BRIEFING

March 1992 80p (60p unwaged)

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The Tories think it's too much!

Class Traitor of the Month

Poll Tax jailings Ireland and the general election

Divided Korea Rigoberta Menchu US Labour Party

Billy Power on miscarriages of justice

Dave Nellist interviewed; Godsiff gutted

Ten years on: Tony Benn on the Falklands War

LABOUR - TAKE THE POWER!

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...and **the fight against racism**

March 1992, No. 120

June 20th...make it a date!

The Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs is organising a major national conference of the Labour left in Leeds on Saturday, June 20th.

This will be the first chance for a cross-section of the Labour left to address the challenges that will face the movement following the general election.

Leading trade union speakers are being invited. The SCG is eager to use the day to strengthen links between the constituency left, the MPs and the trade union left.

Speeches from the platform will alternate with panel discussions and open debates. A final session will include some consideration of this year's left slate for the NEC, a particularly vexed question after last year's divisions.

The SCG is now inviting Labour and trade union organisations to sponsor the conference to help defray the cost and broaden its political base.

Campaign gaffes...

"We have an alliance"

- Tom King to Labour MP John Home Robertson in the Commons after the latter had urged him to go for the fourth Trident.

"Ever notice how Major mentions Labour's minimum wage commitment far more often than Kinnock?"

-bemused punter

"The move marks an acceptance by Labour of some of the benefits provided by the government's changes [in the NHS]..."

- The Independent on Labour's new health package

The Nalgo publicity campaign against public service cuts "has as little to do with us as the Institute of Directors."

- Neil Kinnock's office

"Poll Tax defaulters have again been let off the hook by a lazy and incompetent government"

- Bryan Gould

"I am confident that the candidates selected by the constituencies will make fine additions to the Labour government when they are elected as Labour MPs..."

- Eddie Haigh after keeping Lol Duffy off the Wallasey shortlist.

"The Labour leadership was last night forced to repudiate its housing spokesman after he said the Party planned to change the rules on public borrowing so as to increase house building...a senior Labour source denounced Mr Soley's statement as 'monstrous' and 'entirely false'..."

- Anthony Bevins in The Independent

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The anti-racist struggle

THE WELL-PUBLICISED row between the Anti-Racist Alliance and the Anti-Nazi League poses difficult but unavoidable questions for the anti-racist movement and the left.

The rise of the far right in Europe and the re-emergence of organised fascist groups (notably the BNP) in Britain is rightly a prime concern of both organisations.

The attempts by the BNP and the rest to threaten and intimidate the black community must be met with mass resistance.

But the overall rise in the level of racist attacks cannot be ascribed simply to the BNP. Most perpetrators of racist attacks, of racist abuse, of discrimination in work or public services have never had contact with the organised far right. For black people the problems posed by police, immigration officials, the courts, the media, employers, and old fashioned racist busybodies in their neighbourhoods are more immediate and more numerous.

The organised far right's main political role nowadays is to drag the mainstream to the right; its visibility encourages politicians from "respectable" parties to take up racist themes and make known (as in France) their sympathy with the shibboleths of common or garden, everyday racism.

The far right is not the cause of this racism; it doesn't even play that big a role in spreading it (though its attempts to do that must be opposed). It thrives off this racism - a racism that already exists and is ingrained in all classes - and gives it a public voice.

The traditions of Cable Street, of mass confrontation with the fascists, are to be cherished and drawn upon, but they are not an adequate response to the reality of either racism or fascism today.

What is needed now is an organisation that mobilises not only against the fascists, but also against state racism, police racism, racism in immigration, in the media and sport, at work and in the labour movement. It has to bring together local anti-racist groups and campaigns on specific issues like those around the Asylum Bill or Winston Silcott. It needs links with anti-racists in other countries and an understanding of the international context of racism.

It must be an alliance of the black community and the labour movement, not confined to the top, but built from the ground up. Only by bringing these two constituencies together can we forge the kind of social force necessary to contest and defeat racism on all fronts.

This is what ARA promises to do and why it should be preferred over the ANL. The issue here is not just the sectarianism of the SWP, which in any case will be best exposed in practice by people's direct experience in a living anti-racist movement. The issue is the best strategy for building and sustaining this movement.

It is a pity that the debate over this strategy, like so many other vital debates on the left, has been obscured by what appears to be mere organisational rivalry.

Two organisations now exist and neither will go away. On the ground there is a need for unity in action. People will want to get involved in practical anti-racist activities in their own communities.

ARA should meet their needs by building a durable, deeply rooted anti-racist movement, open and democratic in all its workings. As a top priority it should organise a major intervention around the general election that puts the racist Tories (and Liberals and Labour) on the spot.

THE THIRD anniversary of the fatwa against Salman Rushdie has seen a welcome revival of the campaign to rid him of the death threat and protect freedom of speech.

Rushdie's renewed determination to defend his book and get it out in paperback is admirable. It deserves a positive response from timorous publishers and the British government, which has up till now put its interest in rapprochement with the Iranian rulers ahead of the defence of free speech and the physical protection of one if its own citizens.

But for the struggle to defend Rushdie to succeed it will need better leadership than that offered by some of his literary champions.

Too many of them intermix their impassioned pleas for free speech with idiotic attacks on Islam (Paul Theroux in the *Guardian*) or ludicrous claims that free speech is a value peculiar to "our" culture (Melvyn Bragg on the Late Show).

Appeals for a sensible compromise (Richard Gott, the *Guardian's* new literary editor, has come out against paperback publication) are equally useless. Those who seek a deal with either the Iranian government or the fundamentalists in Britain fail to understand that both are supreme opportunists who use Rushdie to secure their popular base.

For this reason, if no other, the Rushdie campaign needs a strong anti-racist profile. It needs to spread far beyond the literati. It needs support in the labour movement and in the black community. It needs to recognise that all fundamentalisms - Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist - are obnoxious and dangerous. And it needs to distance itself from all of those who would use Rushdie as an instrument in the North's war against the South.

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

***Labour Briefing* is the monthly voice of Labour's independent left. It is produced by a democratic, anti-sectarian network of Labour and trade union activists and is managed by an elected National Editorial Board whose meetings are open to all supporters. We are happy to offer a right of reply on the usual basis to all members of the labour movement.**

All articles published in *Labour Briefing* reflect the opinions of the authors alone unless otherwise indicated. *Briefing* welcomes criticisms and contributions. Please keep us posted on what's going on in your area. Deadline for the next issue is March 9th.

***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?**

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

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

Sheniz Yilmaz *(not her real name) came to Britain in 1988 from Maras in south eastern Turkey. She works at a factory making good quality blouses and women's tops for West End stores such as Miss Selfridge and Marks and Spencer. She earns £110 for a 44-hour working week (£2.50 an hour) and is told to pay her own stamp!* Labour Briefing *asked her about the impact of Labour's minimum wage proposals.*

LB: What difference would a legal minimum wage make to you and the people who you work with?

SY: It would make an enormous difference. Most of the Turkish employers in London constantly try to drive down wages by threatening that a newer group of women are prepared to work for less. A "floor" to the process would stop this.

LB: If the bosses are not prepared to deduct tax and national insurance properly, why will they abide by a minimum wage?

SY: The bosses are actually quite frightened about the law and use tricks like moving workplaces or going bankrupt if the Inland Revenue or VAT people close in on them. Wages are different. They have to be paid regularly wherever you are, whatever business you call yourself. You cannot avoid that by "playing for time".

LB: Why are unions not effective on low pay?

SY: They are to an extent. I joined the TGWU 1/1132 branch when they organised a previous factory I worked at. The employer does not like to appear "anti-union" in a predominantly left-wing Turkish community here. However, he quietly shut the factory six months after recognising the union and moved all work to his brother's place!

LB: The Tories say a minimum wage will drive firms out of business in areas like the garment trade. Is this true?

SY: This is nonsense. The firms make big money - they are not "back street" shops and they now supply major British firms. A lot of stuff previously made in Hong Kong or Singapore is now made in Hackney because the wages are less here!

As it is now, the bosses use cheap labour rather than improve machinery and methods - we have a young boy working for us who cannot be sixteen and who is encouraged to do all the odd jobs with a promise of more money when he is older.

LB: How much difference would the Labour Party plan for a £3.40 an hour minimum make to you?

SY: It is obviously not enough but I would earn 30% more overnight. My husband has not got a proper job and we live on the "bread line". At least we could buy some of the clothes we make, instead of visiting jumble sales and car boot auctions like we do now.

LB: So will you be voting Labour?

SY: I am a Turkish citizen and do not have a vote here. However a lot of the women I work with who are Turkish Cypriots or Bangladeshis do have a vote and they are very cynical about British politicians, believing them to all be racist and out for themselves. However, we are all overwhelmingly socialist and will probably support Labour. The minimum wage certainly helps to convince us.

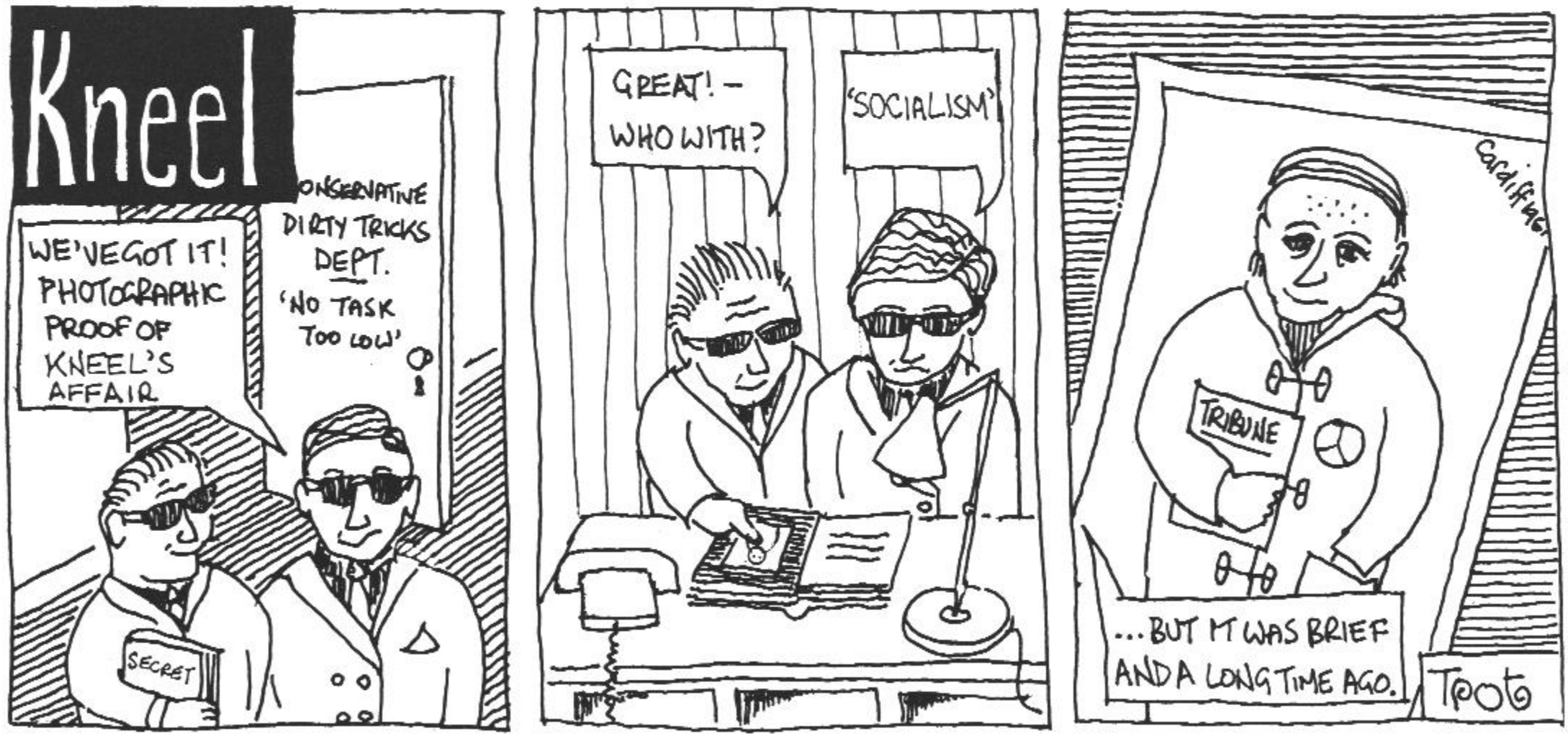
A £3.40 minimum wage will mean higher pay for at least 4.5 million workers - some 20% of the workforce.

12% of full-time workers are paid less than £3.40 an hour. Union agreements with Tesco, Asda, the big four banks, the NHS, the civil service and local government all have at least one grade paid less than £3.40 an hour.

Basic starting hourly rates for sales assistants at selected retail employers: Tesco: £3.28; Sainsbury: £3.18; Asda £2.95; Argos: £3.21; Boots: £3.16; Littlewoods: £3.06; Woolworth: £3.00; Victoria Wine: £2.96; BHS: £2.96; Gateway: £2.95.

£3.40 for a 40 hour week is still only £136 a week. The Low Pay Unit's low pay threshold is £185 a week.

Labour proposes to legislate immediately for a statutory minimum wage of 50% of male median earnings, which is £3.40. It also promises to raise the minimum "eventually" to 2/3 of the male median (£4.53 on current rates). But, warns Tony Blair, "That will be done when the economy can afford it. There is no time limit." Thanks, creep!



Poll Tax jailings:

At least 170 people have now been jailed for non-payment of the Poll Tax. Many more have been sentenced but immediately released when family and friends are able to scrape together the necessary cash. Islington Labour Cllr. ***Liz Davies*** *reviews the current legal and political situation.*

THE MAJORITY of people jailed are on low incomes and simply cannot afford to pay the Tax. Magistrates have the power to remit the Tax if they are convinced people cannot afford it, but many refuse to use that power and proceed to jail the poorest in the community without the blink of an eye.

At least sixty local authorities have jailed non-payers. Labour Burnley has the worst record - 24 jailings - followed by Tory Ealing with sixteen and Labour Islington with ten. Thirteen pensioners have been sentenced to a total of 424 days imprisonment. At least 24 women have been jailed.

Tina Wilton is seven months pregnant and a mother. She has a history of miscarriages. She was sentenced to 30 days by Stevenage Magistrates Court on January 22nd, despite having no income of her own and having made offers to pay in instalments.

Sylvia and Frank Matthews were each sentenced to 90 days by Ealing Magistrates Court just before Christmas. Sylvia is now in Holloway and Frank in Pentonville.

Dorothy Bird, a pensioner from Skipton, was sentenced to fourteen days imprisonment at the end of January. Her weekly income is £63 invalidity benefit. Sefton Magistrates jailed Steven Price, David Hignett and Andrew Jackson on February 5th. All of them are unemployed.

Some authorities are targeting anti-Poll Tax activists. Coventry has started committal proceedings against only three individuals: a local anti-Poll Tax activist, the Chair of the Trades Council and one Mr D. Nellist. The Isle of Wight singled out two people only, both known anti-Poll Tax activists. Islington appears to be going for anyone who contested their original liability orders. Others are using heavy court costs to deter activists from contesting liability hearings. Nottinghamshire, for example, is asking for £1,600 a time!

Some local authorities are happy to obtain suspended sentences which require payment in instalments; people only go to jail if they default on the payments. Often, however, the court or council routinely demands instalments well beyond the means of non-payers. In East and Mid Devon, people on income support are ordered to pay £5 per week.

immoral

The most vicious local authorities simply insist that courts jail people no matter what their means. Margaret Hodge's Islington is among these. Ealing is now sending out press cuttings about the people jailed for non-payment in an effort to intimidate people into paying. They are seeking imprisonments en bloc. On February 20th, 1,000 cases will be heard in one day at Acton Magistrates Court. Brent, now Tory-controlled, has been printing the names of non-payers in local newspapers.

The jailings have given new life to many local anti-Poll Tax campaigns. Up and down the country activists are spending days in court, providing income and expenditure analyses and legally challenging every attempted committal point by point. They are the unsung heroes of the movement. Many have turned themselves into experts on the minutiae of magistrates' court procedure and have achieved some remarkable victories.

illegal

Activists in Bury St. Edmunds and elsewhere have forced the courts to acknowledge the inadmissability of computer evidence. The government will have to redraft the law. Nonetheless many magistrates are simply issuing liability orders on demand. Where activists appear in court to challenge the evidence, cases are adjourned until the law is changed - in spite of case law that makes clear that adjourning cases to await a change in the law is illegal. Two people jailed on computer evidence are now taking false imprisonment actions against the courts and councils involved.

Socialist Labour councillors have an important role to play in preventing jailings. Oxford City Council has set up a Hardship Committee to examine individual cases. Councillors in Islington are arguing that all decisions to use bailiffs, benefit deductions or committals should be made by a sub-group of councillors, not by officers. Even where people are serving sentences, the council can vote at any time to remit the debt, at which point the non-payer must be released.

At the very least, Labour councillors should insist that if the council is going to collect the Tax, it should use attachment of earnings wherever possible and accept any offer of instalment pay rather than proceed to the committal stage.

In jailing non-payers, Labour councils are making a mockery of the Party's national policy opposing imprisonment for debt. This is one of the few remaining areas in which local authorities do possess discretionary powers; the law itself does not force them to jail anybody. There are plenty of alternatives that will not cost councils a penny. The only reason for not exploring them is a reactionary vendetta against non-payers and their political supporters on the left of the Party.

resistable

Nationally, the Party has called on the Tories to end the 20% contribution rule for people on benefit, but Bryan Gould has said that a Labour government taking office after the beginning of the new financial year will not be able to abolish the 20% rule "retrospectively". He has yet to set out a clear time-scale for the full abolition of the Tax. Indeed, he welcomed the government's extension of the deadline for collecting the Tax from two to six years - effectively prolonging the life of the Tax beyond the next Parliament. There is still no suggestion that local authorities will be reimbursed for even a small part of the massive loss of revenues due to the Tax.

If this goes on, the Tories will escape the electoral consequences of their Poll Tax bungle - and our leaders will have no one to blame but themselves.

■ **For advice on legal arguments against Poll Tax jailings contact CAPTIVE, PO Box 764, London E5 9SX; tel. 071 613 0675.**

British politicians and Irish realities

The general election approaches and once again the conflict in Ireland is being ignored by the three main parties. ***Ronan Bennett*** *argues that public opinion on this issue is way ahead of the politicians.*



British politicians discussing Ireland

IT IS NOT that the Irish issue has been relegated to the sidelines: it has been dragged away to some secret burial site, dumped, covered over, and written out of the political agenda.

For the seventh time in the 22 years since the troops were sent in, government policy in Ireland, by a shameful arrangement between the parties, will not be put before the electorate. The current phase of the conflict is now almost a quarter of a century old. Every government initiative - Labour and Tory, repressive and political - has failed. Yet the silent message from the parties - in the absence of any real message - is that there will be no change. The RUC, the UDR, the regular units of the British Army, military intelligence, the SAS and M15 will do what they can to defeat the IRA while Peter Brooke, the beleaguered Northern Ireland Secretary, does what he can to get the 'constitutional parties' around the table.

In other words, more of the same.

Is there any other area in modern British political life in which successive government have so spectacularly failed over such an extended period? Given that the policy (broadly, one of 'containment') has resulted in nothing more than the large-scale destruction of life and property, how long will it be allowed to continue?

There are increasing signs, though not yet from the Labour Front Bench, of growing dissatisfaction with the rhetoric of 'not giving in to the men of violence'. Neal Ascherson, columnist for the *Independent on Sunday*, has been inching his way towards the idea of withdrawal.

Matthew Parris argued persuasively in a recent *Spectator* that the time had come to take the troops out. Parris said that 'hundreds of MPs' have come to the same conclusion and 'are waiting for a lead'.

So it seems that political commentators have at last caught up with public opinion on Ireland. A special Mori poll, commissioned for the recent Channel Four documentary, 'Pack Up Your Troubles', showed that a majority of people in Britain were in favour of withdrawal. The poll also showed that there was a majority in favour of talks with Sinn Fein.

To this I can add some anecdotal evidence of my own. In January I published a long article in the *Guardian* arguing that even if the Brooke initiative were to succeed in its own terms (getting the 'constitutional parties' around the conference table) the problem would not be solved. The indispensable first step towards an eventual settlement has to involve starting meaningful talks with Sinn Fein. On the agenda would have to be a British commitment to withdrawal and a bilateral ceasefire.

I argued that Sinn Fein leaders were showing signs of a willingness to manoeuvre and compromise and that they were genuinely interested in finding a way to end the hostilities. Sinn Fein says it is prepared to talk to anyone at any time, without preconditions. At the same time, it was not 'begging for talks', and its readiness to negotiate should not be taken for weakness by those who would argue that all it needs now to finish off the IRA is one more 'final push'.

There was nothing in the article that many on the left have not been saying since the conflict began. Yet it prompted a huge and largely favourable reaction. The arguments were taken up by the BBC's Today programme and by Central Television's Central Weekend slot. Calls also came in from 'On the Record' and LWT. Letters to the newspaper called the piece 'refreshing', 'a breakthrough', 'a blast of fresh air'.

Yet all it was only saying the obvious. If you bake a cake according to the same recipe for a quarter of a century and every time the cake turns out wrong, you throw away the recipe and start with something different. Stop treating the war in the North of Ireland as if it were a large-scale crime wave and recognise it is a political problem which demands a political solution.

It's time the Labour Front Bench grasped that the electorate is ready and willing to contemplate a change in policy along these lines, and that most voters have understood, even if senior politicians apparently have not, that the first step towards a settlement is through talks with Sinn Fein.

The shadow of the Church

Surely 1992's most outrageous event (so far) has to be the injunction issued by the High Court of Ireland which prevented a fourteen year old rape victim from having an abortion in Britain.

This unbelievable decision was made under the Irish constitution's so-called "right-to-life" provision. The implications of the case for international law, bearing in mind that the girl was in Britain when the injunction was granted, are immense. It also brings home to us in Britain the oppression suffered by women who live under the shadow of a church-dominated state. Most importantly, it shows the need for an international fight for a woman's right to choose and, in Britain, for ceaseless vigilance in defending the 1967 Abortion Act.

James Connolly - Bobby Sands Commemoration 1992

Sunday, May 10th
Conway Hall
Red Lion Square
London WC1

The Wolfe Tone Society, BM Box 6191, London WC1N 3XX.

Billy Power's campaign for justice

SINCE THE Birmingham Six were released from prison just under a year ago Billy Power has kept up a punishing schedule of meetings, interviews and visits to other victims of miscarriages of justice still in jail, often travelling long distances.

Andy Parr
Shoreham CLP



Billy Power and Jeremy Corbyn at the Briefing fringe meeting, Labour Party Conference, 1991 Photo: Bryn Griffiths

No wonder Mark Braithwaite of the Tottenham Three paid tribute to him the day after his own release as "an inspiration".

Billy is presently active in raising support for and awareness of the April 27th court appeal of Judith Ward, who commenced her nineteenth year in prison on February 14th. "She has suffered far more than we ever did," says Billy. "At least we had each other. That poor woman was alone. Now it looks like her suffering may be drawing to a close, but we have to keep up the pressure."

Billy is full of praise for those who campaigned for so many years for the Birmingham Six. "When we came out a few of them decided to take a rest, which was understandable. Now most of them are back on the campaign trail for people like Judy Ward and Danny McNamee."

He finds the adulation he sometimes receives, like his standing ovation at Labour Party conference (definitely a decision taken from the bottom up) a little puzzling. "They don't seem to be aware of our feet of clay."

Billy is also involved in the planned Day of Justice, organised by Liberty, scheduled for later this year. It will the main event in a campaign whose demands are simple and moderate: an end to uncorroborated confessional evidence and an independent inquiry into cases where serious doubts have arisen.

Billy acknowledges that much is still to be done. "There are so many cases, people you've just not heard of, like Wilf Glew and Frank Johnson."

He remains sceptical of recent moves to bring to trial the corrupt police officers involved in framing the Birmingham Six, Guildford Four and Tottenham Three.

"Anything to protect Lord Lane," he sighs.

Trafalgar Square prisoners

THE TRAFALGAR SQUARE Defendants Campaign and its Poll Tax Prisoners Support Group are campaigning for the release of the four demonstrators still held in prison following the March 1990 demonstration.

Mark Hutchings, Simon Russell, Tim Donaghy and Brian Tavares are still in jail and can be written to at the address below.

Support is also given to people jailed for Poll Tax non-payment. The group can be contacted c/o Brixton Law Centre, 506 Brixton Road, London SW9 8EN (tel: 071-738-7586). It produces an excellent monthly calendar of activities.

- **Brian Tavares MV3239, HMP Camp Hill, Clissold Road, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5PB.**
- **Tim Donaghy MW0105, HMP Down View, Sutton Lane, Sutton, Surrey, GU24 9EX.**
- **Simon Russell MD1666, HMP The Mount, Molyneaux Avenue, Bovingdon, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP3 ONZ.**
- **Mark Hutchings MW2737, HMP Coldingley, Bisley, Woking, Surrey GU24.**

Judith Ward vigil

ONE HUNDRED PEOPLE attended a one-hour vigil for Judith Ward outside Holloway Prison on February 13th.

Among those present were members of the Guildford Four, Birmingham Six and Tottenham Three, as well as MP Jeremy Corbyn.

The vigil moved to a traffic island opposite the prison's education wing at 6:30pm so that Judith could see her supporters release balloons and hold up a "Free Judith Ward" banner.

Although the Home Secretary referred her case back to appeal in September, she has only now received a date for the hearing, which will be held on April 27th. It seems the authorities are deliberately delaying hearings to blunt the public impact of the various miscarriages of justice now being uncovered.

John Stalker, the former Manchester deputy chief constable, has said of Judith Ward: "I don't know of any police officer involved in the case who had the instinct and the feeling that we had got the right person."

Write to Judy Ward 994466, HM Prison Holloway, Parkhurst Road, London N7. Contact the Judy Ward Support Group, c/o 1 Orleston Road, London N7 8LH.

Korea North and South: uneasy elites

In December officials from North and South Korea met for the first time in forty years to sign a non-aggression pact committing both governments to peaceful and amicable relations. In early January they signed a further pledge that neither power would "test, produce, receive, possess, deploy or use" nuclear weapons. These developments have been greeted by Western commentators as a sign that the changes which have transformed world politics since 1989 have finally reached the Korean peninsula and that reunification is near. ***Paul Field****, a close observer of the Korean scene, begs to disagree.*

THE RECENT detente between North and South Korea is more of a response to the domestic economic crisis now afflicting both regimes than an indication that post-Communism and the "end of history" are in sight for the Korean people. Despite the rhetoric, neither the bourgeoisie in the South nor the fossilised bureaucracy in the North are able or willing to solve the national question and the immense social and economic problems that accompany it.

The recent disintegration of the Soviet Union, which up to 1986 received over 50% of North Korean exports and provided 60% of its imports, has greatly accentuated the existing economic hardship in the North. Hit by severe goods and energy shortages and beset by transportation bottlenecks and a decaying industrial infrastructure, the North Korean economy had already begun to contract by the end of the 1980s. In contrast to the sustained economic growth and extensive industrialisation that characterised the 1960s and 1970s the last decade or so has exposed the limits and contradictions of bureaucratic centralised planning. For all his talk of "juche" (self-reliance) Kim Il Sung could never fully insulate the North from political developments in other parts of the globe.

Since October 1990 and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the South, it has been possible to discern the beginning of a shift in policy away from classic "state socialism" to Chinese-style market Stalinism. In May last year Kim Jong Il, son of the "great leader" and heir apparent, initiated a new propaganda campaign with the theme that capitalism breeds social decay but also brings material benefits. The message appeared to be that limited marketisation was desirable as long as the party maintained its grip on power to guard against bourgeois corruption.

Having prepared the ground politically for the kind of "development orientated authoritarianism" practised in Beijing, the ruling bureaucratic caste now hopes to reap the economic rewards of capitalist investment. Within the last few months, Pyongyang has courted foreign capital by offering tax holidays and a package of incentives to companies investing in free trade zones. Kim even invited the chairman of the Daewoo business group in South Korea to visit the North. The degree of desperation felt by technocrats in Pyongyang was obvious when the entire state administration council (effectively the North Korean cabinet) signed the invitation to the Daewoo chairman, Kim Woo Chong.

While the Stalinist regime in the North needs foreign capital to avert impending disaster, a downturn in the South's economy and growing signs that the much vaunted "economic miracle" is beginning to falter have increased the South's ruling class's interest in exploiting the pool of cheap skilled labour that lies north of the 38th parallel. Inflation in the South has entered double figures and a small trade deficit was registered for 1990/1 - worrying signs for a government that has based its economic strategy on export-led industrialisation.

The speed of the turn-around in the economy is revealed by figures that put the difference between 1988's trade surplus and 1990's deficit at almost 10% of GNP. Workers in the south are expected to pay for the government's mismanagement. Repression of the democratic union movement reached an unprecedented scale (over 800 trade unionists were arrested between January 1990 and July 1991). Five of the country's leading "chaebol" or business groups received government endorsement for the launch of the so-called "five mores campaign" last November. Its aim has been to increase productivity and restrict the influence of the trade unions, particular the democratic unions. It is part of a co-ordinated attempt by the state and bosses to rollback the relative gains in pay and conditions conceded by Roh Tae Woo under pressure from the labour movement since the country's formal transition to democracy in 1987. Despite the repression, the state has so far failed to destroy Chunnohyup or any of the other democratic union federations. Nor has it been able to suppress the dialectic between government reform and social movement from below unleashed when five million people took to the streets and three million workers went on strike between June and August 1987, bringing down the Chun dictatorship.

Eager to patch things up with his old foe Kim and open up the North to South Korea's ailing companies in time for the forthcoming elections, Roh made what the influential Dong A Ilbo newspaper described as "a great mistake" by signing a non-aggression pact that didn't address the critical issue of the North's nuclear weapons programme. The non-nuclear accord signed at the end of December may have been hailed as a diplomatic coup by Seoul, but as *Newsweek* pointed out it didn't touch on the question of international inspection of the North Korean Yong Ban research reactor.

The reason Kim Il Sung is pursuing nuclear status is primarily defensive. Despite all his attempts to attract foreign capital, the social system over which he presides in the North is fundamentally different to the one which exists in the South. North Korea may not be socialist but it is light years away from capitalism as well. The regime realises that for all Roh's talk about peace and disarmament, the Korean peninsula falls well within the United States long range nuclear umbrella while nuclear submarines in the Pacific are conveniently positioned to make

short range strikes.

Moreover the presence of over 40,000 US troops and air squadrons in South Korea is a continual reminder to the North of the role played by US imperialism in dividing the country and killing over three million of its people (including tens of thousands of Communists and trade unionists in the South) between 1950-53. When radical students in Seoul burn the Stars and Stripes it is because they realise that with the South's 600,000 armed forces under US operational command (the US army seems prepared to be used to crush internal dissent, as its complicity in the Kwanju massacre in May 1980 demonstrates) and with over 30% of Korea's exports crossing the Atlantic to the US, any claim by Roh to political independence is highly suspect. Bush's recent demands for better terms of trade caused considerably more alarm in Seoul than they did in Tokyo because the US still has enormous political and economic clout in Korea.

For all their rhetorical support for "tongil" or unification it is clear that neither regime is serious about tying the knot and making the marriage of their divided country a reality. The North has long since given up its pretence of supporting struggle in the South, causing working class militants in the South who at one time harboured illusions in the Kim government to re-examine their attitude towards the "great leader". In the South academics and economic advisers are more honest than politicians about the disastrous economic consequences of capitalist reunification. For the politicians, lip service to "tongil" is an act of political expediency aimed at the ten million families with relatives in the North.

Given the problems caused to the German economy, not to mention the German working class, by capitalist reunification based on extension of the market to the former GDR and large scale privatisation, the implications of a similar scenario in Korea are beyond contemplation.

To begin with the gap in economic levels between North and South is much greater than between East and West in Germany. Moreover while the North's population is 60% of the South's the GDR's was only 25% of West Germany's. These two factors would make integration considerably more expensive than the GDR's absorption by West Germany. One preliminary estimate put the cost at $400 billion. If the ruling class in the South think they have problems now, they've seen nothing yet compared to what would follow reunification and restoration of the market in the North. Such a move would undoubtedly cost this class the prosperity and position it has acquired in the world economy over the last thirty years and would provoke fierce resistance from the workers' movement.

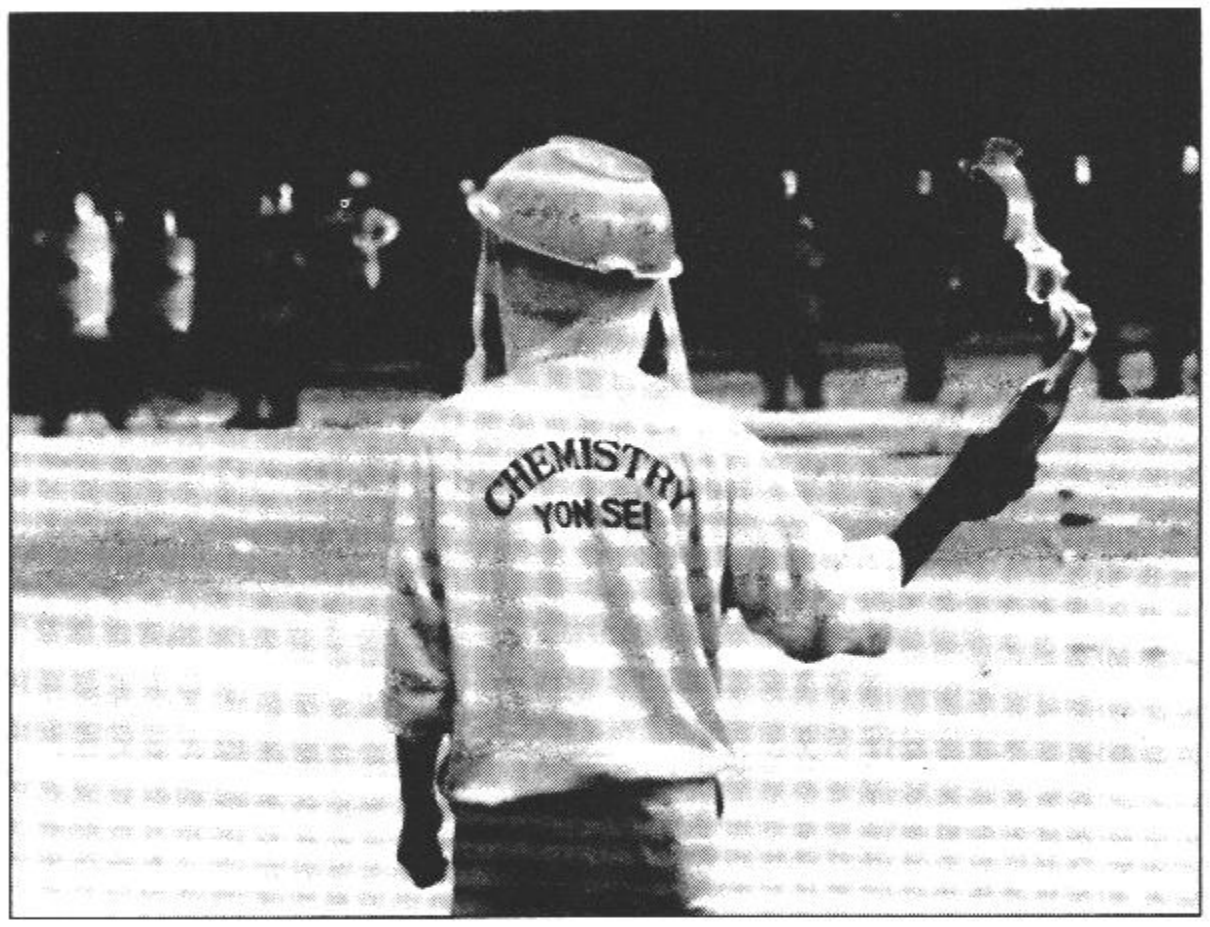
It's hardly surprising then that the South is rushing to normalise relations with Kim Il Sung while publicly warning of the dangers involved in hasty unification and the need for the "stable development of North Korea" before it can even be considered.

The South would prefer to maintain the status quo and see the regime in the North continue its new course. Since the bureaucracy in the North is not going to dismantle itself or willingly relinquish power, dramatic change and reunification could only occur on the basis and as a result of a mass democratic revolution of the kind seen in Eastern Europe. Any democratic movement capable of overthrowing the Stalinist bureaucracy would pose an immediate threat to Roh Tae Woo's government and the political/economic system in the South, which is brutally authoritarian by western bourgeois democratic standards and is built upon a coercive state apparatus which is regularly used to repress any form of civil unrest.

If a democracy movement in the North were to link up with the democratic trade union movement and the militant student, women's, community and other groups it could pose a real threat to the government and bourgeoisie.

The elites that hold power in both North and South Korea are aware that however much they attempt to hijack the discussion on reunification it has always been a basic demand of the left and has a dangerous anti-imperialist edge to it.

"Tongil" or reunification can only come about as the result of mass action by the Korean people and as a step towards real democracy and socialism.



Resistance in South Korea

Tibetans 're-educated'

Dozens of political prisoners are being held in Tibet and ill-treatment of Tibetans at the hands of the Chinese authorities continues to be widespread, according to a new Amnesty report published this year.

Prisoners are beaten with ropes and electric batons and some are shackled.

One twelve year old girl continues to suffer from injuries to the arms and legs after being detained for four months over two years ago. A 24 year old Buddhist nun was given repeated electric shocks while being held incommunicado for ten months.

A 60 year old woman is serving a three year term of "re-education through labour" in Lhasa for allegedly advocating Tibetan independence.

None of these people has been formally charged or tried.

China crackdown

China has renewed its crackdown on independent labour organisations, two and half years after the Workers' Autonomous Federations played a key role in the 1989 Democracy Movement.

In December, China's Ministry of State Security targetted fourteen underground labour groups in Beijing, with memberships of between 20 and 300.

Two of the groups are modelled on the Polish "solidarity" union, according to the Hong Kong press. The groups are believed to have been involved in several strikes in Beijing during 1991. The Chines Communist Party has also stepped up its control over the China Federation of Trade Unions as part of the on-going labour reforms designed to increase productivity in state enterprises. The CCP plans to delegate powers of recruitment, dismissal and wage-fixing to individual enterprises.

"Why I'm standing in Coventry South East"

Dave Nellist explains his reasons to Bryn Griffiths.

BG: What's behind your decision to stand against an official Labour candidate in Coventry South East?

DN: A couple of years ago I was reselected by local Party members by a substantial vote and have retained their support since then. My expulsion in December and the subsequent suspension of the CLP has not altered Party members' views; they made a decision and they want to stick by it. In January, 330 of our members signed a petition saying that I should be reinstated, that no candidate should be imposed and that we should be allowed to fight the election ourselves in order to send a Labour Party supporter back to Parliament - albeit one without a Party card. Only 68 local members refused to sign. In the last two Parliaments I had the eleventh and twelfth best voting record of any Labour MP, which means that 95% of Labour MPs vote less often than I do for Party policies which they agree with more than I do!

We don't reckon an imposed candidate will enthuse Labour voters in the area and retain Coventry South East. I also don't think an imposed candidate can enthuse either Labour members or voters in the three Tory marginals adjacent to Coventry South East, all of which are among the 97 seats Labour has to win to form a majority government. It was with all this in mind that the decision for me to run was endorsed by a meeting of over 400 last month.

BG: Clearly, the blame for the situation in Coventry lies totally at the door of Walworth Road. But what happens if the vote is split between two Labour candidates and the Tories get in?

DN: Before we took the decision to stand we talked to a lot of people in the constituency. In the last couple of months we've spoken to over 13,400 - 4,472 of them promised to support me, which is 33.4% of the total. Our calculations, which are cautious, indicate that at the moment I can expect 44% support with 33% each to the Tory and the imposed candidate. So while there could be some confusion and some muddying of the waters in Coventry South East, we think we can hold sufficient support so that the seat stays Labour.

BG: As far as I'm concerned you should be the official Labour candidate, but after the heat of the campaign, when people are confronted with the ballot papers, a lot of them will be swayed by the instinctive loyalty to Labour among working class people. People have tried to stand against official Labour candidates in the past and lost badly, most recently Lesley Mahmood. What makes your candidacy different?

DN: It's true that there's been a traditional working class loyalty to the Labour Party over and above any personal vote for individual Labour MPs, but it was more true in the days when there were major policy differences between the two parties. The closer the parties have drawn together the weaker the traditional loyalties have become. I've lived in this constituency for twenty years; I was Party chairman for five years and a county councillor; I've dealt with thousands of local cases. It's different from the past cases where people have stood against official candidates. As far as most people in Coventry South East are concerned the Labour Party isn't what happens at Walworth Road - it's us, the hundreds of ordinary members whom they see on the streets and at meetings and on the doorstep, fighting for better services and for jobs.

In Walton, Lesley was unfairly portrayed, particularly in the national press, as an outsider. In Coventry the imposed candidate will be seen as the outsider and we'll be seen as the local Party that's been stitched up by London. Anyone who's imposed will be seen as someone more interested in becoming an MP than actually helping the people of Coventry.

BG: Many people will connect what your doing with the candidacies of Terry Fields in Liverpool and Tommy Sheridan in Glasgow. Is there an association with them and if so what is it?

DN: You've missed out John Hughes in Coventry North East and Ron Brown in Leith.

BG: I focused on those two because I thought people would generally associate them more with you.

DN: The situation in Coventry has arisen out of the individual expulsion of myself. The decision to stand in Coventry was taken after quite lengthy consultation not only with Party members but also with union branches, workplaces, pensioners' organisations, etc. Terry's constituency



Dave Nellist and Terry Fields take a break Photo: Bryn Griffiths

party was suspended for two years before his expulsion so he didn't have any organised body to go back to; the Broad Left in that area took the decision that he should stand. Tommy's candidacy in Glasgow has grown out of the particular circumstances of the anti-Poll Tax movement there, especially the high profile of resistance to warrant sales. Now my expulsion had a lot to do with the Poll Tax. And initially they were going to expel Terry for his non-payment of the Tax before Clare Short came up with a better idea.

The connections between the three of us are as tight or as loose as that.

BG: But what is your personal position on them? You've expressed sympathy but would you support their candidacies?

DN: Again, I want to see the end of the Tories and a majority Labour government. And I want to see the maximum number of Labour candidates returned around the country. I think that Terry, because of his record and his support in Liverpool Broadgreen, should have been the official Labour candidate and should win that election and therefore I give him my personal support. The point of Tommy's candidacy is to highlight opposition to the warrant sales. They've picked a seat where they can have a serious campaign but it's not a Labour marginal.

I don't want to be misconstrued. The cases we're talking about are specific instances where special circumstances make a difference. I live in Coventry South West and I shall personally be voting for the Labour candidate in that constituency, the millionaire socialist Geoffrey Robinson. I'm certainly not arguing that people should stand against Labour up and down the country.

BG: I'm worried that your candidature and the others we've spoken about will encourage people to leave the Party; after the general election there will be new opportunities for the left and if we're not in the Party we'll miss out.

DN: Whenever people write to me telling me they've torn up their Party card, I write back with a metaphorical role of sellotape telling them to stick it back together again. At every public meeting I argue for support for the election of a Labour government and for people to join the Labour Party. And if I win the election the first thing I'll do is knock on Neil Kinnock's door and ask for my Party card back. This is not part of any grand strategy to take people away from the Labour Party. But I will qualify that statement by saying this: when the anti-Poll Tax battle started you could set up a local group and still be a member of the Party; if you start something like that today it would lead to immediate action against you. I've reached the stage now where I advise people that it's more important to take part in community based campaigns - on tenants rights, local services, or in support of a strike - than to "keep you head down and save your Party card". You can no longer put the trouble that you might get into in the Labour Party ahead of the need to support those battles.

BG: That's where we agree. Where I would disagree is taking the next step into standing independent candidates.

DN: But if I was part of some national strategy that had taken that step I would be arguing for people to stand against official Labour candidates up and down the country - and I'm not. People have to get active in the Labour Party because if we get a Labour government, possibly with a small majority, the pressure from above - from the banks, the employers, the media - is going to be tremendous and we'll need a lot of pressure from below even to hold on to the minimum promises Labour's making now. You're right to say there will be opportunities in the future. I intend to be playing a part in them.

BG: After the general election will we see the kind of left upsurge we've seen in the past, expressed through the trades unions and spreading throughout the Party or have the changes in the Party made it so much like the European Social Democratic parties or even the US Democrats that this is no longer possible?

DN: There's lots of people in the Labour Party who want it to become like a European Social Democratic party but I don't think that events in the next two years will allow that. There will be all sorts of pressures, initially through industrial struggles, and at a certain stage through the more formal links between the unions and the Labour Party. But it will be different from the seventies. The changes pushed through the Party in the last five years, the rolling policy forums, the reduced powers of conference, the restriction of Party democracy are all designed to slow down the accountability of those in office to the rank and file.

BG: But is this a qualitative change in the nature of the Labour Party? Is it now something different from what it was?

DN: It's not irretrievable. That's why I'm not arguing with people to leave the Party. I'm interested in recapturing it for working class people and their families. But I'm also not arguing that people should simply sit around and do nothing for two or three years until the situation in the Party improves; they've got to be involved in struggles, like the anti-Poll Tax struggle, and try to seek support for them from the unions and the Labour Party. That process, plus the experiences of recession and the next Labour government, will bring a fresh layer of people into the Party.

The people who are going to change the Labour Party are not me and you; they'll be new forces entirely. I can't predict exactly what campaigns are going to draw them in. I just know that the working class is sufficiently inexhaustible in talent to do the job.

Our campaign in Coventry will be a campaign for a Labour government but it will also raise the flag of socialism. I'm quietly confident about the result but whatever it is there are times when you have to draw the line and stand up for the principles upon which the Party was founded.

Just out - a new pamphlet from *Labour Briefing:*

"WHY SOCIALISTS SHOULD STAY IN THE LABOUR PARTY"

Articles by twelve long-time Labour activists arguing - from a variety of political perspectives and personal experiences - that the best place for socialists in Britain is still the Labour Party.

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One rule for them...

SO ROGER GODSIFF has been endorsed by the NEC as Labour's candidate for Birmingham Small Heath and a saga of crass manipulation and hypocrisy comes to an end.

Formerly a Lewisham councillor with the worst attendance record in the Labour Group, Godsiff got himself selected in Small Heath by organising multiple right-wing trade union affiliations in order to pack the electoral college. It seems a number of delegates' fees were allegedly paid with personal cheques signed by.... yes, you've guessed it, Roger Godsiff.

Ex-APEX political fixer Godsiff was promised the seat by retiring MP Denis Howell, who presumed it to be owned by the APEX wing of the GMB.

Godsiff must have set a record for alienating not only those Party members who were backing leading local councillors for the seat, not only the many local people who thought Labour should stand a black candidate in a seat with such a large ethnic minority community, but even two local vicars who publicly denounced the buying of a safe Labour seat. They were convinced that Roger wasn't Godsgift to Small Heath.

Joyce Gould conducted two investigations into the Small Heath selection.

The first one gave Godsiff a clean bill of health. Then came a BBC television expose of the fake union affiliations and another investigation was launched. This time Gould reported that Godsiff admitted he had been "unwise" but should be endorsed anyway.

Birmingham Trades Unions for Labour (TUFL) acted as a "clearing house" for local union affiliations enabling the right wing to garner the 40% union vote in selective meetings. TUFL performed this "service" despite letters from Joyce Gould stating that under Party rules it had no right to do so. In 1990 alone over £3,300 in affiliation fees was being handled by Birmingham TUFL. £1,400 of this came from a combination of twenty EETPU branches, ten GMWU/GMB branches, twelve APEX/GMB branches and five AEU branches, compared to a total of £510 from the city's thirty TGWU branches.

The battle led to the establishment of two unlikely-named local organisations - SHADES (Small Heath Affair - Democratic Solution Committee) and the Small Heath Voters' Group. Memories of the suspended St Helens CLP which apparently met as a Ferret-Breeders Club!

Despite enough irregularities to have ruled out any left-wing candidate standing anywhere else, the NEC has chosen to endorse Godsiff. And the Party members who selected him don't even know he sends his kids to private school...

Having stamped its seal of approval on Godsiff the NEC decided to impose shortlists on seats where selection was delayed, mainly to thwart the influence of the left. Subsequently, the NEC panel imposed short-lists on Nottingham East (where Najma Hafeez, who lost out to Godsiff in Small Heath hopes for compensation), Coventry South East (where even the eager-to-please Dennis MacShane proved unacceptable) and of course Wallasey, where ex-shipyard worker Lol Duffy, the clear choice of the local party to overturn Lynda Chalker's wafer-thin majority, was predictably - but outrageously - excluded from the shortlist.

Leeds: witch-hunter returns

PITY JOYCE GOULD. Having left the frozen north of Leeds all those years ago for sunny Walworth Road, she now finds herself having to make frequent return trips.

Joyce made her name in Leeds as a pragmatic left winger. She moved to the centre right and so gained a full-time job as a Labour Party agent working under the notorious right-wing Yorkshire organiser, Dick Knowles.

Soon after Knowles left Leeds, ultimately to ascend the municipal throne in Birmingham, Joyce moved to London and began the not very arduous climb from Assistant National Agent to Director of Organisation.

Today Leeds can boast at least one throw-back to those happy days of Joyce's youth: the witch-hunt is back. Only this time it's costing us some half a million pounds a year to keep the Party safe for the City.

In Leeds there have now been full-scale investigations of two Party branches.

University ward, which has been led by a group of non-aligned left-wingers, was suspended by the January NEC. No evidence of *Militant* "infiltration", of "intimidation", of not supporting Labour candidates was presented by Gould. Apparently it's now sufficient for some local big-wig like Leeds Council leader Jon Trickett to complain that he's got a left-wing thorn in his side for the Labour apparatus to mobilise to remove it.

University ward's real crime was to insist on the right of ward members to have a say in the running of the City Council. Last year, they nearly de-selected Councillor Nanette Sloane, a loyal Trickett supporter. This year, they would certainly have placed a left-winger into the vacant council seat. The putative left candidate, a leading local gay activist and a former Labour candidate in an unwinnable ward, was excluded from the council panel by the District Labour Party. Now that the branch itself is suspended the selection of an approved candidate will take place by postal ballot!

Middleton Ward, rent by a feud between two groups of right-wingers, was also investigated by Joyce Gould, who had to listen to allegations regarding events going back five years - many of which had already been investigated and resolved. She recommended no action be taken.

Comrades, come rally...but what to?

Across the land, Labour left activists are viewing the election with a mixture of excitement at the prospect of removing the Tories and bitter despair over Labour's seemingly endless march to the right. ***Richard Hanford****, a long-time constituency activist and public campaigner for the Labour Party in Mid-Sussex ,offers a grassroots view of the forthcoming campaign.*

IT IS always taken for granted that the Labour rank-and-file will fall into line come election time. We are expected to do our duty and play "follow my leader." Careerists call on us to get them elected, but won't hear our demands on them to deliver the goods afterwards. Comrades, come rally...but to what? The Red Flag has been lowered. Activists have been alienated and their enthusiasm has been drained by the witch-hunt and the Policy Review, the failure to oppose the Gulf War and the attacks on Poll Tax non-payers.

In this election we will be expected to support many policies we have previously opposed. There is no longer any commitment to common ownership of any kind. A Labour government will retain privatisation, anti-trade union laws and nuclear weapons. It will embrace the undemocratic, capitalist Common Market, and possibly proportional representation, which is future electoral suicide. Indeed, a cosy Lib/Lab coalition could provide a convenient excuse to do little except introduce PR while still satisfying Kinnock's sole ambition: to become PM. He has already unilaterally disarmed his Party by dumping Conference policy to cut "defence" spending, thereby dumping also the potential "peace dividend" as well.

Labour's vacillation between promises of "jam tomorrow" and warnings of "no quick fix" has made voters uneasy. The ceaseless flow of "Charter" launches seems to indicate that Britain would be transformed into a bed of roses with a magic wave of Bryan Gould's filofax and a fistful of quangoes; then comes the "Treasury Team" to assure the City that almost every proposal will be indefinitely postponed until the profit system can pay for it. Hardly an inspiring spectacle.

The only firm pledges left are to establish a minimum wage and to increase child benefit and pensions (though the latter are not even being restored to pre-Thatcher levels). Nevertheless, the increases are desperately needed and must be at the forefront of our campaign. The minimum wage would also be a massive vote-winner, if only our leaders would show some confidence in it. Banning hunting and reducing animal experiments would also be widely welcomed.

If the Left doesn't push these policies they will be overlooked. And Labour will suffer for it. Wherever there are differences between Labour and the other parties, we should stress them. We must try to ensure that our Party is not presented to the public as what Eric Heffer foresaw as an "SDP Mark 2."

There may seem little we on the left can do as the election campaign is reduced to a deceitful, depoliticised slanging match, fought through the mass media. The manifesto will be drass dressed up in gloss. But we must endeavour to smash through this superficiality to campaign for socialism and to recruit people into the Labour Party on this basis.

The official Labour line has reduced attacks upon the Tories to mere accusations of mismanagement and promises to "make the market system work better than the Tories". I think the left should slam the Tory record on homelessness, unemployment, NHS, Poll Tax, etc., but also honestly admit the inadequacy of Labour's current programme. We should recognise that there is a worldwide slump; Major is not the cause and Kinnock is not the cure. It would be irresponsible to pretend otherwise.

In talking about social and economic problems, we should at every opportunity expose the capitalist causes and propose socialist solutions - the need to take power rather than simply take office, the need to extend democracy throughout industry via common ownership and workers' control.

This approach effectively counters the criticism, commonly heard by canvassers, that "you're all the same", that whichever way you vote, the government always gets in!

The Labour right-wing is highly selective as to who and what it will publicly support. The right would rather see some Labour losses than any left gains. Hence the expulsion of Dave Nellist and the exclusion of Lol Duffy in highly marginal Wallasey.

Where does that leave us? We must work hard for Socialist Campaign Group people, but what of unfairly selected or undemocratically imposed or profoundly anti-socialist, anti-trade union or racist or sexist Labour candidates?

Let me state plainly that I am not suggesting abandonment of electoral activity. But honesty being the best policy, I must also say that I can't see why socialists should forget Clause Four and waste time campaigning for capitalism.



CLASS TRAITOR OF THE MONTH

Short sighted

For some years this month's Class Traitor has engaged in a well-publicised on-again off-again relationship with the Labour leadership. But Neil Kinnock knows that when it matters* Clare Short *will always come up trumps.

SHORT WAS thirty-five when she was selected in 1981 as Parliamentary candidate for the old Birmingham Handsworth constituency. As a director of Youth Aid and the Unemployment Unit she had already built a national reputation as a left-wing critic of the last Labour government's policies. When Benn lost the deputy leadership at that year's conference, she was heard muttering, "Fucking hell, now we're stuck with that bastard Healey".

When Handsworth was redistributed into the new Ladywood constituency Short defeated the then left-wing Albert Bore, who had previously deselected the sitting right wing MP, John Sever.

She was appointed to the Front Bench employment team in 1985. She was still considered very much a committed left-winger, albeit one who cultivated the "soft left" and refrained from attacks on the leadership. Three years later, she resigned the post in order to vote, in defiance of the Whip, against the renewal of the PTA. She let the press know just what she thought of Kinnock's "macho authoritarianism".

She returned to the Front Bench just a year later, this time with a social security brief, having proved her loyalty to Kinnock by helping him dump unilateralism. She appeared on TV to eulogise Kinnock and dismiss her criticisms as belonging to a past era.

"Probably the worst thing that could have happened to Clare was getting on the NEC," says a long-time observer. She was first elected to the NEC Women's Section in 1988 - after tendering a much publicised resignation from the Campaign Group, along with Richardson, Ruddock and Beckett, over the decision to stand against Kinnock and Hattersley.



Short proved herself in the leadership's eyes at the climactic NEC sessions on the Policy Review in May 1989. In response to Gerald Kaufman's "how to stop worrying and love the bomb" document Short, the passionate unilateralist, put forward a number of curious technical amendments (one of them appeared to commit Labour not to use "the independent deterrent" except as part of a NATO operation) which Kaufman accepted. A week later, she voted with the majority to end Labour's commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament.

In the extraordinary account of this incident she gave to Wintour and Hughes for their book Labour Rebuilt, she claimed that she had undergone a painful self-education on defence policy and had come "to feel that much of the unilateralist argument had been made out of ignorance".

Short has made herself a useful tool of the Labour establishment. She sits on key committees - the Organisation and Home Policy Sub-Committees, the Campaign Strategy Committee and the Economic Equality Policy Review Group - where her role is to lend support to the leadership rather than make policy. At these bodies, as at the NEC, she makes many highly individualistic contributions that have no effect whatsoever, except to satisfy her need to be seen as a dissenter. She has also developed a fondness for junkets on the Second International circuit.

At the 1990 Party conference Tom Sawyer imposed her on the NUPE delegation in place of the democratically selected Alice Mahon (both are NUPE sponsored MPs). Later the delegation agreed by a single vote to oppose the anti-Gulf war FBU motion.

She abstained in the Commons vote supporting moves towards war on January 14th 1991, then rejoined the pro-war lobby for the crucial January 21st vote. "We have to support our troops," she said. She then used a Commons question to Tom King to advocate the "destruction of Saddam Hussein and his war machine".

On TV she expressed some anxiety in response to the bombing of the Baghdad bunker. Kinnock told her she could not do this and remain on the Front Bench, so she resigned for a second time. She was at pains to explain to the press that she had not been "criticising the leadership".

Since then she has been working her passage back to respectability by championing the witch-hunt. Her oft-expressed detestation of Militant goes back a long way. Her sister is a Militant supporter and Clare seems to believe that this embarrassing fact can only be explained by some Moonie-like behaviour on Militant's part. She jumped at the chance to act as chief persecutor of Nellist and Fields, proposing the catch-all resolution calling for an "investigation" into Fields' "activities" and demanding repeatedly of Nellist that he answer her McCarthyite "are you now or have you ever been" questions. She waited for six hours in a West Bromwich hotel while the NCC went through the motions of considering Nellist's case so she could appear on TV the moment he was expelled to denounce him and the *Militant* "maggots".

Anti-*Militant* spleen does not explain her routine support for other witch-hunts (against *Socialist Organiser*, the Lambeth councillors, the Brighton Party) or for Frank Field in Birkenhead.

When she backed the leadership in excluding Martha Osamor and other black candidates from the short-list for the Vauxhall by-election her then left-dominated GC condemned her.

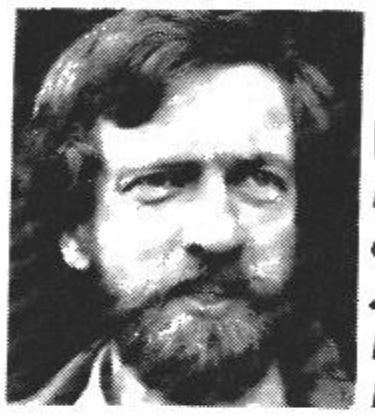
It was around that time that the old right-wing reappeared in the constituency after a long absence. John Sever was in attendance, but more significantly, Albert Bore, now a leading right-winger on the city council and heir apparent to Dick Knowles, began organising against her. Bore's ward was a base for the local right and one of its members was ex-councillor, would-be Parliamentary candidate and EETPU member Sardul Marwa.

Over the next two years the EETPU affiliated like mad to the Ladywood GC. Together with the GMB and the AEU, it formed a hard right trade union block controlling a quarter of the electoral college. Short cried foul and embraced the LCC arguments against union involvement in selections. But her problems in Ladywood were never just about the EETPU. There was an exceptional influx of new members recruited by Marwa and Bore, whose wife, Najma Hafeez, had stood against Roger Godsiff in Small Heath.

Short had backed Godsiff in the beginning, voting with Kinnock (but against Hattersley) not to scrap the selection when the initial complaints came in. She was rewarded by the leadership with the removal of most of the EETPU delegates from her GC. She then turned around and voted with Benn and Skinner against endorsing Godsiff, in an act which one witness called "sheer chutzpa".

Short's battle against Page Three

Common cause among Commons tendencies



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

EVERY FEW WEEKS *the Tories ensure there is a debate in Parliament about nuclear defence.*

The latest one, on a private member's motion (proposed by former Tory Whip and junior Defence Minister Michael Neubert, otherwise known as Bilko) followed the familiar pattern.

The two front benches, unable to find anything to disagree over, resorted to personal abuse. The Liberals played a slight variation on the bipartisan theme by promising to put "only" the same number of nuclear weapons in Trident as there are in Polaris - thus ensuring there is "no proliferation".

An innocent bystander might ask, in that case, why bother with Trident at all?

The rest of the debate saw the "tendencies" (a term familiar to both Briefing *readers and National Constitutional Committee members) holding forth.*

The biggest and best organised is the NATO tendency which had a thin time after the INF Treaty in their search for an enemy but were temporarily saved by the Gulf War. Their super-computers have discovered a list of unspecified Third World "threats" which can only be kept at bay by global nuclear powers.

Another tendency is made up of those strange souls determined to save regimental traditions; it seemed more about cap badges than anything else to me. They prefer lots of low tech soldiers to high tech aircraft and tanks.

The Russo-tendency is emerging fast; its basic theory is that Yeltsin is pro-western (was he ever anything else?) and we should encourage integration of the former Soviet forces and then NATO membership for the lot. Boris himself seems to have gone a stage nearer the edge (or over it) in wanting a joint Star Wars with the USA. Exactly what global power is simultaneously threatening Russia and the USA we wait to be told.

Only the (temporarily) small anti-nuclear and pro-arms cuts faction made the obvious points. Who are the enemies? Why are we spending £23 billion on Trident when the world is split asunder by poverty and hunger? And how will Labour canvassers explain how are we going to pay for the schools, houses and hospitals without slashing the arms budget?

UNABLE TO SPEAK *in the debate (I spoke in the last two and would therefore not be called), I went off to investigate another scandal.*

The Select Committee on Social Security has been looking into pension funds, specifically the Maxwell problem. We have heard heart rending stories of people who have paid into the schemes for years and have now lost everything. All the regulatory bodies and experts seem to have approved of the operation of the funds and yet, on Maxwell's death, a great hole emerged.

There has to be protection for workers' payments into pension funds; there has to be democracy in their operation; they have to be independent of the employer's control. Above all, the lesson is that City self-regulation produces Guinness, Barlow Clowes and Maxwell.

From the balconies of the council blocks in Islington we can see the bold towering offices of the City. The telephone number profits and fiddles seem a million miles away from people struggling to survive on £39 per week plus housing benefit.

THIS PARLIAMENT LOOKS *pretty nasty in its death throes. However, hope springs eternal. What can be a more pleasant sight than Tory MP's scanning the "Situations Vacant" columns of the Daily Telegraph?*

Short sighted (continued)

pornography and her defiance of the *Sun's* attacks have won her many admirers but her recent record in defence of womens' rights inside the Labour Party is not impressive. In 1989, she voted on the NEC against a motion to add a woman to the shortlist for the Glasgow Central by-election and did the same the following year in regard to Bradford North. A month after the latter incident, she tabled a resolution from the NEC Women's Committee (of which she was chair) regretting the absence of women from the short-list and stipulating that at least one female NEC member should be on all future NEC by-election panels.

For the leadership, it is useful to have someone with a "feminist" image to make its miserable excuses for not enacting the democratic reforms women want. Short likes to assure women activists she is doing her best to advance their cause with the leadership, but in reality she has become a conduit for the leadership back into the women's organisation.

Last year in Brighton, in replying for the NEC to the debate on Composite 59 (which called for women to elect the NEC Women's Section), she told delegates she had voted for the Composite at the NEC but that since the majority didn't agree she had to ask for it to be remitted. In fact, she had supported the leadership at the NEC. Diana Jeuda's mouth was seen to drop open when Clare uttered this porkie from the rostrum.

Short is easily manipulated by the leadership who consider her a useful idiot. She is notorious for getting the wrong end of the stick in argument. One associate commented, "If the NEC were debating a nuclear attack Clare would want assurances that the bomber crew were all union members."



"An unnecessary and unjustified war..."

Ten years after the Falklands and one year after the Gulf, Labour Briefing *spoke to* ***Tony Benn*** *about war, the Labour Front Bench and the coming general election.*

"THE FALKLANDS WAS an unnecessary and unjustified war which could have been averted and could have been stopped at any time.

I didn't realise it then, but looking back now I believe it had a great deal to do with oil. As Energy minister I was called into a cabinet committee meeting on the Falklands in the late seventies. It seemed there were oil reserves there but that no international oil company would take out a license from the British government while the question of sovereignty was uncertain. Eventually the licenses were agreed and the area is now being exploited for oil. It would not be unreasonable to say that the Falklands was the first oil war and the Gulf was the second.

The possibilities for a peaceful solution were always there: condominium, lease, UN administration and so forth. There were any number of ways out of the conflict. At one stage the British government did produce a peace plan with a realistic chance of being agreed but withdrew it the same day.

At first the Americans weren't very pleased about the British military response. They thought it would destabilise their relationships with the Latin American dictators. On the other hand Thatcher was an ally; they decided to prop her up, though with some anxiety. It was what Eden hoped would happen at Suez but didn't. Reagan was prepared to support the British this time but he did try to engage in some damage limitation. One form of this was to provide massive logistical support to get the war over with as quickly as possible. It was the American satellite system that allowed the Belgrano to be located and the Conqueror to be sent in.

The argument for Britain's ownership of the Malvinas was always a very shaky one - based as it was on conquest itself. Does a century of conquest entitle you to a moral right?

Michael Foot fell for the war on day one. We tried to mount some resistance at the NEC International Committee and within the PLP but we got hammered.

John Silkin, who was our defence spokesperson at the time, came up to me after the Task force was sent and said, "You're absolutely right, but we can't say it now. The Task Force will fail and then we'll show them up." I found that attitude revoltingly cynical. On the other hand, Judith Hart was very good on the war, as was Jim Mortimer, and of course Tam Dalyell was marvellous.



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Much later, in an interview at the Edinburgh Festival Robin Day said that Foot had told him that he had been briefed by Thatcher before they sank the Belgrano. Throughout the Gulf War the Front Bench was briefed on a regular basis. When there is a war, even a minor one, there is a de facto coalition. Our Front Bench throughout those two wars would have had briefings whenever they wanted, probably daily. Thus the British establishment gathers the Front Benches together and cuts them off from the peace movement and the populace.

Then Michael appeared at the victory parade. The government had scheduled it for when the Queen was out of the country so it was very much Mrs Thatcher's parade - with the leader of the Labour Party in attendance.

After the war, when Tam was pursuing the Belgrano and exposing the lies told by Mrs Thatcher and the government, the Front Bench didn't want to support him because they said the Falklands War was so popular that if we put it back on the agenda we would lose out. They didn't want the matter raised.

It's only a year since the Gulf War but here the verdict of history is even more overwhelming. Saddam had been positively supported by the US, which armed him against Iran. The Kurds were betrayed after the First World War when it became clear that Turkey was a bastion against the Bolshevik Revolution. The US and its allies never wanted democracy in the region; they had no intention of undermining the kings, the sheiks, the emirs and so on. The justifications for the war were totally fraudulent. It was about oil and power and the casualties were and are horrific.

Neither the Falklands nor the Gulf are plus points for the Tories in this election. The great disappointment and loss of opportunity for Labour is that it didn't come out as a principled peace party, something that could address the questions people have now about the environment, the end of the Cold War, nuclear weapons, US domination, the New World Order. Instead it just went along, stuck like a child on the back of a bicycle going wherever the US wanted to go; not for the first time it was the pillion rider of the Atlantic alliance.

Despite all this, people in the peace movement should be clear that we have to destroy the Tory government to change the balance of power in Britain. When Labour comes in, no matter what the leadership says, expectations and morale will rise. And that leads to change.

There isn't anything automatic about it. The difference between the last Tory cabinet and the first Labour cabinet will not be that great. But the pressures to which they will be subject are very different. There's something durable about the labour movement. There is an interest, an aspiration and an experience there that simply won't go away. "

One year on: Desert Storm exposed

"A victory has been won in the Gulf - a victory for what is right." So claimed Neil Kinnock on February 28th, 1991. But one year later the full horror of Kinnock's "victory" is still emerging. ***Graham Durham****, Brent East CLP, reads the indictment of the imperialist war, the Labour leadership - and the* Labour Briefing *Editorial Board.*

WAR CASUALTIES aside, the on-going disaster in Iraq has led to the deaths of 50,000 Iraqi children from malnutrition and disease. Real wages of Iraqi workers have plunged to less than 10% of their level a year ago and food prices have increased twenty fold. Medicine, clean water, equipment of all types are unavailable or blocked by sanctions. Tens of thousands of cluster 'bomblets' lie unexploded, maiming more civilians every day. The dropping of 90,000 tonnes of bombs during Desert Storm has trapped Iraq in what a UN report described as "a pre-industrial age".

Despite this huge disaster Saddam Hussein remains in power in Baghdad and was left free to slaughter the rebellious Shi'ite population in the south and the Kurdish uprising in the north. Nine months later, more than 300,000 Kurds are homeless and destitute in the mountains of Kurdistan. A four month blockade of Iraqi Kurdistan by Baghdad continues at this moment as Hussein tries to force the Peshmerga to retreat.

Back in Kuwait, where it all supposedly started, the al-Sabah regime is back on the throne and busy dishing out £500 billion worth of contracts. No sign of any of the promised concessions to the democratic process have been noted.

History has thus already exposed the hollowness of all the various reasons advanced by Labour's leadership to justify their support for the war. There is no free Kuwait - only the old autocratic, oil-filching billionaires. The much-vaunted need to defend the borders of Kuwait was a mere smokescreen for a war the US and its allies were determined to fight. On Bush's orders and with Egyptian/Saudi compliance any attempt at securing a negotiated withdrawal was destroyed in August 1990.

Some on the left argued that the removal of Hussein was a just object for the war. Yet it is now clear, despite the bloody massacre of retreating Iraqi soldiers at Mutla Bridge, that Bush decided that the Iraqi military machine must be preserved, against the wishes of Schwarzkopf and Thatcher. Bush foresaw the coming popular uprisings and wanted to ensure the regime had the weaponry to put them down; he also foresaw and hoped to encourage a military coup, but that was not to be.
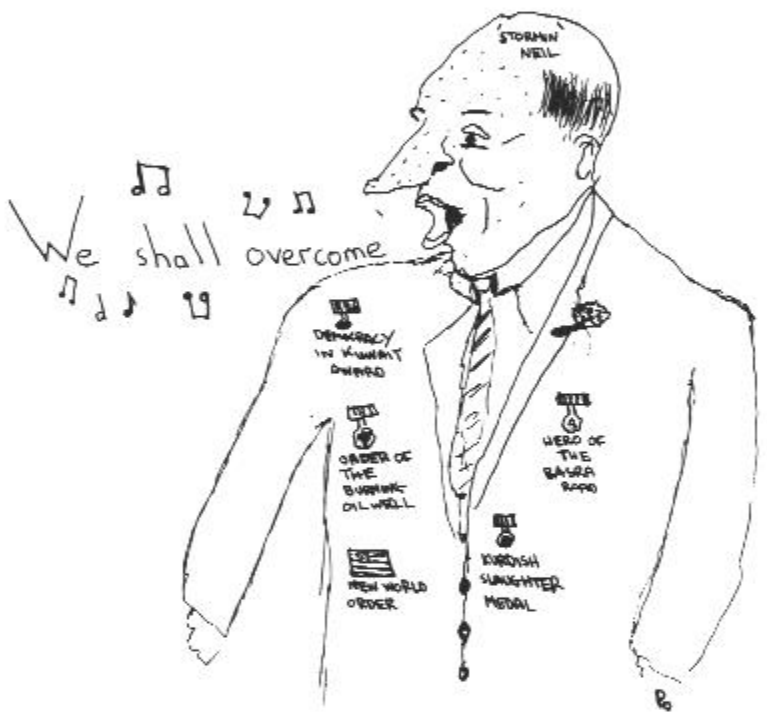
The dismantling of the so-called safe havens demonstrates the hatred for the Kurdish national demands which Bush and Major share, despite their public bleatings. Turkish forces are encouraged to wage war against the PKK (Workers Party of Kurdistan) and allowed to attack Kurds on the other side of the border with Iraq. All the West's fine words about the Kurds have proved as much use to them as Jeffrey Archer's missing £57 million.

The purpose of Desert Storm was to enforce United States power in the middle east and ensure the continued happy US relationship with the oil-rich dictatorships. Iraq posed the biggest potential threat to this set-up and to the security of the US premier ally in the region, Israel; Iraq's devastation was therefore a necessary part of constructing the grim New World Order in which any opposition to US plans is met with brutal repression.

Kinnock's claim that "a victory for what is right" was won shows just how craven is his willingness to comply with the needs of US imperialism and how indifferent he is to their human cost. The war also found support from numerous Labour MPs who once claimed to be left-wing. Jo Richardson, Paul Boateng, Michael Meacher, David Blunkett, Joan Ruddock, and many others forfeited their socialist credentials forever.

Amongst those who joined the anti-war movement, confusion arose over the role of the United Nations. Unable to distinguish their post-1945 hopes for the UN from the reality of a US-run institution, many left-wingers supported sanctions and opposed war. Most of the Campaign Group fell into this camp, along with CND. They seemed to be arguing that it was alright to starve Iraqi civilians to death but not to carpet bomb them. An honourable exception was Bernie Grant (see *Labour Briefing*, March 1991).

Faced with the imperialist onslaught against Iraq few on the left in Britain were able to reach the simple conclusion that our duty was both to oppose the war and defend Iraq. As this failure was shared by the majority of the *Briefing* Editorial Board, it is to be hoped that all of us can learn the lessons and be better prepared to meet future imperialist offensives.



SONGS OF THE MODERN LABOUR PARTY No 3

Let's all get modern!

AS WE ALL know, the British economy displays chronic weakness. It generally performs worse on all indicators than most other major economies and has been in relative decline for over a century.

Dave Palmer
Economics correspondent

The source of this weakness is widely recognised as the structurally low levels of investment and profitability, particularly in manufacturing industry. The Thatcher-Lawson 'economic miracle' of financial deregulation, privatisation and anti-trade union laws only exacerbated the problem. Throughout their regime, investment in manufacturing continued to fall as a proportion of gross domestic product.

Among the factors often cited as reasons for Britain's economic weakness are the subordination of national economic interests to 'finance' capital, an 'anti-industrial' culture within the establishment, lack of a state 'accumulation policy' and other symptoms of 'imperial hangover', like high military spending. Britain is unfavourably compared to its more successful competitors, Japan and Germany, which in the post-war era, it is argued, have had institutional arrangements which ensured successful concentration on domestic production. What is therefore needed in Britain is a 'modernisation strategy' - a set of 'rational' policies which, if implemented, would improve the international competitiveness of UK-based firms.

A left version of the 'modernisation' argument underpinned the three main elements of the old Alternative Economic Strategy: reflation and increased public spending to create full employment; the extension of public ownership; and the introduction of workers' control and planning measures. In diluted form, the AES nearly succeeded in becoming official Party policy in the early 1980s. Its great weakness was its emphasis on import controls and bureaucratic forms of nationalisation; its strength was its emphasis on social ownership and workers' participation, however problematic and limited that commitment.

The last variant of this approach was Andrew Glyn's 1985 Campaign Group Pamphlet "A Million Jobs A Year: The Case For Planning Full Employment". The 'non-sectarian' revolutionary left was sympathetic to "A Million Jobs", whatever its limitations, because if a Labour government actually carried out its proposals it would shift the balance of power substantially in favour of the organised working class. Such measures would also cause an economic and social crisis as the ruling class would certainly resist and stage an investment strike.

Enter 'Labour And The Economy: A Programme for Action', the product of the *Socialist Economic Bulletin* (i.e. Socialist Action leader John Ross) and the authors of *Beyond The Casino Economy*. Ken Livingstone has taken up Ross's ideas and is pushing an alternative economic policy

"... the AES nearly succeeded in becoming official Party policy in the early 1980s. Its great weakness was its emphasis on import controls and bureaucratic forms of nationalisation"

which he insists could be implemented while maintaining a balanced budget.

The 'Programme for Action', yet another version of the national, 'modernisation' strategy, accommodates to the shift to the right with a vengeance. It has no commitment to any real expansion of public spending and completely deprioritises extension of social ownership and control of production. It represents a huge step backwards from "A Million Jobs" and in some respects is way to the right of the old AES. It is unfortunate that the 'Programme' is the only left alternative currently on offer to the nonsense peddled by the Labour leadership.

The 'Programme' identifies the "short termism" of the City, high levels of military spending and the high ratio of overseas investment by UK-based capital as the main causes of low levels of domestic investment. It outlines "realistic" policies "which can be implemented by a successful Labour government" to end the three lows of "low investment, low productivity and low wages".

To generate the resources for domestic investment and to modernise and rebuild the industrial base the 'Programme' chiefly proposes:

- Reduction of military spending to the European average to release at "least £7 billion" for a public sector industrial policy;
- "Far-reaching package of exchange control regulations" and tax incentives to stop capital flowing overseas.
- Credit controls, a "sharp" cut in interest rates and devaluation "inside or outside" the ERM.
- Creation of a "new core of publicly-owned companies in finance and industrial sectors", with full compensation for any of the private sector which is nationalised.
- Expansion in training, notably for woman and black people and a non-specific commitment to "rebuilding the public services".
- Commitment to free collective bargaining and a minimum wage.

Seven billion pounds is not a lot in a £600 billion economy - Lamont is expected to make £4 billion tax cuts in the middle of a recession - and would presumably be required in the first place for diversifying defence industries. Where the resources would come from for the "direct public intervention" to raise investment is not clear.

Nor is it clear why these measures should convince the financial system to direct substantial capital flows into areas of domestic investment which consistently display rates of profit far below the international average.

Disquiet has occurred within CLPD over the weak commitment to public ownership in the 'Programme'. But *Socialist Action* has resisted all pressure to strengthen this aspect of it.

We need to ask if its proposers are serious about the 'Programme'? Are they really suggesting that the main priority for the left is to argue that Labour can run capitalism more efficiently? Are they committed to the consensual partnership with business that is a prerequisite for the 'Programme'? Are they really convinced that the tax incentives and exchange regulation they propose will produce massive changes in the levels of domestic private sector investment, when the return on that investment remains so low?

I'd be very happy if someone would reply telling us what the objective of this watery 'Programme' is. Certainly if it is to be the springboard to something with a more socialist content (as *Casino Economy* argue) there is a long way to go!

Strathclyde NALGO rejected by Labour

Amongst the more outrageous actions of Labour councils has been the decision by Strathclyde Regional Council in Scotland to end check-off collections for white-collar union NALGO. Apparently the Council were scared to give the same treatment to NUPE and the GMB because of their affiliation to the Labour Party.

The NALGO General Secretary and Executive had an urgent meeting with Neil Kinnock to press him to get Strathclyde to reverse its actions - particularly embarrassing to them as this is the largest NALGO branch in the country. It was explained to Kinnock that this stupidity was jeopardising NALGO's £2 million general election advertising campaign - which would undoubtedly be to the detriment of the Tory government. Kinnock refused to budge. Clearly, helping trades unionism in Scotland is not on his agenda.

No wonder some white collar unions have problems persuading their members to affiliate to the Labour Party!

GEC strike

Seven hundred workers at the GEC Switchgear Openshaw plant in Manchester have been on strike for five weeks against compulsory redundancies and victimisation.

In response to management's plans to cut 95 jobs at the plant (part of a drive to shed 11,000 GEC posts nationwide), 70% of workers voted to strike.

This is the first major strike in the Manchester engineering industry since the early 80s and has received a lot of support from neighbouring workplaces. The workers are mainly members of the AEU, GMB and MSF.

Contact: Dave Hughes, 23 Prince Edward Avenue, Denton, Manchester; donations to AEI Shop Stewards Committee Fund.

Update on the Teamsters

The new democratically elected leadership of the 1.5 million member Teamsters Union took office at the beginning of February.

On the day of his inauguration as union president, reformer Ron Carey told a crowd of 500 rank and file members gathered on the steps of the multi-million dollar Teamsters HQ in Washington, DC: "I will begin my work as president by setting an example with the following measures: the Teamsters' limousine, the condominium in Puerto Rico, the luxury jets, they're all going on the market next week."

A major challenge for the new leadership is the carhaulers' contract, which expired last May. Union members rejected the latest management offer (a four-year contract with a two-tier wage system and restrictions on the right to strike) in December by 74%.

In January, 65 leaders of Teamsters for a Democratic Union met in Detroit and vowed that the reformers' stunning election victory would be a signal to build and extend the rank-and-file movement, not wind it up.

COHSE no showsie

The farce of Tory laws governing the re-election of general secretaries has been exposed by recent events in COHSE, where both the General Secretary (Hector McKenzie) and the Assistant General Secretary (Colm O'Kane) were returned unopposed after opponents found it impossible to get nominated under the union's arcane procedures.

This is the latest in a line of 'non-elections' that have graced the trade union movement since the Tories introduced their phoney accountability measures.

Radical *and* realistic

Given a rare chance to exercise an almost instantaneous right of reply, ***Seumas Milne****, co-author of* Beyond the Casino Economy *and one of the signatories of 'Labour and the Economy', faxed* Briefing *this answer to Dave Palmer's article on the opposite page.*

THE KEY to whether a Labour government elected in 1992 lays the basis for progressive social advance or paves the way for an even more catastrophic political defeat than in 1979 lies in whether its economic policies can be made to deliver the goods to the people the labour movement seeks to represent.

The starting point for those of us who drew up 'Labour and the Economy: A Programme of Action' last summer was that unless Labour adopts more radical policies it will be unable to tackle the scale of the crisis it will inherit and achieve the movement's short-term goals of industrial and social reconstruction.

The skeleton programme, hammered out between those around *Socialist Economic Bulletin* and the *Beyond the Casino Economy* project, is a basic minimum. It calls for action in the labour market to create full employment, free collective bargaining underpinned by a minimum wage, a sharp cut in military spending, the creation of a new public sector in finance and industries, plus statutory and other forms of intervention in the private sector, controls on capital export and foreign exchange markets, devaluation and interest rate cuts, and the cancellation of Third World debt.

By any measure, that is a radical agenda, even if it leaves many questions open for further debate and research. Dave Palmer thinks it "unfortunate", "a huge step backward" and accommodating

> ***"The left has been notoriously weak in economic policy in the past ten years"***

to the right "with a vengeance". To anyone active in the mainstream of the labour movement - or most other places, for that matter - such accusations are frankly ludicrous. And what would Dave put in place of the 'Programme'? We are not told.

The left has been notoriously weak in economic policy in the past ten years. The work around *Beyond the Casino Economy* and *Socialist Economic Bulletin* is an attempt to put that right. But it is in no way a sectarian or exclusive project. Of course there are differences of emphasis among those involved, but there is a much broader area of common ground.

Propaganda for socialism is needed more than ever at a time when so many on the left have lost confidence in their own ideas and traditions. But we must also engage in what is actually happening in the Party and the unions and, most important, be prepared to agitate around measures that could enable Labour to implement its stated aims in government.

Finally, I am simply baffled by the claim that 'Labour and the Economy' "deprioritises" public ownership. Without a major extension of public ownership and intervention, there is no chance of overcoming chronic under-investment. That is clearly stated in the programme which is why it was so viciously attacked by the right in MSF. Any *Briefing* readers who haven't seen the statement and would like to judge for themselves should write to Labour and the Economy Group, 120 Northcote Road, London E17 7EB.

Coal cuts: Selby feels the knife

STILL REELING from the shock of the Rothschild Report, an already demoralised mining workforce has been given a further hefty kick with the announcement of more than 1,000 job cuts in the flagship Selby Group.

The jobs are being axed from Whitemoor, opened only five years ag, Kellingley, Sharlston and Prince of Wales, all recently grouped with Selby in a pre-privatisation reorganisation.

The 1,105 jobs are being cut from the most modern and productive coalfield in Europe. All four pits, together employing nearly 4,000 men, are making money.

Selby Group director Alan Houghton told NUM officials at the review meeting when the cuts were announced that they had nothing to do with profitability. Since the 1984-85 strike, British Coal have closed more than 100 pits - all on the grounds that they were losing money.

But Selby's high-tech pits, which regularly break production records, were supposed to provide jobs for life. Miners who moved there from all parts of the British coalfield counting on a secure future are now being told its maximum life is fifteen years.

Kellingley, Europe's biggest pit and cheapest coal producer, was the flagship of the industry until the opening of Selby. It is now scheduled to lose 410 jobs from a workforce of 1,600.

As with last year's pit closures and in keeping with their stick-and-carrot approach, British Coal have blackmailed miners into taking "voluntary" redundancy. They warned that the top-up payment - an incentive to go quietly, introduced three years ago and worth up to £10,000 - would be withdrawn at the end of March.

The bombshell fell as miners were still reeling from the grim future envisaged in the Rothschild Report, commissioned by the government in preparation for privatisation. It foresaw as few as twelve British pits suitable for privatisation - and doomed the rest to closure within two years of another Tory election victory.

The British coal industry entered 1992 with just 53 pits left, two of which are already condemned.

Against the trend, Hatfield Main was reprieved at a reconvened review meeting on January 31st when British Coal announced that the colliery would not be closed and there would be no job losses. The pit remains in the review procedure and its future will be reconsidered at the next quarterly South Yorkshire review meeting on April 15th.

In a separate development, Rotherham Council have launched a plan to keep open Thurcroft Colliery, with the support of the NUM, to save 600 jobs and exploit top-quality coal reserves which could sustain another twenty years' production. The rescue package would involve restoring the pit on a care and maintenance basis before carrying out a feasibility study with a view to returning it to full production.

Also in Yorkshire, it has been announced that the clean coal experimental power station at Grimethorpe is to be closed. Apart from 90 lost jobs, the decision signals the death-knell of Britain's world lead in the research and development of clean coal technology. Further evidence of the Tories' policy of deliberate starvation of the industry.

Government figures for energy research show that, in 1989-90, £1.7 million was invested in coal research, £17.9 million into renewable sources - and £177 million into nuclear power. In other words, for every pound they give for nuclear energy research, they give coal a penny!

Even the European Commission is now convinced it must save what is left of the British coal industry - the most efficient in Europe - by temporarily subsidising it to the same extent as its counterparts on the Continent. Tory ministers have rejected the idea.

Meanwhile, private generating companies continue to announce new coal-importing terminals around the coast. Falling orders from these companies are agreed by all to be the principal cause of the job cuts in the Selby Group.

Report courtesy of the excellent *Yorkshire Miner*, journal of the Yorkshire Area NUM. Subscribe to Yorkshire Miner (11 issues for £4) by writing to *Yorkshire Miner*, Miners' Offices, 2 Huddersfield Road, Barnsley S70 2LS.

Building workers take on the EETPU

EVER SINCE THE building workers' union UCATT voted in a left Executive majority in its first genuinely democratic elections in years, the EETPU has been waging an all-out membership and recognition war with it.

The front page of this month's UCATT Viewpoint is filled with a photo of a union member ripping up the EETPU membership card which was sent to him even though he had never asked to join the scab union (nor had any of the other UCATT members at Laing's Westminster Hospital site who were also sent the cards).

AEU members now being urged by Jordan and Laird to merge with the EETPU are advised to question the internal democracy of an organisation that hands out membership cards, and presumably voting rights, to people who haven't even joined! Attempts by the EETPU to win recognition from employers in construction have been rejected again by the industry's National Joint Council, due to the determination of the new UCATT leadership and the solidarity of the other unions on the Council.

Most of the few building workers who joined the EETPU at the height of the "red scare" last summer returned to UCATT when they found the EETPU simply could not represent them.

New UCATT General Secretary George Brumwell is contemptuous of the handful of UCATT full-timers who went over to the EETPU: "They cut and ran. What that tells me about them is that their commitment to this union was more of a selfish than a trade union nature."

UCATT is to launch a new recruitment campaign and provide better back-up for its stewards at site level. In the face of attacks from the government, the employers, the media and the right wing of the trade union movement, UCATT is fighting back with a vengeance.

MI5 vs. NUM

IT IS becoming clearer all the time that the secret state was deeply involved in sabotaging the miners' strike of 1984-85.

A Commons motions signed by Merlyn Rees and Peter Archer indicates that during the miners' strike freebooting right-wing millionaire David Hart was working hand in glove with Stella Rimington, the newly appointed head of MI5.

During the strike Rimington was running MI5's F2 branch - in charge of snooping on trade unions. The phrase "enemy within" as applied by Thatcher to the miners is said to have originated from F2.

Hart played a key role in the strike, liaising closely with Thatcher and Macgregor and effectively organising and financing the "back to work" movement. The Rimington connection makes it obvious that it was the state itself which built the scab UDM to smash the miners' resistance.

Archer's support for the motion is significant because he had been appointed by Maxwell as Mirror ombudsman and was about to begin his investigation of the Scargill smear when the late and unlamented Captain Bob removed him from the post.

MP Tam Dalyell indicated in the House of Commons that ex-NUM Chief Executive Roger Windsor - the union's highest non-elected officer during the strike - had also been "involved" with Rimington.

Windsor denies the charge, but many inside the NUM believe he was acting for the security services from the beginning. They cite a number of strange incidents during the strike. On his supposedly secret mission to Libya Windsor managed to get himself photographed being kissed by Qaddafi - the single worst piece of publicity the miners received throughout the strike.

Likewise, the only one of the secret NUM visits to the Soviet Embassy discovered by the media was the one which Windsor participated in.

After leaving the NUM, Windsor became the principal "witness" for Maxwell's smear campaign against Scargill. It is now alleged that stolen NUM documents have been found in Maxwell's safe. Several of the "witnesses" used by the Mirror in the course of their "expose" also appear to have MI5 connections.

The revelations about Hart and Windsor are no more than a glimpse into what was clearly the biggest British counter-subversion operation since the war. It included: the use of agents provocateurs on NUM picket lines; a programme of disinformation, including feeding false reports of miners' vandalism and violence to the press; the tapping of every NUM branch secretary's phone; GCHQ was used to track the miners' international connections, in particular to monitor its banking transactions; and, it now appears, deep penetration of the NUM head office.

Better for the bosses

IT CAN BE no coincidence that the proposed name for the merged AEU-EETPU right-wing trade union is to be "AEEU", which is the sound you make when your hand's been caught in a piece of machinery.

Threatened by the potential strength within the trade union movement of the new Public Sector Union (NUPE-NALGO-COHSE), and seeking to rival the giant TGWU and GMB, the AEEU will bring the scab electricians' into the TUC by the back door to strengthen the hard right.

In a wave of triumphalism not normally seen outside the pages of Militant, AEU General Secretary Gavin Laird claims in the latest AEU Journal: "In a direct sense we will be in a powerful position to influence all things European. We will be in a position to achieve those things denied to British workers by the present government..." The jingoist slogan of the heavily-funded merger campaign, "Better for Britain - Better for you", raises the question: just whom in Britain will the new union will be better for? "Better for the Bosses" springs readily to mind.

Among the many advantages of the merger, the ability to win more single union agreements from management is singled out in the Journal by AEU President Bill Jordan. The AEU propaganda also lists Frank Chapple, the notoriously autocratic former EETPU General Secretary, as a "plus" for the merger as well as the EETPU's "solid support for the Labour leadership of Neil Kinnock and his shadow cabinet team".

Nowhere in the current AEU Journal is a single voice against the merger allowed space. Maybe these folks don't have much to learn from Eric Hammond after all! Hopes for a commitment to equal opportunities in the new union are not raised by the Journal's supposedly humorous piece on a Christmas party where "Brother Tipton interjected that if all sisters looked like sister Boiler-suit there was no chance of them being sexually harassed, not even by a blind billy goat".

With a majority for the merger looking likely, the once-powerful AEU Broad Left will have to do some serious thinking about its future. Survival for genuine trades unionists won't be easy in the new outfit - which will rapidly turn into an outright agency of the bosses the first time it comes into rivalry with any other union.

Another win for TGWU Broad Left

BILL MORRIS' worst nightmares are starting to come true.

In the recent postal ballot election for the TGWU's General Executive Council the left strengthened its grip on the union, increasing its majority on the GEC from seven to nine.

All the sitting left-wingers were returned (though Walter Greendale's seat in the North East was lost because of the reduced allocation of Executive places); left-winger Peter Gibson was elected for the first time from the Passenger Services Trade Group and will be joined by Chris Green from the Civil Air Transport Group.

Since his election as General Secretary, Morris has been under constant pressure from his new found friends in the Labour leadership; they want him to tame the TGWU and remake it in the image of New Realism. The left majority on the GEC has other ideas. Morris will now have to respond to sustained pressure from within his own union for a more politically independent course of action.

The GEC results were accompanied by an announcement that negotiations with the NUM over the proposed merger would be renewed.

It looks like the Broad Left is at last beginning to use its muscle on the key political choices facing the TGWU.

Rigoberta Menchu in London

RIGOBERTA MENCHU is a Quiche Indian woman born into an isolated mountain community in rural Guatemala. Now in her early thirties, she is endowed with a revolutionary spirit shaped by unimaginable suffering.

One of her earliest memories was watching her brother die of intoxication after planes sprayed pesticide on the plantation where she and her family were picking coffee. When she was eight years' old another brother died of malnutrition. When they lost a day's work to bury him, the family was thrown off the estate and had to make their way back to the mountains.

Years later a third brother was horribly tortured by the army before being burned alive along with others in front of their families as part of a ghastly lecture by the local army commander on the "evils of communism".

Her father too was beaten, tortured and finally killed by the army in 1979. Three months later her mother was kidnapped by the army, raped, tortured and murdered.

In the face of this colossal oppression, Rigoberta and her comrades defended their Indian communities against the landlords and the army. She co-ordinated activity among the isolated villages and helped build a resistance movement, organising strikes and anti-government actions.

Ten years age she was forced into exile to save her life. Last month she spoke to a packed meeting in London organised by the 500 Years of Resistance Campaign.

> *"FOR 500 years we have been unable to speak of our suffering. It's been a long dark night. My life has been in exile, with my suitcase packed, hoping to go home - all part of the long, sad night we've been suffering.*
>
> *Guatemala is a country of so many atrocities - we have all lost hundreds of relatives. There are more than 60,000 widows in Guatemala, 80% of them indigenous women. It's a land of terror and hidden cemeteries where people are just killed and thrown into the ground. Murder and assassination are daily reported. It's the only country in the region today where there is still an armed conflict.*
>
> *We have no share of the political or economic power of the country and no space to develop our own ideas, implement our own perspectives or develop our own identity. We want to have representation, a government which represents us. Without this there can be no peace in Guatemala and therefore no peace in the region.*
>
> *The 500th anniversary is a time when we indigenous people can say what has happened to us, how we have been robbed, what it means to have lived in darkness for 500 years. It is a moment to say that the indigenous people will not continue to die or be wiped out.*
>
> *Ten years ago I went to the UN. We seemed so strange to them. People across the world were not aware of the indigenous peoples' struggle, saying no such thing existed. So gradually we created awareness of our struggle, sometimes patiently, sometimes going too far and getting thrown out of meetings and having to turn round and come straight back in through the back door.*
>
> *Now we've got the Year of Indigenous Peoples called by the UN. But this wasn't given to us on a plate. We fought for it.*
>
> *We won't be able to achieve our aspirations without action. So in each country where there's the slightest opening we must work to put our ideas into action. Our organisations are working hard. They're poor. We have no millionaire friends. But we have many friends who are working to make our dreams a reality."*
>
> **- Rigoberta Menchu**

The full story of her experiences is told in I, Rigoberta Menchu, published by Verso and now in its tenth impression.

Sandinista land rights defended

THE FAR RIGHT in Nicaragua's National Assembly suffered a key defeat in December when, by 47 votes to 46, the assembly upheld President Chamorro's veto of ex-contra Alfredo Cesar's property law.

The law would have denied land rights to over 200,000 people awarded property titles under the Sandinistas. Eight UNO deputies voted with the FSLN against the law, marking a major shift in the balance of power.

Cesar was one of the beneficiaries of an alleged $600,000 channelled to the Nicaraguan right during the 1989 election campaign, according to a recent *Newsweek* article. The payment was in violation of both Nicaraguan election laws and a US Congressional ban.

Meanwhile, FSLN leader Daniel Ortega has confirmed the crisis of perspective within the Nicaraguan opposition. With the right-wing government imposing fierce austerity as the price for loans from international banks, Ortega was asked if the FSLN had an alternative plan for government. Ortega replied, "I'd say we have no alternative," adding, "in terms of an in-depth proposal there is a void, not only in Nicaragua but throughout the left in Latin America and the world."

ONE YEAR AFTER its formation, Serikat Buruh Merdeka Sehahawan (SBMS), Indonesia's first free trade union in a quarter of a century, continues to fight for survival against government attacks on its leaders and members and rivalry from the government-controlled All-Indonesia Workers Union (SPSI).

Despite the brief abduction of the union's General Secretary, Saut Aritonang, in June last year, the SBMS has continued to grow.

It now claims 220 "cadres", 4,000 registered members and 30,000 "influenced" industrial workers willing to join SBMS actions.

Another event which has challenged the SPSI's monopoly is the formation of the Serikat Buruh Bebas Transportasi (SBBT) or Free Transport Workers Union on May 5th, 1991. The union, which claims 7,000 members (mostly taxi drivers in Jakarta), staged its first demonstration on May 29th demanding a labour agreement between the taxi owners and drivers.

The SBMS is asking unions abroad to: press Suharto's military regime to recognise the new unions and respect the right to organise freely; boycott Indonesian exports of manufactured goods; and use foreign investment to pressurise the Indonesian government to improve its appalling human rights record.

Iran's state killers

At least 750 people were executed in Iran last year - 60 for political offences.

Twenty people convicted of offences ranging from armed revolt to drug trafficking were publicly hanged in October and nine more in December.

"Against CODESA - for full democratic rights for all"

THE WESTERN CAPE section of the trade union federation NACTU, the New Unity Movement, QIBLA (a radical Muslim group), the South African Council on Sport, and the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action have issued a statement in opposition to CODESA (Conference for a Democratic South Africa), the forum in which the ANC and the apartheid government are currently negotiating. The following is an excerpt.

// THE GOAL OF the oppressed peoples' struggle for national liberation is the attainment of a just society based on full democratic rights and in which inequality based on colour, creed, sex or gender is outlawed and in which there is no exploitation of one human being by another.

The reform strategy of the present National Party rulers and their backers in the ranks of Big Business is aimed at undermining and preventing the attainment of this fundamental goal.

We consider it to be a violation of all democratic principles and practices that these negotiations are going ahead while literally thousands of defenceless people are being butchered by state supported terrorists, criminal gangs and vigilantes controlled by mafia-style warlords.

The compromises, deals and frauds which are being made around the negotiations table, no matter what fancy words are used, have only one meaning: namely, that the oppressed and exploited will have to accept less than full democratic rights for all.

The changes that the de Klerk regime has been forced to bring about are the result of mass struggle by the urban and rural oppressed workers and their allies. That struggle must continue and be intensified. This is the only way to guarantee the attainment of our cherished goal of a non-racial, democratic, undivided South Africa/Azania free of exploitation and oppression.

No settlement is possible in South Africa/Azania without the workers being directly involved in deciding on their future."

Nicaragua - El Salvador: Who's winning the peace? Speakers from FSLN and FMLN

Tuesday March 24th
7pm
LSE, St Clements Building,
Houghton St, London WC2.

Fiesta Resistencia
Benefit with Salsay Ache (women's salsa band) and Las Faroloa y Pepe (flamenco group) and DJ Max Reinhardt.

Saturday March 28th
8pm-midnight

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London
£5/£3.50

Organised by Camden-Nicaragua Association

Libya and Lockerbie: The unanswered questions

Monday
February 24th, 7.30pm
House of Commons
Grand Committee Room

Speakers:
UK families Flight 103 Group,
Tam Dalyell,
Bill Bowring,
Reem Abdelhardi
Chair: Bernie Grant

Libya and Lockerbie

'NO INTERVENTION IN LIBYA' is a new campaign set up to investigate the Lockerbie bombing and to challenge British and US calls for the extradition of Abelbaset Al-Megrahi and Ali Fhiman, the two Libyans detained in Tripoli for the bombing.

The campaign has three main demands: that there should be an independent international judicial inquiry into the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 with which all relevant national authorities must co-operate fully; that the British and US governments must withdraw their threats of economic and military action against Libya; and that there must be a full public inquiry in Britain into the Lockerbie bombing and the subsequent investigation.

"It seems to me that Libya is being used as a sole whipping boy when there was an alliance of elements. Father Patrick Keegans, of Lockerbie, authorises me to repeat the concerns expressed in his letter of January 13th, of which the Foreign Office has a copy. He expresses concern in particular about the telephone conversation between Mrs Thatcher and President Bush in March 1989, agreeing to 'play down' the Lockerbie disaster, and the removal of Syria and Iran from any Lockerbie connection after the telephone call," said MP Tam Dalyell in a Commons debate last month.

Libyan government officials say no one was ever tried for the bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi in 1986, which killed one hundred people, despite the Libyan government producing a list of suspects. They have also said that they are willing to have the two men tried in a third neutral country or by an international court, but the British and Americans have refused to accept this. Leaked minutes of a 1989 meeting between the Scottish, German and US investigating authorities linked Marwan Kressat of the Syrian-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (General Command) with the bombing. Crucial evidence was found on him and he was detained by German police but later released. He is still wanted in connection with a similar device found on an El Al plane in August 1972.

"America coat-tailed by the British is setting up Libya as the fall guy. The issue here is wider than Libya versus America. It is about the rebirth of imperialism - not that it has ever gone away," said Bernie Grant.

Beyond the charade in New Hampshire

The unedifying farce of the US presidential primaries is convincing a small but growing minority of Americans that the time has now come to build a new political party. Amongst them are a number of left-leaning union officials who are taking steps to set up a US Labour Party. ***Mike Marqusee*** *reports.*

BRAINCHILD OF Tony Mazzocchi, long-time leader of the Denver-based Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union, Labour Party Advocates was launched last year with the express purpose of establishing an independent party of labour in the United States.

Mazzocchi became convinced the project was viable after opinion polls of trades unionists showed that 52.8% supported the idea of a Labour Party and less than half saw the Democrats as representing working people.

LPA is taking a methodical approach to this ambitious iask; they have given themselves two years to recruit 100,000 LPA members, including at least 1,000 elected union officials; only when it has reached that target will LPA hold a convention to found a labour party.

"Without thousands and thousands of Labour Party Advocates, any party we might try to organise will be neither representative nor democratic," they say.

This is the first time since the CP-dominated Progressive Party debacle of 1948 that a section of the US labour movement has moved to create a new party.

Mazzocchi and the other LPA leaders are adamant that the programme of the new party must be drawn up democratically at a representative convention, not imposed beforehand. They also recognise the central importance of involving black and women workers, many of whom are not union members: "We need a party in which all working people are represented equally. Or we will be stuck with parties in which working people are not represented at all."

Mazzocchi is telling trades unionists, "It is not a question of whether there will be a third party but whether it will belong to us or to the right-wingers who would want to smash any organisation of working people."

"The bosses have two parties - working people should have at least one"

"For the past ten years, I have openly declared my belief that unless the trade union movement in this country seizes the political initiative and organises a Labour Party, it will never again be the force it once was.

The response to my call for a Labour Party has always been enthusiastic. Nevertheless, I have hesitated actually to undertake organising such an effort until it was absolutely clear that we had no alternative.

Today, it is clear. We have no alternative.

For the last fifty years, the labour movement has been trying to pressure the two major parties, especially the Democrats, to adopt a more pro-worker agenda. Millions of dollars, thousands of volunteer hours, and hundreds of endorsements later, what do we have to show for our efforts?

The people who actually call the shots in the Democratic and Republican parties long ago gave up even pretending to represent the interests of working people.

And millions of Americans know it. In the 1990 Congressional election, only 35 percent of the electorate bothered to go to the polls. The rest of us stayed home - voting, in effect, for None of the Above.

Enough is enough. The bosses have two parties. Working people should have at least one. It is time for the labour movement to organise its own independent party of working people."

- Tony Mazzocchi, Secretary-Treasurer of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union, inviting US trades unionists to join Labour Party Advocates.

Labor Party Advocates, Box 1510, Highland Park, New Jersey 08904, USA; tel. USA 609-561-6259.

Hell on wheels

RANK-AND-FILE reformers in the US Transport Workers Union made big gains in recent elections in the giant Local 100, which covers 30,000 workers on New York City's subways and buses.

The rank-and-file newsletter *Hell on Wheels* organised a slate of reform candidates to challenge the Local's ineffectual, old guard leadership; reformers contested nine of the ten top officers' posts plus 22 of the 39 Executive Board places.

Their campaign highlighted the link between the union's lack of internal democracy and the concessions made to the bosses over the last decade.

It proposed the election of shop stewards and negotiators, the provision of childcare at union meetings, the establishment of a strike fund and an end to political dependence on Democrats and Republicans.

In the end, half the members who received ballots voted; the reform candidate for president secured one third of votes cast and the *Hell on Wheels* slate won nine seats on the Executive Board.

Despite their success, the reformers are calling for new elections. They charge the incumbents with using union funds for their campaign and failing to send out ballots to members classified by management as sick.

■ **For more information read *Labor Notes*, 7435 Michigan Ave., Detroit, Michigan, 48210, USA.**

Mahabad remembered

Keith Veness
Agent
Islington North CLP

POLITICS CAN be an interesting business.

On the first Saturday in February I was invited to address a 46th anniversary rally of the "Mahabad Republic", held at the Kurdish Cultural Centre near the Oval in South London.

Along with Peter Shields, Secretary of Hackney Trades Council, I was present on behalf of Kurdistan Focus, the new British-based solidarity organisation, and we were the only British socialists in a hall packed with Kurds, mainly from Iranian Kurdistan but joined by others from Turkey and Iraq.

The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad was the first attempt to create an independent state for the Kurdish people. As such, it is the "Easter Uprising" or the "Paris Commune" of Kurdish self-determination.

Mahabad is situated in the north-west of what is now Iran and is the centre of the Kurdish population in that country. During the second world war, Iran (then called Persia) was jointly occupied by British troops and the Red Army, who moved in to overthrow the pro-Nazi Shah and his regime. The Soviet armed forces occupied the top third of the country, which included areas with majority populations of both Kurds and Azerbaijanis.

Iran was (and is!) truly a "prison of the peoples". Besides the dominant Farsi-speaking Persians, it also contains large populations of Azerbaijanis (a Turkish speaking people), Arabs, Baluchis and Kurds. In the north the five million Azerbaijanis occupy an area that abuts the former Soviet Azerbaijan. The Kurdish area also goes up to the border of the former Soviet Union and the presence of the Red Army in 1945 encouraged the creation of "people's republics" in both Kurdistan and Azerbaijan.

The Kurdish Republic was based in Mahabad and was led by the "Komulah" (literally, the committee) of Kurdish socialists. It's main driving force was Qazi Mohammed and a small group of intellectuals.

In October 1945 the "Komulah" rose and took over Persian police and army posts. At the same time, Azerbaijan socialists seized control in Tabriz and established an independent "people's republic".

The new regimes received some small arms from Stalin but were told to confine themselves to their areas and never received the promised tanks or heavy artillery. A small Persian force was defeated at Qazvin but a larger one then set out to re-conquer the area.

At this point the Mahabad Republic received an important boost with the arrival of the legendary Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the Iraqi Kurdish leader, with 9,000 armed Peshmerga guerillas. Crossing the mountains Mulla Mustafa met Qazi Mohammed outside Mahabad and added his forces to the new Kurdish state.

The "Komulah" came into the open and set itself up as the "Democratic Party of Kurdistan". Barzani retained the leadership of his Kurdish Freedom Party.

A newspaper was produced, called *"Kurdistan"*, and independence was proclaimed on January 22nd, 1946.

Qazi Mohammed was elected President and efforts were made to include Kurds from Turkey and Iraq in the provisional government. Rights of minorities like Jews, Christians



and Azeris were protected. Books of Kurdish poetry and history were published.

The small militia of the regime numbered only 1300 and the strongest force was the Barzanis and other clan leaders. The Persian army attacked again from Saqqiz but Mulla Mustafa met them on April 24th and defeated them in a pitched battle.

At this point, Stalin and the Soviet regime - more interested in Persian oil concessions and a deal with the British - withdrew the Red Army and told the two republics to negotiate a deal with Teheran.

That was the signal for the Persian army, backed by British aircraft and weapons, to move in on the north and the Azerbaijan Republic collapsed on December 13th when Persian troops re-occupied Tabriz.

Now isolated by Soviet withdrawal and the collapse of its ally, the Mahabad Republic was doomed. Qazi Mohammed went to Miandoab to negotiate but was treacherously arrested and later publicly hanged, along with other Kurdish leaders. Mullah Mustafa and his Peshmerga staged an epic "fighting retreat" through the mountains of Iran and Iraq, eventually throwing off all attacks to pass through Turkey and into exile in the Soviet Union.

The Mahabad Republic was brief-lived but its example is still potent today. The Komulah and the KDPI are now the strongest opponents of the fundamentalists mullahs of Tehran. Mahabad also lives on in the armed struggle of the PKK in Turkey. Finally, it is Mullah Mustafa's son, Masoud Barzani, who now leads the free Kurds of Iraq and who faces the army of Saddam Hussein.

As we stood at the South London meeting for a minute's silence for the martyrs of Mahabad, we could clearly see this episode as the overture for the struggle that will eventually create a united Kurdistan.

Russian trade unions under threat - Party of Labour speaks out

Public meeting with a speaker from the Moscow Federation of Trades Unions and a Moscow City Soviet Deputy

Chair: Ken Gill

Wednesday, February 26th
7:30pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Sqaure, London

500 years of exploitation - and resistance

***Geoff King** wades through the glut of books accompanying the extravagant 'celebrations', replica voyages feature films, television programmes and other Columbus-mania due to plague us in this 500th anniversary year.*

COLUMBUS WAS almost certainly not the first European to reach the 'New World'. Even if he had been it would be absurd to describe his arrival as the 'discovery' of a world that already had its own thriving cultures. Of the 'gold, God and glory' said to have motivated him, it was the gold that was uppermost in his mind, and he turned into a cruel despot once in control of his new domain.

No, the real Columbus was certainly not the heroic figure of myth. For all this, though, 1492 remains a date of importance, as Kirkpatrick Sale argues in *The Conquest of Paradise* (Hodder and Stoughton, £17.95), marking the start of an era of unparalleled colonial exploitation and leaving a legacy with crucial consequences on both sides of the Atlantic. Sales reminds us that at the time Columbus set sail the western world was in transition. Older medieval certainties were being undermined by economic and social changes. Although they had relatively little impact on the average citizen of the time, journeys of exploration were an important aspect of this shift, opening up both new geographical spaces and new sources of profit to help fuel the rise of capitalism.

In the Americas, the impact of European arrival was catastrophic. Within 25 years the 600,000 population of the indigenous 'Indians' who first welcomed Columbus to the Caribbean was reduced to 3,000. By the 16th century they were extinct as a result of mass-murder, disease and slavery. The total death toll in that one century has been put as high as 70 million, a slaughter rivalled not even by the murderous regimes installed in the region by modern American imperialism.

Despite the dismal failures of Columbus as a colonial administrator - at one point he returned to Spain in chains - he set the pattern for the future invasions of Mexico, Peru and North America in which colonists imposed western systems wholesale with dire environmental results. Sale gives a richly detailed account of the whole process, shifting back and forth across the Atlantic to draw out implications for both old and new worlds.

The Columbus of the schoolbooks was constructed in works more of fiction than fact, starting with his own Journal and the biography by his son Fernando. Extracts of both are available with other documents in *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, newly reprinted by Penguin.

From the beginning, Columbus enveloped his enterprise in fictions which are analysed by Stephen Greenblatt in *Marvellous Possessions* (Clarendon Press, £22.50). Like the later conquistadors, Columbus claimed possession of the land through the legal fiction of a formal statement - read in Spanish and unintelligible to the locals. Such devices were in part an ideological mask for the brutalities of conquest. But the assumptions on which they were based were also a part of those very brute facts, Greenblatt argues, developing the suggestive notion of 'mimetic capital' as a social relation of production in the colonial project.

For a more straightforward account of what Columbus was up to, the Latin America Bureau has reprinted Hans Koning's *Columbus, his enterprise* (£4.99), hard to beat as a short, pithy starting point. Like Sale, Koning emphasises the importance of the economic and financial aspects of the venture.

A useful sketch of the continuing economic legacy of Columbus' invasion can be found in *Faces of Latin America* by Duncan Green (Latin America Bureau, £8.99). In a series of short, detailed and highly readable essays, Green covers many of the issues facing the continent, including the impact of multinational capitalism, the IMF and US foreign policy, as well as internal political dynamics.

Most of the other Columbus books are either biography, picture-book gloss or the debates about where Columbus was, where he thought he was, or who might have gone before. Typical of one strain is Ian Wilson's *The Columbus Myth* (Simon & Schuster, £16.99), which champions the cod-fishermen of Bristol as the first modern Europeans to reach America. Wilson also presents evidence that the Vikings were in the Americas some 500 years before Columbus.

This year Seville is to host the massive Columbus Exposition and festivities are planned across the United States (despite the liberal guilt they might provoke in some). Elsewhere, especially in Latin America, many will seize the chance to commemorate 500 years of exploitation - and celebrate 500 years of resistance to imperialist injustice.

CAMPAIGN!

NO, CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS didn't "discover" America. Yes, the Western European "civilisers" did reduce the population of Native Americans from 110 million in 1492 to 20 million just a hundred years later.

As our rulers plan their celebrations of the invasion of the Americas, anti-imperialist groups across the world are organising to make sure the other side of the story is told.

The 500 Years of Resistance Campaign co-ordinates some twenty Latin American, Central American and Caribbean groups based in Britain. Its aim is to "reflect on the 500 years of continued resistance by the women and men who have kept alive the spirit of freedom" in the Americas.

The campaign is planning conferences, political and cultural events and publications.

Get your trade union or Labour Party branch to pass a resolution supporting the 500 Years of Resistance Campaign. Send off for the 500 Years of Resistance Action Pack No.1 (£3.00 each).

Contact: 500 Years of Resistance Campaign, Latin America House, Kingsgate Place, London NW6 4TA; tel. 071 372 7608.

New Age Patriarchy?

***Camilla Power** reviews the BBC2 programme* Wild Men, *broadcast at the end of January, and the book* Iron John, *by poet Robert Bly.*

An American tradition of the search for a real (as opposed to an ideologically constructed) masculinity goes back at least as far as Walt Whitman, singing "the body electric" in the 1850s. A homosexual who dared not risk persecution by coming out in his day and age, Whitman created a corpus of great poetry, explicitly anti-heterosexist, anti-sexist and anti-racist, and implicitly anti-patriarchal. Though it is the male presence that is eroticised in his poems, Whitman never neglects or subsumes the female presence, treating female sexuality with an equal tenderness and respect.

Wilhelm Reich, the chief Marxist proponent of psychoanalysis in its Freudian heyday, fled Nazi persecution to come to America before the War, only to be subject to McCarthyite persecution in his declining years, eventually dying in prison. The lifelong sexual-political project of this dedicated communist and inspirer of the German Sex-Pol movement was to attack the roots of patriarchal oppression. He diagnosed psychic disturbances as the result of the alienation of human sexuality, brought about by the social and economic conditions of capitalism and the historical development of the patriarchal social order.

The American Men's Movement (AMM) of today is most positively viewed as part of this heritage. Robert Bly, author of the best-selling book *Iron John*, and his disciples in the AMM are saying nothing new. They are merely honouring prophets such as Whitman and Reich who received little enough honour in their own time.

If patriarchy is to be attacked, then its core relationship - the authoritarian, alienated, power-obsessed relationship between fathers and sons - must be dismembered and its participants set free to create between them a new relationship. Men need to recognise not only that patriarchy oppresses women, but that it oppresses men too.

The televised spectacle of a bunch of mostly white, urban, middle-class males bawling their heads off for their daddies in a Texan field may not be immediately edifying. Yet, the men involved were taking a courageous first, small step down a road that leads to revolution. In a world still dominated by macho ideology, they were making themselves vulnerable to the same sorts of persecution that Whitman and Reich suffered in their time. The realisation that 'real' men are able not only to cry, but to hold, embrace and nurture their small children, without compromising their manhood, is vital to undermining patriarchal, sexist values.

Now for the necessary feminist criticism. Yes, it is only appropriate that men should have space of their own to sort out these tortured relationships, without using women as their emotional crutches. However, in the whole of Bly's work there is a disconcerting absence of any statement about women or about relations of power and oppression apart from male ones. In 'Wild Men' the only clue we had from Marvin Allen, the AMM leader who orchestrated this particular Wild Men's weekend, was the following: "We're not woman-bashing..." but "the women's movement ought to go down on bended knees and thank God [who he?] for the men's movement." According to Allen, he's reclaiming "the emotional ground ceded to women during the 70s and 80s" - a period when women were bearing the material brunt of increasing levels of poverty in the US.

If the AMM regards itself as in some kind of competition with the women's movement, and even attempts to claim that men have been suffering the worst of the oppression, it's hardly surprising that self-respecting feminists feel their hackles rise.

Bly took his title, *Iron John*, from the Grimms' fairy tale 'Iron Hans'. It is revealing that of all the Grimms' stories 'Iron Hans' is perhaps the one with the least female presence, female magic or power. Essentially, it's a story of male initiation through stealing a key to secrets possessed by females.

Anthropologist Chris Knight, in *Blood Relations*, has offered the most compelling materialist and political interpretations of such tales. He argues that their magical episodes represent phases of female blood solidarity and power through initiation in the course of menstrual seclusion.

What we need from Bly and his buddies is acknowledgement that his models of male initiation derive from female models; that the men's movement wouldn't and couldn't exist without the leadership of the women's movement. If Bly, Allen and the AMM intend to steal the creative essence of women's and of Native American Indian ritual culture merely to make themselves feel good in the course of a weekend - and return refreshed to the rat-race of capitalism - their work is not revolutionary but counter-revolutionary. If, with due humility, the AMM acknowledges the central role and corresponding power of women's segregated ritual culture,it will help to build a combined movement that undermines the nuclear family as the keystone in the bourgeois economic architecture.

Otherwise, what we have here smacks of nothing but New Age Patriarchy.

Out now!

"Female Space Invaders: the revolution that made us human"

A *Labour Briefing* pamphlet
by Chris Knight

"Magic for everybody - but no gods!"

Available from *Labour Briefing*, 26 Wattisfield Road, London E5 9QH; cost: £1 per copy (including p&p).

PERISCOPE

Briefing out-lefted by local rag shock!

Here at the *Labour Briefing* HQ in scenic Hackney we had nearly given up half-way through our arduous production weekend when the *North-West Evening Mail* popped through the letter box with a pleasant surprise.

The Barrow-based paper found our treatment of February's Class Traitor of the Month, neighbouring **MP John (Jack) Cunningham** "hugely enjoyable" but complained that it "fails to live up to its billing". It seems we were too soft on the good Doctor!

The paper says "few people in Barrow will shed any tears for the MP" and correctly states that our main function "seems to be putting the boot into the Party leadership."

December's Class Traitor, **Paul Boateng**, airily dismissed our attack on him as "full of inaccuracies" (though no one has yet told us what these are) and said he was proud to be lumped with Beckett, Evans, Kaufman, et al. His agent took the coveted award with less equanimity; he tore the article to shreds in front of Brent South's General Committee.

Farewell to the working class?

If you're having trouble making ends meet, you'll be delighted to know that after thirteen years of Conservative rule the richest 20% in the country have seen their slice of the cake swell from 37% to 44% of total national income. Those of us in the bottom 50% will have to make do with 6% of the nation's wealth (down from 12%).

Makes you want to **picket** Labour's next £500-a-head nosh-up, doesn't it?

"Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer, just pass the caviar down here..."

The Simple Truth?

We are grateful to our namesake, *Turkey Briefing*, for the best description of **Jeffrey Archer's** visit to Kurdistan: "the famous novelist, adventurer, parliamentarian and philanderer was in the region last week..."

Bottomley's pits

Tory Health Minister **Virginia Bottomley** has justified cutting yet more hospital beds by stating that "we are not catering for people who do not have a home or who have nowhere to go."

Sam, Sam, the coursing man

The next time a right-winger reminds you not to argue against agreed Party policy, remind him or her of the poor example set by Party Treasurer **Sam McCluskie**.

As foxhunting gallops into the political arena, Sam "where's our dosh gone?" McCluskie put his name to an advert for the Campaign for Hunting in the *Times* and the *Telegraph*. The ad called for opposition to Kevin McNamara's Wild Mammals (Protection) Bill, which was narrowly defeated in the Commons (and is in line with Party policy against hunting).

Sam is known to be keen on coursing, the "sport" in which two greyhounds are set on a defenceless hare.

With friends like these...

Eric Heffer's autobiography, *Never a Yes Man*, was favourably reviewed in the *Times*, the *Sunday Times*, the *Telegraph* and the *Spectator*. It was not reviewed at all in the *Independent*, the *Independent on Sunday*, the *Observer* or the *New Statesman*.

Eric's long-time "friend" ***Alan Watkins*** had promised to review the book for the *Observer* but couldn't find the time because he was preoccupied with his own utterly inconsequential account of the downfall of Thatcher.

And the *New Statesman* clearly couldn't find the space. After all, they had to fit in a full-scale review of the autobiography of **Screaming Lord Sutch**.

Competition corner

In our continuing search for the most boring trade union mag (see last month's *Briefing*) we need to get a few rules straight.

For example, you can't send in the last three issues of *Briefing* and expect to win. And *Labour Party News* is also hors de combat.

However, we will allow the first month's award to go to the Unity Trust Bank's *Unity News* as it does have an incredible number of gratuitous pictures of **Norman Willis** as well as a photo of COHSE's **Hector McKenzie** with what looks like half a pint of scotch in his hand.

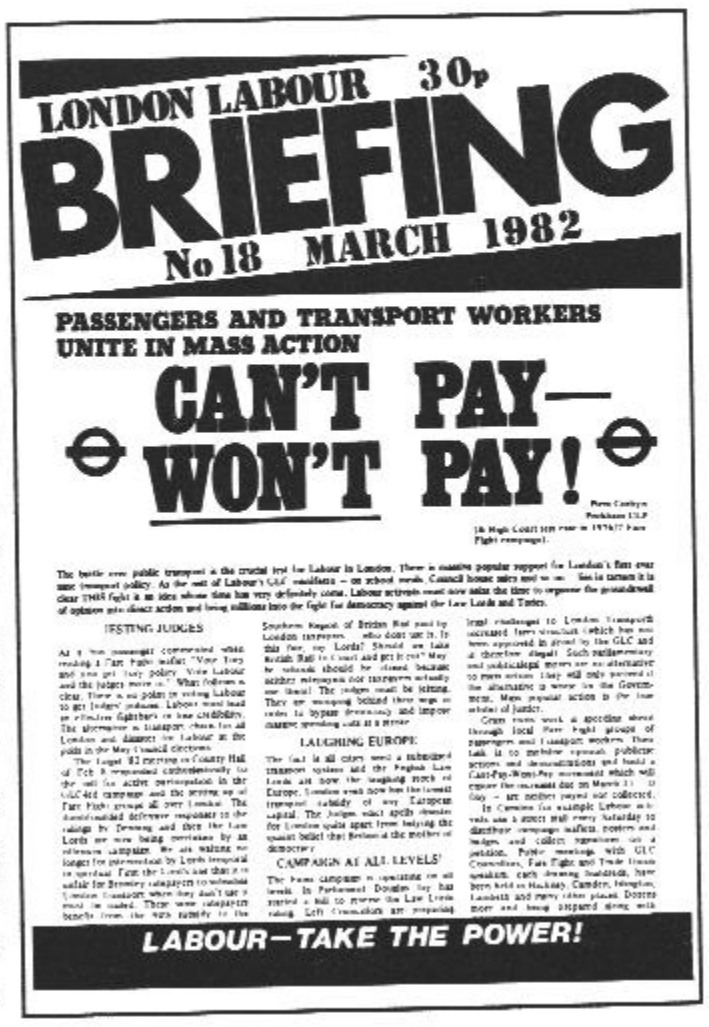
And the oddest-shaped journal? It has to be the square (yes, square) *UCATT Viewpoint*.

Famous last words...

Ten years ago, *London Labour Briefing* launched its first pamphlet: an attack on the Social Democratic Party entitled "SDP refreshes the politicians other parties do not want". In the introduction, Michael Meacher is quoted saying that it was ironic that the SDP was launched just when "the social and economic ideas of social democracy...have patently been found wanting and suffered eclipse." *Briefing* backed the "Can't Pay, Won't Pay" campaign to defy the Law Lords' ban on the GLC's Fares Fair policy. GLC leader Ken Livingstone insisted he had to stay in office despite the judiciary's wrecking of Labour's housing, school meals and transport policies.

Nigel Williamson profiled Labour PPCs in London and categorised Kate Hoey as "left" and Harriet Harman as "Broad Left". This issue featured the first of the 'Streetlife Supplements', carrying in-depth arguments linking the personal with the political, with eye-opening articles on rape, miscarriage, "workers' law and order", and disability.

Down on the south coast, *Brighton Labour Briefing* covered the Women's Right to Work campaign along with campaigns to defend local schools from the then Tory council's axe. Ironically, the campaign to save the Unemployed Centre has had to be renewed ten years later; this time the Centre is under attack from the Labour-controlled council. Back in 1982, the Brighton housing crisis was explained by none other than Steve Bassam, who ten years on is presiding over that continuing crisis as leader of the council and spearheading the witch-hunt against former comrades who played a large part in putting him where he is now.


LONDON LABOUR 30p
BRIEFING
No 18 MARCH 1982

PASSENGERS AND TRANSPORT WORKERS UNITE IN MASS ACTION

CAN'T PAY— WON'T PAY!

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Lidice still lives!

Nearly fifty years ago, on June 9th, 1942, in the small village of Lidice, some twelve miles outside Prague, the Nazi occupiers rounded up and shot all the men of the village. Their families were forced to watch. ***Leonora Lloyd*** *believes the massacre - and the extraordinary rebirth that followed it - must be remembered.*

AFTER THE killings, the houses were ransacked. The women were deported to concentration camps. Children were either sent to camps or 'adopted' by Germans. Then the houses were burnt and the village was razed to the ground.

Lidice had been personally selected by Hitler in revenge for the assassination of Deputy Reichsprotektor Reinhard Heydrich on May 27th. In the immediate aftermath of the assassination, thousands were shot. Many were executed just for having expressed agreement with the assassination. Czechs already held in concentration camps were also killed.

The assassins were two Czech 'freedom fighters' based in Britain. Their action was completely isolated from the underground movement in Czechoslovakia, which meant that there was no way of preparing for or organising against the reprisals.

Lidice entered the history books by accident. A young married man wrote a letter to a girlfriend at the factory where she worked. "On that fateful day I slept somewhere at Cabarna...See you this week and then we shall not see one another any more." The factory owner opened the letter, decided it had something to do with the assassination, and passed it to the Nazi authorities.

The girl was detained, but could not even tell the police the man's surname. This flimsy connection was enough to make the Nazis settle on Lidice.

However, it was not just bad police work which sealed the town's fate. Most men in Lidice worked in the nearby coal mines. Part of Kladno district, which had for centuries been a centre for the iron and steel industries, the area had long been a centre for socialist-led industrial struggles. By the 1920s the Communist Party was playing a leading role. As a result, the Nazis made Kladno their regional headquarters when they occupied Czechoslovakia.

When they razed Lidice, the Nazis also attempted to eradicate any memory of its existence. They literally redrew the maps, taking its name off and showing blank countryside where the village had been. Signposts were altered. Nothing was left.

But it proved impossible to prevent the world from learning the truth about Lidice. The first act of defiance was the appearance of flowers on the site of the killings. As the news leaked out, Czechs in and out of the country were inspired to oppose the Nazis.

All over the world, funds were set up to erect memorials to Lidice. Stern Park Garden in Illinois was the first of many places - streets, squares, districts, whole villages - to be renamed Lidice. Even children were given the name.

In Britain, a movement led by Stoke Labour MP Sir Barnett Stross first raised the slogan "Lidice shall live". It was quickly taken up by the workers of Coventry, whose own city had been almost obliterated, and by miners. Committees were set up throughout the world and money was collected to rebuild the original Lidice.

Three years to the day after it was razed to the ground, Lidice was the site of a rally attended by 150,000 people. Young people came from all over the world to rebuild the town and to erect a school, museum and memorials to the dead. Today, the new village overlooks the field where the men were killed.

During the Christmas season of 1949, the first homes were handed over to the 139 women who had lived through the horrors of the concentration camps. They were joined by the few surviving children, many brought back from "re-education" with adoptive German families.

In 1954, Barnett Stross proposed that an international rose garden be planted in Lidice as a symbol of the desire for world peace. Again, the British working class responded by collecting money for the garden, which now has 30,000 roses from around the world.

Lidice was just one of many villages in many countries that received similar treatment during the war - and not just from the Nazis. In the centre of the Friendship and Peace Garden is a circular plateau bearing the names of other cities, towns and villages that suffered, including Coventry, Warsaw and Hiroshima.

In this fiftieth anniversary year, a new appeal has been launched to plant avenues of trees in and around Lidice. Because the village lies in an area of severe ecological pollution, the planting of trees has more than symbolic significance.

The appeal is being organised by Lou Kenton, a former member of the Communist Party (now a Labour Party member) long associated with Czechoslovakia. It is supported by President Vaclav Havel and many others and calls on "the people of Britain to support us in this gesture to the people of Czechoslovakia, in this affirmation of the triumph of life over death and destruction, in this hope for a better future."

For £6 a tree can be planted. Names of donors will be inscribed in a memorial book. Eight trees have been donated by members of MSF London Region, an example I hope will be followed by others in the labour movement.

■ **Details from: Lou Kenton, 7 The Tiltwood, London, W3.**



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

Dear *Briefing* ...

It is no accident that the first review I have seen anywhere of Nigel Todd's new book on the Victorian radical, Joe Cowen, should be in *Labour Briefing*.

Heather Hawkwood is right to conclude that "Cowen's story is important". The fact that it has remained untold for 91 years of the twentieth century is testimony to what an awkward figure he was. It is hard to claim him for liberal radicalism and, in truth, Todd only manages to claim him for socialism by playing down some of his more reactionary views.

When we come to consider why no independent workers' party emerged between the collapse of Chartism in 1860 and the birth of the SDF in the 1880s, Cowen is a figure of immense importance. Cowen's story shows the falsity of the analysis, popular amongst Stalinist historians like John Foster, that there was no workers' party in these years simply because workers were bought off by imperialism. Some may have been, but a substantial minority did want to fight and Cowen put himself at the head of this group.

Yet the fact remains that while Cowen was always on the side of workers' struggle, there was no party. It was not simply his hostility to "tight organisations" but his opposition to any organisation at all.

Cowen was content to focus on single issues; as Todd shows, his political sympathies ranged from radical liberalism through revolutionary republicanism to anarchism. Marxism never got a look in. As I said, it is no accident that Todd's book is reviewed in *Briefing*, although it would be appallingly bad historical practice to draw any direct parallels. So I won't!

Yours,
Keith Flett
Tottenham

I am trying to kick the habit of penning a monthly missive to *Labour Briefing*, but I can't resist making a few points in reply to John Nicholson's diatribe against CLPD (February *Briefing*).

John had a dig about the alleged lack of positive discrimination in the left slate for the NCC. Last year every left group was aware that two CLP places were up for election but only CLPD took this seriously. We approached all the groups in Labour Left Liaison and at least one *Briefing* EB member in an effort to find candidates. But these efforts were to no avail. Eventually, two CLPD supporters were willing to let their names go forward for this very unpleasant task.

John is very critical of the so-called 'twin-track strategy' and here he is much closer to CLPD than to *Briefing*, which has always supported such an approach. The criticism that *Briefing* has been making of the so-called Socialist Movement (and of its tail, *Socialist Outlook*) is that they have not been operating the 'twin-track' properly.

But I can't believe that John is right when he says that the 'twin-track approach' is not accepted by LPS. LPS has been developed as the Labour Party 'track', with the Socialist Movement as the other 'track', or at least a major part of it. For John to be able to deny this shows what confusion surrounds the so-called 'strategy' and highlights the lack of effort being made to argue for it.

In an attempt to clarify the politics of the 'twin track' Vladimir Derer wrote a 2000 word critique for *Socialist Outlook* in reply to its mischievous attack on CLPD. *Socialist Outlook* didn't even bother to respond. No wonder the 'strategy' has made so little impression; its supporters make no effort to explain or defend it.

John has a go at CLPD for allegedly spending too much time attacking others on the left. What he failed to add was that the great majority of the criticisms we made are in response to digs at CLPD - it's just that our replies tend to be longer than the original attack!

But, provided it doesn't degenerate into petty sectarianism, debate on the left is healthy and helps to clarify political issues. To its credit *Briefing* encourages debate, whereas John, it seems, would draw a veil over political differences.

Yours,
Peter Willsman
CLPD

The position of the Cuban Communist Party as revealed in Sue Lukes' interview with Cuban official Roberto de Armas (February *Briefing*) remains sadly flawed.

De Armas says "We are not philosophically against the existence of political pluralism" - then comes the big "but" - "right now, the one-party system is our guarantee of the necessary unity."

I believe the opposite is the case. When dissent is suppressed or not heard above the level of whispers, avowals of unity are unconvincing.

What is one to make of de Armas' statement that "the great majority of the people supports the solutions..." proposed by the Party leaders. The leaders may believe this, and indeed it may be true, yet without elections open to oppositional argument - which means other parties - how can they know? And how can the CP know that it is fashioning the best strategy when the opportunity to express ideas is effectively restricted to a minute core of cadres meeting in private?

Cuba's electoral system is pyramidical; each tier elects the one above. At the base, where candidates stand for election to local committees, it is assumed that they are in agreement with the CP's programme. They campaign on practical community issues, such as the siting of a new building and fulfilment of patrol duties. Much as local elections in Britain leave to be desired, they are decidedly more political than Cuba's, where local elections are the only ones directly involving the mass of the people.

Fidel Castro is revered by many older Cubans. But most of the population, who do not remember the island as the USA's brothel, take the gains of the revolution for granted.

They compare their living standards and opportunities not with the poor of Cuba's neighbours in the Caribbean, but with what they hear from relatives and the US's Radio Marti about life 90 miles away in Florida.

Fidel will not last for ever. Who and what comes next is the great unanswered question. As with so many others, it will be resolved behind closed doors.

De Armas dismisses the possibility of lessons for Cuba from the events in East Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union. This is hardly the approach a Marxist should take. Lessons abound. The Fourth International's 1977 resolution on 'Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat' remains, to my mind, the best prescription for the development of socialism in post-capitalist societies.

Pluralism is not a luxury, as de Armas implies. It is crucial for the defence and advancement of the revolution. Pluralism will bring risks, but it will surely lower the risks foisted on the revolution by a one-party - almost one-person - state.

Yours for socialism,
Geoffrey Sheridan
London



In defending *Searchlight*, Graeme Atkinson accuses Larry O'Hara of "appearing from nowhere". In fact, Larry has been active on the left for the best part of twenty years, in the International Socialists/SWP, Big Flame and the Green Party. He has published articles in *New Socialist, Return* and *Lobster*.

Whether Gerry Gable actually chaired the Jewish Awareness Group meeting in Ilford is irrelevant. The fact is he was responsible for directing that certain Black comrades be refused admittance to a meeting organised by a body with open links to the semi-fascist Herut group in Israel.

Searchlight's excuse for not printing statements from the Newham Monitoring Project and other Black Groups - that they contained inaccuracies - doesn't hold water. Why then also refuse to print a letter from the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism explaining why, after eleven years, it was no longer prepared to produce the anti-racist section of *Searchlight*? The problem is not one of errors (if Atkinson can exercise a right of reply in *Labour Briefing* he can surely do it in his own paper!) but *Searchlight*'s refusal to accept political criticism.

O'Hara's point about Al Sharpton was not whether he and his supporters will work with white anti-racists but whether Black people have the right to criticise the police when, instead of detaining fascists who attack a Black meeting, they arrest the Black people who fought them off.

The "hoary old 1977 'Gable Memorandum'" is, in fact, proof of Gable's links with British and foreign intelligence services. In 1976-8, when the ABC Official Secrets trial was looming and Hosenball and Agee were being deported, Gable wrote in a memo to his superiors at London Weekend Television: "The arrest of Campbell/Berry and Aubrey has caused a civil rights row, but according to my top level service sources, they inform me in the strictest confidence that for about four years Campbell/Berry/Kelly and others have been systematically gathering top level security material." The memo also accuses Phil Kelly, later editor of *Tribune*, of being trained by the Cubans and PLO as a killer terrorist, alongside Carlos, as well as being a KGB spy!

I was on the Executive of Anti-Fascist Action from 1986-1990 and can confirm the destabilising effects of Searchlight's allegations regarding *Class War*. Of course, if *Class War* went onto the streets with the NF on 'Stop the City' demonstrations, it would be correct to criticise them. But the only evidence that has ever been adduced are unsubstantiated boasts in the *Bulldog*. And since 'Stop the City' was organised by Greenpeace and a mixture of anarchist, ecological and feminist groups - not *Class War* - why single them out in the first place?

Atkinson's claim that the *Searchlight* evidence didn't arrive in the post or was stolen and that an unnamed member of the Newham Monitoring project was given the dossier but didn't hand it over to the AFA Executive is another example of *Searchlight*'s divide and rule tactics. In fact Unmesh Desai of the NMP supported the original suspension of *Class War* and (to his regret) defended *Searchlight* at the annual AFA conference, describing it as the "Bible of the anti-fascist movement". He had no possible reason to deceive anybody regarding *Class War*; the fact that it has taken *Searchlight* five years to dredge up this flimsy excuse strongly suggests that the bogus allegations about *Class War* also originated with the Intelligence Services and were intended to split AFA.

The AFA Inquiry Report is clear: "Despite many approaches to the magazine for evidence, the sum total of material from *Searchlight* to the enquiry was nil. We are bemused by *Searchlight*'s role in this affair". David Rose, the *Guardian* journalist who publicised the NF/*Class War* allegations, had to retract them when Gable was unable to provide the promised evidence.

As for the other allegations: the BUAV did have a prominent fascist in its midst, but what has that to do with the Animal Liberation Front? And it is true that Nicky Crane was squatting in Islington, but is that a reason for branding Hackney squatters as fascist and providing the Council there with ammunition to evict them?

No one doubts that *Searchlight*, especially during the 1970s when it was edited by the late Maurice Ludmer, has played an invaluable role in the fight against fascism. But under Gerry Gable, it has tried to manipulate and use the anti-fascist cause. *Searchlight* must drop its attacks on Black and anti-imperialist groups, come clean on its links with the secret state and stop trying to play one group off against another.

Yours,
Tony Greenstein
Brighton AFA

The inclusion of an interview with Massoud Barzani in February's *Labour Briefing* is extremely problematic.

Although he is quoted attacking the Turkish government for recent bombings in Northern Iraq, the KDP chairman is in fact presently restoring ties with Ankara. Mohsin Dizai, envoy of Barzani, held high level talks with Turkish officials earlier in January and spoke of "normalising" relations. The attitude adopted by Barzani in your article is consistent only with the position he adopted after the Turkish air raids (which included one on his home town of Barzan). At that time all KDP relations with Turkey were severed and military retaliation was threatened.

But the recent meetings between Dizai and Turkish Foreign Minister Cetin, Prime Minister Demirel and Deputy Prime Minister Inonu in Ankara show Barzani's anger was short lived.

He is now working with the Turkish government and is sabotaging the PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party) guerillas by preventing them operating across the Iraqi-Turkish border. He also intends to visit the Turkish capital in a couple of months.

Massoud Barzani is a feudal leader who is undermining the PKK-led struggle for Kurdish independence. His appearance in *Briefing* is an error of judgment.

Yours in comradeship,
Paul Philippou
Hammersmith

In 1984, the Labour Party produced an excellent poster/pamphlet, charting the "Long March of Labour". It quotes Keir Hardie's 1901 call for a "Socialist Commonwealth, founded upon the common ownership of land and capital, production for use and not for profit, and equality of opportunity for every citizen." It also boasts that the Poplar Councillors of 1921, in defending the poor, breaking the law and being jailed for their beliefs, showed "socialist principles in action". Also highlighted is the 1983 Conference re-affirmation of unilateral nuclear disarmament with a photograph of Neil Kinnock addressing a CND rally.

Some of us have certainly marched a long way since then.

Fraternal greetings,
Richard Hanford
Sussex

Police racism in Newham

ON NOVEMBER 4th 1991 two local shopkeepers, Mr Deane and his son Tony, became the latest victims of an increasing spiral of police racism and brutality in Newham.

In an unprovoked attack police officers abused and then viciously assaulted Tony Deane; he was so severely injured that at one point doctors feared he had broken a bone in his back. When his father, a 53 year old severe asthmatic, pleaded with police officers not to kill his son, they responded with a ferocious attack on the older man, resulting in Mr Deane being taken to Newham General Hospital where he received emergency treatment for head and facial injuries.

The Deanes were then charged with assaulting the police, an imprisonable offence.

While senior police officers talk of improving links with the black community their juniors continue to beat, brutalise and frame black people - without opposition from above or from the inept and politically bankrupt Police Complaints Authority.

The "Defend the Deane Family" campaign, supported by Newham Monitoring Project, is calling a demonstration for an end to police harassment of black communities.

"The history of our struggle shows that when black communities stand as one united and organised, in alliance with principled white anti-racists, we have the power to force change and demand justice," said the Newham Monitoring Project. "Today it's the Deanes, tomorrow it could be you."

Defend the Deane Family
March for Justice
Assemble 12:30pm
Saturday, March 28th
Plashet Park
Plashet Grove
London E6
East Ham (District Line)
Sponsors include Newham Monitoring Project, Anti-Racist Alliance, Anti-Nazi League, Campaign Against Racism and Fascism and *Labour Briefing*.

Immigration insanity

A BRITISH-BORN woman must choose between her husband and the health of her two-month old baby, says the Home Office, who are determined to deport her husband back to Morocco.

Janet Assbayhi was born here. She married her husband Fadile in March 1990 when he was here on a six-month visa. For three years they had been penfriends. Fadile was granted temporary permission to stay because of his wife's pregnancy, which ended in a premature delivery by caesarian section due to a stress-related blood illness. Mother and baby were both in intensive care.

Now the Home Office is proceeding with plans to deport Fadile, claiming that Janet Assbayhi's moving to Morocco would present no problems as she has lived abroad before!

Ironically, Fadile will be able to apply for re-entry from Morocco as the husband of a British citizen - which just shows the cynical lengths the Home Office will go to harass black people.

The Nottingham Afro-Caribbean Commission has launched a campaign on the family's behalf.

Anti-Fascist Action

Public meeting:

LEWISHAM - 15 YEARS ON

March 26th
7:30pm
Deptford Town Hall
New Cross
London, SE14

Beating the Fascists - an old South London tradition!

Fascists burn Anti-Apartheid bus

THE ANTI-APARTHEID Movement's double-decker "South Africa Freedom Bus" has been destroyed in an arson attack.

The bus was used for educational and publicity tours around Britain and had been financed from donations from a range of progressive and church organisations.

At the end of January, NF symbols were daubed on the bus while it was parked in the Orleston Mews depot in Islington in north London.

Attempts were being made to move the bus to a safer place but before they could be carried out the vehicle was set alight and destroyed on February 8th.

ARA update

SEVENTY MPs have signed an Early Day Motion condemning the growth of racism throughout Europe and supporting the Anti-Racist Alliance.

ARA meetings are being organised all over London and in Manchester, Wolverhampton, Leeds, Cardiff, Birmingham and Scotland.

A major ARA concert with music and comedy will be held on April 2nd at the Hackney Empire. In June there will be a national anti-racist carnival in London.

Fringe meetings are planned at all the major trade union conferences. ARA is now sponsored by: NUPE, NALGO, NAPO, NUM, USDAW, MSF, FBU, NUJ, UCATT, COHSE International Committee, SERTUC, Scottish TUC, TUC Black Workers Conference, TGWU Region 1, several trades councils and an ever increasing number of Constituency Labour Parties. It is also backed by a wide range of other campaigns, including Anti-Apartheid, OutRage, the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, and Liberty.

Contact: the Anti-Racist Alliance, PO Box 2578, London N5 1UF; tel. 071 607 3988.

Brick Lane 4

THE TRIAL OF the Brick Lane 4, arrested following an attack by fascists on anti-fascists in Brick Lane, starts on March 2nd. There will be a presence at Southwark Crown Court, Tooley St, London SE1, every day; for details phone 071-241-3799.

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