BRIEFING

LABOUR - TAKE THE POWER!

June 1991 80p (60p unwaged)

The only way to beat the Tories

Class politics

LABOUR'S TRIUMPH in Monmouth has raised hopes of an outright victory in the general election and dashed defeatist talk of coalition government.

But to build on our current strengths and exploit the Tories' weaknesses we must commit ourselves unequivocally to public spending on public services.

Labour won in Monmouth not because MPs and Walworth Road workers were bussed into the constituency in their hundreds, nor because of the glossy campaign literature, nor because of the self-promoting activities of the reinstated Peter Mandelson. The candidate, who was scared to discuss the weather without consulting his minders, can certainly claim little credit. Labour won because it made the NHS an issue, combining a national and local focus on the dangers of hospitals opting out of the NHS. That put the Tories on the defensive.

But Labour's campaign on the NHS was only made possible by a renewed commitment to public spending. This was unexpected, but welcome. John Smith, after years of fudging questions on taxation, has now accepted that Labour must increase taxes and national insurance on the rich and middle income earners. Kinnock was finally able to announce that Labour would spend £20 billion more than the Tories on the welfare state and even started to attack rising unemployment.

It seems Labour's leaders have calculated that public services, especially the NHS, are sufficiently popular with the electorate to justify a commitment to specific expenditure - something the left has been telling them for years!

Cllr. Liz Davies
Islington

This latest turn is a repudiation of the entire Policy Review strategy. For four years, all Labour would say was that child benefit and pensions would be increased. Nothing more was promised on other welfare benefits or on rebuilding public services.

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Class politics

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The leadership believed that Labour could only win by wooing the middle ground away from the Tories and the Liberal Democrats. Votes could only be won by not making enemies - which meant, for the leadership, travelling into the general election light with as few solid commitments as possible.

That strategy was never going to achieve even the leadership's limited but vital aim of getting elected. Kinnock's attacks on Poll Tax non-payers only gave the Tories a cushion against the anti-Poll Tax movement. His Gulf War-mongering failed to attract even the hard-core warmongers' votes; they were always going to vote for the real warmongers, the Tories, anyway.

Now Labour is at last challenging Major's claims to be promoting a "classless society". The latest Labour pronouncements on the welfare state are timid and sketchy and riddled with contradictions, but at least they are beginning to state that we do not live in a "classless society", that Tory policies benefit one class and Labour policies another.

Both Labour and Conservative are class-based political parties. One is the representative of the working-class; the other of the ruling class. Labour will only succeed in mobilising its base by stressing that critical distinction, not hiding it. Pretending that Labour is just as much the party of big business as the Tories alienates our own working-class vote - and does not fool big business for a second.

Of course, to win a resounding majority at the general election and then to deliver policies for the benefit of the working-class takes more than a few promises of increased spending. The leadership must commit itself now to wide-ranging measures to increase public expenditure - including defence cuts. It must campaign energetically against the current wave of redundancies, stating unequivocally that mass unemployment is not an acceptable price to pay to reduce inflation.



Liz Davies Photo: T. Conway

Promises should be backed up with action. Labour should support campaigns against cuts - including industrial action - especially in the NHS, public transport and local government. Labour councillors should refuse to implement the Poll Tax and support the anti-Poll Tax movement. Labour should be seen as the party of collective action, not efficient management. It should shun all talk of coalitions and aim for a popular mandate to undo the damage of the Thatcher years. This kind of campaigning will exert far more pressure on the Tories than point-scoring in the House of Commons.

Monmouth means that Labour may now have up to a year to build a general election campaign based on a clear class message. The entire base of the labour movement is deeply committed to defend and expand public services. It can be mobilised and score real successes against a Tory government that is weaker than ever. The working-class will believe in Labour's commitment to the NHS and to other public services if the Party shows what those policies mean in practice - by supporting all those struggling now against the government.

***The Evening Standard* calls *Briefing* ..."The defiant organ of the unreconstituted hard left"**

● *Labour Briefing* is the monthly voice of Labour's independent left. It is produced by a democratic, anti-sectarian network of Labour and trade union activists and is managed by an elected National Editorial Board whose meetings are open to all supporters. The next NEB meeting will be held in London on June 23rd.

● **All articles published in *Labour Briefing* reflect the opinions of the authors alone unless otherwise indicated.** *Briefing* welcomes criticisms and contributions. Please keep us posted on what's going on in your area. The deadline for the next issue is June 10th.

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● Contact *Briefing* at 26 Wattisfield Road, London, E5 9QH. Telephone: 081 985 6597; fax: 081 985 6785.

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A programme for Labour victory

LABOUR CANNOT win the next election by default. It has to exploit Tory disarray by proclaiming positive socialist commitments. This is now implicitly acknowledged even by the Party leadership, who spent the last four years stripping Labour naked.

But what positive commitments could Labour unite around? What goals could it project with sufficient conviction and clarity to win over a solid majority of the working class - and with it a majority in Parliament?

Why not start with a few points already agreed at Party conference: re-linking pensions to earnings and restoring them to 1979 values; cutting defence spending, transferring resources to public services, including the NHS, and embarking on a programme of arms conversion; renationalising BT; establishing a national minimum wage (with no strings or backdoor pay limits to make one section of our class foot the bill for the other); abolishing the Poll Tax immediately.

The bulk of the labour movement in the constituencies and the trades unions would be wholeheartedly behind this programme. They would carry the arguments for it into the working class with real conviction. The only thing that keeps Labour from doing precisely this is its leadership.

Of course, these commitments do not go nearly far enough. A Labour government could certainly win an election on this basis, but once in office, if it actually tried to honour its pledges, it would have to confront a series of challenges from a resistant ruling class. If it backed away from this confrontation, if it failed to implement its programme, it would rapidly lose support, as did the last Labour government. Radical steps would be needed to deal with the extra-parliamentary power of capital. If a Labour government did not expand and deepen its programme, it would shrivel up and die.

The local election results seem to point to a hung parliament, though for the moment the Monmouth victory has silenced the coalitionists. Nonetheless, there can be no doubt that doing a deal with the Liberals (and god knows who else) is on Kinnock's mind and that the possible terms of the deal are being discussed within the Shadow Cabinet.

Alongside that, we have the efforts of Norman Willis, spurred by John Edmonds, to come up with a new formula for wage restraint.

A Lib-Lab government? Pay limits? Sound familiar? This is a good time for Party members to recall the Wilson/Callaghan debacle and ponder its lessons.

The best way to avoid a repeat of this ghastly scenario is for Labour to articulate clear socialist goals now and build the popular support for them that will be necessary to sustain a Labour government under pressure. This support cannot be built simply by arguing for improvements in public services. What is needed is practical and political support for all those fighting here and now to defend public services from Tory ravages. And that includes Poll Tax non-payers and opponents of local government cuts.

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Korean workers battle "white skeletons"

***Paul Field** examines the background to the latest workers' upsurge in the West's favourite "economic miracle".*

THE uprising currently shaking South Korea was sparked when riot police armed with steel pipes beat a 20-year-old student to death on April 26th.

Kan Kyung Dae, a first year economics student at Myongi University in Seoul, became the latest victim of the lethal "white skeleton" riot police (martial arts thugs distinguished by their white helmets) when he attended a small rally protesting the arrest of a fellow student.

In response to this act of brutality, shocking even by South Korean standards, thousands of workers and students spilled on to the streets demanding the overthrow of President Roh Tae Woo.

On May 4th rioting broke out in 21 cities across South Korea after police tried to arrest a single student who was inserting yellow flowers into the shields of riot police while fellow protestors sat peacefully at the Sinchon intersection in Seoul. Workers and students rose to his defence, triggering a day of clashes that saw up to 20,000 protestors advance under barrages of teargas along the plush shopping malls and in front of the luxury tourist hotels of central Seoul.

> ***"... thousands of workers and students spilled on to the streets demanding the overthrow of President Roh Tae Woo"***

By May 9th over 100,000 protestors had joined the street battles in Seoul with a further 150,000 participating in demonstrations in other cities. As we go to press, there are reports of riot police using yet more teargas against some 80,000 protestors who, in defiance of a government ban, were trying to lead Kan Kyung's funeral procession into the centre of the capital. The student alliance, Chundaehyop, has called on South Korea's one million students to wage a "life or death struggle" to bring down the government.

The initial response of Roh Tae Woo was to sack Home Minister Ahn Eung Mo and suspend the riot police responsible for Kan's death. While expressing his "deep regret" at the death Roh also attacked "radical factions" which, he said, were using it as an excuse to overthrow his government.

The real problem is the repressive state apparatus that Roh Tae Woo inherited from the authoritarian dictatorship of Chun Doo Hwan. These forces were nurtured by US imperialism when it helped Syngman Rhee adapt the formidable coercive apparatus left by the Japanese at the end of their fifty year rule of the Korean peninsula.

> ***"Kan's death comes after more than a year of increasing repression"***

The only reform Roh Tae Woo has made since Kan's death is to issue the "white skeletons" with different colour helmets (blue); the new Home Minister is resisting calls within his own party for disbandment because "the special units will be necessary as long as rioters exist".

Kan's death comes after more than a year of increasing repression which has seen the arrest of 300 trade union militants and the amendment of existing labour laws to make them even more draconian. When the number of strikes last year dropped to 320 from 1,616 the year before many Western commentators hailed the end of class conflict in South Korea. But trade unionists pointed out that while the number of strikes had declined their intensity had increased because, "the government has mobilised riot police to break up disputes at an early stage" (Korea Labor, December 1990).

> ***"Inflation is now in double figures and a trade deficit has been registered for the first time in years"***

The government offensive has two aims: to destroy Chumshyup, the first national alliance of democratic unions since Chun Pyung in the 1940s, and to clampdown on industrial unrest before the coming annual wage round. Inflation is now in double figures and a trade deficit has been registered for the first time in years. It is vital for the government that workers bear the brunt of this economic downturn.

Korea has the longest working hours in the world. Ninety-eight per cent of women work overtime. In the last decade, 15,705 workers have been killed and over a million injured in industrial accidents.

There is growing evidence that Korea's massive proletariat is becoming increasingly disaffected by the limited form of bourgeois democracy established at such cost in 1987. In a recent poll conducted by Korea Gallup only 18% expressed support for the ruling DLP with 60% supporting neither the DLP nor the opposition New Democratic Party of Kim Dae Jung. These results were reflected in the turn-out in the March local elections, which was only 55% - shockingly low for a country which only four years ago saw three million workers take strike action to bring down military dictatorship.

TV news: "sound and fury signifying nothing"

When is censorship not censorship? ***Mick Gosling*** *of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom investigates media self-justifications in the wake of the Gulf War.*

"WHO could have thought television could be so thrilling?" With these words Sheena MacDonald, presenter of Channel 4's *This Week,* introduced a recent British Film Institute retrospective on television coverage of the Gulf War.

Thrilling, perhaps, in the overheated atmosphere of television newsrooms. But for viewers, smart communications technology, smart weapons, and above all, smart news management produced a wealth of images and a dearth of news.

"We got carried away by the impact of military technology and our own technology," admitted Tim Orchard, editor of BBC TV's *One O'Clock News.* "We were using ground stations in Kuwait which for us were the equivalent of the first moon landing."

"I share the concern that it looked like little boys' computer games," said Liz Howells, managing editor of Sky News.

Nik Gowing, diplomatic editor of Channel 4 News, added his own *mea culpa*: "How many people were really killed ... Only 7% of ordnance dropped was laser-guided. The rest of the bombs were free-fall and only 25% hit their target. We are suffering the fog of war."

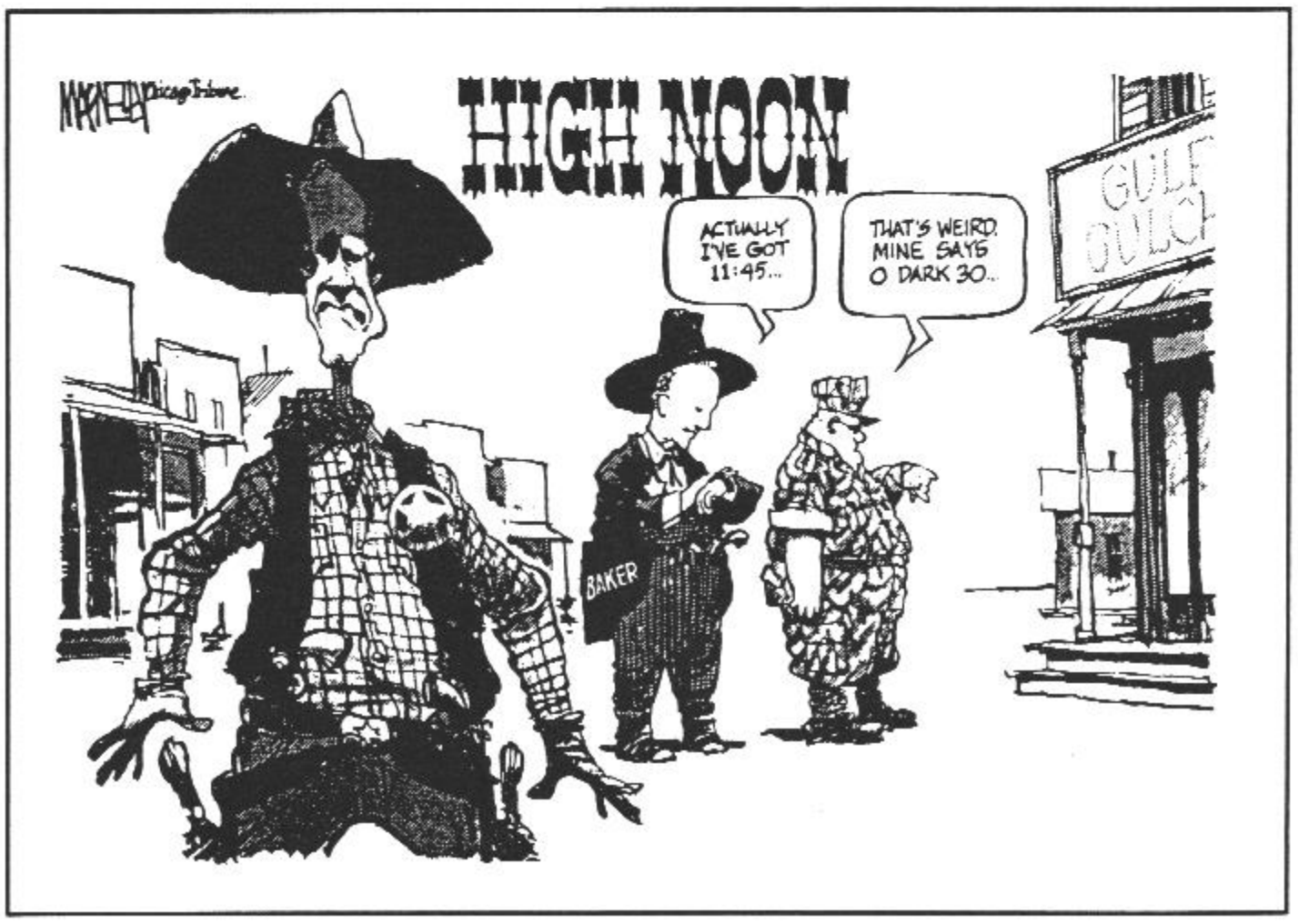
The fog of war? Or self-imposed illusions? Throughout the Gulf War media editors were the willing accomplices of military censors and government news managers.

Within days of the end of the war, television news showed it does not have to be like this. Harrowing news bulletins on the plight of the Kurds forced Bush and Major to act.

That action may well prove cosmetic but here was clear evidence of the ability of television news to mould and mobilise public opinion.

But in the run-up to the Gulf War and during the war itself, there was no probing of the sordid history of diplomatic manoeuvrings by the US and Britain in the Middle East or of the metamorphosis of Operation Desert Shield to "protect Saudi Arabia" into a Desert Storm to "free Kuwait".

Double standards and double-think were conscious editorial policy. It was not the Ministry of Defence, but John Wilson, Controller of Editorial Policy at the BBC, who laid down the Corporation's line on the eve of war: "Programmes should make it known in general terms that some information will be held back for military reasons and that reports out of Iraq are rigorously censored."



David Mannion, responsible for all ITN's programmes, could not understand the derision which greeted his comment at the BFI retrospective that "the information was controlled, but you were not controlled in how you reported it".

Challenged on the dubious language used by ITN to camouflage military censorship, he produced the following spurious nonsense: "We tried to be as accurate as we could in what we said in front of the reports. In Iraq, in Baghdad, we said reports were subject to Iraqi censorship. You notice that phrase. That is not to say every report was censored; in fact, some reports were not censored. But they were all subject to Iraqi censorship and we thought it right, even when they were not censored, to let the viewers know we were working under these particular conditions. In Israel where reports were censored we said they were censored. In Saudi Arabia where we had to leave out certain details for operational reasons we said just that. We had to leave these details out for operational reasons. If you can't understand that, that's your problem."

Richard Blystone, CNN's London correspondent, appeared to blame the viewers. "TV exists in a defined period of time in a little square box. It is an emotionally loaded symbol. If you go to TV for your only news, then you're lazy. If you go to TV for the truth, then you're a loony."

If future war coverage is to be more than what Macbeth called "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing", we must reject this cynicism and fight to bring broadcasting under democratic control.

"Safe havens" or concentration camps?

For the time being, Bush and Major's "safe havens" have succeeded in knocking the suffering of the Kurds off our television screens, but what do they mean for the Kurds themselves and their struggle for independence? ***Labour Briefing*** *interviewed sympathisers of the* ***ERNK*** *(National Liberation Front of Kurdistan) at the Kurdish Workers Association headquarters in north London.*

Briefing: ***What's your response to the "safe havens" scheme?***

ERNK: What the British public must understand is that the problem confronting the Kurds today is not just a "humanitarian" one but a political one. The British and American politicians go on about our suffering but they never tell their own people why we are suffering. We are opposed to the "safe havens". Most of those Kurds who went to the Iraq-Turkish border are still there, in the mountains, and conditions are appalling. Five hundred a day are dying, according to our reports. Despite the efforts of the humanitarian organisations, aid is not getting through because of the obstruction of the Turkish army; some of it is being stolen by Turkish soldiers.

The real purpose of these "havens" is to gather our people into camps and cut communication between them and the freedom fighters. They are a means of controlling the Kurdish people in the West's interests, of containing and dividing us. We have called on our people to return to their homes - not the "safe havens" but their real homes in the villages - and to defend them.

The "havens" suit both the Iraqis and the Western imperialists. For the West they are an excuse to install a military presence in the northern part of Iraq. The real aim of the "havens" is to create a Kurdish community under constant military supervision, completely dependent on outside assistance for even the basic necessities of life.

The people of south Kurdistan have already experienced life behind barbed wire when they were put into camps in 1988. They do not want to live in camps again, even if they are called "safe havens".

LB: ***Whom do you blame for the current tragedy?***

ERNK: We blame Saddam, of course, but we also blame the poor leadership of the so-called Iraqi Kurdish Front, Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani. After the war between Iraq and the US-led Allies they thought freedom was there for the taking. They failed to see that it was not simply a matter of liberating Kurdistan but of defending it. How long did they defend it for? One week? They should never have listened to the US and they should never have encouraged the people to rise on such an ill-prepared and unco-ordinated basis.

"We are fed up with being a political football kicked from one side to the other. We cannot rely on help from Western or regional powers"

This was an adventure and the Kurdish people are paying for it. The leadership should have realised that Saddam Hussein would return. You only have to look at the recent history of south Kurdistan to see this. In 1975 the Kurdish leadership thought it had the backing of the Shah and then when the Shah and Saddam made an agreement in Algiers they were crushed. This is by no means the first time our people have been made homeless and had to flee to the mountains. In 1988, at the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the town of Halabja was liberated only to be destroyed by poison gas. It seems the leadership has failed to learn the obvious lessons of all this.

The Barzani family is basically a tribal organisation. In the 1950s when General Qassim initiated some land reforms the Barzani family opposed them because they themselves are traditional feudal landowners. Now they are relying on Turkey and the US to save them but it will only take some secret agreement between Iraq and the Turkish government for the Kurds to be left completely isolated once again. We are fed up with being a political football kicked from one side to the other. We cannot rely on help from Western or regional powers.

LB: ***But what do you think should have happened after the war?***

ERNK: Instead of seizing the towns immediately we should have built up basic guerilla struggles. Now we see that the old traditional *pesh merga* methods of warfare are totally inadequate against a modern enemy. We need to spread socialist ideology amongst the people, to get a socialist programme understood and accepted, to build on the trust and understanding of the people, who do have the capacity to resist and to fight on.

The armed struggle can succeed. In north Kurdistan we started the armed struggle in 1985 and we have lasted longer than any other armed resistance in Kurdish history. We are getting stronger all the time. At the beginning we were only defending ourselves from attacks by the Turkish army but now we are on the offensive. We have established permanent bases among our own people - not just military but political bases. The armed struggle is essential but it is not enough. We have to have a political platform as well. That is why we have the PKK (the Kurdish Workers' Party) as well as the ERNK and the AGRK (the military front).

Above all, we must rely on the strength of the Kurdish people and nothing else. We will accept aid and solidarity



from all our friends but we refuse to fight anybody else's war.

LB: ***What about the Baghdad negotiations?***
ERNK: We have fought and suffered for too long to accept "autonomy". As long as we are not independent we are vulnerable. Talabani and Barzani are cuddling and kissing with Saddam like long lost brothers because of their own feudal interests, because he has recognised them as leaders. Any agreement with Saddam is worthless. Talabani and Barzani say they want "autonomy" within a "democratic" Iraq - but a democratic Iraq is not possible with Saddam in control!

For us to succeed, we need to build a socialist movement across the whole of the middle east; we need solidarity from other socialist and democratic forces in the region - only they can deal with the region's problems.

That is why we insist that all foreign forces leave. First the US claimed Saddam was an evil dictator because he invaded Kuwait; they encouraged the Kurdish uprising only to go silent when Saddam launched his counter-offensive against it. Then, when the people mounting on the border became a problem for the Turkish authorities, who feared the effects in north Kurdistan, they decided Saddam was once again an evil dictator.

Saddam is now only surviving because of the West; they're helping him when they could have crushed him. Of course, they never really wanted to get rid of him. He was like the dog that bites its owner; he had to be punished. Besides, one of the main purposes of the Gulf War was to establish permanent US military bases in the region, which has now been done. It must be understood that Saddam Hussein is by no means our only problem. Turkey is worse - and it is fully backed by the US, which has actually participated in the Turkish army's dirty war against us, supplying helicopters and planes and even pilots. So for us it is not a matter of choosing between the US and the Iraqis; they are both our enemies.

LB: ***What are your priorities now?***
ERNK: We will continue to organise our own people, to carry on our long-term armed struggle, to hit our enemies militarily where they least expect it. Our struggle will be long but we have a solid basis for it. Already we have pushed the Turkish government into making some changes, though of course these are largely cosmetic. For example, Turkey is now allowing people to speak Kurdish, even though such speech is still forbidden in the schools and the press and all political freedom for Kurdish organisations is banned by the Turkish state. Eventually they will have to listen to us because militarily they are losing; it is our area, our people and they cannot impose their will forever against us. Also, economically they are being hit hard by our struggle.

LB: ***What about the Kurdish community in Britain?***
ERNK: The community here has been devastated by the tragedy of our people in Kurdistan. We appreciate the generosity of the British public in donating clothes, medicine, etc., but it was the British government which helped create this tragedy in the first place. Britain has a terrible record in relation to the Kurds. After all it was Britain which took our country away after World War I and divided it between Arabs, Persians and Turks. More recently, of course, they have refused to give Kurdish refugees asylum. Our people in Britain face many problems: of language, housing, employment, health care, immigration status. We are looked upon as criminals by the British government and our own political activities to secure freedom for our people are regarded as dangerous, though we are a peaceful community. We are eager to make alliances in Britain with anyone - political organisations or members of the general public - who genuinely supports our struggle for self-determination. As we have said time and again, the Kurdish people can only be safe and free, not in camps or "safe havens", but in a democratic, independent, united Kurdistan.

"...one of the main purposes of the Gulf War was to establish permanent US military bases in the region, which has now been done"

For more information contact the Kurdish Information Centre: c/o Kurdish Workers Association, Fairfax Hall, 11 Portland Gardens, London N4. Telephone: 081 880 1759; fax: 081 802 9963.

■ Donations to Kurdistan Relief Fund, National Westminster Bank, Hackney Branch (600923), account no. 15256890 or 11 Portland Gardens, London N4.

Closing the door on council housing?

Struggling with rent rises, deteriorating homes, and an oppressive benefit system, council tenants face harsh times. ***Scott Reeve*** *and* ***Catriona Sanchez,*** *co-convenors of the* ***South Hornsey Tenants Association*** *in north London, outline the crisis in public housing and the poverty of Labour's response to it.*

IN TIMES PAST housing was a key election issue for Labour, but it seems unlikely to figure in the coming general election campaign. The little that Walworth Road has produced on the issue seems to be addressed to owner occupiers. Although Opening Doors, the Party's housing policy document, does deal with most of the main issues, it falls short in three vital areas.

It has hardly anything to say about rents in social housing and the reform of the housing benefit system. The issue of meaningful consultation with tenants is not even discussed. And it makes clear that improving the quality of social housing will not be a priority for a future Labour government.

None of the members of Labour's working party on housing had direct experience of the tenants' movement and no consultation with this movement took place.

Many people active in tenants' associations believe that the whole future of council housing is now in question. Twelve years of Tory attacks have changed its very nature, particularly in London.

The rents charged by many London councils now place homes outside the reach of tenants on moderate incomes. Each year they edge closer to market rents. Three years ago rents in the private sector were nearly six times higher than council rents; now they are just over twice as high. In Labour Haringey, rents are now so high that council tenants with an income of £200 a week are entitled to housing benefit. With the 70% reduction in the price of tenants' homes under "right to buy" policies, it is now nearly as cheap for tenants to buy their homes as to continue to rent. After all, mortgage repayments tend to go down whilst council rents, at least at the moment, are going through the roof.

For these reasons the majority of council tenants in many London boroughs are on income support. More and more council estates are becoming ghettos of the very poor with 80% or more of tenants trapped in the benefit system. This has naturally affected the way that housing officers view council tenants. Many of them see themselves as charity workers assisting the socially inadequate. The idea that council housing exists to provide homes for workers on moderate incomes seems to have died.

Yet even within the framework of the capitalist economy workers need somewhere to live. Wages for many hospital, transport, shop and unskilled office workers are no more than £175 a week before stoppages. How can they afford to live in council homes where the weekly rent is £50, £60, £70 and in many cases much more?

Along with the "right to buy" and cuts in government grants, a vital plank in the Tory drive against council housing has been housing benefit.

Before 1982 tenants on means-tested benefits were paid the full amount of their rents and rates as part of their weekly benefit. All this changed with the introduction of the "unified housing benefit" system.

Under this system local councils are responsible for paying out housing benefit. They do not, however, actually give council tenants any money but merely credit their rent account. These tenants have thereby lost the right to put pressure on their local council by withholding their rent.

The chaos of housing benefit is having an impact on rent arrears and thus on rent rises. Since 1989 council housing budgets have been "ring-fenced", i.e. revenue and expenditure have had to balance. Under this system, the only way councils can make good a shortfall caused by rent arrears is by rent increases.

It takes months, sometimes years for councils to process tenants' housing benefit claims. Lack of communication between DSS offices and local councils means that over-payments occur when tenants come off income support. This then leads to huge rent arrears when tenants are asked to make good the DSS over-payments from their own pockets. If council housing becomes nothing but charity shelter for social security claimants, it might as well be taken over by the DSS and tenants' associations should merge with claimants' unions.

It is imperative that some form of rent control should be imposed on council housing if good quality housing is to be provided for workers on low-to-average wages. It could be made unlawful for council rents to be more than 20% of two-thirds of the average wage, with rent rises kept below the rate of inflation. Obviously, government grants for council housing would also need to be greatly increased.

After all, the subsidy to owner occupiers in the form of mortgage tax relief is seven times greater than current government spending on council housing!

NATIONAL COUNCIL TENANTS MEETING

JUNE 22nd 1991
1:30pm - 4:30pm
FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, EUSTON ROAD

SHELTER on
"Practical Proposals for the future. What should a Labour government do?"
KEN LIVINGSTONE MP
on "Rent freeze? Rent control? The future for council housing in London."
CLIVE SOLEY MP
on "The future under a Labour government."

LOTS OF TIME FOR QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

BANNED!

TUC buries *Working Women*

THE BRITISH TUC likes to make great play of its commitment to "independent trades unionism". For decades, it has lectured union movements in developing countries on the virtues of "free" trades unions and the iniquities of state interference in union affairs. Currently it is pouring vast resources into Eastern Europe ostensibly to promote these lofty ideals.

Mike Marqusee
Labour Briefing

But a decision has now been made at the highest levels of the TUC effectively to ban a new booklet for, by and about women trades unionists - at the request of Her Majesty's Government. The scandal first emerged from the Congress House bunker as a three-line item in the *Financial Times*. *Briefing* took note and investigated.

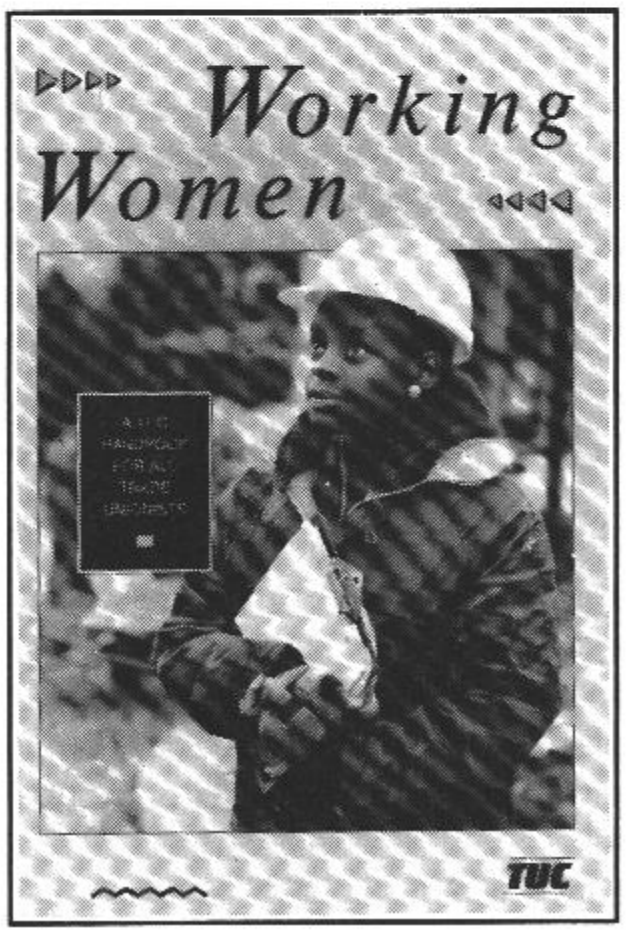
The story begins at last year's Women's TUC, which passed a motion demanding that the TUC do something about women's trade union education. Accordingly, a group of experienced women trade union educators, working with regional officials and consulting widely with women shop stewards, produced *Working Women: a TUC Handbook for all Trade Unionists*.

. . . And Now

The 1986 Social Security Act changed things:

- the maternity grant was *abolished*.
- *Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)* has repla[illegible]d mate[illegible]'v allowa[illegible]e and
[illegible]ty p[illegible] most v[illegible]ing
T[illegible] [illegible]of

Well-designed, easy to read and crammed with useful information and advice, *Working Women* deals with women's place in the labour market, conditions for women at work, maternity and childcare issues, health and safety, sexual harassment and, crucially, the role of women in trades unions.



Over thirty thousand copies were printed - one of which landed on the desk of one of Her Majesty's Inspectors at the Department of Education and Science. This man is responsible for evaluating educational provision in the trades union movement. Why should a government bureaucrat be concerned with trade union education? It happens that four-fifths of TUC-sponsored education for union members is funded by a £1.7 million annual grant from the government to the TUC. Naturally, the government likes to keep an eye on what it is getting for its money. However, it should be remembered that the booklet itself was paid for entirely by the TUC with no help from the government.

The HMI took exception to two passages in *Working Women*. One referred to the maternity grant being "*abolished*" in 1986 (apparently, the italics were objectionable) and the other to the fact that government policies since 1979 have helped hold down women's wages.

The HMI duly recommended that *Working Women* not be used on any trade union courses financed by government grants.

Did the mighty TUC, champion of independent trades unionism rise up to decry this wanton state interference in internal trade union affairs? Did it resolve to defy this attempt to dictate the content of trades union education?

No. Norman Willis, proud PEN supporter and promoter of free speech, assured the DES in a letter that their recommendation would be implemented. He ordered TUC staff not to allow the booklet to be used on any courses receiving DES finance. So much for the democratic and rather modest demands of the Women's TUC. So much for the right of trades unionists to organise their own trade union education free from state interference.

Government policy and low pay

These are some of the actions taken by the government since 1979 which have contributed to holding wages down and which have badly affected women workers:

Schedule 11 was abolished. This allowed any group of workers to claim parity with a similar group within an industry covered by a national agreement
the Fair Wages Resolution estab'[illegible]ed in '891, was abolished in 1983. It [illegible]'ed
[illegible]t employees of contractors [illegible]
[illegible]lic sector could claim pay
[illegible]'tions in line v[illegible]'th the ge[illegible]n
[illegible]ade locally
[illegible]ers of W[illegible] Coun[illegible]
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Shop stewards should demand that the TUC issue the booklet immediately to anyone who wants to use it. Union branches should place bulk orders and stewards should take copies to give out on courses - including courses financed by the government. Write to the TUC Publications Department, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1 for your copies today.

After all, you paid for it.

Local election round-up

Labour's results on May 2nd were good - but not good enough. Despite the mess the Tories have got themselves into, we're still a long way from capturing the kind of positive popular support we need to form a majority government. Below, ***Briefing*** *correspondents report from around the country.*

WIRRAL: a six-month campaign of smears and distortions in the Tory-run local free-sheet culminated in the defeat of Wirral Council Leader Yvonne Nolan on May 2nd.

The rag had printed a series of letters (clearly organised by local Tory hacks) from "name and address supplied" attacking the Labour Group leadership for supporting Poll Tax non-payers, while refusing to print the many letters in favour of the Group's stand.

Last year, Labour inherited a Tory budget that had stripped all reserves in order to set an artificially low Poll Tax. Nonetheless, the Labour Group, under left leadership, was able to restore some of the worst cuts and maintain the "no cuts" position of the District Labour Party.

Although this year's Labour budget, set against a background of possible Poll Tax capping, was £11 million short of a standstill budget and included reductions of about £3 million in spending, it was constructed (with the support of the DLP) to avoid job losses and did not include direct service cuts.

Labour's stand won widespread support amongst the council workforce and anti-cuts campaigners and was popular in working class areas. But in the better-off suburbs the smears paid off - aided and abetted by deserters from our own ranks.

Two ex-Party members ran as "Labour Independents" and split the Labour vote. Frank Field, Labour MP for Birkenhead, publicly condemned the non-payment campaign. And Walworth Road chipped in by expelling eight long-serving local Party members - including Wirral Deputy Leader Geoff Barker - for alleged links with Militant.

In spite of these assaults, Labour gained two seats in the elections, one from a "Labour Independent" and one from the Tories, giving the Labour Group an overall majority in Wirral for the first time ever.

But with the removal of its left leadership, the Labour Group faces a stern challenge. It must resist the temptation to try to stay in office by making cuts; trades unionists and the electorate must be rallied to join the fightback.

However, judging by the Group AGM, at which the left found itself isolated, it looks more likely to follow the road set by other Labour Groups around the country: grit your teeth, bang your dented shield - and make the cuts!

■ **Stu Clarke,**
Chair, Wirral West CLP

IN BARROW the Labour Party was thrashed. Previously there were 21 Labour, 15 Conservative and two "independents" on the council; now there are 19 Labour, 17 Conservative and two "independents".
Although there is now no overall control on the Council, Labour will retain power by virtue of the Mayor's casting vote.
The thirteen Labour candidates secured a total of 8,525 Labour votes; the twelve Tory candidates a total of 12,745 Tory votes. The turn-out was a relatively high 43%.

Undoubtedly the most sensational result occurred in the rock-solid Labour held Ormsgill ward, a working-class area of high unemployment and massive social deprivation which saw the triumph of the right-wing Thatcherite chair of Barrow Young Conservatives, 22-year old Michael Tear. This snarling extremist beat the sitting soft-left Labour councillor, a passionate advocate of using bailiffs against Poll Tax non-payers.

I fought the marginal Newbarns Ward which last year elected a Tory by just over 200 votes. This year the Tories romped home with 1,512, exactly 1,000 higher than my 512 "votes for socialism". The one positive result for the left was the Labour success in Barrow Island, the Borough's most deprived ward, where a supporter of Poll Tax non-payment fought and won a strong campaign.

Tory MP Cecil "Where's Barrow?" Franks gloated, "Barrow has had enough of socialism". Chance would be a fine thing!

■ **Hyder Prodhan**
Barrow and Furness CLP

Analysis in short

The Conservatives have been reduced to the third largest group on Manchester City Council by the best Liberal Democrat performance since 1987. Local Labour activists attribute the Liberal success to the national swing, rather than the "Focus Team" activism which has scored here in the past.

In winning three seats in the **MANCHESTER GORTON** constituency, the Liberal Democrats toppled a number of Gerald Kaufman's cronies operating out of the local Labour (beer-drinking) Club. To add insult to injury, two of the Labour winners were solid anti-cuts/anti-Poll Tax activists, including Ken Strath, who nearly deselected Kaufman in 1989.

If this had been a general election, Kaufman would have scraped in - but only thanks to the efforts of the left.

IN BRIGHTON Labour gained four seats - but in comparison with the 1990 local elections, the Labour vote slumped.
In the Kemp Town constituency there was a 6.5% swing since May 1990 to the Tories from Labour; in the Pavilion constituency the swing was 4.6% to the Tories.

Compared to last year the Labour vote across the town was down by 5,844; the Tories were up by 531. The other parties were down by a total of 1,131. So while the turnout was down, it was down primarily among Labour supporters.

Prosecution of Poll Tax non-payers has hit the Labour vote hard. There are over 30,000 people in Brighton who have paid no Poll Tax at all. Their votes will be needed to secure victories in the general election.

The Labour Council leadership has now achieved its aim of getting rid of left-wing councillors Jean Calder and Kate Packham. In St Peter's and Tenantry wards, where Jean and Kate were prevented from standing, the swing against Labour was much higher than the average swing in Pavilion and Kemp Town respectively.

■ **Andy Winter**
suspended Brighton Labour councillor.

NEC slate-making merry-go-round

As we go to press it looks inevitable that there will be (at least) two different left slates for this year's elections (the first under "one member one vote") for the Constituency section of Labour's National Executive Committee. ***Dorothy Macedo*** *asks: how did we get into this mess?*

IN RECENT years the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs has usually gone through a rather ill-defined consultation process with the leaders of selected left pressure groups (notably those involved in Labour Left Liaison) about the make-up of the left slate for the NEC.

This year, even that limited consultation failed to take place.

One reason was the bitter after-taste left by the manoeuvrings which surrounded the Committee to Stop the War in the Gulf. Most left MPs had been quite disgusted by the appalling antics of members and associates of Socialist Action who seemed determined to exclude other left groups. What should have been an exercise in maximum left unity during the biggest crisis for years became a hideous example of sectarianism.

Of course, some will say that MPs don't need much excuse to avoid consulting lesser mortals!

This year there were two vacancies on the left slate because Audrey Wise, recently elected president of USDAW, is standing in the trade union section, and Jo Richardson has moved even more firmly into the Kinnock camp. The Socialist Campaign Group (SCG) replaced them with two men: Jeremy Corbyn and Dave Nellist.

LLL decided it could not support the new slate. At a meeting with SCG representatives, the Labour Women's Action Committee said that while it wanted four women and three men, a slate of four men and three women would be acceptable, for this year only, provided all the candidates supported positive discrimination for women and black people. In other words, Nellist would have to go.

The next SCG meeting voted nem con to reaffirm the original seven names. Meanwhile, Labour Party Black Sections decided to put forward Greenwich councillor Kanta Patel in place of Nellist. This alternative slate was backed by the Labour Party Socialists national committee and will probably be supported by LLL, though some are still pressing to replace Corbyn with a woman.

The *Briefing* Editorial Board has now voted twice to support the SCG slate, despite the problems mentioned earlier. It did so because it believed the left will look ridiculous if it can't agree on a credible, united slate: the only winners will be the right-wing.

The *Briefing* EB was particularly conscious that this year, for the first time, CLPs are supposed to ballot all their members to determine how their conference delegates vote in the NEC elections. We therefore need a nationally-organised, well-resourced and vigorous campaign if we are to secure a strong left vote.

Realistically, only Benn and Skinner stand any chance of being elected. The existence of more than one left slate will be a dangerous diversion from maximising their support.

Is it worth creating divisions over other candidates who aren't going to be elected? Some have argued that, in that case, we might as well use this year to promote relatively unknown women. The need to promote more women is undeniable, but the answer surely would be for them to stand (this year) for the Women's Division of the NEC. Last year there were no left candidates at all in this section.

This does not mean that we are insensitive to the problems with the SCG slate, nor do we accept that only MPs are suitable candidates for the NEC. But let's be honest, comrades, there have always problems with the left slate and the way it's been drawn up. Last year, many people were unhappy about Jo Richardson being on it and it would certainly be possible to criticise other candidates on this year's slate.

Socialist Organiser, for example, which supports the replacement of Nellist by Patel, admits that "we disagree with other people on the slate at least as much". The reason they give for picking on Nellist, i.e. his association with Militant, looks unpleasantly like sectarian rivalry. Given that both groups are being witch-hunted, this is unfortunate. If we don't hang together, we shall certainly all be hanged separately. The fact that *Militant* has not defended *Socialist Organiser* does not mean we should return the compliment.

One thing is certain: Walworth Road and the LCC will be delighted by any evidence that we are squabbling amongst ourselves.

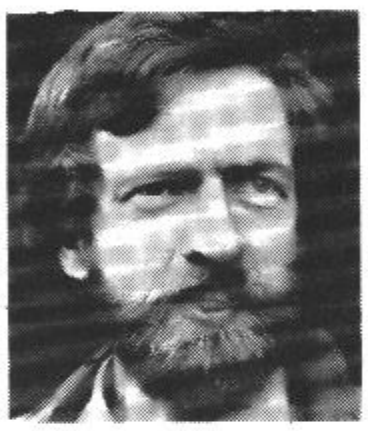
Support the Socialist Campaign Group slate for the Constituency Section of the National Executive Committee:

Diane Abbott, Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, Ken Livingstone, Alice Mahon, Dave Nellist, Dennis Skinner

Also support Gavin Strang for Treasurer and Pete Willsman for Conference Arrangements Committee.

In next month's *Briefing*: how to campaign in your constituency for the left slate - and what's happening in the Women's and TU Sections.

What's "natural" about these disasters?



☐ **Commonweal** is a monthly column by **Jeremy Corbyn,** Labour MP for Islington North.

THE HORRORS IN *Africa, Kurdistan, Southern Iraq and Bangladesh demand massive and urgent aid from the West. The government found over £1 billion without even getting Parliamentary approval to make Kuwait safe for the Emir and the oil companies. Where is the same commitment to stop people starving or dying in epidemics? Why did it take a week to get the helicopters from the Gulf and Diego Garcia to Bangladesh to distribute food and vaccines?*

The House of Commons debated the matter. Worthy as many of the speeches were they were underscored by a view that wealth and aid automatically flowed from the rich north to the poor south.

It does not and has not - at least for the last three hundred years. The point is that without a real increase in commodity prices (in many respects they are now lower than they were in 1950) and a write-off of the debt, the disasters and poverty will get worse.

There are in fact very few "natural" disasters; deforestation and urbanisation increase drought and run-off and that in turn leads to desertification and floods. Yet the areas most affected are told by the World Bank to produce for export, service ever bigger debts and adopt a market economy approach.

Cholera outbreaks in Peru and elsewhere are linked to cuts in public services, poor drainage and health care. The old aid patterns will not deal with this new crisis. What's needed is real solidarity in the struggles against the debt, the World Bank and the multinationals.

FOR REFUGEES, BRITAIN *is one of the world's least welcoming abodes. There are fewer applicants, fewer approvals and less support for those admitted than almost anywhere else in Europe. On top of that there is no right of appeal against decisions of the Home Secretary on whether asylum will or will not be granted.*

Two years ago a Kurdish man from Turkey, Siho Iyuguven, arrived in Britain and sought safety; it was refused. Despite numerous appeals by supporters and friends the Home Office maintained its stony face and set a date and time for Siho's forcible return to Turkey.

In the end Siho did not return to Turkey. He committed suicide rather than go back to the harassment he had fled.

Three weeks ago a victim of torture in Zaire sought asylum here. It was refused. The Home Office had him removed - even though an application for a judicial review had been lodged. He went to France and then back to Zaire. He has not been heard of since.

The Trevi group (a secret meeting of EEC Interior Ministers) has tried to introduce a "lowest common denominator" immigration policy to keep out victims of oppression.

On May 8th I introduced the Asylum Seekers and Refugees Bill which would give a right of appeal and a charter of rights in regard to housing, health and education for refugees. It was opposed by right wing Tory Gerald Howarth, who invoked a litany of racist images to try to defeat it.

However, aided by his speech and the fact that most Tory MPs do not turn up until the evening, we actually won the vote by 116 to 73!

Now I want Labour to commit itself to this policy of basic human rights.

WE HAVE BEEN *having some success in the campaign to end Blood Sports. A Bill to protect Badger Setts has gone through the House of Commons and we have managed, under the captaincy of Harry Cohen MP, to get a Hare Coursing Bill through at least the Committee stage.*

The uneatable, unspeakable and unthinkable trio of Tory hunters (Nicholas Soames, Michael Colvin and Nicholas Bonsor) tried to defend hare coursing on the grounds that it rid us of a pest and was a Great Tradition of Old England that must be preserved.

Like bear baiting and cock fighting?

GENERAL PINOCHET LED *the coup in Chile in 1973 which murdered Dr Salvador Allende and some fifty thousand others and drove over a million into exile.*

He was supported by the British Tories with arms and credit but never dared leave Chile other than to visit his old buddy Stroessner in Paraguay. Now as head of the Chilean Army he is visiting this country on a buying mission as a guest of British Aerospace.

Carl Blackburn from Chile Solidarity and I tried to deliver him and the BAe Directors a letter saying what we thought of him. They would not see us.

His visit is what the evil of the arms trade is all about - it must end.

PR, Labour and the Liberal Dictators

SO I WAS out canvassing in the local elections and I knocked on this rotten wooden council flat door and a woman opened it. Behind her I saw a dark, damp hall. I asked if she would be voting Labour on May 2nd. Well, although her bedroom and living room walls were covered in black mould and although her window frames were rotten, she said she would indeed be voting Labour . . . if we adopted proportional representation!

John Wilton
PPC Birmingham Edgbaston

Then I woke up.

A recent survey, we are told, says Labour's vote will go up by 7% if we adopt PR. In our constituency, we have been knocking on doors week in and week out since last July - over 9000 so far - and not one person has raised PR as an issue. Perhaps they just don't believe it's a cure for damp, mould-ridden council homes.

Every time the Tories are in trouble and Labour makes any headway at all in the opinion polls the so-called quality press starts to talk up PR. Of course, all these pro-PR articles never mention the obvious consequence of PR - coalition government. After all, PR and coalitionism are the final pieces in the jigsaw of Labour's transformation into a "safe" West European social democratic party.

The pro-PR pundits in the national press and the PR supporters in our own Party argue that PR is more "modern" (whatever that means) and more democratic. How ironic then that PR itself should only be introduced as a result of an undemocratic stitch-up in smoke-filled rooms.

Ashdown is already saying that the price of Liberal support for any minority government - Labour or Tory - would be a commitment to legislate for PR. So this "more democratic" electoral system would be foisted on the public as a result of the party with the smallest number of MPs holding the balance of power and dictating terms to parties with far greater numbers of MPs - and votes.

On top of PR, Ashdown is demanding seats in the Cabinet and ministerial posts. And these are only the public demands. Once the bargaining starts behind closed doors, the real Liberal agenda will emerge - incomes policies, "no strike" legislation in the public sector, cuts in public spending, etc.

These are prices some people on the right of our Party are willing to pay, but they are not prices that people in damp, dilapidated homes can afford to pay.

A Labour government which gains the most seats in a general election - even if not an overall majority - should tell Ashdown to stuff his PR up his RP (that's rear passage). He has already said he would support the Tories in a coalition if he has to. Instead of trying to coax the Liberals into our camp, Labour should put its full programme to the House of Commons and defy the Liberals to vote it down and force another election.

There is one further irony about Ashdown's PR demand. The Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform and its Chair Jeff Rooker (who is so wedded to democratic reforms that he arranged to have his constituency reselection process stopped) have made a virtue of not advocating any particular system of PR. Instead, they have argued in general for "electoral reform".

Now we can see why they have adopted this tactic - because they know it won't be Labour which chooses which particular variety of PR emerges from any coalition deal.

In keeping with PR-style democracy, it will be the smallest party with the least public support (the Liberals) which dictates the specific type of PR to be introduced in Britain.

The PR pushers in our Party have tried to divorce the issue from politics. but it is becoming clearer all the time that the politics of PR are rotten to the core and that it is Labour's supporters who will be expected to pay the price for them.



Coventry: *the sour taste of New Realism*

COVENTRY IS a Labour city. Three of its four constituencies have Labour MPs: John Hughes (NE), Dave Nellist (SE), Geoffrey Robinson (NW). The fourth is a key Tory marginal (SW), held now by John Butcher. We also have a Labour MEP, Christine Oddy. The City Council has been overwhelmingly Labour since the end of World War II. Currently, Labour has 46 seats, the Tories eight and the Lib Dems none.

With such a firm electoral base, you would expect a lively local Party. In fact the Coventry Labour Party has no headquarters, no paid agents and no Labour Social Club. It is not even mentioned in the local telephone directory or Yellow Pages! You would have to stretch your memory to think of when it last held a public meeting.

"In fact the Coventry Labour Party has no headquarters, no paid agents and no Labour Social Club. It is not even mentioned in the local telephone directory or Yellow Pages!"

Last year, the Constituency Labour Party in Coventry South West (that key marginal) operated without a CLP secretary and with less than 400 members in its five wards. Even Dave Nellist's Coventry South East has difficulty in getting a quorum for its meetings.

In Coventry North East, the Fraud Squad has become involved in a dispute over the deselection of Campaign Group member John Hughes MP by Council Deputy Leader Bob Ainsworth, an ex-IMG/Militant supporter turned arch right-winger, following allegations of ballot-rigging in one ward.

The Labour MP for Coventry North West is a millionaire and ex-manager of Jaguar Cars. He lives in a Lutyens-built mansion in the Surrey stockbroker belt, light years from Coventry, and was recently in the news for shooting his son in the foot while out pheasant hunting

City of Coventry

How does the local Party machine actually work? A quick look at the District Party is illustrative. The chairperson is Bill Lapworth, a full-time TGWU official; the vice-chair is Ray Lissaman, a full-time AEU official. The secretary, Cllr Peter Lacey, also doubles up as secretary of the City Council Labour Group. The executive is made up of minor figures from similar backgrounds.

When it comes time to appoint Council delegates to various bodies or school governors or to knife-and-forkism at civic receptions and banquets, chums and cronies are always remembered. Patronage is the order of the day. No wonder at a recent "consultation" meeting over one of the Council's policies, two comments from the public were: "This lot make the Kremlin look open" and "Have these people never heard of glasnost?"

The politics of the Labour Council and the local trade union officials can be summed up: accept the system, the laws, the cuts, the privatizations and grab whatever grants you can from other sources. They have been making cuts here since 1976!

It is difficult to think of a radical or progressive policy implemented by Coventry Labour Council even in the supposed heyday of the municipal left in the 1980s. The powerful local unions, the TGWU and AEU, accepted massive job losses in engineering and the car industry in Coventry in the early 80s. They never went beyond narrow economism; they never prepared for the crisis.

Last November the Labour Council "celebrated" the 50th anniversary of the Coventry blitz. Because of the blitz, Coventry is renowned throughout the world and has no less than 32 twin towns! At the time of the "celebration" the Gulf War was looming, but the Labour Group ignored it and its obvious relevance. Instead it invited the Queen Mother for a Cathedral service and Dame Vera Lynn to switch on the Christmas shopping lights. They sold the whole thing on Radio 4's Breakaway as a tourist attraction. Even some of the shopkeepers thought this was in bad taste. But then a quick tour through Coventry City Centre and a look at the tatty new shopping developments would convince anybody that bad taste is the

"This lot make the Kremlin look open"

order of the day under "Flash" Harry Noble, the Coventry Council planning supremo.

After the recent local elections, Cllr. Arthur Waugh Jr., former Deputy Leader and former Lord Mayor ("Becoming Lord Mayor is like winning the pools"), complained loudly that "the Left" had taken over the Council. What he means by "the Left" is a group of ex-Militant, ex-SWP, ex-IMG supporters who have moved very definitely to the right (just as, in the 1950s/60s, many Labour councillors were ex-CP members). They have changed their politics but maintained their bureaucratic and factional methods. One week after taking office this "Left" took the first batch of Poll Tax non-payers to court with a threat of immediate imprisonment. New Realism, surely, in the worst possible taste.

This month's Constituency Close-up comes from ***Dave Spencer****.*

Born-again-again

Through fifteen years of twists and turns, ***Margaret Beckett*** *has pursued her ambitions in and out of the House of Commons. She has now reached the final eminence - as* ***Briefing*** *names her June 1991 Class Traitor of the Month.*

ALWAYS AMBITIOUS, Margaret Beckett has floated with the political tide, carefully cultivating her career and displaying an astonishing indifference to the hobgoblin of consistency.

After a degree in metallurgy from Manchester University, she trod a familiar career track to Transport House where she went to work as a research assistant for the Labour Party.

She fought the Lincoln constituency against renegade incumbent and Euro-fanatic Dick Taverne, who had resigned the Labour Whip to sit as an independent. After failing to unseat Taverne in February 1974, Beckett took a job as political advisor to Judith Hart, then Minister for Overseas Development. In October of that year she despatched Taverne and entered Parliament - as a committed anti-Marketeer.

Here she continued her association with Judith Hart as Parliamentary Private Secretary until, after only a year in the House, she was appointed an assistant government whip.

Although considered a left-winger (and a member of the then very small Tribune Group), Beckett accepted the post of Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education in 1976 - replacing Joan Lestor who had resigned in protest over the IMF-imposed spending cuts. Working for Shirley Williams in what was considered to be a very right wing ministerial team, Beckett impressed colleagues as a diligent servant of the increasingly beleaguered and reactionary Callaghan government.

Beckett lost her Lincoln seat to the Tories in 1979. As Labour swung to the left in opposition, she became a vocal Bennite and won election to the NEC (after failures in 1976 and 77) on the left tide in 1980. During the ensuing stormy year she voted with the left on the Executive and was duly turfed off in 1981 when right-wing trade union leaders organised their fightback.

In a much publicised speech at the Tribune Rally at the 1981 Conference, Beckett publicly tore into Neil Kinnock and Joan Lestor for abstaining in the deputy leadership contest and handing victory to Healey. Would it be churlish to suggest, in the light of later developments, that Beckett's angry denunciation had more than a little to do with the loss of her NEC seat?



£20bn on NHS?

She stood for the NEC in the three succeeding years and lost each time. But in 1983 the marginal seat of Derby South returned her to Parliament. She immediately signed up for both the Tribune and Campaign Groups and stood for the Shadow Cabinet, gaining only 27 votes.

In that year's leadership contest, she voted for the despised Kinnock, who subsequently made her a Social Security spokesperson; he was said to be still smarting from her 1981 conference attack, but one thing you have to give our leader, he knows how to co-opt opponents.

With the support of the left, she managed to regain a seat on the NEC for one year in 1985-86 and for a few months in 1987 when Betty Boothroyd resigned and Beckett, as the runner-up, filled her place.

Repeated attempts to win election to the Shadow Cabinet came to nought until 1988, when Beckett made the smartest of all her career moves. Although she had long been an inactive member, she had paid her subscriptions to the Campaign Group and happily accepted its support for her various candidatures. In 1988 she made a widely advertised break from the Group, ostensibly over the decision by Benn and Heffer to challenge the leadership. This marked the end of her association with the left (but not, for two years, the end of her appearances on the Campaign Group NEC slate).

She was born-again-again, this time as an uncritical Kinnockite.

Beckett's reward was election to the NEC in 1988. She has held her seat comfortably ever since - not too difficult given the paucity of candidates in the Women's Section and the inertia of trade union block voters.

In 1989 she finally won a place in the Shadow Cabinet - courtesy of the PLP rule change that enlarged this august body and introduced a quota system for women. Eager to utilise Beckett's assiduousness - and her reputation as an ex-left winger, a prodigal returned - Kinnock appointed her as Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Her conservatism in this post and her increasingly mindless loyalty to the leadership pushed her into the top three in the 1990 PLP ballot.

Beckett's declared political affiliations still include CND (despite her NEC votes against unilateralism and for the Gulf War), the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (despite her votes for the witch-hunt) and the Common Market Safeguards Committee (despite her happy embrace of ERM and EMU).

As a member of Kinnock's hard-core economics team - with John Smith, Gordon Brown and Tony Blair, the most right-wing in memory - Beckett has been instrumental in keeping Labour's campaign pledges to the barest minimum, repeatedly insisting that Labour "will not spend what the country cannot afford". She has won new friends in the City but made little impression anywhere else.

Kinnock's recent pledge of £20 billion extra spending on services may or may not have caught her unawares, but she didn't miss a beat, falling into step with the latest diktat, without so much as acknowledging the volte-face.

Lambeth: occupiers defy closure

Since April 20th, Lambeth NALGO members working in consumer and money advice sections have mounted a round the clock occupation of two Lambeth advice centres tunder threat. The occupations have won backing from the local NALGO branch and support is growing across the borough. ***Briefing*** *interviewed three of the NALGO members currently occupying the Lambeth Walk Consumer Advice Centre. Their identities have been concealed to protect them from victimisation.*

Briefing: ***Why have you decided to occupy the centres?***

Nalgo members: We want to maintain a service to the public and prevent compulsory redundancies. Occupation was the only way to stop the Council closing us down. Management was refusing to negotiate, despite a mass petition from our users and hundreds of letters to councillors.

B: ***How has the occupation been going?***

N: We've been here three weeks and we're worn out. But we have had excellent support from members of the community who've been bringing us food, cakes and even a bed.

B: ***What support have you had from the union?***

N: We've had good support from some individual members of our NALGO branch which has also now been persuaded to back us financially.

B: ***How has the council responded?***

N: Management visits regularly to harass the occupiers and has written to us individually at home with threats of disciplinary action. The Council has also stopped our pay - because we're continuing to provide a service!

B: ***Finally, what do you think of Lambeth's Labour administration?***

N: They can't be trusted after their "u-turn" on the Poll Tax. Now they tell us they're "protecting frontline services" when in reality they're slashing them!

"Nothing to celebrate"

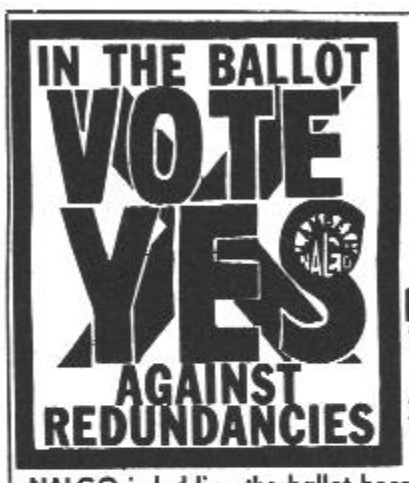
A candle-lit vigil in Trafalgar Square on the eve of the Gulf War Victory Parade

Initiated by Women Against War in the Gulf and supported by Black Sections, Labour Against the War, Labour Action for Peace, Kurdistan Solidarity Committee, the Socialist Movement and others.

9pm-midnight

June 20th

Call 071 272 7649 for more information.



TO LAMBETH NALGO MEMBERS:

VOTE YES

LAMBETH NALGO IS HOLDING A BALLOT FOR ALL OUT STRIKE ACTION IN THE EVENT OF COMPULSORY REDUNDANCIES

NALGO is holding the ballot because:

1. Essential local services are being threatened with devastation by the Council's cuts.
   Hundreds of local people have protested against the closure of advice centres, nurseries, pools, and youth clubs.
   NALGO cannot stand by and watch a Labour Council make Tory cuts.
2. Lambeth Council has not withdrawn the threat of compulsory redundancies despite NALGO's attempts to negotiate.

FOUR REASONS TO VOTE 'YES':

1. To stop the council using compulsory redundancies as part of its staffing policy.
2. To oppose the devastation of essential local services, following years of cuts and closures.
3. Cuts in jobs and services hit the lowest paid and black and women workers hardest.
4. To fight for your job, now and in the future. A weak union can do nothing to protect your rights and conditions.

Cut the crap, not jobs and services!

ON APRIL 30TH, 150 people attended a public meeting called by Lambeth Against the Witch-hunt and heard NEC members Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner call for an end to the suspensions of thirteen Lambeth Labour councillors and two local Party members.

Caroline Hathaway
Assistant Branch Secretary
Lambeth NALGO

A majority of those present expressed strong opposition to the cuts in jobs and services which the council leadership is now pushing through. Hundreds of jobs are being lost through "voluntary" redundancy and many will face compulsory redundancy.

Closures already agreed include nurseries, advice centres, swimming pools and playgrounds. Several speakers at the April 30th rally, including suspended anti-cuts councillor Alison Higgs and surcharged former councillors Sharon Atkin and Ted Knight, argued that these cuts are no way to build a fightback against the witch-hunt.

Strong community opposition to cuts is now being matched by pockets of industrial action. Two advice centres have been occupied against closure for over a month (see left). Strike action is set to spread to unexpected areas, such as Education Social Work. NALGO members are balloting for all-out action against any compulsory redundancies.

With even Streatham Tory MP Bill Shelton calling for additional government money for Lambeth, it is clear that a united campaign between the Council, unions and the community could reverse many of the current cuts. The failure of the Lambeth Labour Group to lead such a campaign is inexcusable.

LEWISHAM LABOUR GROUP struck a small blow for democracy on Monday May 13th, when it rejected recommendations from outgoing Chief Whip Gavin Moore to withdraw the Labour Whip for one month from four anti-cuts councillors.

The vote revealed increasing unease about the rising tide of intolerance in the Labour Party.

Ghost of Poll Tax haunts the living

THE POLL TAX is not dead.The Tories have been forced to admit that it was a mistake, but councils all over the country continue to take people to court for non-payment.

The issue for socialists is not the relative merits of some hazy alternative but the reality of an evil tax which is still in force and still subjecting millions to the harsh hand of the law.

Brian Harrison
Deptford CLP

Many people have paid and will continue to pay a personal price for defying the Tax. But millions have learned for the first time that united action can have a devastating effect on those who hold power. Without our compliance that power is useless.

Inevitably, Tory manoeuvres ("council tax" and £140 reduction) have had an impact on the anti-Poll Tax movement. Many people are heard to say, "Well, it's over now".

But don't be duped into thinking that people are no longer interested in the non-payment campaign. Far from it. The only people who say this have either paid the Tax or are political activists who were only involved in the campaign for the benefit they thought it would bring to their organisations.

Anyone who is still involved with people on the ground level knows that with bailiffs and imprisonments looming over us, the non-payment campaign is far from over.

Non-payers appearing in court are not busy discussing the "council tax". They may sometimes be distressed or fearful but they are still encouraged and strengthened to see they are not alone. We have to continue to provide essential support and co-ordination.

Local campaigns should be highlighting the fact that Labour councils are using bailiffs against some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

Constituency Labour Parties must continue to pass resolutions demanding that councils refuse to use bailiffs. If Labour councillors continue to use bailiffs, we must make sure these councillors are not allowed to hide from the results of their decisions.

We must demand that the Labour Party adopts a policy of amnesty for non-payers. Surely this should pose no problem for a Labour leadership which is always saying it will do anything to win the general election. Why not adopt a popular socialist policy for once instead of copying the Tories?

Labour should insist that Tory central government pays the price for its mistakes - not local people.



LOCAL AUTHORITIES HAVE told the Department of Environment that the legal remedies for dealing with Poll Tax defaulters are failing in 80% of cases. Bailiffs have been next to useless because "defaulters were aware of their rights in relation to gaining access to premises", the Guardian reported.

Deductions from benefit were bringing in only tiny amounts of income and arrestment of earnings has proved difficult because people were simply not providing necessary information. The Audit Commission estimates that 7.5 million summonses will be needed to enforce the 1990-91 Poll Tax.

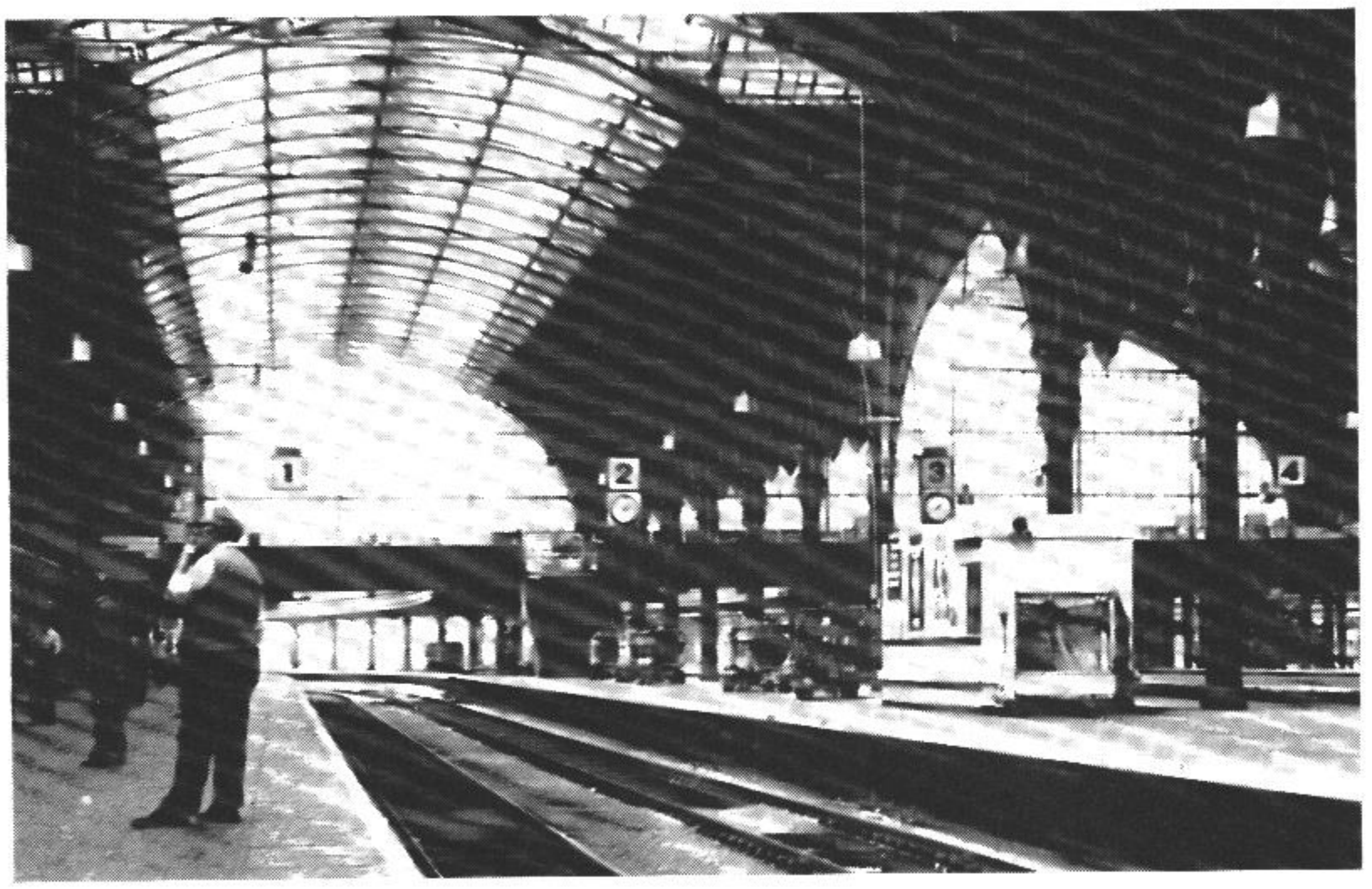
BECAUSE INCOME SUPPORT benefit was calculated on the basis of an underestimated average Poll Tax, claimants lost £1.50 a week. Because benefits were not uprated in line with the real rate of inflation (which includes Poll Tax), the same people lost another £2 a week.

As for Lamont's £140 cut, it leaves most low income households little more than 50p better off a week. However, VAT increases are estimated to cost poorer families some £4 a week.

All of which amounts to £1 billion a year across the country. And no amount of overtime worked by bailiffs will recoup it.

FORMER TRIBUNITE LABOUR MP Woodrow Wyatt must be one of the only people in the land in mourning for the Poll Tax: "The community charge was starting to compel councils to cut their costs...In 1994 local councils won't be nearly so accountable to voters...No system of taxation can ever be absolutely fair. Nor is life. A rich man pays the same price for a pair of shoelaces as a poor man...the government was determined to abolish the community charge despite its growing success. The new scheme is less fair. It also costs the nation billions of pounds more to subsidise than the community charge. A sad retreat..."

Railworkers vote on strike action



THE RMT will be balloting its British Rail members this month on a management pay offer of 7%. The union is looking for rejection of the offer and support for a series of 24-hour stoppages against it.

Greg Tucker, Secretary RMT Southern District Council

In the last five years British Rail's productivity and profitability has soared. Staff numbers are down 12%, receipts per person up 14% and costs down 9%. Instead of putting the money back into the industry in higher wages or better conditions BR management has given it back to the government - which has reduced transport subsidy by £500 million. Another £100 million is being used to reorganise BR to prepare for privatisation. At the back of the queue, as usual, are workers' wages and investment in safety.

For a moment in January BR's new Chairman seemed to be heralding a change of direction, publicly demanding £100 million to improve services. But after he was called into the Department of Transport to have his knuckles rapped, it was back to the old game of high fares, poor services, low-paid staff and long working hours.

Now railworkers are asking, "Why should we be asked to take a pay cut to meet the costs of privatisation?"

Current wage settlements in other industries are averaging over 9%. British Telecom and British Coal settled at 10%, the Post Office at 10.4% and Ford at 13.4%. Over the years BR workers have slipped further and further down the pay league. This year is the time to call a halt.

When the BR annual pay award fell due, inflation was 8.9%. Management has dragged its heels, hoping to be able to compare its offer favourably with a falling inflation rate. In previous years they did the opposite, pushing pay agreements through early to beat rapidly rising inflation.

In 1989, by standing together, workers forced BR to come up with more money. The current RMT ballot must set the scene for the same kind of struggle.

Unfortunately there are already signs of weakness. Confusion over the negotiations on London Transport has not helped (see opposite). On BR, TSSA and ASLEF have decided to go to internal arbitration rather than mobilise their members and in the RMT not all BR workers are being balloted.

In addition, the RMT has not come up with a specific figure for its pay demand, only the tired old formula for a "substantial increase"'. Serious issues affecting conditions are being channelled separately into the bureaucratic negotiating machinery as if they were not inextricably linked with the question of pay.

The success of 1989 was based on bringing all issues and all sectors into struggle together. So far this year this is not the case.

When confronted with these criticisms all Jimmy Knapp can say is that the union is "not in control" of the timetable for action. A key demand of the left must be to bring all the union's sectoral disputes to the boil together.

The one-day stoppages called for in the current RMT ballot were enough in 1989 but BR has learnt its lessons since then. This time more will be needed. It is clear that BR will consider permanent lockouts to try to break the union. The union must start now to prepare the ground for all-out action.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY WORKERS have rejected an 8.9% pay offer from employers. AEU members voted two-to-one and EETPU members 13,206 to 10,460 against the deal. Union leaders, who want to make a deal with the bosses but are sensitive to rank and file discontent, had made no recommendation.

There has been no national industrial action by workers in electricity supply since the early 70s. But privatisation has led to worsening conditions and inflation and interest rates have squeezed their standards of living.

There had been an earlier ballot on an 8.2% offer which resulted in a two-to-one majority for industrial action. After further negotiations, the employers came up with the 8.9% offer which has now been rejected. However, another ballot will be required before industrial action can take place under the law.

Current take home pay in the industry averages about £750 per month. Workers are unlikely to settle for anything less than a 10% rise, but the union leaderships can be counted on to try to thwart any moves to strike action. Already, the claim has been undermined by the white-collar unions, notably the EPA, which rejected a united approach on this year's pay deal and is playing its usual game of waiting till the manuals settle and coasting to a pay rise on their industrial muscle.

Tube bosses divide and rule

*Despite a successful ballot for strike action, London Underground workers face job losses and threats of further re-organisation. A **tubeworker** member of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) reports.*

EIGHT HUNDRED jobs have been lost on London's Underground even though the RMT and TSSA had voted by two-to-one for industrial action against staff cuts.

Negotiations at ACAS saved 200 of the original 1000 proposed job losses and instituted talks on rosters which could increase staffing. Management proposals to cut another 800 jobs were withdrawn; working parties on staffing and pay levels set up after the 1989 strikes but subsequently abandoned by management were reestablished; promotion and transfer arrangements were reinstituted and the protection of earnings for displaced staff was extended from eighteen months to three years.

However, largescale reorganisation of the Permanent Way and Engineering Departments, which at this stage involves no job losses, remains on the agenda. Management could now move swiftly to break up these sections. Individual line managers will control their own Permanent Way and Engineering services with the option of putting this work out to private contractors.

However, it is unlikely that any further major changes will be proposed for passenger services this side of the general election.

London Underground Ltd macho management style has produced a £100 million deficit and deteriorating services. It is now seriously discredited in the eyes of the public, which wants better and safer services with more staff on trains and stations. Only a Tory general election victory would give LUL a fresh mandate for new cutbacks.

ASLEF, which claims just over 50% of train staff on LUL, collaborated with LUL's job-shedding plans from the start. This split with the RMT was the single most important reason for management's success.

In an unprecedented move on London Underground, ASLEF signed a deal with management after the other unions had clearly registered their refusal to agree this same deal and before they had finished balloting.

ASLEF national officials stated that they would not support any of their members who respected official RMT or TSSA picket lines.

Full-time local officials and branch officers went even further. They actively campaigned against the RMT and TSSA ballots and declared support for management's plan to sack activists.

During previous ballots (in 1987 and 1989) management had kept its counsel. This time threats of the sack were widespread, backed up by individual letters to each member of the workforce.

In addition, management imposed its package while the unions were still balloting. Compliance with the anti-trade union laws meant that the new working arrangements were in place for fully four weeks before the ballot could be concluded.

By the time the LUL management agreed to talks with the union at ACAS, rank and file activists feared a repeat of 1985 when an all-out strike call by the NUR against the imposition of one-person-operation was ignored by the majority of workers and had to be called off within twelve hours.

For ten years ASLEF has been the tail that wagged the dog of the Federation of Railway Unions. It has refused to hold a ballot on amalgamation, while poaching over 1000 members from the RMT on both BR and LUL.

The bureaucratic sham of the Federation must be broken up at this year's RMT AGM. The fight for a single industrial union - the RMT - must be combined with arguing the case for defiance of anti-trade union laws.

The RMT LUL District Council already has an excellent tradition of mass leafleting. To this must be added a new tradition: we need regular assemblies of activists, which alone can organise widely and deeply enough in the workforce to combat management intimidation and splitters within our movement.

May Day Sell-out!

NALGO's Metropolitan District Council meeting on April 18th maintained a long Labour Movement tradition of celebrating May Day by selling out.

As long ago as the 1890s, the British TUC leadership made a habit of refusing to join calls for international strike action on May 1st.

Conscious of her responsibility to labour movement tradition, Sheila Smith, Chair of NALGO's London-wide co-ordinating body, refused even to allow debate on a call for District-wide strike action against the whirlwind of local government cuts. Her action was supported by NEC "leftwingers" Ivan Beavis and Chris Eades and by District Organisation Officer Andrew Jack.

Aerospace workers on the march

TWO thousand British Aerospace workers marched through central London on Tuesday March 26th to protest against plant closures at Kingston, Hatfield and Preston. The march was organised by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions and was followed by a rally at Central Hall, Westminster and a lobby of Parliament.

John Hayball
Surbiton CLP

At the rally Joyce Quinn, Opposition Front Bench Industry spokesperson, promised Labour Party support.

But Kingston Joint Shop Stewards' convenor Dave Gollop received the largest round of applause from the meeting when he called for the renationalisation of British Aerospace.

Shadow Defence Secretary Martin O'Neill talked at length about his efforts against pit closures in his Scottish constituency, about the day's Poll Tax proceedings in the House of Commons and about the need to have our boys in the Gulf properly equipped, but offered no commitments in respect of British Aerospace.

There were calls from the floor for the Confederation to ballot members on further action in defence of jobs.

Shop stewards' corner:
NALGO in Glasgow

As NALGO members prepare for annual conference, ***Jon Rogers****, Chair of Lambeth NALGO, serves a warning - and takes issue (below) with Keith Veness's opposition to the NUPE-NALGO-COHSE merger in last month's Briefing.*

ALL NALGO members should by now have received the mid-May issue of the union's newspaper *Public Service* containing the full agenda for the Annual Conference to be held in Glasgow on June 10th-14th.

The democratic, grass-roots impact of circulating the full agenda to all members is somewhat diminished by the paper's front page, dominated by amendments to rules and standing orders. However, for those who make it past this uninviting introduction to labour movement democracy, the conference papers offer some revealing insights into NALGO's current priorities.

Three pages of motions and amendments on the merger with NUPE and COHSE reveal discontent with the way in which the "New Union" is being created. Whether this discontent reflects genuine concern to protect NALGO's modest democratic traditions or self-interested defence of individual positions may become clear in the course of conference debates.

The core of NALGO's membership in local government will be poorly served if discussion on the new union takes precedence over debates about cuts in jobs and services. With tens of thousands of jobs in local government being deleted this year it looks increasingly as if the new union will have no relevance for many members - unless a very large unemployed members' section is proposed.

Resolutions on the conference agenda which do offer some hope include calls for a national campaign against Poll Tax and cuts and for the restoration of local government funding. A number of NALGO branches have recently lost ballots for strike action against job losses. A high profile national campaign, similar to the campaigns for the political fund ballot and during the 1989 pay dispute, is needed to inspire the confidence and enthusiasm that are prerequisites for successful action.

If NALGO's conference in Glasgow fails to initiate such a national campaign, the new union will inherit a shrinking, defeated and demoralised membership.

KEITH VENESS argues in *May's Briefing* that the left should oppose the impending merger of NALGO, NUPE and COHSE because it will cost us Labour Party affiliation, internal democracy and membership. Keith also asserts (quite correctly) that the merger will be about "jobs for the boys" (and certainly boys rather than girls dominate the upper reaches of the union hierarchy).

Keith's response to the merger is unnecessarily timid. From a socialist perspective the formal unification of NALGO with NUPE provides one of the preconditions for a struggle to overcome the blue-collar/white collar split which bedevils local government trade unions. Rather than duck this challenge the Left should fight for a democratic, member-led merger and for Labour Party affiliation by the new union.

● **Jon Rogers**

NEWS OF A major disaster in the Refuse and Cleansing DSO in the London Borough of Camden: for the first time in a Labour-controlled inner London borough, the contract for a major service has been awarded to private contractors. French-based contractor Onyx UK will take over street cleaning and refuse collection on August 1st. It wants to cut workers wages by up to 40%, holiday from six weeks to four, and entitlement to sick pay. Onyx UK is a subsidiary of CGEA, the largest waste management company in Europe. The Camden NUPE branch is planning action, including a demonstration.

BUILDING SITES AND assembly lines aren't the only dangerous places to work. Offices contain their fair share of hazards as well (some lethal). Well done, then, to the Women's Press, 34 Great Sutton Street, London EC1V ODX, for updating and republishing the classic Office Workers Survival Handbook at a price of £5.95. If you work in an office, you can't afford to be without it.

THE *GUARDIAN* HAS obtained a secret copy of an internal post office report urging the "destabilisation" of post office unions and recommending that management should only recognise unions that "have a role supporting the business's drive to achieve our missions and values".

THE EPIU (Electronic and Plumbing Industries Union) has finally been accepted by the TUC for affiliation in its own right. Formed by branches of the EETPU determined to stay inside the broad trades union movement after Hammond and his cronies got the boot, these comrades have faced a long battle for recognition - including hostility from parts of the left that should have known better. Until recently MSF and the TGWU have assisted by recognising "holding branches" but these can now function as free-standing EPIU branches.

THE FRAUD SQUAD are currently inviting the Chair of Bromley Social Services committee, Cllr Monty Blazey, to "help with enquiries" following a junket by Monty and his crony Director of Social Services Mike Carpenter to the USA in November 1989. This trip, all expenses paid, was laid on by Albert Abela Ltd., one of the seedy contractors bidding to take over Bromley's old people's homes. For once we wish the "boys in blue" every success.

Thanks to *Privatisation News* for the above. Copies obtainable from PSPRU, 20 Grand Depot Road, London SE18 6SF.

Willis plots return of wage restraint

UNDER THE guise of implementing TUC policy on a minimum wage Norman Willis is doing his best to slip through a new form of wage restraint to dovetail into Neil Kinnock's low-growth strategy. Trade Union conferences over

Greg Tucker
RMT

the summer must ensure that at this year's TUC and Labour Party Conference this rotten old idea is killed off once and for all.

In its first form, Willis' plan required higher-paid workers to "undertake to disregard increases" for lower-paid workers arising from the national minimum wage, which was to be set (allegedly at around half the average wage) after negotiations between the TUC and employers. The plan made no mention of how employers would be forced to pay up on the national minimum agreement, even if "higher-paid" workers agreed to take pay cuts.

This plan was quickly dropped, only to be replaced with a second which still affirmed that "unions will be expected not to quote in claims for higher paid workers that element of general percentage increases in earnings specifically related to the general move to attain the National Minimum Wage."

In other words, increases for lower-paid workers were still not to be used to spur claims for higher-paid workers.The TUC General Council, rocked by persistent press reports of wranglings among the bureaucrats over the pay formula, came up with its usual fudge. It unanimously agreed a resolution (moved by AEU president Bill Jordan and seconded by NUPE's Rodney Bickerstaffe) which said that a national minimum wage would not affect free collective bargaining but that any exceptional increases made in reaching the minimum wage would not be used "as a vehicle for general increases".

So as usual, the TUC leaders are looking both ways at once. They want to be able to assure their members that there is no wage restraint plan - while behind closed doors Willis and co. work out an incomes policy suitable to Kinnock, John Smith and their friends in the City.

A national minimum wage should be supported - and Labour needs full legal powers to enforce it. But history has shown time and again that the low-paid do best when the whole labour movement is on the offensive.

THE SHOCK NEWS that Rolls Royce is shutting its Watford plant with the loss of 3700 jobs came just two weeks after the announcement that the company chairman Lord Tombs of Brailes awarded himself a modest pay rise of 51%. "Tombsie", however, was not the top earner; this honour was reserved for an un-named director who hiked his pay up to £248,177 per annum.

DESPITE THE MISERABLE efforts of "snorin'" Norman Willis to disband trades council organisation, the various federations of trades councils seem set to continue meeting in defiance of official attacks. A second conference of trades councils organised by rank-and-file officers is due to take place in Manchester from May 31st to June 2nd. The Greater London Association of Trades Councils has replaced its former leadership, which wished to comply with Willis, with a new group determined to maintain the organisation and give support to union campaigns.



THOSE WHO REMEMBER the Trade Union Congress's standing ovation for "Frere" Jacques Delors will be relieved to see the TGWU has finally realised the true nature of the European Commission President. Bill Morris has slammed Delors' attempt to remove the right to belong to a trade union from the EEC's Treaty of Rome. While we're on the subject, whatever happened to the Social Charter?

UNION RECOGNITION RIGHTS are under threat at a former British Telecom factory only months after it was sold off by BT. Employees at Cwmcarn, which used to be the BT Consumer Electronics plant, have been informed that the NCU and STE will be de-recognised this summer. The company has told the NCU that it does not regard it as an "appropriate union". There are 750 NCU members at Cwmcarn.

"WE ARE first-year students in how to act as trade unionists," admits a leading official in the Soviet car workers union in *The Forgotten Class: Soviet Workers' Views of Perestroika*. This new pamphlet charts the breakdown in the old relationships between the CP, the official trades unions and the shop floor in the motor industry. Packed with rare eyewitness accounts of conditions in Soviet industry and interviews with workers in the Togliatti and AZLK car and Yaroslavl diesel engine plants. Available from *Not the Normal News*, 97 Powerscroft Road, London E5 0PT; price £1.50 including postage (30p for each extra copy).

SCAB CONTRACTORS "Sita Clean" have told refuse collection employees in Babergh, Suffolk that they cannot have a pay rise this year due to "the Gulf War and the fact that we are tendering for other contracts and that costs money."

Rough justice!

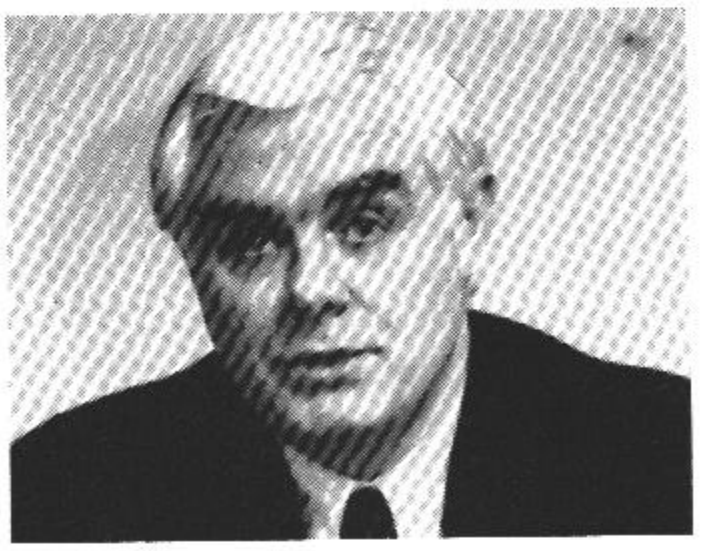
One hundred and sixty local people - of all ages, colours, and backgrounds - packed into a community centre in north London on May 8th for a public meeting organised (on a shoestring) by the local *Hornsey Vale* Branch Labour Party. They came to hear *Billy Power* of the Birmingham Six and *Sharon Raghip* of the Tottenham Three Families Campaign describe the "rough justice" which the British judicial system meted out to themselves and their families.

The meeting was chaired by *Jeremy Corbyn MP* and featured a full hour of lively discussion from the floor.

An excellent example of how grass-roots Labour activists can bring national political issues into the heart of the local community - and find an audience keen to listen and to act.

"I'm going home to an empty house tonight. I'm out here and my little boy is being babysat yet again. This has been going on far too long. My husband's case is due to go in front of the Court of Appeal in July this year, but I am under no illusions as to whether he is going to walk free this time. I do know one thing. If he does not walk free this time, then I will not crumble to the floor and let them win because I have people like yourselves who are willing to hold me up and carry on the fight to ensure that not only him, but all the other wrongly convicted prisoners in Britain are given justice, freed and given their lives back."

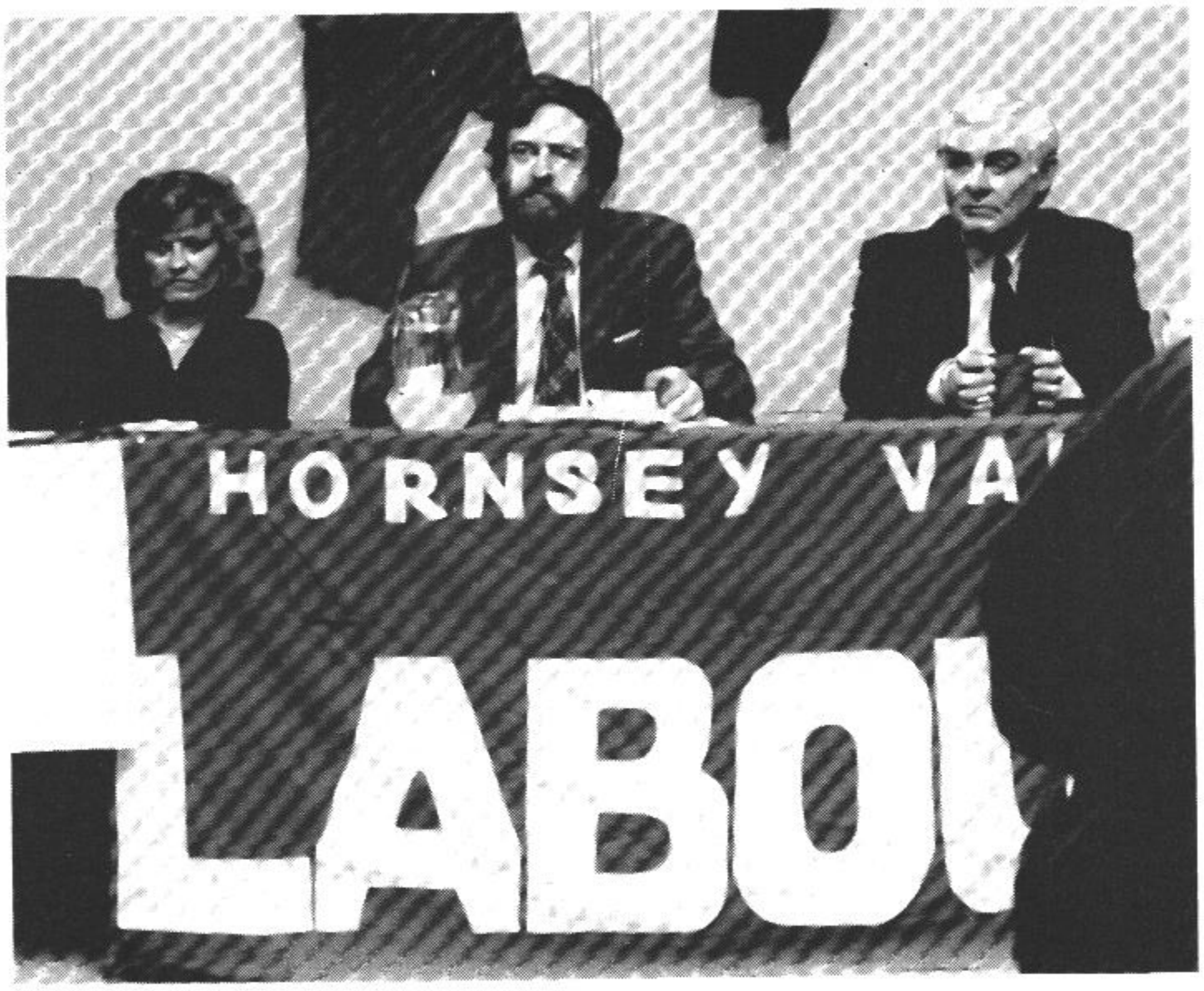
☐Sharon Raghip



Billy Power Photo: Vaughn Melzer

"I did thirteen years in Wormwood Scrubs, and while I was there, I met the Tottenham Three. I know Engin Raghip, Mark Braithwaite, and Winston Silcott personally. There is no doubt in my mind of their innocence. The evidence against the Tottenham Three is minute in comparison to what was used against us and yet they are still in prison. I can get very emotional when I think about the people I left behind in prison while I'm out here free to carry on my life. I really won't be free unless something is done for them."

☐Billy Power



Sharon Raghip, Jeremy Corbyn, Billy Power Photo: Vaughn Melzer

LCI: alive, alive-oh!

Responding to Gerry Downing's requiem for the Labour Committee on Ireland in last month's Briefing, ***Jeremy Gardner*** *of the LCI pronounces reports of its death to be greatly exaggerated.*

THE DEATH of the Labour Committee on Ireland as a campaigning organisation has been trumpeted by Gerry Downing in *Briefing* and elsewhere.

Gerry is worried that the LCI at its Annual General Meeting adopted as its object: "To secure the support of the Labour Party and trade unions for British withdrawal from Ireland". He is concerned that this simple and straightforward formula does not include "self-determination for the Irish people".

But what do the objects of the organisation as agreed by the AGM mean in terms of LCI activity? Take the first of two model resolutions being circulated by the LCI for this year's Labour Party Conference. Does it show the LCI to be the apologist for Labour policy that Gerry Downing suggests?

It calls on the next Labour Government to complete British withdrawal from Ireland within the lifetime of one Parliament. It supports Labour policy in recognising the need for the ending of partition, but implicitly challenges acceptance of the Unionist veto.

The resolution includes the following points:

"Conference believes that at the root of the prolonged crisis and injustice in Northern Ireland is the partition of Ireland by Britain against the democratically expressed wishes of the great majority of its people. The key to overcoming the crisis is therefore to correct that historic injustice by Irish unification which is policy of the Labour Party.

"Conference believes that Irish unification presupposes the ending of British jurisdiction over Northern Ireland and that the next Labour government should declare its intent to complete a programme of British withdrawal from Ireland within the lifetime of the Parliament...

"Conference believes that a Labour government must make clear its commitment to the release of a 'peace dividend' with the goal of convincing all sides of the economic benefits of peace and reconciliation based upon: transforming Britain's present input to the economy of Northern Ireland into a programme of economic aid for peace and reconstruction for an interim period of ten years, redeployment of resources from military to economic construction, and the growth potential of re-establishing the unity of the Irish economy."

When people fail to win significant support for their views within an organisation they often question whether they should stay in that organisation. So it is that Gerry Downing wonders whether he would do better to support the Troops Out Movement.

Of course, there is room for other organisations with different priorities and objects to campaign on Ireland in the Labour Party.

British withdrawal from Ireland remains the priority for the LCI. It is the main body raising this issue within the Labour Party, backing this up with support for initiatives such as the Northern Ireland Human Rights Assembly in April next year, continuing work in the unions following the success of Time to Go - supported by the NALGO, NUPE, NUR, NUCPS and Bakers Union conferences - and continuing work in other areas such as the National Union of Students

In the heart of the monster

Mary Mason
Troops Out Movement

CAMPAIGNING for British withdrawal from Ireland and self-determination for the Irish people as a whole has always been difficult in England, Scotland and Wales, not least because we live within the "heart of the monster". Along with the curse of British chauvinism, we face other obstacles: notably sectarianism and the "party before the struggle" mode of thinking.

Part of the problem has been the success that political parties or organisations have had in steering the course of the withdrawal movement - from Socialist Action and Time to Go to the RCP and the Irish Freedom Movement. There has not been sufficient effort by those committed to anti-imperialist politics to build a non-aligned withdrawal movement large enough to encompass people from varied political backgrounds and strong enough to resist sectarianism or chauvinism.

The Troops Out Movement (TOM) is working to build such a movement. Membership is based on support for our two demands ("Troops Out Now" and "Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole") and a willingness to abide by our constitution and annual conference decisions. We have local branches in most areas and a democratic decision-making structure which this year agreed to concentrate on two campaigning themes, "Human Rights" and "War, Peace and Self-determination".

The Human Rights campaign has been launched with the booklet *Without Consent*, backed by a speaking tour of human rights activists from the north of Ireland. It covered twelve cities and towns in England and Wales.



The *War, Peace and Self-determination* campaign aims to highlight the links between the war in Ireland and British rule. We will be bringing out a booklet putting clear arguments for self-determination, organising discussions as well as leaflet and poster campaigns.

We also recognise the need to target certain constituencies for our campaigns. High on our agenda is the labour movement, where we particularly want to raise the issue of employment discrimination.

In August each year, TOM organises a delegation to the north of Ireland. The delegation is hosted by Sinn Fein and includes visits to community projects, workshops on the political situation and a tour of the border areas. Delegates stay with people in their homes, a welcome opportunity for individual discussion and evenings out in local clubs!

☐ **Find out more by writing to: Troops Out Movement, Box 353, London NW5 4NH.**

May Day in eastern Europe

***Gus Fagan** in Berlin finds workers desperate and disorientated in the face of economic crisis but warns of mounting contradictions for the "new elites".*

GERMANY'S BIGGEST trade-union federation, the DGB, was the sponsor of the first May Day rally in united Germany's old-new capital, Berlin. With half of east Germany's workers facing the dole amid mounting dissatisfaction with the Kohl government (both east and west), some had expected a massive protest. Symbolically, the day before May Day had seen the very last Trabi, east Germany's most famous car, roll off the assembly line in Zwickau, Saxony. It was taken straight to a museum. Half the Trabi workers can hope for a job in nearby Mosel when Volkswagen starts producing the VW Golf there in a few years, but for more than 7000 of them, May Day was their first day without a job.

Nonetheless, the rally on the huge grass-covered square in front of the Reichstag where once Luxemburg and Liebknecht rallied rebellious German workers was sparsely attended. After a few uninspiring speeches by trade union leaders, most people drifted off to the subway, to the bratwurst stalls or to the stands set up (despite the rain) by a few left-wing groups. There were no rousing speeches by political leaders (no party speakers were allowed) and no left-wing voices were heard.

A widespread feeling of resignation, a sense of powerlessness, the failure of trade union leaders or politicians to offer any political perspective - these are some of the reasons behind German workers' passivity on May Day. The strikes and protests of recent months appear to have sprung more from desperation than self-confidence.

In Moscow 50,000 people turned up in Red Square for a demonstration organised for the first time by the trades unions. Decline in production in the Soviet Union between 1987 and 1989 created more than one-and-a-half million unemployed. It was announced in Moscow in the week prior to May Day that the number of unemployed in the USSR could rise to as high as 40 million.

The drive towards marketisation involves a tremendous attack on living standards and job security at a time when ideological disorientation and the absence of any agreed-on social and political alternative (a result of the collapse of the Soviet-type system) has weakened workers' resistance.

In Hungary the Left Alternative (a Marxist current in the Hungarian Socialist Party, the ex-CP) organised a conference to which it invited a large number of left-wing magazines and journals. About 40 people attended from (eastern and western) Europe, the USA, Mexico and Australia. Two days of discussion revealed no consensus on the meaning of the revolutions in eastern Europe, the role of economic planning in a socialist society, the value of Marxism or the strategy for the left in the ex-Stalinist countries.

Resistance to the effects of privatisation/marketisation has been weak in Hungary. The workers' councils which were formed in many factories in 1989/90 (and in which the Left Alternative played a key role) have mostly been co-opted by the ruling Hungarian Democratic Forum and have adopted a more moderate trade union approach.

The first phase of the revolution in eastern Europe, the collapse of the Communist Party regimes and the decision to radically reshape the social-economic order around the market and private property, has ended. Even in the Soviet Union, it is only a matter of time before this phase is complete.

But the social-economic crisis in these countries, the product of decades of bureaucratic misrule, will last for many years and will be intensified by the harsh dictates of capitalist restoration. These problems have been telescoped in east Germany where the whole economy was thrown open in one go (in July 1990) to the full force of capitalist competition.The revolutions in eastern Europe have their own optic: there is a concentration on the errors, crimes (and criminals) of the past; there are widespread illusions that "western methods" are the solution.

But the contradictions for the new elites are apparent even in the Soviet Union. The striking miners back Yeltsin but Yeltsin and the radical marketeers who back him could not possibly support most of the demands being put forward by the miners. These demands give concrete expression to values (social justice, egalitarianism, self-management, hostility to private enterprise and private wealth) which are at odds with the goals of the new elite. The agreement between Gorbachev, Yeltsin and the eight other republican leaders in April on the introduction of a kind of "emergency rule" in distribution, transport and major industries and of regulations aimed at repressing strikes and working-class protest show clearly where all sections of the elite, both old and new, stand in relation to the workers.

The more it changes, as the French have it, the more it remains the same.



May Day in Berlin

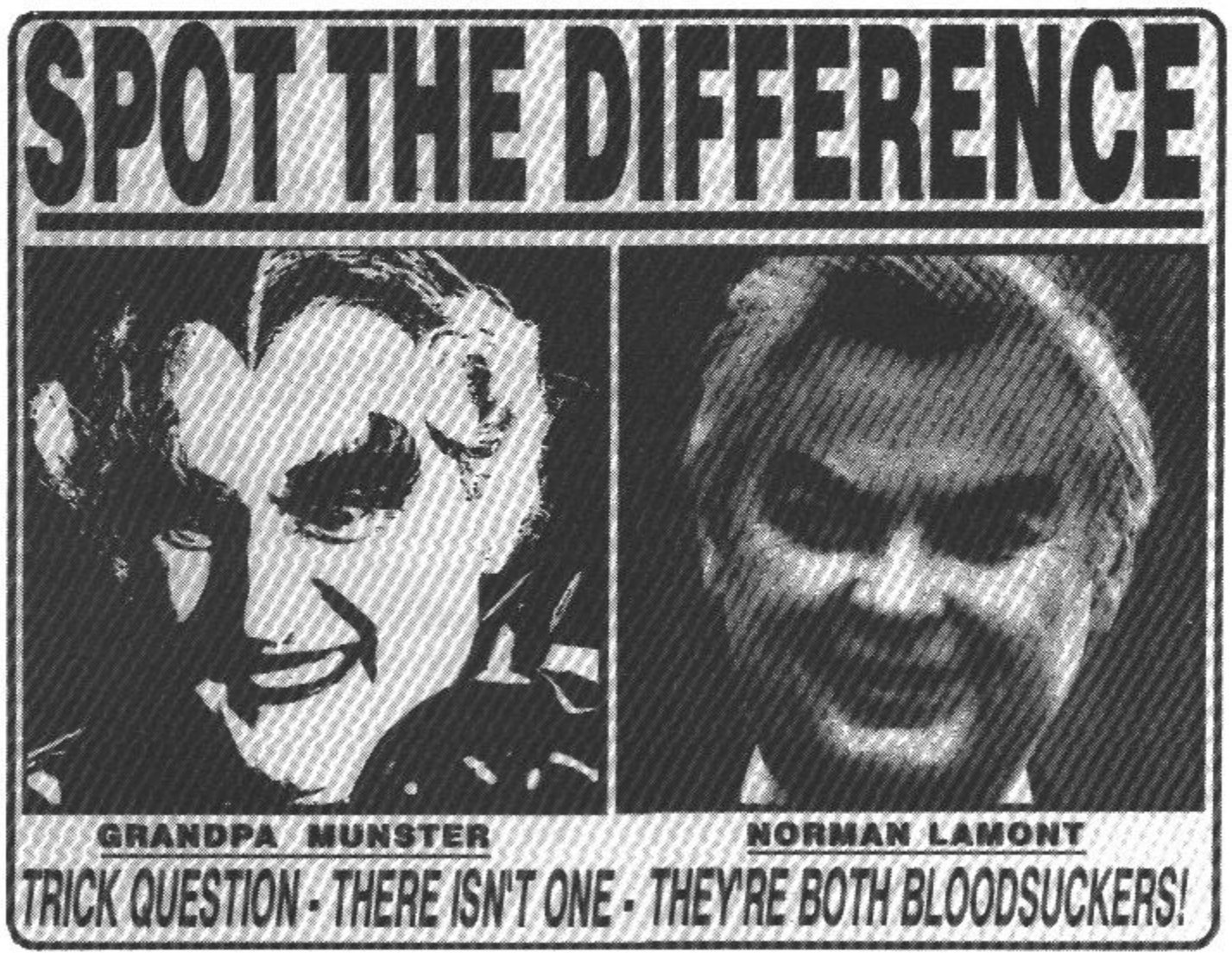
IMF solution for Lamont?

IN ITS spring survey of the world economy the International Monetary Fund came up with the helpful idea that the British government should cut unemployment benefit in order to force down wages.

The IMF would also like to see benefit payments stopped after a given period.

Dave Palmer
Economics Correspondent

The IMF's "structural adjustment" programmes were supposed to transform the economic performance of developing countries in the 1980s. Now it's clear, according to the Financial Times, that though "on average programmes reduced balance of payments gaps, they have had negligible impact on Gross National Product and led to falls in the ratio of investment to GNP". What a surprise.



Stolen from ***ClassWar***

☐ **MICHAEL HESELTINE** has ruled out retrospective legislation to cover losses faced by banks involved in town hall interest rate "swaps".

The "swaps" were popular in the mid-1980s when interest rates were low and Labour councils were seeking ways around central government stringency. Local authorities entered arrangements to exchange fixed rates of interest on debt for variable ones. When interest rates rose rapidly at the end of the Lawson boom the deals went sour and the authorities ended up owing a net £550 millions. The deals were stopped when courts declared the Hammersmith and Fulham "swaps" illegal.

Eighty British and foreign banks bearing the bulk of the losses are miffed. They can claim some of the money back from the local authorities through a legal process known as "restitution" and can get a rebate on corporation tax for the rest. But even then they will be out of pocket to the tune of £275 billion. They wanted the government to enact retroactive legislation to make local authorities liable for this debt, i.e. to make Poll Tax payers pay. In the case of Hammersmith and Fulham that would have meant each adult in the borough would have had to be surcharged £1,250.

Treasury minister John Maples described the banks as "victims of a serious injustice" but offered no government help. Poor old banks!

☐ **NORMAN LAMONT** is getting desperate. He needs an economic indicator to point to as evidence of the long-promised recovery. But he simply can't find one. So in time honoured Tory fashion he has decided to "shift the emphasis of economic monitoring" - otherwise known as moving the goalposts.

Up till now the government has been arguing that the Retail Prices Index, the "headline rate" of inflation, was less important than the "underlying rate", the RPI less mortgage interest and Poll Tax. But in his speech to the Institute of Directors at the end of April Lamont declared the underlying rate "meaningless in the coming year" due to the budget changes in Poll Tax and VAT. Instead, the Treasury now prefers to use a measure which subtracts only mortgage interest from RPI. Funnily enough this fell to 6.8% from 8.4% last month while the measure which used to be called the "underlying rate" and which was once a favourite of government rose from 7.3% to 8.9%, its highest since May 1982.

With unemployment rising by another 85,000 last month (following an increase of 113,000 the month before) and Ford UK declaring its first loss since 1971 (a mere £274 million before taxes) Lamont is under growing pressure to drop interest rates to ease the squeeze. His problem is that inflation is still far from licked and the Bank of England opposes a cut in rates. After all, factory gate prices rose by 6.4% last month, the biggest jump in nine years.

The Treasury will now focus on anecdotal evidence of consumer and business confidence. In a sea of gloomy information the only positive indicator is the partial recovery in business confidence detected in recent CBI and Institute of Directors surveys, i.e. what the bosses hope is going to happen. Lamont claims this is proof that we are nearing the end of the recession. I've heard of bourgeois subjectivism, but this is getting ridiculous.

SOUTH AFRICA

Unmaking an insidious culture

For too long the unions in the developing world have been seen as little more than colonial spoils by the two dominant world trade union centres, the Communist-dominated WFTU and the pro-Western ICFTU. A correspondent from ***South African Labour Bulletin*** *writes of the prospects for a break from the damaging Cold War division and for a new internationalism in the workers' movement.*

THE RELATIONSHIP between trade union movements of the North and South dates back to when colonial governments were in retreat. Local and often militant "native" trade unionists were given instruction on "the principles of Modern Trade Unionism" by worthy trade union officials sponsored by the retreating colonial power. This kind of "solidarity" was intended to teach the "native" unionists a "responsible" attitude towards the interests of capital after independence.

As the Cold War intensified, trade unions in developing countries were not left alone for long. Sooner or later, usually depending upon the pace of the Cold War at regional level, they were made offers that they found hard to refuse.

This is not to say that trade unions in developing countries were blind to the dangers, or that financial support was not desperately needed to help strengthen organisation. But once hooked, an insidious culture soon developed which changed the meaning of solidarity into something quite different. Assistance was provided not on the basis of common class interests (although a convergence of North/South bureaucratic interests often developed), but on an unwritten pledge of loyalty to the funding organisation.

The collapse of the Communist bloc and its effect on the WFTU has raised the question of rebuilding a single unified world trade union international.

The WFTU, with Soviet support, appears determined to continue, albeit in a trimmed down way, desperately seeking a new role for itself.

The ICFTU, on the other hand, is busy reallocating resources away from the South to strengthen relationships with trade union formations in Eastern Europe.

Recently the Confederation of South African Trades Unions, COSATU, which since its inception has followed a path of "active non-alignment" in relation to the major international centres, participated for the first time in the ICFTU Southern African Co-ordinating Committee. Nonetheless, COSATU is unlikely to alter its policy and affiliate in the foreseeable future, despite entreaties from Dutch FNV, and the Swedish, Danish and Norwegian centres/federations, which make up the "progressive group" within the ICTFU. They



Needed: international solidarity

argue that the best way to change the ICTFU is to join it.

But the "progressives" themselves only have limited bargaining power within the ICTFU, and this bargaining power is based on specific conditions, not least the large resources at their disposal, inherited from a long period of social-democratic consensus in their own countries. These resources are very valuable to ICFTU and this gives them room to manoeuvre.

The progressives have won the space inside the ICFTU to act outside of it to give support to the South African unions. But the price is that they have to report their actions to the ICFTU Southern Africa Co-Ordinating Committee. This means that their work is in a sense co-ordinated through ICFTU structures, which suits both the old guard within the ICFTU, especially the bureaucratic apparatus, and the bureaucrats of the "progressive" group. Both experience pressure from their memberships to provide solidarity to South African unions. The combination of bilateral solidarity by the "progressives" with co-ordination through the ICFTU structures helps to contain this pressure, since both can claim credit for the solidarity.

Clearly, COSATU does not have the same bargaining powers as the "progressives" - but it does have other strengths. COSATU enjoys enormous prestige with worker-activists everywhere. The ability to link with these layers of activists, both inside and outside the ICFTU, would be seriously undermined by affiliation, unless COSATU explicitly stated that it intended to challenge decades of Cold War practice. Sooner or later it would find itself acting alone and would then be accused of biting the hand that feeds it!

A far better strategy is to maintain links with activists within ICFTU affiliates while strengthening the relationship with forces prepared to fight for genuine international solidarity worldwide.

New, emergent and largely non-aligned trade union movements in Africa and Latin America and Asia are potentially in a powerful bargaining position. If their strengths are shared and consolidated, the non-aligned trade union movements could play a decisive role in campaigning for a single, international, democratic and accountable world trade union federation.

■ **South African Labour Bulletin is available from PO Box 3851, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa.**

COSATU, the masses, and "misleadership"

Labour Briefing *has received the following comments in response to our interview with COSATU Vice-President Chris Dlamini (Briefing, April 1991) from* ***Mtshana****, who describes himself as "a South African revolutionary socialist" with a long record of activity in South African workers' struggles. We would welcome further contributions to the debate about the way forward for South African workers and their supporters worldwide.*

CHRIS DLAMINI describes the present relationship between COSATU, the ANC and the SACP, as being "born out of struggle" and claims that while "each organisation has its own objectives" they now have "a common purpose."

This hides the slanders the ANC, the SACP and the SACTU poured on the Federation of South African Trade Unions, one of the major forces in the formation of COSATU. Eventually, COSATU was forced by bureaucratic means to adopt the Freedom Charter by the ANC-SACP-SACTU alliance. When it refused to toe the line, the then Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa was bureaucratically split by the alliance. This entente also rejected COSATU's campaign for a Workers' Charter when that campaign still had a socialist flavour threatening to their bourgeois-democratic Freedom Charter.

Recently sincere worker leaders and militants were purged by the same forces from the Eastern and Western Cape regions of the Food and Allied Workers Union. Increasingly, rank and file discontent has been registered in COSATU over the lack of democratic decision-making both within the ANC-SACP-COSATU tri-partite alliance and within COSATU itself.

The state and Inkatha are busy with their military offensive against the masses in the townships. Repression is on the increase, as Dlamini notes, yet the tripartite leadership still clings to negotiations and places illusions in the state's armed forces - calling on them to take action to end the township violence! It also continues to sign peace accords with Inkatha even though the latter goes on freely killing the masses with the backing of the army and police. Worse still, the state and Inkatha are to be allowed by the tripartite alliance to take part in an interim government to supervise elections to the constituent assembly; such elections cannot be free and fair.

How can the bourgeoisie disarm itself? Only the masses organised and armed, in the course of conflict and not negotiations, can deal with the De Klerk regime that is responsible for the present carnage.

Dlamini also fails to examine serious weaknesses in COSATU caused by its (mis)leadership.

For example, major strikes by COSATU affiliates in the mining, commercial and catering, railway, metal and brewery sectors have not gained full COSATU backing. The Living Wage Campaign and the strike waves of 1987 and the first half of 1990 were not co-ordinated and they therefore fizzled out despite their great potential to galvanize the whole industrial workforce and the masses in the townships.

The campaign against the anti-union Labour Relations Act was sacrificed for a rotten compromise at a time when the COSATU-NACTU alliance was showing great possibilities in the massive three-day stay away in 1988 which forced the bosses and their state to retreat.

What was going to be the greatest metalworkers strike ever in 1990 was abandoned due to the Transvaal violence. It could have been utilized creatively to beat back the state, the bosses and Inkatha. Unity with the beleaguered township masses was tragically lost.



The tri-partite leadership also halted the Mercedes Benz strike last year.

Retrenchments in industry are now the order of the day, yet the tripartite leadership has dissolved the National Unemployed Workers' Co-ordinating Committee because of its "inefficiency". Surely it should have been re-built as part of an effort to tackle the political and organisational problems presently making COSATU itself "inefficient".

COSATU should also take up the plight of those sincere militants of Umkhonto Wesizwe purged by the leadership-in-exile for their demands for a militant prosecution of the armed struggle against Pretoria.

COSATU cannot duck this responsibility. Today it not only organises the parents, friends, relatives, and comrades-in-arms of the guerrillas, but is also, as a member of the tri-partite alliance, effectively responsible to all the fighters of our country.

PERISCOPE

Stage whispers

Victory in Monmouth seems to have killed off the *Sun's* ludicrous smear campaign against **Neil Kinnock,** but how do you explain the reactions to the predictable and not very effective story at the top of the Party hierarchy?

First came spluttering outrage from **John Cunningham,** who accused police of collusion with Rupert Murdoch and demanded meetings with top cops. Then a complete about-face. The coppers were doing a terrific job. Labour had no complaints. Meanwhile an undercurrent of panic and despair was audible. The usual "sources" were quoted in the press describing the minor hitch as a "disaster", "extremely damaging", "Costas the election," etc.

Wales Party organiser **Anita Gale**, a pet phobia of Kinnock's from way back, found her cautious internal briefing on the progress of the Monmouth campaign used in the press as evidence of pessimism and doubt in the Labour camp - even as the Party was establishing a solid lead in the polls.

Can it really be true that all these unattributable declarations of lack of faith in the leader emanate from none other than **Charles Clarke**, the leader's own right-hand man? Surely Periscope's usually reliable sources are, for once, misinformed.

A tale of two candidates

Whatever it is that makes Parliamentary candidates acceptable to the Labour leadership these days, it certainly isn't a track record as a Party activist. Witness **Huw Edwards**, Monmouth victor, a member of Brighton LP for a number of years whose name was unknown to Brighton activists until he stepped into the by-election limelight.

Contrast the adventures of Islington party activist and councillor **Liz Davies**. Davies stood for selection in unwinnable Richmond and Barnes in south west London.

She made clear her politics (she is co-chair of the *Briefing* Editorial Board, 'nuff said) and in her speech to the selection meeting denounced the leadership's support for the Gulf War. To general amazement, the local party members proceeded to select her.

CLP officers, notably secretary **Paul Ormerod**, one of Kinnock's right-wing economic gurus, were not pleased. They discovered some technical irregularities in the voting - which they themselves supervised from the start.

Despite protests from CLP members, regional official **Phil Cole** - an old adversary of Davies from student politics - said that a new selection ballot would have to be held.

Three months passed. Davies once again presented herself to Richmond Party members. This time she denounced Kinnock's betrayal of the Kurds. After a tense count, Davies was again declared the winner - by the slimmest of margins.

Guess what? Two days later Cole informed Davies that the votes in the electoral college had been miscalculated and a recount would have to be held. It was third time lucky for Walworth Road as Davies lost the second count of the second selection by a single vote.

Now the largest ward in the constituency has voted to withdraw from CLP activities in protest at the shenanigans surrounding the whole procedure.

They will work for a Labour candidate in an adjoining constituency and ignore whatever campaign is mounted by the right wing victor in Richmond, **Don Touhig** of Islwyn CLP.

Class Warp

Is ***Class War*** going soft?

Britain's self-styled "unruliest tabloid" is now appearing with three-colour cover and all the advantages of state-of-the-art Desk Top Publishing. But have the new technology and a reported sale of 17,000 a month (the envy of the left press) gone to the headbangers' heads? A recent front page headline bowdlerised "fucking" into "f**king" and a full page was given over to "Class War merchandise" - including beermats, tee-shirts, car tax disc holders, cigarette lighters, etc.

Worse yet, the regular "Hospitalised Copper" feature seems to have vanished. It's as if *Briefing* were to drop "Class Traitor of the Month"!

A bad case of the *City Limits*? Have the brains behind "Bollocks to the Poll Tax" and "New Homes for the Rich" made some swift calculations and discovered there's money in anarchy?

Too high?

Another blow to the Birmingham Labour right.

Len Clark, John Spellar's election agent in Northfield in 1987 - when the EETPU's political officer failed for the second time to win the marginal seat - has defected to the Tories. Clark's transfer of loyalties - reported in *Conservative Newsline* - is put down to Birmingham Council's level of public expenditure. Apparently he thought it was too high.

Role model

How does *Briefing* get sold in such large quantities across the nation? North Oxford Campaign Group's newsletter reports:

"Karl Statton's technique is wondrous to behold. Pinning a copy to his chest he assails pensioners in the market, voters on their doorsteps and party members anywhere. While chairing a recent CLP meeting he ended with the words 'That finishes business...anyone want a *Briefing*?' So obsessive is his behaviour that when spotted hawking his wares at a recent social he was asked by a puzzled comrade, 'Karl, don't you ever just GO anywhere?'"

A letter from May's Class Traitor of the Month:

"Dear Mr Marqueese (sic),

I am extremely grateful to you for letting me see what the "loony left" think of me. I shall treasure this article and it will certainly strengthen my resolve in the future.

Many, many thanks.

Yours for socialism,

John Evans

P.S..I wonder why magazines like yours never publish the names of the authors of articles, I thought you were in favour of open government. J.E."

Mike who?

It's not often *Briefing* gets a two-page spread in London's **Evening Standard**. "Handsome, charismatic and ruthless" ran the intro...it could have been referring to any number of *Briefing* activists, but this one was "the American who aims to destroy Neil Kinnock", our editor, **Mike Marqusee.**

Despite its attempt to credit Mike with single-handedly running the anti-Vietnam War campaign and the miners strike as well as funding the dispossessed of Haringey with council grants, the only real dirt the *Standard* dug up was that he wrote a novel about cricket.

Doorstepping anti-union hack **Tony Maguire** at least recognised that *Briefing* is "a potent threat to Kinnock".

The *Standard* also managed to invert *Tribune's* defence of *Briefing* (even they know we're not "a party within the party"), claiming that *Tribune* said just the opposite. *Tribune* responded with the scurrilous accusation that our Comrade Editor was "cuddly and harmless". Find out the truth at the *Briefing* AGM.

Alive...and kicking the boy's balls

Big business is under-developing women's football. ***Heather Hawkwood*** *reports.*

FOR TV companies, football is big money, particularly in Europe, where satellite TV has taken off. Dozens of matches are screened. Big audiences attract huge advertising revenue. Clubs and TV companies make fortunes.

The high media profile appears to stimulate interest in the game. Certainly in Italy and Spain crowds are far bigger than in England although entrance fees are more expensive.

The Women's Football Association reports that after coverage on Channel 4 the number of enquiries from women who want to play the game rocketed. Unfortunately, Channel 4 shows only a few matches a year. Although viewing figures for women's football are about the same as for American football, it is hard to imagine seeing any more coverage of it unless the advertising revenue comes in. And one doubts that the audience will grow without more coverage.

It's a vicious circle. No coverage, less interest in the game, and therefore no major sponsors. And without major sponsors, no money in the game, less interest, and smaller viewing figures. Next season marks a significant step in women's football. There is to be a new national league. A premier league will sit on top of first divisions, north and south. Under these at the bottom of the pyramid will be the currently existing regional leagues.

But for women's teams to join in this league more than skill will be needed. It costs a lot to travel around the country every weekend. Cash will be the immediate dilemma facing most clubs.



One way out of this is to break down the barriers surrounding professional clubs and force them to run women's sides. Some clubs already do this. Arsenal has girls on its YTS scheme. Lots of clubs lend their name to women's sides but the level of real support varies from a mere strip to a blank cheque.

Over time, in all probability, the women's teams run by professional clubs will eclipse the independent sides.

It seems likely that this is the future of women's football: women players with men running the show. Women who have put in the ground-work, spending hard years running teams in unfashionable places, usually along the M62, will be sidelined.

And one has as much confidence in the professional football world to develop women's football as one had in Thatcher's concern for the NHS.

The recent unbanning of under-11 schoolgirls from school league games is a similar story of double-edged progress. Thankfully this move will put a stop to the spectacle of skilful 10-year-olds keeping up with the boys in practices only to wind up going home crying on match night because they were not allowed to play. However, while the keen and able girls will be picked by male teachers looking to field the best team they can muster, most girls will find that the unbanning has done nothing for them.

There is no doubt that the average skill level of a girl is less than that of a boy. Nor is that surprising. Since toddler-hood boys have been encouraged to kick a ball. Girls haven't had that experience. Nor have girls played in the street with older kids and learnt from them.

What is needed in addition to the unbanning is a massive programme of girls' coaching schools and the establishment of separate girls' leagues running in parallel to the "unbanned" open league. Without some compulsion on authorities to develop the girls' game, it will continue to languish.

Famous last words...

TEN YEARS AGO, we were celebrating the left-wing seizure of the GLC. "London's Ours" proclaimed *Briefing* - never a magazine for understatement. In the lead article Ken Livingstone hailed Labour's victory in the capital as proof that voters had "responded to the campaign on firm class lines...We carry a terrible responsibility before the movement as a whole. If we fail, it will be a major setback for the working-class movement and for the left within the Party."

June 81 also marked the start of Tony Benn's campaign for the Deputy Leadership. *Briefing* reported that Benn's bid was being backed by Michael Meacher, among others, and Tony Banks was the author of an article on the need for an organised campaign on Benn's behalf.

At the height of the hunger strikes in Ireland, *Briefing* supporters joined a banned march in Kilburn and the magazine printed a letter smuggled out from the H-blocks. Peter Tatchell penned a stinging attack on the EETPU's influence in Bermondsey under the headline: "The methods Stalin taught Frank Chapple". Meanwhile, *Briefing* supporters were helping to organise a "Hands Off Workers' Poland" march.

Finally, in words later immortalised by the Tory press, the editorial commented on the recent Brixton uprising: "...an alternative view would be that the street fighting was excellent, but could have been (and hopefully in future will be) better organised!"

LETTERS

Your letters are welcome, but please keep them short. Write to Briefing at 26 Wattisfield Road, London E5. Or fax to 081-985-6785

Dear Briefing ...

Good on Aly Mir for voting against the cuts, bailiffs and compulsory redundancies in Haringey Labour Group. But why not vote against them in open Council?

The struggle against the cuts is not waged by Councillors alone. It takes place in the Labour Party, voluntary organisations, trade unions, and among the service users. Council workers may go on strike to resist the cuts, losing money and putting their jobs at risk.

The cuts will only be defeated by mass, collective action, and councillors should be part of that action. That means raising the issues at public meetings, on picket lines, in the Labour Party and Labour Group, and in public Council committees and full Council. Of course, the best place to raise each specific cut must be a tactical question. It may be that a cut will be reversed by some quiet lobbying in Labour Group, and the debate never comes to public attention.

But more often, a cut will only be defeated by a high profile political campaign against it, a campaign that needs councillors' public support.

At what personal and political cost? The worst that can happen to a Councillor is withdrawal of the Labour Whip. That may be politically damaging, but that cost has to be weighed against the political importance of publicly participating in anti-cuts campaigns. Losing the Whip is not a personal tragedy and can easily be faced when trade unionists face job losses.

Councillors must make their position clear to the public. It is not good enough to vote for cuts in council and then tell people discreetly that you do not really approve of them. A vote is a vote. Voting in public for cuts tells the public you agree with cuts.

Cllr Liz Davies
Islington

I would like to reply to Cllr. Aly Mir's argument that breaking the Labour Whip on the question of cuts is not a matter of principle. Comrade, voting against cuts publicly *is* a matter of principle. What value has your opposition to cuts when you vote with the cutters whenever "push comes to shove"?

If councillors are to play any part fighting cuts they must link-up with those outside the Council Chamber, with the trade unions and community campaigns. To do this you must be seen to be publicly on their side. A private vote in Labour Group may salve your conscience but it does very little on its own to build a campaign of resistance.

Cllr Steve French
Lambeth

I have just lost hope! I rather hoped that the struggle the feminist movement has had over the years would have hit men. But no! The review by Alick Bridger of Life is Sweet, which was allowed to appear in Briefing by the male-dominated Editorial Board is a disgrace. It describes a working class political woman as having "tits". How the hell did that get into your paper?

I suggest that you take a close look at your structure and belief-system. Being non-sexist isn't just another right-on thing on the list of being a radical Marxist. It is something that needs to be internalised.

I suggest that *Briefing* men sit down and do a serious rethink in what they are doing and what they really believe in. I suggest that Alick gets a job on the Star or the Sun, where he will be at home.

Ann Flowers
Hackney
(a working class, political feminist, with breasts, not "tits")

I just don't understand Bryn Griffiths' arguments against proportional representation. He objects to coalitions. But both Labour and Conservative parties are in themselves coalitions - groups of factions brought together not by principle but by the "first past the post" system. At least PR might bring the horse trading out into the open!

His argument that Labour could not win a majority under PR is an argument for Stalin-type dictatorship. Why bother with elections at all if the object is power at any cost? The fact that previous Labour governments would not have existed under PR hardly strikes horror to the heart. What no Ramsey MacDonald, no Clement Attlee, no Harold Wilson?

His argument that we would be able to elect a Labour government committed to our manifesto is laughable. Since when has a Labour government or Labour council for that matter bothered about its manifesto or Conference decisions?

We worked out that in Coventry twice as many people didn't pay their Poll Tax last year as voted Labour in the local elections. Perhaps if the Labour Party had supported the anti-Poll Tax Campaign it would have more chance of a majority. Policy, not electoral manoeuvring, is important. And why shouldn't Liberal Democrats and Greens have proper representation? And why should we on the Left be always told to shut up and stop rocking the boat, because it might ruin Labour's election chances?

Most people who vote Labour in the next election will be doing so without enthusiasm; they just want to get the Tories out. This is because of the "first past the post" system - a blatantly undemocratic system. It hardly stimulates or reflects the political self-activity and involvement of the working class, which should surely be our starting point in *Briefing*.

Dave Spencer
Coventry

I have read *Briefing* a few times now, and the main criticism I have of it is its rather puerile name-calling.

Name-calling and character assassination have always been the tactics of the Stalinists and the right wing. I believe that left wingers need to be more careful in the way they criticise their opponents.

Simply branding someone as a "Class Traitor" or indeed a "looney left" does little to popularise the ideas of socialism.

The question we should be asking is: "What exactly is it that causes good activists to sell out?" Undoubtedly, personal weakness, cowardice, financial avarice and careerism all come into it, but the main reason these activists abandon their loyalty to the working class is surely their theoretical weakness, their lack of understanding of socialist ideas or the history and role of the working class.

Briefing would do better to devote more space to theoretical explanations of current affairs, the history of our movement and especially to explaining the bankruptcy of reformist ideas - and less to personal abuse, which is more at home in the worst areas of student politics than in an arena with the democratic traditions of the working class movement.

I make no secret of the fact that I enjoy reading the Militant newspaper precisely because it provides me with a diet high in theoretical fibre.

Max Neill
Preston

Labour Briefing Annual General Meeting Saturday, July 20th 10:30am-5pm

Debate: Out of the ghetto - the future of the Labour left
Action: NEC campaign, witch-hunt, LPS, Conference
The new magazine: a balance sheet

Speakers include: Ken Livingstone, Jeremy Corbyn, Pauline Purnell, Dorothy Macedo, John Wilton, Jean Calder, Pete Willsman, Graham Bash

Plenty of time for discussion
Creche, food

Durham Road Community Centre
Durham Road
London N.4
Finsbury Park tube

Admission: £4 waged; £2 unwaged; free to comrades from outside London
Followed by social

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Return to Labour Briefing, 26 Wattisfield Road, London E5 9QH

STOP PRESS: Bourgeoisie adopts Ross programme! In an article entitled "Our Labour Manifesto - a Vision for Britain", the *Economist* of May 18th has urged Labour to commit "resources for additional spending on the health service" (as well as education) which should come from "savings in other programmes", notably defence. Labour, the magazine opines, should "bring defence spending down to 2.5% of national output by 1993", slightly lower than the European average and beyond even the dreams of Labour conference these days.

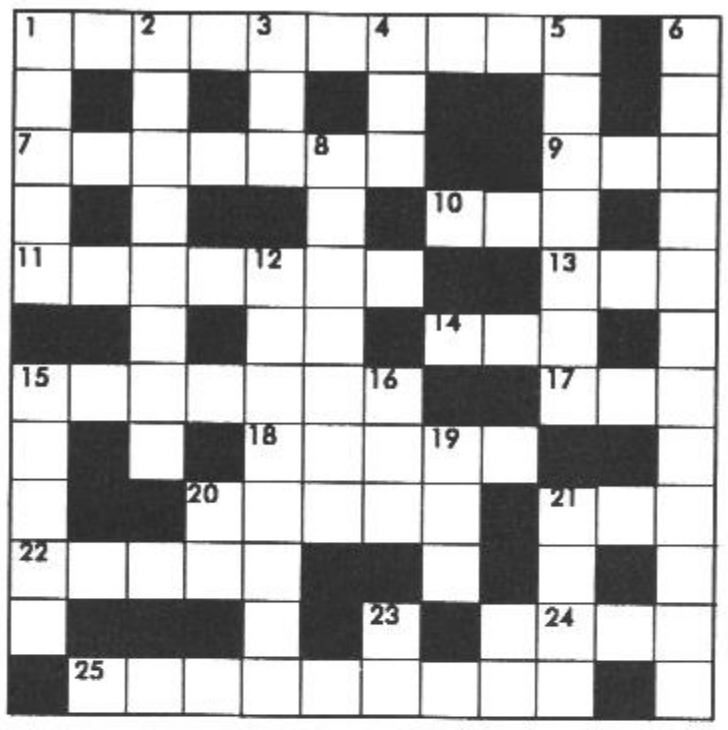
CHESSINGTON SOUTH BRIEFING READERS SEND GREETING STO THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Auction!

Saturday, June 22nd
7pm
Lewisham Labour Club, Limes Grove, London SE13.
All proceeds to *Labour Briefing*
Loads of bargains! Enjoy a drink while you're at it in one of London's few *socialist* Labour Clubs.

Briefing Crossword

First person to post the correct solution will be reported to the National Constitutional Committee and dealt with accordingly! Answer in next month's Briefing.



Across

1. US capitalist pol or Irish patriot
7. Sandanista capital
9. They think they own the left!
10. Cockney Degsy
11. Not long term strategy
13. "1 across" military wing
14. Student or seafarer?
15. Housing charity
17. Level neck wear
18. Planet needing friends
20. Theoretical mistake
21. Councils do this a lot!
22. Bent US President
24. Imperialism's world trade agreement
25. 1000 year epoch (preferably socialist)

Down

1. NEC asks for this at Conference
2. Chilean Dictator
3. "22 Across" did this!
4. Bitter publisher
5. Coventry MP
6. Not safe in Tory hands
8. Kinnock's programme?
12. What Whitelaw did in Ireland ... et al.
15. Labour needs this; Duke Ellington had it!
16. Ethnic equality person
19. If at first - this again
21. Small mollusc
23. Didn't do much for Kurds.

DIARY

Saturday May 25th/Sunday May 26th: Conference on South Asia organised by International Forum on Asia and Southall Monitoring Group. University of London Union, Malet St, London, WC1. Details: 081-843-2333.
Saturday June 1st: Socialist Movement AGM, Leeds.
Wednesday June 5th: World Environment Day.
Saturday June 8th: Rights for Wrongs, the civil liberties conference, sponsored by London Labour MEPs, CRS, CWS South East Political Committees, NCCL; 10am-4:30pm, South Bank Polytechnic, Elephant and Castle, London.
Saturday June 8th/Sunday June 9th: Red-Green Economics Conference, Kingsway Princeton College, London, WC1. Details: Ken Barker 0222-220309.
Friday June 21st: Nothing to Celebrate, candle-lit vigil on the eve of the Gulf War "Victory Parade", organised by Women Against War in the Gulf; Trafalgar Square, London, 9pm-midnight.
Saturday June 22nd: Auction for *Labour Briefing*, Lewisham Labour Club, Limes Grove, London SE13.
Sunday, June 30th: Anti-Apartheid Freedom Run in Brockwell Park, Brixton; all day. Details: 071 387 9186.
Saturday July 13th: Cancel the Debt, demonstration to mark the G7 summit meeting in London. Assemble noon, Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park; march to Trafalgar Square for rally at 2:30pm. Details: 071 281 8148.
Monday July 15th/Tuesday July 16th: The Other Economic Summit, Central Hall Westminster.
Saturday July 20th: *Labour Briefing* AGM, Durham Road Community Centre, London.
Saturday September 7th/Sunday September 8th: Hazards Conference organised by Hazards Education Society and Lothian TUCRC; Pollok Halls, Edinburgh University; 031 556 7318.
Saturday September 21st: National Campaign Against the Witch-hunt meeting, Manchester.
Sunday September 29th/Friday October 4th: Labour Party Annual Conference, Brighton.

Maxwell's Euro-racism

IN A DISPLAY of Powellite scaremongering, Robert Maxwell's supposedly internationalist *European* newspaper recently carried a front page article with the massive headline: "Europe braced for migrant invasion".

The only "fact" adduced to support this claim was the increase in popula-

Kevin Flack
East Lewisham CLP

tion in North Africa which was offered as evidence of a "surge of immigrants", a "migrant flood", an "immigration timebomb". The editorial says that "immigration is the major challenge facing the European Community for at least the next decade". None of this would be out of place in a National Front rag.

A separate article deals with the plight of Moroccans trying to enter Spain, where controls will be stepped up to defend Fortress Europe. Spain, the *European* says, "is no longer protecting just its own border: now it is the Community's southern frontier." Moroccans are now not even allowed to visit Spain unless they are carrying the equivalent of £276 to "prove they are bona fide holidaymakers".

The *European* assumes that there will be increasing migration into the EC because of its economic success. It doesn't even contemplate the racist backlash against the EC's present migrant worker population (around 15 million people) which may arise when the harsh economic effects of the Single Market hit home. The far right is growing across Europe, particularly in the former East German state, and will seek to exploit the collapse of industry and rise in unemployment.

Socialists need to organise pan-European initiatives to meet this threat.

STRICT CONTROL OVER "internal immigration" within "Fortress Europe" is one of the main dangers of the Single Market, according to the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit. The unit has published a guide to the latest developments, *Imagine there's no countries*, available from GMIAU, New Mount Street, Manchester (price £2.50).



Le Pen or Le press baron?

Thamesmead: second racist murder

ANOTHER BLACK person has fallen victim to racist violence in Thamesmead in south east London.

Following the killing of Rolan Adams in March, twenty-five year old Orville Blair was stabbed to death by a white thug on May 11th - outside his home, in broad daylight.

The police have denied any racist motive for the murder, yet the brutal ferocity of the attack and the coolness with which the killer walked away shows that killing a black person has become a casual act in Thamesmead.

Since the beginning of this year, the number of racist attacks in the London Borough of Greenwich has doubled.

The finger of blame undoubtedly points to the influence of the neo-Nazi British National Party (BNP) whose national headquarters is located in neighbouring Welling. The BNP has thanked Bexley Council for refusing to evict them. The party plans a demo in Thamesmead on May 25th calling for "Rights for Whites". An anti-racist counter-demo is being organised.

Black people in Thamesmead are under attack. Everyone, black and white, who opposes racist attacks should join the struggle against these brutal racist terrorists.

■ **Contact the Rolan Adams Family Campaign, c/o GACARA, 115 - 123 Powis Street, London SE18. Tel 081 854 4587.**

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