BRIEFING

October 1991 80p (60p unwaged)

Despite...

Kinnock
Hattersley
Cunningham
Kaufman
Smith
Beckett
Blair
Brown
Gould
Dewar
Straw
O'Neill

We can still win!

"Many members are fed-up with being told which policies to dump and which members to expel by Walworth Road 'smart suits' who can't even manage to send a membership card out on time!"

- John Wilton, PPC Birmingham Edgbaston (see page 14)

Class Traitor of the Month page 15



Justice for Sarah Thornton page 5

Brighton purge, Dave Nellist page 16-17



Boris Kagarlitsky: A second Russian Revolution? pages 9-11

LABOUR - TAKE THE POWER!

In this month's *Labour Briefing*

4 *News and views:* Scandal of **Bristol** Port sell-off; Justice for **Sarah Thornton**; a "white riot" in **Newcastle**? Larry O'hara on **Searchlight** and the secret state;

Polish left alive and kicking; **Boris Kagarlitsky** denounces Yeltsin; **Chris Knight** hails "The Second Russian Revolution".

12 *Labour Party:* **Jeremy Corbyn** celebrates **Vic Williams**; **Lorraine Mont** mourns marginalised Labour women;

John Wilton outlines a strategy for Labour victory; **Peter Mandelson** is this month's **Class Traitor** - at last!

16 *Labour Party (continued);* **Mike Marqusee** asks who's afraid of **Dave Nellist?**

Jill Arnold lays bare the **Brighton** purge; **Bob Cryer** issues a warning to the PR tendency; and **Kneel** is in big trouble.

22 *Trade Union Notebook:* Hobson is choice for Railworkers; **Pergamon 23** keep Maxwell under fire; **T&G Solidarity** launched; **Western Goals** - the Tory entryists;

Sinn Fein on British terror in Belfast; **Periscope**; **Arthur Chandler** on racism in football; Famous Last Words; Letters; Crossword; **Sharon Raghip's** message for Labour.

October 1991, No. 116



Who guards the *Guardian*?

A FEW YEARS ago the *Guardian* joined the *Independent* and the *Scotsman* in boycotting the lobby system of off-the-record government briefings. A defiant stance in favour of accountable government and accountable journalism. Bravo!

In August, however, the *Guardian* has now returned to the "not for attribution" confabs...though it has not seen fit to tell its readers. This reticence is in marked contrast to the front-page orgy of self-congratulation with which it celebrated its withdrawal from the dreaded system.

The *Guardian*'s sneaky volte-face comes as no surprise to *Briefing* editor Mike Marqusee, who wrote to the official *Guardian* Reader's Representative, Professor Hugh Stephenson, some months ago complaining about *Guardian* hack and Mandelson-phile Patrick Wintour's coverage of events in Lambeth.

Stephenson dismissed Marqusee's complaint that Wintour had wrongly quoted Cllr Steve French as calling for "Victory to Iraq!" and "Bomb Israel!" at a Lambeth Council meeting during the Gulf War. The Prof loftily opined that "an intelligent reader" would surmise that the allegations against Cllr French were "taken" from Ben Lucas' "briefing paper" on the left in Lambeth which had been mentioned at the beginning of the article.

In fact, Wintour failed to identify Lucas's "briefing paper" as an LCC document (though it was clearly labeled as such) and failed to tell his readers that Lucas himself was not even present at the meeting.

Stephenson's account actually contradicts the account of the article given by *Guardian* management to Cllr French's solicitors some months ago.

In response to demands that the false allegations be retracted, the *Guardian*, after some delay, informed Cllr. French's solicitor that it "had now spoken to two persons who were present at the meeting" and that they would back up Wintour's story.

So which is it? Does the *Guardian* stand by its smear or is it trying to offload responsibility on to poor old Ben Lucas?

Stephenson seems serenely untroubled by such concerns: "I do not find that Mr Wintour's reporting in this instance significantly broke any part of the code of conduct to which the *Guardian* subscribes".

After the *Guardian*'s secretive return to the fold of the government's lobby-cum-disinformation system, we know just how stringent that code must be!

Eye-opener

SAROOSH, currently serving a three-month sentence in prison for non-payment of the Poll Tax, writes to the anti-Poll Tax movement:

"We need another nationwide newsletter which can cover all aspects of this campaign, allowing people to hear and debate different issues...we have work to do and we must set an example. We must give credit where it is due and build on past experience and learn from mistakes, not hide behind them as a camouflage for our inactivity...we must introduce the movement for what it is: the biggest catalyst and eye-opener this century."

Report from Kurdistan

Jeremy Corbyn MP and Ihsan Qudir visited Iraqi Kurdistan in August 1991 at the invitation of the Kurdistan Front. *Kurdistan Report*, their account of the present situation in the area, will be published on September 29th, £1.50 from Kurdistan Focus, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QG.

After Stalinism...

For socialists recent events in what used to be the Soviet Union are of compelling interest, not least because of their contradictory character.

On the one hand, the defeat of the coup - the last gasp of a corrupt, authoritarian and parasitic elite seeking desperately to preserve its privileges - must be welcomed by anyone who genuinely believes that socialism is nothing if it is not a full flowering of democracy.

Labour Briefing has an honourable history of supporting all workers and democrats who have opposed Stalinist repression. Our opposition to the coup and unequivocal pleasure at its defeat is consistent with that record.

On the other hand, the defeat of the coup has certainly accelerated the drive towards the reintroduction of capitalism, with all its attendant miseries, in the land of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Ideologically, the collapse of Stalinism is being exploited by the ruling classes in the West to crush all working class aspirations to socialism or even social democracy. No one should be surprised by that. For our oppressors, it remains as important now as ever that the oppressed should believe there is no humane, practicable alternative to capitalism.

We cannot answer this attack by mourning any vestiges of so-called socialism in the Soviet Union. For socialists, the final, ignominious implosion of Stalinism must be welcomed as a necessary precondition to the revival of international socialism. Our task is to reinvigorate and reapply the democratic, egalitarian premises which for generations have drawn millions to socialism. The aspiration towards a classless society which fuelled October 1917 remains as vital to the future of humanity as ever.

The SWP is having a whale of a time circulating an "open letter" which declares that "it is no longer possible for socialists to remain in the Labour Party and have any real hope of achieving change" and calls on disillusioned Labour lefts to "join together to build an independent socialist alternative to Labour".

For us, it's sad to see the names of so many left Labour activists appearing in Socialist Worker's weekly roll of those abandoning the Labour Party. For the SWP, it's cause for celebration, despite the obvious confidence and strength which a strong Labour left can give to the working class.

But what is the SWP's real agenda? Are they likely to jettison decades of sectarian party building for "an independent socialist party building for "an independent socialist alternative to Labour"? Or is the "open letter" just another device to recruit frustrated socialists into the SWP?

It's easy enough to catalogue the sins of the Labour leadership (we should know!) but the real question which the "open letter" barely poses is: leave Labour - to do what?

In reality, the vast majority of those leaving the Labour Party will drop out of politics altogether. A few will join the SWP or similar groups. Others will continue to seek the holy grail of an "independent socialist alternative". Independent of what? Organised labour?

The "open letter" contains the SWP's familiar attacks on Labour's "electoralism", crudely counterposed, as ever, to "working class action". Surely in the wake of recent events in the Soviet Union, it is foolish in the extreme for socialists to dismiss so airily the exercise of the franchise and the importance to working class people of representative, democratic institutions - however remote, limited or bourgeois they may be.

For many of us on the Labour left, our struggle in the Party has been precisely an attempt to locate and seize the powerful interconnecting cables between "electoralism" and "working class action".

Those who leave the Party, understandably embittered and outraged at what it has become, will be abstaining from this crucial strand of the class struggle. They will only succeed in making life easier for Kinnock and his heirs.

We're happy to act on the excellent suggestion of Dave Marks (see letters page) and hereby institute a regular "Class Hero of the Month" slot. The first (unlikely) recipient of the award is veteran Tribune Parliamentary reporter Hugh Macpherson (no Trot he).

Hugh hit the nail on the head in a recent column when he warned that Neil Kinnock "leads a front bench which now advocates an enlightened form of Conservatism which is less radical than that on offer from the Liberal Democrats. The danger to the Labour Party of a hung election is that they have a leader with nowhere to go and nothing to lose. I would not place the loyalty of some of those around him any higher than that of Roy Jenkins or David Owen at a similar stage of their careers."

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. The deadline for the next issue is October 14th.

***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.

This is *Labour Briefing* No. 116, October 1991.

Editor: Mike Marqusee, Co-chairs: Liz Davies and Pauline Purnell, Secretary: Kevin Flack NEB Convenor: Keith Veness, Distribution Manager: Graham Bash, Production Manager: Dave Lewney, Production Team: Alick Bridger, Paul Field, Joanne McAuliffe, Treasurer: Dave Palmer, Promotions: Bryn Griffiths, Bookshops: Dorothy Macedo, Trade Union Editors: Jon Rogers, Keith Veness, Labour Party Editors: Richard Heffernan, Bryn Griffiths.

Double-dealing Labour council swaps future energy supplies for short-term gain

Bristol Labour councillors ***Dave Sutton, Hedley Bashforth*** *and seven others have issued this damning account of the local Labour leadership's sale of the Port of Bristol to some very dubious customers.*

FOR OVER a year Bristol City Council has been negotiating the sale of the Port of Bristol to a private company, First Corporate Shipping (FCS). The negotiations led to a decision on August 22nd that FCS should be allowed to buy the port "as a going concern".

The deal was agreed by the Labour Group following a report by the Group Leader on July 26th. The report justified the sale on the grounds that the private sector would not invest in a Council-owned port and that consultants said that FCS could attract £74 million capital investment over four years, including a new bulk handling terminal. If the Council did not sell the port, there was a risk of further losses in addition to the cash required to pay interest on the port debt.

Reports of the proposed deal carried in the trade press in August indicated that the deal was linked to a plan to import coal. The National Union of Mineworkers monitored these reports and wrote to the Bristol Labour Group Leader on August 21st asking for a meeting to discuss the implications of the sale for Britain's coal industry. The Leader could have responded by adjourning the upcoming Council meeting in order to report the NUM's request to the Labour Group. Instead, he replied as follows to the NUM:

"Can I assure you that the transaction with FCS does not constitute an agreement on the bulk importation of coal."

Two weeks later an announcement was made of a joint venture between FCS and National Power for the construction of a coal importing facility at Portbury Dock. The deal would bring in 5 million tonnes of coal a year and create between 50 and100 jobs. The NUM estimate that it would also lead to the closure of pits in South Wales, Staffordshire and Derbyshire and the loss of up to 6,000 jobs.

There is no doubt that those involved in the negotiation of the sale of the port to FCS, both in the City Council and in FCS, were fully aware of National Power's proposed coal-importing facility. The failure of the Council's leadership to report National Power's interest raises several areas of concern.

If National Power's interest was known, it should have been reflected in the valuation of public assets disposed to FCS. In fact, FCS has acted as a stalking horse for National Power, yet at no time was this reported to the Council.

In its negotiations with FCS, the City Council was given legal advice by Bevan Ashford, a firm of solicitors, and by Lord Silsoe QC; both pointed out risks but both also favoured the sale. However, Lord Silsoe has been retained by CEGB/ National Power as a legal adviser and presented their case at inquiries into the proposed nuclear power stations at Sizewell and Hinkley. The advice given to the Council by Lord Silsoe is clearly compromised. Bearing in mind the huge sums of public money and assets at stake, it cannot be right that the Council should agree to the sale on the basis of advice received from a lawyer who has been retained by the chief beneficiary of the sale.

"... we call on the Labour Party National Executive to investigate..."

If the legal advice is bad and the deal with FCS is in any way open to challenge in the courts - by, for example, British Coal or the NUM - then the Council has laid itself open to huge financial losses.

The proposal to import coal flies in the face of the recommendations of the House of Commons Select Committee on Energy, which recently called for investment in the British coal industry. It is also completely out of step with the Labour Party's energy policy, which is to invest in British coal.

Coal imports are only affordable because North Sea oil revenues permit them. These revenues should be invested in a clean domestic coal industry and in renewable energy sources to guarantee future energy supplies after the oil has run out. The sale of the port of Bristol to FCS has laid Bristol City Council's leadership open to charges of double-dealing, of ripping off the public and of trading the future of Britain's energy supplies for the smallest of short-term gains.

We call on the Council to seek urgent legal advice from an independent source as to the validity of the transaction with FCS. We further call on the Council to seek advice from the District Auditor as to whether the existence of National Power's proposals to import coal should have been included in the valuation of assets disposed to FCS.

Finally, we call on the Labour Party National Executive to investigate the circumstances surrounding the deal between the Council and FCS which has led to clear violations of Labour policy.

Justice for Sara Thornton

"Come out here, Kenneth Baker, come out here!" Over a hundred women and children (and a few men) kept up a two-hour long barrage of taunts, songs and catcalls outside the Home Office on September 11th. The concrete canyons of Queen Anne's Gate reverberated with demands for justice for battered women who kill. ***Camilla Power*** *reports on the short and long-term aims of a vital struggle.*

THESE SASSY Wednesday lunchtime demos are orchestrated by Southall Black Sisters in conjunction with the Sara Thornton Support Group, a coalition of feminist lawyers. The campaign focuses on three women currently serving life-sentences for the murder of their violent husbands: Sara Thornton, Kiranjit Ahluwahlia and Amelia Rossiter. A petition with over 5,000 signatures calling for the release of the women was presented to the Home Secretary.

An appeal by Sara Thornton has been heard and dismissed; appeals for the other two women are pending. Pleading provocation, Sara appealed on the grounds that she was not guilty of murder - which carries a mandatory life sentence - but even though she was a terrified and desperate woman.

Two days later, on July 31st, Joseph McGrail received a two-year suspended sentence for battering his wife to death. His defence, on the grounds of provocation, was that he "snapped" after years of torment and abuse from his wife. In protest at this decision, Sara stayed on hunger-strike for a month.

Each year in Britain some seventy men kill their female partners; between twelve and fifteen women kill their male partners. Forty per cent of those women are found guilty of murder; only 25% of the men are.

The current interpretation of provocation makes allowance for explosive loss of temper, a



"Kenneth Baker, come out here!" Photo Camilla Power

of manslaughter. In case law, to qualify for the partial defence of provocation, the accused must have acted during "a sudden and temporary loss of self-control" caused by the words or acts of the victim.

On July 29th, the Appeal Court rejected the arguments of Sara's counsel that the defence of provocation as it stands is "apt to describe the sudden rage of a male, but not the slow burning emotion suffered by a woman driven to the end of her tether". The minute it took Sara to run to the kitchen and fetch the knife she used to stab her husband was held to be sufficient for her to "cool off" - "male" behaviour-pattern, but ignores the experience of women subject to prolonged violence in the home. Man-made law is written by and for men, derived from men's experiences and interests. The result is that women who kill are rarely deemed eligible for existing defences to murder.

The immediate aims of the campaign are: the release or retrial of battered women who have been imprisoned for murder; reform of the law on provocation to admit defences applicable to women in violent homes; and abolition of the mandatory life-sentence for murder.

But the long-term goal has to be provision of a far greater level of support for women attempting to leave violent relationships. Immense difficulties face women, traumatised by years of violence, or with young children, who try to escape. All three of the women in question - Sara, Kiranjit and Amelia - made several approaches to various agencies, including social services and the police, and sought court injunctions. They received no flesh-and-blood support. Their cases illustrate the horrible isolation experienced by women in our society - a society which has obliterated effective kinship ties and concentrates all economic and emotional support within the walls of bourgeois marriage.

The Child Support Bill threatens to make this kind of predicament even worse for women with children. Threatened with loss of benefits if she refuses to name the violent father of her children, a woman will find it harder to be able to leave.

Sixteen years ago, a Commons Select Committee on Domestic Violence recommended the establishment of four hundred refuges. Today there are under two hundred, overcrowded, underfunded, threatened by local authority cuts. Even four hundred would be pitifully few. Thousands of women and children are affected by violence in the home every day. The threat of it is present to almost all women. There will be no solution until every street, every tower-block contains a sanctuary, a Women's House, where every woman can go with her children and know she will be safe.

In a recent reply to Jo Richardson MP, Kenneth Baker has stated that "at this initial stage" no change is planned to the law on provocation. "There is a real danger...it will lead to more aggrieved women taking the law into their own hands, declaring open season on loutish lovers and butchering them wholesale."

● Demonstrate Wednesday, Oct 9th, 12-2pm, outside the Home Office, next to St James's Park tube, London. Bring rattles, whistles, drums, etc.
● Women for Socialism meeting on Domestic Violence, Saturday October 5th, 2pm, Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC2. Speakers from Southall Black Sisters and Sara Thornton Support Group.
● Mock Trial on Monday Oct 7th at the High Courts, the Strand, London.
● Contact Southall Black Sisters 081-571 9595 or Julie Bindel of Sara Thornton Support Group 071-704 0651.

Newcastle: a "white riot"?

***Heather Hawkwood** reports from Newcastle on the "rioting" which sent press and politicians into such a tizzy.*

WHETHER RECENT events in Newcastle amounted to a genuine riot or were merely an escalation of the norm for this area is a matter of much local debate.

After all, high-speed joy-riding, the odd bit of arson and vandalism are not that unusual in these parts of the city. Indeed, an average night in Newcastle's West End displays many of the characteristics of a "riot", only on a smaller scale.

The five affected wards differ in character. Elswick has a high percentage of Bangladeshi families whereas Scotswood is made up of all-white estates. However, massive unemployment, high levels of drug abuse and well-established rings of criminal thugs are common. Crime ranges from house breaking and car theft to organised gangsterism; the drug barons and the much-publicised ram-raiders have made the West End their home. They are virtually immune from arrest because neighbours are too frightened to give evidence.

"Racial harassment is an everyday occurrence"

Racial harassment is an everyday occurrence. There are known fascist organisers operating in the West End but how strong they are and just what their role has been in recent weeks is unclear.

In comparison with the Met or the Manchester TAG the West End police are out of Z Cars. However, they are often slow in reacting to calls for assistance from black families under attack. What the papers have been saying about the north east police being under-staffed is true and in one way fortunate: had they been strong and confident enough to try to smash their way into trouble-spots then what were in fact relatively gentle disturbances with few casualties could have turned into something much nastier.

Rumours were rife that gangs from Scotswood had designated the Thursday night of the week of disturbances as the time to torch Asian shops. Thankfully, that did not happen. While black families were clearly the most vulnerable to attack and no doubt the most terrified, the number of reported racist attacks was actually small. A post office run by a black family was set on fire; there was a petrol bomb attack on another black household and a black family had their windows broken two nights in succession.

Again, low profile assaults on black people happen every night in the West End. However, on this occasion, it does seem likely that the local mosque and temple would have been burnt had police not mounted a special operation to protect them. Certainly the word among the youth was that these were key targets.

Driving around the affected areas during and after the riots, we saw no evidence of increased racist graffiti but there have been sightings of fascist leaflets.

There is much speculation in Newcastle about "outside influence" on the riots, Nazi or otherwise. Without doubt the youth were organised. There were pre-arranged assembly points and a network of transportation.

It seems likely that after the Meadow Well disturbances on the first night, gangs of crooks were able to exploit the angry mood by sending out messages of times and places to meet and targets to attack. The youth did not walk around the streets en masse; instead, they moved in purposeful groups of three or four.

"The drug and ram-raid barons were the brains behind it all"

The local crooks are well able to carry out this kind of operation; even the joy-riders are able to intercept police radio messages and detect bugs and ultra-high frequency transmissions.

My own guess would be that the drug and ram-raid barons were the brains behind it all. Certainly they were the only ones who benefitted: a no-go area for the police suits their needs and establishes them as the people the kids must obey.

Most of the burning was of disused, boarded-up property. There seems to have been little random violence against individuals. Onlookers, watching from well-established viewing points on the joy-riding circuit, were untouched.

These events should not be glorified or romanticised by the left. They could only have taken place in a context of abysmal capitalist failure and the participants were undoubtedly working class youth facing a desperate future. But fighting the police and burning buildings is not necessarily a useful response. In this case, I would argue that the rule of the police is actually preferable for working class people to the rule of the drugs barons - especially given the element of racial harassment involved.

Many local people have been terrified by the events and the black community feels that it has been under serious threat. Many in that community may now conclude that they must organise to defend themselves and not put their trust in the authorities or established community leaders.

Of course, the West End needs massive investment urgently: jobs, training, housing renewal, youth provision, etc. Money will come from "City Challenge", the latest Heseltine gimmick, and the City Council will spend it on a variety of worthy schemes. But one-off injections of cash will not solve the problems.

Essentially, the crisis in the West End is as much a crisis of working class consciousness as anything else; it is therefore a job that only the labour movement can tackle. Tragically, the movement has little purchase in these areas and is far too weak to offer any kind of alternative pole of attraction to the many white youth mesmerised by a career track that seems to lead from petty crime to big-time gangsterism. To win these youth over, the labour movement would have to be organisationally and ideologically well-armed - and at the moment it is neither.

Greetings to conference from Lewisham Labour Briefing supporters Sun, sea and socialism Brighton 1991

Searchlight under the microscope

In last month's Briefing, *Ray Hill and Daphne Liddle answered criticisms of the anti-fascist magazine* Searchlight *made by a number of black organisations. The debate continues with this contribution from* **Larry O'Hara**, *a journalist and independent left researcher into fascism, who levels grave charges against the* Searchlight *team.*

SEPTEMBER'S LABOUR *Briefing* was the first time (as far as I am aware) that any members of the *Searchlight* inner circle have deigned to reply in print to the Newham Monitoring Project's allegations regarding the meeting in Ilford chaired by *Searchlight* editor Gerry Gable.

Searchlight never printed the original NMP press statement nor the statement by black organisations printed by *Briefing*. It also failed to print the resignation letter by CARF, which ended its eleven year association with the magazine last October, criticising it for interpreting "the fight against racism and fascism as the fight against anti-Semitism in the first instance".

Ray Hill's comment about not being "easily impressed" by black organisations "consisting of three men and a dog" is distasteful. It is just not up to Hill (or me) to engage in patronising comments about black organisations in this manner.

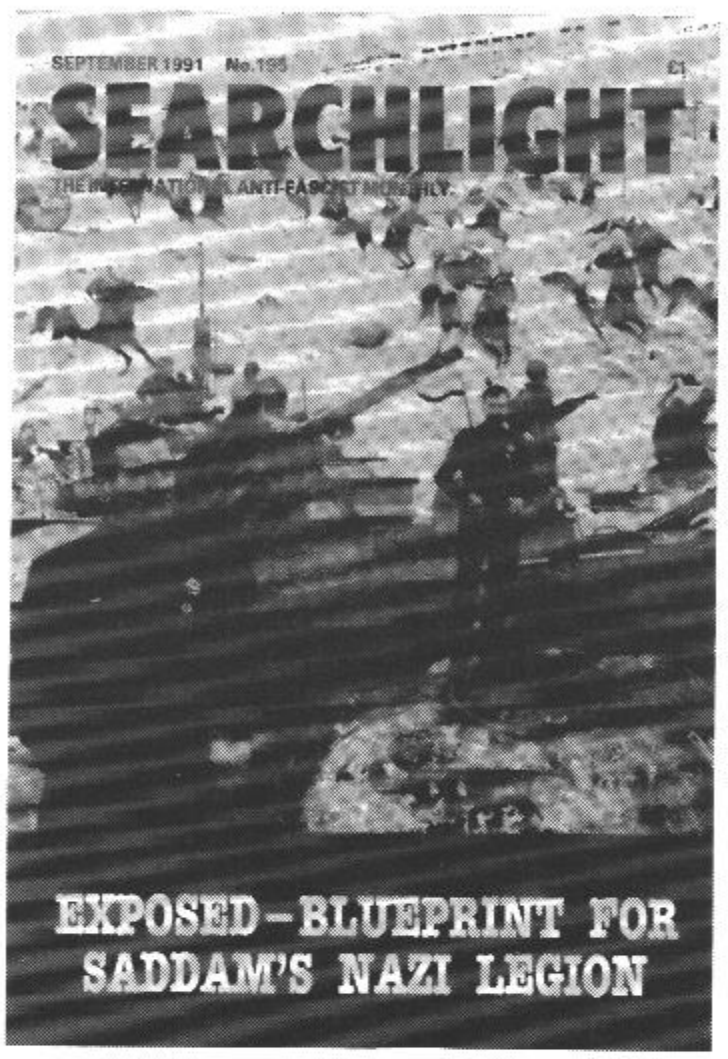
On one point, however, I do agree with Hill: *Searchlight* does take an interest in "police harassment of black people". This co-exists, however, with an attitude many anti-racists find questionable. For example, *Searchlight*'s July editorial criticising the American Al Sharpton's "friends in London, some of whom do not want even to work with white anti-racists, should know by now not to expect too much from the police, and should learn how to protect their own meetings. If they insult the police day in day out, they should not moan if the police then look the other way".

It is simply not up to *Searchlight* to tell black people whether they should or shouldn't "moan" about police harassment; that is their prerogative.

Indisputably, *Searchlight* is sometimes useful; it has printed excellent information. Many people have not dared criticise it because of this good work. Indeed its very existence infuriates fascists greatly. All this I concede. There is a need for a magazine to forewarn anti-fascists and at present (although CARF is a hopeful sign, subject to the qualification that they do not, in my view, give the specifically fascist groups the attention they deserve) there is nothing yet on the horizon to replace *Searchlight*.

That *Searchlight* does need to be replaced by something better is a large claim that cannot be totally substantiated here, but certain troubling facts about *Searchlight* will ensure it is raised repeatedly.

Searchlight is just not independent. It has suspect links with the secret state (MI5 in particular). Don't take my word for it. Consult the *New Statesman* (February 15th, 1980) which partially reproduced the infamous "Gable Memorandum" of May 5th, 1977, where Gable, who was trying to wheedle information out of the ABC Defence Campaign, told his bosses, "I have now given the names I have acquired to be checked out by British/French security... and the South American stuff is being checked by Geoffrey Stewart-Smith's Institute. He has strong CIA links".



In 1986 Gable told two reporters from *International Times*, repeating MI5 disinformation, that an alleged associate of Carlos the Jackal was none other than Phil Kelly, former *Tribune* editor. "He's a fucking terrorist - of the worst sort".

One of Gable's more disgusting episodes was his role in the smear campaign against the anarchist group Class War, whom he accused of associating with "known fascists and Nazis", notably at a Stop the City demonstration in London in 1985. The allegations ripped Anti-Fascist Action apart. Class War were eventually exonerated (though some of their propaganda was criticised for naivety and confusion); the report of the AFA enquiry into Class War remarked that "despite the leading role of *Searchlight* magazine in the affair, and despite many approaches to the magazine for evidence, the sum total of material from *Searchlight* to the enquiry was nil. We are bemused by *Searchlight*'s role in the affair".

Others like myself, having come across attempts by *Searchlight* to discredit Meibion Glyndwr, the Animal Liberation Front and squatters in Hackney are not so bemused.

It matters little whether Gable and his circle are aware of what they are up to when they circulate print these stories. The effects on those slandered are the same. Without proof, *Searchlight* consistently accused the now-defunct "political soldier" NF of being an MI6 tool, but is itself indisputably acting as just such a tool. Or does anyone think the security services give Gable these snippets out of devotion to the cause of anti-fascism?

Liddle says that *Searchlight* is willing to "work together with other anti-fascists whose political positions...are quite different to our own". But in the course of criticising the SWP for daring to hold a march in 1989 to commemorate the ten years since the death of Blair Peach in Southall, *Searchlight* came out with the following description of the SWP's activity: "It smacks of fifth column activity to divide the growing strength of the anti-fascist movement in Britain" The term "fifth column" was originally used to describe those saboteurs who prepared the way behind Republican lines for Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War. Just think about it - the SWP organise a march to commemorate one of their own members who died fighting fascism, and they're accused of being "fifth columnists". Am I alone in finding this disgusting?

Polish left alive and kicking

"Here, people don't understand what it means to be left or right," says Polish socialist feminist Milka Tyszkiewicz. "But they understand that there are employers and employees. They are starting to understand that they have to organise - not just in trade unions, but politically." ***Dave Osler****, Leyton CLP, interviewed left activists on a recent visit to Poland.*



Gdansk shipyard workers on strike, 1988

MILKA TYSZKIEWICZ is one of the three full-time workers at the Socialist Political Centre (SPC) in Wroclaw, a non-party group trying to develop a broad movement around basic socialist ideas.

The SPC will be participating in the Polish general election on October 27th, linking up with the local MKK inter-factory committee to join the Solidarnosc Pracy (Labour Solidarity) slate, initiated by Solidarity Senator Karol Modzelewski and four other MPs.

While MKK is technically a unit of Solidarity, it has been a constant critic of the Solidarity government's anti-working class policies. The SPC acts as its press office and exerts political influence within it. Solidarnosc Pracy is basically a social democratic tendency, but it is prepared to form alliances with socialists. In addition to the bloc in Wroclaw, elsewhere it is aligned with the PPS (Polish Socialist Party) and other radical groupings.

There are also supporters of the independent leftist paper Sprawy I Ludzie (People and Problems) and some elements of the old PZPR - the former ruling United Polish Workers Party - who see themselves as Marxists and take part in a discussion club organised by the SPC.

"In general, all these groups agree, but it's too early to think about a common organisation of the left," says Tyszkiewicz.

Solidarity's rank-and-file has still not forgiven the erstwhile Stalinists and understandably refuses to unite with them organisationally.

At the same time, many left-wingers hate the hard right (and often Catholic fundamentalist) Solidarity leadership.

Wroclaw is a working class city, with an ethnically mixed population of Poles, Ukrainians, Czechs, and Lithuanians, many forcibly resettled there after World War Two. Political consciousness is developing fast.

"All the executive members of MKK are elected by their workplace, and all say they are on the left. What is typical is distrust of official Solidarity," claims Tyszkiewicz, and adds, "The problem of the corruption of the Solidarity bureaucracy is incredible." She suspects that many of the leaders used Western donations during the martial law period for personal enrichment.

While OPZZ, the former state union federation, is trying to gain credibility as an authentic union, for most workers it is irredeemably compromised by its association with the Jaruzelski regime.

There is also a 250,000-strong Solidarity breakaway union, Solidarnosc '80, which has isolated pockets of strength. While it can be militant, its members sometimes display backward, even anti-semitic, ideas.

The Wroclaw region Solidarnosc Pracy slate is standing twelve candidates, of which five are MKK/SPC supporters: it has hopes of winning at least two seats.

The list is headed by Krystyna Politacha, a socialist feminist and national leader of Solidarity's banned women's section. Walesa withdrew recognition last year when Politacha and others refused to toe the union's anti-abortion line. It now operates unofficially.

While the Solidarnosc Pracy programme is democratic rather than explicitly socialist, Tyszkiewicz is adamant that the left is correct in supporting it: "Our first task is to defend democracy against rightist authoritarian currents, which could form around Walesa, or may be the next development of Catholic fundamentalism".

The manifesto also demands rejection of Finance Minister Balcerowicz's IMF-dictated austerity package, and seeks guarantees on social security and health care. It is strong on women's issues and rejects attempts to ban abortion.

It calls for state factories to become workers' co-operatives rather than privately-owned enterprises. The SPC feels that it is not possible at the moment to organise big mobilisations from below in defence of the state sector.

Donations to Polish Socialist Appeal to Basement Office, 92 Ladbroke Grove, W11.

Alf Lomas MEP
For international socialism - not Euro-chauvinism

"No triumph of democracy in Russia"

__Boris Kagarlitsky__, left opponent of Stalinism, author of Farewell Perestroika *and leading member of the recently formed Russian Socialist Party, spoke to __Labour Briefing__ by telephone from Moscow.*

LB: How easy is it to call yourself a socialist in the new climate?

BK: It is much easier right now, after the collapse of the Communist Party, to belong to the socialist left. At least now the independent left is not forced to give proofs everyday that it is not Communist. Now we can just speak for ourselves, without looking around and being afraid of being confused with the Communists. On the other hand, it is quite clear that what happened to the Communist Party is just a prelude to what could happen to any opposition party. The problem is not just about being a socialist; it is about not supporting the government. The socialist left has now emerged as the main legal opposition. The problem is, how long will it remain legal?

LB: What did the Socialist Party do during the coup?

BK: During the August days the socialists were very active in Moscow trying to organise the defence of the Moscow Soviet - not the White House, which was Yeltsin's residence. Some of them also went to the White House during the nights of the 19th and 20th of August, which we considered crucial. Vladimir Kondratoff, who is the leader of the Socialist Party faction in the Moscow Soviet, was appointed as one of the leading figures of the so-called Special Committee of the Moscow Soviet, whose task was to organise the resistance to and liquidation of the Emergency Committee in Moscow. It became quite clear for the socialists that the coup was very much manipulated by people both from the Gorbachev camp and the Yeltsin camp. And of course we have absolutely no illusions about the Yeltsin government. As one comrade, Anatoly Baranov, said when he came to the White House on August 19th, "We came here to defend our enemies".

LB: What is the Socialist Party doing now? What are its immediate aims and has it made any links to the trade unions?

BK: After the August events the Socialist Party launched an appeal for the formation of a Party of Labour. It was published in the Moscow Pravda newspaper and the Moscow trade union newspaper. This appeal is getting a very positive response. At the moment, the sections of the left that are announcing that they are going to join the Party of Labour include not just socialists but also the majority of the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists, most of the left-wing opposition groups from the ex-CP and some very important sections of the trade union leadership, mostly in Moscow and Leningrad. Our rapid progress can be seen in the anger of the government which didn't expect any major opposition group to grow fast after the August events.

LB: What role did the trade unions play in resistance to the coup?

BK: First of all, I must stress that there was no real coup in Moscow. So to speak about resistance seriously is a very big mistake. There was no coup; there was just a kind of power play among the rulers and that is exactly how it was seen by the great majority of the population. The workers of course did not support the Emergency Committee, but neither did they support Yeltsin. In the crowd of about 20,000 people which responded to Yeltsin's call there were almost no workers. Yeltsin's appeals to launch a general strike failed miserably. The trade unions condemned the coup, but failed to support Yeltsin and that, I think, is a very encouraging sign for everyone who wants an independent labour movement to emerge in this country.

LB: How would you define the relationship between the socialist left and the Yeltsin camp?

BK: What is happening in the country can be characterized as the formation of a populist right wing dictatorship with growing fascist tendencies. Clearing there can't be any relations with a government which we consider to be a real disaster for the country and probably even for humankind.

LB: Is it realistic for you to attempt to preserve social ownership of the means of production?

BK: This is exactly our policy. The labour collectives are seriously interested in preventing privatisation because they know quite well what it could mean for them. So we are getting growing support for our struggle against the privatisation drive.

LB: What do you expect from the left in the West?

BK: We have to get some kind of real solidarity which we will probably need quite soon just to survive politically and physically against a regime which is becoming more dangerous by the day. But the main thing for the left now is to tell the people in the Western countries that there was no such thing as the triumph of democracy in Russia.

LB: How can the trade unions, which have been compromised by the state for so long, reconstitute themselves?

BK: Right now, there is a substantial section of the trade union leadership which understands that if they are not to disappear they must become real unions. The miners proved that they had learned from their own experience when they rejected Yeltsin's call to go on strike; they remembered that it was Yeltsin who called them first to go on strike against Gorbachev and two months later to go on strike to save Gorbachev. Miners are not going any more to be manipulated by right-wing demagogues.

LB: Does the word democracy still have a meaning for you?

BK: Of course it has a meaning. And I think that the basic elements of representative, parliamentary democracy which are now being dismantled by the Yeltsin government, for example the Soviets in many of the cities, must be preserved. But while fighting to preserve representative democracy, we are not going to be limited to the traditional parliamentary framework.

LB: Is there a possibility of fighting for real soviets of the kind that were powerful in 1905 and 1917?

BK: We'll have to see. They cannot be invented by the theorists. Just as the original soviets were not.

The revolutionary meaning of August, 1991

Following the defeat of the Stalinist coup and the destruction of the Communist Party in what used to be the Soviet Union, ***Chris Knight*** *sees new vistas of hope opening up for international socialism.*

WHEN THE Bolshevik Revolution triumphed in 1917, it did so in opposition to the insane carnage of the First World War. Socialist internationalist opposition to that war, however close to being extinguished, had become in those years a shining beacon in a world gone mad - the embodiment of all that was best in European culture and civilisation. The International of Rosa Luxembourg, of Trotsky and of Lenin may not have been a perfect political body; but at a time when all other political parties had blood on their hands, its stature was high.

Socialism can surely be nothing unless it can restore its status as the political representative, indeed the highest embodiment, of European and world science, world human self-awareness, world art and culture. Today, that revolutionary beacon, in its particular Bolshevik form, is virtually extinct. Within the birthplace of the October Revolution, Lenin's image has been torn down, the Communist Party disbanded, and even the very idea of socialism of any kind disowned virtually throughout the working class.

It therefore seems important to emphasise a paradox. Despite the reversed political flags and symbols, and the reversed economic and foreign policies, the Second Great Russian Revolution of August 1991 echoes not only the national emancipatory themes of England in 1640 and of the French Revolution of 1789 but also the internationalism of October 1917. This latest revolution's championship of "the market" strikes a chord in Russia precisely because, whatever the exploitative consequences, to be "in" this market at least means being "in" something international. In fact, the working class has not been impressed by what it has seen so far of the domestic results of "market forces". What it responded to in August was the Yeltsin camp's determination to allow the imprisoned Russian people at long last to "rejoin the world".

Now, as in 1917, the popular masses have rejected all "Saviours of the Fatherland". They have refused to be cut off from the only arena within which the modern world's economic and other problems can realistically be solved - the arena of world information and economic exchange, world technological and scientific development, world political culture as a whole.

Having collided with this new internationalism, the Party of the Great Russian Motherland (Stalin's mirror-image inversion of the Bolshevik Party of 1917) has disintegrated beyond repair. The top layers of this party were the nest of the attempted coup. The Yeltsin camp will soon have eradicated it from all positions of influence - just as we socialists in Britain might feel within our rights in preventing the Freemasons or the Metropolitan Police from organizing within our ranks.

Some will recoil from such a parallel. It may even seem to contradict the Trotskyist notion that the Soviet Union under Stalinism, despite its "deformations", constituted a weight on "our" side of the international balance of class forces. But there is no contradiction. Trotsky himself knew that no state is just a thing-in-itself. Its class character is defined by its relationships. In relation to the military threat posed by world imperialism, we Trotskyists defended that state "as a workers' state". In relation to the working class oppressed within its boundaries, we never defended it. In relation to these workers, its significance was the opposite of what it was on a global level. It was the transmission belt along which the military pressures of world imperialism were experienced. To smash it was something which we always fully supported and indeed ardently championed - provided only that it was done by the masses "from the inside".

A tide of "anti-communism" is now inevitable. We don't go along with this - certainly not in the West. but in the east, we must decode it. We refuse to let our sensitivities concerning cherished symbols to place a barrier between us and the popular masses. We have to remember that within Russia and the other former Soviet states, the Communist Party has for decades played nothing resembling even the vaguely reformist role of Communist Parties in the West. Since Stalin's time, this organisation of corruption, wealth and privilege has been indistinguishable from the KGB and the managerial elite.

It hasn't even enjoyed the legitimacy of a real social class. At least a capitalist class during a period of boom plays a real function within the economy, a defined role within the system of production, distribution and exchange. The Soviet bureaucracy played no role in this respect. Apart from plundering the economy to sustain itself by military means, it has had nothing to do. It would be ridiculous to confuse its role with "planning", which involves looking at the economy's needs and providing the information to meet them. The bureaucrats have concealed precisely this information - and planned nothing but the maintenance of their own military and political grip.

What we witnessed in August was, from an internal standpoint, a bourgeois revolution against Stalin's counter-revolution. Compared with that counter-revolution, it was and remains massively liberating (note the explicit support for the Yeltsin camp from Moscow's lesbians and gays). Compared with the international significance of October 1917, it was of course "counter-revolutionary". Personally, though, I wouldn't stress that formal aspect. After all, virtually everything in the world which has happened since 1917 has been "counter-revolutionary" by the standards of October!

The important point is that the story is not yet finished. This Second Russian Revolution may not be what Lenin and Trotsky hoped for immediately *after* October 1917. But as the prelude to a new epoch of global revolutionary change, it could revive their dreams of the

years and months *before* October 1917.

In its world impact, this revolution could inspire even more widespread calls for freedom than the overthrow of the Tsar in the February revolution. I think we should treat it precisely as Lenin and Trotsky treated February - except that it is now as if "February" had spread across almost the entire world. We can't fight for a new world-historic "October" unless we know how to defend this "February" against assaults from the new Kornilovs, from whichever quarter they emerge. Democracy is something worth fighting for.

Conceptualising the future of socialism in terms of nation-states is now completely outdated. There can be no socialist rebirth within Russia taken in isolation. Our responsibility in the West is particularly heavy because of a bitter truth. Long before its own death throes, Stalinism had rooted out virtually all traces of Bolshevism as a continuous tradition in the Soviet Union. Those of us who once hoped or imagined otherwise must face this unpalatable fact. In essence, there is nothing left. Although its working class remains potentially mighty, Russia today hardly has an organised labour movement at all, let alone an ideologically class-conscious one. Stalinism has all but destroyed the workers' movement precisely by destroying its symbols - by turning Lenin into an icon of chauvinist Great Russian sentiment, the hammer-and-sickle into a badge of state privilege, Marx and Engels into the ruling dynasty's mystical founding ancestors.

In a revolution, the old regime's destruction is accompanied by the overthrow of its symbols.

Whilst some respect for Lenin and for the original aims of 1917 must remain among some intellectuals, there will now be a powerful mass feeling that a fresh symbolic start should be made. We socialists get fixated on particular symbols too often. To insist that our Russian comrades preserve or restore Bolshevism's hammer and sickle on the grounds that it was "once revolutionary" would be quixotic. Yes, it would be wonderfully reassuring if history could repeat itself in so pure a form. But insisting on it would be like insisting on marching under the revolutionary emblems of Christ, His Cross and His Holy Blood - all on the academically quite plausible grounds that the early Church was communistic and revolutionary!

Like the words of human language, the symbolic systems of political life change over time in ways beyond conscious control. I think we just have to accept this fact and adjust our own use of such symbols accordingly. It still remains necessary to find new international symbols which distinguish us from nationalists everywhere, from colluders with US imperialism and from the global camp of our class opponents. I would argue that the redness of our own class blood suffices - nothing can change the political meaning of that. But the raising of this cleansed red banner will be just as much the responsibility of revolutionaries in the West as of those emerging from the long night of Stalinism in the East.

The terrible political weakness of the ex-Soviet working class now leaves it exposed to the mercies of world capitalism. We will see rampant privatisation campaigns, sickening legalised corruption, vast inequalities of wealth and the wholesale sacrifice of jobs and welfare provisions on the altar of "the free market". And any fight-back will be hampered since the ideology of class struggle is not validated by any legitimised mass political party.

On a world scale, people in Cuba, Palestine and elsewhere will fear for their future even more than before. For all their horrors, the Stalinist states did represent a useful global counterweight to the naked dominance of United States imperialism, offering at least some space for manoeuvre for national liberation struggles and anti-imperialist regimes.

But to argue that such considerations can be decisive is to forget what Marxism is. The situation of Third World "anti-imperialist regimes" is certainly dire, and the political defence of Cuba will be a number one priority for socialists. But demands for subsidised state sugar-orders or missiles - along with illusions in Moscow as "the great fortress" - were never going to solve the problems of the Third World in the long term. The ex-colonial masses can liberate themselves only in an alliance with the aroused international working class.

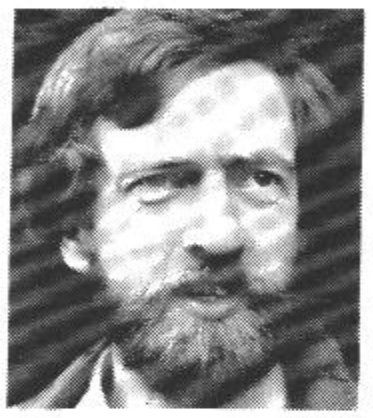
This presupposes an immense process of political change throughout the industrialised West. The workers of Japan, of the United States, of Western Europe must follow through the logic of recent events and draw their own conclusions about how human freedom and global survival can now best be secured. This may be an immense task; but a rapid transformation of global consciousness is certainly less inconceivable now than it was even a few months ago. Is there anyone who can seriously argue that the rampant "free market" will plug the hole in the ozone layer or save the rainforests - let alone rescue the Third World from its mounting debt crisis and avoid the prospect of mass famine?

An international avalanche, prepared in the late 1980s and triggered by events in China and Eastern Europe in 1989, is now well under way. This process cannot be stopped. The stability of the post war system of power blocs has gone and a new period of rapid flux and immense opportunity has opened up. Don't look to Russia for salvation. Don't expect some distant event to come to the rescue of Trotskyists here in Britain. August 1991 has changed all that. By finally destroying Stalinism, it has put the ball back in the world court.

Revolutionary socialists have to measure up to this challenge. We are far closer to that period of optimism, crisis and revolutionary vistas which inspired the young Trotsky between 1905 and 1917 than we have been since the 1930s, when Stalinism and Fascism in tandem crushed Bolshevism along with humanity's hopes.

"...the Second Great Russian Revolution of August 1991 echoes not only the national emancipatory themes of England in 1640 and of the French Revolution of 1789 but also the internationalism of October 1917"

Vic Williams: "My Conscience is Clear"



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

VIC WILLIAMS *was a career soldier. He joined up after holding various jobs punctuated by periods of unemployment and eventually gained promotion to the rank of "gunner" in the Royal Artillery.*

Posted to Germany, he was told to prepare for embarkation to Saudi Arabia to defend it against Iraq, liberate Kuwait and keep the peace. The more he was told the less he was convinced. On the day of parade for departure Vic was not seen. He had left by car for Southern Germany, Switzerland and Austria. He drove around, stopped a lot, thought a lot, and at last decided to head for Britain and give himself up.

He went to Woolwich barracks, where he parked his car, looked at the Guard Room, walked around and thought some more. He then drove into central London, saw some peace campaigners in Whitehall and talked to them. Then he talked to many more.

All this led Vic to speak to the anti-war demo in Hyde Park in February and then be interviewed for "Heart of the Matter" on television. When the war was over, on a fine and glorious cold spring Saturday, he gave himself up to the military police at Rochester Row in London.

At a three-day open court martial at Woolwich a few weeks ago Vic's case was ably put by Helena Kennedy QC to a military tribunal of five Army Officers (all ribbons, medals and scrambled egg) and a "judge advocate" in wig and gown who told us ominously he knew the law and what it meant.

As Helena spoke with great eloquence about liberty, the rights to object on grounds of conscience and Vic's personal motives the officers shifted uneasily: the prosecution stared at the floor and ceiling and wondered; outside through the open windows, we could see and hear a valiant vigil for peace. Vic sat bolt upright in well-pressed uniform and ended the whole thing by simply stating "my conscience is clear".

Found guilty of being absent without leave and conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline (i.e. speaking against the war) he now faces fourteen months in prison, on top of the time he has already served since turning himself in.

The Gulf War cost the lives of over 200,000 people. It has left the region more unstable and impoverished than it was before. It succeeded only in boosting the otherwise flagging arms trade.

Vic's stand cost him his career but struck a blow for the right to dissent and for the anti-war movement.

Please write to Vic Williams in prison, c/o 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4.

A YEAR AGO *the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq was initially greeted by silence. Only after the extent of Kuwaiti holdings in Britain and the importance of its oil reserves were fully realised did Thatcher wing her way to Bush.*

His subsequent conversion to opposing aggression and supporting democracy was so sudden it made Paul's episode on the road to Damascus appear a mere whim.

The media swallowed this nonsense without protest - and Labour Party Conference in October endorsed the Tory war cry. The debate, you may recall, was given a place in history when John Edmonds told the Conference he would not like to be a tank commander in the desert being told what to do by a committee. After all, he might want to launch a "pre-emptive strike". So for all the money spent, all the lives lost, all the liberties suppressed - what has been solved?

The answer has to be nothing: no homeland for the Palestinians, no democracy in Kuwait, a dirty environment, poverty and carnage in Iraq and the Kurdish people still fighting for self-determination.

Will Labour learn the lesson and stand up to the next disastrous bout of jingoism?

THE FAR RIGHT *in Sweden have gained a foothold in parliament on the basis of a racist campaign. Sweden's transformation from model haven for those fleeing oppression to full membership of the Euro-xenophobes club now looks complete.*

Britain has become a leader in this pack, with Kenneth Baker, fresh from his triumphant retreat on dogs, turning his attention to asylum seekers.

He plans to exclude them by visa requirements, fining airlines £2000 for every passenger not admitted, stopping access to green form legal aid advice, denying a right of appeal and insisting on removal to the first stop even for asylum seekers from distant parts.

On top of this is the denial of any funds to help with housing, health and education to refugees who do gain admission and a nasty and very overt attempt to create a racist backlash.

I deal face to face with the horror of people fleeing from Somalia, Zaire, Sri Lanka and other places. When they set out for Britain they cannot be certain of their fate or their families' fate; they are just trying, against tremendous odds, to survive.

If the Tories make this an election issue we should not concede the ground and apologise but stand firm for what is right - and that means arguing for the right to asylum.

FINALLY, I HOPE *the election does come soon and that we fight it on a commitment to eliminate poverty and expand health, education and housing. On that programme we can win.*

However, if we are to expel every one on the lists Chris Patten sends to Neil Kinnock, what does that tell the public about our resolve to deal with their problems?

Short shrift for women-only short-lists

WHEN THE National Executive Committee's Women's Committee (NECWC) was formed two years ago from the merger of the National Women's Committee and the Women's Sub-committee of the NEC it was argued that the new body would be more important and powerful than its predecessors. That promise has yet to be fulfilled.

Lorraine Monk
London regional representative
NEC Women's Committee

The 23-strong NECWC has representatives from the regions (though much reduced in number from the old National Women's Committee), the trades unions and the NEC (three MPs).

It is allowed to meet six times a year and has spent most of its time this year debating quotas and their implementation.

I believe we moved a big step forward when, just before the National Women's Conference, the NECWC agreed to support the imposition of women-only shortlists for target Parliamentary seats - the way to get change in the nature of parliamentary representation. It is now clear that the mechanism of "one woman on every shortlist" where one was nominated, will have failed abysmally to improve the ratio of female to male Labour MPs after the next election.

This year the NEC will not support the imposition of women only shortlists. The NEC report quotes a recent consultation exercise as evidence that a large majority of the Party would reject this measure. However, according to this same report a majority of the Party does support women-only shortlists. Which leaves us as a Party supporting women-only lists, but without any mechanism to implement them. It isn't only Nicholas Ridley who operates "not in my backyard" policies!

The fundamental problem is still the age-old dilemma for feminism: the majority of people with power, i.e. men, are unwilling to give it up. Yes, the men on the NEC are to blame, but so are all the other institutions, clubs and "old boys" networks within the movement which fail to take women's issues seriously. That holds true for the left as well as the right.

Time and again reports from the regions indicate that some offices and officers are not giving Women's Sections or Regional Women's Committees the backing they need. For training, conferences, newsletters - no money, no support. Again and again the NECWC receives complaints that the Party's profile is too macho.

It's not enough to put one pretty blonde on a the cover of a policy document. Welcome as it is to see Margaret Beckett's heightened media profile, why does she always seem to be on the edge of the smiling trio of Gordon, Tony and John, like a session singer with a sixties folk group?

The glossy, easy-to-use ring pull binder produced for our manifesto covered nearly every conceivable policy topic - but "women" did not feature in the index. Blaming the oversight on a temporary worker doesn't account for nobody else at Walworth Road noticing it.

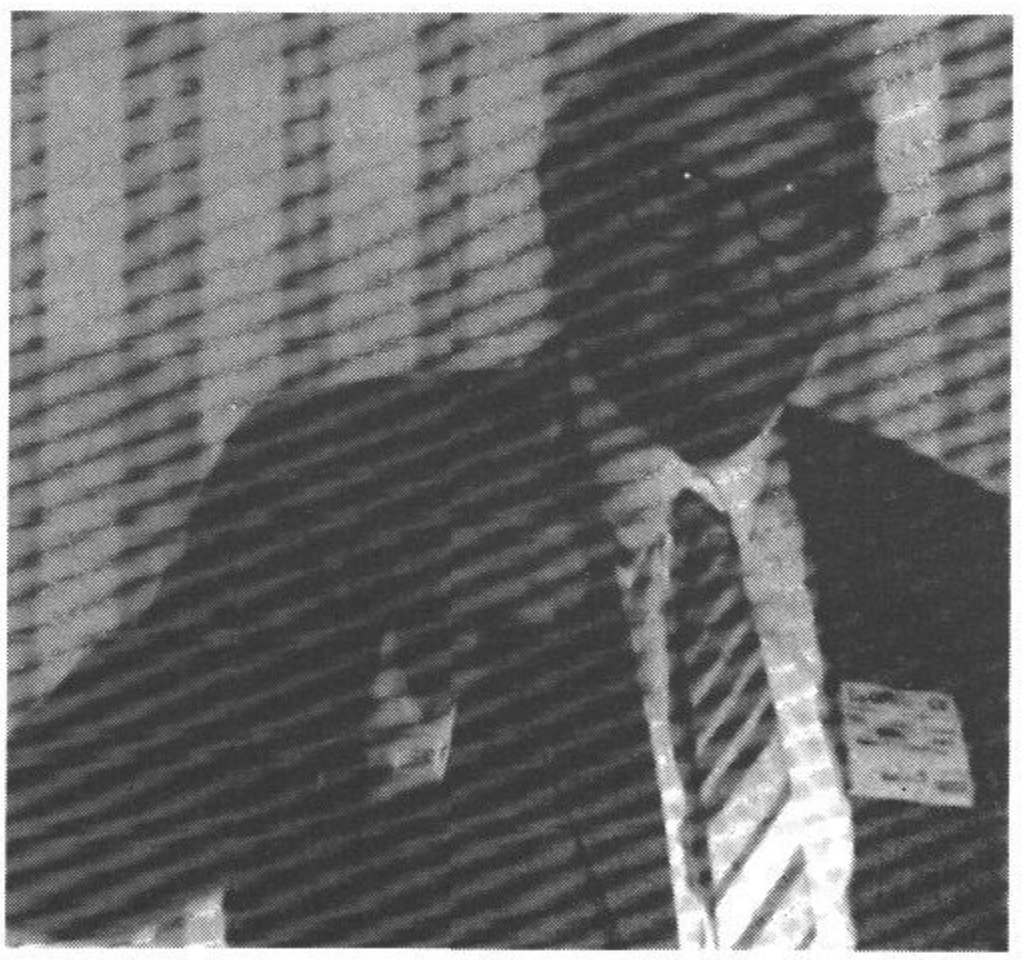
Men in the Party have learnt to acknowledge that women have a "difficult" time and that responsibility for childcare is "hard", but there is no real attempt by the Party organisation or members to address those difficulties or ease those hardships. The fact that the NECWC is a sub-committee - and one deigned so unimportant that it will not meet formally during Conference - is symptomatic of the malaise. Yes, women's lot under Thatcher and Major has been horrendous. Yes, the Tories must be defeated, but we need to tackle the fundamental roots of inequality.

Quotas, if implemented, will go some way to change things, so will a Ministry for Women and women-only shortlists, but it is attitudes that need to change fundamentally - in the draughty halls and stuffy meeting rooms where local parties still conduct so much of their business, as well as in the corridors of Westminster and the offices of Walworth Road.

Eric Heffer on Neil Kinnock:

"Polls seem to dominate his thinking. At times he thrusts out his chin like Mussolini. If Labour wins the next election it will be despite, not because of, Kinnock's supposedly inspirational leadership. Some will say I'm being too harsh and that Neil is really a kind, friendly person. I have not found him so. There is a vindictive trait in him. He does not forgive or forget unless his opponent capitulates entirely. His attitude is somewhat like Stalin's after the death of Lenin. Of course, I do not mean he would imprison his opponents; it is just that, like Stalin, he joined the right to marginalize the left. He then set out to absorb the right by taking over their policies. Kinnock has proved to be a great cynical manipulator who has used the party's dislike and fear of Thatcher to get revisionist policies accepted. He has gone farther than Gaitskell in revising the Party's principles, policies and organization."

From Never a Yes Man, the life and politics of an adopted Liverpudlian, published by Verso, £16.95.



Eric Heffer addressing a Labour Briefing fringe meeting

It's still not too late!

ONCE AGAIN the powers-that-be in the Party are ignoring the arguments of history. Only twice since 1945 have the Tories polled less than 41% of the vote in general elections. That was in the two 1974 elections, when class conflict was at the top of the political agenda. The labour movement collectively challenged the Tory government over a period of three to four years and in the process exposed the class nature of that government. What the Party leadership fails to appreciate today is that even now the combined weight of a united labour movement challenge to the Tories would kill off once and for all Major's "Mr Nice Guy" image and all his rubbish about a "classless society". It would also see the re-surfacing of the splits in the Tory Party which brought Thatcher down and which Major has since tried to paper over.

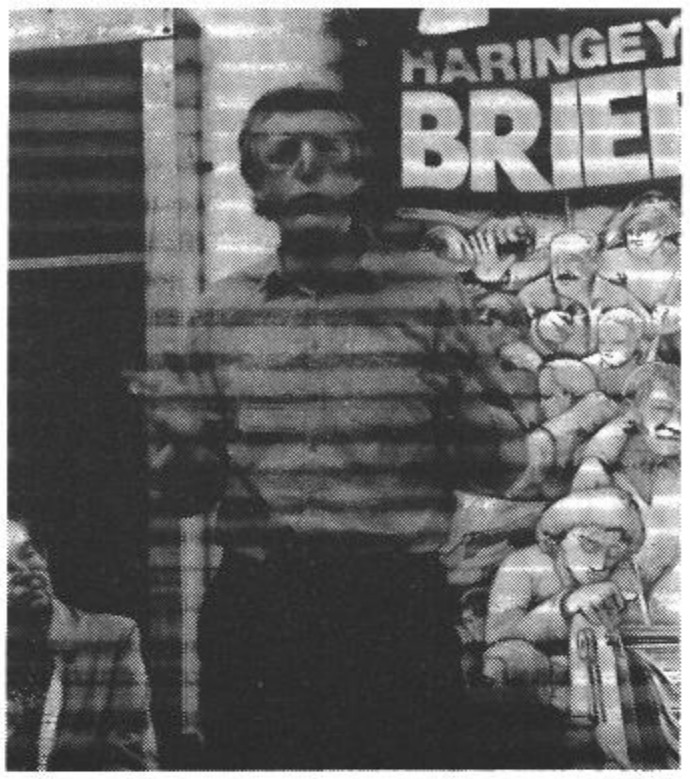
The election may be almost upon us, but it is still not too late for Labour to go on the offensive. We need positive alternative policies which really will change people's lives from day one of the next labour government. We realise we aren't going to get "full-blooded socialism", but even a good dose of "Labourist welfarism" would be better than what is being offered now.

Anyone with an ounce of political understanding will know that a programme of increased public expenditure, with clear commitments on the NHS, education, benefits, pensions, and transport would be a vote winner. If this programme of spending was coupled with cuts in defence spending to at least West European levels (and proposals to disband the British Army on the Rhine - saving over £2.5 billion a year), with arms conversion and diversification to protect jobs, it would sweep the ground from under the Tories. Surely with thousands homeless on our streets and the housing stock visibly crumbling, a house-building programme based on allowing local authorities to borrow and use capital receipts for that purpose would be popular. A party political broadcast showing the fate of homeless people in the streets - and the real solutions to this tragedy - would be more effective than anodyne murmurs from front-bench spokespersons practising a "cult of (lack of) personality".

Our social policy agenda could then be set alongside commitments in three other areas: public ownership, full employment and non-nuclear defence.

The Tory sell-off of public utilities such as gas, electricity and water was highly unpopular. A commitment to take these

"Labour haven't got the policies; they have failed to map out a clear alternative; and they haven't got the power." Thus spoke Paddy Ashdown at the recent Liberal Democrat conference. Just what he meant by "power" is a mystery. But there is no doubt that more and more voters share Ashdown's verdict on Labour's failure to present clear alternative policies. ***John Wilton****, Labour's Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Birmingham Edgbaston, prescribes a stiff dose of socialism as the best medicine for Labour's creaking general election campaign.*



and other utilities (such as BT) back into public ownership would win votes - especially if it was accompanied by proposals to democratise these industries and make them really accountable to the public.

After two Tory recessions in twelve years, surely a commitment by Labour to a boldly stated goal of full employment would be a vote winner. Obviously it would not be achieved overnight; we need to redefine the term and incorporate into it proposals for a shorter working year, week and day and back it up with a properly funded education and training programme and repeal of all Tory anti-trade union laws.

Finally, now more than ever we should be arguing for unilateral nuclear disarmament. In recent years there has been an element of self-censorship on this subject by parts of the left which has allowed Kaufman and Kinnock to use articles in the Guardian and appearances on Sunday morning TV to drag Labour ever deeper into the nuclear mire.

We have been told year after year to put our faith in the "Party modernisers". They have run Walworth Road, Conference, and the Party their own way. Now everyone can see the result: the Party is financially and politically bankrupt. We are £1.7 million in debt. The national membership scheme is a shambles. Members are apathetic and disenchanted. Branches and general committees are collapsing or barely quorate.

Many members are fed-up with being told which policies to dump and which members to expel by Walworth Road "smart suits" who can't even manage to send a membership card out on time! This centralised, authoritarian, "leave the politics to us" approach is killing the Party at the grass-roots as dead as Monty Python's Parrot.

Prospective Parliamentary Candidates are even told not to give their own answers to questionnaires they receive from pressure groups, but always to use standard answers supplied by head office. This sort of imposed uniformity doesn't even occur in Moscow any more!

In case anyone is confused by articles in The *Director* (!) by the Party leader stating that "the Party never believed in wholesale nationalisation", some facts might be useful. A survey of Labour Party members carried out by Sheffield University last year for Party head office revealed that 71% of members wanted more nationalisation and 81% thought "the public enterprises privatised by the Tory government should be returned to the public sector".

The survey also reported that Party "members hold distinctive principled beliefs on public ownership, public expenditure, trade union bargaining rights and non-nuclear defence".

Party members can still take action to push Labour to victory in the election. The "keep your head down and don't rock the boat" approach only plays into the Tories' hands.

Even at this late hour, a concise, radical programme - and a strong dose of internal democracy - would revive the Party and its members.

The master of mendacity

This month's Class Traitor is the most despised individual in the labour movement. We refer, of course, to the Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Hartlepool, ***Peter Mandelson****.*

IN 1985 Mandelson became Labour's first Director of Campaigns and Communications, thanks largely to the backstage manoeuvres of Charles Clarke, Kinnock's top personal aid.

Clarke and Mandelson go back a long way - to the days when Clarke was NUS President and Mandelson was chasing round Oxford halls garnering votes for union elections. Later, when Clarke was head of the International Youth Council, Mandelson worked for its British wing, the British Youth Council. When Clarke became a Hackney councillor, Mandelson ended up with a job as a community liaison worker with the Council.

From there he moved on to a producer's job at LWT, his only real work in the media. Rumour has it that Mandelson was on the verge of leaving the Labour party for the SDP - and was in fact sharing accommodation with an SDP press officer - when he got the job at Walworth Road.

Mandelson quickly established himself as an independent power at Walworth Road, sidelining Larry Whitty and the NEC by virtue of his direct links to Kinnock's office.

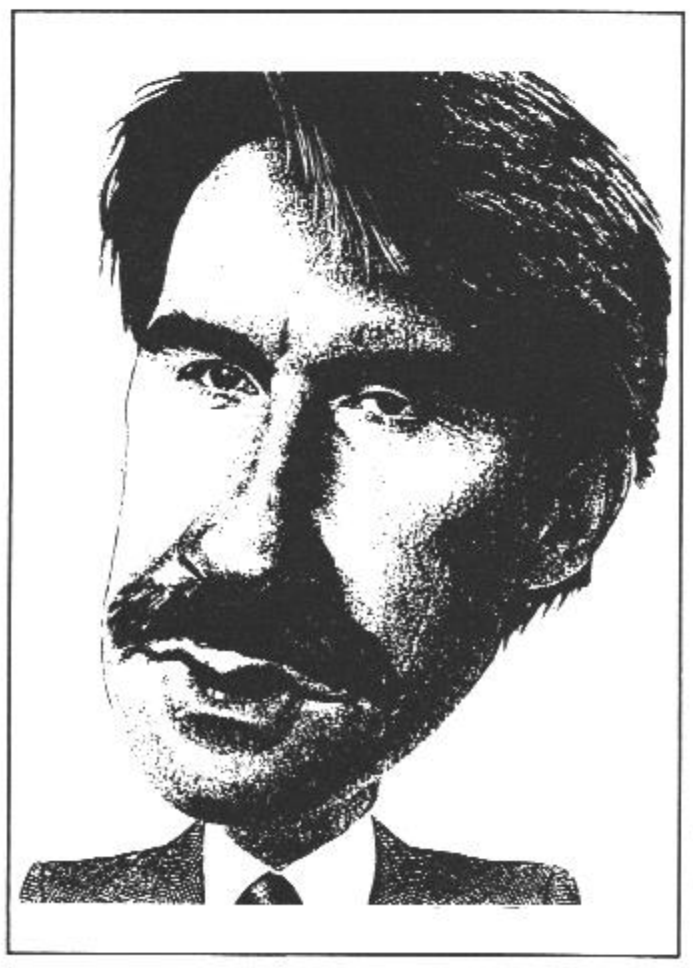
He concentrated on cultivating a handful of key contacts in the "quality press", knowing that they set the political agenda for the much more influential broadcast media.

Mandelson became adept at seducing journalists by offering them an "inside track", a sneak preview into what passes for the leader's mind. Because he was known to be speaking for Kinnock, hungry lobby correspondents hung on his every off-the-record utterance.

As important to Mandelson as what he got into the media was what he kept out of it. In February 1986, he went to considerable lengths to convince the BBC that Benn should not appear on *Question Time*. He ensured that the lesbian and gay rights debates at the 1986 and 1988 conferences were scheduled to coincide with children's TV - which interrupts live coverage. In 1990, in his parting shot, he pushed the debate on the Gulf crisis into the same slot.

In his efforts to build up Kinnock as a "strong" leader, he grossly distorted the content of PLP and NEC meetings. MPs often observed that there was no correlation between Kinnock's long, rambling, off-the-cuff lectures to the PLP and the NEC and the crisp, authoritative "sound bites" attributed to him the next day in the papers.

In 1989, following the NEC's decision to disallow amendments to the Policy Review, Mandelson and his then assistant Colin Byrne told reporters that Kinnock had squashed attempts by the soft left to overturn him on the issue. David Blunkett complained: "The message that the briefings seem to give is that the Party is winning when the activists are defeated."



But the likes of Blunkett were always easy meat for Mandelson, who had seen from the beginning that the way to handle the soft left (whom he regarded as politically unreliable) was by a mixture of the carrot and the stick. Anyone who stepped out of line - as did, on occasion, Prescott, Meacher, Gould, Blunkett and Short - would get the works: hostile, often demeaning stories would appear in the press. Those who did as they were told would be rewarded with a positive place in Labour's media profile.

Mandelson increasingly came to believe his own propaganda. In mid-1988 he reported to the Campaigns Strategy Committee that "the launch of the Party's NHS Bedwatch campaign" had "succeeded in making the NHS the dominant issue for the nation". Apparently, the extraordinary strike action by nurses had nothing to do with it.

During Mandelson's campaign for the Hartlepool Parliamentary selection, some of his staff at Walworth Road used the Party's facilities to issue his personal statements to the press. The NUJ Father of the Chapel at Walworth Road was asked by irate staff to intervene; Mandelson was forced to desist.

One of his favourite pastimes was shaping the platforms for his legendary press launches. In 1990 he spent days working out the formula for the Looking to the Future launch so as to exclude Michael Meacher, one of his pet hates.

Mandelson originally intended to stay in place at Walworth Road right up to the general election, Hartlepool duties notwithstanding. But key members of both the Shadow Cabinet and the NEC didn't like the idea. Gordon Colling of the NGA mobilised the NEC trades union representatives and Mandelson was made to step down.

To add insult to injury, the NEC refused to appoint Byrne as Mandelson's successor, and opted instead for television producer John Underwood.

Underwood let it be known that unlike his predecessor he worked for the whole of the Party, not one faction only. This won him the enmity of the Kinnock loyalists. Critical remarks about Underwood by unnamed MPs emerged in the press. *PR Week* reported that in the light of Underwood's alleged "stonewalling" of the press, "some pundits predict that in the coming weeks dealings with the press and lobby will switch to...Colin Byrne".

Byrne (very much one of the LCC/NOLS gang at Walworth Road) was at that very moment finalising plans for his marriage to Julie Hall, Kinnock's personal press officer. Mandelson was brought back by Kinnock for the Monmouth by-election and claimed credit for the victory, though all he had done was stand around and chat to journalists.

Soon after Underwood insisted to Whitty that Byrne be transferred; Whitty agreed but Kinnock refused. The hopelessly undermined Underwood resigned.

His replacement, David Hill (Hattersley's PA for twenty years), is an irrelevance. The real power in Labour's publicity machine now lies in Byrne's hands - and Byrne's puppet master is Mandelson.

Who's afraid of Dave Nellist?

Labour's big purge has finally reached the Parliamentary Labour Party. Briefing editor ***Mike Marqusee*** *argues for justice for Terry Fields and Dave Nellist.*

COVENTRY SOUTH EAST Labour Party has produced an "Alternative Dossier" in defence of local MP Dave Nellist.

It is well worth comparing with the official 112-page Walworth Road dossier on Dave, which (like the similar one compiled on Terry Fields), consists of nothing but photocopies of articles from the Militant going back to the early eighties.

Some of the articles don't even refer to the MP in question. And there are no clippings from the last twelve months. Very odd, given that less than twelve months ago both Fields and Nellist were endorsed as Parliamentary candidates by the very same NEC which now demands their heads. Nothing is known about either MP now that wasn't known to their Party members or to the NEC at the time of their reselection.

The sheer stupidity of this vendetta is amply demonstrated by the "Alternative Dossier" which reproduces sixty items refuting the NEC charge of "a sustained course of conduct prejudicial to the party". The array of testimonials is powerful evidence that Dave has spent his eight years in the House to good effect.

One after another they have written in: local wards, trades unions, community groups and constituents. They all praise Dave's commitment, popularity and effectiveness as an MP; many express astonishment and anger at Kinnock's recent behaviour.

Twenty-three Coventry Labour councillors have signed a statement backing Dave and describing his reputation as "second to none with the people of Coventry". Protests against the witch-hunt have come in from local UCW, TGWU, CPSA, UCATT, IRSF, and NUPE branches as well as from UCATT Midlands Region, NCU and COHSE branches in London.

Even the local Evening Telegraph says: "We have criticised him many times but one thing is clear: he is a first-class, hard-working constituency MP. His conscientious approach to constituents' problems puts many other MPs to shame."

In 1987, Dave retained his seat with a 5% swing from the Tories, the best result for Labour in the West Midlands. Terry had a similar success in Liverpool Broadgreen. Labour would have won the election if that swing had been repeated nationwide.

This year for the first time all twelve councillors representing wards in Coventry South East are Labour councillors, thanks in part to Dave.

No wonder Chris Patten wrote to Kinnock twice demanding the heads of Fields and Nellist and even urging action against the Campaign Group because it backed Nellist in this year's NEC elections. "Do your job properly," the Tory Chair growled at Kinnock, who seems all too willing to let our opponents dictate his job description.



Photo: Phil Maxwell

Labour's intensifying purge has indeed made an ugly spectacle for the general public in recent months. The methods employed have disturbed even the normally somnolent liberal consciences at the Guardian and the Independent. The camera-toting witch-finders in Walton have attracted most publicity, but a glance at any of the "dossiers" recently produced by the Director of Organisation, with their photocopied leaflets, letters, Labour Group reports, letters to the press and, of course, articles in left-wing papers like Labour Briefing, will convince anyone that the Walworth Road "state within a state" is keeping tabs on us.

The attacks on Fields and Nellist are the culmination of a process which has seen scores of Party members and sitting councillors removed from council selection panels, manifestos and candidates imposed, Parliamentary by-election panels rigged, and hundreds expelled for membership of Militant.

This year alone Walworth Road has conducted investigations into Birkenhead, Liverpool (several times), Nottingham East, St Helens, Tower Hamlets, Brighton, and Lambeth. In a general election year this waste of time and money is unforgivable.

Meanwhile, selection-fixing in Small Heath is treated with kid gloves and the NEC won't even look at the serious allegations made by Paul Davies about the role of the new Regional Organiser in the re-run Birkenhead contest. Robert Maxwell, whose violations of the Party constitution are legion, is still accorded Labour's "Most Favourite Millionaire" status.

If the NEC is going to object to people's links with Militant, then how about a thorough-going investigation into all the extra-parliamentary associations of Labour MPs - including those with Washington-funded pressure groups or big businesses. And if we're worried about Party members "sailing under false colours", how about some action against Labour councils which break their manifesto commitments?

Kinnock has so lost all political direction that the only decisive action he now knows how to take is against members of his own Party. He also fears the power which a small group of left MPs might hold following a narrow Labour victory in the general election. He knows there are still people in the Parliamentary Labour Party who will not allow a Labour government to attack its own supporters or slaughter the poor and oppressed in foreign lands. He is taking steps to eliminate them now, while the Party is locked into pre-election docility.

Brighton purge: the facts

The National Executive, after a year-long "investigation" of the suspended Brighton Labour Party, has voted to initiate disciplinary proceedings against twenty-five of its most active members. ***Jill Arnold****, a Brighton Labour Party member (still!), lifts the lid on the lies, distortions and plain folly of the latest Walworth Road witch-hunt.*



Dave Lewney (armed with Briefing) and comrades lobby Labour's "investigation"

THE BRIGHTON Party was suspended a year ago on the basis of a document submitted to the NEC by Director of Organisation Joyce Gould which claimed that "a number of complaints have been received expressing concern at the increasingly disruptive role of alleged Militant supporters in Brighton."

The suspension and subsequent investigation were presented as yet another attempt to curb Militant. In fact, to anyone with a passing knowledge of Labour in Brighton, the allegation of Militant domination was absurd. As even the local Tory rag, the *Evening Argus*, noted in a recent editorial, Militant's "high point came in 1983...since then its influence has slowly declined..."

The real trigger for the witch-hunt was that the leadership of the ruling Labour Group on Brighton Council took fright at the emerging broad-based opposition to its increasingly right-wing behaviour.

Activists who had played a key role in electing Brighton's first ever Labour council in 1986 on a socialist manifesto voted repeatedly in the General Committee to oppose the Council's stand on issues like the Poll Tax and cuts in jobs and services. Militant supporters were welcome participants in a broad coalition, including Briefing supporters and some comrades whose politics could fairly be described as middle-of-the-road, which insisted on reminding the Labour councillors of the policies and principles on which they had sought selection and election.

For the council leadership, which had no intention of being bound by Party policy or manifesto commitments, this was most inconvenient.

The struggle reached a climax when six Labour councillors were suspended from the Group for their public opposition to the Poll Tax. The GC was in uproar. It had voted consistently against disciplinary action. Many members who did not themselves support the stand of the six councillors still felt strongly about their right to remain in the Labour Group. A substantial majority on the GC was united in wanting the problems discussed and debated - not "solved" by breaking up the Party!

This broad agreement, bridging all kinds of political divides, was too great a threat to ex-left Council leader Steve Bassam and his coterie; they pushed the panic button; the local Party was suspended.

Now it appears the Party is to be reconstructed from the ground-up by Regional Office. At least we will be back in operation. But just what has been achieved by the "investigation" and the suspensions?

The chief declared aim of the exercise was to reduce Militant influence in Brighton. The loss of some active Militant supporters from the Party, including Brighton and East Sussex County councillors, will be a blow to the Party which no doubt Joyce Gould will claim as a "success". Militant, however, are far from having been "eliminated" from the local scene.

The right-wing also claimed that it wanted a more united, less fractious local Party. In fact, thanks to their actions, the level of discontent and disunity will now be higher than ever. Many Party members will continue to oppose all witch-hunts; others, previously unconvinced, will scan the list of twenty-five names and will be horrified to find how wide the disciplinary net has been cast. It will become clear to them just where the slippery slope of the anti-Militant purge is leading.

Just why some of the comrades have been placed on the NEC list defies any rational explanation.

The feeling in Brighton is that many more local members, aghast at the widening of this already unpopular witch-hunt, will come to oppose it.

"It makes no sense to me at all. Apparently some of us have been included on the NEC list because we tried to keep a women's group going after the investigation began last autumn. That hardly seems to warrant suspension from the Party."
- Ann Bellis, one of the suspended twenty-five and a former chair, vice-chair and secretary of Brighton Women's Section.

"The left in Brighton was witch-hunted because it was successful. It overcame divisions to pose a real threat to the New Realists who run the Council. We need the same kind of unity in action now. The best way to defend us is to stay in the Party and fight - for a Labour government and against witch-hunts, cuts, and the Poll Tax."

- Dave Lewney, one of the suspended twenty-five

"The reason they're attacking the left in Brighton is because of the unity we created among ordinary Party members against cuts, rent rises, privatisation, redundancies and the Poll Tax. There are 30,000 people not paying the Poll Tax in Brighton and all three town hall unions are now considering industrial action against cuts. So the twenty-five are far from standing alone."
- Kate Packham, one of the suspended twenty-five.

Brighton's Labour Council leadership has disciplined a woman councillor for signing a motion in support of Sara Thornton. This same leadership has turned a blind eye to three right-wing Labour councillors who have also broken the whip.

Following the local Party's suspension by the NEC last year, a broad-based group of activists set up the Friends of Brighton Labour Party to allow local members to stay in touch and to campaign against the suspension. Joyce Gould says the Friends "have played a destructive and unacceptable role in the Party" and has ordered its "disbandment". So now Labour's Director of Organisation feels free to order the dismantling of pressure groups existing entirely outside Party structures - structures from which, in any case, all supporters of the Friends had been excluded.

From be-yond the grave

At this year's Party conference there will be few of the set-piece left-right battles which set past Labour gatherings alight. But that doesn't mean socialists should ignore developments in Brighton. ***Bryn Griffiths****, Tottenham CLP, argues that Kinnock is exploiting the current docility of the Party to push through rules revisions intended to block rank-and-file revolts in the future.*

THE VENUE for this year's conference is Brighton, where the local Party has been suspended for over a year. Twenty five of its most active members now face expulsion.

A fitting locale, then, for a conference that will have little life or fight in it, despite the attempts to whip up general election fervour.

The rostrum will be monopolised by Shadow Cabinet spokespersons strutting their sound-bites before an unimpressed electorate. Labour's years of policy trimming have made it, in the eyes of the general public, a pure "politicians' party" with no guiding principles. Whatever Kinnock and co. come up with at conference is unlikely to change that perception - and could well deepen it.

And yet, decisions will be made this year which could affect the future of the Party - and working class politics in general - long after the next general election, whatever its outcome.

Kinnock knows that the graveyard unity that prevails today will not last forever. He is taking steps to ensure that his influence is still felt, as it were, beyond the grave.

If we win the election and a Labour government then dashes raised trade union expectations, previously docile bureaucrats could come under rank and file pressure to demand more from Kinnock than jam tomorrow. In particular, public sector support for the leadership has been predicated on the constantly repeated assurance that "Neil will deliver on low pay". If he fails, there could well be a revolt of the block votes. As we will see, preparations to fend this off are already well in hand.

If there is a hung parliament (an increasingly plausible scenario), Ashdown will demand PR as the price of Lib Dem support. Does anyone believe Kinnock will resist the lure - especially as this will certainly be his only shot at power? Hence the huge importance of the PR debate at this conference. Left-wing PR supporters, pipe-dreaming of a new socialist party, should think twice before they end up strengthening the coalitionists.

Kinnock himself has been careful to avoid public pro-PR statements so as not to undermine confidence in Labour's ability to form a majority government. But he has also avoided any outright opposition to it. He is keeping his options open - because he would sell his soul to get his butt into Number 10.

The importance of defeating PR at conference was well put by Pete Willsman in a report to the *Labour Briefing* AGM: "It is simply a question of whether the mass party of the working class will continue to be in a position where it can wield political power through majority governments..."

Finally, if Kinnock loses, his number is up and his departure will be mourned by no one. The unions and the constituencies will be profoundly demoralised but might still insist on a change of direction and the return to some kind of modest Labour reformism. This prospect is loathed by the "modernising", anti-trade union, Mandelson-ite right-wingers in the PLP; they are already working to minimise any future trade union or constituency influence in the Party.

Whatever the result of the election, then, it is clear that the Parliamentary Labour Party hierarchy must move now, while the going is good, to preserve its room for manoeuvre and protect itself from the just retribution of the rank-and file. Hence the recent flood of constitutional amendments, which will continue unabated at Brighton.

The purpose of all these "reforms" is clear: to obstruct the channels through which Party members and trades unionists can exercise control over the Parliamentary leadership.

The attacks on reselection are a case in point. They are designed to protect MPs from challenges by local activists. The imposition of a trigger-ballot on constituencies before they can even start a reselection process where there is a sitting MP would make even the likes of Reg Prentice feel secure. In effect the sitting MPs would have to lose a vote of local members twice (in the midst, no doubt, of escalating publicity) before they would lose their Parliamentary "jobs for life".

It is also being suggested that reselections should be limited to the summer parliamentary recess - when many Party members with children will be taking their holidays!

The proposals on trade union involvement in reselection are now so confused and cumbersome that no section of the Party is likely to support them. The aim of the Labour right - made explicit by the LCC - is to remove trade union influence altogether. The new leadership-friendly National Policy Forum is designed to by-pass conference and undermine the power of both trade union and constituency rank and file to influence Party policy.

So while for the most part this year's conference may be dull and uninspiring, constitutional changes are underway which may determine whether we continue to have an organisationally independent working class party that we can recognise as such by the time the decade draws to a close.

The officers of Islington North CLP send greetings to Conference and call on delegates to support the plans for a Black Socialist Society - support Islington North's resolution!

Oscar Abrams (chair),
Keith Veness (agent),
Jan Schling (treasurer),
Jeremy Corbyn MP.

Plantitudes: a disproportionate disaster

Despite the ballyhoo in the "quality" press which accompanied its publication, the Plant Report on electoral reform commissioned by the Labour leadership is already sinking out of sight. Labour MP ***Bob Cryer*** *takes on the PR lobby and urges the Party to learn the real lessons of European experience.*

FUNDED IN part by chocolate money from the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, this expensive document is precisely not what the Labour Party needs when faced with an imminent general election.

The report concludes with platitudes about wanting to assist debate which illustrate the dilemma facing the pro-PR tendency in the Labour Party: any call for proportional representation (PR) can be seized upon by the Tories as an indication that Labour cannot win a general election outright.

One suspects that some among the PR tendency accept that view and are all too ready to negotiate a deal with Liberals, Scots Nats, Ian Paisley or any other political rag, tag and bobtail outfit, as long as they can have a few jobs whilst slinging policy commitments out the window.

	1983 Actual Result	1983 PR Result	1987 Actual Result	1987 PR Result
Conservative	397	276	376	275
Labour	209	179	229	200
Alliance	23	165	22	147
SNP	2	7	3	8
Plaid Cymru	2	3	3	2
N. Ireland Parties	17	16	17	15
Other	4	3		

Source: House of Commons Library

PR will reduce general elections to political farces. Whatever policies are put forward, voters will know that the real programme will be cooked up behind closed doors after the election. Then the various parties can hammer out a programme to meet the competing ambitions of the leaders and their cronies. The government can sometimes be changed altogether without the bother of an election! This happened in Germany when the Free Democrats changed coalition partners and thereby installed a new government. Indeed, the Free Democrats have shared in government for more than twenty years - despite never having more than 10% of the vote! And this is the country cited by the PR tendency as an example of democracy in action.

Under PR small parties gain power out of all proportion to the vote which they receive, which is precisely why the Lib Dems are so keen on the system. Figures obtained from the House of Commons library demonstrate just how much they would benefit from PR (see table). Under PR, Labour would have lost seats in both 1983 and 1987; the Alliance would have gained massively.

The Labour Party is a coalition of ideas. Under its current autocratic leadership, with a majority of subservient Kinnockite clones on the National Executive Committee, Labour could well be tempted to support PR. No doubt the leadership is attracted by the party list system, in which all candidates would be appointed by the NEC and all rights of selection by Constituency Labour Parties would be removed.

If this system were adopted, it would certainly mean the end of the Labour Party. The coalition would break up, since sections of both right and left, encouraged by the exaggerated power given to small parties, would believe that they would gain more leverage over government by going it alone than by sticking with a centralised, dictatorial and undemocratic party.

Sensibly, the majority of countries understand the anti-democratic effects of PR. Eighty-seven of them use simple plurality (or "first past the post"); only 32 use the list system. Twenty other states use various PR systems which still choose 64% of seats by the "first past the post" method.

The profusion of small parties does not necessarily stimulate a high turnout. West Germany has recorded the highest turnout among EEC states with 84.3%, but the UK was a creditable fourth with 75.4%. Italy recorded 2,675,292 spoilt papers in the most recent national election, compared to just 22,511 in the UK. That proportion of spoilt ballots in Italy, if repeated in Britain, would mean a damaging loss of seats for Labour.

Underneath all the technicalities of PR is the hard fact that it means Labour losing the capacity to implement the policies we have fought for; it means no minimum wage, no rights for trade unionists, no shift of wealth and power in favour of working people.

We need a majority Labour government. That is why Labour must set its face against the illusions of PR.

wernham printers limited

4 Forster Road, Tottenham High Road, London N17 6QD
Telephone: 081-808-1677 Fax: 081-365-1776
Lithographic Printing

Hodge watch

AFTER ALL the fuss about "one member one vote", LCCers have been strangely indifferent to the OMOV ballots conducted for this year's NEC elections. In many constituencies, it's been left to the left to organise the ballot and motivate members to participate.

Maybe the LCC saw the Islington North result coming. In what must be one of the highest turn-outs for an OMOV ballot in the country, 134 members cast ballots. The full Campaign Group slate was supported, with local MP Jeremy Corbyn topping the poll with 115 votes. Islington Council leader Margaret Hodge, who represents a ward in the constituency, came a poor tenth with 45 votes.

Perhaps the Islington North ballot, one of the first to be counted and announced, inspired Hodge to punctuate her latest Tribune column (usually unreadably anodyne) with extravagant remarks like this: "In my view it is time to put caution to the wind and to adopt a far bolder approach...Voters need to feel that there really is something radical and different about us and that voting Labour will make a difference to their day-to-day lives.

Our strategy appears to be based on the negative principle that we should say nothing which will alienate voters. Of course that is true, but we should switch to a more positive approach to ensure that what we say attracts and inspires voters. There is much we can promote which does not bear a price tag..."

The true face of Hodge was seen in a meeting of the Islington Labour Group on Monday, September 16th when Hodge tried to defend the despatch of bailiffs' letters to the borough's thousands of Poll Tax non-payers. This action, never discussed in the Labour Group, was in flagrant contravention of local Party policy and the 1990 manifesto commitment not to use bailiffs.

Hodge tried to weasel her way out of this act of bad faith by arguing that Islington would not really use bailiffs, it was just necessary to send out the letters before attachment of earnings orders could be made. As readers will know, a liability order suffices for this purpose. Either Hodge was confused, misinformed by senior officers or deliberately misleading the Labour Group. Whichever it is, it doesn't say much for her boast in the letter she sent to CLPs seeking their support in the NEC elections: her "hands on experience" in running Islington council "would undoubtedly be of help in running the Labour Party".

More to the point, her willingness to send bailiffs letters to terrorise the most vulnerable people in the community - and set them up as scapegoats for the big cuts in services she may have to make next year - ought to disqualify her from any labour movement office.

AMONG THE EXHIBITORS at this year's Party conference: Mercury Communications, British Gas plc, Nuclear Electric, BT, B&Q, the ten privatised water companies, Kingfisher retail group (Woolworths), Cable TV Association, BA, BNFL, Merck (legitimate drug barons), National Power, NatWest, Nirex, Cellnet, Courage and the Brewers' Society.

JUST LIKE YOUR local Labour council, the Labour Party Head Office is deep in debt and planning to solve its financial crisis by cutbacks and redundancies.

This year's NEC Report admits to a net loss of £289,000 in the last financial year - bringing total losses since 1986 to well over £1.5 million. In the three years prior to that, under Jim Mortimer's regime, the Party ran a surplus. With HQ operating at "full staffing levels" in readiness for a general election, the deficit is growing even as we speak.

Despite all the self-congratulation about £500 a plate dinners, the NEC Report predicts "a deterioration of our income in real terms" and warns that "it is inevitable after the general election that there will be a substantial reduction in the Party's expenditure with subsequent reduction in levels of activity".

Last year Party members subsidised the unput-downable Labour Party News to the tune of £271,000 - only Walworth Road doesn't look at it that way. The NEC Report claims that £220,00 of this total is "subscription income".

"OPPORTUNITY BRITAIN" is to be the "theme of the week", Larry Whitty declares in the official guide to Labour Party conference. And sure enough there it is on the front cover - "Opportunity Britain", as bold as brass, splashed across a full page colour photo of Neil Kinnock surrounded by a gang of over forty red-jumpered children - and not a black face in sight.

KEN COLLINS, MEP for Strathclyde East, has accepted Glyndebourne tickets as a gift from British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. And why not? you ask...after all, the Chair of the European Parliament Environment Committee has a right to enjoy his leisure...

WALWORTH ROAD'S CLAIM that membership increased by just under 6%, from 293,723 in 1989 to 311,152 in 1990 doesn't add up. Income from individual membership subscriptions declined in 1990 to £957,000 from 1989's £983,000.

As for the National Membership Scheme, the NEC Report admits "1991 has been a difficult year", it promises "a first-class service in the future". It doesn't mention the outstanding backlog of unprocessed and unpaid subscriptions for 1991 - and what that might imply for next year's membership figures.

Birmingham Labour Briefing

Socialist greetings to Labour Party Conference!

Caught Short

THE EETPU is gunning for Clare Short.

Its delegation to her Birmingham Ladywood constituency has increased from four to seventeen in the last eighteen months. This level of affiliation would imply that the EETPU has at least 1,700 members living in the constituency.

In alliance with the GMB, AEU and other trade union right-wingers, the EETPU could control a quarter of the electoral college in the selection contest scheduled for November (unless the NEC intercedes). Short's opponent will be Sardul Marwa, a former councillor and EETPU member. The recent big influx of Asian members will benefit his candidacy.

The selection has already been frozen for over a year following a row over the Co-op Party delegation. A recent BBC TV news programme exposed the chicanery which secured Roger Godsiff the nomination in neighbouring Small Heath, where the GC was packed with EETPU and GMB delegates, some of whose affiliation fees were paid by Roger Godsiff, the GMB full-timer who "won" the contest. The EETPU may now expect a quid pro quo from the GMB in the form of support for its man in Ladywood. The BBC programme revealed that the EETPU was affiliating like mad to Labour constituencies across the West Midlands.

None of this information emerged from the prolonged investigation into Small Heath carried out by Labour's Director of Organisation. Indeed, when the NEC voted overwhelmingly against scrapping the selection and starting again, Clare Short, as usual, was among the majority.

Rooker'ed

THE PARLIAMENTARY selection contest in Birmingham Perry Barr was stopped last year when sitting MP Jeff Rooker panicked because he thought his job might be under threat.

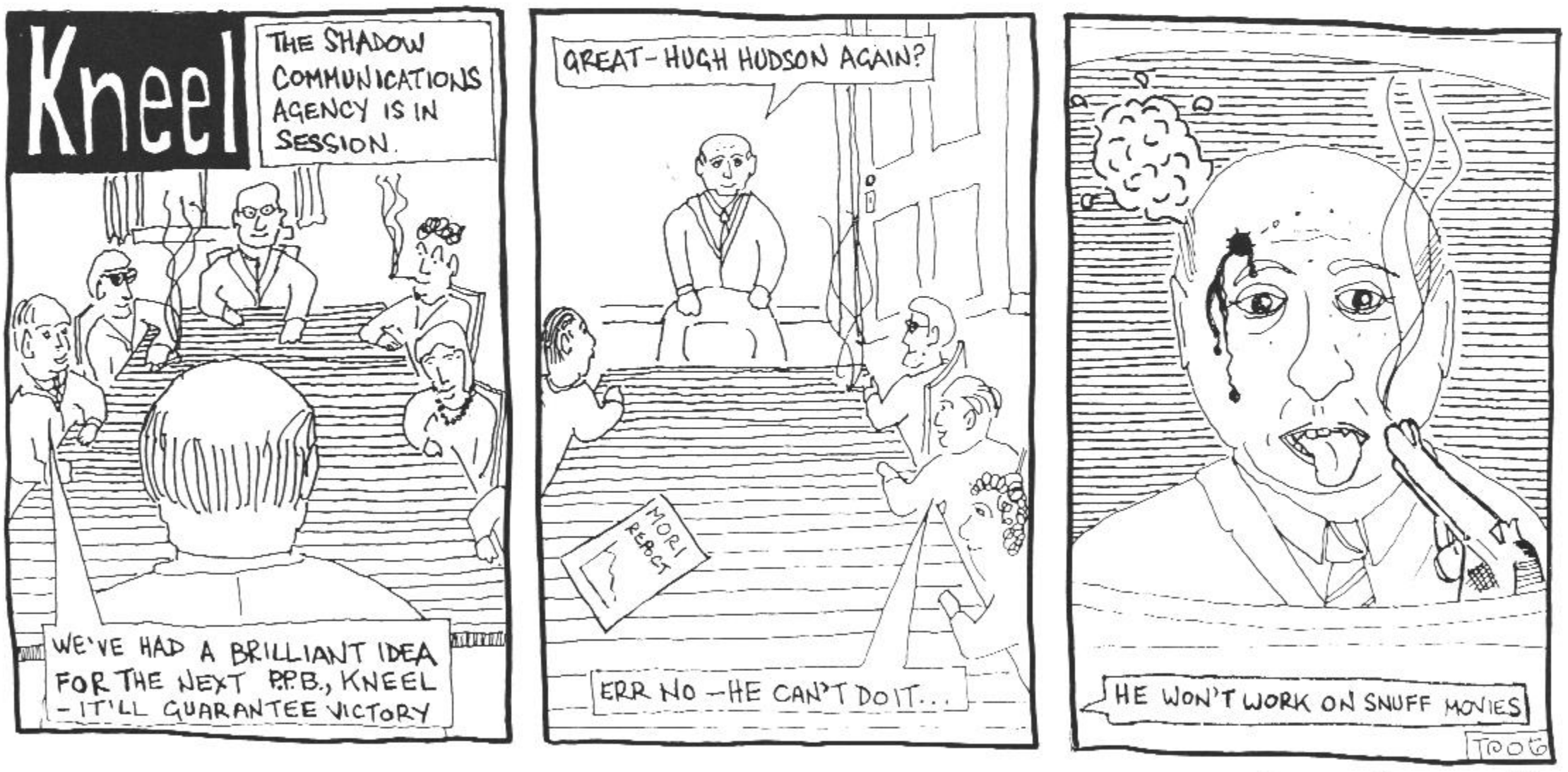
For the last year the constituency, with one of the largest memberships in Birmingham, has been a shambles as the secretary (a Labour councillor in right-wing Handsworth Ward) missed meetings, notices went out late and correspondence lay untouched. At the same time the EETPU was up to its old tricks, sending delegates from branches as far afield as Bromley, Kent (where EETPU head office is based) and Warrington, Lancashire.



Nonetheless, the local right-wingers botched this year's AGM which elected a left-wing secretary; complaints were made to Regional Office which reconvened the meeting. However, the right had no candidates of its own to oppose to the officers elected at the first AGM. They were saved by Regional Office insistence that unopposed nominations must be subject to an affirmative vote; the upshot was that all the nominations were vetoed - even branch nominations for the Executive Committee. So the CLP has no secretary, no treasurer and no Executive Committee.

It is now effectively suspended. It has sent no motion and at last report had nominated no delegate to Party conference. Rooker has let it be known he is prepared to be imposed on the constituency when a general election is called.

Meanwhile it was revealed that Rooker had written to Paddy Ashdown suggesting some kind of alliance. "What advice would you give if voters could express a second preference at the forthcoming elections," he asked the Lib Dem leader. Unless readers think this is just Jeff's well-known passion for PR at work, they should be advised that the Lib Dems have recently been making inroads in Perry Barr and won council seats in the constituency in May.



Hobson's choice for railworkers

An RMT member reviews the less than satisfactory selection facing union members in the upcoming ballot to replace Andy Dodds as RMT Assistant General Secretary.

UNION ACTIVISTS and Labour Party members have been known to squabble late into the night arguing the toss on whether Andy Dodds' performance as RMT AGS was worse than his performance on Labour's NEC.

In any case, Dodds' decision to take early retirement has left the union's hierarchy without a chosen successor, leaving the door open to a motley crew of hopeful opportunists.

The NUS old guard seems to have been swallowed whole by the NUR (Jimmy Knapp's appetite is insatiable); all three candidates come from the railway stable.

The only "left" candidate is Tony Donaghey, a train guard from Euston, who is currently serving on the union's Council of Executives.

Donaghey was one of the key agitators in the one-day stoppages which secured an inflation-busting pay increase in 1989 - the first indication that perhaps Thatcher wasn't invincible. At the Executive, he is always keen to be seen to be the man supporting the minority reports and is forever attempting to overturn the (soon departing) brother Knapp.

Tony's weakness lies in his underlying belief that the troops won't fight. When addressing an angry meeting of guards against driver-only operations, held shortly after the Clapham disaster, Tony played down calls for industrial action and placed his faith in yet another government inquiry. Railworkers had already been witness to such enquiries following the Kings Cross fire, which, in the fullness of time, failed to make London's railways any safer or to stop management attempts at sacking workers on a grand scale.

Yet Tony Donaghey remains the only credible candidate and left activists in the RMT should canvass for him. The others, Peter King and Wilf Proudfoot, must be defeated.

King is a graduate of the Norman Willis school of trade unionism. He has never done a normal (i.e. non-trade union) job in all his working life. Having acquired, in his teens, a job at NUR head office by virtue of the fact that his father was a union activist, King claims in his election address that this background gives him "the right balance of true perspective of what is wanted in terms of services, benefits and representation and advice where it's needed". Having worked his way up within the NUR's administrative structure as far as he could possibly go, King used his appointed position to get himself elected as an RMT Divisional Organiser, a job in which he has utterly failed to distinguish himself.

Being an AGS entails big bucks and loads of prestige and the temptation is too much for our Peter, who, despite making much of his Labour Party membership, plays it safe and never expresses a political opinion, which is probably a good job.

The third contestant, Wilf Proudfoot, plays the Kinnockite card by attacking the union's left wing: "I am asking you to vote for me as Assistant General Secretary for two reasons; firstly, to rid our union of the influence of the extremists who refer to themselves as the Broad Left. Secondly, to give back power in our union to ordinary members, who support a commonsense approach by officials at national level."

He goes on, "It is easy to be popular by advocating unrealistic pay increases, shorter working weeks, longer holidays, etc. The list is endless. The problem is getting the employer to agree." Thanks for the news, Wilf!

Like Peter King he was elected to the post of Divisional Organiser but unfortunately the Geordie former shopman has had to flee, a hated man, from every region where he has worked, due to his sweetheart deals with management. Indeed Proudfoot failed to gain a nomination for the AGS election from his own branch.

Being a man of the people, or being a man who can't drive (believe which line you like), Proudfoot has refused to accept the expensive company cars that are issued to full-time officers every couple of years. Mrs Proudfoot takes it instead.

Proudfoot's standing in this election would be amusing if the consequences were not potentially so tragic. Having led strikes as a shopman, he hates them as a full-time bureaucrat and is standing on a no-strike platform.

He is also probably one of the few individuals who still believes the Social Contract was a good idea.

Two important strikes taking place in Scotland deserve maximum solidarity from the whole labour movement. Albacom Ltd in Dundee is being struck by 130 engineering workers fighting compulsory redundancies. In a sinister development, a court injunction has been issued banning the AEU full-time officer from the picket lines. At Cumbernauld (once the much-vaunted "Caledonian New Town"), 42 workers from Craven Tasker have been on strike for four months over management's refusal to negotiate this year's pay rise. The strikers are from the AEU, GMB, EPIU and EETPU. The picket lines have seen repeated harassment from the local constabulary and the management have now sacked all the strikers.

In the aftermath of the ambulance drivers' dispute, local NHS managements have tried to clamp down on the workforce.

Two drivers in Somerset have been sacked for the heinous crime of stopping for tea and a sandwich after driving for six hours non-stop. The two victimised workers, Tony Stokes (TGWU) and Mike Wallburton (NUPE), have the full support of their local unions in their battle for re-instatement. They have also won backing from Bridgwater CLP and the South West TUC. Please send donations and messages of support to SACKED SOMERSET AMBULANCE SUPPORT GROUP, c/o Brian Smedley, 7 Bowerings Road, Hamp, Bridgwater, Somerset.

Trade Union News: Issue number three out now!

In its September/October issue, this new rank and file trade union paper:

* speaks out against the trade union laws and argues for total repeal
* reports on all current disputes and campaigns
* debates important trade union issues like derecognition, mergers, teamworking
* looks at workplace organisation and industrial struggle - what's gone wrong and what's gone right

If you are a committed trades unionist (employed or unemployed) who wants to know what's going on across the movement - order Trade Union News.
40p per copy (reductions for bulk orders)
For sample copies/more information/individual or group orders contact: Trade Union News, c/o STURC, 42 Braganza Street, London SE17 (or phone 071 700 1550).

Glasgow's silver lining

THIS YEAR'S TUC may have seemed a dreary affair, even by TUC standards, but despite all the pre-election "don't rock the boat" self-censorship, all was not without hope.

The good news is that the hard right AEU leadership are becoming increasingly isolated; they were comprehensively defeated on single-union deals, on Employment Action, on EETPU readmission, on the minimum wage and on black self-organisation.

This didn't stop Bill Jordan from attacking Scargill from the rostrum then declaring to journalists afterwards: "the blasts from the past we have seen this week may get the applause of the lay members, but it's the agreement among the trade union leadership that counts."

The NUM's motion for repeal of all Tory anti-union laws was backed by 30% of Congress; if the TGWU had swung behind it - as they could well have done, given the ambiguities of their own policy - the Congress would have been evenly divided. In the end, despite the dominance of the Broad Left on the TGWU Executive, the union's delegation in Blackpool voted heavily against backing the NUM. Another example of the Broad Left's failure to deliver at crucial moments. More promisingly, the NUM motion was backed by NALGO, MSF, the NUJ, FTAT, UCATT, BECTU, the Bakers, and the NGA, among others.

By 4.6 million to 3.2 million the Congress defeated an attempt to reverse its policy of phasing out nuclear power over 15 years. Remarkably, this victory was secured without the help of either the TGWU, GMB or AEU, all of whom voted in the pro-nuclear lobby. The successful amendment was moved by Arthur Scargill.

There was also a notable victory for the persistent campaign to defend the rights of Trades Councils and a slight swing to the left on the TUC General Council with the election of Ken Cameron of the FBU.

Norman Willis' performance defied predictions that he could not get any more embarrassing than he was last year. Amazingly, Norm seems unaware of the contempt in which he is held throughout the movement. The big unions which increasingly dominate the TUC are happy to have such a useless figure at the helm; they are pleased that the TUC remains an ineffective cypher because it enables them to call all the shots. This is one of the consequences of the "automaticity" rule, passed in the early 80s, which has enabled a handful of union giants to dominate the General Council without any accountability to the annual Congress.



Bill Jordan photo Newsform

AEU LEADERS ARE still pushing hard for merger with the EETPU. In hopes of carving out the elected AEU National Committee (which spiked their last attempt to force the merger through) they are now planning a ballot on "the principle of amalgamation" in the near future. Jordan and Laird have signed a letter headed "Let's Get Together" distributed to all AEU branches and printed on the front page of the latest *Contact*, the EETPU bulletin.

Secret negotiations between Jordan and Laird and Hammond and his successor Paul Gallaher have been held over recent weeks - even while the TUC was condemning the EETPU's "unprincipled and aggressive poaching activities".

Meanwhile the EETPU continues it attacks on UCATT - and has even sent out membership application forms to its delegates on Labour Party General Committees urging them to make a priority of recruiting among UCATT members in Direct Labour Organisations.Recently the scab union also seduced a minor TGWU building section official, indicating that everyone is fair game for Michael Howard's favourite "trade union".

TRADES COUNCILS HAVE won back their rights to organise regionally and to hold an annual conference. Delegates at the TUC in Blackpool voted to withdraw the Congress House proposals to close down the trades councils network.

For the trades councils activists who decided to defy the General Council and continue meeting, this is a sweet victory. It is also a success for those people in unions like RMT and NUPE who persuaded their annual conferences to reverse the policy of their TUC representatives, who had earlier backed the Congress House proposals.

Apparently Norman Willis was even more "pallid and shaking" than usual when Congress overturned his diktat.

NALGO HAS COMPILED a fascinating chart showing how the percentage of women members in particular unions compares to the percentage of women delegates representing them at this year' TUC.

Among the better performances are: AUT, with 15% women members and 4 women delegates out of a total of 7; the Bakers, with 50% and 3 out of 6; BECTU, with 35% and 3 out of 13; the GMB with 32% and 20 out of 95; MSF with 22% and 12 out of 44; NATFHE with 36% and 4 out of 10; the NCU with 20% and 4 out of 19; the TGWU with 17.5% and 15 out of 104, the UCW with 26% and 3 out of 18. Among the (even) worse performers were: BIFU with 56% women members but only 6 women delegates out of a total of 27; NALGO with 55% and 29 out of 72; COHSE with 80% and 6 out of 19; the EIS with 66% and 1 out of 9; the IRSF with 63% and 2 out of 11; the NAS/UWT with 50% and 3 out of 15; NUPE with 76% and 14 out of 33; the NUT with 73% and 10 out of 21; Sogat with 28% and 2 out of 34; USDAW with 59% and 10 out of 35.

Women in the unions: Fighting for our rights!
Saturday,
Nov 23rd,10am-5pm
Wesley House
4 Wild Court
London WC1
Women for Socialism
Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee
Contact Carolyn Sikorski,
53a Geere Road,
London E15

Hackney
Trades Union Council

sends greetings to all delegates in Brighton:
Repeal all Tory anti-union laws!
Defend the right to organise!

Erik Rechnitz (President),
Peter Shield (Secretary),
Keith Veness (Treasurer)

T&G Solidarity - at last!

FOR THE first time in many years, left-wing activists are organising at rank-and-file level in the TGWU.

The T&G Solidarity Group is already proving its worth by organising a tour of London and the South East by striking Tanks and Drums workers from Liverpool, now in their seventh month of action. In conjunction with the tour, pickets are being held of Tanks and Drums suppliers.

The T&G Solidarity Group has contacts throughout Britain, produces a monthly leaflet, a quarterly bulletin and is seeking individual and branch affiliations. It seeks to maintain critical left support for Bill Morris and has drawn up a "Programme for the 1990s" (see right).

Activities will be organised for next year's TGWU Rules Revision Conference. The next meeting will take place on Saturday October 26th at the Magazine Hotel, Newark Street, Leicester, 1.00pm-5.00pm.

T&G Solidarity Group Programme for the 1990s

- All full time officers to be elected from relevant sections/groups
- Full time officers to receive average wage of workers they represent
- No crossing of any union picket lines in defence of workers' living standards or union principles
- Expulsion of scabs from the union
- Solidarity with all other workers struggling to organise and defend basic union action
- Expulsion from the union of all organised racists and fascists
- Opposition to all forms of wage restraint and control
- Opposition to any agreements which make workers pay for the bosses' crisis
- Open recruitment of unemployed people and reduction of working week

TGWU Solidarity Group
Box No 1
136 Kingsland High Street

TGWU: Come in number 2?

Nominations have now closed in the race to succeed Bill Morris as TGWU Deputy General Secretary. Broad Left candidate Jack Adams led the field with 541 branch nominations to Kinnockite Jack Dromey's 399. Adams' nominations included most of the union's largest branches and if the rank and file votes the same way as the branches Adams will trounce Dromey.

However, the effects of the pro-Dromey media campaign are hard to predict. It seems unlikely that being "Kinnock's man" will help Dromey very much but then Adam's long-time membership of the CP isn't much of a recommendation at the moment either.

Voting in the postal ballot supervised by the Electoral Reform Society ends on October 16th.

TWENTY-THOUSAND UNION of Communications Workers members at BT are being balloted for action against the job cuts at operator centres throughout Britain. Up to 7,600 jobs are under threat, including those resulting from the drop in demand for directory enquiries which followed introduction of the ludicrous 44.5p charge per call. The result of the ballot is expected on October 2nd.

WITH TRADE UNIONS paying a fortune these days to PR agencies, we wonder how on earth the unwieldy National Union of Knitwear, Footwear and Apparel Trades - formed from the merger of two equally forgettable sets of initials, NUFLAT and NUHKW - managed to come up with the charming acronym KFAT. Sounds like an additive in a new yoghurt. On an even lighter note, congratulations must go to KFAT General Secretary George Browett who described the TUC General Secretary as Norman Wisdom. And their latest journal - called, wait for it, *KFAT NEWS* - contains excerpts from a speech entitled "No more Sexist Language" followed by a report about a stall "manned" by women members from Ilkeston on - yes, you've guessed it - International Women's Day. Seriously though, this industry has been hit hard by the Tories and we wish KFAT all the best fighting for its members in coming years.

OVER THREE THOUSAND trades unionists, socialists and pensioner activists - many from East Anglia but with sizeable contingents from London and the Midlands - attended a rally in the Norfolk village of Burston on September 8th to commemorate a twenty-five year long strike by Annie and Tom Higdon.

The Higdons refused to accept their sacking by the parish council and built and ran an alternative "strike school" on the village green with the help of money from union branches and co-ops all over the country.

The rally was organised by the TGWU and supported by the NAS/UWT - whose predecessor unions the Higdons belonged to. The strike school is still there. Bill Morris, Jo Richardson and many others addressed the rally but the mood was best summed-up in Dennis Skinner's fiery opening remarks. "It's a good job the Higdons weren't New Realists," Skinner declared, "or they would have packed-up and gone home and none of this would ever have happened."

NALGO'S NATIONAL LOCAL Government Committee has managed to block an anti-cuts demo scheduled for the Saturday before Labour Party Conference by the simple expedient of not circulating any of the leaflets to its own members. At least it looks like the mass lobby planned for the Friday of the Tory Conference is going ahead.

Crisis in London
The scandal of private wealth and public squalor!
Conference
November 2nd
Trades unionists previously involved in London Bridge are organising a conference to build links among public service trades unionists in the capital to campaign against cuts and privatisation.
Contact Ed hall, Lambeth Nalgo, 6a Acre Lane, London SW2 5SG

Pergamon 23: Maxwell still under fire

ROBERT MAXWELL has a powerful hold over Labour through his ownership of the Mirror. With an election threatened, the Party's leaders are desperate for a good press.

Despite his success in throwing overboard nearly all the Labour policies so deeply loathed by the media, Kinnock knows that the Party still has one and only one mass circulation national daily on its side. Hence his eagerness to avoid offending Maxwell.

From almost any other point of view, Maxwell is an electoral liability. His political affinities have always been closer to the Stalinist bureaucracies of Eastern Europe than to the Western European social democratic models praised by the Kinnock leadership. His personal style comes over as arrogant, verging on megalomaniac, and his record as an employer is abysmal. But Peter Mandelson rules yet, and the labour leadership has been prepared to stick with their dodgy friend for the sake of the Mirror.

Though this unprincipled relationship has never been without its problems, the dispute between Maxwell and the Pergamon NUJ has put it under strain as never before. The NEC was openly ridiculed at last year's conference when it recommended opposition to a resolution supporting the demands of the Pergamon 23, claiming there were problems with the way it was drafted. Diana Jeuda - speaking for the NEC though she herself had voted to support the resolution - more or less abandoned any attempt to make a convincing case in the face of jeering from delegations taking the piss out of the NEC for not having the guts to stand up to Maxwell.



Paul Foot addresses Pergamon 23 rally

The real sting in that resolution, as far as Kinnock and friends were concerned, was a clause calling on them to make representations to Maxwell to help ensure the reinstatement of the Pergamon 23. Even then, the NEC is used to allowing awkward conference resolutions to gather dust at Walworth Road without ever giving them a second thought. The same thing might well have happened to the Pergamon resolution had it not been for moves from Maxwell's Oxford East Constituency to have him thrown out of the Party over charges arising from his treatment of the workforce at Pergamon. Over a period of months, the constitutional procedure for laying charges against Maxwell was followed to the letter. An elected team (convened in strict accordance with the rules) gathered evidence from both sides and presented the National Constitutional Committee (NCC) with a 30-page report which detailed ways in which Maxwell had contravened his constitutional obligations as a Labour Party member.

It was no great surprise when the NCC returned their verdict: no case to answer. But the Constituency refused to let it drop, calling on every CLP in the country to press the National Executive to deal with the issue in the light of the apparent failure of the NCC to deal with the charges with the same rigour they are wont to apply to other members. Oxford East also informed CLPs of its intention to call on Conference to refer back the NCC report on Maxwell.

Unsurprisingly, the NEC has not been moved to deal with the Maxwell anomaly. But the mounting pressure certainly has had an effect in forcing the Labour leadership to seek a resolution - any resolution - to the dispute.

Former TUC chair Tony Christopher was approached and agreed to act as an independent arbiter. He recommended that Pergamon withdraw the notices of dismissal to the strikers, that the principle of re-employment be conceded, and that jobs be offered at Pergamon where possible. Private Eye characterised his report as a massive humiliation for Maxwell.

At this year's Conference, the delegate from Oxford East will no doubt wish to thank the Labour Party General secretary for his role in securing the Christopher report, which remains an important document for the future of the Pergamon dispute. But the leadership will be reminded that despite formally accepting the findings of the report, Maxwell did not come up with an offer of jobs until three hours after he had sold Pergamon to Dutch publishers Elsevier, and that even then two of the strikers, including the Father of Chapel, were excluded from the deal.

A composite resolution to be moved by Oxford East will call on the leadership to renew pressure on Maxwell to ensure he settles with the NUJ in a manner consistent with the findings of Christopher's inquiry.

Though they deny it, the Labour leaders have always had the power to secure a just resolution to the Pergamon dispute.

The problem has been lack of will. Massive pressure from the rank and file, and most importantly from the unions, has already pushed the leadership further than it wanted to go. The pressure must now be kept up until the the Pergamon 23 finally win.

Greetings to Labour Conference:

Full support for a national minimum wage!
Repeal all anti-union laws!

Hackney NUPE Officers Branch

Western Goals - Tory "entryists"

IN JULY a secret three-day event took place in London presided over by Jean Marie Le Pen, leader of the French Front National (FN). One of its main objectives was the building of a Europe-wide right wing network, comprising the FN, the German Republikaner, and similar organisations across the continent.

Another possible candidate for membership is Pamyat, the Russian anti-semitic organisation, whose leader, Dmitry Vasiliev, has frequently talked of the need to create an "All-Europe Forum." The main force working to extend this network into Britain is Western Goals (WG), an organisation viewed as the lunatic fringe of the Tory Party but whose recent virtual takeover of the Monday Club pushed that organisation dramatically to the right and substantially widened WG's sphere of influence.

WG is a sort of "entryist" group within the Conservative Party, which has welcomed it with unwarranted hospitality. There has never been any action by the Tory leadership to curb these "entryists"; indeed, in certain areas of the country, especially parts of south Essex, they are supported by the leadership at the expense of "traditional Tories".

The Labour leadership has also refrained from attacking the "entryism" of the extreme right into the Tory Party.

WG initially had a Parliamentary Advisory Board which included Tory Neil Hamilton MP. This same Neil Hamilton (according to Martin Walker's book on the National Front) attended the 1972 Conference of the Italian-Fascist MSI, which paid his air fares and expenses.

Immediately following July's secret London meeting, Andrew V.R. Smith, Director of WG, boasted at a press conference that he and his colleagues were building a "European Network" of which Le Pen would be "the natural leader." WG organised a fringe meeting at Tory Party conference in 1989 addressed by an FN Euro MP and by Commandant Clive Derby-Lewis of the South African Conservative Party (well to the right of South Africa's governing Nationalist Party).

In 1989 WG launched itself into print with an expensively produced journal called ***European Dawn***, whose masthead included the traditional fascist symbol of the sunwheel, formerly the emblem of the British Movement. Its second edition lavished praise on Le Pen and Republikaner boss Franz Schonhuber (who was in the Waffen SS during the War) as "the only voices of sanity and decency in Western Europe."

Other articles vitriolically attacked the Labour Party and supported apartheid and Pinochet's military dictatorship in Chile.

Edited jointly by Smith and Stuart Northolt, ***European Dawn*** was apparently the successor to Young European and described itself as "published by Western Goals on behalf of YEWF".

YEWF is the Young Europeans for World Freedom, the European youth section of the World Anti-Communist League. Northolt has been its chairman and Smith its secretary general. Northolt sent out a covering letter with *European Dawn's* first edition boasting that Roberto D'Aubuisson of the Arena Party of El Salvador was the guest of honour at a private dinner party of the WG Executive and had become an honourary patron.

D'Aubuisson is one of the organisers of El Salvador's death squads.

On November 20th 1990 WG held a memorial dinner, presided over by Lord Sudely, for General Franco of Spain, whom they remember as a hero.

WG has also been linked to the fascist British National Party, which was present at a WG meeting at the Royal Commonwealth Society where the speaker was Andreas Treurnicht of the South African Conservative Party.

Revisionist historian David Irving, who denies the existence of the Nazi holocaust and has appeared at meetings organised by the BNP, also spoke at a meeting organised by Gregory Lauder-Frost, Vice-President of WG and Chairman of the Monday Club Foreign Affairs Committee.

Thus Western Goals plays a vital role as a bridging organisation, building links between the Tories and the more extreme right in Britain and between the Tory right and powerful fascist organisations on the continent.

WOMEN, WAR AND RESISTANCE

Ireland and the Middle East

A day of discussion for women on campaigning for peace and self determination.



Speakers include:
Bernadette McAliskey
Reem Abdelhadi
Haifa Zangana - Iraqi Women in Exile
Camilla Power - Women's Peace Vigil
Nihal Aktas - Patriotic Women's Union of Kurdistan (YJWK)

at London Women's Centre;
Wesley House 4 Wild Court, Off Kingsway, London WC2B 5AU

Saturday 26th October, 1991 11am

Workshops - creche - food wheelchair accessible

Organised by: Women Against War in the Gulf and Women in the Troops Out Movement
WAWG BM Box 1656, London WC1N 3XX Tel: 071 609 1743

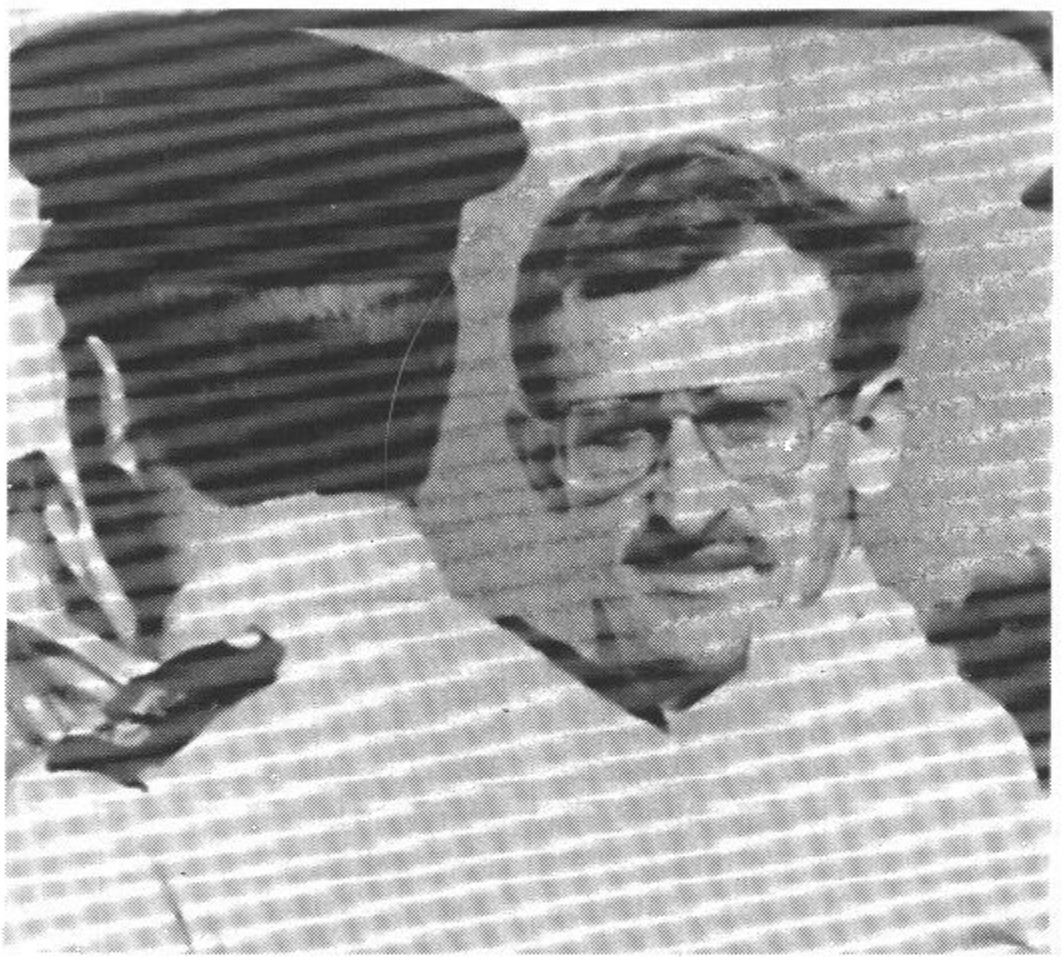
Anti-Fascist Action

The Lessons of Cable Street
Saturday, October 12th
2pm
Davenant Centre
179 Whitechapel Road
London E1

Reclaim the Lane!
Oppose fascist paper sales
Sunday, October 20th
Assemble 11am sharp
Corner of Brick Lane and Bethnal Green Road

National Demonstration Against Racist Attacks
Sunday, November 10th
1pm
Aldgate East tube
London

AFA, BM 1734, London WC1N 3XX



Dubliner Dessie Ellis goes on trial on Wednesday, October 2nd at the Old Bailey in London. He was extradited earlier this year to face charges of conspiracy to cause explosions (under the Explosive Substances Act of 1833!).
Supporters will be picketing the court throughout the proceedings.
Contact: Justice for Dessie Ellis, c/o Haringey IBRG, Hornsey Library, Haringey Park, London N8; tel. 081 3551 ext 1432 - ask for IBRG.

British terror in Belfast

SINN FEIN councillor Pat Rice has accused the British army of an "act of indecency, barbarism and inhumanity" following the army's insistence on body-searching a 66-year-old terminally-ill women as she was about to leave her home in Belfast for a regular hospital visit. Sarah Crooks, who suffers from Alzheimers' disease and has chronic heart and chest problems, was searched in her wheelchair. Soldiers then body searched her two grand daughters who were about to leave for school.

The army's four hour uninvited stay left the house "in a complete mess", according to Mrs Crooks' daughter, Eileen Strong, who said, "I am not a member of any political organisation or movement. We keep ourselves to ourselves."

"Where are the bogus 'peace campaigners' now?" demanded Cllr Rice. "Will they speak out against this terrorism or is their attention reserved only for Republicans?"

Living in a war zone

IN THE NORTH of Ireland raids on houses are frequent, usually take place in the early hours of the morning, and often leave people's homes completely wrecked. British soldiers laugh as they toss children from bed to bed, empty drawers and rip up floor boards.

- Between 1973 and 1987 a total of 272,000 raids were carried out on houses in the North of Ireland.
- RUC figures record 1,100 houses raided in the last five weeks of 1988, more than 30 a day. Republican sources state that there were as many as 1,500 raids in a single week.

Over here little, if anything, is known about these brutal infringements of basic rights.

The **Brighton Women and Ireland Group** aims to cut through the censorship of the British press, to let people know about house raids, plastic bullets and the daily realities of British occupation. The women community activists from Belfast coming to Brighton from November 4th-9th will be speaking to a wide range of local groups about what the British presence really means to them.

BWIG urgently needs help to finance this valuable undertaking. Donors will be invited to meet the Belfast women during their Brighton stay.

● Please send donations (cheques payable to BWIG) to BWIG, c/o Flat 5, 66 Ladysmith Road, Brighton BN2 4EG.

TAKING UP ONE of Enoch Powell's old battle-cries, Tim Smith, Tory MP for Beaconsfield has called for Irish people in this country to be disenfranchised. "I understand it historically but don't think it's justified that the Irish have a vote here in the 1990s," said Smith, who nonetheless believes that Irish people in Britain should pay the same taxes as everyone else.

TULINK: Trade Union and Ireland Network

TRADE UNION activists from across the country are getting together in a new initiative to build the campaign against British rule in Ireland.

An inaugural meeting in Birmingham during the summer agreed that TULINK should: promote organisations working for British withdrawal within individual unions; work on specific issues, eg. employment discrimination; provide co-ordination and information on British withdrawal across the labour movement.

All the work of the network is to be "consistent with the demand for self-determination for the Irish people". It was also recognised that different tactics would be required in different unions. The aim of the network is to provide support.

The Troops Out Movement is providing resources and co-ordination. The network will meet quarterly and produce a newsletter between meetings. The first issue is out now. A major conference is planned for February 1992.

Richard Stanton, chair of the Troops Out Movement, explained to Briefing: "It's not a new organisation but simply a network, linking up organisations in which people are already active. The last few years have seen real progress within the labour movement in the campaign for British withdrawal. But if the different campaigning groups are left working in isolation, it could run into the sand."

To get on the mailing list contact TULINK, c/o TOM, Box 353, London NW5 4NH; tel. 071 609 1743.

Troops Out Movement:
Britain's war in Ireland

Prospects for peace
Bernadette McAliskey
Thursday, October 24th, 7:30pm
Banqueting Suite
Manchester Town Hall

Ireland and the Labour movement
Bernadette McAliskey
Trade union speakers
Friday, October 25th
7:30pm
Conway Hall
Red Lion Square
London

PERISCOPE

Two heads are better than one!

Having trouble finding your kids in the dark? Bumping into little nippers on your way to work?

British Nuclear Fuels Ltd can help. BNFL has issued a cordial invitation "For your next school trip..." Now London Zoo is on the way out, it's sunny Sellafield for the day-trippers. A fun-packed package of life-size working models, videos, computer games and quizzes is promised. And the kids will "glow" with appreciation afterwards.

I can get it for you wholesale...

Herman Sterligov, President of the Russian Club of Young Millionaires, made a massive killing on the commodities exchange which he set up in Moscow in December, 1990.

Now he is advising Western businessmen in the New York times: ""My country - the Russian Republic - is wide open for business and those who get there first and are willing to risk their money will reap dizzying rewards...It must never be forgotten that though Russia was beggared by the Communists, it is still a fabulously rich country, Not only do we have oil, gas, wood, diamonds and gold, we have a highly educated, well-trained workforce that can be employed for a fraction of what such labour would cost elsewhere..."

When thieves fall out...

The attempt to scapegoat Campaign Co-ordinator **Jack Cunningham** for Labour's shaky performance in the polls (see last month's Periscope) continues apace.

The well-informed **Andrew Grice** of the Sunday Times reports: "Kinnock believes that Major has enjoyed better back-up from ministers than he has had from Shadow Cabinet members. He is particularly disappointed at the performance of Jack Cunningham whom he believes has been outperformed by his Tory opposite number, Chris Patten.He has decided to give Roy Hattersley, his deputy, a bigger role."

However, the cheeky Grice goes on, opinion polls suggest that "**Kinnock** himself may be the problem, with 38% saying he was the main reason they would not be voting Labour..."

Booze & Bolshevism

Bored with comrades beginning sentences with "As Trotsky said ..."? Fed up with socialists who intend to start the revolution "when this pub closes"?

Did you know that at the height of the Russian Revolution, **Trotsky** announced: "No drinking comrades!...All places suspected of having stores of liquor should be searched and the liquor destroyed. No mercy to the sellers of liquor..."

The Military Revolutionary Committee issued an order banning the production of alcohol, which threatened: "All culprits against this order will be tried by a Military Revolutionary Court."

On learning this, several members of the **Briefing Editorial Board** were seen to peer gloomily into the bottom of their shot glasses.

Things they (used to) say!

"In terms of his Parliamentary performance and his standards as an MP I think he has drawn widespread admiration for the kind of performance he puts up."

Yes, it's **Neil Kinnock** endorsing **Dave Nellist** in May, 1987.

Her-man

You don't have to travel far in the labour movement to encounter patronage and nepotism, but surely using a guest column in a national daily to promote your spouse's candidacy in a union election is over the top.

This month's "Robert Maxwell Family Fortunes" award to **Harriet Harman MP**, who used a temporary stint at the Mirror to plug husband Jack Dromey's forlorn tilt at the TGWU Number 2 slot.

Free the rabbit!

The **British Union Against Vivisection** is offering Labour PPCs a special photo-opportunity. They can enter a human-size battery cage to pose with a two-metre tall rabbit.

Instant anachronism

The **London School of Economics** has been advertising for a "lecturer in modern Soviet government".

Will Gorby apply?

At least the Tories know

In his new book, **Nick Ridley** comments on the Tory government's attempts to reduce the Poll Tax: "The government had vindicated the rioters and those who refused to pay. Lawlessness seemed to have paid off."

Best seat in Brighton

Retired union bigwig and self-styled Labour kingmaker **Clive Jenkins** has bought the right to represent Chelsea CLP at this year's Party conference - by paying the CLP's affiliation fee to the national Party, a sum rumoured to be in the neighbourhood of £1000.

President Scab

Mike Blick, Nalgo National President, took it upon himself to cross an official picket line set up by his own union branch on July 25th.

This may have been a clever attempt on Blick's part to promote the "New Union" to be created by merger with NUPE and COHSE by copying the behaviour occasionally shown by members (and officials) of other unions when confronted with a Nalgo picket line.

In any case, Blick's manoeuvre was too subtle for the Nalgo National Group Meeting on September 18th which voted him out of the chair and for the Nalgo Metropolitan District Council which is recommending his censure.

Can Nalgo be seen to do less than sack a scabbing president? Watch this space.

Time's revenges

The anonymous Labour hack who penned *The Conduct of Elections - a practical guide to the organisation and management of Parliamentary and Local Elections*, published by the Party sixty years ago, would probably be expelled today for opinions like these:

"It is the strength or pressure of political ideas as expressed through a party which decides the issue. If the pressure is high, the resulting virility and force of the particular party will enable it to organise and poll its strength, and all its reserve votes in the electorate.

"If the faith in the ideas is low the party will poll badly and its reserve votes will remain dormant. Hence arises the necessity for a party to have a policy that can be readily understood and that will inspire party members and appeal to the electorate."

Great Britain United

*From the terraces... **Arthur Chandler** takes a closer look at the strengths and weaknesses of Channel Four's expose of racism in football, "Great Britain United".*

AFTER THE Channel Four programme was broadcast media attention focused on the utterances of Ron Noades, Chairman of Crystal Palace. Noades said that he didn't think too many black people could "read the game", that they didn't like defending when they'd lost possession, and that they didn't like playing in winter. Since then Noades has been under attack from his own black players as well as from the Professional Footballers Association. He has maintained that he is not a racist and was quoted out of context and has been defended by one of Crystal Palace's black directors, who pointed to the club's eight black players, two black coaches, and two black directors as evidence against Noades' racism. Nonetheless, it is hard to imagine a context in which "I don't think too many can read the game" would not be racist.

However, the media concentration on Noades is absurd; the views he expressed are widely held within the game. Emlyn Hughes, for example, has said that black people lack "bottle". Jimmy Greaves has said John Barnes doesn't perform well for England because he wasn't born here. Brian Clough once said that African nations should stick to throwing spears.

Far more startling was the presence on the programme of black players prepared to speak out openly against racism in the game. This breakthrough has been re-enforced by those black players, even some at Crystal Palace itself, who openly attacked Noades after the broadcast.

In the past, black players have been reluctant to talk about the issue. Some have argued that admitting being affected by racist abuse would only encourage it; others that it is no different to a white player being abused because of his hair or weight. Brian Marwood, the (white) Chair of the Professional Footballers Association, expressed this view on the programme, saying, "It's just something that they have to accept; it's an easy target because of their colour".

The programme was fronted by Marwood's predecessor as PFA Chair, Garth Crooks, himself a relatively recent convert to speaking out on the issue. Crooks probably takes some credit for getting the players to talk. When, back in 1987, he appeared on a previous programme on racism in the game he was noticeably the only player to do so. In the past, John Barnes has been silent on the subject. He refused to co-operate with Dave Hill, an advisor to the Channel Four programme, when Hill wrote Out of his Skin, a book on racism focusing on Barnes' arrival at Liverpool.

On the Saturday following the broadcast of the programme, Arsenal fans followed their team to Crystal Palace where they punctuated the match not with racist taunts, but with chants of "Noades is a racist", something that a few years ago would have seemed as likely as Thatcher being ditched by the Tories.

Clearly, the impact of the programme should not be underestimated. However, it was flawed, particularly in its simplistic approach towards terrace racism.

It would have been interesting for example, to delve further into the Mark Bright story. Bright admitted on the programme that he had left Leicester City partly because of the racist abuse he was getting from the crowd, even at reserve matches. I have checked this story with former members of the coaching staff at the club and it is undoubtedly true. However, since Bright left, the fans have voted to name two black players, Alan Paris and Tony James, players of the season. What accounts for the change in fans' attitudes?

This programme seemed to imply that the racists in the crowd were a definable, organised group. In fact, to defeat racism in football it is necessary to recognise that it is widespread in society. On the programme, Vinnie Jones of Chelsea was given the task of admitting to a knee-jerk socialised racism which he himself sought to challenge and condemn. That too may make an impact on supporters.

Famous last words...

Ten years ago, the Tory media onslaught on the GLC was at its height. Led by our old friend Ken Livingstone, the GLC was reducing fares by 30%, establishing an Enterprise Board to create jobs, fighting the forced sale of council flats and spending over £1m on voluntary and community groups - and was seen by the ruling class as a dangerous example of left wing Labour in power. The Labour Party in Islington was celebrating - as MP Michael O'Halloran along with sixteen local councillors left the party for the SDP. Pursued by journalists inquiring about his defection, O'Halloran jumped over his garden wall and ran away.

Councillors in Manchester were thrown out of the Labour group for opposing cuts; the left in the area began organising itself into a "Labour Co-ordinating Committee" group! A NUPE Area Officer slammed the GLC's failure to stop the wholesale transfer of housing to the London Boroughs and pointed out that GLC Chair of Personnel John Carr was presiding over the loss of 750 jobs.

There were reports from a Troops Out delegation to Belfast and from (pre-US invasion) Grenada. Graham Durham of the "Hands Off the Polish Workers' Committee" declared "international workers' power" was the only answer. Nigel Williamson previewed Party conference, where *Briefing* held its first ever fringe meeting. Its theme was "Fighting to win: accountability and socialism in local government" (a perennial *Briefing* fave). *Socialist Organiser* went weekly.

Finally, in the Deputy Leadership campaign, 85% of CLP nominations went to Tony Benn. Did he win? Find out next month.


LONDON LABOUR 20p
BRIEFING
No 14 OCTOBER 1981
As media onslaught mounts:
DEFEND THE GLC!
by Valerie Wise
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* ...

As *Briefing* has a fair record of listening seriously to constructive suggestions from readers on how the magazine can be improved, I thought that I'd suggest a few ideas to spice up your attacks on the LCC/ right-wing Labour leadership - and counter criticisms that are often made about the tone of *Briefing*.

My general idea is to build on and extend the highly successful format of your "Class Traitor of the Month" feature which seems to be what everyone turns to first in *Briefing* and which clearly has a virtually endless supply of material to draw on - perhaps more than can be written about in our lifetime!

My suggestion is that, using the "Class Traitor of the Month" format, you add three more categories. First, to counter the accusation that the tone of *Briefing* is exclusively negative, *Briefing* could run a monthly feature on the "Socialist of the Month" where the paper can look at the records of those who deserve credit in the labour movement - good Marxists such as Dennis Skinner, Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill, Terry Fields, Mildred Gordon and Jeremy Corbyn.

Secondly, as a subtle variation on "Class Traitor of the Month", I would like a feature entitled "Opportunist of the Month" which (at the risk of overlapping in many cases with "Class Traitor") can take a special look at those particularly loathsome ex-lefts who have slithered up the career ladder of the labour movement through the support of the left, but who soon become part of the Kinnockite establishment. The worst cases in this category still try to appeal, when necessary, to the left to keep their positions. The sort of vermin I have in mind for this category would be those like Tony Banks, Tom Sawyer, Clare Short, George Galloway and Paul Boateng.

Finally, I would propose a category which will give comrades in local Labour parties a chance to contribute about the familiar evils of Kinnockism at the local level. Such a category could be "Witch-hunter of the Month": a monthly attack on the bureaucratic right-wingers up and down the country who put all their time and effort into getting socialists expelled from the Labour Party.

I think it's time *Briefing* hit back harder at the witch-hunters and hounded them a bit!

Yours for socialism,
Dave Marks
Burgess Hill

Editor's note: see page 3.

The letter from Peter Nielsen (September *Briefing*) made sad reading. While I feel great sympathy with his anger and frustration at all that has happened of late in the Labour Party, I think he is wrong. Nor is this abstract theorising on my part. Where I work (Southwark) a Labour Council is threatening to impose infernal working conditions on my colleagues and me as well as withdrawing recognition from my union, NALGO. Where I live (Greenwich) a Labour council is threatening to imprison me for non-payment of the Poll Tax.

Despite (indeed because) of this, I will not be leaving the Labour Party but will be staying in to fight all the harder for what I see as basic socialist principles: public ownership, Party democracy, unilateralism and amnesty for Poll Tax non-payers. At best, socialists fighting elections against Labour candidates will get tiny votes, lose their deposits and make themselves look silly. At worst, they will split the vote and let the Liberal Democrats or even the Tories in. One only has to look at history from the 30s, when the ILP (which then had a lot more support then Militant or the SWP has now) disafilliated from the Labour Party, up to today to see the truth of this.

The Labour Party was created by workers and socialists to serve the interests of the working class and eventually to act as the instrument of its self-emancipation. The fact that it has been taken over by middle class opportunists and careerists who know nothing and care less about socialism doesn't mean socialists should abandon it. Instead they should fight that bit harder to return control of the Party to where it belongs - in the hands of working class socialists. Instead of being downhearted by defeats and setbacks, massive as they may be, we must learn to do better and strengthen our resolve.

The material we have to work with may be far from ideal but the worst workers' party is better than none. And the Labour Party remains a workers' party; millions of workers still vote for it and there is still the possibility of many of them becoming active in it.

My own experience has shown me that the life of tiny sects, pure but sterile, is futile and the smaller and more introverted the sect the more bizarre and out of touch it is with reality.

Right opportunism and left sectarianism are the mirror images of each other and at this moment we are seeing a massive growth of both. Socialists should not give in to raw emotion but attempt to make a rigorous scientific analysis and in so doing renew and revitalise the fight for socialism in the only place it stands a chance of victory - the Labour Party.

Yours in comradeship
Terry Liddle
London

Your September issue contains a reply to Aly Mir from Liz Davies, defending her record on Islington Council.

However, in the July issue in which Aly's criticisms appear (and on the same page) I am sure Liz will be able to discover another letter on the same subject (I know this as I wrote it).

I hope Liz can see her way clear to responding to some of the questions I raised in relation to what I consider to be inconsistencies in what Liz has actually done and what she writes in *Briefing*.

For instance, I would appreciate it if Liz answered my query concerning her equivocal attitude cuts at a group meeting; her response to Aly Mir does not refer to this.

Liz claims she has "worked closely with local trade unionists", and I am sure she has, but this has not been noticed in my department, which is part of the Leisure Services Committee, of which Liz is a voting member.

There is no need to labour the point about attendance at this committee, as nobody can be expected to attend every meeting that takes place and anyway councillors' attendance is a matter for public record.

Abstaining on the Poll Tax in council is obviously not a vote against, whatever the reasons for it.

Finally, as I have no intention of becoming a councillor, I hope that this letter still merits a response, as I am sure that *Briefing* would not wish to be accused of restricting debate on important issues by making them the preserve of an elected Labour Party elite.

Yours faithfully,
Terence Patrick Luke

Editor's note: We cannot accept any further correspondence on this matter!

Which way for Nicaragua?

Conference organised by Latin America Bureau with Sergio Ramirez (former vice-president) and Arturo Grigsby (Central America University)
10:30am-4:30pm
Saturday October 5th
LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2

Fiesta Sandinista!
7:30pm-midnight
Chequer Centre, Chequer Street, London EC1

Sandinista Splash!
Saturday November 2nd
Sponsored swim for Nicaragua
9am-noon
Oasis Pool
Tottenham Court Road tube
7:30-10pm
Union Pool
Goodge Street tube
Registration: £2/£1

Human origins
Evolution or revolution?

Saturday December 7th
10am-5:30pm
Polytechnic of East London
Duncan House
Conference Centre
Stratford High Street
London E15
Elaine Morgan, Pete Wheeler, Chris Knight, Alain Testart.
£10 (£8 students)

POLL TAX *ACTION!*

POLL TAX PRISONERS NATIONAL SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE
Saturday October 12
Methodist Hall,
Birmingham
11am-5pm

●

WOMEN'S PICKET at HOLLOWAY PRISON
October 19th from 11.30-12.30
Organised by the Prisoner's Support Group of the Trafalgar Square Defendants' Campaign

●

The POLL TAX AMNESTY National Demonstration
Saturday 19th October
Assemble 1pm, Caledonian Park, nr Pentonville Jail
March to Trafalgar Square for RALLY at 4pm.

●

National Anti-Poll Tax Conference
Finishing off the tax...
October 26th
Manchester Town Hall
Contact:
Tottenham APTU (081 802 9804)
Yorks 3D (0532 623822)
North West APT Forum (061 707 1584)
South West APT Federation (0272 255504), APT Action Network (031 229 9552)

●

Hither Green Labour Party *Auction*

Saturday, November 30th
Lewisham Labour Club
Limes Grove, London SE13

Censors and Secrets

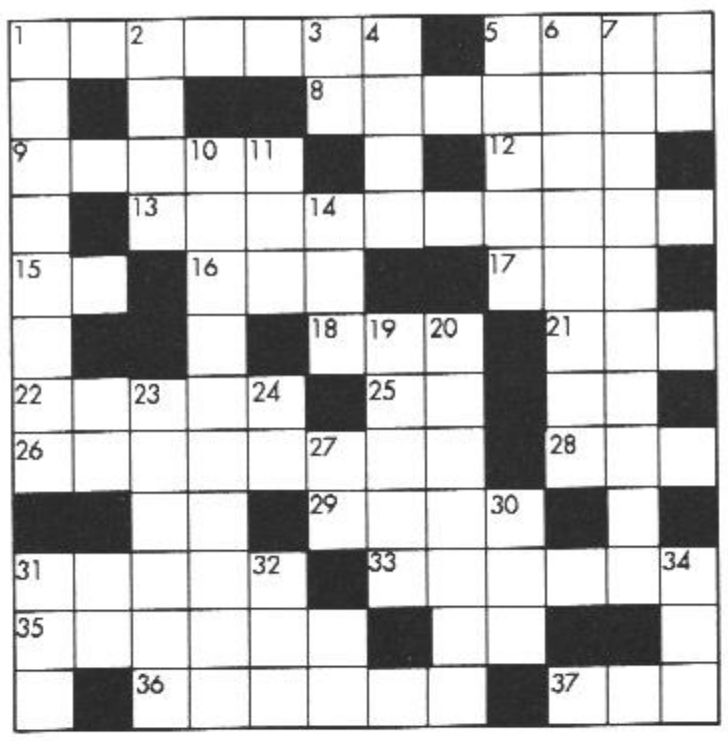
10am-6pm
Saturday, October 19th
NATFHE Conference Centre
27 Britannia Street
London WC1
£10 per delegate;
£5 for individuals
Contact NUJ, 314 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP; tel. Tim Gopsill on 071 278 7916 ext 200

The only way to get *Briefing* before it sells out!
Annual subscription: £11.50
Supporting sub: £15.00
Overseas sub: £25.00
Name .....
Address .....
.....
Amount enclosed .....

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

Statewatch

Statewatch, the essential new bulletin keeping an eye on those keeping an eye on us, reveals a leap in police "stop and search" operations. The total is up from 109,800 cases in 1986, when the Police and Criminal Evidence Act was introduced, to 256,900 in 1990. This quarter of a million "stop and search" incidents (60% of which took place in London, giving a new meaning to the "I've met the Met" sticker) resulted in just over 30,000 arrests. The Home Office is not saying how many (or how few) convictions were produced by all this harassment nor has it given any explanation for the soaring "stop and search" figures.
Statewatch offers concise reports on policing, immigration, the military, civil liberties, racism, Northern Ireland, law, prisons, security and intelligence and the build-up to Europe 1992.
Subscription £12 a year from Statewatch, PO Box 1516, London N16 OEW.



Across

1. Soviet or US state
5. Italian "Champers"
8. Play by Aeschylus
9. Russian mountains
12. Pakistan Car Society
13. Father +Son German marxists
15. The Royal "I"
16. The way to go through
17. Telecom Union
18. Cash- not gross
21. Opposes South African Racism
22. "The East is red"
25. "... to the witchunt"
26. London or Jamaican area
28. Single Scots cereal
29. Spots on face
31. Workers need this
33. Posh school
35. Turin fake
36. The whole lot
37. Recede

Down

1. Neasden strike
2. Cricket in SE11
3. Jovian satellite
4. Middle East spirit
5. Colorado resort
6. Music rythm
7. Andean "lost city"
10. Scots city - not Kenl
11. Rorqual whale
14. Prohibit
19. Former Tory bigot
20. Ship's loading
23. Out frying pan - ...
24" ... you like it"
27. Part-time soldiers
30. Make mistake
31. "The Great Satan"
32. Young University Teachers
34. Spiders weave 'em

Justice for the Tottenham Three!

The Tottenham Three are now in their sixth year of imprisonment for a crime they did not commit. ***Sharon Raghip****, wife of Engin Raghip, one of the Three, has a clear message for the Labour Party.*



Sharon Raghip, Jeremy Corbyn and Billy Power will speak at the Briefing fringe meeting in Brighton
Photo: Vaughan Melzer

THIS IS a hectic time for the Tottenham Three Families Campaign. Engin's appeal will be heard on November 25th. The police enquiry should soon confirm our evidence that Winston Silcott's unsigned interview was tampered with. We're hopeful that after that the Home Secretary will decide to refer all three cases back to the Court of Appeal.

We've got a full schedule of meetings at Labour Party Conference and we can't see any reason why delegates should not pass unanimously the motion and amendments on the Tottenham Three.

I urge all Labour MPs who believe that every human being has a right to fair and equal justice, whatever creed or colour they may be, to support and play an active role in the pursuit of justice for these three young men.

It is understandable that many individuals within the labour movement did not want to support the campaign in its early days because of the notorious nature of the crime and the depth of hysteria whipped up by the national media.

But the evidence was always there from the beginning that these three men were unjustly convicted. Slowly but surely the trades unions and labour movement have been influenced by our arguments and they are beginning to voice their support.

However, because of the length of time it took to right the injustices against the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four, it is important that people learn from these men's needless suffering. Even now, besides the Tottenham Three, there are many other individuals, both men and women, languishing in prison as victims of miscarriages of justice.

I don't want the years of injustice that Engin, Winston and Mark have suffered to be in vain. There should be safeguards built into the criminal justice system to ensure that miscarriages of justice do not take place. The most important one should be an end to all convictions based solely on uncorroborated confessions.

Labour's Home Affairs spokespersons have been supporting our campaign. However, we can't help feeling that the case could and should have been raised more effectively in Parliament.

We're grateful that the leadership of the Labour Party is now beginning to respond to the men's case. Roy Hattersley, hopefully the next Home Secretary, voiced some concerns in a recent New Statesman interview. We'd now like to see him voice these concerns more widely in public.

Labour should consider it to the Party's credit that within its ranks are people who are unafraid to speak out against the unjust imprisonments. The roles played in cases like the Tottenham Three by people like Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Grant should be fully acknowledged.

Our long struggle seems to be slowly reaching its goal. We have real hopes that Winston, Engin and Mark will be exonerated and released.

It is a very poor testament to PC Blakelock and his family when innocent men are condemned to years of suffering because of the injustices which took place on October 6th 1985.

TOTTENHAM THREE FAMILIES CAMPAIGN

MARCH FOR JUSTICE

Saturday, October 5th
Assemble at noon
Wood Green Civic Centre, London N22
Rally 2pm Finsbury Park
For more information call 081 809 6483

LABOUR BRIEFING

Rough Justice: Labour's Silence
With Sharon Raghip, Billy Power,
Terry Fields, and Jeremy Corbyn
Monday, September 30th
George IV Room, Royal Albion Hotel

Social! *Thursday October 3rd*
Big socialist trivia quiz!
Prizes! Celebrity guests! Late bar!
Nellie Peck pub, 57 West Street, Brighton 8:30pm-1am **£2/£1**

at Labour Party Conference

Printed by Wernham Printers Ltd (TU), 4 Forster Road, London N17