BRIEFING

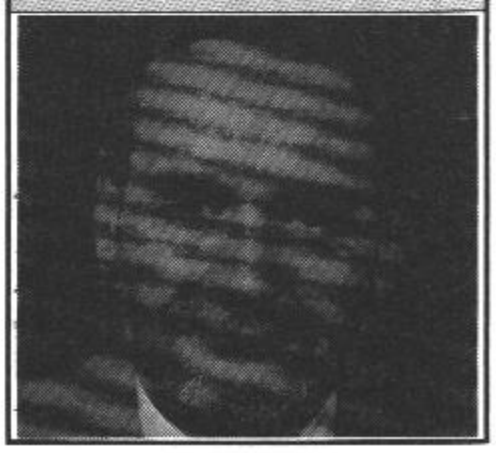
November 1991 80p (60p unwaged)

Exposed: Major's racist Tories

- ***Major courts bigots' votes***
- ***Baker strikes at refugees***
- ***Western Goals: Tory "entryists"***

- see inside

Class Traitor of the Month page 15



Turkish hell in Kurdish "Safe haven" page 9

The new McCarthyism page 12

NUM ballot on overtime ban page 21

Poll Tax: coutroom drama page 22

LABOUR - TAKE THE POWER!

In this month's *Labour Briefing*

4 The Tories' bridgehead to the extreme right; **Baker**'s attack on refugees; a new democracy in **Ethiopia...**

Adnan Bucak on the Turkish general election, **Jeremy Corbyn** and **Ihsan Qadir** report from Kurdistan...

10 **Alf Lomas** MEP on why the Social Charter is a fraud, **Mike Marqusee** on McCarthyism old and new...

Highlights and lowlights at Labour Party conference, **Tom Sawyer, Class Traitor of the Month**...

16 **Dorothy Macedo** on Labour Party Socialists, the NUM vs. Bristol City Council, **Ken Capstick** gets the boot...

Leonora Lloyd on women and the trades unions, Adams beats Dromey, the NUM ballots, wage slavery at **Foyles**...

22 **Terry Liddle** on a day in his life as a Poll Tax non-payer, **Dave Palmer** on "golden coffins" wheeze...

COSATU leaders up against the apartheid state, reviews, **Periscope, Arthur Chandler**, letters, crossword...

...and a message from the **Brighton Friends of Sara Thornton**.

November 1991, No. 117

Tories play the race card



AS THE general election approaches, the Tories and their media friends are determined to whip up a frenzy of race hate.

It all began in June when John Major told a European Community summit meeting in Luxembourg that he wanted "a strong, tight perimeter fence around Europe" in order to "curb" Third World immigration. In this speech he also introduced the scare figure of 1000 applications for asylum in Britain per week.

Outraged that "liberal, multi-racialist" Major should attempt to steal their clothes so close to an election, the fascists of the British National Party denounced the Tory Prime Minister in their paper, *British Nationalist* ("For Race and Nation"). They warned voters that, as in 1979, the Tories were engaged in "a cynical ploy to halt the nationalist challenge by fooling the public into thinking they are about to 'act tough' on the immigrant invasion".

The BNP's strategists must have been foaming at the mouth during the Tory conference in Blackpool. First, there was Douglas Hurd promising to press European governments for "tougher measures" to control the "tidal wave" of immigrants.

The next day, Kenneth Baker followed suit. Once again he waved the "1000 a week" scare figure and declared to applause, "We simply cannot provide a home for those who only want to live in a richer country...for too many, claiming refugee status has become a method of avoiding immigration control."

All this is meant to justify the crackdown on asylum seekers (for details, see page 5). For his finale, Baker accused Roy Hattersley of introducing race into the election - because Hattersley had pointed out the racist nature of Tory immigration policies.

Hattersley had already become a target for the tabloid bigots during Labour's conference week, with the *Daily Express* warning its readers: "Hattersley would let in one million migrants". The *Express* quoted extensively from an unnamed "immigration expert" who said that Labour's proposals on immigration would "result in the country being overrun by 'good life' families from Africa and the Indian subcontinent. Already £400 million a year is spent on maintaining nearly 500,000 fake refugees".

Further evidence of just how respectable racism has become in Tory Britain is the recent High Court ruling effectively legalising racial segregation in state schools.

The Court ruled that the right of "parental choice" as enshrined in the Tory Education Reform Act of 1988 over-rides the Race Relations Act which outlaws discrimination in schools. The Commission for Racial Equality had brought the case against a council which had allowed a white parent to withdraw her child from a black majority local school because she was allegedly coming home reciting "Pakistani nursery rhymes". The parent was backed by advisors from the Thatcherite Centre for Policy Studies.

We stand corrected!

DAVID BLUNKETT has provided us with a copy of NEC minutes showing that he did indeed vote against the *Britain in the World* policy document (which dumped unilateralism) in May 1989.

What price unity on the Labour left?

THE OVERWHELMING bulk of the Labour left is composed of non-aligned local left activists. For them, the internecine squabbling and heated rivalry of the nationally-organised left groups is often baffling and always frustrating.

A recent example was the split over the left slate for Labour's NEC. Although the slate promoted by the Socialist Campaign Group received wide and positive support at the grassroots of the Labour left, nearly all the nationally-based left groups declined to support it - apart from Labour Briefing.

Everyone on the left has suffered from these divisions. Some have been occasioned by substantial political issues and were probably unavoidable. Sharp debate on such matters is healthy. But too often the sentiment seems to be that we mustn't allow the large number of things on which we agree to get in the way of an almighty row over the few things on which we disagree!

In recent years the rank and file has been asked to choose between the two main alliances between which the national left has been split: on the one hand, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and the other groups in Labour Left Liaison, and on the other, the group which has coalesced around Labour Party Socialists.

CLPD has an awesome track record and it can claim credit for masterminding some of the left's most impressive victories. It continues to play a valuable role, particularly in defending mandatory reselection. But it too often acts as if the Labour Party was a machine operating entirely outside the rest of society; too often it has asked activists to survive on a diet of constitutional issues. Indeed, the whole LLL block sometimes seems to act as if the only function of the left at the grass roots was to pass model resolutions. Along with this has come an apparent reluctance to prioritise opposition to the witch-hunt and a failure to take action over the Poll Tax, which over the last few years has probably preoccupied Labour left activists on the ground more than any other issue.

On the other side, LPS, with which Briefing has been closely associated, has so far failed to live up to its promise and has remained largely a top-down alliance of pre-existing left-wing groups. Too often, it has produced worthy but abstract propaganda and has yet to tackle the thornier problems of organising and campaigning.

Like CLPD, but for different reasons, it declined to back the Campaign Group slate, a major error through which it lost an opportunity to offer the independent rank and file left the nation-wide organising focus it so desperately needs.

Long-term, sustainable unity is unity from the bottom up: democratic, pluralist, participatory. We want all the Labour left - and above all the non-aligned local Labour and trade union activists - sitting in one room together, freely debating a wide range of issues, fostering a host of campaigns, building a network with contacts in every constituency.

This is the kind of unity in action we'll need if we are to sustain ourselves as socialists in the Labour Party in the run up to the election - and make the most of the opportunities that will open up after that.

However, it is obvious that such unity and organisation will not materialise spontaneously. It is also obvious that none of the existing left formations on its own can achieve it - though all must be included in the effort. The fact is that the majority of left activists look, with reason, to the Campaign Group for initiative and co-ordination. In the last year the Group has demonstrated exemplary leadership in opposing the Gulf War and the witch-hunt. This is the time for the Campaign Group MPs to step forward and clearly assume the role which the bulk of the left wants them to play. No one else has the authority to unite the left. No one else has the potential to reach out to all the scattered, disparate and often demoralised ranks and knit them together around commons aims and activities. A first step, which the Campaign Group is now contemplating, will be the convening of an open, democratic assembly of the left to choose the slate for next year's NEC elections and make plans for the general election and after.

Our pages are open for further contributions to this debate from all sections of the Labour left.

NEARLY FIVE hundred Poll Tax non-payers in England and Wales have now received sentences for non-payment of the Poll Tax. Most have been suspended, but some eighty people are now or have already served time in prison for this "crime".

This month's Class Heroes are two veteran Welsh left-wingers jailed by Labour-controlled Rhymney Valley Council. At this moment Ray Davies and Tom Hopkins are in Gloucester prison finishing their fourteen day sentences for defying the Poll Tax tyranny. Tom, 79, is an ex-miner and lifelong socialist. Ray is a former steelworker who challenged Kinnock in the Bedwelty Paliamentary selection in 1981 and is currently a county councillor.

Everything you always wanted to know about *Labour Briefing*...

***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. We are happy to offer a right of reply on the usual basis to all members of the labour movement.**

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. Deadline for the next issue is November 11th.

***Briefing* is the only magazine on the left which is not funded by any part of the labour hierarchy or by any organised grouping. To survive and thrive we need the support of our readers. Why not take copies to sell at your local Labour Party, trade union or campaign meeting? And while you're at it, take out a standing order - say, £5 per month - to ensure we have the funds we need to keep going. It's an easy and effective way of hitting back at the Labour misleadership!**

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

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Co-chairs: Liz Davies and Pauline Purnell
Editor: Mike Marqusee
Editorial Board: Graham Bash, Matin Carey, Martin Cole, Guy Daley, Liz Davies, Graham Durham, Paul Field, Kevin Flack, Paul Foley, Bryn Griffiths, Richard Heffernan, Steve King, Chris Knight, Dave Lewney, Leonora Lloyd, Dorothy Macedo, Geoff Mann, Mike Marqusee, Len Mason, Mick McKeever, Eddie Niles, Mike Phipps, Camilla Power, Dave Palmer, Hyder Prodhan, Pauline Purnell, Jon Rogers, Dave Spencer, Karl Statton, Jane Stockton, Aileen Ryder, Frank Tonner, Greg Tucker, Keith Veness, Valerie Veness, John Wilton, Richard Woolven

Western Goals, part 2

Last month's Briefing *outlined the activities of Western Goals, a small but powerful organisation within the Conservative Party building links between the Tory right and fascist organisations on the continent. It aims to build a British section of a Europe-wide network of the extreme right to be headed by Jean Marie Le Pen, leader of the French Front National (FN).* ***Ed Daley****, an Edinburgh-based free lance journalist, continues the investigation.*

WESTERN GOALS have a special interest in South Africa and set up an "African Desk" in 1988. In July of that year they helped organise a visit to Britain by the head of Unita, the South African backed guerillas trying to overthrow the Angolan government. WG director Stuart Northolt has also met with representatives of the Mozambiquan Renamo terrorists.

One of WG's vice presidents is Commandant Clive Derby Lewis who is also foreign affairs spokesperson for the South African Conservative Party (well to the right of South Africa's ruling Nationalist Party). In June 1989 he and Party leader Andreas Treunicht visited Britain on a WG organised tour and later that year he addressed a WG fringe meetings at the Tory Party annual conference.

Derby Lewis returned to Britain in 1990 under the auspices of WG. This time he met the ex-NF, now Tory tennis star Buster Mottram and addressed a meeting of the Monday Club in the House of Lords (hosted by Lord Sudeley). He was also in attendance at a select dinner in Whitehall for Conservative MPs and addressed a Monday Club Foreign Affairs Committee meeting organised by WG luminary Gregory Lauder Frost, where "historian" David Irving ("there was no holocaust") was also in attendance.

That same year WG leader Andrew V.R. Smith arranged a meeting between Derby-Lewis and Jean Marie Le Pen. Shortly before that he arranged for the Commandant to attend the WACL conference in Brussels.

WACL is the World Anti-Communist League, a dangerous and shadowy organisation stretching across the globe, which includes many Nazi parties and Nazi collaborationist groups within its national chapters. At one time it included the Tecos, a fanatical Mexican Nazi sect, and Roger Pearson, founder and leader of the openly Nazi Northern League has been boss of its US chapter.

The links between WG and WACL are numerous and incontrovertible.

WG includes amongst its international patrons John K. Singlaub, who is boss of WACL, and El Salvadorean Death Squad leader Roberto D'Aubuisson, who has also worked with Stefano delle Chiaie, the international Nazi terrorist responsible for the Bologna bomb outrage in which eighty four people were murdered. D'Aubuisson headed a "political institute" set up by WACL. Among the top leaders of WG, Smith, Northolt and Michael McCrone have all held senior positions in WACL's European Youth section, and Smith and Northolt have both worked closely with David Finzer, the General Secretary of WACL's "World Freedom League".

Initially WG had a Parliamentary Advisory Board including Tory MPs Sir Patrick Wall and Neil Hamilton. At the time of WG's foundation Wall was president of the British Anti-Communist Council, the British chapter of WACL, which was partially run by Peter Dally, vice president of Western Goals. Wall was a visitor to "World Freedom Day" in Taiwan in January 1981. This was an international event organised by the various chapters of the Asian WACL.

Similarly Paul Masson, a director of Western Goals, is on the international youth committee of the "Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations" (ABN), the East European section of WACL, and Masson and Smith formed part of a Monday Club delegation to an ABN conference.

As an "entryist" organisation within the Tory Party, WG sees itself not as the progenitor of a mass movement but as a pressure group and power broker, seeking to influence the political agenda within the Tory Party by targeting opinion formers and decision makers.

They campaign within the Tory Party to "combat the insidious menace of Liberalism and Communism", seeking to push the Tories ever further to the right, while simultaneously providing a bridge to continental fascist groups like the FN.

By forging links between the traditional right and fascism WG blurs the border-line between the two, thus using the Conservative Party in Britain to bestow respectability on fascism which strengthens it both nationally and internationally.

The bigger Tory vote

Paul Field *reviews* The Bigger Tory Vote: the Sequestration of the Bigotry Vote, *by Nick Toczek (£3.00 from A.K. Press).*

This chilling, meticulously documented book charts the activities of eight hard right activists, all of whom played leading roles in the "Halt Immigration Now Campaign" run by the Monday Club between 1971 and 1973.

These eight - including George Kennedy Young, Tony Vander Elst, the late Ronald Bell MP, Beryl Carthew, Joy Page and Lady Jane Birdwood - bridge the narrow divide between the "dry" right in the Tory Party and the fascist right in Britain at large. This tendency struck gold when Thatcher ousted Heath in the mid-seventies and its adherents were gratified to see Thatcher adopt their strategy by stealing the NF's clothes with her remarks about being "swamped" in 1979.

The influence these people wield is demonstrated by Anna Bramwell's appointment as Director of the Centre for Policy Studies, the think-tank founded and frequently used by Thatcher, in 1986. Bramwell expressed openly Nazi sympathies within a few weeks of assuming her position in a talk on Waller Dane (Nazi minister for Agriculture from 1933) and "Hitler's Green Party" given at a conference organised by former NF activists.

The career of G.K. Young is revealing. Young served as a secret intelligence service officer in the early fifties and was responsible for the British role in the Anglo-American operation to oust Mossadeq and restore the Shah to power in Iran. He was made Deputy Director of M16 in 1958 but three years

Baker's new barriers

The tabloid press is working itself into a frenzy over the number of refugees entering Britain. Meanwhile, the "quality" press reports that members of the Cabinet are pressing for Britain to become the first country ever to withdraw from the United Nations Charter on Refugees. And Home Secretary Kenneth Baker is pushing a new range of restrictions on refugees seeking to enter Britain. ***Liz Phillipson*** *indicts the Tory attack on the right to asylum.*

WHILE THERE has been an increase in the numbers of refugees entering Britain in recent years, we are still taking substantially fewer refugees than other European countries, even from countries like Sri Lanka where we have historic links and responsibilities.

In fact, the vast majority of the world's refugees are outside Europe and being looked after by developing countries such as India.

Since 1979 the Tories have built placed one barrier after another in the way of genuine refugees fleeing to Britain. Their object has been to bar the way without causing scenes at British ports that might upset the liberal establishment. Their strategy is to move the barriers to the beginning of the journey, by such devices as the Carriers Liability Act and visa requirements, thus exporting the problems.

The proposals announced by the Home Secretary in July would raise the barriers even higher for both refugees and immigrants. These developments are mirrored across Europe as the Fortress is made ready for 1992.

Baker proposes to double the fines levied on airlines under the Carriers Liability Act to £2000 per person refused entry. This will ensure that many refugees never leave the land from which they are trying to flee and transfers the policing of immigration to airline staff. Refugees who do make it to a British port are to be photographed and fingerprinted like criminals.

Currently, refugees arriving at British ports who are refused entry have no appeal until after they are sent back to wherever they came from! This practise violates UN guidelines - and is likely to be condemned by the European Court of Justice in a forthcoming case. The government has been forced to say it will introduce appeals in Britain for asylum seekers. However, the proposed appeals system is woefully inadequate and unsafe. Particularly worrying is the suggestion that those refugees deemed less deserving by the Home Office will be channelled into a special fast track appeal conducted on the basis of file papers only.

Most shocking to many people campaigning with and on behalf of refugees is the threat to withdraw legal aid for all refugee and immigration cases. But here Baker has proved inept. He announced that in place of legal aid greater funding would be given to the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service (UKIAS) which would handle all cases to provide "a more effective and economic service". But it transpired that Baker had not consulted with UKIAS which has refused to take this role on. The government has been reduced to touting around the voluntary sector with a big bankroll as bait.

The attack on legal aid flies in the face of the principle that a person should be entitled to independent legal advice of her or his choice and has infuriated the whole of the legal profession, including the Law Society and the Bar Association.

The proposals are likely to be debated in the House of Commons in the next few months. The Labour left should make sure it is present in numbers alongside refugees protesting at this latest specimen of Tory inhumanity.



later left the intelligence service to become an activist in far right groups.

Young left the Monday Club in 1973 after a bitter internal battle in which he clashed with other members of the leadership over their attempts to purge the organisation of NF supporters.

The following year he set up Tory Action, better known as "Maggie's Militant Tendency" after the 1984 Panorama Programme which exposed Tory MPs Proctor, Howarth, Hamilton, Moate and Winterton as supporters of the group. Howarth and Hamilton denied the charge and secured an out of court settlement two years later - the next day BBC defence lawyers received a list of Tory Action members that included both their names along with evidence that they had been expelled from the Monday Club in 1973 - after Young's resignation. The Tory Action journal *Round Robin* regularly carries calls for the forced repatriation of black British citizens and actively supports the campaigns of Victoria Gillick (ex-Powellite), the anti-semitic British League of Rights run by lifelong Tory Party member Lady Jane Birdwood, and the ultra-racist *Choice*, a newspaper published under the slogan "Racialism is Patriotism". I was struck with the thought that if Kinnock spent a tenth of the energy he uses witch-hunting his own members exposing the influence of the revanchist right in the Tory Party there would be a wider mistrust of the Tories in general. And a bigger lead for Labour in the polls.

Ethiopia's path to democracy: a glimmer of hope

After seventeen years of war and oppression under the military dictatorship of Mengistu Haile Mariam, Ethiopia is now building a grassroots democracy. ***Will Campbell*** *of the Ethiopia Solidarity Campaign, reports on the latest developments.*

WHEN THE forces of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) took Addis Ababa at the end of May the leadership promised a national conference, which it organised within one month. All political organisations, representatives from minority ethnic groups and workers' representatives were invited; only one marginal political coalition refused to participate.

The conference resulted in the adoption of a charter which lays down the structure of the transitional government which will govern Ethiopia for the next two years. An 87-person Council of Representatives has been established as the highest body of the transitional government. Interestingly, the EPRDF were happy to settle for only 30 of the 87 seats, indicating a willingness to argue their policies from a minority position.

The charter states that elections for a National Assembly will take place within two years of the establishment of the transitional government; then, power will be handed over "to the party or parties that gain a majority in the National Assembly".

In a country with no experience of democracy, let alone human rights, the speed of these developments is impressive. But the EPRDF is clear that creating prospects for democracy at the top of the system means nothing if the people are not involved in democracy at a grassroots level. And it is the EPRDF's experience of grassroots democracy which offers most hope for Ethiopians.

One of the founding members of the EPRDF is the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which began a guerilla war against the military regime in 1975. As the TPLF gained control over larger areas of Tigray province, a system of participatory democracy was evolved. This system involves people's councils, which are elected on three levels - village, district and zone. The councils are elected by a general assembly of the people which debates each nomination at great length before it votes.

The councils are responsible for all aspects of local life - economic, social and political. The system is strengthened by the involvement of associations which act as unions in providing a voice for women, farmers, workers and youth. The associations are always consulted in the implementation of policies which affect their members.

Each policy suggestion from above is passed down the political structure to the lowest level of council and debated with the relevant mass associations. Any amendments are passed back up until decisions are made. For example, the TPLF's agricultural department decided to implement a soil and water conservation programme in Tigray in 1989. The programme was discussed by councils throughout Tigray in conjunction with the farmers' and women's associations before the programme began. I witnessed the result of the discussion, which was a highly effective and participatory terracing and tree planting campaign.

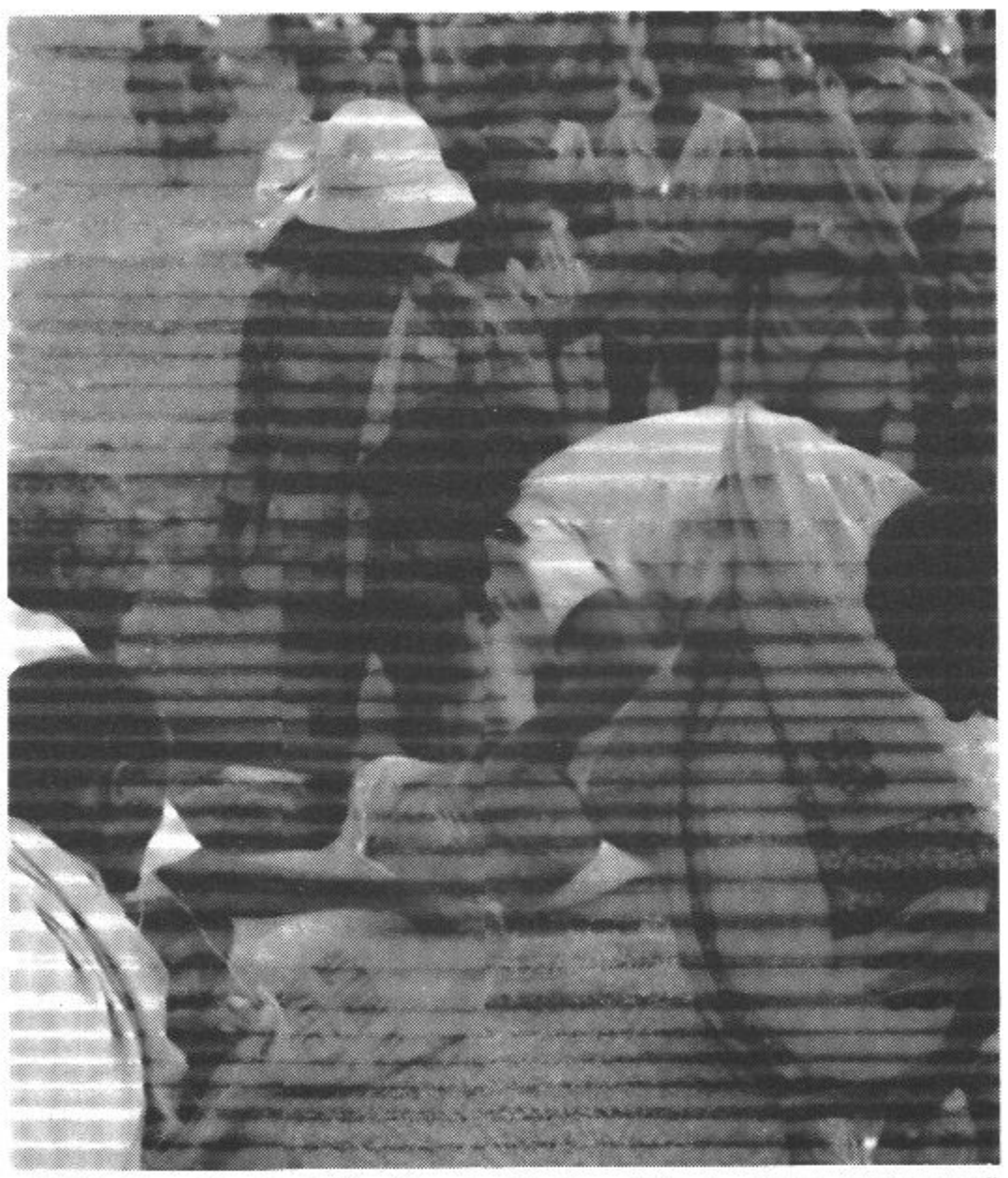
On a more recent, post-Mengistu, visit to Ethiopia in July this year I witnessed food distribution for victims of famine and war. The logistical nightmare of registering beneficiaries, weighing out grain and recording the amounts given for the benefit of international donors was undertaken by the relief committees of the people's councils. The lesson is clear: food distribution can be conducted most effectively and fairly by the people themselves.

During my last visit members of the people's councils were being assessed by the people they represent; this is meant to be a regular six-monthly exercise. I found that in many cases over half the sitting council members were dismissed by the people for corruption or ineffectiveness. The fact that the people were not afraid to condemn their elected leaders indicated to me a growing sense of people's power. The EPRDF's principle is that if you give people real power over their lives, they will take it and make good use of it.

In Tigray, plans are now being made for the establishment of a Tigray-level people's council. When this is elected, Tigray will have its own regional administration. This fits with the EPRDF's policy of federal government. If the experience of EPRDF's grassroots democracy is followed in the rest of the country the prospects for real democracy in Ethiopia are extremely strong.

As the left in Britain reassesses its ideological position following the fall of "socialism" in eastern Europe we would do well to follow events in Ethiopia closely. The continuing democratic revolution in Ethiopia offer a glimmer of hope in an uncertain world.

Ethiopia Solidarity Campaign,
211 Clapham Road,
London SW9 0QH.



Distribution of food relief in Alamata, Northern Ethiopia. Photo: W Campbell

Turkish workers go to the polls

Britain is not the only country currently caught up in election fever. In Turkey, which goes to the polls on October 20th and 27th, the election campaign is being waged against a backdrop of soaring inflation and a rise in trades union militancy. The conservative Turkish government is in deep trouble. ***Valerie Veness*** *interviewed* ***Adnan Bucak****, a former member of Islington North Labour Party who has returned to Turkey and is now an active member of the SHP (the Turkish Labour Party).*

VV: What are the main issues in the election?

AB: The main issue is inflation, which is currently running at 60/70% per annum! I have just seen an interview of all the Party Leaders on TV and virtually every question was on the cost-of-living and the economy.

VV: What are the major differences between the main parties?

AB: The main parties are: the SHP, ANAP (Motherland Party - the conservatives), DYP (True Path Party - right wing but more liberal), REFAH (Welfare Party - Islamic), DSP (Social Democrat - the party of former Prime Minister Ecevit), and SP (left socialist - led by a former Maoist!).

Currently ANAP have 251 MPs, the SHP 99 and DYP 49.

ANAP are basically "Thatcherite" and aim to privatise all nationally-owned industries if re-elected. They are now in serious trouble with some opinion polls showing them lagging below 20%. In Turkey you need 25% to be elected in a large multi-member constituency - even though it's a "first past the post" system. If you don't get it, no-one is elected.

The SHP has an electoral pact with the EHP (the Kurdish Labour Party). It is very similar to the British Labour Party and is committed to bringing down inflation and has a vague commitment to address the "uneven distribution of wealth". As in Britain, this lack of clarity is causing some problems in the election. But the SHP is committed to reviewing the constitution and improving rights for trades unionists. An important breakthrough has been the commitment to support rights for the Kurdish minority.



Adnan Bucak

The DYP is led by Demirel, a capitalist politician and former prime minister overthrown in 1980 by the army coup. He is a right winger who now claims to be moving towards the "centre". His party is committed to political reform but not as thoroughly as the SHP. They are nicknamed the "Two Keys Party" because they are promising a key to a house and a key to a car for every family!

The other former premier in the contest, Ecevit (DSP), has steadily abandoned his "socialism" and become a nationalist. He attacks the SHP for its Kurdish alliance and says that an SHP vote is a vote "for terrorism". He seems a cross between Owen and Jenkins. His support has dwindled - like the SDP in Britain!

VV: How has the campaign developed?

AB: Demirel and DYP started strongest but their support has see-sawed up and down in the polls. Nevertheless they are in the lead with 27%. The SHP are a strong second on 25% but are gaining every week. The governing ANAP has 23% in the most recent poll but is falling rapidly. Ecevit's DSP is now below 10% and all the others are nowhere.

VV: In that case, what do you expect the result to be?

AB: That is hard to know due to the vagaries of our electoral system. However, ANAP are likely to be trounced and both SHP and DYP are likely to greatly increase their numbers of MPs. If that happens some deal between these two is possible.

VV: How is that likely to affect the left and the trades unions in Turkey?

AB: An SHP win, even in coalition, will greatly encourage the unions to fight for their members. An SHP government will call the President, Turgut Ozal, to book. The Turkish President is not supposed to be involved in daily politics but he has blatantly backed ANAP. The SHP are committed to forcing a presidential election.

This is a very exciting and open election campaign. It's the first time I've seen every issue openly discussed. And to see the SP leader on TV openly advocate Turkish/Kurdish Federation - all such talk was previously illegal - is quite exhilarating!

VV: Lastly, the bombing of supposed PKK bases in Iraq has been in the news. Is this act for domestic political consumption?

AB: Yes, but this has not had much effect. Most Turkish workers do not believe the government; inflation and unemployment have remained the big issues. These will determine the outcome.

Eyewitness: Kurdistan today

"What world, what hope, where?" was the cry of despair heard by ***Jeremy Corbyn*** *MP and* ***Ihsan Qadir*** *when they visited Iraqi Kurdistan this summer as guests of the Kurdistan Front. They have published a full account of their trip in* Kurdistan Report, *from which we are pleased to print this extract.*

WE TRAVELLED to Kurdistan by plane via Istanbul, Ankara and Diyarbakir and thence by car through Turkish Kurdistan where we were met by endless military road blocks supposedly in search of the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party).

At the border with Iraq, the town of Cizre, one of the oldest settlements on the Silk Road, is a ghost of itself. There is almost no traffic and over three-quarters of the people are now unemployed.

The border itself is bizarre, with great formality and efficiency on the Turkish side. We were handed over to a group of peshmergas, who were to escort Mohsin Dizayee, the KDP chief negotiator, and ourselves to Zakho.

We inspected the results of Turkish bombardment at Xerezok, a small village about 300 yards from the Turkish border, which the Turks had claimed was a camp of 700 PKK guerillas but which consisted of no more than 17 shacks made from tree branches. Apparently one morning the villagers saw a helicopter flying low, thought it was about to drop food so waved to it and then it moved away as American built jet fighters screamed low and raked the village with cluster bombs.

As we walked we had to be careful to avoid the large number of unexploded bomblets lying there waiting to maim the few remaining children. Two distraught and angry women who had lost their children looked at us and said in response to an American reporter's question, "What world, what hope, where?" and slowly wended their way with their donkey to another village.and yet another attempt at lives disrupted for the fourth time in as many years. They paused for a long time by the twelve green flags over the new graves dug amidst the unharvested wheat.

As we travelled for hours over tiny tracks, unmade and very dusty in the heat, we saw signs of the way in which Kurdistan has been treated ever since Iraq was founded, and the way in which the recent ravages have been just another bitter twist for the people in their long fight for survival against all the odds. Throughout the country we saw the terrible signs of years of conflict: exploded vehicles and spent shells abound. The worst sight was of piles of shells from all over the world.

We drove past endless palaces of Saddam with walls all around and in one case a lonely and miserable Republican Guard left to look after a palace already under peshmerga control. Saddam's palaces are not just buildings of strikingly ugly modernity, but have thousands of empty hectares all around with a guard post every 200 yards. In most cases the palace would be lucky to be graced by an annual one-night visit.

Nothing could have prepared us for our visit to Qaladiza on a dusty hot afternoon with the temperature around forty degrees. It used to be a town of 10,000, and although an ancient site was now a scene of modern reinforced concrete houses, schools, colleges and hospitals. After the Kurdish uprising of 1988 it incurred the wrath of Saddam and the Ba'ath apparatus. The army attacked the town and expelled or killed the entire population, who either embarked on a long trek to relative safety in the villages or made camps nearby. For the next two months the army systematically blew up every single building and left it what it is today - a mess of reinforced concrete slabs with thin men trying vainly to break them with sledgehammers to get at the steel bars to sell for scrap to Iran or to make new buildings.

The water system is rudimentary, with standpipes in some places; the sewage system non-existent. We met families camping out in cave-like hideouts with nothing to protect them from -30c winters. Food supplies were thin and the sanctions policy had left all machinery in tatters and the vehicles in a dangerous state. Desperation and destitution are the order of the day.

Everywhere we saw the effects of the scorched earth policy of the Iraqi army, but particularly when we visited Barzan village, the home of Barzani family. Once a large and beautiful village it was totally destroyed - every house, mosque, synagogue and church - and in a sort of Old Testament revenge the water course had been dynamited to try to make it a desert village. Yet, again, amidst the beauty of the mountains and the natural abundance of fruit and wheat small groups of men were trying to rebuild the village without any equipment or materials other than those that came to hand.

***Kurdistan Report* is available from Kurdistan Focus, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QL.**



Jeremy Corbyn with Kurdish leaders photo: Ihsam Qadir

Responding to a Commons question from Jeremy Corbyn on the Turkish raids against Iraqi Kurdistan, Tory defence minister Archie Hamilton said: "The point must be made that that was action against the Kurdish Workers' Party - the PKK - a Kurdish terrorist organisation which has no support from other Kurdish groups in northern Iraq. Exactly what tactics the Turks are deploying must be a matter for them. However, the fact is that they are reacting against terrorist organisation. Clearly, we condemn any bombing of civilians and children."

Turkish hell in Kurdish 'safe haven'

Ihsan Qadir
Kurdistan Focus

TURKEY HAS once again attacked civilian settlements in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Turkish warplanes bombarded Kurdish re-settlement camps in Shiladiza and Sorya as well as two villages. The attack began on October 11th and lasted until the 16th. According to the latest news more than fifty people were killed and many were wounded.

This is the second Turkish raid on the Kurdish villages in Iraq. The first one was in August 1991, in which twelve people died (see report by myself and Jeremy Corbyn, left).

Turkey cites PKK activities around its border areas with Iraq as its pretext for killing innocent people. This is a lie. We did not see a single PKK member in Iraqi Kurdistan while we were there. The leadership of Kurdistan Front has categorically denied the existence of any PKK bases in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Of course, the Turkish authorities are perfectly well aware of this reality. They know there are no PKK bases in Iraqi Kurdistan, but they need a cover for their barbaric actions.

In a statement released on October 12th, Massoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Front, said: "We confirm that the bombed targets are civilian and residential areas. We also categorically deny the existence of any PKK bases in the affected areas and we repudiate Turkish claims in this regard. The scale of this new Turkish aggression, the second in two months, shows that it is aimed at the entire people of Iraqi Kurdistan, including women and children".

The Turkish attacks expose the real nature of the so-called "safe haven" arrangement in Kurdistan. The UN-sponsored security zone is in fact turning into a death trap zone. This arrangement has left the Kurds wide open to murderous attacks - and no one is willing to do anything about it.

The silence in the West over the murder of Kurdish women and children at the hands of the Turks carries a message (to Saddam Hussein as well as the Turks) that to kill Kurds is not a crime against humanity.

They are silent because they do not wish to offend their Turkish allies in NATO.

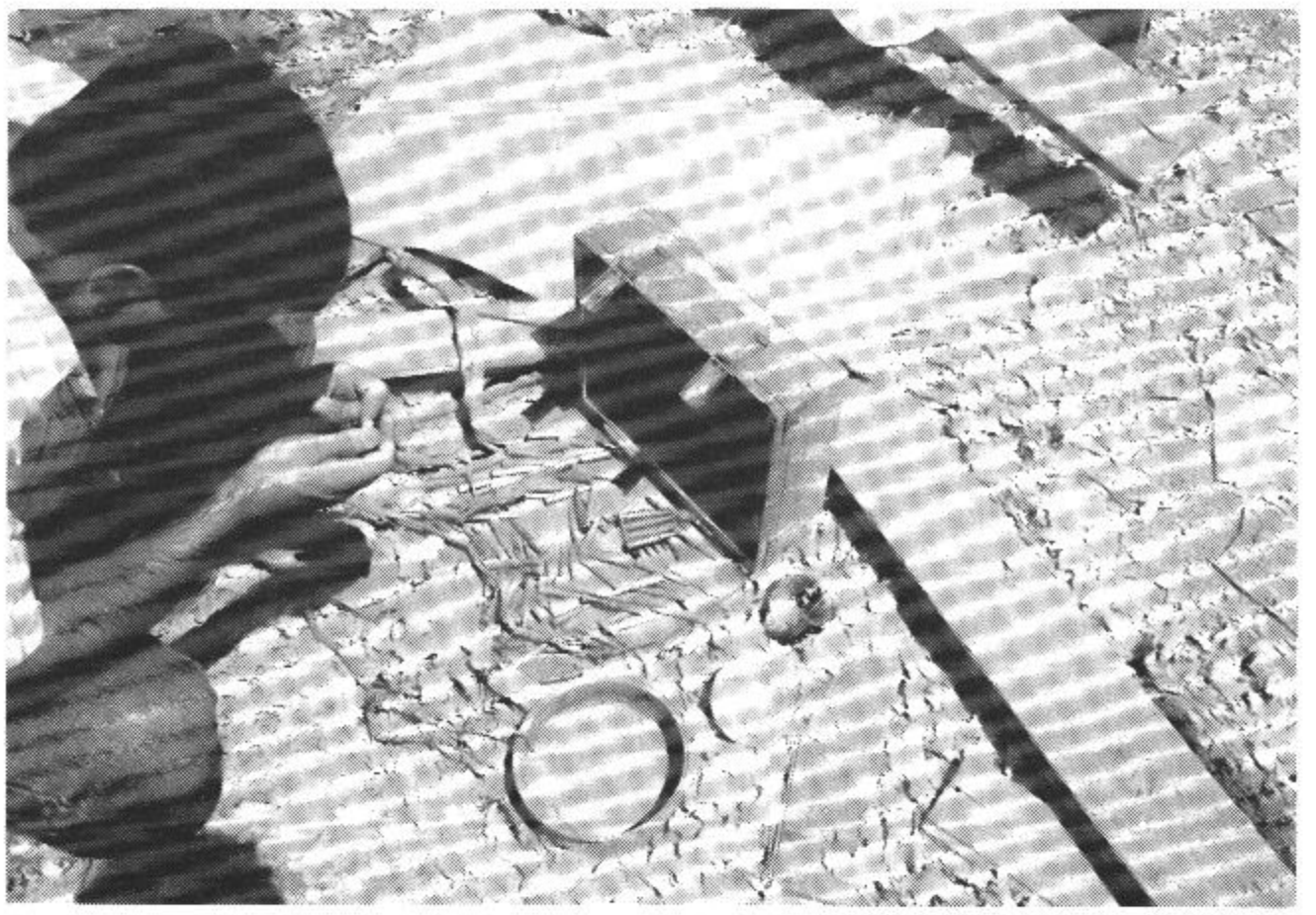
We should remember that after Saddam Hussein was allowed to get away with the gassing of the Kurdish village of Halabja in 1988, he felt freer than ever to massacres Kurds, Shia Arabs and later Kuwaitis.

This time, the governments of the Western countries must come clean. They should respond to the cries of Kurdish leaders for help and support. They should put intense pressure on the government of Turkey to stop its attacks on Kurds in Iraq and to recognise the national rights of its own Kurdish population which numbers more than fifteen million.

In the past, the British labour movement was indifferent to the sufferings of the Kurds. Now is the time to come forward and show solidarity. The Kurdish issue is not going to go away. All supporters of the Kurdish cause should prepare themselves for a long and hard and bitter struggle.

We need to build a truly democratic and open solidarity movement here in Britain. Without this we will never be able to force the British government to stand by the Kurds and defend them.

If the crimes of Turkey are not stopped and punished now, then we may well see yet another great tragedy in the region. The Kurdish people have been exploited and murdered by a variety of regimes over many, many years. But they have never given up their fight against dictatorship, tyranny, and the unjust and unnatural division of their land. They deserve our close support and solidarity. We should not leave them to the mercy of the Turkish wolves.



Kurdistan 1991: shattered by war - again photo: Jeremy Corbyn

UN: abused and misused

A new pamphlet from Labour Action for Peace offers a detailed critique of United Nations' actions in the Gulf War. The role of the USA, backed by Britain, in taking over and exceeding UN demands on Iraq is documented in a number of essays written by socialists with a long record in the peace movement, including Tony Benn, Jim Mortimer, Ron Huzzard and others. The pamphlet concludes: "The UN must never again be misused as a cover for military actions initiated and controlled by the USA or any other powerful country".

The UN - war or peace? Lessons of the Gulf Crisis, from Labour Action for Peace, 80p from 37 Hollingworth Rd, Petts Wood, Orpington, Kent, BR5 1AQ.

Europe - Social Charter or Social Chatter

***Alf Lomas**, a member of the European Parliament, outlines the case against the EEC.*

FOR ORDINARY people in Britain, the European Community has not been a success story.

Because of the EEC, we have suffered from massive balance of payments deficits, hugh exports of capital, and an inability to control the flood of imports. On any conservative estimate the EEC has led to at least one million unemployed.

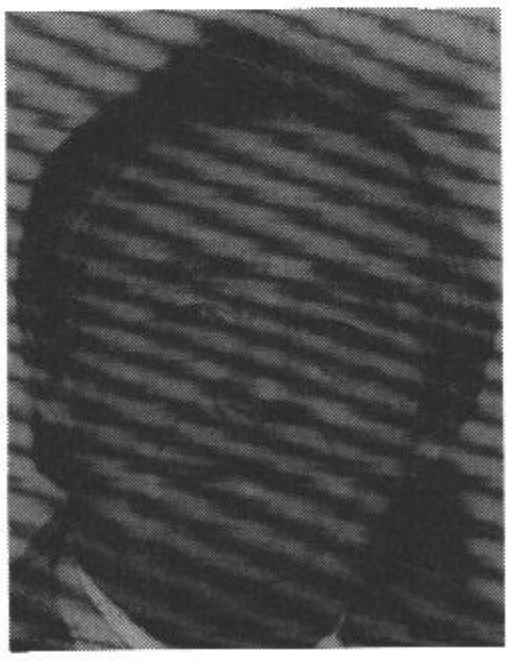
The Common Agricultural Policy costs the average family £17 a week extra on its food bill, destroys millions of tons of food every year, and dumps much of its surpluses on the world markets to the detriment of the developing countries. Our net contributions have cost us billions of pounds and next year we will have to pay £1.5 billion.

With nearly twenty million unemployed and over fifty million living in poverty, the European Community's economic performance over the years, when compared to other trading nations, like the United States, Japan or the EFTA countries, is dismal, with the worst record for unemployment, inflation, and productivity.

"On any conservative estimate the EEC has led to at least one million unemployed"

Now, with 1992, we are to have more of the same. 1992 is the target date for the completion of the European Community's Single European Act, which promises to eliminate all barriers to the movement of capital, goods, services, and people, in the European Community.

The Act is not an end in itself,



Alf Lomas

but is a step towards a Federal Europe, with an Independent Central Bank and a Single Currency.

These developments will lead to an increase in the gap between rich and poor nations.

To counter some of the criticisms of the Single Market, the EEC Commission produced "the Social Charter" containing twelve "fundamental rights" for working people, including proposals regarding remuneration for workers, hours of work, industrial relations, and clauses on pensioners and the disabled.

But are any of these proposals likely to be implemented and if so, what would they mean?

The House of Commons Select Committee, chaired by a Labour MP, Ron Leighton, described the Social Charter as a "con trick", partly because it has no legal base and partly because it is so weak and vague.

There is no reference to the Social Charter in the Single European Act, which lays down the rules for the single market.

No mention of any specific social improvements there, except for health and safety at work. All other social benefits can only be introduced with the agreement of all member states and there is no chance of that happening with the outright opposition of Britain and the more guarded opposition of other member states like Spain. The *"European Parliament News"* (probably the least read paper in publication) said the social action programme was in complete "deadlock" and the proposals for directives, which included regulating working hours, protection for pregnant women, workers' rights in industry, etc., stood no chance of being approved.

In any event, the Charter is so vague and flexible, the implementation of most of its proposals would have to be left to member governments. For instance, what the call for "fair remuneration" for workers means will be decided "in accordance with arrangements applying in each country"; working hours and annual paid leave will be "in accordance with national practices", conditions of employment will be "according to arrangement applying in each country", and the right to strike will be "subject to the obligations arising under national regulations and collective agreements".

In addition, the Commission has made it clear that it is not proposing any initiatives on the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, because "the problems deriving from the application of these principles, must be settled directly between the two sides of industry or where appropriate, by the member states". So much for GCHQ workers' rights!

The Charter says that all retired people should receive "a decent income" and that action should be taken to improve facilities for the disabled. But the Tories believe that pensioners already have a decent income and it is not likely that they will do anything much for the disabled.

Despite its feebleness, the Charter was described by Mrs Thatcher in one of her more hysterical outbursts as a "Marxist" document, which led to Mrs Papandreou (no relation!) Commissioner responsible for Social Affairs, to rush to London to reassure the British

"...the Tories believe that pensioners already have a decent income..."

government that it was no such thing. There was "nothing socialist in the Charter", she insisted, explaining that most of it would be up to national governments to implement as it wished.

All the same, some trades unions, weary from years of Tory attack, are clutching at the Charter like a drowning man clutches at straws.

Of course, it can be used as a weapon when bargaining with employers, but the unions will be hugely disappointed if they believe the Charter will bring any dramatic changes in social rights.

These will come about as they always have, by organised workers, through political and industrial action, fighting for and winning them.

Next steps for Black Sections: at least 30 Black MPs

***Lloyd French**, Secretary of National Labour Party Black Sections, hails Black Sections' historic victory at Party Conference and sketches the problems and possibilities that lie ahead for Black self-organisation in the labour movement.*

THE STRUGGLE for an autonomous organisation for Black party members has not been easy. Even at the last minute the Party leadership were trying to confuse the issue and make it a Black and White society. But pressure from Black members has at last forced the Party, after eight years of opposing Black Sections, to concede a major victory for Black people. It follows the decision of this year's TUC to support the establishment of Black groups in trade unions.

Black Sections have waged their campaign based on three basic principles: the organisation must be unitary; it must have a Black-only membership; and it must allow representation at all levels of the party, including the National Executive Committee.

We have won on all three issues, and the Black Sections will be holding a recall National Conference later this year to study the Conference decision and to discuss the role which will be played by the Black Sections in shaping the future of the new Black Socialist Society. We will also be holding immediate talks with other Black groups and trade unionists to encourage their participation in the Society.

Although there are still other constitutional issues that need to be resolved, the acceptance of the society will now allow Black members to pay a greater role in policy development, rather than the internal issues which have been forced on us by the Party.

Up to now, we have had to campaign on issues like the Tottenham Three, racial harassment and Third World debt outside the Party. The new Black Socialist Society will compel the Party to play a leading role in opposing racism, xenophobia and the rise of right-wing extremism in European politics.

We welcome the Labour NEC's decision to confirm the Black candidate in the Langbaugh by-election, Ashok Kumar, and look forward to his certain victory in the coming by-election. Nonetheless, there are still unnecessary outstanding disputes over potential Black candidates in four seats - Birmingham Small Heath, Birmingham Perry Barr, Nottingham East and Ealing Southall.

We call on the NEC to act swiftly to endorse Black Labour parliamentary candidates in these constituencies, as part of a positive move towards securing at least thirty Black MPs.

The Black Sections campaign will not let up until racism is defeated. We will continue to take the Black Agenda to the heart of the labour movement.

Rolan Adams killer gets life

The white youth who stabbed to death 15-year old black teenager Rolan Adams in Thamesmead earlier this year received a life sentence from an Old Bailey judge who declared that "there were racial overtones" to the killing - a view strenuously denied throughout the trial by both prosecution and defence.

The killing had followed BNP activity and a steep increase in racist graffiti and attacks in the area.

Rolan's father, Richard Adams, welcomed the verdict and rejected the police insistence that the conflict was "territorial": "We came from next door. Are they saying this is a no go area for my kids?

The dregs of this society go around murdering but the people who don't want to face up to what is happening are no better."

Self defence is no offence

When two white bikers chased and assaulted Martin Calvert, a black man in his late twenties, in October 1990, he naturally feared for his life.

As the pillion rider assaulted him with a heavy chain and fists, Martin defended himself with a small clay modelling knife. He was charged with wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm. In court, the bikers admitted to racially abusing and assaulting Martin.

The judge said there was no doubt about Martin's good character, but the jury found him guilty of actual bodily harm and he was sentenced to eighteen months. Martin has now been sacked from his job as a recreation attendant for Hackney Council.

A campaign has been launched to free Martin and secure reinstatement at his workplace. Contact the Free Martin Calvert Campaign at: Hackney Community Defence Association, 50 Rectory Road, London N16; tel. 071 249 0193.

Sick of hypocrisy on Ireland?

***In Whose Name?* has been produced to accompany a new Troops Out Movement campaign, WAR, PEACE AND SELF-DETERMINATION. This snappy, well-produced and fact-filled booklet argues that peace in Ireland, as elsewhere, depends on its people being allowed to determine their own future.**

Explaining the background to the new campaign, Richard Stanton, Chair of the Troops Movement, told Briefing: "For a generation British governments have been waging war in what they claim is part of their own country. Their war in Northern Ireland is by far the longest military campaign in the history of the British army. They declare they are waging this war in our name. Yet the majority of people here have never supported it.

"The Troops Out Movement's new campaign is for everyone who is sick of hypocrisy about the war in Ireland. It is about applying at last to Ireland some of the lessons so bitterly learnt in Vietnam and Kenya, Palestine, South Africa, and Yugoslavia. Its message is that by brutally denying Irish people the right to self-determination, the British establishment is also denying them the right to peace. It is about ending the war for good."

***In Whose Name?* is available from the Troops Out Movement, PO Box 353, London NW5 4NH (tel. 071 609 1743) at a cost of 75p each plus 25p p&p.**

Amnesty takes up Irish case - at last

For the first time in its history, Amnesty International issued an "Urgent Action" notice in response to an incident in the UK: the constant ill-treatment of West Belfast Catholic Damian Austin.

Damian has been detained twice in Castlereagh Interrogation Centre in recent months. He was first held in May and subjected to physical abuse and death threats. Released without charge, he was continually harassed by the police. In August, he was again arrested and beaten; this time the injuries were documented by doctors. After being examined, Austin was told by police, "Complain all you want. It's going to get worse." He was also told he would be shot by the UVF.

Austin has since visited London to meet with Amnesty representatives and Labour MPs and Irish solidarity activists at Labour Party Conference.

"Are you now or have you ever been..."

With the escalation of the purge of the Labour left, the air has been rent by cries of "McCarthyism". But just what was "McCarthyism"? How does it resemble the current witch-hunt in the Labour Party? What lessons can we learn from it? Briefing *editor* ***Mike Marqusee*** *investigates.*

THE FIRST thing to get straight about "McCarthyism" is that it was not just about Hollywood.

It was nothing less than a mass purge of US political, industrial and social life affecting millions of individuals. Its legacy is still there for all to see: notably in the political weakness of the US labour movement.

That movement had emerged from World War II stronger than ever. In the year after Japan surrendered, five million US workers hit the picket line in the biggest strike wave in the country's history. In one week at the end of January 1946, national strikes paralysed the auto, electrical, steel, and packinghouse industries.

Then came the Cold War. President Truman, labour's "friend in the White House", who had already used his powers repeatedly against the strikers, instituted a "loyalty oath" for federal employees, which led to thousands of dismissals. The next year Congress passed the anti-labour Taft-Hartley Act, which banned secondary strikes, mass picketing, and wildcats, enmeshed the unions in a net of legal restrictions and required all union officials to sign a "non-Communist" affidavit.

At first union leaders greeted Taft-Hartley with bold pledges of defiance. All of these came to nothing, however, as pressure from the state and the employers mounted. Instead, the bureaucrats launched an attack on the Communist Party.

In union after union, Communists and fellow-travellers were ousted from the apparatus. In some unions this was achieved with the aid of demagogic appeals to the rank-and file to get rid of all those who "do not put the union first". In others, rigged elections, packed meetings, intimidation and open thuggery were employed. Dissident locals (branches) were suspended and officers were imposed on them; local union newsletters were censored; officials spent all their time hunting out "reds". Political debate was stifled; independent rank and file action of any kind was suspect.

In this period the bulk of US unions became "one party states" run by and for the full-time apparatus. To oppose their will was to oppose "the union" itself; "factions" were banned in the name of unity, as was the distribution of "unapproved" leaflets and the sale of newspapers. The sine qua non was anti-Communism and loyalty to US foreign policy. In the end, not only the Communists, but all dissenters, whatever their ideologies, were crushed.

In 1949 the CIO (at that time one of two national US trade union federations) expelled the eleven remaining "Communist dominated" unions - their specific offence was a failure to abide by Taft-Hartley. These unions represented over one million workers - one fifth of the total strength of the CIO, which chartered alternative unions in the industries they covered and authorised poaching raids. Over the next decade, most of the dissidents either withered away or merged with larger unions within the CIO fold.

It was only in 1950, one year after the purge of the CIO, that Joe McCarthy, the alcoholic demagogue from Appleton, Wisconsin (who faked a war record to get elected to the Senate in 1946) became a household name when he announced to a Republican women's club meeting that he had a "list" (never produced) of "known Communists" in the State Department.

The current purge in the Labour Party is clearly not in the same league as the "McCarthyite" purge in the US, which destroyed jobs, reputations, careers and lives on a grand scale. And the Labour left enjoys a number of advantages denied to the Communists and their allies in "McCarthyite" America - not least the absence of a prolonged capitalist boom and a Cold War!

Nonetheless, as Kinnock extends his witch-hunt, disturbing parallels are beginning to emerge. And with them some useful lessons.

Kinnock's purge may appear to be confined within the labour movement, but one lesson from the US experience is that once the rot sets in here, it inevitably spreads further afield. The left must argue that the struggle for democracy and pluralism in the labour party and the trades union is inseparable from the struggle for the same values in society as a whole.

The key argument deployed against the Communist Party in the unions was that the Party's separate organisation meant that Party members were loyal to the CP first and the union second. The same argument is being used against Militant in the Labour Party today.

The Kinnockite purgers claim, as did the anti-Communist union leaders forty years ago, that they are not curbing free speech but only taking defensive measures against a "foreign" form of organisation. But the history of McCarthyism confirms that you simply cannot have free speech without freedom of organisation.

Attempts to declare certain organisations "beyond the pale" and to proscribe them inevitably lead to the infamous "Are you now of have you ever been..." question, which sure enough cropped up again at a recent meeting of Labour's National Executive. Are people like Clare Short and David Blunkett completely oblivious to the way in which history has discredited this form of interrogation?

Perhaps it is too much to expect anyone associated with the Labour leadership to exhibit any sense of historical perspective - after all short memories have been very handy in the Labour Party in recent years, just as they were during the purge years in the US. Here's another lesson from the past: never trust anyone who lives in a permanent present.

Many liberals in the forties and fifties accepted the argument that the CP as an organisation was unacceptable but objected to some of the nastier consequences of the witch-hunt that followed, particularly when it threatened "innocent" people.

The major US civil liberties organisation, the ACLU, restricted its efforts to pleading on behalf of people who could



Yesterday: the Rosenbergs, Communists murdered by the State, 1953

or would put their hands on their hearts and say they were "not Communists". Indeed, many Cold War liberals made it a "point of principle" not to defend the civil liberties of Communists. They tied themselves in knots trying to oppose some of the less savoury aspects of the purge while accepting its basic premises.

Their position is summed up by a slogan coined by liberal pundit Sidney Hook: "Heresy, yes; conspiracy; no." It could come straight out of a *Tribune* editorial on Fields and Nellist.

The McCarthy years should teach us that by accepting the witch-hunters' divide between the "guilty" and the "innocent" we not only betray the democratic rights of the "guilty" (the CP, the Militant), we also disarm ourselves in the battle to defend the "innocent".

Once you have declared a range of political activities or affiliations "illegitimate", name calling ("Commie", "red", "Trot", "loonie") rapidly becomes a substitute for debate. The sole purpose of such epithets is to place political opponents "beyond the pale" - and thus obviate the need to answer any of their arguments.

And here is where the original relevance of the term "witch-hunt" becomes striking. The old test of a witch is well known: throw the accused in water; if she drowns she's innocent; if she floats she's guilty. Thus, to be accused is to be guilty.

All arguments advanced by the accused are inherently suspect because the motives of the organisation to which the accused allegedly belongs have already been established as duplicitous. The Communists were "saboteurs" bent on wrecking American democracy, which they didn't really believe in - why should they benefit from its constitutional guarantees? Likewise, the Militant are "entryists" abusing Labour Party democracy, so why should they be granted its protection?

The only way you could extricate yourself from the trap of the "presumption of guilt" was by publicly denouncing "Communism" and "co-operating" with investigations against it, i.e. by naming names and betraying comrades. Anything less was said to show a "lack of sincerity". This is the choice now being offered to Nellist and Fields.

The logic of the witch-hunt is inexorable. It becomes the duty of the accused to "clear themselves", not the obligation of the accuser to "prove" any charges against them. This "presumption of guilt" is soon followed by "guilt by association". To "prove" someone is "guilty", you simply have to show her or him in the company of others "known" to be "guilty".

Soon opposition to the witch-hunt is itself construed as "guilt"; after all, everybody knows that only someone who was either a knave or a dupe would bother to defend people who are, by definition, "guilty".

We've seen this logic at work in Brighton, where Joyce Gould, sublimely oblivious as ever to the niceties of natural justice, has decreed that the "Friends of Brighton Labour Party", a group which came together to oppose the local witch-hunt, is "destructive" and must be "disbanded" - on pain of disciplinary action!

Then as now all this led to a corruption of judicial procedures and an erosion of natural justice. After all, the victim has already been selected. Guilt is presumed. The end result of any inquiry is predetermined. So why bother with due process?

In all witch-hunts, the most zealous are the "ex-es". Ex-Communists queued up to confess their past associations and heap anathema on their former comrades; today, ex-Bennites, ex-Trotskyists, ex-Campaign Group members compete for the media spotlight to denounce "entryism", "gesture politics", and the "enemy within".

In the US purge, many liberals but also some on the socialist left were reluctant to defend the CP because of an understandable abhorrence of its historical record. Not a few on the left today in Britain are similarly reluctant to defend Militant. But if this stance was wrong in the 40s and 50s in relation to the CP - as it undoubtedly was - then it is even more obviously wrong now. After all, whatever the sins of the Militant, they simply cannot be compared to those of the CPUSA.

Ironically, the witch-hunt did not finish off the CP just as today's witch-hunt will probably not finish off Militant. Though CP membership declined steadily from the mid-forties, it was maintained at between 30,000 and 40,000 until it hit its real crisis in 1956. One year of Khrushchev and Hungary did more damage to the CP's base than ten years of witch-hunting.

The lesson is that the biggest impact of purges is political, not organisational- and the highest price we pay is self-censorship. For every individual directly affected by the "McCarthyite" witch-hunt, a hundred others were silenced by fear. And this is no less true in the Labour Party today. The fear of disciplinary action, of being denied a chance to stand as a councillor or MP, of being excluded from the pettiest of CLP positions, of being pilloried in the press or even just being ridiculed or ostracised by other Party or union members is eating away at our confidence in standing up for what we believe.

We cannot afford to cede any political ground to the right as being "beyond the pale". That is always the real victory of the witch-hunters.



Today: standing up to Kinnock's purge. Photo Bryn Griffiths

Conference highlights...



Photo: Bryn Griffiths

The *Labour Briefing* fringe meeting was on Rough Justice: Labour's Silence. A packed hall heard chair Jeremy Corbyn introduce Sharon Raghip of the Tottenham Three Families Campaign, Billy Power of the Birmingham Six and Terry Fields MP, who gave a moving account of his recent experience in prison and joined Billy in condemning a criminal justice system that destroys so many working class lives.

THE TOTTENHAM THREE Campaign scored a notable success not only in getting its resolution debated but even more by getting it passed *nem con!*

Only two years ago it would have been impossible to get this matter raised at conference. The vote showed that the lesson of the Birmingham 6, virtually ignored by Labour politicians for the first ten years of their unjust imprisonment, is beginning to sink home in the Party.

But apparently the message hasn't yet reached everyone. When Billy Power of the Birmingham 6 paid a visit to the conference, taking a seat with Chris Mullin in the visitors' gallery, David Blunkett in the chair failed to acknowledge him - though he was certainly notified of Billy's presence. It was left to the CLP delegate seconding the Pergamon resolution to welcome Billy to Labour Party conference. He received a standing ovation from the constituency delegates.

During the debate on constitutional reforms, Tony Benn took the rostrum to advise delegates of the five questions they should always ask people in power:

1. What powers do you have?
2. Where did you get them?
3. In whose interests do you exercise them?
4. To whom are you accountable?
5. How can we get rid of you?

THE LEFT'S one big victory of the week was the massive vote for reducing defence expenditure to average European levels. Despite the widely broadcast opposition of the NEC - and a public promise from Kinnock that he wouldn't be bound by such a policy even if it was passed - delegates voted to cut arms spending by 3,776,000 to 1,094,000, rebuffing Bill Jordan's cynical attempt to counterpose "investment in manufacturing" to "spending on social services".

KINNOCK and the NEC were overturned by a massive conference rebellion in support of the Pergamon 23. Larry Whitty, doing the NEC's shitwork as usual, argued that the conference shouldn't involve itself in specific industrial disputes, that by passing the motion they would reduce the NEC's ability to intervene in the case, and that the NUJ should have accepted Maxwell's last offer - which would have meant accepting the victimisation of two of the 23.

But Whitty's efforts were in vain. The Pergamon strikers have got their message home to the whole movement: don't support union-busting employers, even if they happen to be Robert Maxwell. Correction: especially if they happen to be Robert Maxwell.

...and lowlights

LIVERPOOL BROADGREEN CLP has been suspended for months but a delegate claiming to represent it spoke in the very first debate - on Emergency Resolution 1, which condemned the suspension of Fields and Nellist. Tom Sawyer in the chair made great play of calling this delegate at random, though of course he knew that it was none other than right winger Barry Novarro, who has never been able to win elected office in Broadgreen but was appointed a delegate by the Regional Organiser and specifically mandated by her to attack Terry Fields, Broadgreen MP, in this debate.

Sadly MSF, despite Executive policy supporting Fields and Nellist, voted against the resolution. But 200 CLPs supported it.

THE COMPOSITE which sought to preserve the "mandatory" bit of "mandatory reselection" by opposing the "trigger ballot" was only defeated by Tom Sawyer's dishonest chairing.

He declared the composite lost on a show of hands (both NUPE and UCW delegations broke their mandates by opposing it) then deliberately ignored calls for a card vote. Instead he took a card vote on the pro-"trigger" NEC report, which was duly approved, thanks to the votes of the GMB and TGWU - both of whom also supported the anti-trigger composite (illogically).

Sawyer rigged the proceedings because, quite simply, he knew the anti-trigger composite would pass and the leadership would not approve.

BROWN NOSE OF THE CONFERENCE SEASON AWARD must go to the LCC whose Wednesday morning bulletin to delegates was headlined: "Kinnock's Winning Vision" and declared, "We wanted a good speech, we got a brilliant one...a speech that had Prime Minister written all over it."

It didn't matter that this year the LCC bulletin was the most boring, unimaginative and uninformative of all those produced at conference - because they hardly bothered to distribute it, busy as they were with the many "jobs" they hold in the labour bureaucracy. Poor LCC, all dressed up with nowhere to go!

Neil's messenger boy

"I'll love this man till the day I die," said Neil Kinnock as he hugged this month's Class Traitor at the NUPE reception in Brighton last month. Was ***Tom Sawyer*** *returning the compliment when he declared from the conference rostrum, "Glynis, I don't care what they say, I think you're beautiful" - or is NUPE's Deputy General Secretary just a sexist creep?*

AS AN Area Officer in NUPE's northern region, Sawyer was one of that corps of left-wing full-timers who backed the Labour left in the seventies, boosted NUPE's affiliation to the Party, and built support among low-paid workers for the "dirty jobs" strike of 1979.

In 1982, at the age of 39, he followed his former boss Rodney Bickerstaffe to London to become Deputy General Secretary. He had been appointed by the Executive (which in those days was to the right of the officials) over front-runner Ron Keating. Soon after he became the first NUPE representative to win election to the Labour NEC. Bickerstaffe and Sawyer then agreed a time-honoured division of labour: with Bickerstaffe operating mainly within the TUC and Sawyer left to do as he pleased in the Party.

On the NEC he voted with Benn and the left for his first two years. He opposed Kinnock's first stab at undermining reselection in 1984, complaining that NUPE hadn't been consulted and that he had only read about the proposals in the Guardian. Whatever Sawyer learned from this episode, Kinnock seems to have twigged that Sawyer desperately wanted to be "on the inside". Within a year, Sawyer was being promoted in the press (with no little help from Kinnock's office) as one of a "soft left" trio on the NEC (Meacher and Blunkett were the others) blocking with Kinnock to break the power of Benn and the hard left.

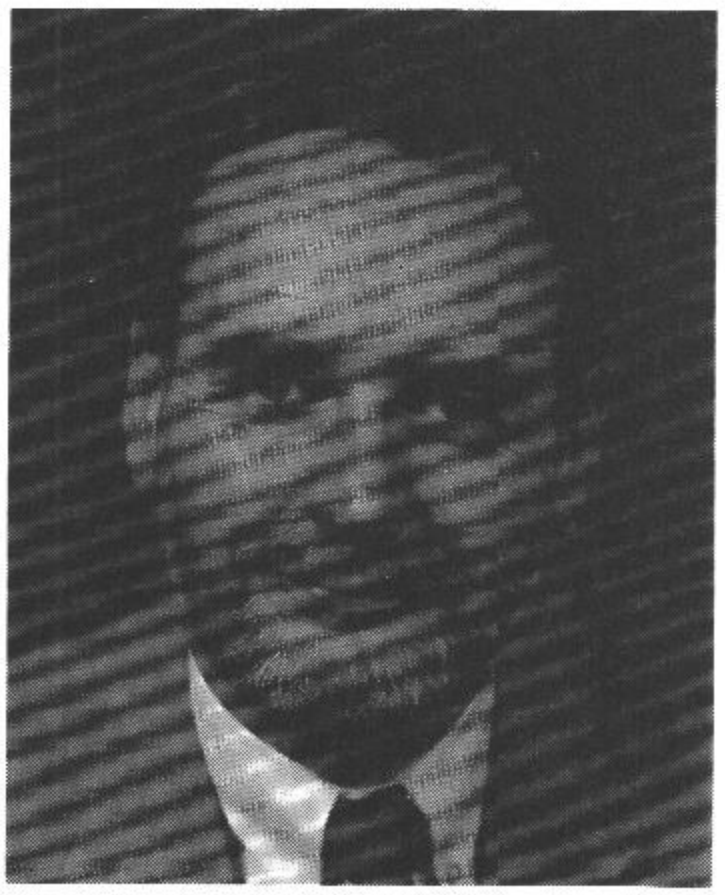
Since then Sawyer has become a conduit for Kinnock's office into NUPE and the broader union movement. In the process he has squandered the political clout which NUPE had built up in the previous decade.

He has been an assiduous proponent of the witch-hunt since May, 1985, when he got the NUPE Executive to reverse its opposition to expulsions and call for the expulsion of Militant, just as the Liverpool councillors were facing surcharge for trying to defend NUPE members' jobs.

In November 1986 he voted against explicit NUPE policy in order to back Kinnock's move to re-open, once again, the vexed issue of selection.

As Chair of the NEC Youth Committee, Sawyer met John Mann (then of Clause Four/LCC, now with the AEU) who represented NOLS on the Committee. It was Mann who dreamed up the constitutional changes in the Party's youth structures which subsequently became known as the "Sawyer proposals" (Tom is always working to someone else's grand design). These resulted in the complete destruction of the LPYS (down from 500 plus branches in 1985 to 34 in 1990).

At the height of the nurses' strikes in January 1988 he brought a lukewarm resolution on the dispute to the NEC. When Benn proposed an amendment giving "full support" to striking nurses, Sawyer demanded it be withdrawn and, when Benn refused, voted against it. The following year, Benn tabled a resolution supporting the striking railworkers. Sawyer again demanded withdrawal and proposed an alternative resolution recognising the "essential autonomy" of the trade unions from the Party.



The phrase is a little hard to swallow given Sawyer's role in the Policy Review. He likes to be known as the "architect" of the Review but in fact he has been little more than a messenger boy and bag carrier for Kinnock's office throughout that farce.

Although he has acted as "chair of the Policy Review" and sat on in on all the meetings of Kinnock's select Review management team, he has made no contributions on policy development. His job has been to sell the review to the trades unions and the party members, not least by making empty annual promises to improve membership participation in the Review.

Sawyer's big test came in 1989. Though his union had been committed for years to unilateralism, at the NEC he had abstained on the leadership's proposals to keep the bomb. He managed to persuade his union executive to back Kinnock (against Bickerstaffe's advice) and at NUPE's subsequent annual conference he argued that unilateralism had to be ditched in order to elect a Labour government that would establish the minimum wage, implement defence cuts and transfer resources to social needs. At the time he addressed the conference he was fully aware that the Policy Review contained no such commitment. His deceit helped secure the NUPE block vote to dump unilateralism.

But for Sawyer nothing is more important than delivering NUPE for Neil. At the 1990 conference he arranged to have left-wing MP Alice Mahon ousted from the NUPE delegation to Party conference although she had been elected to the delegation by the NUPE Parliamentary Group. Mahon was replaced by Clare Short - a smart move since in the end the NUPE delegation only decided to oppose the FBU's anti-Gulf War resolution by one vote.

Not surprisingly, there is widespread criticism of Sawyer among NUPE members for "spending too much time playing Labour Party politics". During his tenure the union has declined in membership, been routed by privatisation in local government, outpaced by COHSE in the health service and now faces a huge financial crisis.

Sawyer and his friends have, however, succeeded in changing the union's rules in order the block the growth of any opposition. Candidates for the major national offices must now be nominated by at least 25 branches spread over three different regions; canvassing of nominations or communicating with branches other than one's own is forbidden.

Nonetheless when left-winger Nick Bradley managed to stand against Sawyer for Deputy General Secretary not long ago he received 31,000 votes to Sawyer's 48,000 in a pitiful 12% turn out. This vote of lack of confidence did not deter Sawyer from claiming last month in Brighton that "to hold my job I stood for election in a constituency of 600,000 NUPE members on a platform of affiliation to the Labour Party and I won. In that election I asked for a mandate to represent the union on this National Executive and I got it".

Prone as he is to such fond illusions, it's no wonder Tom enjoyed his week in the Brighton limelight so visibly.

Don't tear up that Party card!

How has Labour Party Socialists fared since its launch in May, 1990 and what are its prospects for the future? ***Dorothy Macedo,*** *national co-chair of LPS, urges comrades to attend the organisation's second Annual General Meeting.*

SINCE THE left has continued to decline during the last two years, perhaps it is an achievement that LPS has at least managed to tread water. The great left revival, like the economic upturn, seems to keep disappearing over the horizon.

When it was founded, LPS set itself several targets: among them, providing a network for grass roots activists and prioritising regional and local organisation. It has to be said that LPS is still top-heavy, exactly the fault we criticised in other organisations, though it is less London centred than most. But it has yet to recruit that elusive animal, the non-aligned left-winger, in great numbers.

The relationship with the Socialist Movement, of which LPS is a part, has been problematic, and feelings about the SM newspaper *socialist* have been mixed, particularly regarding its attitude towards the Labour Party.

On the other hand, work with the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee has given LPS useful links with union activists and laid the basis for a joint union-Party campaign to repeal the Tories' anti-union laws.

And LPS remains an autonomous body: its commitment to work in the Labour Party is unequivocal.

There have been modest successes. LPS launched the Campaign Against the Witchhunt which has made a start at bringing together all those affected by Kinnock's purge. During the Gulf War it worked with the Socialist Campaign Group to set up Labour Against the War which tried to provide a Labour Party focus for anti-war activists.

The coming general election will be a watershed. LPS supporters will be working hard for a Labour victory, but also trying to raise the many crucial issues the leadership would prefer to forget.

If it is to achieve its potential, LPS has to offer Party activists not only political direction but also the practical support - information, analysis, co-ordination - they need to keep going in a difficult climate. If we can do that, we will be well placed to press a Labour government to deliver the changes Party members want.

If LPS withers, it will be an opportunity lost. There is no substitute for the hard slog of Labour Party work and no substitute for building a network of constituency activists. Party members who have been tempted to tear up their Party cards should pause for thought. Come to the LPS AGM and join us in fighting to make our Party habitable for socialists.

Bristol Council scabs on NUM

LOCAL COUNCILLOR Dave Sutton describes it as "the most shameful position taken by the Bristol Labour Party in my memory."

The local Labour leadership has pushed through the sale of Royal Portbury docks to First Corporate Shipping, which is acting as an agent for National Power, who plans to turn the privatised port into a major coal importing facility.

National Power, the privatised electricity generating company, reckons to get six million tonnes of coal a year though the port to service a cluster of power stations in the south west and Wales, threatening six thousand miners' jobs. National Power has also just signed a deal in Johannesburg to import six million tonnes of South African coal.

The deal obviously contravenes Labour's energy policy, which opposes coal imports, but this hasn't inhibited the local right-wing Labour leadership. Allegations of lack of consultation and possible conflicts of interest have embarrassed the Council leaders but not lessened as yet their determination to go ahead with the sale in an effort to shore up the Council's shaky finances.

Council leader Robertson seems to have deliberately kept other Labour councillors in the dark about the NUM's strong, detailed and well-argued objections to the plans for the port. An angry Peter Heathfield has responded by circulating all Bristol Labour councillors with copies of the NUM's correspondence with Robertson.

He has also raised questions about the role of Labour Chief Whip Doug Naysmith, now acting as a director of the FCS's Royal Portbury operation.

Under pressure, the Council leadership finally agreed to meet the NUM to discuss the problem on October 23rd - two months after the NUM first wrote to Robertson.

At a meeting of the District Labour Party on October 7th - dubbed a "night of shame" by one Bristol left-winger - delegates agreed to receive a deputation from the NUM, but asked them to leave after they had made their case. They then attacked the NUM and voted down (by 45-22) a motion from the local Labour Women's Council criticising the leadership's handling of the affair.

Leading the charge was former LCC Executive member Neal Lawson, a TGWU Research Worker in the hard right Region 3. He insisted there would be no going back on the deal and said of the miners, "They've taken our jobs in the past." He was backed up by Phil Gregory, Regional TUC Secretary, and Brian Watts, a TGWU steward at the docks.

When will something be done about the rogue Region 3, which is using its influence in the local movement to undermine national TGWU policy?

The NUM is seeking legal advice about mounting a challenge to the Portbury sale in the courts. In the meantime they are asking for assistance in delaying the Parliamentary passage of the Harbour Review Order, which is required to complete the deal.

Locally, the left is organising a public rally against coal imports with Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner.

And where does Frank Dobson, Labour's Shadow Energy spokesperson, stand on Bristol Labour group's flagrant disregard for Party policy?

Capstick falls foul of Kinnock's vendetta

AN NEC panel of Roy Hattersley, Eddie Haigh and John Evans has decided to prevent the vice-chair of the Yorkshire Area NUM from standing as a Labour candidate in the Hemsworth by-election.

Ken Capstick received the nominations of five of the ten Hemsworth wards; none of the other candidates had more than one. Capstick also received the overwhelming majority of trade union nominations. He would have walked away with the selection on the first count.

At no time during their interview with Capstick had any of the three panel members indicated their objections to him, nor was he given any reasons for the panel's decision to rule him out. The Hemsworth General Committee refused to make a selection from the four remaining names and called on the panel to reconsider. The panel refused and promptly imposed Derek Enright, an ultra-right winger and MEP for Leeds between 1980-84, as candidate.

The usual unnamed "Labour Party spokeswoman" told the *Guardian* that Capstick had been dropped because of an alleged "lack of Party activity", but Enright himself has hardly done anything in the Party since he was deselected as MEP by an overwhelming majority. Since then he has worked as a diplomat for the European Commission in which capacity he penned a number of patronising articles about West African states in the local press. Lately he has been hiring himself out as a "Euro-consultant" for firms seeking EC assistance. During his own term in office, it is said that his ineffectiveness led to the loss of millions of pounds in EC grants to the area. He is an anti-abortion "pro-life" fanatic.

The Walworth Road slur on Capstick is absurd. He was born in the constituency and has been active at every level of the labour movement. Only last month he received 2,300,000 block votes in the elections to Labour's NEC trade union section. No one who has seen him perform can doubt that he would make a highly competent candidate and an effective speaker on television.

Capstick has clearly fallen victim to the latest advance in "guilt by association" reasoning - in this case the undesirable associate is Arthur Scargill. The fact that Capstick moved the resolution condemning Kinnock's presentation of the British Press awards to the Mirror journalists who smeared Scargill (passed unanimously) probably didn't help his case either.

Thanks to the Labour leadership, Hemsworth will not be represented by an NUM MP for the first time since 1945. This follows the ousting of Yorkshire NUM chair Ken Homer from the Party's Conference Arrangements Committee by a consortium of New Realist trade union leaders at the Brighton conference.

The message is obvious. The NUM is "beyond the pale" and will be denied its rightful place in the labour movement. The leadership has not forgiven the miners for having the temerity to resist the Tories in 1984-85.

Will those who justified their support of the witch-hunt on the grounds that it would be restricted to Militant now admit their error? If a major officer of an affiliated union is not deemed a suitable Labour candidate, then who is? After all, Ken Capstick is not accused of breaking any Party rules or being a member of any proscribed group. Isn't his disqualification proof hat the leadership will now tolerate only the most abject of sycophants?

Some commentators have been bemused by the pointless and vindictive nature of this latest move. They forget two things. First, Kinnock loathes Scargill and the NUM with a pathological hatred and second, he lives in fear of the power a small band of left-wing Campaign Group MPs might acquire in a closely balanced Parliament.

Libs get away with phoney "Labour" leaflet

Belle Harris, one of three Labour candidates in the local elections in May 1990, brought charges against her Liberal opponents for issuing a fake "Labour" leaflet in several highly marginal wards.

The leaflet bore the legend "Vote Labour on May 3rd" and quoted - out of context - various statements made by members of the Labour Party. The purpose was obvious: to raise the spectre of the "loony left" and in particular to play on the racist fears of white working class people.

On behalf of Labour, Belle Harris' attorneys argued that the leaflet constituted a "fraudulent device, to impede or prevent the free exercise of the franchise" and should therefore render the elections "null and void". The judge did not agree.

Belle Harris now faces legal costs of £30,000 which may well rise to £50,000 and could cost her her home. She is a well-known London Labour activist and was an elected member of the Inner London Education Authority from 1986-1990.

"I always knew there was a risk," said Belle, "but we have to stop this kind of leaflet from ever being distributed again. There are far-reaching principles at stake for the Party nationally. The judgement as it stands could enable any party to produce fake Labour leaflets or posters and take out of context any statement made by any member of the Labour Party."

Support Belle by making donations to Tower Hamlets Legal Appeal Fund, Labour Party, 349 Cambridge Heath Rd, London, E2 9RA.

Is there a future for the left in the Labour Party?

LABOUR PARTY SOCIALISTS A.G.M.
Sunday November 17th
10am-4pm
Camden Town Hall, Euston Road, London

Contact LPS c/o 58 Florence Road, London SE14.

Leeds DLP axes gay candidate

PATRICK HALL a well-known gay activist in Leeds has been excluded from the panel of council candidates by the Leeds District Labour Party.

Patrick will now appeal to the Regional Executive. He has already stood as a Labour candidate in a marginal ward and has been a prominent Party worker for many years.

Seven councillors spoke in the concerted move at the DLP to keep him off the panel. They claimed that because he put his name to a leaflet calling for poll Tax non-payment ten months ago he cannot stand for Labour in next May's elections. Patrick explained that the organisation that issued the leaflet no longer existed and gave repeated assurances that he will abide by the Labour Whip. If he had been allowed to stand and been selected and elected, Patrick would have been Leeds' first openly gay councillor.

Time to unload some useless baggage

Women trades unionists face all the problems of men trades unionists - and then some. ***Leonora Lloyd****, MSF activist, looks at the progress - or lack of it - women have made within the unions and appeals to sisters to turn over a new leaf.*

TRADE UNIONS are in trouble. Their membership is falling and many are seeking to cut costs by merging with other unions, moving to less expensive premises, cutting back on trade union education and reducing staff. To attract members, they are offering all sorts of financial and other services.

Compounding the general fall in membership has been a steep decline in activism. Often a branch will crumble when the secretary or treasurer retires, moves or just gives up. Many union branches have chronic problems organising quorate meetings.

The situation cannot be solely due to the anti-trade union laws, because in many cases the legislation has backfired on its creators (for example, the response from members to ballots for political funds and for strikes has been good) and besides, the same malaise affects the Labour Party, which is unhindered by legislation.

The left within the trade unions are in much the same state of demoralisation and disarray as the left within the Labour Party. Whilst the ship sinks, the left debates which of the passengers should be thrown overboard, and among those who make it to the lifeboats, the question is who should be eaten first.

The one bright spot for the trade unions is increasing recruitment amongst women. This is due to two factors: increasing employment of women, including in traditionally male areas where trade union organisation is stronger than in many traditionally female areas, and increasing attention paid by unions to gender issues.

Most of the latter fall within the normal ambit of trade union concerns. Equal pay, maternity and paternity leave, even child-care can be seen as having direct relevance to common workplace concerns. But there are two issues particularly crucial for women which have proved more problematic for trades unions.

The first is abortion, which the National Abortion Campaign has sought to make a trade union issue since it was formed in 1975. Whilst most of the big unions with large female membership have affiliated to NAC, the health service union COHSE disaffiliated in 1984 - under pressure from its Catholic membership - and despite a more positive policy adopted last year, has still resisted reaffiliation.

Abortion is the one policy, above all others, which still has to be frequently re-affirmed, because of the regular attacks mounted by the anti-abortion activists.

The other issue is sexual harassment, which is clearly a work-place issue, but is resisted because of the implication that fellow trade unionists are involved. Unions have special problems with resolving the problems thrown up by sexual harassment cases. Does the harasser have the right to be represented when he (or sometimes she) is harassing another member of the same union? After all, he is innocent until proved guilty.

There are even more problems when the harassment is of a member of another trade union, given the tendency of unions to always support their own members first.

One problem which unions have clearly not solved, although some have started to make progress, is the feminisation of structure and procedures. By this I mean changing the union to make it more accessible to women - and therefore to all its members. Male patterns of organisation are usually about holding on to power, not about sharing it. They are about command and control not empowerment. They are about mystification, not simplicity.

Unfortunately, despite campaigning around many of these issues since the late sixties, women trade unionists still have a long way to go, not least because they too are plagued by the curse of the left: sectarianism.

By their nature, women trade union activists cannot afford to be separatists, but they suffer from all the divisions which effect male activists, and would too often rather be nasty to each other than tackle problems of sexism in a united and sisterly way.

The trade union school on November organised by Women for Socialism - a group which prides itself on organising women across the left, both within and without the Labour Party - will be discussing many issues of importance to women trade unionists, but unless it has as its underlying theme the questions raised here, it could be just another useful but limited exchange of views and experiences.

If women can honestly face and overcome their sectarianism and work together on the problems we have in common, we could be the ones that bring the soul back to the trade unions and the wider labour movement. A one-day conference cannot do this but it could start the process.

It would be wonderful if we recognised at last that every group on the left has something useful to say - and even more useless baggage to unload. It would be wonderful if women from across the left came determined to share and learn, rather than score points and try to make new members for their particular little group. It would be wonderful if they accepted that they have only part of the truth, not a monopoly of wisdom.

That would mark a new beginning for the beleaguered left and would start to heal our self-inflicted wounds.

Women in the unions: Fighting for our rights

10am-5pm
Saturday November 23rd
Wesley House
4 Wild Court
London WC1

Organised by Women for Socialism and the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee

Dromey: down but not out - yet!

JACK ADAMS has beaten Jack Dromey in the race to become TGWU Deputy General Secretary.

In an 18% turn-out, Adams collected 77,180 votes to Dromey's 65,806, with the two other candidates picking up about 20,000 apiece.

"I am pleased that our members have voted to ignore the smear campaign mounted against me by some media commentators," said Adams after the result, the latest in a series of ballot victories for the union's Broad Left.

While Dromey had been denied the benefits of backing from either of the union's two political machines, he enjoyed the huge advantage of favourable, high profile media attention. He fought an aggressive campaign, barnstorming round the country and exploiting his responsibility for TGWU members in the threatened defence industries to gain publicity.

Clearly, however, TGWU members were not sufficiently impressed by "Kinnock's man in the TGWU" to elect him over the uncharismatic Communist Jack Adams.

Where will Dromey go now? With Assistant General Secretary Eddie Haigh taking early retirement, the AGS position and the TGWU's place on Labour's National Executive falls vacant. There had been plans to abolish the AGS position and create two new posts of "National Official" to share the number three spot in the union hierarchy. It had been assumed that these new posts would go to Dromey and Margaret Prosser and that the two of them would then fight it out for the spot on the NEC. But Dromey has now so antagonised all elements of the union leadership that he may have no choice but to renew his dormant Parliamentary ambitions and hope that Neil can find him a spot in a by-election.

Pensioners appeal for union support

The Greater London Pensioner's Association (GLPA), established by retired trades unionists and now acting as an umbrella body for all senior citizens organisations in the capital, has had its grant withdrawn by the London Boroughs Grants Committee - a body set up in the aftermath of GLC abolition to preserve the voluntary sector!

The GLPA told Briefing: "It is no doubt because of our campaigning activities for the Pensioners Charter and in support of others struggling to defend or improve their conditions that we have had our grant withdrawn this year."

They need £20,000 to survive as a campaigning organisation and rather than lay down and die ("If we did that, what message would that give our pensioner members?") they have appealed to the trades union movement to support them with cash and help.

All donations to: Harry Mundy, GLPA Chair, 28a Highgate Road, London NW5 1NS.

Justice at last for Tilbury dockers

After two years, Tilbury Port employers have finally been found guilty of breaking their statutory duties when making 600 dockers redundant in a politically-motivated purge after the 1989 strike. The dismissal of all 19 shop stewards was also deemed unfair by the industrial tribunal. The employers still plan to "vigorously resist" the reinstatement of the men.

Wandsworth, the blighted borough

The mad privatisers of the London Borough of Wandsworth are at it again!

This time they have awarded the job of transporting children with special educational needs to a firm, TES Ltd, whose only previous experience in the Borough has been street sweeping and rubbish collection. It's not clear if the unfortunate kids will now be collected each morning by dustcart or push-barrow but what is certain is that they will not get the trained care and assistance that the Council's own in-house welfare attendant-drivers used to give.

What a skin-flint bunch of callous bureaucrats!

At the sign of the Black Horse (leg?)

Hundreds of local branches of Lloyds Bank, currently trying to kid everyone that it is a family operation through its ghastly TV commercials, were struck on September 30th by members of BIFU (the banking and finance union) in protest at the bank's appalling new grading structure.

BIFU said that over 200 branches were shut down and the action would have been even more successful if the company-association, the so-called Lloyds Group Union, had not told its members to scab.

BIFU intends to keep up the action throughout the autumn and has already succeeded in recruiting many new members through its stand.

21-week strike strong in Camden

Over 100 social work staff are still on strike over the Labour Council's failure to implement a nationally-negotiated regrading agreement. One of the results of the strike is that the Children Act 1989 cannot be implemented and families at risk and in need are going without necessary services.

NALGO is giving national support to the strike which remains solid. As it is saving £250,000 a month in wages alone, Camden Council, facing a yawning deficit, appears to be in little hurry to settle the dispute.

Crisis in London!
Conference to defend London services
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1
Saturday, November 9th
10:30am to 5:30pm

Miners' ballot on overtime ban

AN NUM delegate conference held on October 11th decided by a two-to-one majority to hold a ballot on industrial action to force British Coal to negotiate with the union over the annual pay claim. The union is recommending an overtime ban with no safety cover until management comes to its senses.

Ken Homer, Yorkshire Area NUM General Secretary, has issued this call to his members:

"Your union believes that as your representatives - we speak for more than 80% of the workforce - we are entitled to negotiate your pay claim with British Coal.

But the only way British Coal will allow us into talks is if we abandon our members in an Area where we are a minority union.

Those members would, under British Coal's dictat, be represented instead by leaders of the hated breakaway UDM.

This is despite the fact that they choose to be members of the NUM, they pay their contributions to the NUM for the NUM's services - and that they proved to be the most loyal of our members during the 1984-85 strike.



Arthur will be campaigning non-stop for a 'yes' vote photo Bryn Griffiths

The proportion of miners now having to work overtime has more than doubled since 1985. Workers receiving overtime pay now work an average extra 12 to 14 hours every week.

British Coal are increasingly introducing weekend coal production as standard, as well as implementing more 'ad hoc' contract systems.

British Coal seems to expect its employees to work and produce coal seven days a week, 48 weeks a year. And miners receive virtually the lowest unsocial hours payments in the country.

Our members have seen their basic wages eroded at the same time as their efforts have sent productivity through the roof.

Basic pay for faceworkers last year made up only 54% of average earnings, leaving a massive 46% made up from variable payments like overtime, bonus and shift pay.

This ballot gives us the chance to start building the unity and fightback which I believe must be our priority if we are to be able to win what our members deserve.

Let's be realistic - unless we do bring pressure to bear on British Coal, the employers will continue to refuse to negotiate."

The ballot will be held on November 14th and 15th.

Victory at Tunnicks

THE MAINLY female workforce at Tunnicks biscuit factory in Uddington near Glasgow (they make sticky marshmallow teacakes amongst other items) scored a notable victory when they won a pay offer of 8% after a five week all-out strike.

Initially the management offered 4% on a take-it-or-leave-it basis ("let them eat tea-cakes"?) but after determined action the women not only doubled the pay offer but got improved overtime and a weekly instead of twice-yearly "timekeeping bonus".

Breakthrough In Eastbourne

AN INDUSTRIAL tribunal case in Eastbourne, of all places, has sent a frisson through Tory councils and dodgy contractors the length and breadth of the land.

The TGWU have taken UK Waste Control (now part of Onyx) and Serco Ltd. to court under something called the "Transfer of Undertakings Regulations" which say that a new employer is liable for "continuing employment of all existing employees on the same pay and conditions". What this means is simply that if a council privatises a service, the workers are all entitled to claims for unfair dismissal if the contractor does not employ them all on the same terms and conditions already existing!

If the TGWU eventually wins, it will cost UK Waste and Serco a packet and effectively scupper Tory (and, in Eastbourne, Liberal Democrat) councils from hiving off any profit to the private sector.

Already Tyler Environmental Services have pulled out of a deal to buy Bromley Council's DSO because they do not wish to lay themselves open to these sort of costs.

For more details on the claim, contact the Privatisation Unit at 20 Grand Depot Road, London SE18, tel. 081 854 2244.

Murton colliery must not close

A MAJOR campaign is underway against British Coal's plan to close Murton Colliery. The Murton Mining Federation Board, which unites all unions at the pit, believe that if BC gets its way in Murton it could spell the end for the whole North East coalfield.

The Murton closure will now go through the national review procedure. David Guy, President of the North East Area NUM, says that British Coal are "going their dogmatic way, irrespective of the social and economic costs to miners, their families, pit communities and regions like the North East".

Alternative studies by the unions show that the pit could produce coal profitably even using management's own criteria.

The joint unions' statement is crystal clear: "despite past mismanagement we believe that Murton mine has a viable future".

Foyles: a case for workers' control

*In the retail industry, Foyles is a byword for reactionary management practises. **Jerry Acres**, who recently finished a six month stint there, lifts the lid on the self-styled "world's greatest bookshop".*

FOR PEOPLE who live in London and buy books regularly Foyles Bookshop in Charing Cross Road is usually high on their list of places to avoid.

First, there's the killer swing doors, then the maze of overflowing bookshelves, the temperamental 1920s lift (usually out of order), and the escalators reaching only to the second floor. Patient bibliophiles who persevere and eventually find the right department soon discover that staff have no way of telling whether they stock a book other than looking on the shelves for it.

"The blame for the chaos that reigns in the shop lies at the door of the capitalist who owns it - not the workers who tend its dusty shelves"

The blame for the chaos that reigns in the shop lies at the door of the capitalist who owns it - not the workers who tend its dusty shelves.

The management strategy of the world's largest bookshop is entirely based on the anti-worker, anti-union prejudice of its sole proprietor, Christina Foyle. Dearest Christina perfected her strategy after defeating a strike in the early eighties. The scabs who broke the strike were recruited to form the nucleus of the shop's permanent staff and management. On top of this she imposed conditions of employment and pay and methods of running the shop which prevented all collective organisation by employees.

Take the famous Foyles' billing system in which each customer must collect a bill from one counter, pay it at another, then return to the first to pick up the books. Your average *Daily Express*-reading reactionary considers this nineteenth century system quintessentially English and charming. To anyone with an ounce of common sense it is a pain in the arse. On a recent visit to Czechoslovakia I found one shop that operated the same system. When I asked the staff about it they were obviously embarrassed by this Stalinist legacy and said they intended to scrap it in the near future.

Foyles has all sorts of similarities to an old-style eastern bloc enterprise - except that its boxes of unpacked books are characteristic more of the anarchy and overproduction of the market than the scarcity of the command economy. The reason Christina Foyle continues to operate this archaic system is simple. She doesn't trust her staff to handle money.

Many customers become irritated by this quaint system. In my brief stint at Foyles most of the workers were verbally abused and one was physically assaulted as a result of it.

Seventy per cent of the people who work at Foyles are employed on temporary contracts. This gives the general manager the power to dismiss anyone without any prior notice and for no given reason - a power he frequently exercises. Even those who never miss a day and always clock in early can expect at most ten to twelve months employment.

There are two direct consequences of this anti-labour policy. The first is that staff are never around long enough to build up any real knowledge of the books in their department, a fact that is obvious to anyone who has ever stepped foot in Foyles. A large number of sales are lost because staff lack expertise and don't even bother to maintain an index of books in stock. The second is a great deal of suspicion and paranoia on the part of management who realise most staff have no loyalty whatsoever to the shop, do little work and, given half a chance, are likely to rip it off.

"Foyles has all sorts of similarities to an old-style eastern bloc enterprise"

Christina Foyle further divides her workforce and consolidates her misrule by the system of payment by commission which leads to huge disparities of pay among people doing identical jobs. Cashiers and admin staff receive only the basic wage and assistants in an unpopular department sometimes earn £80 a week less those in a busy section who receive commissions.

Foyle is also guilty of the most racist and sexist employment practises. They are racist not in denying black people promotion or recognition but simply by not employing them in the first place. How the biggest book shop with one of the highest turnovers of staff in London can get away with never employing any black people is quite beyond me.

Foyle's sexism does not quite extend to refusing to employ women, but it does include making them spend their first few months on the till - a tiresome duty from which men, who become assistants the day they start, are exempt. When I asked why men were not employed as cashiers I was informed that it was a "girl's job".

Christina Foyle, the Eleanor Ceaucescu of the book world, gets away with her more eccentric policies because as the owner of a private company with no shareholders and no union she is answerable only to herself.

By employing young men and women who have just left school or college she is sure of a constant stream of people with no previous experience of work - or trade union organisation. This enables her to get away with stunts like having a peripatetic tea lady serving on the shop floor in order to deny staff their statutory teabreaks.

If there was ever a suitable case for workers' control and self-management, it's Foyles.

As the Poll Tax bureaucracy slowly catches up with the millions of non-payers, courtroom scenes of tragedy, farce and heroism become everyday occurrences. ***Terry Liddle****, Eltham CLP, sketches a typical day in the life of a defiant non-payer.*

Courtroom drama

A THOUSAND PEOPLE are due to appear in court with me this morning. My McKenzie's friend and I arrive early. I notice a familiar face: to my delight I find I'm to be in the dock with Cllr. Eddie McParland, who has spear-headed the local non-payment campaign. He arms me with a lengthy list of questions for both the magistrate and the representative of Greenwich Council.

The doors open and the waiting room quickly fills to capacity. Eventually, seven of us are herded into the dock. Justice on a conveyor belt. The magistrate enters. To my surprise it is a woman.

As soon as we are seated Eddie jumps up and demands the right to put a number of questions to the magistrate as to her suitability to judge the case. This is not allowed.

Next Eddie demands the right to be tried individually as he does not know any of the others in the dock and doesn't want them knowing about his private affairs. I come in next with lengthy references to Magna Carta and the Civil War. Greatly encouraged by these displays, the other defendants demand the same rights. But once again, we are refused.

There follows requests for McKenzie's Friends. I introduce mine as a descendant (after twenty-six generations) of one of the Norman barons who forced Magna Carta on King John. Eddie introduces his as a Scots lawyer. The others in the dock are rapidly losing their fear of authority and they also demand McKenzie's Friends. The job falls to Eddie and we then play musical chairs in the dock as our McKenzies try to find space to sit next to us.

Then an officer of Greenwich Council gives evidence, a lacklustre performance. Eddie kicks off the cross-examination alleging that Council officers are waging a vendetta against him because of his role in the anti-Poll Tax campaign. He argues that the person in the witness box clearly lacks the necessary knowledge of his case and demands that the Borough Treasurer be called in. His case is postponed.

I follow with a long list of points ranging from suggestions of Masonic influence to the queries about the number of registration forms sent to my address. At one point I ask the witness if she has ever had any psychiatric tests. This is disallowed. Undaunted, I follow up with a question as to why the Queen is exempt and if I declared myself a Queen would I also be exempt. Here the magistrate interjects to warn me that if I did so I'd be "sent down". To nearly every one of my questions the witness replies that she doesn't know.

The others ask questions about confusing bills, deductions for students and what has happened to their rebate applications. There follows a recess for the Council officers to come up with some answers.

Back in the dock and a three year old boy is brought in. He too had a summons. The magistrate is mightily displeased and awards costs against the Council to the boy's mum. She then asks the boy if he has anything to say to the court. He states: "I can't pay my Poll Tax". Everyone collapses into laughter.

It's my turn to give evidence. As an atheist I make an affirmation - a hard won right which should be exercised. First, I state I've no case to answer as no evidence has been presented by the Council and none of my questions have been answered. I follow up with a speech explaining why I'm refusing to pay and making it clear that if I'm imprisoned I'll refuse to wear uniform and will go on hunger strike. My oratory is greeted with applause and cheers.

It is now verdict time. Four cases are postponed. One man agrees to pay and two liability orders are granted - including one against me.

That evening I chair a meeting of my Labour Party ward. In walks Quentin Marsh, leader of Greenwich Council, just as the Secretary is attacking him for never attending meetings of the ward he represents! At question time I ask Cllr. Marsh if he thinks that prosecuting small children is likely to bring the Party into disrepute. He is not amused.

Greenwich Council found a novel way to summons non-paying Councillor Eddie McParland. He received it with his member's mailing along with other council papers - just days after he was suspended from the ruling Labour Group.
In court, the Council's Senior Revenues Officer admitted she didn't know that the Council had a policy of not using electoral records to compile the Poll Tax register. Eddie's case resumes on November 26th at Woolwich Magistrates Court.

Colchester trial

THE TRIAL of 16 demonstrators arrested protesting against the Poll Tax in Colchester nineteen months ago begins on 18th November.

Two thousand people marched through the streets of the town in March 1990. Facing a High Street cordoned off by police and jeered by Tories from the Conservative Club, the demonstration was attacked by mounted and riot police. Like some of the Trafalgar Square demonstrators, the Colchester defendants face "incitement to riot" charges with heavy jail sentences.

The trial is likely to last several months, will cost a fortune to the defendants, many of whom may also lose their jobs. The Colchester Anti-Poll Tax Union has launched a defence campaign that deserves national support.

Send donations and letters of support to: Colchester 16 Defence Campaign, c/o Terry Peach, Colchester APTU, AEU Hall, Barrack St, Colchester, Essex.

Hither Green Labour Party

Auction

Saturday November 30th

Lewisham Labour Club
Limes Grove
London SE13

"Golden coffins": you *can* take it with you!

WE ALL know about the massive pay-offs the bosses give themselves when they quit or get the sack. For example, Sir Roland Smith, recently ousted as chair of troubled British Aerospace, is to be paid every penny of his £300,000 salary for another five years.

Dave Palmer
Economic correspondent

But how about the latest "golden coffins" arrangements for *dead* capitalists?

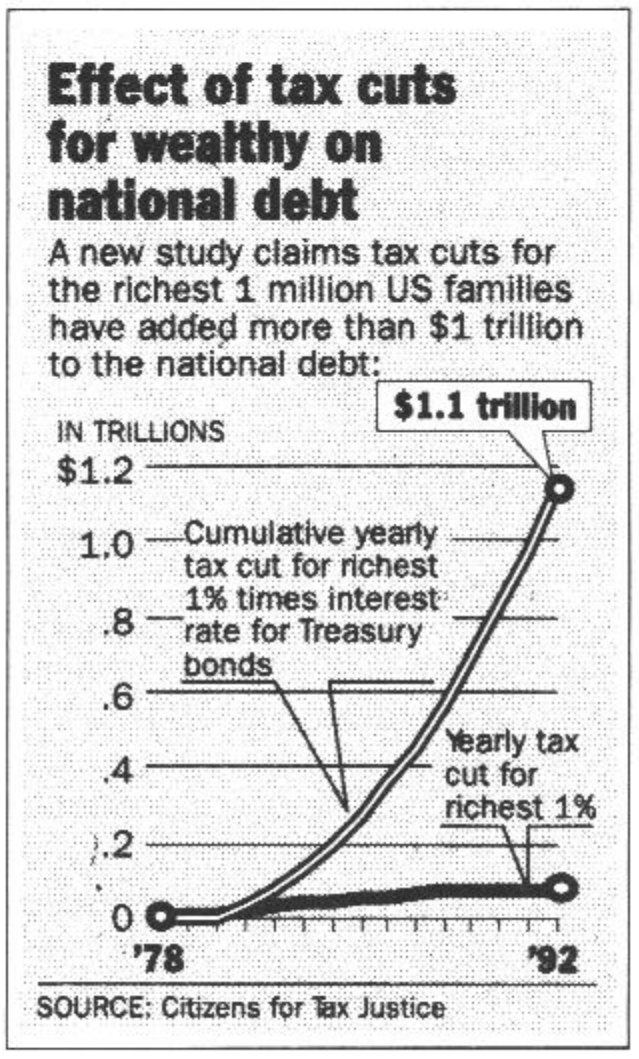
According to *Fortune* magazine, at least 15% of chief executives of companies in the US Fortune 500 list enjoy contracts which guarantee them continuing pay even after their earning potential comes to an end, i.e. after-death remuneration!

Armand Hammer, the oil-magnate who died last year, is still being paid his $2.3 million annual salary by Occidental.

Sadly, super-oppressed UK chief executives don't appear to enjoy the same benefits. Their "trade union", the Institute of Directors, defends its failure to campaign for comparability with their US counterparts by arguing that UK chief executives are sufficiently well rewarded in this life and therefore do not have to try to "take it with them".

SOCIALIST ECONOMIC BULLETIN and the authors of *Beyond The Casino Economy* have launched "Labour and the Economy: a Programme for Action". The statement's declared aims are to "outline policies which can be implemented by a successful Labour government" and "begin the process of uniting the left behind these".

Its central thesis is that the priority for the 90s must be the generation of resources for domestic investment to bring about the "industrial modernisation" of Britain's low wage, low productivity, low investment economy. If it is to secure necessary increases in domestic investment, the statement argues, the next Labour government will need to pursue policies which "end the emphasis on investment overseas, military spending and the interests of the City of London".



The statement shares common ground with 'left-leaning' neo-Keynesians, like Will Hutton of the *Guardian*, who would largely agree with its analysis of the damages wrought by the Thatcher Decade. It reads very much like an extension of - rather than a break from - from Labour's current official economic and industrial policy, though it is far more coherent and clear-cut in its commitments.

Clearly the authors of the statement have aimed to "place it" in such a way as to attract and engage with people to their right within the labour movement. This may seem a sensible strategy in the current climate, but surely some more definite commitment to a socialist transformation of the economic system, and some specific measures for getting there, will be required if we are ever to "unite the left" behind a new (and better) Alternative Economic Strategy.

Without such overriding aims and objectives, there is a danger that we will end up strengthening rather than challenging the current widespread capitulation to neo-liberal economics.

The old Alternative Economic Strategy (AES) around which much of the left united in the seventies eventually succeeded in becoming (in somewhat diluted form) official Labour policy. Its great weakness was its emphasis on import controls and "traditional" nationalisation. Its strength was its commitment to social ownership and workers' participation, however problematic and limited that commitment may have been.

Economic policy initiatives from the left in the nineties need to include proposals on decentralised forms of planning and social ownership if they are to be credible alternatives to - not just variants of - official policy.

Obviously, developing such initiatives will require the broadest possible consultation and debate, which is why "Labour and the Economy" should be welcomed, despite its weaknesses.

A conference has been called by *Beyond The Casino Economy*/Socialist Economic Bulletin to discuss the economic options facing a Labour government on November 30th at Kingsway Princeton College, in London.

THE IMF'S twice-yearly "World Economic Outlook" bulletin is worried that the transformation of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union into market economies will place a great strain on the existing pool of world "savings" (i.e. capital). It therefore proposes to fund the integration of the old Eastern Bloc into the world economy by cuts in Western military expenditure, provided these are matched by the Soviet Union.

A 20% cut in the $460 billion spent on arms every year by the industrial countries would yield savings of $90 billion a year - which would go a long way to making up the "shortage" of available funds. Nice to see the IMF lining up with the left on this question!

ACADEMICS at the London School of Economics recently asked students to participate in a study to see whether what they call "chartism" (predicting the future value of financial assets on the basis of trends detected in past performance) has any validity.

Two hypothetical exercises were conducted by the students. While one group traded in (imaginary) financial assets with "chartist" information on price trends, another had to do the same with only the aid of the basic price history.

The result: there was no significant difference between the performance of the two groups.

The experiment was then repeated with foreign exchange dealers from two London banks. Again there was little difference between those with "charts" and those without. What's more, the City professionals barely outperformed the untrained students!

The LSE experiment seems to confirm that the huge earnings of traders in the financial markets (which for Marxists are a cut of surplus value) ought to be classified by orthodox economists as a pure form of economic rent - because it comes in every year regardless of labour or skills.

South African trades unionists: up against the apartheid state

ON OCTOBER 15th a Johannesburg judge delivered a verdict of guilty in the trial of COSATU leaders Jay Naidoo, Moses Mayekiso, Sydney Mufamadi, and Baba Schalk on trumped-up charges of kidnapping and assaulting a police officer (see Labour Briefing, July 1991).

The next day the judge passed a one year sentence, suspended for three years, on all four men.

As this is an absurdly light sentence for such a serious offence, it amounts to an admission that the whole trial was bogus. It also means, however, that if any of the four break the law in the next three years, they will have to serve their time. And just how can you be an effective trades unionist in South Africa and not break the law?

Undoubtedly there was much argument inside the South African corridors of power about how to handle the trial of the COSATU leaders.

A two-day general strike against the recent imposition of VAT on a wide range of goods, including food and medicines, has been called by COSATU, NACTU, and twelve independent trade unions and is scheduled for November 4th-5th.

The spectre of the workers responding to the imprisonment of their leaders by turning the two days of action into something longer and more ambitious must have haunted de Klerk, for one.

Pressure on behalf of the COSATU four also came from some more unlikely sources. The two largest private employers in the country, multinationals Barlowe Rand and Anglo-American, pleaded on behalf of the COSATU defendants. Clearly, there continues to be division within the white establishment over the best method of dealing with the liberation movement.

Despite relief at the soft sentences, the impression left by the case is one of the overweening confidence of the apartheid state. It has shown that it can trump up the most arbitrary charges and get convictions in court - even against prominent trades unionists representing hundreds of thousands of workers.

Inside the workers' movement there have been angry reactions to the whole affair. The South African TGWU is issuing a statement highly critical of the strategy of the ANC leadership, whose confusion and inertia it blames for the arrests and convictions. The TGWU leaders believe that the ANC has become enmeshed in negotiations and that its consequent refusal to challenge what passes for "the law" in South Africa has disarmed the mass movement.

"Inkathagate" (the exposure of government financing of Buthelezi's gangs) has not turned the tide in the liberation movement's favour, as many thought it would; instead it appears to have let the Inkatha terrorists off the leash, with a resulting increase in violence.

Increasingly, the COSATU leadership, sections of which have a long record of support for the ANC, is coming to believe that there is no substitute for independent trade union action. They hope to use their influence in the Tripartite Alliance with the ANC and the South African Communist Party to push the liberation movement back onto the offensive.

Tackling township violence

IN JUNE 1991 the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action, a newly-formed revolutionary current in South Africa, held its first national conference. It adopted the following resolution on violence in the townships:

"WOSA sees the violence as a massive spoiling operation promoted by our class enemies against the liberation movement. Its aim is to promote conflict among liberation organisations, to divide each base from its leadership, to weaken our mass structures and to discredit our movement as irresponsible.

WOSA therefore supports the current efforts to convene a Peace Conference on the following understanding:

- Government and all those capitalists who grew fat on the profits of apartheid are responsible for the social conditions that breed this violence. They must take immediate steps to address the causes - poor housing, low wages, unemployment, etc.;
- Government, through its lawful agencies, has the responsibility for halting the violence by bringing to justice the askaris, the impis, the comtsotsies and the Third Force responsible for the violence. Government must identify and act against their own armed forces involved in promoting the violence;
- Our people have an absolute right to organise armed self-defence committees. These must be non-sectarian and should include all sections of the affected communities, all public organisations willing to help, including women and youth. Any peacekeeping role for apartheid's forces must be monitored by independent agencies approved by our organisations.
- Except for authorised persons, the public carrying of weapons of any kind must be banned. Defence Committees and political organisations must take responsibility for their supporters. Defence committees must assert control over the neighbourhoods.
- Mass meetings should be called where leaders inform the public that their members have been instructed to build local unity structures which would involve all organisations, whether political, civic, church or otherwise - so that ways can be found to end the sectarian fights which are tearing the communities apart.

When one political organisation lays claim to a township, this is NOT a victory. Divide and rule has won. No country can be run on the basis of territorial gangs. Look at Natal and the Reef.

WOSA members serve on civics and defence councils. But WOSA youth are attacked by PASO and COSAS. WOSA members of COSATU are leading members of unions but are driven from May Day rallies by the Congress Alliance.

What madness is this? Have we learnt nothing from Eastern Europe or Africa of the criminal stupidity of imposing a one party state? The key to an end of violence is a return to open forms of independent mass organisation."

Sandinista leader in London

Over two hundred people turned up (and many had to be turned away) for a conference on "Which way forward for Nicaragua?" on October 5th. The Latin America Bureau in London organised the event, which was addressed by Nicaragua ex-vice president and writer Sergio Ramirez.

Ramirez conceded that in the run-up to the 1990 election defeat many of the Sandinista's mass organisations had become mere appendages of the FSLN. But now, faced with privatisation and the austerity policies of the new right-wing government, these organisations have regained their vitality.

In an absorbing contribution Arturo Grigsby of the University of Central America highlighted the results of eighteen months of economic attacks: 58% under- or un-employed, devastation in social services, and a consumer boom for rich exiles returned from Miami.

Controversially, he suggested that the way for this assault was paved by the FSLN's own 1988-9 austerity measures and their subsequent "concertacion" with the new regime.

Remember Chico Mendes!

The five-year old Brazil Network is launching a fund to develop practical support for and direct links with the Brazilian trade union movement.

The new fund has been named after the rubber tappers' union leader, Chico Mendes, killed by the big landowners who are largely responsible for the destruction of the rainforest. The Brazil Network has already shown the effectiveness of building direct union-to-union links. When Doreen Smith, union convenor in the Cadbury/ Bourneville factory in Birmingham, was suspended by the management, amongst the many protests which flooded in demanding her reinstatement were telegrams from unions in Brazil as well as the CUT (the Brazilian TUC). This was the result of contacts made by unions in the cocoa industry.

Trade union branches and individuals are urged to support the fund. Write to Brazil Network, PO Box 1325, London SW9 ORA. For just 50p, trade unions can also buy copies of the Network's pamphlet, "Fighting Back - Trade Unions in Brazil".

Jewish victims of Zionism

Yediot Aharanot, a Hebrew language paper in Israel, reports a recent meeting between the Israeli Foreign Minister David Levi and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in Bonn. The touchy subject was Soviet Jews emigrating to Germany.

Levi complained that the German embassy in Moscow was issuing 110 permits a day to Jews wanting to settle in the newly united Germany. The Israeli government believes (as it has always done) that Russian Jews must be made to settle in Israel, whether they like it or not. Kohl is said to have promised Levi to block the flow of Jews to Germany by refusing to grant them refugee status.

With the "right of return" becoming an "obligation to return", it looks like yet another group of diaspora Jews will fall victim to Zionist power-plays.

"Capitalism no"

A convenor at Poland's largest car plant is appealing for rank and file links with British trade unionists in the motor industry.

Maciej Guz leads the Solidarnosc 80 union at Fabryka Samachow Osobowych (FSO) in Warsaw. The new union represents an alternative to both the anti-working policies pursued in government by the old Stalinist state-run union federation OPZZ and mainstream Solidarity.

Employing over 15,000, FSO is the largest workplace in Warsaw. Both Citroen of France and General Motors are reportedly interested in taking a controlling stake. An announcement over the firm's future is expected shortly.

Solidarnosc 80 advocates workers' self-management as an alternative to privatisation of state concerns. The branch at FSO, more radical than the union nationally, is campaigning on the slogan *"Capitalism, no"*.

Contact Maciej at Komarska 60a m12, Warsawa 04-149, Poland.

Vic Williams

As reported in last month's *Briefing*, Vic Williams is currently serving fourteen months for desertion following his stand as a soldier against the Gulf War.

The Vic Williams Defence Campaign will be running an advert in the national press to demand his release. Cost of sponsorship is £5 for individuals and peace groups and £20 for other organisations. Petitions are available from the campaign c/o 265 Seven Sisters Rd, London, N4.

Harasser's hate links

So the all-white, 98% male, 50% millionaire US Senate has deemed Clarence Thomas fit to be a Supreme Court judge.

Since they weren't impressed by the clear evidence that Thomas was a sexual harasser and apparently swallowed whole his big lie that he had "never discussed" the question of abortion with anyone, they undoubtedly wouldn't see the relevance of Thomas' long-time association with the *Lincoln Review*, a bastion of black rightism.

In the columns of the *Review*, Thomas has argued against government interference in the economy (he is against the minimum wage) and opposed "affirmative action" programmes.

The *Review* is notable for fierce religiosity and support for capital punishment, anti-abortion vigilantes, and South Africa. The *Review*'s editor was directly employed for several years by the South African government, is also a former member of the World Anti-Communist League (for more on WACL, see page 4) and has links with Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church.

Thomas still sits on the Board of the *Lincoln Review* - a fact which he should have declared on government disclosure forms but did not.

Gulf War crimes tribunal

A British commission of inquiry into the Gulf War has been organised, with a public hearing in London on Sunday, December 1st with Ramsey Clark, former US Attorney General.

Clearly, the full truth about the Gulf War, in which 250,000 Iraqis (most of them civilians) were killed, has yet to emerge. The War Crimes Tribunal will meet in February, 1992 in the USA. The Tribunal can be contacted at the IWCT, BM2966, London, WC1N 3XX.

McLibels

McDonald's has frequently threatened legal action against anyone daring to criticise it.

The *Guardian*, Channel 4 and the *New Statesman* are amongst those who have been forced to apologise to the hamburger giant. Undaunted, London Greenpeace (a small anarchist group not to be confused with the international environmentalist group) produced a factsheet entitled "What's wrong with McDonald's" which has now been translated into fifteen different languages. In 1989 McDonald's spies began attending London Greenpeace events and following participants home to ascertain their personal details. Names and addresses of individuals were needed because London Greenpeace isn't a limited company and cannot be sued as a group.

In September 1990 five London Greenpeace supporters were issued with writs alleging that McDonald's had been libelled by the factsheet.

The writ listed sixteen "defamatory" statements, including the assertion that McDonald's is responsible for the torture and murder of animals. None of those sued were responsible for writing the factsheet. Their "crime" was that they had handed out the leaflet or were in attendance at places where the leaflet was publicly available. Shades of South Africa's "common purpose" law?

In January of this year three of the five agreed to apologise and the case against them was dropped. The remaining two are determined to fight on.

McDonald's only picked on these five in an attempt to deter others from criticising them. However, the anti-McDonald's movement is now worldwide and will not be halted.

McDonald's recently used a libel action threat to force the cancellation of a Scottish play about the fast food industry that didn't even mention it by name.

For more details contact McLibel Support Campaign, c/o London Greenpeace, 5 Caledonian road, London N1; tel. 071 837 7557.

The shape of things to come

You can't argue about the origins of humanity without arguing about politics. ***Keith Veness*** *reviews* Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origins of Culture, *by Chris Knight, Yale University Press, £40.*

CHRIS KNIGHT'S tome is a real "labour of love" and in effect combines five or six separate books in one massive volume. It aims to explain human evolution from the moment we ceased being unexceptional primates to our emergence from the last ice-age as the begetters of civilisation. *Briefing* supporter Chris is, of course, not one of the self-selected elite of anthropology or evolutionary science and will doubtless be accused of conceit in attempting to revolutionise our view of the ascent/descent of humanity. Yet, as someone said of cosmologist Alan Sandage, if you aim to figure out the universe "you had damned well better be pretty conceited"!

Chris' starting point is a simple one. Virtually all attempts at explaining how human evolution began are hopelessly "male centred" and leave out half the story. The "man the mighty hunter" school (dubbed 'Tarzanists' by Elaine Morgan in her seminal work *The Descent of Woman*) fails to explain the host of problems that arise when we try to imagine humanity beginning one fine day with apes deciding to fall out of their trees and dash off hunting zebras. For a start, the differences between female apes and female humans are much more pronounced than those between male apes and male humans.

Blood relations offers a far more plausible theory, starting in the tidal flood basin which was then the Horn of Africa, a fairly restricted environment. Here hominids developed from bands of food gathering apes into creatures that lived by collecting shellfish and aquatic plants and by simple fishing techniques. There is much fossil evidence to back this up and so far the Knight theory is well within the usual bounds of debate.

From here, however, Chris launches into a revolutionary line of thinking. He asks why exactly the female menstrual cycle developed and what reasons lie behind its link to the lunar month. Most primates have menstrual cycles that vary from sixteen to thirty-nine days. Most monkeys and apes display an "oestrus period" (coming on heat) absent in humans. Ignored by most male anthropologists, these crucial differences are the major axis for Chris's ideas.

His earlier work on the "first human revolution" showed how the typical baboon "harem society" came to be overthrown by the development of a hunting and gathering economy. These ideas are incorporated into early chapters and show how a radically different arrangement arose revolving around groups of males leaving on hunting expeditions and returning with meat. This necessitated women "banding together" to create a network of solidarity that stopped males from having sex until food was supplied to the whole group. From this system of "sex strikes" arose matrilineal clans, along with the "incest" and "own-kill" taboos that have perplexed generations of anthropologists.

Yet such a system could only have worked if women were able to enforce both a social and biological solidarity. Chris Knight has picked up the vital clue: menstrual synchronicity. This is something women have known about for a long time but in which male writers have hardly shown any interest. When groups of women in their teens, twenties and thirties live and sleep in close proximity the timing of their periods tends to align. In itself there seems little value in this. Indeed, as any woman who has suffered from bad period pains or PMT will tell you, it's useful if other women in better frames of mind are around to assist.

There must have been some overriding need behind the development of this synchronicity. The need to deny sex and then enjoy it as a group seems to be the best explanation. But why the lunar cycle? Contrary to the nonsense propounded by astrology and the tarot, the moon has no discernible influence on anything earth-bound - except for two important factors. The moon contributes two-thirds of the energy that raises the ocean's tides and it has always served as a beacon for hunting and other nocturnal activities. Not surprisingly then, a primate moving into a littoral environment developed a menstrual cycle of 29.5 to 27 days - the moon's respective synodic and sidereal times.

For us city dwellers in the polluted and light-ridden nights in Britain, it is hard to grasp the key role the moon plays in a society without electric light or housing. A hunting society would certainly base its activities on a lunar pattern. And any collective women's action would revolve around this pattern as well.

The book also draws on mitochondrial DNA "fingerprinting", evidence showing that Homo Sapiens is a very recent development and pointing back to an "African Eve" as the probable ancestress of us all.

Despite its length and its sometimes obscure use of mythology and symbolism, this book is a revolutionary textbook for socialists and feminists. It turns upside down the reactionary developments in biology and evolutionary theory that dominated the 1980s. At a time when thick-headed bourgeois commentators celebrate the "collapse of communism", this book shows the short-sighted nature of such twaddle. Communism - the ideas of revolutionary change, of solidarity, of feminism and of a society organised for the benefit of everyone - is not only still the spectre that haunts Europe but it is the very thing that created us as human beings and made us social and technological creatures. We need now to translate this onto a higher level where production is designed to satisfy real wants and science is used for the benefit of the vast majority.

Our ancestors may not have been as materially well-off but they were as intelligent as us. Collective women's solidarity based on blood rites and menstruation ultimately lives on in socialist ideas and actions today. Buy, borrow or force your library to order this book - the dynamics that develop from it are certain to play a role in things to come.



Chris Knight

Book review

Never a yes man: the life and politics of an adopted Liverpudlian

by Eric Heffer, Verso, £16.95.

THE CONVICTION that jumps out of the pages of *Never a Yes Man* is that socialism must come from below. Eric Heffer, a self-taught working class intellectual, passionately believed in his class acting for itself and spent his life fighting against intolerance, authoritarianism and bureaucracy.

Eric was thrown out of the Communist Party in the 1940s only to find that he had to defend them against witch hunts on the Liverpool Trades Council. Throughout the rest of his life he championed the cause of independent working class action throughout the Eastern block. Unlike so many of his generation who broke from Stalinism, he did not embrace the right. Instead, he read insatiably the works of other Marxists, notably Rosa Luxemburg.

The most fascinating feature of this book is the insight it offers into the thinking of major political players involved in events many of us remember well. In particular, it is a valuable glimpse into the struggles faced by a full-time activist committed both to socialist principles and the unity of the Labour Party.

Thus, Heffer's support for the "Mikardo compromise" on mandatory reselection flowed from an attempt at honourable compromise. What to Eric was an attempt to win a minimal gain for the left was seen as an act of treachery by the ascendant Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (and the rest of us!).

And many *Briefing* readers will recall Eric's hesitancy about the Benn bid for Deputy Leader in 1981. *Never a Yes Man* catalogues a vituperative exchange on this subject between Eric and Arthur Scargill.

Eric's political relationship with Benn crops up a number of times. In the seventies Eric accused him of grovelling to Wilson to keep his cabinet place. Later, he formed a genuine partnership with Benn marked by real mutual respect.

Never a Yes Man sometimes reads a little like a stream of consciousness - but this roughness gives it the real flavour of a Heffer autobiography. This is no ghost-written, sanitised, "official" version; it is a fascinating statement about a whole generation's politics that ought to take its place alongside Benn's diaries on every socialist's bookshelf.

Bryn Griffiths

Book review

Chomsky exposes the real terrorists

Deterring Democracy

by Noam Chomsky, published by Verso, £19.95.

NO UNAPPROACHABLE theoretical tome this, despite its 400 pages: this is a readable but relentless expose of the cynical hypocrisy underpinning US foreign policy. Contemptuous of fashionable talk of a "new world order", Noam Chomsky identifies the real continuities in America's strategy as world policeman.

Chomsky argues that the Cold War has been of enormous value to successive US governments as a cover for conducting war against the Third World. In this sense, the Cold War has really only half-ended: "Washington remains a player as before".

The core of the book examines America's relationship with Latin America during and 'after' the Cold War. Again, continuity of policy from Carter to Bush emerges as the hallmark.

Indeed, in Chomsky's view, Reagan's specific achievement has been so greatly exaggerated as to be almost a hoax. "After eight years of pretence about the 'revolution' that Reagan wrought, no-one would dream of asking its standard-bearer for his thoughts about any topic, because it is understood, as it always was, that he has none".

Chomsky catalogues the history of illegal US aggression against Nicaragua under the Sandinistas, examining particular the White House statement that last year's election of the right-wing Chamorro government was the result of the first free elections there for ten years. First, this assertion ignores the enormous economic and political pressure America exerted on the 1990 ballot; second, it denies the fact that the elections won by the Sandinistas in 1984 were widely judged to be fair; and third, it implies that the fraudulent elections held under Somoza before 1979 were in some way free.

Little was new about the international terrorism conducted by the White House under Reagan. Nor is there anything novel in the justifications offered for it - from "security interests" to overt racism. The "war on drugs" or concern for human rights are just the latest pretexts.

Chomsky's argument is that the US is a terrorist state whose treatment of the oppositionists in its "backyard" has been far worse than the Soviet Union's treatment of Eastern Europe. In his last chapter he looks at the "manufacture of consent" - the role of the American media in reinforcing the outlook of the State Department at home.

Chomsky is no liberal, but a real dissident and socialist. In fact, he hates liberals, saving his deadliest venom for the corrupt liberals of journals like the *New Republic* who provide rationalisations for American imperialism.

It is encouraging to know that while others are burying their differences with the American establishment, an intellect as great as Chomsky's continues to hammer it at every opportunity.

Mike Phipps

Keeping women dependent on men

Against Redistributing Poverty

available from the King's Cross Women's Centre, 71 Tonbridge Street, London WC1H 9DZ, tel. 071 837 7509, £1.20, p&p included.

PRODUCED BY the Wages for Housework Campaign and the Payday men's network, this pamphlet reveals the fraud behind the Tories' plans for child maintenance, now embodied in the Child Support Act.

The authors believe that Income Support is a first form of payment for the unwaged work of raising children, which should be counted and paid for by those who couldn't function without it, i.e. the state and the military-industrial complex.

The pamphlet argues that absent fathers should not pay if the mothers don't want them to. By using children as a decoy the state will take money away from working class people to fill the Treasury's coffers.

Under the Act: the government will repeatedly deduct £400 over eighteen month periods from the Income Support of those women who refuse to name the father of their child; single mothers on Income Support will have all maintenance money they receive deducted from their benefits; women (many of whom are lesbian) will be forced to be financially dependent on men, and/or they will be "liberated" from Income Support into low-waged jobs, on top of their unwaged work in the home; fathers on Unemployment Benefit or Income Support will have 5% deducted from their benefits; Black and Third World women, children and men will be targeted for reduced benefits, harassment, imprisonment and deportation; and everybody's civil rights will be undermined by increased policing of our private lives by the newly established Child Support Agency.

PERISCOPE

Kermit on safari

The *South China Post* was none too pleased with **Gerald Kaufman's** attire on his visit to Hong Kong this summer.

"He came, he saw, and he wore some atrocious clothes," the Post reported, then asked: "Could Mr Kaufman...perhaps have been labouring under the illusion that this being a colony and all, the safari suit was *de rigueur?*"

The opposition

A group calling itself **Conservative Fightback** held a fringe meeting at the Tory Party conference in Blackpool. A spokesperson for the group explained that it was formed a few years ago "specifically to counter the influence of *Labour Briefing* in loony left boroughs".

One speaker, Haringey Tory councillor **Gerard Tyler**, did admit that the enemy (that's us) was not quite the power it used to be in local government. "In Haringey today," he reported, "a small clique which can only be described as the Oxbridge Tendency have taken over." At least he noticed the change!

Cllr. Tyler, whose antics in Haringey include waving a South African flag at an ANC deputation, has total confidence in our long-term future. "I'm sure there'll be a hard left fightback," he told the audience of ninety.

At the same meeting the leader of the Tory Group in **Newham** (which is composed entirely of two councillors; presumably the other one is the Deputy Leader) described her Labour colleagues as follows: "Many of them aren't from London. Quite a few aren't even from England. That's probably racist, but there you go."

Byrne-out

Readers of *Periscope* will be familiar with the recent history of one **Colin Byrne**, Mandelson loyalist and (for the moment) Labour's Chief Press and Broadcasting Officer.

Byrne had planned on succeeding Mandelson when the latter left Walworth Road for Hartlepool, but the NEC preferred the more experienced John Underwood. The frustrated Byrne proceeded to make life hell for his new boss - with assistance from Mandelson and **Julie Hall**, Kinnock's personal press officer and, as it happens, Byrne's fiancee.

The hopelessly undermined Underwood went to Kinnock with an ultimatum: if Byrne wasn't moved to another department he would resign. **Larry Whitty** had already agreed that Byrne should be "redeployed", but Kinnock didn't see it that way. Underwood resigned to be succeeded by the ineffectual ex-Hattersley aid David Hill. At Party conference, it was Byrne who was seen doing the spin-doctoring, often accompanied by his master, Mandelson.

Now Byrne has announced that he will be leaving the Labour Party's employ after all.

He has taken a job with the Prince's Trust, promoting the Business in the Community project and the Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum.

"I have always admired **Prince Charles**," says the unpleasantly slick and steely Byrne, evincing the ready sycophancy which made him such a hit with Kinnock.

Clarevoyant

Replying for the National Executive to the conference debate on Composite 59 - which called for the Women's Section places on the NEC to be elected by women only - **Clare Short** informed delegates that although she had voted for the Composite in the NEC, the majority had not agreed with her and so therefore she had to ask for it to be remitted.

She was lying.

Reliable sources have informed Briefing that at the NEC Clare voted with the majority and against the right of women to elect their own representatives.

In the conference hall, **Diana Jeuda's** mouth was seen to drop open in astonishment at her colleague's cheek.

Defending the indefensible

For those with a nose for such things, the best part of the recent Labour Party conference was the debate on membership and finance, in which delegates abandoned the new model passivity to let loose their rage at the brazen lies of **John Evans**, reporting for the NEC.

The one thing no one was going to tell constituency delegates, even in this week of meek-mannered leader-worship, was that the Party's national membership scheme was a success.

Yet this is precisely what the hapless Evans (a former *Briefing* Class Traitor of the Month and next year's Party chair) tried to do.

When Evans told delegates that the kinks in the new membership system were now ironed out and that everyone who applied to join was getting a card within four weeks, he was greeted by furious howls of indignation and shouts of "You're a bloody liar", by no means coming only from left-wingers.

Evans' bluster was in stark contrast to the plain-speaking of the Party's elected auditor, **David Hopper** of the NUM, who described the national membership scheme as "a fiasco...motivated by a desire to exercise control over the members."

He was followed by **John Wilton**, PPC for Birmingham Edgbaston, who roundly castigated the NEC's failure to control the Party's finances, pointing to the £169,000 subsidy of Labour Party News and the £400,000 unitemised "other expenses" tucked away in the budget for the Organisation Directorate.

Charity begins...and ends

How do Britain's leading charities spend the millions we pour into their coffers?

The **National Trust** (which raises more money than any other charity - £89.1 million last year) spends 13p of each £1 on admin costs.

The **Spastics Society** spends 25p in the £1 on admin and the Royal Opera House 22p.

Just 33p out of every £1 raised by **Guide Dogs for the Blind** is spent immediately - the rest is invested. The **RSPCA** spends 53p immediately and the **RNLI** (the lifeboat charity) 51p.

Which brings us round to a question that has long nagged *Briefing*: why is an essential emergency service like lifeboats funded by charity donations and not the government?

Maybe Labour could show its commitment to safety by promising to introduce public funding of the lifeboat service.

"As resources permit", of course!

Thanks

To *Labour Briefing* supporters in **Hither Green Branch** of East Lewisham CLP who raised £235 at an auction for the *Briefing* slush fund.

Banish boxing from the box

Arthur Chandler *casts a cold eye on the "noble art of self-defence" in the age of television.*

LIKE MOST sports, professional boxing is dependent on television for finance. To make it rich, boxers have to appeal to television audiences.

These audiences tend to be less interested in the finer points of the ancient art of self-defence than in seeing people beat the living daylights out of each other. It is the Frank Brunos and Nigel Benns who make the big money these days and boxers know they have to emulate these fighters if they want to match their purses.

Since 1969 six fights involving British boxers have led to fatalities. The last twelve months seems to have been a particularly unfortunate time for boxers. Michael Watson's former sparring partner, Rod Douglas, had a brain operation after passing out after a domestic title fight with Herol Graham. Mark Goult collapsed after a bantamweight contest. Jim McDonnell was also hospitalised after being knocked out.

So should professional boxing be banned? No. The fact that a sport is dangerous is not sufficient reason to ban it. You may not like it, you may not like those who like it, but it would be wrong to ban it on safety grounds. The participants are, after all, willing participants, and in a world where sport is the only way out of poverty and despair for many working class kids any move to ban the sport from above will be greeted with understandable bitterness by the very people the move aims to protect.

There are after all many other potentially lethal sports, motor racing for example. And as for violence, I have seen punches thrown in every Rugby World Cup match that I have watched. But, people say, boxing differs from other sports in that the whole point of it is to deliberately inflict physical damage on one's opponent. Which is a fair point, but also a completely different one to arguing for a ban on medical grounds.

If society is to ban boxing then it has to be because of the damage boxing does to society, rather than to the individuals participating. If the existence of boxing is a symptom of an uncivilised and barbarous society, then the banning of it does not make society any less uncivilised or barbarous. If boxing damages society then it is damage that is being done at all levels, not just in the big televised matches.

And if boxing is to be banned on these grounds then the ban must extend to amateur boxing also. There are 35,000 amateur boxers in the country, very few of whom aspire even to the £400 that they might earn for a first professional fight. There are 1,000 professional boxers but only a handful make a living out it. Surely it makes more sense to encourage young people to take up alternative sports than simply to ban a sport with 35,000 participants.

We could also try to alter the nature of boxing. If boxing has changed because of television then television can be used to change it again.

Recently television has come close to killing off darts as a professional sport - by ceasing to show it. In the same way it has made snooker players the top earning sports persons in Britain - by giving it wall-to-wall coverage. Even Sumo wrestling and American football now attract considerable interest following Channel Four coverage.

Those opposed to boxing should not, therefore, be calling for a ban, but for television companies not to show it. This would take a long time, however, given its high audience ratings. There is, however, already a powerful and potentially successful lobby to drop boxing from the Olympic games.

Boxing does have friends in high places. Robert Atkins, the Tory Sports Minister, reacted to the calls for a ban after the Eubank vs. Watson fight by saying that he thought boxing was good for you! Indeed, so lavish was he in praise of the sport that at one point it appeared he was about to argue for it being made compulsory.

The sport should be made safer, if that's possible. Doctors should be allowed in corners and should be allowed to stop the fights. Consideration should be given to reducing the number of rounds and increasing the length of breaks between rounds. However, we should be clear that boxing can never be safe and that the ring will always be haunted by deaths and disabilities. But ban it? You couldn't if you tried.

Famous last words...

Ten years ago Ted Knight declared that the Tory plans for local government announced by Michael Heseltine "present the greatest challenge ever faced by Labour councils." Frank Hansen warned that "time has now run out" for Labour authorities and that they would have to either "fight back...or buckle under". *Briefing* declared its "full solidarity" with Ken Livingstone, under heavy media fire for his views on Ireland. There were reports on the nefarious doings of freemasons in Newham and the EETPU in Southwark and of a path-breaking fringe meeting organised by CLPD at Party conference on the question: "Who oppresses women?" Piers Corbyn denounced the GLC for selling off housing stock and Jane Stockton appealed for help in the St Pancras North GLC by-election, where Mildred Gordon was challenging SDP defector Anne Sofer.


LONDON LABOUR 20p
BRIEFING
No 15 NOVEMBER 1981
OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE
Labour—Take the Power!

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* ...

Your editorial comment on the "open letter" signed by hundreds of ex-Labour Party activists and instigated by the SWP falls foul of the very sectarianism it complains of!

Of course the idea of an independent socialist alternative is a chimera: the holy grail which those who don't like reformism too much but aren't too serious about doing anything about it either are always seeking.

When you look at the kind of issues which face the workers' movement, from the Poll Tax to unemployment and the NHS, building a socialist force which can take struggles around these issues forward is imperative. Even *Briefing* can cheerfully admit that the Labour Party is not that force, nor is there any reasonable hope of turning it into it.

So yes, the SWP is about building a new socialist party. We can all think of examples where groups who have attempted to do this have launched themselves for the moon. One would hope that the open letter proves that the SWP is not about to do this.

What it comes down to is to give some hope to the many thousands of socialists who despair of Kinnock and the Labour Party - they need not simply give up and go dig the garden. There is life for socialists outside the Labour Party.

As for the interconnecting cables between "electoralism" and "working class action", if you think there will be dancing in the streets upon a Labour victory, you should say so openly.

Finally, please note that I have recently moved to a house without a garden!

Yours fraternally,
Keith Flett
Tottenham

The October *Labour Briefing* editorial rightly spotlights some of the issues arising out of the SWP's "open letter" calling on socialists to leave the Labour Party.

In responding to the SWP, we have to go back to basics and re-assert what Marx and Engels said in the *Communist Manifesto*: "the communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties". We can recall Lenin's *"Left Wing Communism"* pamphlet on the relationship of Marxists to the Labour Party and his instructions to the then revolutionary British Communist Party to seek affiliation to the Labour Party. We can re-affirm Trotsky's instructions of the 30s for revolutionaries to work inside the Labour Party and trade unions.

Those of us inside the Labour Party who hold a Marxist analysis need no lectures from comrades in the SWP as to the ultra-reactionary bourgeois nature of the Labour leaders. The same bourgeois misleaders are at work in the trade unions (reformist trade unions, just like the reformist Labour Party) yet the SWP have not issued an open letter to rank and file union militants calling on them to abandon the struggle in the unions!

When workers take collective action to defend their living standards, whether by strike action at work (if they have a job) or by fighting the Poll Tax or fighting NHS, education and local government cuts, they rightly make demands on the political organisation of their class, the Labour Party.

The centrality of the Labour Party to working-class politics is underlined by its relationship to the mass organisations of workers, the trade unions. The prospect of a trade union rank and file increasing in class consciousness and finding political expression in the Labour Party is precisely why the Kinnock leadership, egged on by a ruling class determined to smash independent working-class politics, is out to destroy the Party/union bond. That most fundamental issue facing the workers' movement - how to smash New Realism - can be most effectively achieved by the class struggle from below finding its political expression in the Labour Party.

With a general election approaching and the desperate need for the working-class to kick the Tories out, now is not the time to abandon Labour. In the event of either a Labour victory or a defeat, new opportunities will emerge. Defeat and Kinnock will go and once against sharp battle lines of left and right will be drawn, a battle we must not abstain from. Victory and the total inadequacy of the Kinnock programme will be felt by the working-class. The ensuing fightback will need a responsive, combative left taking up the class struggle in the Party.

Take the power,
Hyder Prodhan
Barrow-in-Furness

At conference we were told by *Briefing* supporters on several occasions that the left groups are little more than fronts for London activists. Not only does this lend credibility to the smears from our opponents in the Party, but it is not true in relation to several of the left groups, although I can't speak for *Briefing*.

In addition it was predicted by at least one prominent comrade at a Campaign Group meeting that the support for the candidates on the alternative left slate would be almost wholly "metropolitan". Kanta Patel was supported by all the left groups except *Briefing* and the Campaign Group. For the record, Kanta was supported by the following CLPs: Don Valley, Halifax, Shipley, Morecombe and Lunesdale, Crosby, Gainsborough and Horncastle, Stoke-on-Trent Central, Stoke-on-Trent North, Aldridge Brownhills, Birmingham Ladywood, Wolverhampton South West, Uxbridge, Walthamstow, Devon North and Plymouth Sutton.

Also, I noticed that the Labour Party Socialists' bulletin at conference supported 'periodic' rules revision conferences. This would be a massive backward step and would effectively prevent the rank and file ever changing the constitution. This is precisely why the NEC supports it. Could someone please explain how "the voice of Labour's independent left" could have supported such a reactionary proposal?

Yours,
Pete Willsman

Arthur Chandler, in his article on the aftermath of Channel Four's "Great Britain United", cites the visit of Arsenal fans to Selhurst Park where they apparently harangued the Crystal Palace chairman with chants of "Noades is a racist".

Having spent that afternoon on the Holmesdale Road terrace (and a pretty depressing afternoon it was too) I must make it clear that the anti-racist chants originated from the Palace fans. And it was Palace fans who continued their demands that Noades be removed at the home match against West Ham the following Tuesday evening - witness the News at Ten report that night.

Yours in struggle,
Mark Holmes
London SE13

Editor's note: responses to Chris Knight's article on Russia have been held over and will be published as a feature in the next Labour Briefing.

Labour Briefing

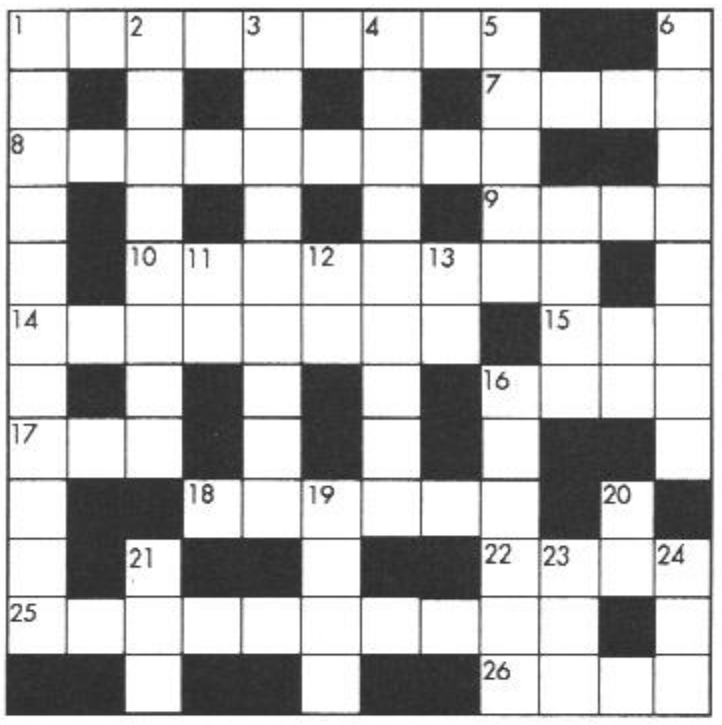
"Why socialists should be in the Labour Party"

We plan to publish a pamphlet on this theme in January. Contributions of no more than 1500 words are welcome. Deadline: November 30th. Contact 26 Wattisfield Road, London E5 9QH.

Beating the fascists: An old East End tradition

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION AGAINST RACIST ATTACKS

Assemble 1pm
Sunday, November 10th
Aldgate East tube, Whitechapel High Street, London E1



Across

1. Georgian earthquake city
7. Russian Sea
8. Where 1917 happened
9. International air carriers union
10. The first
14. Clueless
15. Education union
16. Underclass
17. Zilch
18. Swedish province or lorry
22. Essex river
25. Bakunin, Malatesta, Kropotkin, etc.
26. "Fame is the ..." - not cold

Down

1. Spanish Stalinist Woman
2. Country-wide
3. Not old stone age - more recent
4. Covers Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria
5. Romanian gymnast
6. Phobia of confinement
11. Royal Academy
12. All systems are ... !
13. "N by ..."
16. Life - not animals
19. Dull pain
20. Australian wizard
21. Council Estate's head gear
23. Cleopatra's serpent
24. "To ... is human"

Socialists for Labour

Campaigning for left policies in the general election

Saturday
November 16th
11am-5pm
Camden Town Hall
London

Workshops on:
trade union rights, women, anti-racism, Poll Tax, minimum wage, democracy, defence,

GREATER LONDON LABOUR PARTY AGM

Deadlines:
Resolutions by December 11th
Nominations and amendments by January 31st
Delegates by February 21st

Nominees for Regional officers and Executive must be delegates.

GLLP AGM: March 14th and 15th, Business Design Centre, Islington.

Labour CND Annual General Meeting

Saturday 16th November
10:30am - 4:30pm
Islington Central Library
Fieldway Crescent
Holloway Road
London

Speakers include:
Marjorie Thompson, Ken Livingstone, Jeremy Corbyn and Ken Cameron of the Fire Brigades' Union.

East Lewisham Labour Party
Alternative Xmas Fair
11am-3pm
Saturday
December 7th
Lewisham Labour club
Limes Grove

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JUSTICE!

Sara Thornton: guilty of fighting back!



Brighton Friends of Sara Thornton: seven of these nine women have been suspended from the Labour Party by the NEC!

THE BRIGHTON Friends of Sara Thornton first came into being shortly after Sara Thornton began her hunger strike in Holloway Prison.

Anne Bellis
Kate Packham
suspended Brighton Labour Party members

We shared Sara's outrage that her appeal against her life sentence had been dismissed - when only two days later Joseph McGrail received a two year suspended sentence for killing his wife, having successfully pleaded "provocation". We wanted to encourage local public support for Sara's case and highlight the other issues involved: the need for changes in a law which discriminates against women and for more refuges for women and children seeking to escape domestic violence.

On Saturday mornings we've been collecting signatures on a petition demanding a re-hearing of Sara's case and changes to the "provocation" law. The response has been enthusiastic, particularly from women. Some of them tell us about their own experience of living with violent partners - about their isolation and their anger at the unsympathetic attitudes of a society which should be offering them protection and support. Much of their anger is directed against the judge who told Sara at her appeal hearing that she always had "the option to leave" her husband. For most women in Sara's situation, there is nowhere to go.

We already have several hundred signatures and will eventually present the petition to the Home Secretary. The campaign has even received the backing of Brighton Tory MP Andrew Bowden and the local Labour Council.

On Saturday, November 2nd, Brighton Friends of Sara Thornton will be holding a night time vigil in support of all women and children who are victims of domestic violence. For more information please contact: Anne Bellis (0273 689532) or Kate Packham (0273 601559).

HOME SECRETARY Kenneth Baker is said to be considering "new evidence" which might lead to the release of Sara Thornton.

The evidence was in fact already available at the time of Sara's original trial, but was not presented. It seems that Sara's family doctor heard Sara's husband threaten to kill her and actually saw him hit her.

The Free Sara Thornton Campaign want the law on "provocation" reinterpreted so that years of beatings of and violence against women are taken into account. They are also campaigning for justice for Kiranjit Ahluwalia and Amelia Rossiter, other victims of the double-standard used by the courts in judging women who fight back.

Contact Julie Donovan, 55 Regina Point, Canada Estate, London SE16 (tel. 071 231 0415).

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