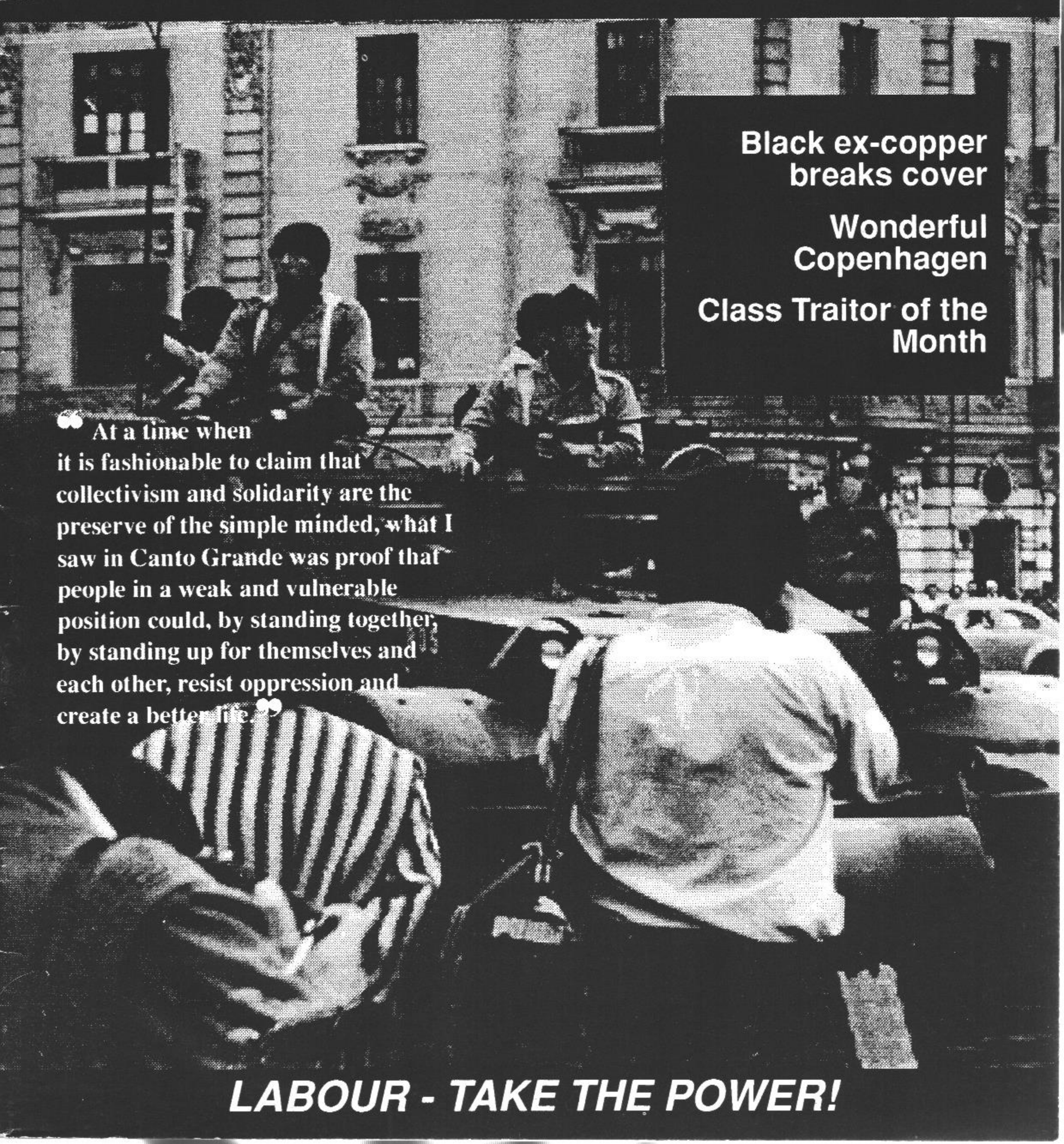
LABOUR BRIEFING

JULY 1992 £ 1.00



Black ex-copper breaks cover

Wonderful Copenhagen

Class Traitor of the Month

"At a time when it is fashionable to claim that collectivism and solidarity are the preserve of the simple minded, what I saw in Canto Grande was proof that people in a weak and vulnerable position could, by standing together, by standing up for themselves and each other, resist oppression and create a better life."

LABOUR - TAKE THE POWER!

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July 1992, No. 123

Bailiffs hit cop shop



BAILIFFS SEIZED property worth £63,000 at the South Yorkshire police headquarters on June 2nd. This latest chapter in a story which began outside Cortonwood pit during the 1984-85 miners' strike is reported in the June issue of *Yorkshire Miner*.

The seizure of goods at the Sheffield coppers HQ was for legal costs awarded against the police by the High Court on July 9th last year. The costs were awarded to Ernest Cusworth, a council roadsweeper living in Brampton near the site of the colliery, who had been injured by police during the strike.

In November 1984 the frail 54 year old was leaving his house early in the morning to go to work when he was charged by riot police who dragged him over his garden gate, then beat and kicked him unconscious. At the High Court hearing last year, police claimed that Ernest - all 5 foot 4 inches and 9 stone of him - lunged at them and pulled a 17 stone officer down on top of himself.

The jury decided unanimously to award damages and costs against the police. Ernest, whose claim was pursued by his union NUPE, said after the hearing that the decision ended "seven years of hell".

But still the police refused to pay. It was not until police cars and other equipment were seized by the sheriff and bailiffs that they rushed a cheque to Ernest's solicitors. A further payment of some £1,000 is to be demanded for the costs of the seizure operation.

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The real choice facing the Labour left

THE LEADERSHIP CHOICE offered to Labour Party members is no choice at all.

All of the candidates offer either slightly more or slightly less of the same ineffectual nonsense we've had over the last five years. Their analyses of Labour's election defeat have been superficial and self-serving; their prescriptions for the future so ambiguously and cautiously worded as to mean nothing.

All of the candidates for leader and deputy leader were principle players in the Kinnock circus. Some may have relished their assigned roles more than others; some may have chafed very occasionally at the bit. None stood up for principles when it counted.

But even if their past records had not disqualified them, their dire performance in the current contest would. They have conducted the "debate" in such a way as to evade addressing basic questions on economic and international policy, social equality, defence cuts, trade union rights, tax, Maastricht, Party democracy, membership and finance. In the absence of anything of substance to say, they have leaned heavily on buzzwords (modernisation, fairness, consensus, etc.); surely we have had enough by now of the politics of equivocation.

So, sadly, abstention is the only option for socialists in the current leadership and deputy leadership ballots. However, abstention is certainly not our only option in the long-term struggle to pull the Labour Party to the left, to make it a vehicle for the kind of far-reaching social changes which the working class majority of this country (and the planet) desperately need.

The first task here is to rebuild the Party itself at the base. We on the left know that Labour can only survive if its activities touch the lives of millions. That means strengthening the trade union link by democratising and enlivening it at every level. It means focusing, to begin with, not on those people who voted Tory or Liberal Democrat but on our own class base, the people who either voted Labour or - disenfranchised or simply unenthused - failed to vote at all. It means local Labour Parties putting down roots in their communities by working hand in hand, week in week out, with all those involved in the struggles for better living standards, jobs, public services, human rights and equality which will keep breaking out no matter how the apologists for the ruling class try to write them off.

Rebuilding the Labour Party requires being there with the working class and all oppressed people as they collectively hammer out strategies and solutions under the whip of necessity. It means disregarding the agenda set by the Labour leadership, which failed even to seize the golden opportunity to defeat the Tories over Maastricht in the first major confrontation of the new Parliament. We have to set our own agenda based both on the immediate need to defend people from renewed Tory attacks and the long-term aim of creating a socialist programme that will equip a future Labour government to end poverty, found a new public sector and re-establish common ownership as the only democratic means of controlling the economy. These two strands of activity have to be knit together; one will not work without the other.

This requires not only action at the base of the labour movement; it also requires focus and guidance from the recognised national leadership of the Labour and trade union left. It falls to the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs to provide that focus and guidance. The SCG has to reach out to the thousands of Party members who support its work in Parliament and help them build the kind of unifying vehicle which will enfranchise grass-roots activists in all their rich diversity, enable them to pool their experiences and resources and relieve them of the sterile grip of the sects, grouplets and others who pursue hidden agendas at the expense of the health and well-being of the left as a whole. It is to be hoped that the first step in this long journey is taken at the Leeds Conference on June 20th.

Without a vibrant left that puts an end to retreat and retakes the offensive within the Party and society at large, Labour will get nowhere. We need to create for ourselves the kind of inclusive and flexible organisation that will give us all air to breathe and the courage to face the battles to come. We need to put an end to the isolation felt by so many activists so that they can rebuild the labour movement with enthusiasm and confidence.

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

***Labour Briefing* is the monthly voice of Labour's independent left. It is managed by an elected National Editorial Board whose meetings are open to all supporters. The next EB will meet on July 19th. 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. Deadline for the next issue is August 17th.

***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?**

Apologies for non-appearance of June issue. Subscribers will be extended an extra month.

Contact *Briefing* at PO Box 2378, London, E5 9QU. Telephone: 081 985 6597; fax: 081 985 6785.

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Wonderful Copenhagen!

***Labour Briefing* spoke to MP BOB CRYER, a former MEP and long-time opponent of the European community, about the impact of the 'no' vote in the Danish referendum.**

"SOCIALISTS MUST oppose the Maastricht treaty because it entrenches the capitalist composition of the EC and hands over enormous powers to the Council of Ministers and the EC Commission. If a Labour government had been elected on April 9th with the Maastricht treaty in place we would have been required by the Council of Ministers and the Commission to reduce public expenditure by the order of £10 billion, given the public sector borrowing requirements of £28 billion left by the Tory government. We would have ended up cutting the very services we were elected to defend.

The significance of the Danish referendum is that it makes Maastricht a dead duck and that it has up-ended the cosy consensus which prevailed in the twelve member states. It's worth pointing out that in Denmark the government, the major opposition party, most of the minor ones and the media were all asking for a 'yes' vote. One of the great things about the Danish vote was that the voice of the people was sufficiently loud and their intellect sufficiently clear to ignore this soggy consensus. You have got to bear in mind that in Denmark for years there has been an anti-market party and an anti-market newspaper with a circulation of about 15-20,000, the equivalent in this country of a circulation of about 100,000. It demonstrates that even if you're relatively obscure but you've got a principled position and you work at it there are moments when that work is amply justified. The 'no' campaigners were able to spread a good deal of concern over the constitutional position of the Danes and the threat posed by Maastricht to their relationship with other Scandinavian countries. A large section of the working class of Denmark were deeply suspicious about Maastricht and there was a strong socialist presence in the anti-Maastricht campaign.

The Danes have done more in a single week than we've done since 1979. They have up-ended the British government. I have had a stream of Tories coming up to me surreptitiously saying things like, "I am pleased at the Danish result because now we don't have to walk through the lobbies in support of a treaty we dislike." This was after Dennis Skinner and I and one and two others had been singing "Wonderful, Wonderful Copenhagen".

It's put the government in a desperate situation because if they don't do something about the Maastricht Bill they will be seen to be climbing down and if they do do something with it then there are enough votes to defeat it - providing that the Labour leadership has the guts to seize the moment to scupper the Tories in the Commons.

There is mounting pressure from outside Parliament, in the constituencies, amongst the membership, arguing that if the Danes can have a referendum why can't the United Kingdom? I think it is possible to win a referendum and I think it's desirable that we should do. We have to add the caveat, however, that any legislation for a referendum must include scrutiny of referendum campaign expenditure. That is the lesson of 1975 when the 'yes' campaign was massively subsidised and the 'no' campaign was threadbare. We want equal access to the media and equal amounts of funding on both sides.

Incidentally, contrary to Neil Kinnock's assertion that the Maastricht Bill, if it comes back, can't be subject to an amendment calling for referendum, I've put down just such an amendment which, I'm assured by the clerks, is in order. What we've got to do is to press, through constituency parties, for a debate on a referendum at the Party Conference. I think there will be majority support in the Labour Party for that.

People from the progressive left who want to campaign against Maastricht should be prepared to accept a broad alliance outside the Labour Party, but I don't think we want to be linked up with people who are viewing this from the point of view of 'Little England'. However, when the Labour leadership accuses me of being a 'Little Englander' I point out that I am not one of those in the Labour Party who wishes to point nuclear missiles at foreigners. This is the true test of an internationalism which clearly the leadership does not share.

One of the important things about the Danish referendum is that it sent messages cascading through every other EC state. It will be easier now to contact like-minded groups from other countries and build a fight against Maastricht and all that it represents right across Europe." ❑

Pro-choice women oppose Maastricht

As we go to press, the Irish people head for the polls to vote in the referendum on Maastricht. The mainstream media have depicted a 'yes' vote as a vote for reform of Ireland's reactionary abortion laws. They have ignored the fact that the pro-choice movement in Ireland is actually calling for a 'no' vote.

The Maastricht Treaty includes a protocol which says "Nothing in the Treaty... shall effect the application of Article 40.3.3 to the constitution of Ireland", a reference to the anti-abortion amendment. This addition to the Treaty copper-fastens the anti-abortion amendment and thus endorses the criminalisation of women attempting to control their own fertility.

Clearly rattled by the possibility of a 'no' vote, Irish Taoiseach Albert Reynolds announced recently that if Maastricht were rejected, he would seek state injunctions against women leaving the country for abortions. Opponents were quick to point out his hypocrisy on the issue of freedom of travel within EC states - also one of the Maastricht provisions.

Black copper speaks out:

Inside the Met mentality

IT'S HARD for a lot of us on the left to understand what could possibly motivate a black person to join the police. Is it a misplaced desire to serve the community, a quest for acceptance or a form of social climbing?

Andy Parr
Shoreham CLP

Former black copper Dave Gray is quite certain. "It's money. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise." He reminds you of the basic £12,000 a year, the free food and accommodation, plus free uniform (admittedly 150 years old).

Dave should know. He spent six years in the Met. He knows the black policeman is on a hiding to nothing. Black people regard him as a man who will do anything to earn money - a man on the other side of the fence. And white racists cannot abide the very idea of an "immigrant" with money and authority telling them what to do. He had faced racism all his life. His own mother once called him a "black bastard". In the force, he first encountered it at Hendon Police College. A Scottish sergeant who was responsible for conducting drills somehow failed to stage Dave's passing-out parade.

The racist gibes began to get to him. The woman who was class captain ridiculed him as a "monkey bastard". The instructor failed to reprimand her.

Dave was sent to Carter Street in the South London division. This is one of the busiest police stations in London (it was responsible for bringing to book the allegedly inebriated and violent Larry Whitty on election night). Here things went from bad to worse.

The system is that a sergeant takes the rookie under his wing. In fact, he can make or break a career. Dave's sergeant wrote of Dave in his official review, "This man has a desire to be white." The entire report was couched in negative language. Dave refused to sign it. Worse still, the remark leaked out to others in the station.

From then on, says Dave, "I took a conscious decision not to be shat on". He came into contact with another sergeant, a violent, stubborn man who had grown up in the Old Kent Road area. "A truncheon won't break a nigger's skull," he told Dave, "It's too thick." Dave feels this man ought not to be allowed in the police.

"Another time, we were policing the Peckham Carnival. It was hot and we were twelve to a van. A sergeant asked me if it was my mother or my father who was black. I lost my temper and called him a 'wide boy' which is what he was".

Sexism was similarly rife. Female officers were referred to as "Dorises" or "Plonks" ("plonk" follows "plod" in



the dictionary and women, in the copper's mind, inevitably follow men). An attractive woman would be called a "slapper" or a "dabbler". He feels policewomen take on the worst characteristics of their male counterparts in order to compete with them.

"Politics were not discussed, although it was implied that you should really be a Tory," Dave recalls, "Lefties are despised. They go on marches and demonstrations and are therefore trouble-makers. Ordinary decent people don't protest."

What can be done? Dave feels no ethnic officer should be sent initially to an inner city area. He calls for an independent police complaints authority which is present at all times in police stations.

Dave feels no decent person would want to be a copper. "You go through thirty years of complete narrow-mindedness. Any person who survives it is extremely strong mentally - especially any black person." ❑

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Football in Orbit



ARTHUR CHANDLER interviewed CRAIG BREWIN, spokesperson for the Football Supporters Association, on the latest developments in the sport.



AC: The football season was supposed to have ended weeks ago, but football seems to be more in the news than ever. What's going on?

CB: It's quite an absurd situation. A year ago the government was adamant that there would be no U-turn on compulsory all-seater stadia for professional clubs, despite the clubs themselves claiming that they could not afford to do it without government help. Football then signed TV contracts worth £304 million for League games, and £74 million for cup games, generating more than four times as much as the previous contracts, and enough to convert most league grounds to all-seater status. A few weeks later the government announced that clubs that could not afford to go all-seater would be exempt.

AC: So where is the TV money going?

CB: Who knows? The FA, the governing body of football, sanctioned the creation of a break-away superleague last year. The purpose of the new league was to ensure that all TV money would go to its members only. The first division was already getting 75% of the TV income, with the bulk of it going to the handful of clubs that ITV were prepared to show live. But they wanted more. The thing is that not one single superleague club has announced any previously unplanned enhancements to its ground development plans, despite this windfall, nor have any of them announced cuts in admission prices. In fact, the admission prices are rising next season by astronomical amounts, over 50% in one case, and by an average of 30% The money will go on players. Players' wages, players' signing-on fees and transfer fees.

AC: There's no doubt that with the advent of the Premier League, and the massive gap in wealth between it and the remnants of the Football League, it is possible that places like Wolverhampton and Newcastle will never see top flight football again, but what about the TV deal itself?

CB: I can't get too excited by it and the arguments that I have heard are confused. I can't really bring myself to say that the League should have gone with ITV. Its coverage is awful, it shows few highlights programmes, which means we rarely see the majority of clubs, and it trivialises the game. I also remember the dirty tricks that ITV got up to four years ago when it won the current contract, negotiating with individual clubs and encouraging them to break away from the Football League. ITV's complaints about the way the deal was struck are valid but to me they sound like hypocrisy and sour grapes. At least we'll now have BBC 'Match of the Day' on Saturday nights, as well as live matches from the European Cup, Cup-winners Cup, UEFA Cup, League Cup and possibly some games from the current second division.

AC: But surely you can't be supporting the growth of Pay TV?

CB: No. I hope it fails. I hope it's boycotted. As well as sky-high ground admission prices we will now have to pay to watch. To put league football on pay TV will restrict its access enormously and it may not even generate as much income as Sky hopes. When the Premier League decided on Sky it was because of the long-term potential of pay-per-view so I expect in the long-term to see very high prices for some games. To stop it, people need to nip it in the bud and refuse to pay now. But having said that, I do want millions spent on grounds - all grounds. If football does not go with the satellite companies it would mean massive loss of income. I think the government should insist that all the extra TV cash be spent on facilities. If the deal doesn't work then football may get less money when the contract is renegotiated, but by then the grounds will have been made safe. And I can't see anyone losing sleep if it means fewer players earning £250,000 a year.

AC: But given the number of people who support and want to watch Premier League clubs on TV, it must be likely that Sky will succeed?

CB: Possibly, but the interests of the TV viewer differ from the interests of the active football fan and the FSA's main concern is the aspects of the deal which affect the paying spectator, particularly the advent of the Monday night fixture. There are of course wider political issues concern-

ing the growth of unregulated TV and cross-media ownership, but MPs seemed more concerned with standing up for the armchair viewer than addressing this issue.

AC: Back to Mellors' U-Turn on all-seater stadia. What do you think of it?

CB: It's a classic fudge. There have been a number of supporters groups campaigning on the issue, particularly our own, but none has argued for the retention of terraces on financial grounds. The argument has been that terracing can be safe and people want to stand. The Football Licensing Authority should be asked to produce guidelines on safe terracing and all clubs, regardless of capacity, League or Division, should be given the chance to meet them. Mellors admitted in a radio interview that he had gone as far as he could but was not prepared to risk being the person remembered for abandoning the all-seater policy because if there were a death on a terrace, caused by whatever reason, he and his government would take the blame.

AC: So the decision was based on fear and financial expediency, but then most government decisions are.

CB: I've still not given up hope for a common sense policy. Once the FLA has drawn up its guidelines on safe terracing, we should be able to use them as a campaigning tool. Most Premier League Clubs want to maintain small amounts of terracing. Although I think it is likely that the high open kops will inevitably disappear, a small terrace holding a few thousand people is as safe at a big ground like Arsenal as it is at Leyton Orient.

AC: But all we're left with is campaigning to retain small patches of terracing. Is it worth bothering?

CB: Yes, it has to be. It's what the supporters want and we still consider it to be our game. In any case, these are the cheap bits, the bits where the teenagers can afford to go, where they take their friends who may not go every week. If football is to remain a sport open for all to attend, then we have to have a way in for these people. After all, they can't afford to watch it on TV any more. ❑

Green is the colour

TERRY LIDDLE looks at the high stakes and unanswered questions raised by the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

GREEN IS the colour of money. That is President Bush's message to the Earth Summit meeting in Rio. His attitude towards the treaty on biodiversity and his effective emasculation of the treaty on the emission of global warming shows that for US and multinational capital it is business as usual.

Deforestation, desertification, the genocide of native peoples, the escalating Third World debt, the adverse effects of the arms trade, population growth, the extinction of plants and animals, population growth and the decline of fertile land were just a few of the issues laid before the summit. They were addressed at length by presidents, prime ministers and even Kings. But no effective plans for action have emerged. For the cause of the environmental crisis has not been addressed. This is capitalism, compelled to ecological destruction by its unbridled lust for profit. The trees felled to provide the mountains of paper circulating in Rio will have died in vain!



Meanwhile, the poverty gap grows. The richest fifth of countries have income 59 times that of the poorest fifth. The gap grows between the rich countries and the poorest because each year the rich take £145,000 million and give back only £30,000 million in "aid". Much of the money flowing into the rich countries goes to service debts and interest charges. Poor countries pay interest rates four times higher than those paid by rich countries.

The commodities exported by the Third World to pay these debts have crashed in price. This is due in part to the World Bank forcing a rapid expansion of export production which has caused a glut. Many poor subsistence farmers have been forced off of land needed for this production. They in turn invade wilderness areas, their slash and burn methods adding to global warming, deforestation, desertification and the extinction of plants and wild animals. And as population grows the situation worsens.

Those in the West who have adopted capitalism's spectacular conspicuous consumption life-style are not without blame. For every four-ounce burger made from South American beef 55 square feet of rain forest are destroyed for grazing. The grains and beans fed to beef cattle could provide every person on Earth with a cup of food every day for a year. Meanwhile in Britain 18% of the carbon dioxide which contributes to global warming comes from motor cars. And Britain's ancient woodlands are vanishing at a faster rate than the Amazonian rainforests.



As the streets of Rio filled with troops to protect delegates from Brazil's underclass, a UN report warned of a "ferocious and prolonged class war." In Rio it has begun with the poor organising to loot supermarkets for food. In this war socialism, which must go beyond industrialism to an ecologically viable and life-sustaining economy, must be victorious on a global scale. If it isn't, capitalism may soon make life on Earth an impossibility. ❑

Madness behind the mess

The half-built Canary Wharf is on the verge of collapse. Should we be surprised? Not at all, argues JOHN TURKIE, since Europe's biggest office development was 'planned' in a vacuum of strategic thinking.

OLYMPIA & YORK (O&Y), Canary Wharf's developers, stand to lose all or most of the £1.6 billion they have ploughed into Canary Wharf. Canary Wharf's eleven big creditor banks, who lent O&Y £1.2 billion, have put the heat on the government by calling in administrators who now have a few weeks to stave off liquidation.

Even if a deal is done on the Jubilee line extension and a rescue package cobbled together, the banks still stand to lose at least £700 million. But these sums pale into insignificance compared with government financial support for the project - £4 billion so far, rising by a further £1.7 billion if the decision is taken to go ahead with the Jubilee line.

If Canary Wharf goes into liquidation, O&Y's global empire will collapse, causing further upheavals in the world financial sector. O&Y has debts of over £7 billion and a 'fire-sale' of its properties would mean property markets world-wide would plummet, with the banking sector having to write off huge debts on property loans.



***ONE OF** Canary Wharf's few* tenants, the *Daily Telegraph*, is locked in battle with its clerical staff over a management attempt to derecognise the GPMU.

The *Telegraph* bosses claim that while they were willing to work with Sogat they had no agreement with the NGA and will not therefore recognise the new merged union. Their real intent, of course, is to *eradiate* trade unionism altogether within the company. A clear majority of *Telegraph* employees voted in a secret ballot for union recognition, but management dismissed the result. Instead, it has set up a "staff council" which has no support among the workforce. Out of a total workforce of nine hundred there are six hundred members of the GPMU and the NUJ.

Telegraph boss Conrad Black sits on the board of Olympia and York, the firm which owns Canary Wharf.

The hypocrisy of the pundits in the financial press, who now condemn Canary Wharf as 'Thatcherite madness', is astounding. Given the depth of the international property recession and, crucially, the huge amount of vacant high-quality office space in the City, it was clear before O&Y's current crisis that Canary Wharf was never going to be anything more than a cheap location for back-up services. Yet all remained bullish till the end. O&Y are so strong, the refrain went; it isn't a question of whether Canary Wharf will be a success, it's only a question of when.

To describe Canary Wharf as Thatcherite madness is only part of the story. The origins of Canary Wharf lie in developments in the global economy. It was hoped Canary Wharf would play a major role as a global financial centre and extend London's competitive reach as a world city.

Canary Wharf, in fact, hijacked the redevelopment of Docklands. It became a Thatcherite flagship post hoc.

Canary Wharf was conceived because of the nature of existing redevelopment policies in the area. Namely, the Enterprise Zone, with its subsidies and deregulated planning environment; and the London Docklands Development Corporation, run by property developers with direct links to government ministers and the power to instigate major infrastructure programmes.

The planning of Canary Wharf took place in a strategic vacuum. It was piecemeal and incremental. The strain placed on the existing infrastructure by the needs of Canary Wharf was met by the LDDC with what can only be described as the 'knee-jerk' approach to planning. Most important of all, the government took no account of the planning relationship between the City and Canary Wharf.

Way back in 1986 - before the original bid to develop Canary Wharf had collapsed and before O&Y came on the scene - the City of London Corporation tore up its local plan so as to allow an extra 25 million square feet of office space to be developed. This was in direct response to the perceived threat Canary Wharf posed to the City's dominant position. The City certainly didn't see Canary Wharf as a 'partner', even if O&Y and the government did.

O&Y seriously underestimated the threat from the City to Canary Wharf's viability, perhaps because of the gains it thought could be made from the Big Bang. So did the government. So much so that Thatcher put away her centralising tendencies and allowed the City of London to act independently, perhaps because of a blind faith in the 'free market'.

What a mess. ❑

TGWU drops dockers

SACKED LONDON dockers were shocked to find that their union, the TGWU, despite guarantees from Ron Todd and co., has decided to abandon them after a three year battle - just one week before their first industrial tribunal hearing.

During the 1989 national dock strike the Port of London Authority (PLA) exploited the climate of union bashing created by the government to sack 140 union activists, including all the stewards and the branch secretary. Despite Ron Todd's call for no return without reinstatement, the strike collapsed and the dock workers at Tilbury found themselves returning to work without any union infrastructure. The result was that new conditions (including lower wages and compulsory overtime), designed to prepare the way for privatisation, were imposed with little resistance.

Meanwhile, the core of 140 sacked trade unionists set out to fight for reinstatement through the industrial tribunals. What followed was a legal battle of Dickensian complexity, with the PLA blocking every move. Both the TGWU and the PLA have poured millions into it.

After two years, on August 20th, 1991, the tribunal gave its ruling in the first nineteen cases; it declared that the dockers had been unlawfully dismissed for trade union activity and issued twelve re-engagement orders. The PLA immediately appealed the decision and a further ruling is awaited shortly.

Most of other 128 strikers, unable to hold out for two years, found new jobs and settled for meagre out-of-court settlements. However, a core of 32 kept up the fight. Their confidence was boosted by the tribunal decision and they looked forward to seeing justice done in the near future. But at this point there seemed to be a change in attitude on the part of the TGWU's legal representatives. The dockers found themselves under increasing pressure to settle before going to court. "It was more like meeting the PLA solicitors than our own representatives," commented one. The pressure increased with each visit; each new offer was described as "final" and "the highest". Inevitably, a few gave in but most held out, preferring justice to short-term financial gain.

Then, in the first week of June, the knife in the back arrived in the form of an almost threatening letter from the TGWU. The remaining strikers were told that the union would no longer represent them.

The letters state that the strikers will be sent all the documentation from the case but that if they wish to continue to fight they must find there own legal representatives. Alarmingly, the letter also implies that they may be held liable for the PLA's costs should they continue to press their cases through the courts.

One of the strikers, Fred Drostle, a former steward and long-time activist, said, "I am angry that after 41 years as an active member of the TGWU in the docks we are being treated in this way for defending the basic trade union rights that we've only gained since I first started work in the docks".

Justice miscarries, again

KATE MAGEE was arrested in Derby at 1:00am on April 14th when heavily armed police stormed her home. She was held for 36 hours under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and then for another 36 hours under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. On Friday April 17th she was remanded for a week. Although a remand prisoner, she was placed in a category A wing in Durham prison.

She has been charged with failure to disclose information which might be of material assistance under the PTA and impeding the arrest or prosecution of persons unknown under ordinary law.

Kate's arrest arose because of her brother Joseph Magee's alleged involvement in the shooting of a police sergeant in Derby. Kate's other brother Pat was picked up on April 17th under the PTA. Shortly after his release he appeared on television with a bruise over one eye.

It was announced on the news a few days after Kate's arrest that she was on hunger strike. This provoked concern in the Irish community. The Home Office refused to give details to the PTA Welfare and Research Association. This information was finally given to Father Paddy Smythe from the Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas. It emerged that Kate was suffering from an eating disorder due to the anxiety of her ordeal.

She appeared at court again on June 5th. Despite the fact that she has been remanded already for seven weeks, the prosecution said they were still not able to serve committal papers.

Kate has been refused bail. Her weight has dropped from 9 to 7.5 stone. Her family live in Ireland and are afraid to visit her in case they too are arrested under the PTA. She worries about her two children who are also now in Ireland.

Over twenty people have been picked up under the PTA since April 13th. Magee is one of the few to be charged. You can write to her at Durham Prison, Old Elvet, Durham.

What went wrong
and what's left now

A post-election view from West Sussex by Labour activist RICHARD HANFORD.

WE ALL KNOW we cannot afford another election in which the crucial issues raised by economic and ecological crises are obliterated by American-style "negative campaigning" and balloon-waving. Those in need of higher pensions and child benefit could ill-afford this last charade. Compared to these victims, Kinnock's ego was an inflated yet insignificant casualty of the defeat. What rich irony indeed for all his presidential posing to be upstaged by Orator Major, proclaiming his vision of a classless society from a soapbox!

His subsequent, uncharacteristically honourable decision to resign regrettably does not seem to have signalled a change of direction for the Party. We face prospects of pacts and PR as our dim defeatist leaders-in-waiting pursue superficial changes to the electoral system rather than significant changes to the economic system. They have learned no lessons from defeat and refuse to face facts.

In a severe slump, defending an indefensible record, saddled with Thatcher's legacy in the form of further Poll Tax bills, fears for the future of the NHS, massive and rising unemployment and topped up by a dismal campaign, how could the Tories still manage to win? With a multi-million pound campaign, media approval from the mass Mirror to respected FT, a sunny polling day and a general public feeling that change was long overdue, how could Labour lose?

"The Labour Party is both financially and politically bankrupt. The left is blameless, yet powerless."

The Labour leadership paved the way to defeat with its lengthy programme of reshaping policy and party. But having altered almost everything, it appeared to offer next to nothing. After a Policy Review which promised to "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change" but instead produced 100,000 empty words, it came as no surprise that the 1992 manifesto contained nothing of substance, save an introductory poem by Adrian Henri.

A 1989 Party report had stated plainly that it was a genuine "commitment to get at the roots of poverty which distinguishes Labour's approach from that of...others (who) think that poverty can be solved simply by tinkering with taxes and benefits." Recognising that "we need to attack the root causes of poverty, not just the symptoms," the document continued to "consider the reforms needed to our tax and benefits systems" at great length. But come election time, the leadership were still far from unequivocal even about its own taxation tinkering, having wasted time and resources on attacking not the roots of poverty, but the roots of the Party.

Labour was seen as defensive about the minimum wage and doubtful on taxation. Earlier indignation at privatisation was replaced by meek acceptance. Playing safe, preferring superficiality to socialism, there was no real programme to rebuild the country's crumbling infrastructure and welfare state.

Suicidally, Labour's leading Parliamentarians had already accepted the loss of vital votes through Poll Tax hit electoral registers and approved extra ex-pat votes from Tories in tax-exile. The leadership had it all its own way, ran the campaign in its own style, with its own approved policies and approved candidates. They had made all the alterations deemed necessary to make Labour eminently electable.

Despite the defeat, we still seem stuck with it all. The Party is a complete mess. Almost all traces of socialism have been stripped from both policy and Parliament. The left has lost Campaign Group MPs Terry Fields, Dave Nellist, Ron Brown, John Hughes, Bob Clay (retired); Lol Duffy was kept out and John McDonnell just missed out. In came Party bureaucrats Mandelson, Prentice and Gapes and the actress who advertised the Tory-backing, asset-stripping, ICI-threatening, predatory transnational Hanson.

And who would deny the truth of the following statement:

"The main parties ... dodge unpopular issues and try to obscure the shallow nature of their policies with fancy logos and slogans. Their conferences are now so stage-managed that they might as well be held at the London Palladium; radical ideas are discouraged and minority views are ridiculed."

This appeared not in *Briefing* but in the Manifesto of the Liberal Party, whose policies were well to the left of both Liberal Democrats and Labour.

The Labour Party is both financially and politically bankrupt.

The left is blameless, yet powerless.

Unless urgent action is taken, we may emulate the Liberals in becoming a radical remnant, whilst the Labour leaders head for some soggy Social Democratic soft option. Prime tasks are to defend trade union links, win youth support (as Lenin and Luxemburg realised, "Who has the youth has the future") and steer Labour clear of pacts and PR. Above all, socialists in the Party must unite to fight for Clause 4. Whatever our differences, on common ownership we find common ground. We must ensure that it remains the cornerstone of our constitution, and becomes the main plank of policy programmes. Without this Labour will lose all identity and purpose and be led off into the Lib Dem domain.

Who benefits from Labour?

Sue Lukes
Islington North CLP

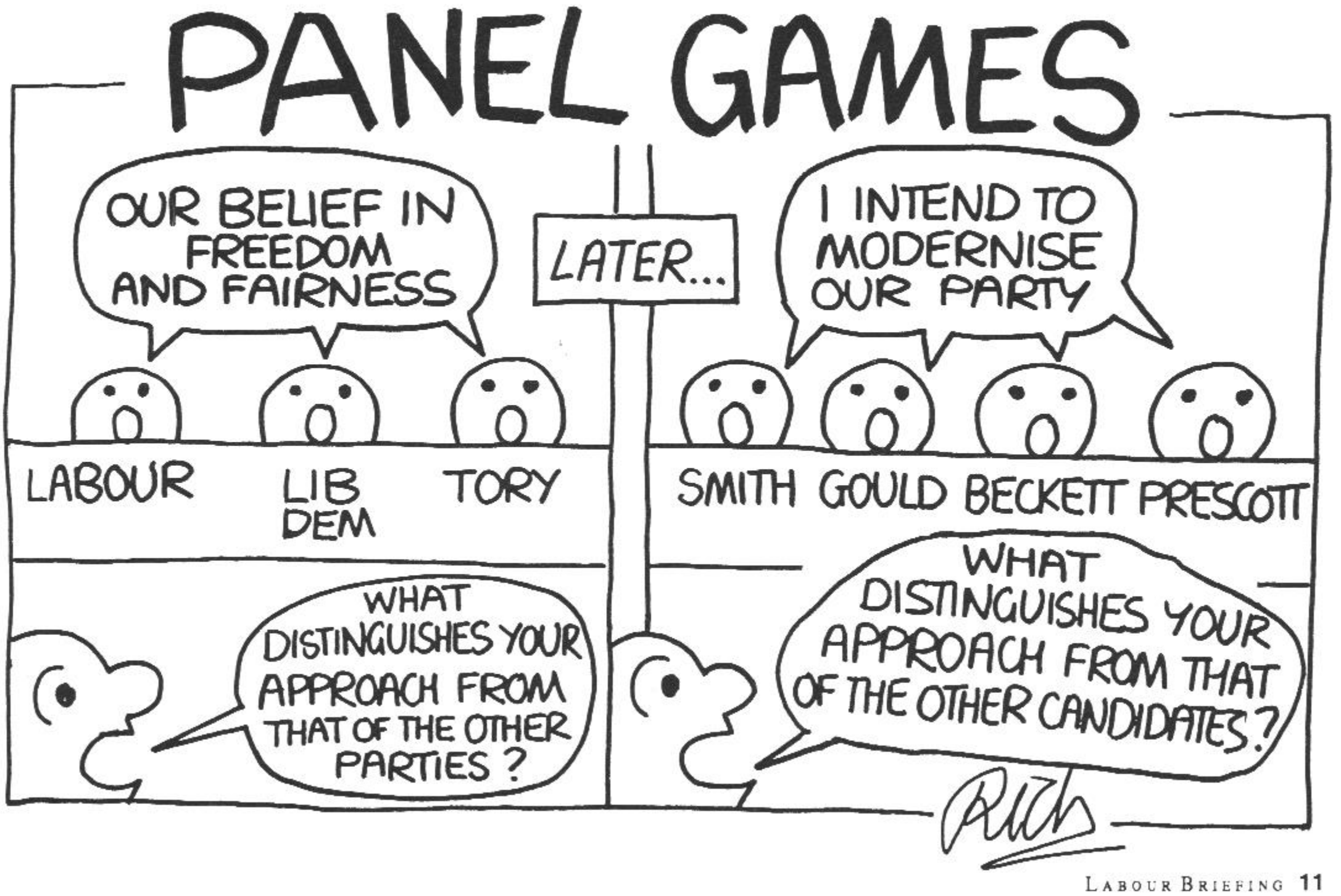
SHOULD WE BE surprised that senior Labour Party figures are now looking to make the poorest pay the price of Labour's defeat? "Advisers" and other shadowy figures are saying that the only way to balance the books without increasing taxes is to drop universal benefits (like Child, Unemployment and Sickness Benefits) and replace them with "targeted" (i.e. means tested) benefits which conform to specific policy objectives.

John Smith has suggested setting up a commission, to include people outside the Party, to look at benefits. While no-one should oppose an attempt to rethink policy creatively, we can only suspect that some sections of the Party leadership hope that the commission will be able to say what they are thinking but dare not speak out loud.

There will clearly be a debate on benefits within the Party. The left should be involved: who else will be there to defend the poor? We must, however, ensure that the terms of such a debate are not so restricted as to make some "answers" inevitable. There must be discussion on the whole of the tax and benefits system, on incomes and wealth. The massive subsidy to owner occupation via mortgage interest tax relief must be questioned. And it is completely unacceptable to talk of cutting benefits while maintaining extravagant spending on nuclear and conventional defence.

We need to define the aims and principles of a socialist benefits policy. How do we achieve dignity without paternalism, avoid stigmatising claimants while discouraging fraud, allow for differences and emergencies but not create poverty traps? How can such a policy allow for women's financial independence in a society based on "households" normally headed by men?

The benefits people have paid for through their national insurance contributions have now fallen way below any decency level. Many people who believed that they had built up an entitlement through years of work and contributions have seen it wiped out by successive years of cuts and changes and must now rely on the "safety net" provided by means-tested benefits. The real scandal of Child Benefit is not that rich women can claim it but that the very poorest women, those who depend on Income Support to survive, see every penny they get for their children deducted from their benefit. The real problem is that Child Benefit is set by people who think that allowing us to get more than £9.65 per week will encourage us to have too many children!



CLASS TRAITOR OF THE MONTH

This month's Class Traitor, BRYAN GOULD, is not going to be the next leader of the Labour Party. That burden will fall to John Smith, whom, we can assure readers, will feature in these columns in coming months.

the Life of Bryan

"BRYAN IS NOT as left-wing as he thinks he is," Austin Mitchell once observed. Another colleague dubbed him aptly a man of "discreet calculation".

First elected to the House from Southampton Test in 1974, Gould became Peter Shore's PPS and helped organise opposition to the EEC. However, as early as 1978 Tony Benn had him pegged as "an establishment man".

After losing his Southampton seat in 1979 Gould became a founder member of the LCC. He criticised Denis Healey's subservience to the City but kept the Bennite movement at arm's length. In 1983, he returned to Parliament, this time representing Dagenham, and became one of only a handful of MPs to back Shore and Gwyneth Dunwoody in that autumn's leadership contest. He went straight on to the front bench working in the Trade and Industry team under Shore. That year he joined the hard right in demanding a purge of Militant. He was also one of the first "soft left" MPs to call on Labour to revise its stance on council house sales.

Eager to make his mark and ambitious for advancement, he stood for the Shadow Cabinet in 1983, but received only 25 votes. The following year he stood for the constituency section of the NEC and polled only 18,000 votes. Undeterred, he stood for the Shadow Cabinet yet again in 1984 - and still received only 25 votes. In 1985, his vote increased to 53, still well out of contention for a top slot.

That year, John Smith took over the Shadow Trade and Industry brief and Gould at last found his starring role. The deregulation of the London financial markets and a wave of City scandals gave him the chance to make his mark in the House and with the Parliamentary press lobby. Standing out in a lacklustre opposition front bench, Gould's confident and concise performances at the dispatch box won him new support in the PLP and a following in the Party, carefully nurtured by the LCC, which saw in his addiction to "new ideas" a handy cover for a rapid move to the right.

In 1986 he secured 82 votes for the Shadow Cabinet and finally won a place (at the expense of Robin Cook). Kinnock made him Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury and Campaign Co-ordinator. Gould turned the latter post into a high profile position at the centre of Labour's campaign and media machine. By now he had become a trusted member of the Kinnock's inner circle. He took command of Labour's 1987 election effort and was credited with many of its successes while escaping blame for its signal failure.

In the wake of the 1987 defeat Gould was ubiquitous, preaching the same message he was to offer the Party five years later in the wake of yet another election defeat. "We must first learn to give new and more welcoming signals to the electorate... talk in a more modern language... sharpen up the process of policy formulation..." he wrote in *New Socialist*. "We need to develop radical policies which are not only true to our socialist values but also appeal to the self-interest of those whose votes we need," he told an LCC conference. "Our obligation is to strengthen our socialist commitment by giving it a more radical cutting edge and sharper focus," he wrote in *Tribune*. In this period, Gould played a key role in laying the ideological foundations of the Policy Review (which left us with no policies) and the national membership scheme (which left us with few members).

Gould topped the 1987 Shadow Cabinet ballot. His 163 votes, accompanied by strong votes for Prescott and Meacher, led the "soft left" to believe that it was now "in the driving seat". That illusion was short-lived. Kinnock kept faith with the old right-wing and gave the three top Shadow Cabinet jobs to Hattersley, Kaufman and Smith, denying Gould the post of Shadow Chancellor he craved. Instead, he was given Trade and Industry and a key brief in shaping the central "Productive and Competitive Economy" section of the Policy Review.

At the October Conference he was elected to the NEC in his second attempt. In the five years that followed, Gould was to vote against the leader's wishes on the NEC no more than half a dozen times.

For a while Gould argued for a redefinition of social ownership through employee share holding. This "radical" policy was born of and died with the Lawson boom. In the end, his plea for "more flexible forms of common ownership" led, as the left predicted, to the abandonment of all forms of common ownership.

As the leadership moved ever further to the right, Gould occasionally fell out of step. During the early stages of the Policy Review, his modest proposals for state intervention in industry enraged Kinnock adviser John Eatwell, a born-again devotee of the free market. Despite Gould's public denunciation of the Benn-Heffer campaign as "tiny and impotent", off-the-record briefings orchestrated by Peter

CLASS TRAITOR OF THE MONTH



Mandelson began to let the world know that the golden boy of 1987 had fallen from grace in the leader's eyes.

In the Shadow Cabinet elections of 1989 Gould came ninth with 124 votes. In the big reshuffle which followed he was replaced at Trade and Industry by that rising star of the new right, Gordon Brown. Gould was given the Environment portfolio vacated by Jack Cunningham, who became Campaign Co-ordinator and Shadow Leader of the House. At Kinnock's urging Gould let it be known that he had specifically requested the position. In fact, it was no secret at Westminster that Kinnock had offered him no choice; it was Environment or nothing.

Gould's Shadow Cabinet vote slumped alarmingly in 1990: his 94 votes placed him seventeenth among the eighteen elected members. This was his punishment for supporting defence cuts at the NEC meeting held just before the 1990 Conference, a mistake he was careful not to repeat.

Gould was shocked at the unreasonable way his fortunes seemed to have turned sour so suddenly. He found the petty vindictiveness of the Kinnock regime in its last years distasteful. But like many of his "soft left" colleagues, Gould did not relish being on the outside looking in. He redoubled his efforts to secure support from a leadership that went out of its way time and again to make clear to the media its lack of trust in him. He kept aloof from the Tribunite "Supper Club" and gave the leadership full backing during the Gulf War.

As Labour's Environment spokesperson during the Poll Tax rebellion, Gould found it easy to score points against the Tories but was hamstrung by Labour's flip flops over its alternative. In the House of Commons, Gould described collecting the Poll Tax as an attempt "to squeeze blood out of a stone... with each successive year the Poll Tax becomes less and less workable..." This was, of course, the argument made by the non-payment movement which Gould repeatedly denounced. In mid-1991 he served as Kinnock's front man in the witch-hunt against the Lambeth councillors.

Once the Tories had backtracked on the Tax, Gould made it his business to boast of the "hard line" Labour councils were taking on non-payment. When the High Court ruled that computer evidence was inadmissible in Poll Tax cases, Gould complained that non-payers were being let off the hook by a "lazy and incompetent government". He offered Labour's parliamentary support for a short government bill to plug the loophole and thus enable local authorities to continue committal proceedings.

All this helped Gould claw his way back on board the Kinnock band-wagon. When Cunningham's performance as Campaign Co-ordinator came under fire in mid-1991, Gould was recruited to serve as Cunningham's deputy. He effectively took over the show during the election campaign, proving himself, as ever, a willing tool of the Shadow Communications Agency.

Gould's leadership bid has turned out to be rather a damp squib. He was lucky to pass the 20% threshold for PLP nominations and some of those who signed up for him let it be known that they had only done so to ensure the Party was not embarrassed by an Albanian-style ballot with John Smith the only candidate on offer. Despite all the hoopla about the "rolling manifesto" and the renewed talk of "radicalism" there has been a distinct lack of enthusiasm for Gould's candidacy in any section of the movement.

If Gould's vague noises about "the need for consensus", constitutional reform, working with groups outside the Party and reviewing the union link mean anything at all they mean a permanent shift by Labour away from any class identity. As in 1987, he has preached an empty rhetoric of "consumerism" and "modernisation" that systematically evades every crucial issue facing the labour movement.

While all this goes down well with the media, it is greeted with considerable unease within the Party. The fact that Frank Field, that profoundly anti-Labour Labour MP, nominated Gould for leader says it all.

Gould's advocacy of the claims of industry over the clout of finance has been consistent over many years but has never been fleshed out with any convincing proposals for either state intervention or workers' control. He wants to undermine the power of the City but is unwilling to take any decisive steps towards that worthy aim. While he has been a long-standing champion of devaluation (a fetish he inherited from his master, Peter Shore) his attack on John Smith's tax plans shows that at heart he believes wealth redistribution is counterposed to wealth creation, his holy grail. This is a "radicalism" stripped of any actual threat to the establishment. What we have here is not "new ideas" but stale gimmicks and glib phrase-making.

Gould's late bid to focus on the deputy leadership looks a pathetic attempt to salvage something from the wreckage of his ambitions. No doubt he will hope that Smith gives him a substantial portfolio, but competition for the top jobs will be tight and Smith will have to reward Cook, Blair and Brown before he even considers a place for Gould. ❑

It's not the system
- it's the backlog (Part 2)

DURING THE election campaign I managed to recruit a number of new members. A couple I have known for many years were amongst these. Within days they received acknowledgement of receipt of their application.

Karl Statton
Banbury CLP

"Efficient or what?" I thought. "At last they've got the system up and running."

Seven weeks after the cheque was sent off they'd still not heard anything. The bank told them the cheque had not yet been presented. So they asked me if I could look into it.

I phoned Wally Road and was told there was no record of their membership being processed. The general election was the cause of the delay. "The whole system is the problem," was my reply. No, not a bit of it, the system was working well, I was told. My friends would have to be patient for two more weeks.

Two weeks later, the cheque had still not been cashed, so I called Wally Road again. "Sorry, not yet, give it another week or so."

I was beginning to get a little pissed off at this point, and told the person on the other end that at a time of such financial crisis it was ludicrous for the party to sit on £20 cheques. "This system is a disgrace and the sooner it is replaced by a local collection system the better it would be for all concerned."

"The system is fine," said the friendly bureaucrat "but due to the election there is an incredible backlog." What do we do if people decide not to wait any longer and stop the cheque? I asked. I hope his response was not typical of the Wally Roader's commitment to building a mass membership. "There's not a lot we can do about that really."

Anyone who cares about the future of the Party has to call for an end to this bureaucratic nightmare and for the re-introduction of the local method of subs collection and recruitment. ❑

North Oxfordshire Socialist Campaign Group

First Annual Eric Heffer Memorial Leature

Speaker: Tony Benn
7:30pm

Friday, July 10th
Banbury Town Hall

Tommy in Lallygrad

GLASGOW LABOUR CIRCLES have been rocked by a series of controversies in the wake of the local council elections. *Militant* anti-Poll Tax activist Tommy Sheridan, at present in Slaughton Prison, Edinburgh, won a Council seat, defeating Labour candidate Stewart McLennan, election agent for Pollok MP Jimmy Dunnachie. As McLennan is a former Trotskyist turned rabid witch-hunter, this must have been sweet for Sheridan.

Another anti-Poll Tax rebel, Nicky Bennett, took the neighbouring South Nitshill seat. In the east end of the city, two sitting councillors, Jim McVicar (Baillieston) and Charlie Stevenson (Queenslie), were suspended indefinitely by the Labour Group for opposing handing over details of income support claimants to the Poll Tax officials.

As a result both men stood under the Independent Labour banner, backed by their local Labour Party branches against official Labour candidates imposed from above. Both held their seats by comfortable margins. Both have now been expelled.

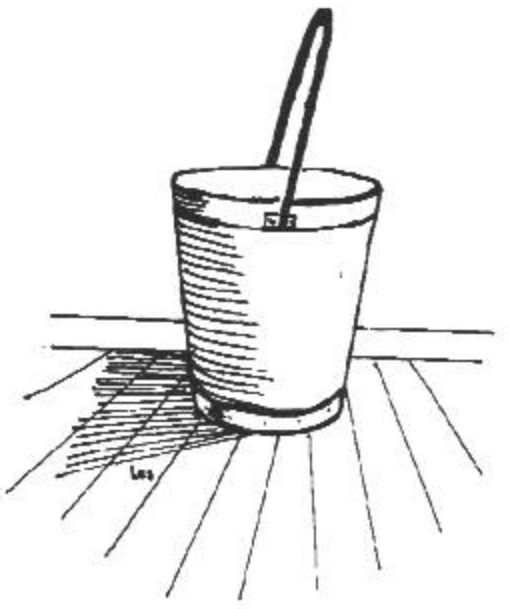
Jim Friel, Bailliestown Labour Party Secretary, an active Party member for over twenty years, has also been booted out for the crime of acting as election agent for Jim McVicar. Friel is also agent for Shettleston's Labour MP, David Marshall, and president of the Scottish section of the printworkers' union, GMPU.

Baillieston, a former mining village, has a long term history of radical socialism. John Wheatley, one of the Red Clydesiders, was raised in a miners' row in the village. He became Minister of Health in the first Labour government.

In Glasgow Pat Lally, right-wing Labour Group leader, saw his cherished dream of becoming Lord Provost evaporate and then failed in his bid to retain the Group leadership. His dictatorial style led to Glasgow being nicknamed 'Lallygrad'.

There will not be many tears shed in Glasgow. ❑

ARTEFACT



BUCKET
Containing tears shed at news of Gerald Kaufman's resignation

Lambeth witch-hunt heads for NCC

Celia Dignan
Steve French

THIRTEEN LAMBETH Councillors and two Vauxhall CLP members face possible expulsion by the NCC in mid-July. They could be the last socialists expelled during Kinnock's regime or the first victims of John Smith's new leadership. The NEC charged them with 'a sustained course of conduct prejudicial to the Party' in March 1991, since when they have been suspended from Party activity.

The suspension of the leader, deputy leader, chief whip and mayor was effectively a coup against the Council leadership to further the ambitions of the local LCC. The action followed two special council meetings. One was called to oppose using Poll Tax bailiffs and the other condemned the Gulf War. Afterwards, the NEC received anonymous and unsubstantiated reports that intimidation and even criminal damage had occurred. Using these smears the NEC launched an 'inquiry'.

Following the NEC's action, a vicious media witch-hunt and a sustained smear campaign within the Party ensued. To many, the "guilt" of the thirteen is a foregone conclusion and it simply remains for the NCC to 'rubber-stamp' it. It is impossible to believe that they will receive a fair hearing.

The Labour leadership believed that it could win the general election by courting "respectability" in the eyes of the establishment. This strategy failed. Labour lost a fourth election in circumstances which couldn't have been more favourable for victory.

The witch-hunt has done nothing for Labour's electoral prospects in Lambeth either. Recent by-election results have been poor. Regional office has excluded anyone who opposes the suspensions or who is remotely on the left from selection contests.

Drop the charges. Fight the Tories - not the left. Messages of support should be sent to Lambeth Against the Witch-Hunt, 18 Stockfield Road, Streatham, London SW16 2LR.

Nuclear Jack back on rack

MORE TROUBLE FOR Labour's so-called Campaigns Co-Ordinator, Jack Cunningham.

After receiving the *Green Magazine* award for the worst environmental record of any MP, he has now also won their monthly Green Gremlin Award. Following the legal challenge to his election reported in the last issue of *Briefing* (British Nuclear Fuels had circulated a newsletter to all employees and local worthies recommending Dr Jack - after the election had been called), he has now compounded the offense by refusing to condemn plans for a NIREX nuclear waste dump to be sited in the village of Gosforth in his Copeland constituency.

Replying to a written protest from Cumbrians Opposed to a Radioactive Environment, Cunningham wrote, "I am surprised you have the effrontery to expect me to enter into correspondence with you."

The new boy

ANDREW MACKINLAY, newly elected Labour MP for Thurrock, is rapidly winning himself a reputation as a bumbling eager beaver and brown nose of the backbenches following his initial interventions in the House of Commons.

In his maiden speech he spoke of his thirty year ambition to become an MP (indeed he made the first of his four unsuccessful tilts at parliament at the age of 24 in 1974), of the "moving experience" and "priceless privilege" of speaking in the chamber. He praised Neil Kinnock: "I believe the Labour Party owes him and his wife a great debt."

John McDonnell
needs your help

JOHN MCDONELL, a long-time servant of the London Labour left, has been hit by heavy damages following a libel suit filed by his Tory opponent in the general election, the unspeakable Terry Dicks.

John stands to lose his home if he cannot raise the £55,000 Dicks is trying to squeeze out of him. Dicks' own costs were born by millionaire James Goldsmith, so he was free to take John to court without risk to himself.

Please make a donation today to the John McDonnell Appeal, 3 Hanson Street, London W1P 7LJ.

General Election Debrief

It is important the views of our candidates and agents at the General Election form part of our General Election.

It is absolutely crucial that whilst we examine the campaign to identify those aspects that we believe upon, we must also look at the positive aspects of the campaign and how we build and develop for the future, our most important task is to learn.

In order to assist we would be grateful if you could complete the attached questionnaire and return it to me by June 20th 1992.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Joyce Gould

Joyce Gould
Director of Organisation

Letter from Joyce Gould to Labour candidates.
No wonder we lost the election!

Solidarity and Sendero

RONAN BENNETT'S eye-opening visit to a Peruvian prison provided with much more than just a setting for his second novel, *Overthrown by Strangers*.

AROUND THE prison of Canto Grande, on the forlorn outskirts of Lima, the desert is grey dust. Everything about the place speaks of decay, yet Canto Grande is not old. It was built in the mid-1980s to a design employed in Spain during the Franco era. Within the perimeter wall, the prison is shaped like a cake cut into six slices, each wedge a block pulled slightly apart and out from the centre. The wedges are divided lengthwise in two to make, in effect, twelve blocks, numbered 1a to 6b.

Until a few weeks ago, almost 500 prisoners of the Communist Party of Peru, better known as Sendero Luminoso (the Shining Path) were housed in 1a (women) and 4b (men). The political prisoners had succeeded in excluding the authorities from their blocks and had effectively created an autonomous area within the prison. However, on May 11th, President Alberto Fujimori ordered the army and police to take control of the women's block. Fighting broke out and several women prisoners were shot dead. There were also reports that three policemen had been killed. The fighting escalated and reached the men's block. By the time the army and police had taken both blocks tens of prisoners had been killed. Official reports put the figure at 35, with 20 injured. However, it is generally believed that the true figure is over 100. What is not in dispute is that five of the six most important leaders were among the dead, giving rise to speculation that there were selective executions after the prisoners surrendered.

The assault on the blocks came only weeks after Fujimori's 'autogolpe', in which the President led a coup, with army backing, against his own government. After the coup, Fujimori promised the army a free hand in dealing with Sendero. The prison massacre, not the first in recent Peruvian history, is dramatic evidence of how the army intends to step up its war against the Maoist insurgents.

Since launching its guerrilla war twelve years ago, Sendero has gained control of much of the Peruvian countryside, displacing state authority and establishing its own rule through "popular committees". More than 30,000 people have been killed and another 20,000 have "disappeared". Although Sendero has been ruthless in its prosecution of the war, human rights organisations like Amnesty International claim that responsibility for most of the deaths and disappearances lies with the army and police.

Sendero's own record is bloody. Besides soldiers and policemen, their targets have included state representatives, however lowly; politicians of all parties; trade union leaders; and members of the Movimiento Revolutionario Tupac Amaru, a smaller left-wing guerrilla group. This, and the macabre theatricality of many Senderista actions (dogs hung from lamp-posts), has earned Sendero a reputation for a kind of unhinged ruthlessness. The short-hand favoured by journalists to describe the organisation is "the Khmer Rouge of Latin America".

In November 1989 I was in Peru to research a novel which had as one of its central characters a former Senderista. I had been concerned that although the novel's narrative and characters were progressing satisfactorily, I still could not quite get the book's theme into focus. I knew I was dealing with characters who had experienced strong personal and political commitments in their pasts, and that they had lost these commitments, but I was unsure about how to turn their sense of loss and isolation into a larger theme.

On November 1st, 1989, I witnessed from a distance of a couple of hundred yards a heavily armed contingent of the Peruvian police shoot down unarmed marchers in Lima's city centre. Five people were killed and many more wounded. The government - then living out its dog days under the by then immensely unpopular populist Alan Garcia - claimed the marchers had fired on the police. It later transpired that the marchers were the widows and families of dead Senderistas, and the march - it was the Day of the Dead - was an annual event to

inside a Peruvian prison



Photo: Ronan Bennett

commemorate their fallen.

Back in my hotel one of the receptionists asked me about the massacre. After a long conversation he invited me to go with him to visit imprisoned Senderistas in Canto Grande.

I arrived to see that vestiges of Canto Grande's high-tech surveillance equipment were still visible. There was a metal bracket in the wall that used to mount a close-circuit camera; the camera itself had gone, stolen, visitors said, by the police guards. "Canto Grande was designed for a European mind," one visitor told me. He pointed to a building that was once the control centre. "It had banks of screens, buttons and lights. But the Peruvian mind cannot cope with such things. The equipment broke down, they stole it, and so now the control centre is abandoned."

Certainly, when it came to getting past the guards at the perimeter gate, the police techniques were more conventionally Latin American: to get through I paid a bribe of two cigarettes and the equivalent of seven cents in Intis (Peru's worthless and now abandoned currency).

Once through the perimeter gate, we entered a long passage on either side of which were cell blocks. There was the sharp stench of piss. Filthy, scabrous arms stretched through the bars, hands cupped in supplication. From the upper floor windows, prisoners lowered plastic bowls on strings and pleaded for food. Some prisoners were waiting at the end of the passage. They were in rags, barefoot, bearded, hair unkempt.

It was a noisy place. A man on the balcony of one block was screaming, apparently at nothing; beside him another man was shouting, trying to attract the attention of someone in another block. The squalor was appalling. We reached the wire fence around 4b, guarded by two bored-looking policemen at a small table. They wrote our names into a book and opened a chain-link fence.

To enter the Sendero block in Canto Grande was to pass into another world. I heard huayno music played on guitars, charangos and zampofias. We entered an anteroom, on either side of which was "an honour guard" of some twenty men. They were wearing red, tunic-like jackets, and each held a red flag with the hammer and sickle emblazoned in gold. As the visitors arrived, the honour guard came to attention and raised the flags to form an arch, under which we passed. Prisoners, scrubbed clean and neatly dressed in casual clothes, crowded in to receive their visitors, and they clapped in loud applause as we emerged from the arch. The atmosphere of menace so tangible outside had vanished.

We were led to the exercise yard. On the walls there were stylized murals depicting Sendero's Presidente Gonzalo and heroic scenes from the "popular war". At the top of the wall, in exquisite lettering was: "Nothing is impossible for those who dare to conquer the heights." A tall, green-eyed man approached. His name was Cox, and he stood out because, unlike the rest of the prisoners, he was fair-skinned. Peru is an acutely racist society, and the Sendero revolution is, as much as anything else, a rebellion by the poor, brown masses against the white ruling class.

Cox, said to be a leading member of the Party (they do not call it Sendero), turned out to be the nephew of the Bishop of Lima.

I admired the lettering at the top of the wall and asked Cox how they managed to get up there to write it. He said, "Nothing is impossible for those who dare to conquer the heights."

Cox wore jeans, a baseball cap and a T-shirt with cut-off sleeves. There were stretch marks on his upper arms. When arrested, the soldiers twisted his arms up his back until they snapped. He was lucky to be alive. The security forces normally execute captured guerrillas on the spot or torture them

Continued on page 18



Photo: Ronan Bennett

to death. Even those who live long enough to get to prison are not assured of survival. A mile down the road from Canto Grande is the prison of Lurigancho where, in 1986, 124 Senderista prisoners were executed by the security forces.

Morale was clearly high. We sat at benches set out in the yard. There was joking and laughing as prisoners and visitors relaxed, chatted and exchanged news. A dozen or so musicians stood in the middle of the yard mixing traditional huayno tunes with revolutionary songs. From time to time, the men got up to dance. After an hour the musicians came to their climatic finale. It was "Flor de Cactus", a fast, swirling tune. The dancers, holding hands, formed a circle around the musicians and rushed round and round, faster and faster as the tempo increased.

The prisoners served their visitors lunch: rice and beans and a morsel of meat. Cox told me that like almost all the others he had not yet been tried. Judicial and police strikes, overflowing court calendars and bureaucratic inefficiency meant that remand could last years. Cox said the police also deliberately delayed things. Three-quarters of the cases brought against Senderistas are eventually thrown out, often because the police have used torture to extract confessions.

After lunch, Cox took me on a tour of the block, a three-tiered building originally intended to accommodate 90 inmates. In spite of the over-crowding it was spotless. The cell doors had been removed. Some cells had been converted for communal use: there was a library and a storeroom from which food brought in by visitors was shared out equally. They had constructed an oven for baking bread and built a huge cauldron for purifying the water.

The prisoners organised everything themselves. They cared for their sick, they studied and taught, cooked and cleaned; they made leather goods, including fashionable shoes which visitors could buy. They kept a few rabbits, pigeons and chickens: the meat and eggs went to the sick. They had had a dog, "Audaz" (Cheeky), but, Cox said, it was shot by "la represion" a few days earlier during "a confrontation". There were frequent confrontations, Cox said. "In order to organize like this, we have to keep the authorities out. Sometimes they try to storm to block in an attempt to re-impose control. But we resist. Sometimes prisoners die".

Back in the yard, Cox and others expounded on Sendero's guerrilla war. They said they were adapting Maoist thought to Peruvian experience. Peru, Cox said, is a peasant society with colonial structures forced on it. The Party would overthrow these structures to create "a popular republic".

500 YEARS OF RESISTANCE!

International Rally
Liverpool
August 15th

The August 15th Festival and Rally, timed to coincide with the visit of the "Columbus Regatta" to the city, will feature a wide range of international figures including:

* **JEAN BERTRAND ARISTIDE**, exiled President of Haiti;
* **MANNING MARABLE**, Black Socialist Historian;
* **ANA GUADELUPE MARTINEZ**, a Comandante of the FMLN, EL Salvador;
* **DANIEL ORTEGA**, former President of Nicaragua;
* **A. SIVANANDAN**, Editor of *Race & Class*;

Others invited to take part include MOSES MAYEKISO of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, DR CHEDDI JAGAN of Guyana, ROSALINA TUYUC, leader of Conavigua (the National Organisation of Widows in Guatemala) and LUIS Da SILVA, President of the Workers Party of Brazil.

Sendero has built up a formidable, largely rural, guerrilla army, but, as yet, in spite of frequent shows of force in the capital, it shows no signs of being able to take a major town. It has no international backers to supply the heavy weaponry needed to capture and hold an urban centre. It depends for arms on what it can capture from the security forces, and while some guerrillas have M16s and AK47s, many are carrying around blunderbusses.

Nevertheless, Sendero has set out to strangle the cities. Lima's dependence on the fertile valleys of the central highlands around the town of Huancayo for food and electricity makes the capital vulnerable. The guerrillas have a strong presence in Huancayo and its hinterland. They have used terror - chiefly the assassination of local functionaries - to create a power vacuum. But they have also built up popular support through the shrewd exploitation of long-standing divisions between peasant communities and discontent over the failure of land reform.

The indiscipline, corruption and brutality of the security force drive many peasants into Sendero's arms or, at the very least, make them resentful towards state authority. Unpalatable as it is to politicians and commentators alike, a sizeable part of the population prefers the presence of Sendero to that of the army.

Where Sendero has displaced official Peru it has consolidated support through land redistribution and through the maintenance of "revolutionary order". It punishes thieves, drunkards, adulterers and wife-beaters. It was, Cox told me proudly, "el nuevo poder" in action.

Although both the Peruvian government and the US Drug Enforcement Administration, now heavily committed in Peru's coca-growing areas of the country, claim Sendero operates alongside the drug cartels, they have yet to produce convincing evidence. Cox was emphatic: the Party had no links with the drugs cartels. Instead, he pointed to the proven corruption of certain politicians, as well as army and police officers, some of whom have been indicted in US courts for drugs-related offences.

Leaving Canto Grande, it was hard to miss the contrast between the discipline and determination of the Senderistas and the guards' slovenliness, between their block and the rest of the prison. But more importantly, the massive failure of Peruvian state and society will ensure that Sendero's revolution continues. The economy is in chaos, overwhelmed by foreign debt, inflation corruption and inefficiency; the people are destitute, shut off from hope of betterment by a selfish, myopic ruling class.

Every non-socialist remedy - from Reaganomics to statist populism - has been tried and has failed. It was in the desperate hope of something better that, two years ago, people voted in Fujimori and rejected Mario Vargas Llosa, novelist and Reaganite. Fujimori has since been working to re-establish relations with the US, the World Bank and the IMF. The result has been more unemployment and poverty. In the eyes of many of Peru's impoverished masses, their ancestors enjoyed a better life five centuries ago under the Incas. It is in this context that Sendero's revolution to overthrow everything built since the Conquest finds a response.

In an effort to establish whether Cox had survived the May 11th massacre I contacted Amnesty International. They forwarded a press release from the Peruvian embassy which stated: "The killings were not the result of a police operation but were the action of the riot leaders who preferred to kill their fellow inmates to discourage others from surrendering to the police forces".

A list of thirty names was appended. Cox's did not appear on it. The press release said that there were five unidentified bodies.

Compared with the destruction of life on such a scale my own search for a theme for my novel counts for little. However, my visit to Canto Grande did provide me with what I needed. At a time when it is fashionable to claim that collectivism and solidarity are the preserve of the simple-minded, what I saw in Canto Grande was proof that people in a weak and vulnerable position could, by standing together, by standing up for themselves and each other, resist oppression and create a better life. ❑

Overthrown by Strangers

THE GLOBAL REACH of international capital in the late twentieth century has stirred up waves of forced migration which have brought together the most unlikely combinations of groups and individuals, divided by every conceivable cultural, racial and linguistic barrier, united only by a common oppressor whom the vast majority cannot even name.

In his second novel, *Overthrown by Strangers*, *Briefing* contributor Ronan Bennett takes the inner pulses of a selection of characters brought together in exile - a hapless, isolated victim of the war in Ireland, an embittered Peruvian thief turned prison revolutionary and a deracinated middle class Guatemalan leftist. All appear to have given up an unequal political struggle, yet all are haunted by that struggle. All find themselves ensnared by the tentacles of a ruthless organisation of right-wing evangelical Christians.

This is a serious book which delves deep to examine in detail the contradictory and often unconscious compulsions driving its characters. In the end, the point is that self-discovery cannot be divorced from solidarity. At times grim and violent, like the world it depicts, *Overthrown by Strangers* is always fascinating and is fired throughout by rage at the barbaric injustice of the New World Order and compassion for all its victims.

Mike Marqusee
Editor
Labour Briefing

Nicaragua on the rack

TEN THOUSAND Nicaraguan sugar workers stopped work earlier this year in a strike wave involving bank, telecommunication, customs and electricity workers. They were demanding a 100% wage increase and government adherence to negotiated agreements.

When negotiations stalled hundreds of workers camped outside the presidential offices threatening to blow up a truck containing 3,500 bags of sugar if police tried to remove them.

Lucie Jimenez, leader of the largest union federation, the FNT, called for a week of strikes to put pressure on the government, although opposition Sandinista leaders expressed concern that the unrest could heighten instability in the country. Settlements were subsequently reached to end the strikes.

Meanwhile, some groups of 'recontras' - ex-contras who have gone back to banditry - and 'recompas' - former Sandinista militants who have rearmed - have come together to form new groups known as 'revueltos' (scrambled up). The new groups have a common interest. 1,500 of them occupied the northern town of Ocotal for five days demanding land titles, construction materials and agricultural credit so they could settle down as farmers.

A few weeks later 200 women 'revueltos' armed themselves and occupied public buildings in Ocotal demanding jobs, free medical care and funding for children's centres. Last month groups took over the larger town of Jinetega and blocked all roads leading to Esteli, demanding land and housing.

A new national peasants front has been set up, bringing together ex-contras, ex-soldiers and members of the existing farmers' union, to campaign for land and credit - the key to social and economic stability.

Meanwhile, 34,000 acres of agricultural land have been laid waste by the eruption of the Cerre Negro volcano 10 kilometres from Leon. 4,500 people were made homeless after their farms were buried under deep ash.

Homelessness throughout Nicaragua is increasing. According to UNICEF there is a housing deficit of 416,000 houses. 20,000 tenants were evicted in the last 15 months alone due to an anti-tenant law passed in 1990, which is being fought by the Nicaraguan Tenants Association.

Government policies are only aggravating social problems. Poverty is increasing and cholera is now described by health experts as being in its 'expansive phase'. ❑

Sao Paolo forum

IN JULY IN Managua the third annual meeting of the Sao Paolo Forum will take place. Its main objective is to develop alternatives to the neo-liberal policies being implemented to devastating effect across Latin America.

Sixty-eight progressive Latin American organisations make up the Forum. They include the Nicaraguan FSLN, the FMLN of El Salvador, the Cuban Communist Party, various Trotyskist and social democratic groups, as well as the Brazilian Workers Party, which hosted the first meeting two years ago.

The Forum is open and informal and is clearly an important initiative. Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega has called for a 'People's International', and for the first time currents from beyond Latin America have been invited. The PLO and movements from Africa are among the eighty-nine delegations expected to attend.

Hard-liners for Northern Ireland

JOHN MAJOR's appointments to the Northern Ireland Office mark a hardening of approach by the government.

New Secretary of State Patrick Mayhew was a fierce opponent of the limited safeguards in the Dublin government's 1987 Extradition Act. As Attorney-General he also opposed publishing the findings of the Stalker Report into the British Army's 'shoot-to-kill' policy and refused to prosecute RUC officers involved. He is the only politician ever to have been known actually to want the Northern Ireland job and has promised Major that he will crack down on the IRA.

His deputy, Michael Mates, is a ex-Lieutenant Colonel who served in Lisburn in the early 70s. As chair of the Common Select committee on Defence he vetoed an enquiry into the dismissal of former army (dis)information officer Colin Wallace. He only revealed later that he and Wallace had once shared the same barracks.

Greater legal and military repression may be in preparation behind the facade of 'all-party talks' - which in any case exclude any Republican viewpoint.

Six counties jobs bias continues

RELIGIOUS INEQUALITY remains endemic in Belfast City Hall despite the Council's signing a Fair Employment Declaration back in 1978, a recent report has confirmed.

The Fair Employment Commission reports that only 28% of the Council's workers are Catholic. Predictably, this figures falls to 17% in the senior management positions. The report also criticises delay and obstruction by the Council in allowing the Commission access to its records.

In a separate report the Commission found discrimination against Catholics even more acute in the private sector. Only 5.7% of workers employed by Belfast shipbuilders Harland and Wolff are Catholic.

Overall, Catholics are still up to two and a half times more likely to be unemployed than protestants.

Socialismo o muerte - venceremos!

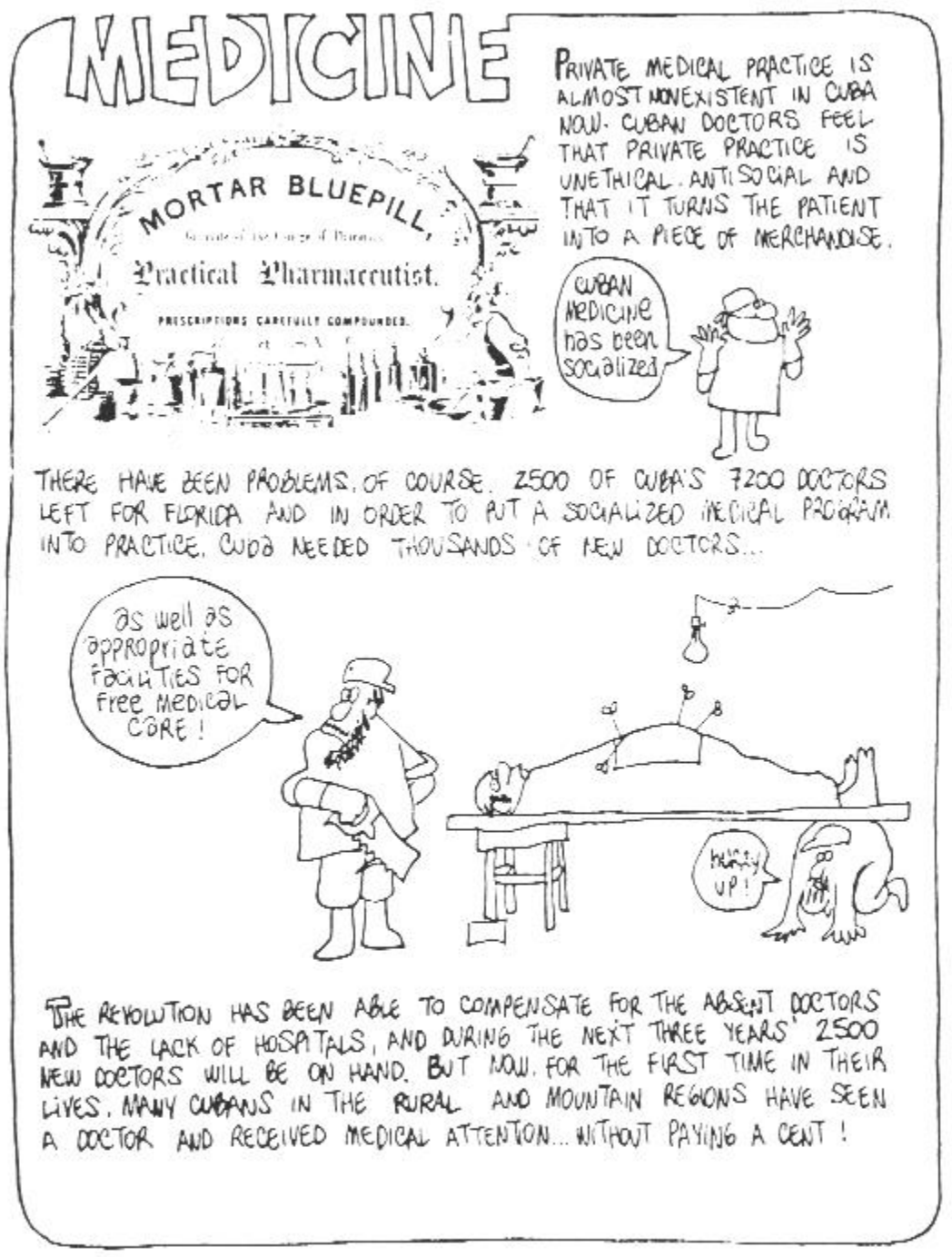
JULIE BOSTON visited Cuba on holiday and returned with a renewed commitment to defending the beleaguered revolutionary fortress.

BRITISH HOLIDAY makers who dip into this year's Thomson's Worldwide package will see an addition: Cuba. £725 will buy thirteen nights in a hotel on Varadero's magnificent coast. BBC *Breakaway* and other travel programmes have also introduced holiday makers to the attractions of Cuba. Cubana airways now runs weekly flights from Stansted. Among the passengers leaving on April 9th was a group on a Study Tour advertised in *Labour Briefing*.

Cuba has many attractions. Holiday brochures feature the sport and leisure facilities. Canadian holiday makers have been visiting Varadero for the past five years because it has one attraction found no where else in the Caribbean - safety.

Living standards for Cubans are far higher than in the rest of the Caribbean or Latin America. There is no unemployment, no homelessness, no begging and no cholera. Cubans exude health. They look strikingly fit: the result of a lifetime on a diet of 2,600 calories a day (now reduced by the embargo to 2,400). Insurance companies are unlikely to have to reimburse Cuba's holiday makers for loss by theft or illness.

Years of misinformation about Cuba have created a negative picture of the country. Many of us visiting Cuba recently were sent off with dire warnings. Cuba is Stalinist, Communist, violent, drug-running, etc. One traveller who phoned the National Vaccination Clinic was told that injections against rabies and meningitis were necessary, though in fact neither is required in a country with universally accessible free health care and high quality medical standards.



The only threat comes from the United States trade embargo. Lack of oil, medical ingredients and food is a serious problem. Yet there is world-wide silence at this violation of the human rights of ten million people who daily carry the burden of queues for food and transport.

The British Cuba Resource Centre has raised sufficient money to pay for an advertisement in the *Guardian* publicising the demand for Cuba's national sovereignty to be respected. A meeting in New York attracted 5000 people. In Galicia, Spain, sufficient money was raised to send a shipment of medicine, school materials and food.

A tanker of oil was paid for by people in Mexico. However, no nation dares trade with Cuba because of the threat of US reprisals.

Solidarity with Cuba was a theme in the Newcastle, Chesterfield and Leicester May Day celebrations. In 1988 the Cuban shipping line, Mambisa, put in an order of £70 million for ten freighters from Sunderland's shipyard in which it also offered to take a part stake. The Tory government's answer was to close the shipyard down.

When the guerillas found themselves facing Batista's army they said, "Don't shoot, you can't kill an idea." Cuba may not be our idea of socialism but it's much closer to it than anywhere else on planet earth.

Immigration controls sow division in Los Angeles

Finally, US unions are waking up to the dangers immigration controls pose for organised labour. MARY MCGINNof the US monthly *Labor Notes* reports from Los Angeles.

FIVE MAJOR US unions are calling for the repeal of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, terming it an attack on organised labour.

Nearly all AFL-CIO unions backed the Act when it was first proposed; they saw it as a way to deter the flow of undocumented immigrant workers and protect American jobs. The Act fines employers who hire workers without legal papers. It also allows the Immigration and Naturalisation Service to do spot checks at work sites.

The experience of recent years, however shows that despite the Act employers are continuing to hire undocumented immigrants. They are highly exploitable, and employers face little risk of a fine.

According to Jeff Stansbury, education director for Hotel and Restaurant Employees Local 11 in Los Angeles, the INS has only enough staff to visit less than 1% of manufacturing establishments per year. "With sweatshops, particularly in the garment industry, constantly closing shop and opening up new places, enforcement is slim," he noted.

Los Angeles unions have found that employers exploit the Act to discriminate against workers who look "foreign", said Anne Kansvaag of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles.

Employers also use the Act to scare workers trying to unionize by checking union activists' INS I-9 forms (which carry the government's authorisation to work). This has not only divided workers, but increased resentment against unions. "It's really a labour control system rather than an immigration act," Stansbury said.

Peter Olney, an organiser for the International Union of Electrical Workers, said the INS came to one plant where an organising drive was in progress and demanded that 79 workers be fired for improper documents. Olney said the employer rehired 40 of the fired workers when they presented "new documents", but "none of the union's supporters were rehired."

Jono Schafer, an organizer for SEIU Local 399's "Justice for Janitors" campaign, described how employers use the Act to create resentment against the union.

"In the summer of 1990, workers at the nation's largest cleaning contractor [Century City] won the right to union representation," Schafer said. "In response the contractors began a complete audit of their personnel files. Nearly 1,000 employees were required to present work authorisation. Because of the confusion that ensued among the workers, many thought they had to produce a different document than the one they had presented at the time of their initial employment.

"The move severely hurt the union's reputation with the workers. They blamed the company's audit on unionisation. The word began to spread that to join a union meant that employers were going to check your papers."

Organising immigrant workers is essential for unions in Los Angeles, where thousands of Latino and Asian workers are employed in light manufacturing and service jobs. According to a recently released report compiled by Los Angeles unions (joined by the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the Alliance for Asian Pacific Labour), the Act "seriously harms our ability to organise new members by exposing workers to anti-union retaliation, denying them the right to strike, subjecting them to employment discrimination, stripping them of protection from existing wage, hour, health and safety laws, making them liable for criminal prosecution, and forcing them to work for subcontractors where competition drives working conditions further downward."

The unions calling for repeal of the 1986 Act include: the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union, Service Employees International Union, the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, and the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners. ❑

South Africa: state of fear

OVER 7,000 people have been killed in so-called 'township violence' since the release of Nelson Mandela and many black communities live in a constant state of fear, according to a new Amnesty International report.
Much may have changed in South Africa in the last two years, but clearly reforms have yet to touch the security forces.

The report documents the complicity of the police in a number of brutal attacks by Inkatha on black communities including the armed attack by Inkatha on crowds in Pietermaritzburg in March 1990 which left 80 people dead. In May 1991, 29 people were killed when the Swannieville squatter camp outside Johannesburg was attacked. According to eye-witnesses, police joined the Inkatha rampage.

Various inquiries inside South Africa have revealed security forces involvement in murder, poisoning, kidnapping and arson. Not one officer has ever been prosecuted.

Amnesty concludes that the ability of the security forces to operate outside the law remains a major threat to any democratic transition in South Africa.

South Africa, State of Fear, £6 (add 15% for postage and packing), available from Amnesty International, 99-119 Rosebury Avenue, London EC1R 4RE.

The Belly Grip



Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid, born one hundred years ago this August, was, in his own words, "a Communist, a Scottish separatist and republican". One of the greatest poets to emerge from these isles in the twentieth century, he is still largely ignored by the middle-class London-based literati.

Come let us put an end to one thing
    Now that science gives us the power,
And make it impossible for any men
    To exercise for another hour
Any influence on other men that depends
On economic pressure to gain its ends.

Come let us finish the whole damned farce
    Of law and order on murder based,
On the power to coerce and starve and kill,
    With all its hypocrisy, cruelty, and waste;
And safe from all human interference give
Every man at least ample means to live.

Come let us transfer all moral issues
    And social relations to a higher plane
Where men may agree, but if they don't
    Can never be forced to submit again
To the will of others by hunger and want.
It's time to end the sadistic cant.

Come let us put a premium then
    On pure example and persuasive force,
Not that they're likely to carry far
    In maintaining present conventions, of course,
Since these all depend on the belly-grip
And will change completely when that's let slip.

For no religion, no form of government,
    Has ever had any sanction except
Brute needs ruthlessly taken advantage of,
    And these science has now triumphantly o'erleapt.
The fools who say men must still bear any yoke
Have no gifts, save cruelty, more than most other folk.

Nor has any other man in politics to-day
    Nor in industry, commerce, or the money swindle
Nor will any man in the future, thank God.
    Our kings and statesmen in a few years will all
dwindle
To nothing, big though they may loom to-day,
- Only apprentice nothings upon mankind prey.

There have been men in the course of history
    Giants compared to the mass of their fellows,
But they took no part in the fraud of ruling.
    How big compared to the average, tell us,
Let alone to any the centuries treasure
Are Mosley and Lloyd? - Not a cheese-mite's measure!

Let us believe in the intelligence and decency
    Of the majority of men if properly treated
And their power when a great opportunity
    Is frankly presented to rise and meet it,
And abjure the impious nonentities who still,
As hitherto, would fain impersonate God's will.

All that humanity through the ages has won
    Owes nothing to them or any of their kind,
If our life lost any real asset none
    Of these could attempt to regain it, you'd find
- Only a MacDonald, a Baldwin, a Thomas
Are the God-like creatures science threatens to take from us!

We'll survive the loss! The kindly common men
    Upstarts like these deem unfit for freedom
Will not have the slightest difficulty
    Once such blind leaders cease to mislead'em
In establishing a right good fellowship
Forever free of the belly-grip.

From *Stony Limits*, 1934

UCATT fights back in cold climate

LAST YEAR saw the election of a left-leaning UCATT Executive following what was widely seen to be the union's first genuinely democratic ballot in years. New UCATT Chair Peter Lenehan, addressing the union's National Delegate Conference in Southport, referred to attempts by the media and management-style unions to break UCATT after the left's victory. "The group of officials who defected to the GMB and the EETPU a year ago were like mercenaries going to those who would offer them the highest price. They said UCATT was finished. They said they would take 60,000 members with them. They were wrong. UCATT members have stayed loyal to their union.

"Workers don't split unions lightly, and the EETPU has come to understand that construction workers don't want a sweetheart union." The expertise of the full-time officials who deserted UCATT has led to a grand total of 200 members following them out of the union.

The new face of UCATT was on display in Southport. The practice of seating regional secretaries separately from their delegations, to prevent the possibility of delegates being "whipped" into line, was restored. Conference stewards were helpful and polite and there was a general feeling that retired UCATT members were more suitable for this task than retired boxers. Organisations such as the Connolly Association and the Construction Safety Campaign (CSC) were allowed stalls at the conference and their fringe events were announced from the platform. Under the previous leadership UCATT officials had been disciplined for expressing support for the CSC.

In a hard-hitting speech, Lenehan slammed corruption in the building industry, saying, "If the embezzlement of millions of pounds out of our industry was properly pursued by the state there would be people in jail. Why isn't it done? Because it might affect the funding of a certain political party, and the Tories know how to look after their own."

Plans for revitalising the union include an increase in safety reps on all organised sites, a general move to decasualisation in the industry, improvement of communication with members, a pensioners' forum, a commitment to women in the construction industry and a more active role in the TUC and Labour Party.

Meanwhile, industrial action on building sites throughout London is expected in the next few weeks as anger over the employers' offer of a nil percentage wage rise offer mounts. The unofficial Joint Sites Committee (JSC) is preparing to "go for the bosses' throats" with what appears to be the tacit support of the UCATT leadership.

UCATT's new General Secretary, George Brumwell, warned: "Our people have had to absorb 40% pay cuts, longer hours and unemployment. There is simmering resentment in the industry not of our making and not of our choosing."

He added that anti-union legislation has made it effectively impossible to organise legal industrial action in the building industry but warned, "There are other ways and other means."

This was interpreted as giving a green light to the JSC which has already organised eight strikes in London. In early June its pickets swooped on a £25 million office building project in Farringdon, central London, as part of its campaign against Balfour Beatty, which it accuses of hiring "cowboy subbies" who owe thousands of pounds in unpaid wages to workers on a North Circular Road project.

Dominic Hehir, UCATT's new London regional secretary, told the conference that his message to employers was: "Don't phone me when there's unofficial action telling me to get men back to work. If you offer a nil increase and try to get the lads into the ground, they won't stand for it. There will be total chaos in London."

A warning to Nalgo members

AS NALGO'S annual conference gathers in Bournemouth, a report issued by the Centre for Public Services in Sheffield makes a timely warning of the future facing local government workers under fourth term Toryism.

The report, "Competition, Cuts and Contractors", covers the experience of tendering and privatisation in three Tory London boroughs: Kensington, Wandsworth and Westminster. It has been produced in conjunction with Nalgo branches in those boroughs and Nalgo's Metropolitan (London) District.

The report's great strength is its succinct but detailed account of the history of privatisation in the three boroughs. Unfortunately - especially for a report subtitled "lessons for trade unionists" - it has little to say on the effectiveness (or otherwise) of trade union action in each of the boroughs.

The "plan of action" offered for Nalgo branches in Tory boroughs (but intended to be of wider application) also includes little that is new and much that is vague or unclear. Branches are exhorted to develop a "strategy" but given no guidance on its content or objectives.

The failures of the report simply reflect the political weaknesses of the Nalgo leadership. The foreword by Jean Geldart, Chair of Nalgo's National Local Government Committee, focuses entirely on the report's exposure of the many shortcomings in the Tory vision for the future of local government. It offers nothing to Nalgo members looking for a way to fight back.

Nonetheless, the report is worth purchasing if only to equip members for a more informed intervention in the interminable debates about "where we go" after the general election.

Copies are available for £5 to unions and £10 to local authorities from the Centre for Public Services, 1 Sidney Street, Sheffield, S1 4RG.

Left candidate bids for NUJ top job

RANK AND FILE activist Miles Barter is to be the left's candidate in the forthcoming election for NUJ general secretary.

A freelance journalist from Birmingham, Barter, aged 30, is standing on a democracy ticket under the slogan "giving the union back to the members."

The election follows a bureaucratic fix on the Executive to sack right-wing General Secretary Steve Turner, who is now setting up a rival union.

Barter, a former member of the Executive, is the only candidate who isn't a full time trade union official.

He chairs the NUJ's Birmingham branch, currently under attack from the leadership for urging members at BBC Pebble Mill not to cross a picket line and for winning a strike vote among members at the Birmingham *Metro News* facing derecognition. The *Metro News* strike was sabotaged by full-timers who refused to make it official.

A union activist since the age of nineteen, Barter has a record of backing workers taking industrial action, was a regular picket at Wapping and played an active part in supporting the 84-85 miners' strike. He has been involved in anti-deportation struggles and has the support of the union's leading black activists, including NUJ President Jim Boumelha and Black Sections spokesperson Marc Wadsworth.

Barter has pledged to take union campaigns to the grass roots, especially where chapels have been derecognised. He wants to improve the union's performance on health and safety and pensions, to defend broadcasting journalism from government attack and to launch a debate on journalistic ethics.

Barter believe the solution to the union's financial crisis is to recruit more members to an attractive, fighting union.

Contact Miles Barter at 29, Romulus Close, Birmingham, B20 2AR; tel. 021 523 9980.

Lambeth colleges victory

A TWO-WEEK indefinite strike by 500 staff members at Lambeth's Further Education Colleges ended in victory on Monday June 1st.

Following budget decisions in March, the Council had imposed reductions which college management had made clear would lead to compulsory redundancies. This was unacceptable to all the college unions, NATFHE, NALGO, NUPE and APEX, who took strike action to force the Council to withdraw the threat.

Although the strike threatened exams due to start on June 2nd it had excellent support from students at the colleges, who played a vital role in putting pressure on the Council.

The students' actions included occupations of the Council Chamber and the Education Department headquarters.

In an expression of anger and desperation, strikers and students blockaded the main A23 through Brixton for an hour on Friday May 22nd, forcing the Council Leader, Steve Whaley, to emerge from his office to address them.

A spokesperson for Lambeth NALGO welcomed the settlement of the dispute: "This strike is an excellent example of the unity with other trade unions and with the community which will be necessary to fight the onslaught on local government being prepared by the government.

"Our victory should encourage other groups of workers to take industrial action in defence of jobs and services."

London NHS alert

THE TOP-SECRET Tomlinson inquiry into London's Health Service has produced plans for the closure of at least 2000 acute hospital beds, according to NHS watchdog London Health Emergency.

At least two teaching hospitals are likely to go, the most obvious targets being Charing Cross and St. Thomas's. Up to 10,000 jobs are under threat and John Lister of LHE estimates that "the immediate impact of closing 2000 beds would be to axe around 100,000 admissions per year." According to the King's Fund, St. Thomas's could be worth £150 million on the open market. Will it become another monument to privatisation like the neighbouring County Hall, the former home of the GLC?

THIS YEAR'S NUPE Conference was well attended by delegates. It was just a shame they didn't remain in the hall a lot of the time. Perhaps if they had, they would have listened to the debate and voted accordingly, instead of just following the Executive's recommendations. NUPE members have minds of their own; their delegates should as well.

The creche facilities, however, were great. The workers were sympathetic and the children were taken out most days. Perhaps next year delegates might consider attending the creche instead of the conference.

The new slavery

Harlot's Ghost by Norman Mailer and *The End of History and the Last Man* by Francis Fukuyama are reviewed by **Andrew Coates.**

THE CONTRASTING fates of these two books tells us something about our culture.

Norman Mailer's *Harlot's Ghost* is probably the best American novel of the last twenty years. It explores the nature of Western democracy and the secret services with searing realism. However, after some initial interest when it was published last year it has been largely forgotten. By contrast Francis Fukuyama's work, which celebrates the successes of Western liberalism and the 'Worldwide Liberal Revolution' has been taken very seriously indeed. The former leftist, Professor Fred Halliday, has even incorporated Fukuyma's ideas into his own explanation of the 'death' of revolutionary socialism. His claim that "there are no serious ideological competitors left to liberal democracy" is now taken as axiomatic by all the heavyweight political commentators.

Harlot's Ghost is a monster of a book. Nearly a thousand pages are given over to a narrative which explores the moral presence of the CIA in American and international life. The central personage, Harry Hubard, is used to illustrate the gamut of counter-revolutionary action, from anti-communist subversion in South America to the Bay of Pigs.

One character, Chevi, a demoralised leftist recruited, used and morally destroyed by the CIA sticks in the mind with his assertion that the prosperous West has destroyed for ever his "honour". "The dark ones, Latins, Muslims, Africans, orientals. That is us. You will never understand us. You do not comprehend that we are in need of honour. We wish to lift ourselves above shame." Mailer makes us feel acutely the casual brutality of Western imperialism towards 'lesser' peoples.

No such complexities for Fukuyma. Although his central notion, that people strive for recognition and what he calls "thymos" (self-worth), would seem to call into question the whole unequal distribution of power and wealth in the world, he insists that the notion of 'history' as a stirring narrative fuelled by great contradictions has come to an end.

Liberal democracy, he claims, rests on a universal mechanism of technological advance, which has helped the human desire for recognition find fulfilment through parliamentary avenues.

Guided by reason, humanity has now made enough progress to be able to solve all of its major difficulties. Mailer's "dark ones" can rest assured that their needs will eventually be sorted out because we are hitched to a "universal and directional history leading up to liberal democracy".

Fukuyama is not totally blind to the effects that free-market liberalism can have in fostering social disintegration or intra-national conflicts but in true Cold War fashion he literally rubs out any notion of class struggle or any other concept of historical advance. Recent events in Los Angeles are an eloquent refutation of his theory that the major social contradictions have come to an end.

Bittersweet horror

Geoff King reviews *Jazz* by Toni Morrison, Chatto & Windus, £14.99.

A DOOR-TO-DOOR beauty products salesman shoots his eighteen year old lover; during the funeral, his wife tries to attack the corpse. These two principal events are outlined in the opening paragraph of a novel that moves on, hauntingly, to explore the texture of the lives involved, between one generation and another, from a rural past to the cityscape of Harlem in 1926. History is over and everything is ahead, everything is new in the brave post-war world, we are told. But as in Morrison's last work, the acclaimed Pulitzer-prize winning *Beloved*, it is the past that seems to assert its rhythms upon the central characters, a group of individuals picked out among a "wave of black people running from want and violence".

The implications of the book are more subtle, though, than a simple matter of historical determination. Past agonies seem at times to visit themselves upon the present, and certainly cannot be ignored. But there is another movement here in which other possibilities are allowed. The anonymous narrating voice that drifts in and out ends up less certain, less able to predict the actions or read the precise motivations of characters whose behaviour seems at once both over- and under-determined. *Jazz* is certainly likely to confirm Morrison's reputation. Her prose, as ever, verges on the poetic; achingly precise, always capable of surprise and understated bittersweet horror.

New NAC mag

LEGAL ABORTIONS in Britain is twenty-five years old this year. To mark the occasion, the National Abortion Campaign has re-launched its magazine with a new name, *Women's Choice*.

The magazine is packed full of useful facts and information on abortion rights, lies told by anti-abortionists, news on the struggle for choice around the world, including reports from Ireland and the US.

NAC has survived now for seventeen years on limited resources campaigning against powerful and wealthy anti-abortion groups. *Women's Choice* is an impressive new magazine and further testimony to its invaluable work. Contact: NAC, Wesley House,Wild Court, London WC2 5AU; tel: 071 905 9801.

Read the world

Mike Phipps reviews an international selection of summer books.

MARTIN SPROUSE'S *Sabotage in the American Workplace* is a vast collection of true stories. It covers every aspect of dissatisfaction and revenge against employers by disgruntled workers from regular wrecking and thieving to the more hilarious cases: the mural painter who enlivened his work by painting SS stormtroopers in the background of his bland painted-to-order murals; the mailroom clerk who worked for the Reaganite Heritage Foundation and regularly shredded incoming fund-raising cheques; or the radio DJ who made up entire news items on air complete with taped soundbites from his friends; even a waitress who poisons customers so her boss will go out of business!

The motive? In the words of one of the interviewees: "There's this common illusion that if someone gives you a job, they are doing you a favour. In reality they are going to take you for everything you are worth."

A more serious socialist read is *Bounds of Possibility*, a sympathetic study of the philosophy of Black Consciousness and its impact on politics and culture in South Africa. Black Consciousness rejected the dependence of Black people on white leadership, denounced the assumption that an opponent of apartheid was automatically a natural ally and scorned the definition of 'non-white' in favour of the forging of a positive Black identity.

At the centre of this book is Lindy Wilson's rich biographical chapter on Steve Biko which explores the origins of Biko's opposition to liberal 'non-racialism', the formation of the South African Students Organisation in 1969, Biko's banning, court appearance, his little publicised work for unity in the liberation movement and finally his arrest, torture and murder at the hands of the South African police.

Prayer in the National Stadium is very different: a first book of poetry by Maria Eugenia Brave Calderara, a university teacher in Chile at the time of the 1973 military coup, who was tortured and imprisoned in the National Stadium in Santiago before escaping to England where she now lives.

Her poems are direct and powerful. They cover the desolate period of her captivity, through her adaptation to "subtle, mysterious England, still distant, ungraspable" to her more recent upbeat 'anti-poetry'. They are pervaded by an integrity and humanity that made a lasting impression on this reader.

Still with Latin America, James Dunkerley's latest collection of essays is interesting if uneven. It is to be welcomed in what his preface describes as "times like these when, lubricated with notions of 'the end of history' and the advent of 'post-modernity', both tendencies are firing on all cylinders, apparently heedless of the paradox that history has permitted such cannibalism." Discuss.

> "I TOOK A whole case of jars and threw them into the tumbler... The foreman in charge shut everything down for three days in order to clean out the tumbler. The company had to throw away three complete pallets of packed pickles to be sure that no glass was sent out to the public. The foreman took us off the line, put us against the wall and asked, 'which of you son of bitches did this?'... No one got blamed and the company lost thousands and thousands of dollars" - Terry, pickle packer.

Sabotage in the American Workplace, ed. Martin Sprouse, Pressure Drop and AK Press, San Francisco. *Bounds of Possibility*: the Legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness, ed. Barney Pityana, Mamphela Ramphele, Malusi Mpumlwana, Lindy Wilson, Zed Books, Pbck £9.95. *Prayer in the National Stadium*, by Maria Eugenia Brave Calderara, Katabasis, £6.95; *Political Suicide in Latin America*, by James Dunkerley, Verso, Pbck £11.95.

Famous last words . . .

"In the past an isolated Lambeth or Lothian was capable of being picked off. An alliance of Islington, Camden, Haringey and Hackney united with the GLC and ILEA poses a far more formidable threat to Thatcher." - Keith Veness, *London Labour Briefing*, June 1982.

"God help Islington! The first compromise they have to make - you'll destroy them!" - Ted Knight interviewed in *Briefing*, July 1982.

"If enough of us unite to call a halt to this factionally-blinded criminal wrecking activity now, our leaders can be made to see sense and draw back from the brink of a total disaster..." - *Briefing*, August 1982, on the creation of the "register" and the beginning of the witch-hunt against Militant.





Wheel of fortune

FORMER LABOUR MP **John Ryman** has been jailed for two and a half years after conning two women out of £115,000.

Fox-hunting barrister Ryman became the MP for Blyth when **Eddie Milne**, who had represented the constituency conscientiously for fourteen years, was booted after making allegations of corruption in the Party during the Poulson affair.

In the general election which followed Milne stood as an Independent Labour candidate, losing to Ryman by only 78 votes. Ryman's Commons attendance was so infrequent that at one stage Chief Whip **Bob Mellish** had to issue a radio appeal to get him to turn up for a crucial vote.

After alleging that his Constituency Party had been taken over by "left wing weirdos" he resigned his seat five months before the 1987 election and vanished from politics.

In court, it was shown that Ryman had persuaded two elderly women, a widow and a divorcee, to part with money which he said he was going to invest for them.

Instead, he used the money to pay off maintenance debts owed to **Shirley Summerskill**, former MP and one of Ryman's five ex-wives. Another one of this unfortunate quintet commented, "I'm glad he's behind bars. He's a danger to women. He shouldn't be let loose."

London *Briefing* Group:
Time to reflect

Open discussion:

Monday, June 29th, 7:30pm
HAS LABOUR A FUTURE?
Has the left a future in it?

Monday, July 30th, 7:30pm
WOULD 'SOCIALIST GROWTH' WRECK THE PLANET?
How much do reds and greens have in common?

Monday, September 7th, 7:30pm
CAN THERE BE JUSTICE UNDER CAPITALISM?
How should socialists use the law?

Venue: Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont St, Russell Square (convenient for Euston and Kings Cross), London

Most boring trade union journal competition

THIS MONTH'S usual selection of trade union tedium is offset by a curious theme. At long last, the grey-suited bureaucrats are rebelling against years of docile obedience to the Labour leadership. ASLEF's *Locomotive Journal* (by the way, they're called trains these days) carries a leading article by General Secretary **Derrick Fullick** fulminating against the way **John Prescott** was deliberately spun-out of the general election by the Party's spin-doctors. He reveals that at least three big public meetings on transport policy were called off "in favour of the razzmatazz of an American-style victory parade-that-never-was in Sheffield. Where I come from, there's a moral to that sort of tale: 'You don't belch before you've had the meal'." He goes on to brand those union leaders who leapt in behind John Smith as "disgusting".

The UCW's *Post* (do posties really have to deliver this turgid affair, packed with 'Pat retires after 130 years' items?) is similarly striking. The front page headlines ('Don't Break The Link' and 'You're nothing without us, Alan warns Labour') show retiring UCW General Secretary **Alan Tuffin** flexing his political muscles for once against the wishes of the Labour leadership.

In the latest GPMU *Journal*, **Tony Dubbins** continues in the same vein. "It was despicable to hear certain trade union leaders who are forever spouting the cause of democracy...openly proclaiming their support for particular candidates whilst arrogantly not having consulted their executive, let along their membership...We have been extremely concerned about the apparent disregard for the traditional link that binds the Party and the trade union movement together."

Back to our monthly award which could be won for the foreseeable future by any of the journals produced by the teaching unions, **AUT, NUT** or **NASUWT** (who have just discovered 'letraline', left over from the 1970s). However, this month the coveted palm goes to the new *NUPE Journal*, which looks like an Abbey National freebie. Why didn't it stick to the TUC award-winning style of the *NCU Journal*? The latter is snappy, colourful and informative, though fatally marred by "realistic" double-talk about the need to accept non-compulsory redundancies.

Finally, the first issue of the new merged *AEEU's Journal* includes what threatens to be a regular column by ultra-reactionary Sun journo **Richard Littlejohn**, who can't resist using his debut to take a sideswipe at the NUM.

Getting up their noses

TRIBUNE'S DIARY column took a swipe at the last *Labour Briefing* bumper Class Traitors of the General Election centrespread. While dismissing our humble efforts as being in "the worst traditions of the left", it reprinted a hefty chunk of our climactic denunciation of **Neil Kinnock**, a grudging admission that we had indeed hit the nail on the head.

COHSE full-timer **Pete Marshall** replied to the diary item in a letter to *Tribune* which asked: "is there any truth in the rumour that members of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee are paying up to £100 to be included in *Briefing*'s Class Traitor column, as an appearance in it is bound to mean a rapid rise up the Labour Party ladder?"

Yes, Pete, it's true, but forgive us - the *Briefing* slush fund has to be replenished somehow and the LCC can easily afford the squeeze.

Another letter to Tribune from the thin-skinned **David Blunkett** lambasts *Briefing* editor Mike Marqusee for his "usual pattern of personal abuse with side-swipes at everyone". Poor old Blunkett took exception to a letter from Marqusee questioning the "radical" credentials of the Bryan Gould campaign, which Blunkett is managing. "I do not mind adherents of *Labour Briefing* engaging in vigorous debate," he says, "but I do get sick and tired of the distortions and half-truths with which they peddle their particular creed."

This from the man who writes every year to all those constituencies which failed to support him for the NEC demanding to know their reasons for this unpardonable effrontery.

The bare necessities

FOR THOSE who experience trouble getting the car in and out of the garage on frosty mornings, a custom-built family house in West Heath Road, Hampstead, offers the answer: a **heated driveway**.

The house, with six bedrooms, two bathrooms, double garage and large landscaped garden, is being offered through John D. Wood and Company for £750,000.

Repeat performance

THE SHADOW Communications Agency has produced its election post-mortem.

It claims that people did not vote Labour because it was perceived to be too linked to the past, too close to the trade unions and minorities and too identified with the "downwardly mobile".

Back in 1987, the **SCA** produced a similar report entitled "Labour and Britain in the 1990s" which claimed that Labour was too linked to the past, too close to the trade unions and minorities and too identified with the "downwardly mobile". On this basis the cardboard edifice of the Policy Review, the national membership scheme and the cult of the leader and the Shadow Cabinet was constructed.

SCA boss **Philip Gould** is obviously driven by the need to vindicate his past strategy in the light of its rejection by the punters. He should be sent back to his Soho media ghetto where his pseudo-scientific, self-aggrandising prescriptions can do no more harm to the working class than the rest of the squalid efforts of the public relations industry.

BRIEFING holds annual conclave

THIS YEAR'S *Labour Briefing* Annual General Meeting was a day of lively if sometimes inconclusive debate.

Cllr Liz Davies
Islington

In the morning session, an open discussion on "After the general election - where the hell do we go from here?", Bernie Grant MP spoke about the future of the Socialist Campaign Group and said it needed to reach out to the rank and file and organise outside as well as inside Parliament. John Wilton, Parliamentary candidate for Birmingham Edgbaston, talked about the need for Labour to return to its roots, to emphasise class politics and rid itself of middle class careerism.

Leonora Lloyd described her experiences in campaigning in Hendon South and the Party's continuing failure to addressed women's concerns with concrete policies.

Contributors from the floor raised a wide and refreshing variety of issues and concerns. There was an acute sense that the labour movement as a whole was in serious trouble and that reversing the legacy of Kinnock would not be easy. There was also a warm response to Bernie Grant's proposals for an expansion of the Campaign Group into the constituencies and the trades unions.



Liz Davies at Briefing AGM

The afternoon session started with greetings from representatives of the Kurdistan Front, who described the current situation in Iraqi Kurdistan, and Southall Black Sisters, who talked movingly about the campaigns around Sara Thornton and Kiranjit Ahluwahlia. Resolutions were passed in favour of setting up a London *Briefing* group to hold political discussions, backing Scotland's right to self-determination, against a vote for Smith, Gould, Prescott or Beckett and in support of the Campaign Group slate for the NEC elections, including Women's Section candidates Leonora Lloyd, Pauline Purnell and Dorothy Macedo.

The meeting ended with an informal discussion on the magazine in which the need to secure newsagent distribution was stressed. An Editorial Board was elected - so democratically that anyone who put her or his name forward went on, resulting in a new 43-strong EB!

In memory of Ron Dixon

GARTH FRANKLAND pays tribute to Ron Dixon, the son of a miner from Grimethorpe Colliery, who died on May 7th, 1992, aged 43.

I remember Ron as a member of the Workers Revolutionary Party in the early 70s. He was part of a loyal band workers recruited in South Yorkshire by Bernie Diamont, the WRP full-time organiser. Unlike some, Ron was never a hack or a bully; he relied on reason and a genuine interest in politics. For many years he worked as a clerical worker for the Health Service and Social Services in Barnsley.
He lived with his parents for most of this time in White City, a housing estate in Grimethorpe near Barnsley.
By the time a number of us were thrown out of the WRP for insisting on a democratic debate towards the end of 1974 Ron had already dropped out of the party. He had become critical, like so many good activists, of the constant demands for money and pointless activism. He met up with us oppositionists at the Yorkshire Miners Gala in 1975 and from then onwards never wavered as a supporter of a more open and democratic Trotskyism. He helped to organize a series of successful Marxist educational classes in Hemsworth.

Tragically, after what appears to have been an incident with the police his back was broken. His mother found him collapsed at the backdoor of their home. From then on he was confined to a wheel chair.

He bravely continued his interest in politics and developed an interest in photography alongside his continuing devotion to classical music.

Unfortunately, his physical condition continued to deteriorate. He moved with his parents to a specially adapted house near the centre of Barnsley and was able to attend the occasional Labour Party meeting. His visits to hospital grew more frequent and eventually a cancer was discovered. He died after the cancer had been removed from his weakened body.

Ron always believed in a socialist future and he also knew that the Kinnock leadership were responsible for our election defeat. The defeat depressed him as well as it did us all but he felt the future for the planet must still belong to socialism.

Ron remembered and talked about his many friends and despite his appalling handicap cheered those who visited him. Our condolences must go to his mother and father who devoted their lives to looking after him. We will remember Ron.

LETTERS

Your letters are welcome, but please keep them short.
Write to:



Terry Liddle's mind "boggled" at the suggestion (made by me) at the AGM of the Socialist Society that "the Liberal Democrats were to the left of Labour." That is not what I said. I merely pointed out that, on the question of the release of capital receipts from the sale of council houses and on some other policies, the Liberal Democrats were indeed more attuned to the needs of working class people. The same could also be said of the restoration of powers to local authorities. Labour hedged on both. The Liberal Democrats were unequivocal.

That was not, of itself, a reason to vote for the Liberal Democrats. Apart from half a Trident submarine and a £1.50 per hour rise for the lowest paid, there was no substantial difference between their's and Labour's manifestos.

What was on offer was the prospect of PR being included in the Queen's Speech. The ramifications of that would have been very ominous for the Tories to whom power is everything and who were prepared to dump an icon like Thatcher in order not to lose it. It would have triggered the fiercest confrontation with them for decades.

I sense that defeating the Tories decisively would take the sport out of politics for those who would be denied their orgasmic quest every four or five years. No more barricades to storm. No return match to look forward to. No traitors to expose. No wretched victims of capitalism to feed on and to make promises to which can't be kept. Instead, there would be a Parliament where power could be exercised by the skilful practice of politics. Socialist MPs, supported from outside, would be positioned to achieve results and to go into elections with a track record of achievement rather than years of impotent opposition.

Had Labour actually won the election, the gallery of Class Traitors named in *Briefing* would have become nauseatingly triumphalist and unassailable. The hung Parliament was the policy for the working class. When will the Labour left finally realise that 'first past the post' is as much a bastion of Tory power as any other ruling class institution? *Class War* and the Liberal Democrats can see it. Why can't they? The Tories have much to teach them about winning and holding power. Will they never learn?

Peter Nielsen
Lydney
Gloucestershire

The March issue of *Labour Briefing* with Andy Parr's article on Billy Power in which Billy said, "There are so many cases, people you've just never heard of, like Wilf Glew and Frank Johnson" was the first time I had seen my name outside these walls in all the years I have been in prison.

The April issue of *Labour Briefing* with details of my case was like a great weight being lifted from my shoulders. For once in over sixteen years I can relax some.

I remember reading some years ago about a woman who visited her sister in a secure mental hospital. This was in Canada. The visiting sister was wearing a kind of smock similar to the patient sister. As she was leaving after the visit, the visiting sister was grabbed by the guards, who thought she was a patient, and the more she said she was a visitor, the more they were convinced she was a patient. She spent five years locked up before they realised she was telling the truth.

I was in a similar situation. The more I protested my innocence and made very serious allegations, the more the authorities thought I was crazy and making it all up.

When I first arrived at the Scrubs, I thought all I had to do was tell them what had happened and everything would be sorted out. That was a terrible mistake. But thank god, there are some people in the prison service, psychiatrists and one or two others, who did believe me. Now, with your help, I believe I can make my voice heard at last and prove my innocence.

My very best wishes,
Frank Johnson
338667
HM Prison Swaleside
Eastchurch, Kent ME12 4AX

Editor's Note: Frank Johnson has served nearly seventeen years in prison for a crime he did not commit. A campaign is now being set up to free him. Please write to him at the address above.

I suspect that Robin Blackburn and *Briefing* have more in common than your recent critique and his reply to it suggest (*Labour Briefing* April and May).

Blackburn has the merit, in my view, of believing that it is possible to build some kind of left wing current outside of the Labour Party. Of course in Robin's case the actual building of the current is nothing more than a fairly distant memory which may explain why, in typically muddleheaded fashion, he managed (as you point out and should have said louder) to vote Liberal in a constituency were Labour came second.

Even so both your editorial and Robin Blackburn look to the future of the left, at root, in the Parliamentary system. *Briefing* is still attempting to revive Labour's electoral fortunes by pushing it to the left. Good luck in this labour of sisyphus. Meanwhile Blackburn is working out how the electoral space for his new left groupescule can be created.

I don't think this will do. Indeed in the May issue of *Briefing* I read: "He leaves Labour possibly weaker than at any time in its history. The Party is broke. Its membership has shrunk to an all time low. It has no discernible policies or guiding principles of any kind". Quite so. I'd suggest that you take out a subscription to *Socialist Worker*! There will be plenty of work for socialists to do in the coming period. But it won't be in the Labour Party of John Smith.

Yours,
Keith Flett
Tottenham

LETTERS

Judging by his response to my "*Briefing* is wrong..." piece (November *Briefing*), John Nicholson (February *Briefing*) could be a graduate in the Stalinist school of falsification. I wanted to open a debate on socialist strategy. Therefore it's not worth wasting your readers' time going to town on his distortions.

Suffice to give one example. Referring to the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy rally at the 1991 Conference, John claims: "The...platform...was littered with MPs, but excluded Corbyn and the witch-hunted Nellist...while the WAC-backed Anni Marjoram was prominent...and [made] a full speech...'the other women' [Purnell and Lloyd] were reduced to belated add-ons."

John, an ex-member of CLPD's EC, chooses to forget the aims of our rallies. First, to promote candidates on our slate; second, to brief delegates on CLPD issues; third, to encourage contributions from the floor.

In 1991 we arranged a gender-balanced platform. In the event we had a woman chair and two of the women on our Constituency Section slate spoke. But Diane Abbott and Kanta Patel, our two other women candidates for the CLP Section, couldn't make it. Diane was to speak on First Past the Post, and Anni Marjoram at short notice substituted for her. Pauline Purnell and Leonora Lloyd are not CLPD supporters (and indeed Leonora is "in two minds" on the PR issue) so the choice of Anni was logical.

John claims we missed the chance of having "a full slate of five left women for the Women's Section of the NEC" because we were too "busy competing over the CLP places". This rings hollow. At present the only section in which socialist women stand a chance is the CLP Section. It is the slate for this section which is the acid test of the left's commitment to positive discrimination. Not until Division IV is elected by Women's Conference can there be serious campaigning in this section. So far as women socialists are concerned, Division IV of the NEC ranks even lower than the Fourth Division of the Barclays League. John's concern about the Women's Section is no more than a cover-up, diverting attention from the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs' decision to reduce the number of women candidates on its slate for the CLP section from four to two.

John describes CLPD's slate as "a silly list" and argues that we don't stick even to our own criteria of candidates' "credibility". Credibility can only be measured by the size of the candidates' personal vote. Thus we still argue for inclusion on the slate of comrades who don't meet all our political criteria but enjoy significant personal support. In this context John doesn't seem to have noticed that at best only four candidates on any left slate last year were credible in this sense. Corbyn's support by 27 CLPs does not make him much more "credible" than Kanta Patel who was supported by 15 CLPs. Since none of the less-successful candidates presently stands any chance, criteria such as positive discrimination and the candidates' political reliability must carry more weight.

Yours,
Vladimir Derer
London

Editor's Note: For reasons of space, the second half of Vladimir Derer's reply to John Nicholson will appear in the next issue of *Briefing*.

I would like to comment (in a personal capacity) on *Briefing*'s coverage of the anti-fascist and anti-racist movements. The debate around *Searchlight* has been very good and I have made copies of the various articles and letters available to Exeter AFA members. The coverage of the ANL/ ARA debate I am not impressed with. Last October, Exeter AFA held a conference on racism and fascism with speakers from London AFA, CARF, *Searchlight* and the Newham Monitoring Project. As far as I recall there was no mention of any new national organisations or of any need for them. Since then, I feel that we in long-established organisations have had two national organisations trying to impose their leadership on us - having by-passed us in the first place. The choice of imposed Black Nationalist or sectarian SWP leadership is something that I personally reject. Leadership has to be won democratically in a movement, not imposed. It should also be said that neither ARA or the ANL seem to have any real commitment to 'No platform' beyond putting it forward as a slogan.

Briefing should not forget that there are a large number of long-established groups throughout the country (local AFA, CARF groups, etc.) that continue to work independently of (or in co-operation with) ARA and the ANL. I think *Briefing* is wrong to come down uncritically behind ARA and even more so for leaving AFA out of the equation.

Yours in comradeship,
David Parks
Exeter Anti-Fascist Action

Your special piece on the so-called Class Traitors of the General Election was offensive in the extreme.

When the whole of the Labour Party should be looking to draw the positive lessons of our defeat - and the result was a significant improvement on 1983 and 1987 - your magazine can only seek to scapegoat hard-working full-time employees of the Party who should be treated with the same respect you are always demanding for other groups of workers.

Typical *Briefing* dishonesty!

Yours sincerely,
Lawrence Carcree
London

I agree wholeheartedly with almost everything your wise May editorial has to say.

However, the labour movement, by definition, closes the door on a huge sector of society, and alienates itself from them, and for that reason, I am in favour of reviewing the name of our Party.

I refer, of course, to the unwaged. This massive grouping, whom we should naturally appeal to, may be distanced from us by the name 'Labour'.

Of course, the unwaged include a large percentage of other groups to whom we should appeal, and who may be equally put off by our failure to recognise the unwaged. The time is now exactly right to raise this issue in the Party.

Yours in socialism,
Steve Kilsby

Many congratulations on the May post-New Realist election debacle issue. Star article of the issue undoubtedly was the centrespread Class Traitors, "Naming Names". The passion contained in it was superb, exposing those rotten anti-socialists betraying the working class. Vintage *Briefing*!

Yours for socialism,
Hyder Prodhan



PHOTO: Paul Mattsson

Lesbians and gay men will stage a noisy march on Downing Street on Saturday July 25th to demand "full legal quality". The march is timed to mark twenty-five years of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act which partially decriminalised male homosexuality in England and Wales. The direct action campaign OutRage is billing the march as the 'demo of the year'. It is asking participants to 'make a noise for freedom' by bringing whistles, drums, tambourines and foghorns. "The 1967 Act is a discriminatory and outdated law," says OutRage spokesperson Sarah Graham. "It perpetuates inequality by enforcing an unequal age of consent and by banning all homosexual relations involving members of the Armed Forces and Merchant Navy."

The march leaves from Piccadilly Circus at 1:00pm and will be followed by a wild open air party in front of Buckingham Palace.

Kiranjit's case

IN DECEMBER 1989, Kiranjit Ahluwalia, a 35 year old Asian woman, was convicted for the murder of her husband. Kiranjit was provoked into throwing petrol at her husband after ten long years of humiliation, assault and sexual abuse.

Kiranjit's husband died of burns. The defence case was a disaster. All she had wanted was for her husband to feel some of the pain he had inflicted on her. She pleaded guilty to manslaughter. The violence Kiranjit had suffered was reduced by the prosecution to being "knocked about". The night she retaliated against her husband, he had beaten her viciously and put a hot iron against her cheek. Because she had waited for him to fall asleep, it was argued that she had time to "cool off".

Southall Black Sisters have spearheaded a campaign to free women like Kiranjit. An appeal date has been set for July 6th 1992. One of the grounds of appeal will be that the judge at her trial misdirected the jury on the law of provocation. SBS hopes the appeal will establish the need to take into account the continuing and systematic brutality which can drive desperate women to kill violent partners.

Last year Sara Thornton lost her appeal to overturn her conviction for the murder of her violent and alcoholic husband. At the centre of her appeal was an attempt to redefine the traditional and very narrow interpretation of the law of provocation.

In Sara's case, it was held that at the moment of the fatal blow, she had somehow lost the self-control she had previously exercised. The time it took Sara to go into the kitchen to fetch a knife was held to be a "cooling off" period rather than a "boiling over" period.

In contrast, Joseph McCrail was given a uspended two year jail sentence for battering his alcoholic wife to death. Rajinder Singh Bisfa received a suspended 18 month sentence for strangling his "nagging" wife to death. Judge Denison commented, "I do not see that sending you to prison is going to do any good and more importantly is going to do the children any good."

According to official statistics, 25% of all homicides are domestic. Of these, 37% involve husbands killing their wives while only 6% of women kill their husbands. Yet in 1987, 37.5% women who killed their partners were convicted of murder.

Get your union, local community group or Labour Party and any other organisation to draw up a resolution supporting Kiranjit Ahluwalia. Please contact Southall Black Sisters, 52 Norwood Road, Southall, Middx UB2 4DW; tel No: 081 571 9595.

Justice for Women

Demonstrate:

10am., July 20th/21st
Outside the Court of Appeal
Royal Courts of Justice
Strand, London

The EGA stays OK!

The Elizabeth Garret Anderson Hospital is the only women-only hospital left in London. A few years ago it was saved from closure by a public campaign. Now it is under threat once again from the local health authority.

Women's Vigil
Saturday, July 4th
Outside EGA Hospital
Euston Road
London
(nearest tube: Euston)

Contact: Liz c/o Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7; tel. 071 263 9450.

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