies. It is clear that an expansion of civilian shipbuilding will mean jobs for my members. It is clear that a healthy manufacturing base will mean an expansion for my industry. It is clear that a shift in government spending priorities would allow local authorities to do something about the state of Britain's housing stock. I believe TUCND represents work on issues which are very much trade union issues.

So we have a complex international situation with a very dangerous role being carried out by Britain's government. The election of a new government changes the political scene in Britain dramatically and opens up a whole new set of possibilities.

It is clear that the Trade Union arm of the peace movement, TUCND, has a very important role indeed within this process and let us hope we can build a movement which can realise this.



Brother Brumwell

ARMS CONVERSION FOR TODAY

This is a concept that has had a place on the trade union movement's agenda since the end of the first world war. It originally meant using the skills and plant currently being used to make weapons to make other things. After the first world war a significant number of plants "converted" from manufacturing weapons to making goods for the civilian market. Despite statements to the contrary, it remains technically feasible and socially desirable. After the second world war some 7 million people moved from defence work to civilian manufacturing in the space of four years, in part guided by the new labour government. After the Vietnam war the US government instituted a plan to aid the process of conversion, although they were partly motivated by a desire to maintain production capacity in industries they felt could be used again for weapons production in the future.

In 1975 the workforce of LUCAS Aerospace, faced with substantial redundancies, produced a plan for producing goods for the civilian market in the Lucas factories. The JSSC had asked the workforce for ideas for products and were astonished when they were inundated with a range of brilliant ideas for new products. The JSSC sorted these and took a number of products through to a prototype stage. Two of these became part of the folk lore associated with arms conversion - the road/rail bus and the Kidney Dialysis machine. The former was a bus modified so it could travel on the railnetworks as well as on roads. The latter was a much simplified and

considerably cheaper machine than those available at that time. Both of these were taken up and produced in a modified form by other manufacturers, although Lucas' management were deeply reluctant to accept any of the conclusions of the alternative plan or the products outlined in it.

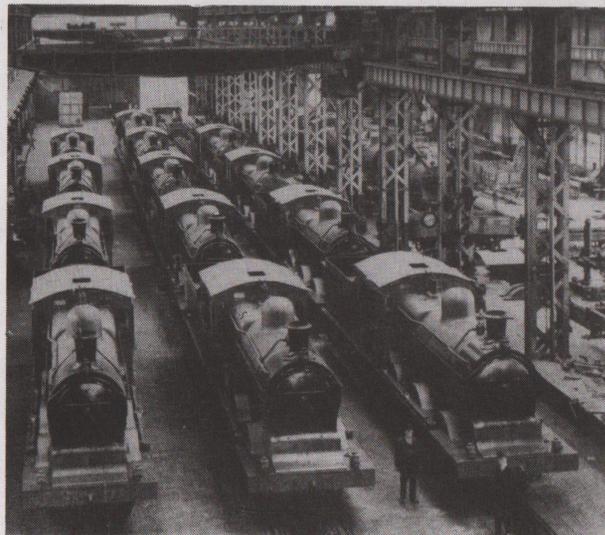
The production of this plan proved a number of things. One was that there is a vast untapped pool of talent in the industry. Another was that the workforce could run their industry more efficiently and intelligently than their current management. Yet another was that the concept of arms conversion was technically feasible.

The downside of the plans effect was that it led people to believe that it is possible to investigate the possibilities for a single plant in isolation from what is happening to the rest of industry. Up to the early 1990's experts were being called into factories faced with closure to do skills and resources audits and to try to match these with gaps in the civil markets. The difficulty here is that there were massive markets available after the first and second wars, while, because of the Tory government's policies towards industry and the so called "free market" philosophies, the civilian market for manufactured goods is in a state of collapse.

Arms conversion, therefore, should now be seen as industry wide programme. It is possible, for instance, to build merchant ships in yards which have built warships. There should be a massive market for merchant ships - because of the decrepid state of the worlds merchant shipping. But this will require

government intervention to support the civilian industry at a level equivalent to those countries who have thriving industries, such as Japan and South Korea. In 1945 Britain produced 40% of the worlds

where we have a surplus in the balance of trade. It is the only area where this country is abreast of modern material and technologies. It is also the only area which has enjoyed the sort of government support



Locomotives being made in the tank factory on Tyneside following the end of the first world war

while Japan built virtually non. Now Japan builds 40% while Britain builds virtually none. The difference is in government's attitudes to industry. Buy a machine tool in Japan and the government provide a subsidy as well as tax relief on the money spent. Buy a machine tool in Britain and the government tax the money spent at 25%. This is one of the things which makes all the difference between a successful industrial nation and the scrapheap which is Britain.

Britain is now more dependent on the export of weapons than any other country in the world. It is the only area

successful international industries need. Yet it is in crisis.

It is possible to use the resources of that industry as a springboard for the resurrection of our civil manufacturing industries, but that means a radical shift in government attitudes to civilian industries as well as a shift in attitudes to defence and weapons exports.

As the president of the Honda Motor Company put it recently "The money game is fine but industry is the only way a country can survive and I really don't know how the British will make a living in the future."

T&GWU'S ARMS CONVERSION CONFERENCE

Below is an account of a recent conference organised by the T&GWU on conversion - reprinted from the T&GWU Record

Britain does not need to choose between world peace and defence industry jobs, T&GWU General Secretary, Bill Morris told an arms conversion conference in Bristol in September last year: "We deserve both and can have both."

Britain's defence industry is

on its knees - brought down by a combination of tough competition and the government's failure to plan for the future.

Radical changes are needed to protect jobs for the long term, and to keep Britain at the leading edge of technology. That much was clear from the debate on arms conversion, which brought together business leaders and politicians as well as trade union representatives.

Bill Morris set the agenda with a firm analysis of the

governments failure. He said a proper programme of arms conversion could save the industry's skills and jobs at a time of falling defence budgets.

"We don't have to choose between jobs and world peace. We deserve both and can have both." Bill told the conference, which also heard a Labour pledge on measures to bring stability to the industry.

The General Secretary said that arms conversion and defence diversification each demanded conversion of skills

- and that would only come through a "real partnership - involving manufacturers, central and local government, with defence workers at the heart of this partnership."

He spelled out the T&GWU's terms for that partnership:

"Minimum standards at work for defence workers - training as well as a universal right, long term job security, partnership between employers and employees, the right to trade union representation and the

adoption of a minimum floor on wages".

the conference heard David Clark, shadow secretary for defence pledged a moratorium on the contracting out of work. "The philosophy of contracting out for the sake of it is nonsensical," he said. The next Labour Government would study each case on its merits - but it would have to be an exceptionally good one to justify contracting out, he warned.

David Clark also promised that in the first six months of the Labour Government an analysis of the country's defence needs would be produced to allow for stability and long term planning in the industry. The governments would also establish a defence diversification agency, he said.

David Batty, managing director of at Rosyth naval dockyard told how the dockyard was now turning out products for general industry; axels, power generators, railway rolling stock and hotel fittings.

These were short terms solutions, he pointed out. Any long terms diversification could affect employment terms, he warned. "Pay and conditions and working practices have to be appropriate to the market you are in, not necessarily the one you were in. Terms and conditions have to match those of your competitors rather than civil service grades."

Several speakers made the point that defence decisions

cannot be made at the national level alone. Charles Grant, of the Economist, said there must be more international regulation of the defence industry at a European level. "There should be ministerial meetings to discuss cooperation to avoid duplication of research and development", he said.

Brian Philipson, British Aerospace director, saw the future of the industry bound up in the formation of "true multinational companies, accountable to a true multinational shareholders' base."

America had half the number of companies as Europe, meeting the demand of a defence budget twice the size of Europe's, he said. This enabled them to enjoy the benefits of scale, and Europe would have to follow suit to keep up.

These multinationals, he continued, would be able to focus investments where it is most needed, balance workloads during feast and famine periods, provide high quality jobs, and profits to shareholders.

He saw phases progressing from national consolidation through European consolidation to global companies, ending up with between three and six global companies throughout the world.

Professor John Lovering, of Cardiff University, said the qualitative change towards globalisation in search of cheap labour and new markets, had

already started. "The genie is out of the lamp and we can't put it back," he said.

Echoing Charles Grant's point on Europe, he went on: "We should be more involved in intergovernmental conferences

on European defence.

"There is no way that, faced with a collapse of the market, you can just diversify into something else."



The Road/Rail bus developed by the Lucas workforce

DIVERSIFICATION - HOW CAN IT WORK?

"Under the present government it can't - because the Tories will not address themselves to long term solutions," said Margaret Prosser, T&GWU national organiser.

But there are some hopeful signs. The International Chemical and Metalworkers Federation had formed an organisation called Peace Works which pulled together information on diversification developments, said Margaret.

Closer to home a presentation from Lancashire county council showed what could be done if there is the political will.

Louise Ellman, council leader, said Lancashire has more than 40,000 workers dependent on defence industry.

European funds had been used to build the Preston technology management centre. This had helped defence manufacturers diversify and use their expertise to produce other products, including new

equipment for fire fighters, new airfield light systems, hearing aids, and security videos.

One Blackburn company which had been entirely dependent on working for the ministry of defence was now only 11% dependent on it, and was now producing mobile lighting systems for general industry.

There would be even more successes with a government that believed in intervention, said Louise Ellman.

Margaret Prosser said change would only come about through partnership. Talk of rationalisation, new techniques, and globalisation all means change which struck fear in the hearts of many.

"But all of us are trying to struggle with the process of change. There are difficulties for trade unions representing people with jobs that are insecure, and for employers who are trying to change the culture of their organisations we must all pull together."



Merchant shipbuilding, the only coherent future for the industry and something this country desperately needs

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TORIES AND LABOUR

Watching, on the first of May, leading Tories slip into the political shredder one after another, and their party humiliated beyond resurrection, was a source of considerable delight and considerable relief. That we should have had to tolerate such corruption and dishonesty, both political and moral, flourish and that such appalling damage to our economy and services should have been possible has been source of considerable dismay to many in Britain. But what the opinion polls have also revealed is a dearth of enthusiasm for New Labour. In the TV entrails searching which followed the election, a range of Tories said that what was surprising about what has happened was not their defeat this year, but the fact that they survived at the previous election. New Labour people are being held up as the architects of the victory this year when, in practice, they are the reason why the Tories lasted so long.

At this stage raising the conservative party from the dead would be a task that would impress even Lazarus. Although of resurrectionists (grave robbers) they have plenty non have the charisma or talent of a faith healer/leader. There is in fact very little talent left in that party, but still, if New Labour kept them in power up to now, they may breath fresh breath in this morbid corpse of a conservative party by their own failings, and that would be a bad thing to happen.

The Labour Government will fail us. Very few amongst the electorate, let alone Labour activists, feel much enthusiasm for them. But there are still considerable differences between them and the Conservatives on a range of issues beyond that of defence.

For instance, in North Tyneside, a long standing solidly Labour area, despite consistent capping by the Government, there exists a range of provisions that are simply not there in areas like Wandsworth. We should not lose sight of the fact that having them in power makes a difference - and if you are a disabled child the difference between North Tyneside and Wandsworth will be profound. The Labour Party is not just a parliamentary party, it is a part of our way of life and part of the

trade union movement. The Labour Party, upon which the Labour Government depends, has an organic relationship with the needs and aspirations of ordinary working people which is the soul of the party. Regardless of how their spin people wriggle and writhe they can't escape this.

On defence, foreign policy and domestic economic issues there is also a difference between the soul of the party and their unlamented predecessors.

There is a recognition now that the way in which defence procurement is carried out has profound implications for civilian industry and on the possibility of civilian industrial regeneration. If the army buys trucks it provides the basis for a truck industry. If it buys aircraft it provides the basis for an aircraft industry and if it invests in technology that technology can be used

elsewhere. The US government have this fact as a key part of their governments industrial policy and guides its military procurement in a way which aids civilian industry. Thus it guides procurement towards that which will aid civilian industry. For instance research is guided in ways which will aid civilian industry and not simply in ways which provide the best weaponry.

That is a lesson they learned from the devastation left by the Reagan years. The Reagan administration did exactly the opposite. They had a system in the Pentagon, referred to as the Military Critical Technology List, which classified all research, including civilian technology and they would classify anything they regarded as being of military significance, and prevent its dissemination. The Reagan government even attempted to make this apply to companies abroad. There was a

notable incident when Britain agreed to buy the Boeing AWACS early warning aircraft instead of the upgraded Nimrod version, when a US Government official from that office visited British plants working on the project and attempted to impose restrictions on their technology. In one place the company called the police, in another he was refused access and in Parliament Bob Cryer raised questions about his persons movements on a daily basis while the Government denied his existence. Even the records of his stay in the London hotel was censored. Now, instead of restricting the use of all technology with military significance, the Pentagon is charged with finding other civilian applications for technology developed for the military. Prior to gaining office the Labour Party were clearly aware of the significance of this



Left to his own devices Brother Blair will not deliver. With pressure from the

change in policy.

The United Nations has a commitment to negotiating nuclear disarmament which has been consistently disrupted and obstructed by the British Government. One of the effects of this process has been to encourage a number of states to develop nuclear weapons in secret. The 1996 conference organised to facilitate this commitment, had a proposal from the British Government to discuss Land Mines put before it. Getting a ban on Land Mines would be of considerable benefit for the world but this was not the place to raise it. It was a deliberate attempt by the British Government to obstruct the discussions on Nuclear Disarmament.

Last year also saw the attempts by the British Government to wreck the nuclear Test Ban Treaty. At one stage they insisted on having 44 countries charged with verifying the test ban treaty (the Enter Into Force agreement). That would mean they would each have to have the technology and provide the personnel to monitor whether countries were or were not developing nuclear weapons. For some of the

countries listed by Britain this would have been a major problem. Bangladesh, for instance is one of the poorest countries in the world, it has no nuclear industry and no desires to develop one, and providing the monitoring facilities would be a major drain on their resources. No other treaty has anything like this number, it was simply an attempt by the British Government to wreck the process.

It is unlikely that the incoming Labour Government will play the game in anything like the way the Tories played it and it is unlikely they will seek to be destructive in anything like the way their predecessors were.

The Labour Party has made a clear commitment to banning the sale of weapons to repressive regimes. It wont keep that commitment. When the issue of selling Hawk aircraft to Indonesia has been raised, the Labour Party have said that these aircraft are trainers and not, therefore, weapons. They are in fact, quite potent ground attack aircraft and photographs have been taken of them being used in this role in East Timour. So it will be very difficult in practical terms, to get them to

keep to such a commitment. The difference is that it will be possible to press them to moderate such sales and, if pressure is maintained, it may be possible to get them to adhere to such a policy in the long term. What will make a difference is public pressure to get them to do so.

The armed services in Britain have been cutback by the Conservative government in incoherent ways for short term savings. So for instance, Tornado squadrons often only have a couple of aircraft capable of flying while the rest are robbed of parts to keep them flying. Swapping parts like this damages them. Quite a large portion of the Navy now is not in a fit state to put to sea and the vast bulk of it operates on outdated technology. For the army the problem is less acute because the quality of the training means a great deal can be done with men working with poor equipment. A number of senior military figures have made it public that the services are in a state of crisis because of the poor state and quality of their equipment. The Labour Government will have to address this. The Labour Party

are committed to a Defence Review. Out of that review will come guidelines for the type of equipment they will buy in the future and that will have profound industrial implications. Trade Unions will be failing in their responsibilities to their members if they do not try to make sure they have a great deal to say concerning future procurement policies.

It is extremely unlikely that the Labour Government will commit themselves to getting rid of Trident in the near or even medium term future. But a great deal can be done to change current defence policies in a way which would be greatly benefit our economy and industry. A great deal can also be done to change the foreign policies pursued by our government in a way which could make a profound difference to a number of places throughout the world. What will make the difference is the quality and quantity of the campaign work done to affect public attitudes and government policies. That leaves the ball firmly in the court of the trade union movement.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION RATIFIED BY THE UNITED STATES

The United States ratification of the UN Chemical Weapons Convention is a major step forward and is seen as a major victory for the Clinton administration's foreign policy. The Republican controlled Congress agreed to sign the convention in April this year in the face of opposition from chair of the Senate foreign relations committee, Jesse Helms, and a number of other far right republicans. At the end of the day only half the republicans in the Congress voted against the measure.

The United Nations passed the convention last year and had the required 65 signatures to the convention, for it to come into affect, by October last year. However, the participation of the worlds leading military power, which is also one of the countries which has admitted it has a large stockpile of such weapons was seen as key to the convention having any real meaning. The USA has a

stockpile of 30,000 tonnes of such weapons, which now will be destroyed by the year 2004. (Some of the stockpile has already been destroyed as a result of a deal done between Gorbachev and Reagan in the mid 1980's.

The other major power with a large stockpile of such weapons with an estimated 40,000 tonnes. There is opposition within Russia to the destruction of these weapons because of a wide ranging opposition because of the proposed expansion of NATO to include a number of the former Soviet Union's Warsaw Pact allies. They appear to be in no mood to accept what is seen as a gesture of cooperation with the US.

The other countries who hold substantial quantities are Iran with about 2,000 tonnes and Iraq with an estimated 1,000 tonnes.

It is believed that Russia will need financial help if they are to get rid of the weapons. The

US has estimated the cost of disposing of their stockpile as being \$12 billion. The cost of destroying the Russian stockpile was estimated as being \$10 billion in 1993 which means that it is likely they will need substantial financial support if they are to destroy the weapons.

A last minute concession by Clinton to the right-wing results from sections 10 and 11 of the Convention. This mirrors similar measures in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. They commit the signatories to providing defensive equipment to countries threatened by countries possessing chemical weapons and to allow the signatories to acquire chemical technology for civilian purposes. Several governments believe that this could allow some countries legitimately to acquire the technology to develop such weapons. Clinton, apparently, has pledged to withdraw from the convention if other countries use these provisions to proliferate gas warfare

technology.

Another parallel which has been drawn with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty is the provision for the verification of the treaty. This is very important. One of the very few areas where the British Government has performed a positive role in the world is that it has been a consistent supporter of such a ban on chemical weapons. It has been satisfied that it is clearly possible to monitor the possible development of such weapons. It has also, however argued that the verification of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty would not be possible. While the fact they have supported the chemical weapons convention and accepts that the verification process is possible in this case is great, the fact it has consistently opposed the NPT on the grounds, they argued, that it wasn't verifiable, should be thoroughly condemned.