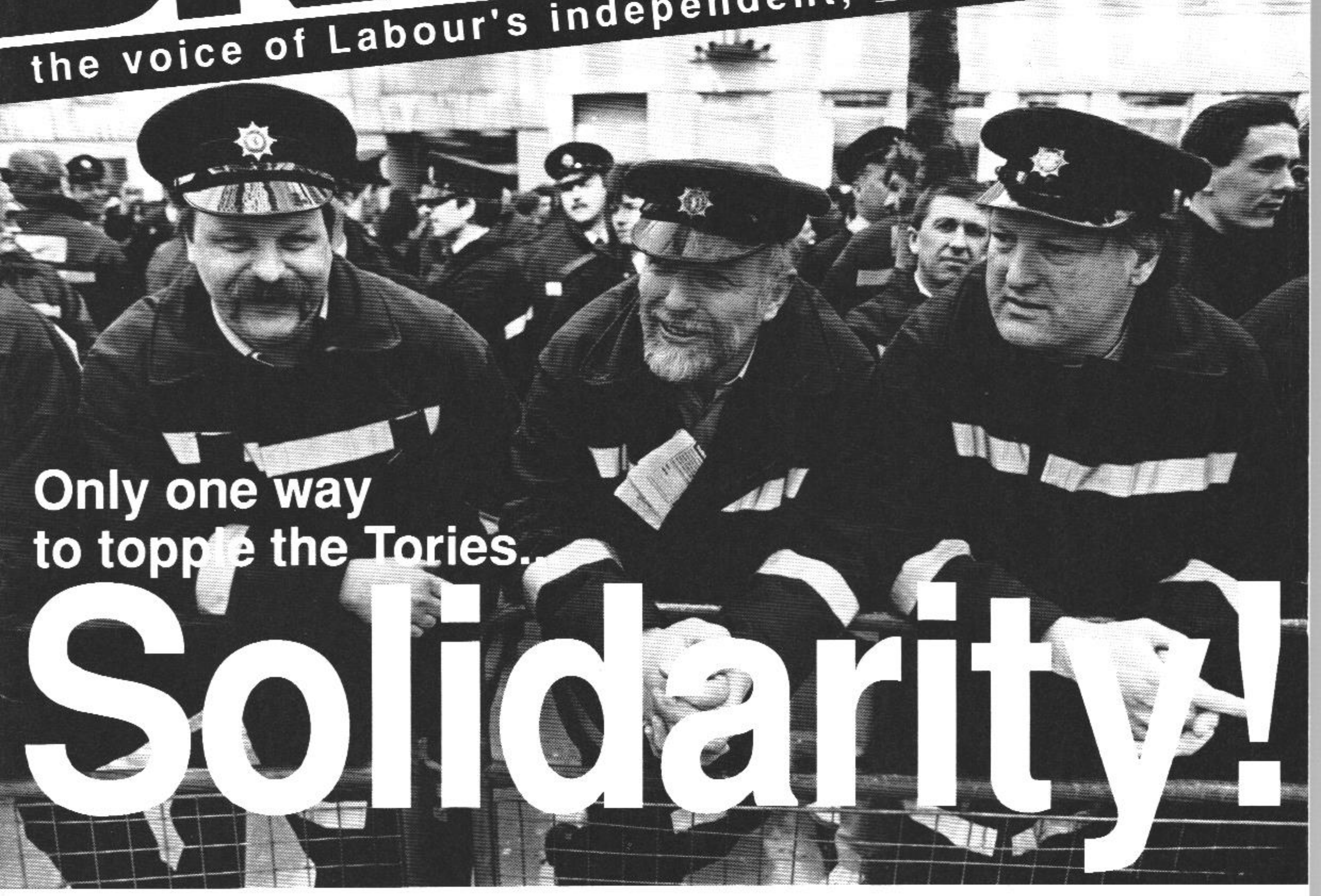
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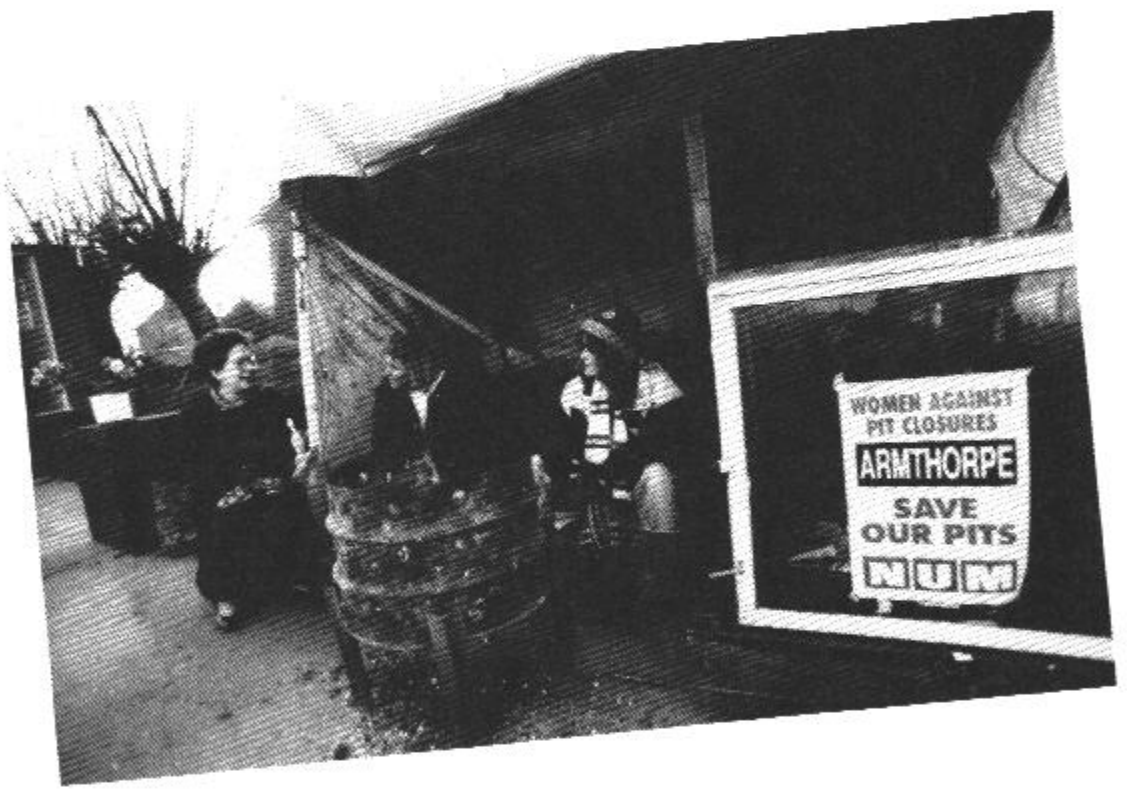
BRIEFING

the voice of Labour's independent, unrepentant left



Only one way to topple the Tories..

Solidarity!





inside ... Dennis Skinner, India, Russia

LABOUR - TAKE THE POWER!

Timex battle rages

MANAGEMENT OF THE US-based multi-national Timex has failed in its bid to stop locked-out workers picketing the factory gates in Dundee. The court has rejected management claims that union members had engaged in vandalism and were intimidating scabs and customers.

But management is proceeding with a case against two convenors alleged to be in breach of a previous court interdict.

The 320 mainly women Timex workers have stayed solid in resisting lay-offs and wage cuts, staging daily mass pickets and attracting wide support from the labour movement in Scotland.

Insult to injury

HEALTH WORKERS ARE being asked to pay back their 1.5% 'pay rise' to keep opted-out hospital trusts in profit.

Management at Hillingdon in Middlesex and Redbridge in Essex have asked their workforces to forego the miserable pittance offered them by the Tory government. Hillingdon had an 8% operating profit in its first year as a trust — a total income of £25,000 per worker.

RCN representatives at Redbridge agreed to hand back the 1.5% and offered an extra £5 a month off their wages on top of that.

COHSE representatives have vowed to fight the move to the bitter end.

NF kicked out

BROMLEY COUNCIL HAS been forced to deny the National Front permission to meet in the Town Hall.

A determined campaign by the ARA, local anti-fascists and Bromley NALGO forced the reluctant Tory Council to withdraw its earlier decision to rent out the Great Hall, capacity 300, to the NF.

Meanwhile in Islington, fascists have reappeared in Chapel Market after an absence of many years. ANL, ARA and local Labour Party members have been mobilising to keep the BNP out of the area.

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After April 2nd...



THE FLAGRANTLY regressive and reactionary nature of the Tory budget has been lost on no one. Those who failed to profit from the boom are now expected to pick up the tab for the bust. Lamont's package was designed to make the working class pay - and pay heavily - for the wretched failures of British capital. What could be a better example of the cruel insanity of capitalism than an economic policy which closes coal mines while making pensioners pay through the nose for fuel to keep warm?

The budget is hugely unpopular and will add to the Tories' woes, but they obviously calculate they can get away with it. They assume that they have four more years before they have to face the electorate. Strange that even with only a 21-seat majority and a divided party they still feel they can dish out such wanton punishment. Not so strange when you consider Gordon Brown's refusal to commit a future Labour government to withdrawing VAT on domestic fuel.

What has kept the Tories afloat throughout their recent travails is, of course, the uselessness of the Labour leadership. One year after the election defeat, it seems none of the obvious lessons have been learnt. Despite our lead in the polls there is little confidence in our ability to win. The sense of drift at all levels of the Party is palpable. With every further move to the right, with every endorsement of Tory ideology (on 'law and order', privatisation, the welfare state, defence spending), with every attack on the trade union link and every new incursion on what's left of Constituency Labour Parties' powers, the Labour leaders re-enforce the feelings of isolation and futility which are our greatest enemies. And with each equivocation, with each retreat, the Party's capacity to act as a mobilising focus for the swelling opposition to the government is reduced.

This is particularly crucial now, with the likelihood that the long-awaited Day of Action on 2nd April will be a success and the need to ensure it becomes a springboard for further actions involving ever increasing numbers of workers from diverse industries. The working class movement is beginning after long sleep to flex its muscles. We now have a real chance to rebuild our movement and regain critical ground lost in the last 14 years. But we need co-ordination and confidence. We also need political representation, which we are not getting from our leaders.

After much goading and in some embarrassment, the Front Bench has at last resolved to oppose Maastricht in the Commons - but only for the time being. Just as last month's defeat of the Tories in the House boosted the movement's confidence (and our standing in the polls) so a capitulation on this issue at the last hurdle will flatten it. A vote for Maastricht by the Labour Front Bench on the third reading would be disastrous betrayal of Labour's supporters at a decisive moment. Not only would it let the Tories off the hook and enable them to patch up their internal quarrels, even worse, it would mean endorsing the rule of the banks and the restrictions of the 'free market', institutionalising mass unemployment and declaring cold war on the Third World and Europe's own black population. It's hard to see a Labour Party which buys such a package (with or without the ineffectual social chapter) being able to pose as any kind of radical alternative to the Tories - and there's no doubt that only a radical alternative can harness the growing hatred of the Tories at the ballot box.

Victories are within our grasp - and we desperately need them. The basic tasks of solidarity - with the miners and all others fighting job and pay cuts - fall on every socialist. Sustained mobilisations stoking the fires of popular discontent can topple this government.

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

***Labour Briefing* is the monthly voice of Labour's independent left. It is managed by an elected National Editorial Board whose meetings are open to all supporters. The next EB will meet on April 25th. We are happy to offer a right of reply on the usual basis to all members of the labour movement.**

All articles published in *Labour Briefing* reflect the opinions of the authors alone unless otherwise indicated. *Briefing* welcomes criticisms and contributions. Deadline for the next issue is April 8th.

***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?**

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Keep the campfires burning

NOW THE weather's improving a bit, if you close your eyes you could almost be on holiday when staying in a pit camp caravan! Certainly on our

Helen Drummond
Camden Miners' Support Group

recent visit to Armthorpe (Markham Main) it was fine enough to stay up into the small hours singing songs in the clear night air. Four of us, stranded at the Frickley miners' welfare club following the David Jones and Joe Green memorial, were treated to the warmest Yorkshire welcome you can imagine (and it must have been good for me to mention it - I'm a Lancashire lass myself!).

Hardly a week goes by without one of the London miners' support groups organising a coach trip to support an event at one of the pits. These visits are put on out of a deep sense of personal commitment which has been built up by the regular contact between twinned groups since the October announcement. The miners, the pit camp women and others at the sharp end rely on visitors to tell them what's really happening in London - the news that's not to be found on the television or in the papers on any day of the week! They ask us: "How good was the bus workers' strike? How many did they get standing with them on the picket lines? What's the feeling like in Brent/Ealing/Hammersmith/Camden Islington/Hackney when you do your Saturday stall? Have you got any contacts with nurses, firefighters, building workers, town hall staff whose meetings we can speak at?" And most important of all: "How many will come out to support us on April 2nd?"

The Armthorpe pit camp is very different from the others I've visited as it is right in the middle of a residential area. There are semi-detached houses on both sides of the pit gates, and the two caravans and tarpaulin-covered shelter are on the pavement outside. Being in a built-up area means there are pit camp 'regulars' who live nearby and are constantly involved. Mick, an ex-Armthorpe miner now retired, is a mainstay at the camp. Mick make it his business to be up stoking the brazier at 5am every day. He's sure that if BC were to move anything in or out of the pit it would be first thing in the morning when they'd try. He's pledged himself to stopping that from happening. Eddie, with his large red estate car, is the camp's self-appointed taxi service. Another retired miner, Eddie is full of information. He told us of his successful visit to Canada during the 1984/85 strike and the wonderful reception he'd had there. Joe, who completed the retired trio, was an enthusiastic ANL and SWP member who told us of his involvement in the 1970s. All three lamented the Labour Party they'd joined as young men and had watched it change out of all recognition except at the grassroots. After all, it takes a lot to kill off the spirit.

After settling in and having our tea from the Cypriot chip shop across the road, we were ready to set off for the Hatfield Main 'do', although we knew we'd have to be back by 10pm to do the night shift. Camden MSG is twinned with Hatfield, so this was a good opportunity to renew acquaintances.

Dave Douglass, the NUM branch secretary, led off the evening with a miners' song from the north-east. Steve Cope, a NALGO member from Camberwell, sang songs covering such topics as the fire at Windsor Castle, homelessness, the last general election and being working class in a 'classless society'. Hatfield Main loved it! Next on stage was Mick Mulligan, another Hatfield man, who sang one solo song before being joined by Lynn and their kids for a family number. Unfortunately, out visit was drawing to an end and the pit camp loomed large.

The fire was roaring when we returned and the music continued well into the night, punctuated by a midnight return visit to the chip shop, whose tradition it has become to give the pit campers a free meal before they close up. Everyone can help in this struggle!

Next morning the Banner Theatre arrived, song sheets were distributed, and the music began again.

All too soon, the magical mystery weekend was over and we were heading back to London. And just think, all this could be yours for the price of a coach ticket!

London busworkers lash back

LONDON BUSWORKERS have been staging a series of one day strikes against a management pay and conditions package that is clearly a prelude to privatisation. **Mehmet Saffet**, TGWU representative at Peckham Bus Garage, told *Briefing:*

"Management are pushing us back 50 years. They're asking for a £50 weekly wage cut and for four to five extra working hours a week. We'd be mad to accept that. In this garage, the nightbuses are 100 per cent; the one-person driver buses are 100 per cent. All the maintenance engineers are giving us support. Management is breaking every health and safety regulation in the book, sending out scab buses with no maintenance. That's how much they care for the passengers. No-one wants this government; even those who voted Tory feel conned. We're well aware it's not just our fight. Miners, railway workers, nurses, fire-fighters - everyone's threatened. No one's safe. That's why we've had no hassle from the public - they understand. There's still a lot of fear, but that's changing. Arthur Scargill would get a good hearing round here. All the unions should get together and make a stand!"

Barry King, TGWU representative, London Central, added: "April 2nd is a Friday. From a bus workers' point of view, that's not a weekday we'd have chosen for a one-day strike; people like to come in to the garages for social and club business, and to collect their pay. Still, we may well decide to respond positively to the NUM's call. It would be a good idea to bring it all to a head. If the miners, tubes, rail and busworkers came out together we'd have the impact."

April 2nd is just the start!

ALL OUR HARD work was rewarded with the 'yes' vote for strike action on 2nd April. At this pit it was 75%.

Dave Douglass
NUM Branch Delegate
at Hatfield Main colliery

There are a number of NUM officials at this pit, and we have had a high profile in the national campaign.

Nationally, the vote was over 60%. When you remember the industrial terrorism that management has unleashed against our union since the 1984/5 strike, that is a remarkable vote. It is a vindication of the NUM strategy for launching a public and community campaign to rebuild confidence and to break down the feeling of isolation which many in the pit communities felt.

Heseltine and the Tory government are perplexed as to what to do next. We are certainly putting no confidence at all in the Parliamentary debate, still less in the fair weather sailors from the Tory ranks. Arthur Scargill is quite right when he says that this battle, like the poll tax struggle, will be won on the streets through mass action, in addition to generalised strike action throughout industry on 2nd April.

Shop stewards' committees, trade union branches, trades councils and miners' support groups should aim to achieve mass walkouts in every workplace in Britain, especially in those unions which themselves are coming into conflict with the government, such as the teachers, the firefighters, London bus workers and Ford workers.

2nd April must be the first shot in a salvo of nationwide industrial action. Our aim is to secure the immediate demands of saving the 31 pits, the rail jobs, the power station jobs, and the tens of thousands of ancillary jobs that rest on our pits.

It will also demonstrate our ability to resist the privatisation of coal and rail.

If the government doesn't retreat under our pressure we must continue until the government is brought down.



Jim Perry speaking at Hyde Park on March 17th. In the background, busworkers carry the banner of Cannock Chase NUM. PHOTO: Rex Dunn

Topple the Tories

"Some union leaders will tell you this strike action means 'a return to the bad old days of trade unionism during the 1960s and 1970s'. Well, I've got news for those people. Those were not the bad old days. They were the good old days. The days when people were proud to belong to a trade union, and when workers stood up for themselves. When we had a health service to be proud of, and good schools to send our kids to. And we looked after our old, the sick and the unemployed. Those were the days when we could feel proud to be trade unionists and Labour Party members, campaigning for a Labour government and for local government to ensure we defended all our services. The Thatcher era was the bad old days. They tried to instill in us only one sense - greed. Yes, they inspired some - the self-centred yuppies of the early 1980s, when individual people made individual fortunes and put it into individual bank accounts. They didn't reinvest the money to create industry, wealth, jobs, so as to resource our services. No, they just wanted to put paper money into quick, paper fortunes. Well, they got their come-uppance all right. They called that day 'Black Wednesday'. They lost their fortunes, deservedly, and have been taking it out on us ever since.

Ordinary working people have never been self-centred like that. We've looked after our communities, cared for each other. But now they want us to pick up the bill for their extravagance!

2nd April is the European Day of Action for Jobs, and the day when we in the NUM start our industrial action. That's going to be the day when working people throughout this country will get back our pride. When we begin to return to the good old days. They've been telling us we've been running at a loss and we've got to be made redundant. Well, I've an answer for them. The Conservatives have been running the whole country at a loss for the past fourteen years. And on April 2nd we're coming back down to London to make them redundant. We know that they're a Government with a flimsy 20-seat majority, and they can't even maintain that. They're so weak, they've begun fighting amongst themselves. They're ready to topple. Let's get them out, starting 2nd April."

Jim Perry, NUM Secretary, Cannock Chase, Staffs, speaking at the London Busworkers rally.

Jim Perry told *Briefing*: "The busworkers took our banner and carried it themselves at the head of the march, saying 'We're all miners now'. I felt like crying. That march and rally was the best thing I've ever attended."

April 2nd action in London

Join the NUM and transport workers picketing at your nearest tube / bus depot from 6am.

"Lifeline services" march organised by the FBU and other public service unions with SERTUC.
11am. - Assemble at University of London Union, Malet Street.
11.30am. - march to Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, next to Imperial War Museum for rally at 1pm.

SUPPORT the DAY of ACTION
2nd April 1993



Who's afraid of the big, bad block vote?

The argument over Labour's link to the trade unions is no dry, constitutional question. As **Dennis Skinner** explained to *Labour Briefing*, it holds the key to a future Labour victory.

LB: The self-styled 'modernisers' claim they want to reform, not dispense with the trade union link. Is the trade union link itself really under threat?

DS: The trade union link's been under threat ever since they started down the road of OMOV. 'One member one vote' sounded very plausible but it cut into the heart of representative democracy. The trade unions and the Labour Party are based upon representative democracy in which people are nominated to represent other people at various levels throughout the movement. That's how both organisations were able to be welded together at the turn of the century. OMOV was used to destroy the philosophy of representative democracy. In this way power was concentrated at the very top of the Labour Party with a void in the middle, because the CLPs had their representative power ripped away, leaving a passive membership at the bottom of the pyramid. Now the right wing of the Party has moved on to the second stage of its hidden agenda, and that is to introduce a kind of OMOV into the trade union movement. They say that it would be a good idea for trade unions to split their block vote at conference - but what's going to happen to a trade union when it has a strike ballot? Some members in a minority will say that since we divide our votes at the Party conference why shouldn't we be able to do that on the picket line? The block vote is based on solidarity. Collective democracy says when you have a vote and a decision is made, then everybody abides by it. Some people are wanting to get rid of the trade union influence altogether. One of the things that John Smith put forward with support on the NEC from the trade union leaders - engaged in masochism - is a proposal to elect the leader by 50% from the MPs and MEPs and 50% from the CLPs, cutting out the unions completely. Of course, that should be opposed as well.

LB: How do you answer those who say that through the various schemes for registers of Labour supporters within the affiliated unions the union rank and file will be enfranchised in Party decision making?

DS: If that's the real aim then let's simply go back to the old system that used to apply before they introduced all the changes under Kinnock. Let the CLPs take decisions directly via their elected delegates on GCs on policy matters and on whom to support for the NEC and for leadership contests. Give them back the powers that they used to have. Within CLPs, trade union members can have a significant voice through affiliated local trade union branches represented by elected delegates.

LB: What about taking it a step further and encouraging as many individual trade union branches as possible to affiliate directly to the Party? Let them send delegates directly to conference and vote in leadership ballots in their own right.

DS: That's the best idea. Unfortunately, it's very difficult to get branches to accept that role because they hear right wing labour leaders saying they want the trade union money to help fight the general election and to sponsor MPs (as long as you don't actually ask them to do anything) but we're not prepared to give them any power. And that's the stumbling block we're up against: lots of union members are saying, what's the point? You want our money but not our opinion. Yes, I'm all in favour of trade union branches affiliating in massive numbers because that's really the only way in which you could reverse this trend. And that way they're not dominated by the leaderships of the various unions.

LB: Do you reject the idea that MPs and MEPs should have a vote at conference as they do at present in leadership elections?

DS: I don't believe that individual people should have elitist votes. An MP has a block vote in the House of Commons. A councillor has a block vote on a council. They are representatives and can be removed by the people they are supposed to represent if they use that block vote in ways which those people disapprove. But within the Labour Party an MP or a councillor is just an individual member. Why should they be given more say than other members? They're represented at conference through their CLP and trade union delegates. There's no logic in giving MPs a special vote on behalf of themselves and no one else.

LB: Are you saying we should reject all the various schemes for registered supporters being canvassed by the NEC?

DS: Yes. It's just a sprat to catch a mackerel. I think it'll finish up in the same way as the national membership scheme, which has turned out to be not a joke but a tragedy for the Labour Party. We've only got about 100,000 paid-up members now. It ripped the heart out of the constituency parties and their campaigning activities.

LB: The NEC consultation document on the union link is 40 pages long; it has scores of separate options that we are expected to consider and respond to by 10th June. Should we even bother with this - since they'll ignore anything we say anyway?

DS: CLPs should definitely respond. They should say, first, that the Labour Party was born out of the trade union movement and it should remain as close to it as possible. Second, that we've only won elections when the trade

union movement has had a formidable part to play in the formation of policy. Third, we've got to defend the block vote while recognising that it carries too much weight at Conference at the moment in relation to the CLPs. I've always supported the idea of 50% for CLPs and 50% for the trade unions. Fourth, we don't just take trade union money, we support trade unionists engaged in extra-parliamentary activity on the picket line - and there's plenty of that going on at the present time. In the process of union members taking on and winning industrial battles, they will take on and change the course of the Labour Party agenda. What we need in this spring and summer is victories - we need to ensure we get those victories by supporting all these workers in struggle. And when they win it will breed confidence, members will become more active inside the movement at all levels. That's the key to reversing this whole process.

Union bureaucrats deliberate...

USDAW'S EXECUTIVE has voted to back several of the options in the NEC's consultative paper on Labour-union links. They have approved the registered supporters scheme and want to see the union vote at Party conference reduced to 50% "in a few years as the membership and delegate strength of the constituency parties grows."

The USDAW Conference in Blackpool at the end of April will be one of the first union conferences to vote on future plans for the trade union link.

Meanwhile, the TGWU Executive has said that it wants to continue to be involved in the selection of parliamentary candidates and the election of leader and deputy leader. It wants to vote at Party conferences collectively, without splitting the block vote. The Executive has instructed Bill Morris to write to John Smith urging total opposition to the Maastricht Treaty unless the social chapter is included.

Heat on Burnsalls

BURNSALLS, THE SMETHWICK firm which sacked their low-waged (mostly Asian women) workers for taking strike action, is coming under increasing pressure.

GMB officer Jo Quigley told *Labour Briefing*: "We feel the strike has now entered an important phase. National media attention is clearly influencing some of Burnsall's customers, especially companies such as Jaguar, who feel that sales of their prestigious products would be harmed by association with Burnsalls.

"Support for the strike is strong but needs to be maintained. We have now begun the first industrial tribunal hearing. We are asking the tribunal to impose a substantial award against the company because of its victimisation of Stephen Wright for his refusal to work overtime at a day's notice. Unfortunately, that hearing was adjourned until late April. We are confident that the withdrawal of orders will force them to negotiate an agreement with the union, or face bankruptcy. We would prefer the former outcome, but the latter would be a clear warning to other employers of workers' determination to ensure their democratic right to union representation is respected."

● **Please send messages of support (and donations payable to the GMB Burnsall Strike Fund), to Will Thorne House, 2 Birmingham Road, Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 3HP.**



PHOTO: Bryn Griffiths

After Henry

EX-EMPLOYEES of the Annie Hall Knitwear company (which produces designer knitwear) have been claiming unfair dismissal against proprietor Gerald Henry.

In early 1991, several workers were sacked and the business was supposedly closed down. However, the following day a 'new' business, owned by the same people, was started up. The difference? The 'new' business employed poorly-paid home-workers.

One ex-employee, Ann Kavenagh, won £6,500 at an industrial tribunal, but she is still waiting for Henry to pay up! Picketing of shops has been stepped up. In response Henry took the ex-workers and Hull Trades Council to the High Court in an attempt to get an injunction against the picketing. He lost the case and paid £2,000 costs!

Recently Annie Hall ex-employees have formed links locally with Burnsalls, Middlebrook Mushrooms workers and Women Against Pit Closures.

Help keep up the pressure on Henry, by sending messages of support and donations to help the campaign. Find out if Annie Hall products are sold in your area.

● Contact: Annie Hall Ex-Employees Support Group, c/o PO Box 128, Hull. Tel/Fax (0482) 492388.

Fantasy for health

At the Camelot theme park, the full Tory propaganda machine went into action. A huge backdrop, glossy platform, giant video screen showing speakers putting the party line. Even civil servants were adorned with 'Health of the Nation' T-shirts. **John Nicholson** (Manchester Gorton CLP) witnessed the North West regional launch of the latest Tory blockbuster.

MANY PEOPLE working in public health have seen 'Health of the Nation' as a major breakthrough. They honestly wish to promote good health, rather than treat illness. As such, their wishful thinking is seemingly supported to the hilt by a document which claims to promote health in its widest sense, in line with the World Health Organisation 'Targets for Health for All by the Year 2000'.

But wishful thinking is where it ends. Unlike the WHO targets (reduce inequalities, increase community participation, tackle discrimination), the Tories' targets are very precise number-crunchers, attacking symptoms not causes (reduce numbers of conceptions in girls under 16, reduce numbers of suicides, etc). Instead of looking at the widely disseminated evidence of the links between poverty and ill health, the Tories' analysis of "variations in health", states:

"The reasons for these variations are by no means fully understood. They are likely to be the result of a complex interplay of genetic, biological, social, environmental, cultural and behaviourial factors. In part they are accounted for by differences in risk behaviour."

Instead of creating any real participatory democracy for health services, the Tories have cut even the faintest vestiges of accountability to local communities.

Addressing discrimination, they say "black groups and certain socio-economic groups are also considered in the Appendix - see page 94."

As might be expected "lifestyles" are mostly to blame. "The lifestyles which people adopt affect their health." No sex and drugs and rock and roll. "The safest way to avoid HIV infection is to remain faithful to one uninfected partner. For drug misusers, the safest path is not to inject drugs."

Try this another way. "For homeless people, the best thing is to live in a house. For poor people, the safest thing is to avoid spending money."

The 'Nation' whose 'Health' is being improved is not the people we know. This 'Nation' is that of John Major's classless society - the jolly nuclear families with their own homes and cars who have the resources to choose whether to 'eat healthily' and 'drink sensibly' and for whom 'exercise can be fun'.

This approach will not overcome the vast areas of discrimination which already exist, nor the gaping discrepancies in health between different social classes, let alone those of multiple deprivation.

With HIV disease, specifically, it is necessary to counter the discrimination and stigmatisation. Otherwise everyone else will say 'it's not us' who are affected. 'Health of the Nation' is no help here. It's as if the Government is trying to protect the rest of 'us' from 'them' who are HIV positive.

But don't mistake the aim of all this. It takes in the liberal soft-centre of the public health professional world, the middle class enthusiasts for whom it 'feels good' and for whom that 'nice Mr Major and nice Mrs Bottomley' are really trying their best.

The whole 'Health of the Nation' paraphernalia is yet another piece of Tory propaganda - glossy, media-focussed, white middle-class nonsense which will leave the people who truly want to see promotion of good health, rather than treatment of illness, well and truly stranded.

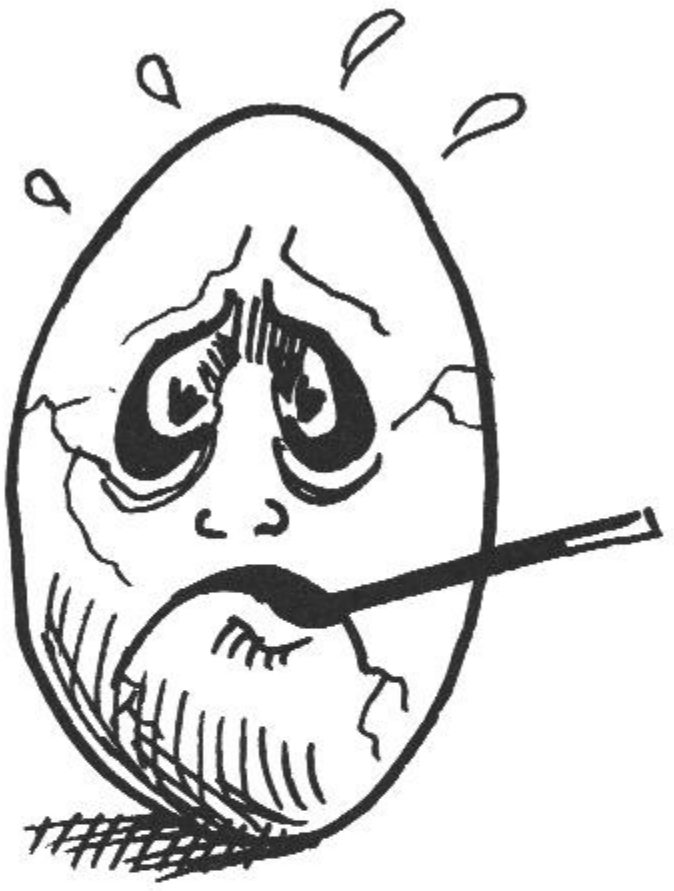
Watch out for the next Tory blockbuster - it's called 'Wealth of the Nation' and it's all about improving everyone's wealth, provided they're already white, middle-class, living in a Tory marginal and don't have HIV.

Making HIV community care a reality

THIS IS THE latest publication from the voluntary HIV organisation, the George House Trust. It aims to stop HIV slipping through the fine print of health authority purchasing plans and local authority community care plans. It sets out practical recommendations for involving voluntary groups and 'users' of service, so that principles of 'Care in the Community' can be put into practice for all those living with HIV disease.

● **Please make cheques (for £5 per copy) payable to George House Trust, at PO Box 201 Manchester M60 1PU.**

A shocking eggsample



Recently the government announced that its salmonella elimination programme had not worked and that eggs were to be date-stamped from now on. **Keith Veness** takes an eve-of-Easter eggsaminaton of the ovoid scandal.

THE ABILITY of mega-big business to cover-up its senseless drive for profits is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the current state of the egg industry in Britain.

The lovely picture painted of chickens pecking around a farm-yard, presided over by a rooster that crows every morning, is of course total nonsense. Battery farming really means thousands of hens crammed into tiny cages in semi-darkness, unable to turn around and fed on reprocessed pellets. These wretched animals are debeaked as tiny chicks (the male ones being discarded and scalded to death in most cases). They live a few short months for intensive egg-laying before being slaughtered and turned into soups, nuggets, pies and all the other processed grot that is the 'fast food industry'.

In this sort of animal Belsen, it is not surprising that disease is endemic and that any infection spreads like wild-fire. Food poisoning and salmonella are the demons that haunt the battery chicken industry and they will not go away. Most of the left were curiously indifferent to the 'Edwina Currie affair', probably because no-one among us fancied defending her.

However, Cruella Deville's statements were actually correct. Most of the battery poultry kept on British farms is now chronically infected with salmonella - and even worse bacteria. Professor Richard Lacey, one of the few honest nutritional academics, has pointed out that only a total destruction of all laying flocks and a massive re-stocking can help to even begin the elimination of salmonella. But this would impinge on the profits of big business and thus is not countenanced by the Sir Humphrey's types at the Ministry of Agriculture.

Now we see the latest U-turn by a government prone to such embarrassing traffic manoeuvres. These cretins have now decreed that the previous subsidies paid to slaughter selective laying flocks were totally useless and instead all eggs must henceforth be 'date stamped'! The salmonella will still be there but at least you will know how long it has been incubating inside the egg.

In reality the only way to avoid salmonella is to totally avoid the battery system. Only buy free range eggs - and don't fall for the advertising swindles that mark eggs farm fresh, newly laid, sunny vale etc. In addition chicken and white meat generally is not healthy - this sort of meat is the most inclined to germs and cross-infection. As primates, we do not need to eat meat and are far healthier without it. The monstrous farm subsidies of the EEC are geared towards butter mountains, wine lakes - and egg pyramids whilst the peoples throughout much of the world starve. Grain imported from Bangladesh goes to feed captive chickens in a salmonella-prone aircraft hanger when such wholesome grain would be much better used in its source country. Such is the cruelty and insanity of free market food production!

● **For more details, why not contact : Chickens' Lib, 7 Castle Street, Tonbridge, TN9 1BH, tel. 0732 364546 or Compassion in World Farming, 20, Lavant Street, Petersfield, GU32 3EW, tel. 0730 264208**

Stop the HIV hysteria

"THERE IS ABSOLUTELY no need for the hysteria being whipped up about health workers who have HIV," said a spokesperson for the George House Trust, the North West HIV charity.

"Firstly there is no recorded evidence of transmission of HIV from health workers to patient.

Secondly there is no point in compulsory HIV testing of health workers. HIV may develop between tests being taken. The cost of testing everyone is massive. Why stop at health workers? But more important, calls for testing simply drive people underground, if they are worried about HIV. What is anyone offering people who have been tested and are positive? Having a test is not giving a cure."

The *Manchester Evening News* proudly proclaimed "We name the Aids doctor" in one front page exclusive. They then set up telephone poll for readers, asking "Should doctors suffering from Aids be named?" The result was not splashed across the following front page - 59.5% of callers voted for maintaining anonymity.

In fear of Militant

THIS YEAR'S Scottish Labour Party Conference in Inverness was much less of a stage-managed affair than last year's pre-election extravaganza.

Cathy Jamieson
Socialist Campaign Group Scotland

Several issues on the agenda were expected to cause some controversy - not least the proposals to give more control to the Scottish Council of the Labour Party in staff appointments and the right of Scottish Conference to determine all policy matters which would be the responsibility of a future Scottish Parliament.

Tom Clarke's pre-conference statements on Labour's future plans to re-nationalise the water industry in Scotland were somewhat over-shadowed by the SNP's alignment with the Tories on the Maastricht debate.

At the Conference there was plenty of opportunity for speakers to argue forcibly for socialist policies for Scotland - if only it had been taken up more often! The 'Youth Strategy' debate was one of the few actually to produce a difference of opinion. Conference overwhelmingly endorsed the Executive statement on Youth Campaigns, which gave two places on the Scottish Executive to youth delegates elected by young people at the Conference.

It was disappointing therefore to see a resolution calling for properly constituted Young Socialist sections at CLP level defeated. Cynical members of the audience suggested that the very words "Young Socialists" had caused opposition by the Executive. Fear of any Militant connection prevented people from even listening to the debate. A packed Socialist Campaign Group fringe meeting heard Alex Smith MEP argue the case for re-building the Party from the grass-roots upwards with a socialist perspective on economic issues. Tony Benn provided an excellent analysis of the current state of the Party, advising on how to challenge right wing policies and activities.

The meeting gave an opportunity for delegates and visitors to Conference from a range of left groupings to air their views. Delegates unable to catch the chair's eye in the Conference hall itself were at last able to make a contribution.

There was general agreement that the immediate priorities for the labour movement in Scotland were the campaign against water privatisation, support for the Timex workers in Dundee, and keeping the union-Party link.

Overall, the mood of ordinary delegates was more supportive of left ideas than at previous events. It is heartening to hear that there are many in the Party who still wish to protect and campaign around Clause IV and basic socialist principles.

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Things to come?

It has a name

Cllr Garth Frankland reports: The Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Conference passed off without any major upsets for the Regional Executive. The bright sunlight over Scarborough's South Bay provided more of a draw than the cramped and inadequate conditions in the Spa Theatre.

The delegates voted for an emergency resolution from Morley and South Leeds rejecting the amalgamation of the region with the North East.

The stage managed TV appearance of John Smith was greeted with polite applause and carefully concealed yawns by the bulk of the delegates. An attempt by a few sycophants on the platform to orchestrate a standing ovation failed to evoke any response from the delegates except perhaps embarrassment.

Richard Caborn's attempted defence of his capitulation to the Tories over pit closures was strongly attacked in speeches from Frank Cave and Ken Capstick of the Yorkshire NUM, both warmly received.

Two leading members of the Leeds left, Peter O'Grady of UCATT and Harold Best of the AEEU, reminded delegates that what we wanted in the various resolutions has a name. ie. socialism, and that we had an enemy - and it was capitalism.

RICHARD HALL, a GMB full-timer who stood for Labour in Newbury in the last general election has press released a letter he has written to John Smith urging Labour not to stand a candidate in the upcoming Newbury by-election - the first of this Parliament.

Apparently, not standing a candidate would be a "bold step that will open a new political era". Hall claimed: "Though no one is prepared to admit it, everyone in Newbury is keeping their fingers crossed for a Liberal victory."

Clive Inge, Newbury CLP Secretary, begged to differ: "This is the view of a private individual who is not a member of the Newbury Party. There is no question locally, we will run a full campaign."

Labour activists in other southern seats expressed alarm at the publicity given to Hall's initiative (will the GMB or the NCC discipline him for supporting a non-Labour candidate in the by-election?). They point out that at the last election Labour overtook the Liberals as the second biggest party in scores of seats across the region and that it is poised to do so in scores more - if the Party leadership don't throw it all away by running a half-heated campaign in Newbury.

One year on



A year has passed since Labour's election defeat but the Party's leaders still seem lost, writes Harry Cohen, MP for Leyton.

IT IS ONE year since the last wretched general election. I think that the electorate made a mistake, but don't blame them. They were given a poor choice. Kinnock spent years making it a presidential-style beauty contest and when the time came he simply wasn't very appealing. Hectoring Thatcherism had had its day, but Kinnock had mimicked the style and was stuck with it. He, personally, was a factor in the lost votes for Labour.

Even more damaging, though, was the abandonment of socialist radicalism for low-quality (but not cheap) public relations, advertising and gimmickry. We were told that it was the only way to win. It inspired no-one and led to a disastrous defeat snatched from the jaws of more likely victory.

One year on and it remains to be seen whether Labour has learnt from the debacle or has anything significant to offer now. The present indications are not promising. John Smith is a Buggins' turn leader from an inadequate voting system as the Party froze over in post-election trauma. He has a powerful hand to take the Party wherever he wishes, and however much resented we are stuck with him virtually for life or the next election defeat.

However, he gives every appearance of being stuck. No new ideas, yet hating traditional socialist ones. The Kinnockites (Clintonites, modernisers, Brown-Blairites, or what have you) still dominate and have positioned Labour firmly as a 'safe' social democratic pro-capitalist party. 'Managing capitalism better than the Tories' again seems to be the main rallying-cry.

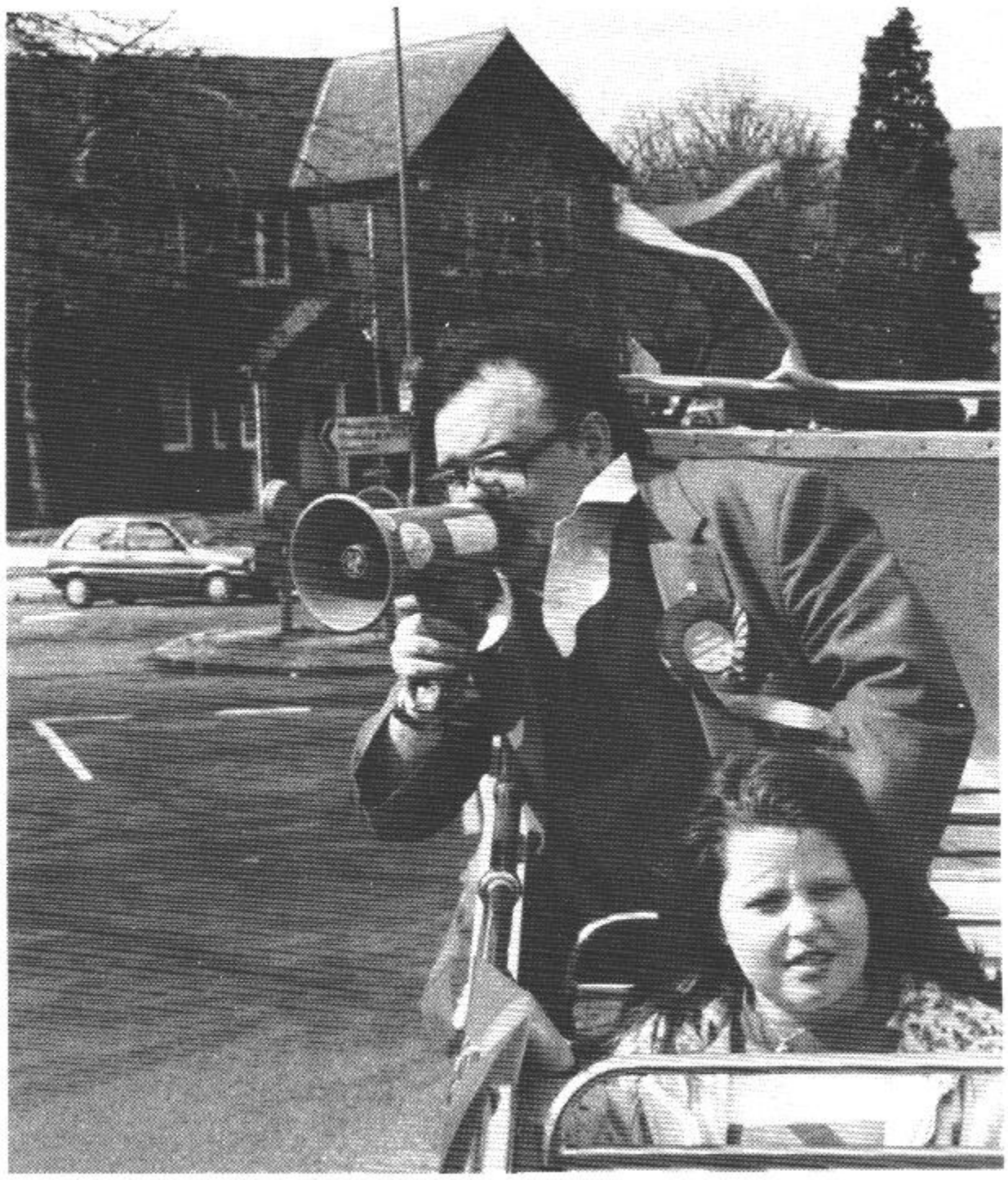
There is no doubt the Tories are rotten. They are in disarray and disunity over Maastricht and presiding over economic decline on a huge scale. Whatever the sorry state of capitalism worldwide, the Tories' 'leave it to the market' policies have contributed to the slump here in no small way. Major is weak and incompetent, leading a cabinet of inadequates. He is also a 'waster', as the most shocking example of the £2 billion handout to international speculators last September showed. The cost of this waste and decline is being imposed upon the ever rising number of unemployed and their families, public sector workers through fixed low pay limits, and women and children at the brunt of benefit cutbacks. Times are much harder for all but the very rich.

The Kinnock strategy, apart from the gimmickry, was to hope that anti-Tory feeling would be enough to translate into a Labour majority. Labour was presented as a milder, safer form of Conservatism to mop-up middle of the road, uncommitted voters. Smith seems to be following the same approach. It does not work.

Smith calls for 'justice, openness and democracy'. The details of what he proposes are far from wholly satisfactory but of course we all support 'justice, openness and democracy'. That, though, cannot be a substitute for an economic policy, or an ideology.

Relying solely on anti-Toryism wasn't enough last time. Whether it might be next time remains to be seen, but it would be a huge gamble bearing in mind the Tory talent for survival, their slick expensive campaigning and media backing.

The Who sang one song which included the lyric, "Meet the new boss; much like the old boss". John Smith has yet to prove, within the Party, that does not apply to him. As for the job of prime minister, if he postures like Major then there will not be the incentive to vote for him and the struggle to get Labour elected will be that much harder.



Winning hearts and minds! Campaigning in Edgbaston a year ago. PHOTO: Bryn Griffiths

London low-down

THE GREATER LONDON Labour Party AGM was informed that the 1994 borough elections will be run by a team headed by Margaret Beckett abetted by representatives from the Regional Executive, the ALA, London MPs and MEPs and Trade Unionists for Labour. In fact, it is such a representative body that no elections for it will be required.

We were also informed that GLLP AGM will in future become biennial and its policy-making role will be supplanted by six policy fora, presumed to be more representative than the AGM itself, which even in these gloomy times attracted 400 delegates.

The ALA report was given by TV personality and Lewisham leader Steve Bullock, who told comrades that Labour local authorities like Lewisham represent the future of Labour in government. God help us if this is true.

The MEPs' report was given by Richard Balfe, who expressed his disappointment that less than half the seats in Camden Town Hall were occupied to hear his peroration.

The motion passed on local government called on the GLLP to launch a major campaign against the Tory government including lobbies, demos and other forms of protest. Just how the depleted (by half) and demoralised Regional Office staff will cope with this when they have all those purges and policy fora to organise is anybody's guess.

Much controversy surrounded an amendment to this motion from the GMB which condemned "those councils who are sacking workers and destroying services because of political ideology, incompetence and anti-direct labour or anti-trade union reasons", a thinly veiled attack on Islington Council whose recent victims have included GMB representatives. GLLP Regional Officer David Wilkinson tried to keep the GMB amendment out of the composite but after protracted negotiations it was incorporated. The composite was formally seconded by an LCC-supporting delegate from Streatham who spent most of her speech demanding an investigation into neighbouring Norwood CLP, where a by-election was recently lost in previously safe Angell Ward (see page 13). Tony Banks MP, a former Angell Ward councillor, rebuked the LCC by telling delegates that attacking Labour councils, as the LCC candidate in Angell had done, was no way to win by-elections.

The debate on Lambeth was the most contentious with the platform only able to reply to strong speeches from Joan Twelves, Ted Knight and Liz Davies by repeating the familiar 'corruption' smears against the witch-hunted Lambeth councillors. In the end, the Lambeth composite was defeated by 377,500 to 205,000, despite strong support from trade union delegates.

In a reversal, women-only short-lists were heavily defeated (the backlash against women comes to London Labour?) despite a slow handclap for the male Executive representative who did such a feeble job of justifying the unjustifiable.

Left-winger John McDonnell and right-winger Siobhan McDonagh were elected as representatives to the National Policy Forum. The London Women's representative will be elected by a postal ballot of women's sections. Lorraine Monk, chair of GLLP Women's Committee, should be supported. On the Executive, the left made a few gains. Southwark Council leader Sally Keeble lost her seat. Policy commitments to defence cuts, opposition to the trigger ballot and support for universal benefits were agreed.

Home truths

THE TORY LEADER of East Sussex Council could not help but note that the only opposition to his restructuring plans, which involve widespread job losses through competitive tendering, had come from Cllr Clive Walder, recently expelled from the Labour Party.

"His honesty has to be respected and admired," said the Tory, "but the problem he has is that his party has moved so far away from him that they have hijacked Conservative policies."

As if to prove the point, the Labour Group refused to support an amendment from Clive Walder opposing job losses, which in the end could only be taken in debate because it was seconded by a Liberal.

Privilege

A MARVELLOUS LETTER to *Tribune* from 30-year Labour Party veteran Anne Belworthy of Canterbury CLP:

"Shortly before the last election we found out that Tony Blair had spent a whole day in Canterbury at the King's School, one of the top public schools, apparently visiting an old teacher of his who is a master there.

"This was on the same day as the local Labour Party branch met but we received no visit from the illustrious Mr Blair. Indeed, it is almost impossible to get any of the Labour 'stars' to appear down here. But it seems that they can spare time to visit public schools, even this one which rubs the noses of the Canterbury people in its incredible wealth with its multi-million pound sports complex and swimming pool. Only one swimming pool exists for the whole Canterbury, Whitstable, Herne Bay area and leisure facilities are almost nil. The King's School owns much recreational land yet is unwilling to let local children play on it.

"Labour Party Conference last year even managed to throw out a resolution from Faversham CLP to withdraw charitable status from public schools."

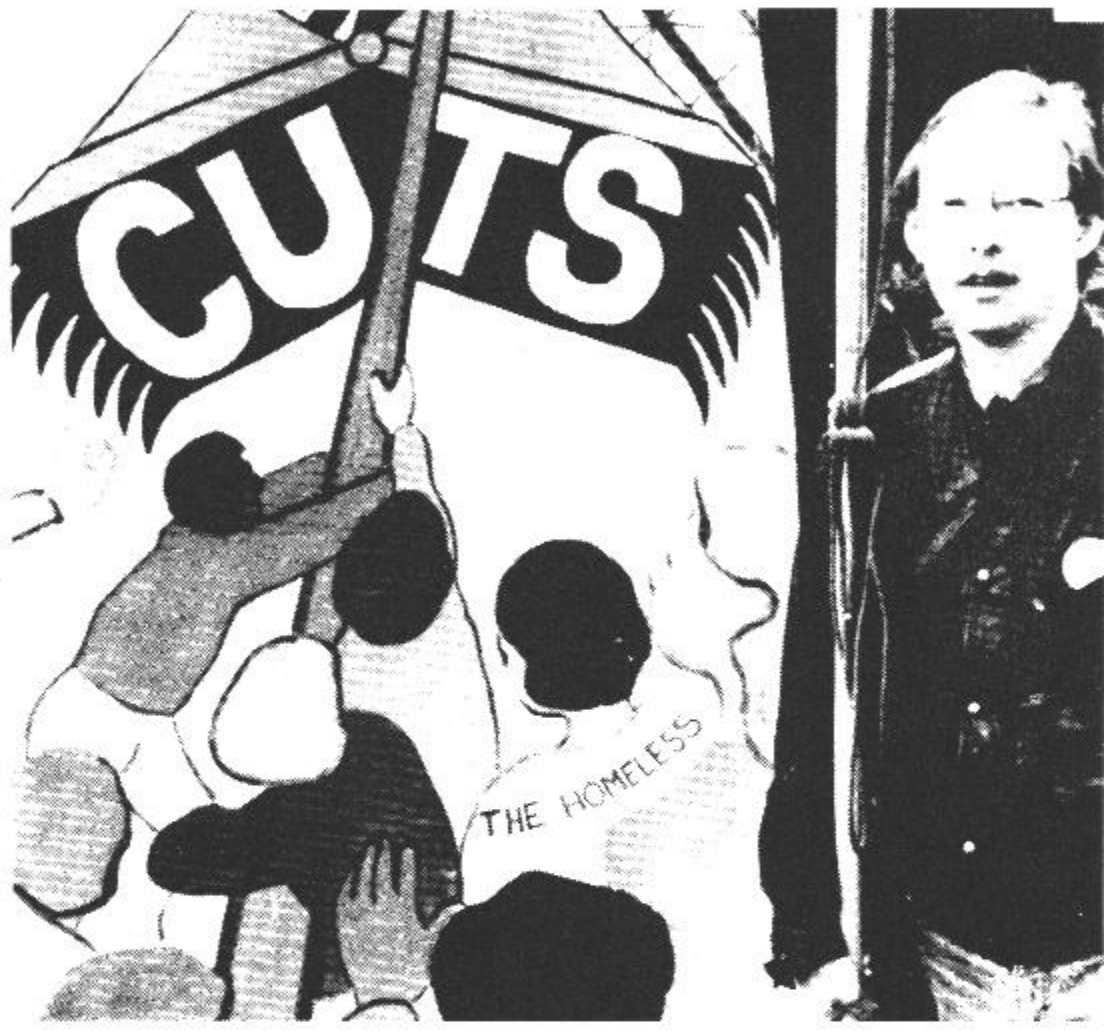
We told you so

LABOUR BRIEFING has reported for over two years that the total membership claimed in Labour's reports to annual conference was far higher than the actual paid-up membership indicated by income from subscriptions listed in the audited accounts. Alerted by *Briefing*, conference delegates asked then Treasurer Sam McLuskie to explain the discrepancy. His only reply was incoherent bluster.

Well, folks, we're not too big to admit we got it wrong. We grossly underestimated the shortfall in membership. A confidential document presented to the February NEC Organisation Sub-Committee, leaked to Paul Routledge of the *Observer*, reveals that paid-up membership at the end of January was less than 100,000, with 130,000 members in arrears of up to three months as well as another 43,000 in arrears over a year but still on the books.

As usual, Labour's apparatus responded to the bad news by attacking the messenger. Roger Hough, Information Systems supremo at Walworth Road, claimed Routledge was motivated by "malice" against the Labour Party. Routledge, a Party member (who admits to being three months in arrears) hit back: "I wonder how many members he [Hough] has managed to recruit and retain. Walworth Road should look to its mettle rather than insulting political journalists who are telling the truth."

The NCC - a suitable case for investigation



Greg Tucker in struggle

ON MARCH 18th, in the last of the Lambeth 13 hearings, Greg Tucker was expelled from the Labour Party, two years after the 13 left-wing councillors were suspended by the NEC in a blaze of lurid publicity following special council meetings on the Gulf War and the use of bailiffs to collect the Poll Tax.

Mike Marqusee
Political Correspondent

Greg, RMT Southern Region District Secretary and an active Party member for 13 years, was booted out by a National Constitutional Committee (NCC) panel following a marathon 12-hour hearing that began back in September (having already been postponed once because of the incompetence of National Constitutional Secretary David Gardner), was adjourned for six months and only concluded late in the evening of March 18th at London Labour Party HQ in Charles Square.

On behalf of the NEC Larry Whitty presented a total of eleven written submissions, all by Lambeth LCC members, all dated within a three day period in June 1992 (16 months after the original suspension) and a list of 40 dates on which Greg was alleged to have committed various unspecified offences. Since not one of those who denounced Greg to the NEC was prepared to attend in person, he was denied the right to confront and cross-examine his accusers. Whitty relied heavily on a dossier prepared by Kim Dewdney, former councillor and LCC Executive member, which contained, as Greg pointed out to the panel, no less than 100 errors of fact or significant omissions in its 32 pages.

Greg also drew the panels attention to the misdating, mislabelling and irrelevance of many of the council minutes which comprised the bulk of the NEC's case.

In contrast, Greg submitted over 60 supportive statements from members of the labour movement and community activists across Lambeth. Detailed accounts of events in Lambeth were submitted by Vauxhall CLP and current Labour Group officers which authoritatively contradicted the LCC's version of events in Lambeth which for the NEC/NCC seems sacrosanct. Five witnesses appeared in person, all testifying not only to Greg's outstanding contribution to the labour movement but also to his constructive and knowledgeable approach to Labour Group business. Unlike the NEC's submissions, Greg's came from a wide spectrum of opinion within the Party and demonstrated support from many who made it clear they disagreed profoundly with some of Greg's political views. Greg dealt with every one of the NEC "charges" in detail. It was hard, he said, to see how he had brought the Labour Party into disrepute by proposing to save public baths and advice centres or remove anomalies in staff contracts, especially when his proposals had later been adopted by the Labour Group.

Greg's defence argued that the bulk of the NEC's submissions (which included an article in *Labour Briefing* that merely mentioned Greg) pertained to the "holding or expression of opinion" which is explicitly protected under the Party constitution. As for his occasional breaches of the whip, these had been dealt with already under the rules by the Labour Group and LGC Executive. That this might be a form of double jeopardy, that it was not the remit of the NCC to enforce discipline in local Labour Groups, that in any case they could not reasonably be deemed a "sustained course of conduct prejudicial to the Party" (which was the ostensible charge), were finer points lost on a kangaroo court whose verdict had been stitched up long ago.

In fact, Larry Whitty did not even try to prove the charge. He submitted not one piece of evidence even purporting to show that anything Greg had actually done had been "prejudicial" to the Party. Under cross-examination he proved unable to explain most of the "charges" and fell back on the broad brush, McCarthyite technique, branding Greg a "ring leader" and claiming it was "common knowledge" that Lambeth was "a shambles". Somehow, he asserted, Greg Tucker was personally responsible for this. His was a shameful, inept and lazy performance. But since the verdict and the sentence were predetermined, it didn't need to be any better.

Panel chair Diane Hayter asked Greg just one question after he had concluded nearly six hours of detailed evidence. Had he actually agreed with the letters he had been asked to write as LGC Secretary back in the late 80s? Enter the thought police!

The aptly-named Hayter had already told one MEP that he should be deselected because he had given support to the Lambeth 13. Given her behaviour throughout the hearing (she had repeatedly attempted to cut short defence evidence) it was no surprise that it took the panel all of ten minutes to find Greg guilty of the charge.

Greg chose to use his "mitigation" statement to issue a hard-hitting indictment of the NCC's disregard for all the norms of natural justice and the disastrous effects of years of non-stop interference by Walworth Road in the affairs of the Lambeth Labour Parties which culminated in the loss of a previously safe Labour seat in Angell ward to the Liberals in mid-March.

"You are like the US generals in Vietnam who said that in order to save the village from communism they had to destroy it," he said. "You have been willing to 'save' Lambeth Labour Party by destroying it." ❑

Evacuation!

John Pendry (ex-Congleton CLP) argues that Labour's lack of moral leadership and mindless media mania has led many activists to abandon the Party.

"THE INDIVIDUAL is responsible for his actions," announced Tony Blair. His contribution to the moral panic on existing levels of crime was applauded by the *Daily Mail*. One can understand Blair's desire to improve his credibility, but this is foolish, not only philosophically but also in its timing. No wonder Patten, who is in difficulty over his education proposals, has grasped Blair's words eagerly. "The very thing I was saying in the face of overwhelming opposition only two years ago," he is now able to say, whilst pinning down the Labour Party with "increasing cross-party agreement to get tough on criminals". What an opportunity missed by Blair to raise the shameful social consequences of 14 years of Tory rule with its inculcation of market values of competition and individual achievement leading to ever increasing levels of greed.

The capitalist media rarely need encouragement in generating moral panic and mass hysteria. In the wake of provocative noises from the Tories in favour of workfare and excitable media coverage of juvenile crime, David Blunkett claimed that compulsory community service could make a major contribution to overcoming the calamity of being unemployed and provide some purpose in life. Is this ignorance, or has Blunkett been lunching with Blair? Does he not know that this sort of thing was raised by the right-wing Prof. David Marsland and the Prince of Wales - and met with widespread condemnation. Who on earth do Blunkett and these others have in mind for this kind of activity? The sons and daughters of the rich, or even those of the middle class? Socialists know whom they have in mind - the victims of failed social and economic policies, those who are struggling with poverty and unemployment at the bottom of the social heap.

Jack Straw argued in the middle class *Guardian* that Clause 4's adoption in the first place was an act of modernisation perfectly acceptable to the middle class of the time, and therefore its abandonment now by the middle class would be perfectly acceptable on the same grounds. Roy Hattersley emphasised the need to scrap Clause 4, in *The Times*.To have regular access to the media gives politicians a degree of control over the dissemination of information, and power to make comment appear as fact and ideas as undisputed truth. Many on the left know that the transmission of information through the capitalist press is a sordid business with many factors at play preventing the truth reaching the public. But is it only sordid? Newspapers, amongst other agencies, help form popular opinion and ideas. The capitalist press (being most of the press) is a one-way process transmitting capitalist values: it protects and promotes the legitimacy of power, wealth and privilege in the hands of a few and helps to persuade the rest of us that the existing social and political arrangements are natural and inevitable.

It came with some surprise then, to hear Ken Livingstone say on TV's Question Time that in his view (a very significant view when expressed before millions) newspapers are not very important agencies in the transmission of information and that TV and radio programmes do a better job. What a lamentable response. He could have raised the relationship between newspaper advertising revenue and the transmission of capitalist ideology. Does Ken remember the *Daily Herald* which, as a consequence of supporting Labour, found advertising difficult to attract? However, it was less difficult to sell the paper to its large working class following. When it was forced to close in 1964, it still had a circulation of 1,265,000 but is advertising revenue had dropped from an 11% to a 3.5% share of the market. Without some counterbalancing support from the Labour Party it was doomed. Since then we have seen the demise of the *Labour Weekly*, and the *Daily Mirror* suffering from the criminal Maxwell and the current regime.

The dignity and efficacy involved in maintaining a socialist presence in the Labour Party is disappearing fast, as the Party drifts into the mainstream of European social democracy. If this is the product of good sense, a clear thinking strategy in response to irreversible social change, then so be it. But what if socialist principles are as valid and as timeless as some of us still think them to be? What if the vacuum now appearing in the Party is the product of chaos and confusion and careerist politicians? Then there is an urgency on the left for debate and clarity about basic principles.

One is used to seeing well-meaning Liberal-Democrats thrashing about all over the place in a quagmire of uncertainty, wanting a better world but without a clue on how to achieve it. It is sad to see John Smith and the Labour Party similarly affected. Unfortunately, all this is reflected in the current level of membership, recently reported at a dismal 90,000 and still falling. The Party boasted a million members in 1952!

The loss of members is not unrelated to the Labour Party losing its integrity, its internal cohesion and its raison d'etre. The moral underpinning of policy and objectives which gave the Party a distinctive character and gave so many of us inspiration and optimism has disappeared. A socialist morality has never shone too brightly in the Labour Party: not just due to the mediocrity of its advocates, but because it is always easier to argue from the right (from what exists) rather than from the left (for something new).

All the great ethical principles (justice, rights, equality, freedom, democracy) can, however, be understood in different ways. This could be a source of great strength for the left, but the ground is often surrendered to the right too easily.

Socialists, in or out of the Labour Party, have always had their own set of ethical meanings, which they have had to sustain in the face of many difficulties and ideological barriers. When acceptable in the Labour Party, these socialist values have made it a party of distinction, a campaigning, mass membership party where the moral superiority of at least some socialism was preached from the doorstep to Parliament. The tragedy for the Labour Party today - and something for which Kinnock must take the major share of responsibility - is that whatever it now stands for, its basic principles are indistinguishable from those of any other party. ❑

Policies not postures

Looking forward to the Socialist Campaign Group Conference on 17th April, **Bob Cryer** MP argues that ideas and policies, not gimmicks and gestures, are the keys to Labour revival.

CURIOUSLY ENOUGH, political parties flourish on the basis of political ideas. This elementary lesson was forgotten by the Kinnockites, all of them keener on denouncing *Militant* than the Tories. The result is a Labour Party in serious debt, declining membership and ideological torpor.

Without ideas a party becomes simply a vehicle for obtaining office. In the Kinnock years this was to be achieved at any price and the belief prevailed that raising issues other than in the lowest, smoothest key was bound to lead to controversy and the loss of votes.

Experience is contrary to this insipid view. In 1970 the most adroit, clever, sharp, experienced brain about was thought to be Harold Wilson's. Labour policy for the 1970 election was to present the country as being in safe hands under a very clever chap and witty with it. Moreover the Tories were being led by an awkward Ted Heath, clumsy on television. The clumsy man's party won. In 1979 the most capable leader on television was bluff Jim Callaghan. It is true that the Labour government had not delivered, but at least unemployment was only just over a million. Political commitments were kept at a low profile and the Party depended on Jim's matey television presence. The horrid, ferocious, shrill Margaret Hilda Thatcher's party won.

In 1992 this knowledge was put to one side, largely at the behest of people without any previous electoral experience, and the Labour leader was presented as 'presidential', culminating in the disastrous Sheffield rally. It was empty, literally thoughtless style substituting for ideas, and it failed.

What chance is there of success? None if Labour repeats the same tired formula. Much of this was in evidence at the recent Yorkshire Regional Conference held at Scarborough. All the constituency parties and affiliated trade unions of the broad acres produced a grand total of twenty-five resolutions and the Annual Report admitted that not a single Young Socialist branch was functioning.

There is a sharp contrast, however, between that meeting and an earlier one held in Yorkshire last June. That was the meeting of the Socialist Campaign Group at Leeds University Students' Union. Originally scheduled for a smaller hall the demand for places meant that a larger hall was needed. Well over six hundred socialists crowded in to listen and take part in a variety of debates. Ideas poured out. The problem was not shortage of subjects but shortage of time for debate.

The left of the Labour Party must fill the vacuum left by the unprincipled manoeuvrings of the leadership clique of the past eight years. Whatever the manifold shortcomings of the Labour Party it is the only vehicle for change which has mass support amongst the people at large.

It is our responsibility to ensure that the mixture of idealism and determination which emerged from the Leeds conference is translated into sustained campaigning to reverse damaging policy decisions and achieve fresh initiatives. The recall conference on 17th April in Sheffield will be an important platform for this. We have to put the case for public ownership as the only means of ensuring adequate provision in both the National Health Service and other public services, as well as being the key to reviving manufacturing industry. Public ownership is also important for implementing a programme of full employment; handy, for example, in a Leyland-DAF situation. But we must go further, develop workers' co-operatives, enabling these to be formed where closures or asset stripping is threatened. Labour must produce a plan of diversification for the defence-based industries, a necessity if we are to save our engineering industry. We must revive trade union initiatives like the Lucas Aerospace shop stewards' plan which was packed with ideas for useful new products to replace killing machines.

We will not be able to carry out any of these ambitions tied hand and foot to a federal state of western European countries under the Maastricht Treaty. We must defeat this proposal. If it does creep through Parliament we must commit the Labour Party to re-negotiation. All these issues involve seeking resolutions at the Labour Party Conference and marshalling support. The process will encourage socialists to join in the struggle as the Labour Party assumes again some semblance of a party for idealists. With a socialist programme there could be the reward of a Labour government - and the next battle will be to see that it carries that programme out! ❑

Recall conference of Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network

Maastricht and the future of Socialism
Organising the Left in the Labour Party — Building the Network

Saturday 17th April
Students Union, Sheffield Hallam University
Pond St (2 mins from Sheffield Station)
11am - 5pm
Socialist Campaign Group MPs speakers, debate and workshops
Registration £5/£2
Contact Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network c/o Jeremy Corbyn MP, Red Rose Club, 129a Seven Sisters Road, London N7.

Get some in

'Politics is a waste of time. You can't achieve anything.' At least, that's what many young people think. **Neil Taylor**, London Guildhall University student and former Southern Region Labour Party youth representative, challenges us to prove them wrong.

WE ALL KNOW the problem - recruiting for the Party is a nightmare. It doesn't have any street cred, it's just not hip! At a time when you would imagine thousands wanting to join and get active, fighting unemployment and shambolic Tory economic policies, it's just not happening.

Encouraging youth involvement is particularly difficult. Maybe one or two are receptive but many think politicians are all the same and anyway politics is a waste of time, you can't achieve anything.

How can we get young people involved in the movement, for our benefit and theirs?

It is by no means easy. At a national level we require some form of co-ordination - a vital, approachable youth office, a campaigning NEC youth rep, and a youth structure which isn't just geared to creating tomorrow's MPs. We need a working structure which positively encourages mass participation through an annual youth conference and a good regional network of youth groups. Above all we need a process which enables young people to effectively influence decision making.

Looking to national and regional office for help, however, is no substitute for grass-roots local party activity.

A first step is to provide first-time voters letters during election campaigns. These should emphasise problems of unemployment, boredom and lack of facilities. It should be pointed out that through campaigning community centres and youth clubs can be saved and better facilities fought for.

Resources are always limited so it is vital that you use your members' skills to the full. You've got to campaign in places where young people are, such as schools, colleges and youth clubs. If you have young people or local school teachers in the Party then arrange debates at the sixth form college or school, with local councillors or even your MP.

Also ensure that you have a clued-up youth and student officer who is keen and enthusiastic. In many instances the post is vacant or is reluctantly filled by someone who feels obliged rather than dedicated. Get in contact with the local trade unions and your local university or college labour club for ideas and help. It is also important that the local Party is supportive and encouraging - some members resent young people getting involved and try to block any creative moves.

Link into a local issue affecting young people. Issue press releases, get local councillors involved but above all make campaigns fun and enjoyable.

It is important that once you've got young people interested they don't feel isolated or confused. It is easy to think that once you've recruited some young people all your worries are over. But you have to keep them interested. There's nothing worse than being demoralised by your first ward meeting. There must be more interesting things in life than standing orders and minutes! Try to encourage them to act on their own initiative and be responsive to their ideas. They will only stick it if they see that it is worthwhile and that change can be achieved.

Most young members will be enthused by socialist ideas, actions to support the miners and other struggles.

It's not easy to implement even half of these ideas but it is crucial that we all make a start. Only by a determined effort from every level of the Party can we get more young people involved and active.

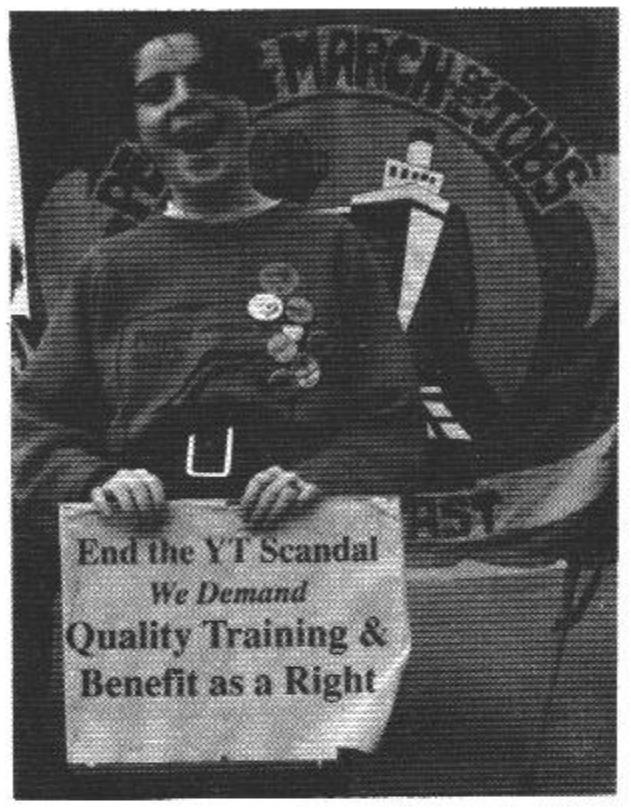


Photo: Bryn Griffiths

NUS needs unity in action

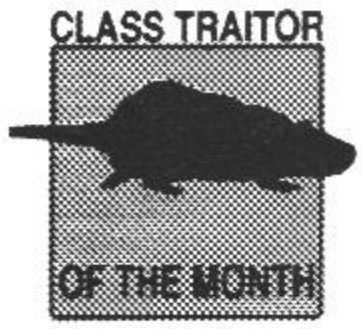
Hamish Renton writes: **"I am standing for the NEC to stick up for those rank and file students who are not attracted to the skulduggery of the NOLS leadership yet who believe that Labour Party members should naturally be at the centre of the student movement. I am interested in the issues - not the factional bickering.**

I am standing to get NUS to make a concerted response to the Tories' plans for voluntary membership and to help orchestrate a fightback against student poverty. NUS has to wake up to the fact that unless the union is united in the face of Tory attacks, we will fail. It is no good spouting windy rhetoric about the fightback, year in year out, if the only response to the Tory assault is the 'NUS Students Charter'.

In January I helped organise the only demonstration against student poverty in Easter term. This was a balancing act, getting NOLS, Liberals, Left Unity, Independents, SWSS all pulling together as one. I have been on my local student union executive for two years and have the bottle to take on the factions and actually get NUS off its knees."

- **Unity in the face of government attacks**
- **End factionalism and sectarianism**
- **Action on student poverty and voluntary membership**
- **For a democratic and pluralistic union**

● **Support Hamish Renton: Independent Left/Clause IV candidate for NUS Executive.**



Power mad parasite

This month's Class Traitor is **Lorna Fitzsimons**, the latest in the dismally long line of disastrously incompetent NUS Presidents hatched in the hothouse of the National Organisation of Labour Students, that elite training ground in crass careerism.



FITZSIMONS IS now seeking a second year as NUS President - hoping to cap off a ten year career in student politics by overseeing the final dissolution of student unionism at the behest of the Tory government.

In pushing her candidacy last year, NOLS cynically exploited the fact that she was not from a university (she hails from Rochdale Poly) to mask her glaring inadequacies. The problem for the Labour right-wingers who have turned NOLS into a by-word for ballot-rigging and shameless self-promotion was that they could find no one more credible or capable than Lorna. This is a sad falling off from the 'Democratic Left' NOLS hacks of the early and mid-eighties, who at least supplemented their lack of scruples with the nous to build a formidable political machine (which Lorna and co. have inherited) and lay a fast track for themselves into employment at Walworth Road and the upper echelons of the trades unions. With Lorna, all that's left from the days of Phil Woolas is the lack of scruples - and the icepick.

No one is a more assiduous devotee at the shrine of anti-Trotskyism than Lorna, which is how she first secured nomination for the NUS Executive from the misnamed New Directions caucus at NOLS conference.

As NUS President she has concentrated her wrath not on the Tory government which has driven students into poverty and is now dismantling their right to representation, but on the left inside the NUS. "Yes, I know capitalism isn't a very nice way to run a society," she whined at NUS conference two years ago, "but if anyone can think of a better way, come and see me after this conference." Clearly, intellectual debate is not her forte; she prefers the bureaucratic fiddle, the carve-up and the hectoring McCarthyite denunciation. Lorna's laughable self-importance is inevitably underscored by a strong streak of paranoia. This is what makes her such a supreme factionalist; nothing distracts her from the removal of potential enemies and rivals. Closing down Tyne Tees and Sussex Area NUS, strongholds of Left Unity, her hated "enemy within", was perhaps the greatest achievement to date of the self-declared "most important woman in Britain under 30".

Lorna's embarrassing penchant for power-dressing has led to allegations that she gets free clobber from Next and Levis and made her the butt of cruel jests by some of her opponents, who are surely going too far in goading so mercilessly someone so transparently and justifiably insecure. She responds by playing that discredited standby of NUS apparatchiks: the women's card! "They objectify me as woman," she told *London Student*. "It's sexist to talk about what I wear and not about me as a politician." Strange talk from someone so busy trying to convince the Tory government that NUS is no longer a political organisation. On BBC Question Time she insisted, "I would rather be an entrepreneurial venture capitalist than a Labour MP." She opposed last year's NUS demonstration but was forced to let it go forward by the annual winter conference (which she promptly abolished). In her speech at the demo, she invoked "harmony" between police, students and government.

The big issue facing NUS at its conference in Blackpool this month is how to respond to the government's plans to introduce voluntary membership, which will tear the guts out of the NUS and strip it of political independence. So far, Lorna's response to this lethal threat has been to buy herself a vodaphone (with union cash) and to launch the NUS "Charter for Students", which blathers on about "market led provision of courses and services". The bright idea (shared with her Liberal and 'Independent' allies on the NUS Exec) is to turn the NUS into a registered charity offering welfare services on a self-financing basis and eschewing all political campaigning. No wonder *The Times* enthused, "For the first time a Conservative Education Secretary could plausibly incorporate NUS ideas..."

A year ago, just after the general election, she announced, "John Patten is a man I can do business with." Apparently astonished to be rebuffed by the hard right Tory hatchetman, she confessed to NUS East Anglia Regional Conference in November: "Our strategy at the moment is centred around John Patten being reshuffled next month. After that, we're stuck."

Still, Lorna keeps coming up with surefire ways to stop the Tory anti-NUS juggernaut in its tracks. There was the 'fax tree' through which unions would be alerted the moment 'voluntary membership' was announced. Now that it has been announced, targetted lobbying of Tory MPs is the latest brainwave: "for example, student sports clubs could target the Conservative backbench committee on sport while overseas student groups lobby the Home Office." Excellent! Especially as the Home Office traditionally enjoys such intimate relations with overseas students (when it's not deporting them, that is).

Like a number of her erstwhile 'soft left' ilk, Lorna got it badly wrong when she backed Bryan Gould against John Smith for the Labour leadership. Embarrassed at Gould's pathetic result and horrified when he subsequently left the Shadow Cabinet over - of all things - a matter of principle (opposition to Maastricht), she wasted no time in swinging back into line with Labour's cadre of born-again Thatcherites. They see themselves as a vanguard expunging Labour of its last commitments to public services and the welfare state and transforming it into...something really new and radical, like a Tory Party Mark II. ❑

Abysmal rants

"Where's the Marxist paper I can sell my mum?" asks freelance journalist **Dave Osler**, taking a critical look at the current state of the left press.

WITH BOTH the political allegiance of the *Daily Mirror* and the very survival of *New Statesman and Society* now in the balance, we could soon see only two publications in Britain with a five figure-plus circulation and a 'vote Labour' editorial line - *Socialist Worker* and *The Financial Times*.

The task of creating a widely read, open-minded and popular leftwing newspaper has never been more urgent. Yet somehow it doesn't seem to figure too highly on our political agenda.

This is presumably because most active socialists sell or support one of the many small beer left periodicals currently kicking around: *Campaign Group News, Daily Worker/Leninist, Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!, Labour Briefing, Living Marxism, Militant, Morning Star, Newsline, New Worker, Revolutionary History, Socialism From Below, Socialist Appeal, Socialist Organiser, Socialist Outlook, Tribune, Workers Hammer* and *Workers Press*, to name just a selection. None of them match the circulation of *International Freighting Weekly*, the rag where I did my cub reporter stint.

Standards vary wildly, but none have attained the degree of accessibility for the unconverted that is so urgently required. Where's the Marxist paper I can sell to my Mum?

The left needs many publications for many purposes, of course. We need classic agitational papers presenting basic socialist ideas to as wide an audience as possible, and heavyweight reviews examining theoretical questions in great depth.

We need vehicles to debate our differences and opportunites to promote our common projects. We need workplace bulletins, journals for autonomous organisations of the oppressed, and - why not - socialist comics for our kids. Comparatively cheap desk top publishing theoretically puts much of this within our grasp.

Of course, political line is all important. However, there are other considerations too. From a technical viewpoint, left periodicals in Britain range from the merely competent to the piss-poor. Lay-out and design are frequently amateurish. Writing often consists of the most abysmal rants: rework the *Guardian* coverage, tack half the transitional programme on the end and hey presto! instant lefty journalism.

Do we want people to read this stuff or not? Even die-hard politicos find chunks of unbroken and ungrammatical text heavy going, no matter how correct the content. For many products of Britain's third-rate state education system, much of our material is unreadable, full stop. Small wonder that left publications reach such miniscule audiences.

Only the Socialist Workers Party has the resources to produce anything that compares to a good trade press magazine, making *Socialist Worker* the best produced left paper in Britain, with a claimed circulation of up to 40,000.

Yet at times it descends into relentless line-mongering of the worst kind. There is never any debate on any issue whatsoever. Unless Paul Foot is on form in any given week, the paper produces few columns that really hit home, and none of the scoops and exposés that characterise the best socialist journalism.

While industrial reporting remains a strong suit, the unending stream of quotes from (always anonymous) workers who just happen to talk in SWP-friendly soundbites frequently beggars belief. Moreover, the information contained is not always dependably accurate.

Tribune is nicely turned out, and after long years of Kinnockite domination, more open to the hard left than for some time. But it cannot transcend its basic function as an intra-Labour Party talking shop and is never going to set the world on fire.

Briefing is often lots of fun but equally often as dull as a Greater Moscow council state tower block, serving up endless rehashing of the half-baked certitudes of traditional left Labourism. It also gives the disconcerting impression of being produced by and for a rather small clique in half a dozen inner London Labour Parties.

The *Morning Star* is potentially so important to the entire movement that it would be criminal to let it go under. It represents an infrastructure already in place for a project that would cost millions to start from scratch. Rather than gloat at the paper's current difficulties, socialists should help it survive and expand, while arguing for its transformation into a broad based daily open to the full range of left viewpoints.

What of the failure of *socialist*? The generally accepted 'Socialist Society conspiracy' theory is nonsense; the supposed protagonists couldn't organise a conspiracy in a masonic lodge. The prime reason for the paper's collapse was its deliberate failure to reflect the politics of the Socialist Movement, realistically the only way to ensure a dependable base of sellers and financial supporters.

This behaviour was motivated by an almost obsessive desire to differentiate *socialist* from the far left press and to prove to the world it was not, repeat not, a Trot front. Let it be stressed that none of the Trotskyists involved with the project over envisaged it as that. We genuinely sought something open to all strands of socialist opinion.

As it rapidly became evident that the hard left were not wanted on board, and that theirs was the only voice that was not allowed to be heard in the paper's pages, backers deserted in droves. The failure to put a clear 'vote Labour' line at the 1992 general election proved the last straw.

But there is no reason why publications built on collaboration between different left groups is doomed in advance. *Coal Not Dole*, the high-quality bulletin of the National Miners' Support Network, demonstrates this.

It is produced professionally, cheaply and quickly using facilities provided by a number of left papers and individual socialist journalists. There are no arguments over the line: the paper says what the National Union of Mineworkers wants it to say.

The result is a readership of 25,000, proving that when we get our act together we can begin to get our message across. Any takers for relaunching *Socialist Challenge*? ❑

Ronald McDonald v McLibel Two

Big Mac resorted to the libel laws to smash any opposition to the brutal burger business. **Dave Palmer** describes the firm stance taken by two people determined to bite back.

ONE OF the most authoritarian transnational companies on the planet is the world's largest food chain - the union busting, low paying, £20 billion annual turnover McDonald's Hamburger Corporation. McDonald's is notorious for going to any extreme to crush any internal or external opposition.

One of its favourite weapons in the UK is that instrument of the rich and powerful to silence the poor and dissident - the libel laws. But at long last that bloated paranoid bully Ronald McDonald may have bitten off more than he can chew when he took on a couple of penniless anti-McDonald's activists.

In 1985 London Greenpeace (an independent collective) launched a general anti-McDonald's campaign to co-ordinate and strengthen opposition. This led to worldwide anti-McDonald's Day every 16th October. A factsheet: 'What's Wrong With McDonald's - Everything They Don't Want You To Know' was produced and soon translated for use in dozens of countries.

In direct response McDonald's stepped up their own vast propaganda efforts and began to project a 'green', caring image. On the other hand they began to use the legal system to suppress free speech by critics. The Scottish TUC, Channel 4, *The Guardian*, green groups and many others were threatened with costly libel cases and forced to apologise for criticising McDonald's.

In September 1990 individuals connected with London Greenpeace had writs served on them, alleging 'libel' in their factsheet.

Two activists, Helen Steel and Dave Morris - the McLibel Two - resolved to fight on against both the colossal resources of the Big Mac evil empire and a legal system stacked in favour of the rich and powerful. They are both unemployed and are conducting their own defence. Legal aid is unavailable in libel cases.

McDonald's admit that their case is not that Helen and Dave actually wrote or printed the factsheet, but that they handed it out on a couple of occasions. Despite the heavy costs and considerable legal complexities the McLibel Two have attended several preliminary High Court hearings, and drawn up detailed defence documents. In proceedings at the end of 1992 the Two forced McDonald's to reveal details of the variety of spying techniques they used to obtain evidence, including the use of an infiltrator into London Greenpeace. The full public trial is expected to take place this autumn.

Liberty have lodged a claim on the behalf of the Two against the British government at the European Court of Human Rights, on the basis that the unavailability of legal aid in libel cases is a denial of their right to a fair trial under Article 6 of the European Human Rights Convention. If the application is declared admissible in Strasbourg the case could be a major embarrassment to the government which has consistently resisted pressure for extending legal aid. McDonald's tactics initially were to drag out the proceedings, hoping to exhaust or financially cripple the defendants. However, now they realise the defendants' determination to fight the case they are trying to rush the current phase. At a special pre-trial hearing the Two were pitted against McDonald's barrister. Showing a complete lack of concern for the difficulties in preparing their case the judge ordered the Two to submit all the relevant legal documentation and available evidence they wish to use at trial to the court by May. A trial date will then be given.

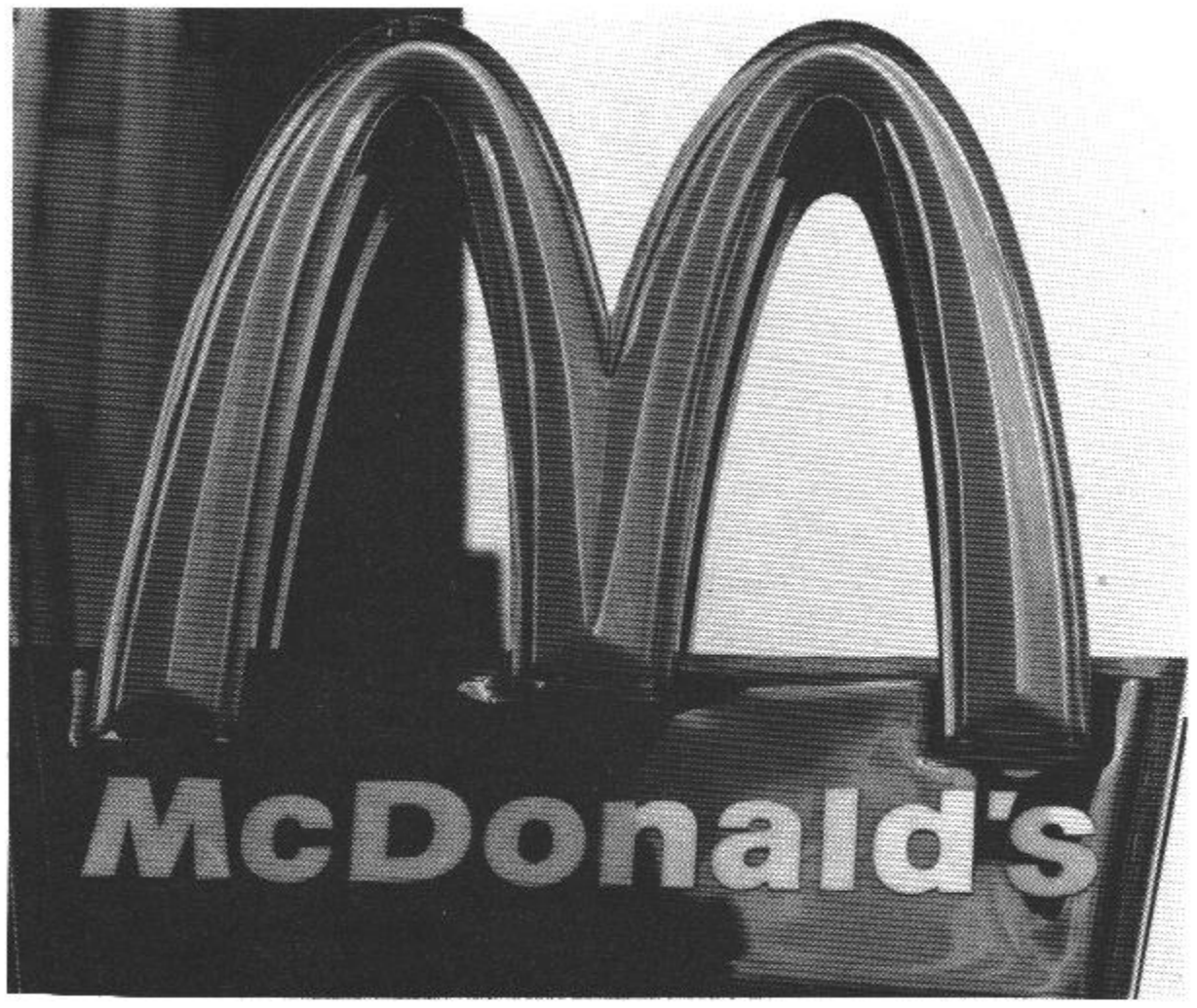


Photo: Bryn Griffiths

At the hearing McDonald's applied for trial without jury on the grounds that "matters of nutrition, health and treatment of animals are too complex for members of the public". This decision was postponed to the May hearing.

Whatever the outcome the trial will provide the Two with a public forum in front of the world's media. They will be able to publish, without fear of libel writs, the facts about McDonald's practices. In contrast to the craven mainstream media - which has meekly submitted to Ronald the Bully's intimidation - the McLibel Two are bravely fighting in defence of free speech and democratic rights.

The McLibel Support Campaign was formed to give Helen and Dave practical support, financial backing and the publicity and solidarity they need. There will be a week of local protests in the week before the trial and a demonstration at the High Court on the first day. ❑

● **Send messages of support and donations to:**
The McLibel Support Campaign
c/o London Greenpeace,
5 Caledonian Road, London N1.
Tel / Fax 071-837 7557

Jack of all trades — in treachery

One year ago *Labour Briefing* broke the story of Frank Johnson, locked up for life for a crime he did not commit. Human rights activist **Andy Parr** now examines the pivotal role in that case played by police informer Jack Tierney.

ON 29TH September 1976 the ass which is British Justice brayed, as it did so many times during that decade, when innocent Irishman Frank Johnson was sentenced to life with a recommendation of 20 years for the murder of Jack Sheridan. He was convicted almost totally on the evidence of two men - Jack Tierney and David Smart.

Let's look at the strange career of Jack Tierney - police informer and agent provocateur.

Before that, however, it is important to realise the role of the police grass in British crime. Contrary to the myth of the case - solving Inspector Morses so beloved of fiction, police work has always relied on 'information received'. Even where scientific evidence is vital in securing a conviction, usually some 'touting' is necessary to tell the police where to look.

Frequently the informer feels, and is given, licence to commit crimes off his own bat. Such was the case with Jack Tierney.

Hailing from Waterford, one of many children, he claimed his father beat him and locked him in cupboards, leading to claustrophobia and a fear of the dark in later life. Prison psychiatrists who noted these points found no irony in the fact that he later obtained work on the London underground in the 1960s.

In 1970, back in Ireland, to where he smuggled condoms, Tierney was involved in an armed robbery of a Waterford creamery with three other men. Returning to a rubbish dump the following day to divide up the spoils, the robbers found much of it missing. Each accused the others of taking it, and in the ensuing fracas Tierney was shot five times, earning him the nickname 'Bullet Proof Jack'. Shortly after, he was seen being wined and dined in Dublin's Gresham Hotel, and it is believed that he was then recruited by British Special Branch.

In June 1972 Andy Ellesmore, who had helped in the defence of the Angry Brigade, was approached by a man who offered to put him in touch with an Irishman who had information on the Special Branch and its methods of compiling dossiers on political activists. 'Agitprop', the London bookshop he ran, had already been raided several times by the Branch, and so Ellesmore was interested in the offer. On 23rd June, he went to a Notting Hill pub with Pauline Conroy, a defendant in the Angry Brigade case, whose Turkish husband was facing deportation. Here they met Tierney who promised the files, and a further meeting was arranged, although Conroy said she could not attend. Later at Ellesmore's trial Tierney said he had been ordered by his police handlers to ensure that Conroy attended, and a woman PC Carol Scard was brought in to act as his girlfriend. A bug was placed in Tierney's clothing to relay the conversation in the pub direct to a Flying Squad car.

At the meeting Tierney offered not files but guns "to help the Angry Brigade out", but Ellesmore declined the offer. The police at the trial said that their tape-machine had failed before the refusal could be recorded! The final meeting took place the following day and Tierney again pressed Ellesmore to go and get Conroy. The bookseller went to the lavatory where he was immediately arrested on a charge of conspiracy to secure firearms, and twenty minutes later Conroy was arrested on the same charge.

The trial began in May 1973, but Conroy had already fled to Algiers with her husband. Tierney appeared as star police witness, and admitted to a long history as a police agent both in Britain and Ireland. The judge warned the jury that if they believed the defence case, the police must be "wicked, wicked people". After eight hours, the jury acquitted Ellesmore.

After a visit to Ireland in 1974, Frank Johnson received a call from Tierney whom he has known as a casual drinking partner. He was amazed to hear from him, as he believed he had been killed in the 1970 incident. Tierney attempted to inveigle Frank into armed robberies, and to show he was not interested, Frank foolishly revealed that some months before he had looked after £4,000 for his employer Jack Sheridan, and could easily have stolen that had he wanted to.

We now know from documents from the organisation Justice that "Tierney acted for the police in order that they could keep an eye on whom they suspected of involvement in IRA activities". Clearly he was doing this, and more, when together with Smart he planned the murder of Sheridan. The following day newspapers led with "IRA behind Human Firebomb Attack", but when the intended victim did not die the police were able to fall back on the robbery motive.

Tierney was by now becoming too hot to handle, and must have been seen as a loose cannon. Accordingly he was sent down with Smart and Frank Johnson. There is clear evidence that he continued his work in prison in return for certain favours. On remand in Brixton he was placed on the same landing as IRA prisoners such as Shane O'Doherty and the members of the Balcombe Street Gang, and approached all of them with offers of 'help', promising he had a safe route for smuggled letters.

Tierney is now believed to be out of jail. Has he finally learnt that he has been used by the British State? Who knows? Either way he has many questions to answer. ❑

Jailed for joint enterprise

JUSTICE

MICHAEL CALLENDER was sentenced to life imprisonment in May 1991 for the murder of Timothy Coleman. **Rachel Graham, co-ordinator of the Michael Callender Campaign, reports.**

Coleman died in the early hours of 16th June, 1990, whilst being evicted from the George Robey pub in Finsbury Park, London. He had been stabbed twice. The man who handled the eviction was bouncer Michael Callender. It was his job to remove troublemakers as quickly and cleanly as possible and that required both hands. In the poorly lit entrance to the pub, Michael was joined by another bouncer who helped Coleman on his way. Throughout his eviction, Coleman struggled against Michael's double handed grip.

At the trial, the prosecution case was weak. Witnesses disagreed on what had happened and continually contradicted each other. Nobody actually saw the stabbing. If Michael needed both hands to remove Coleman, he could not have stabbed him as the prosecution at first claimed.

Although the trial evidence clearly indicated that Michael could not have stabbed the victim, this did not deter the prosecution. When the whole basis of their case had been destroyed, they merely moved the goalposts. Now, instead of being the killer, Michael was an accomplice. Although the prosecution claimed that Michael must have known about the existence of the murder weapon and the possibility that a crime might be committed, there was no evidence to suggest this.

Michael was advised throughout to say nothing and was not even called to give evidence in his own defence. The jury must have found it difficult to understand why he offered no defence while denying the crime.

The trial lasted four weeks and was long and complicated. The jury got bored. At the end of a week-long adjournment because Michael was ill, the judge would not allow the defence to repeat its summing-up which the jury had heard one week earlier. Instead she took two and a half days over her own summing-up. As confused and contradictory as this was, it nonetheless sealed Michael's fate.

The police could not have had a genuine belief that Michael stabbed Coleman or that he knew he had been stabbed. So why did they arrest him?

In fact, Michael went to the police of his own accord to tell them everything he knew about the events of that night. On bad legal advice, however, he told them nothing.

The police didn't even bother to verify accounts of the incident. Why should they? With six of the key witnesses living together, the stories would surely match. They did, however, 'ease' a pending drug charge against one of the witnesses - a fact which was admitted in court.

At the time of the murder police were searching for another bouncer, Andrew Williams, who was involved in the incident with Timothy Coleman. A warrant still exists for Williams but he has never been traced or called on to account for his actions.

The Michael Callender Campaign is about more than one man's innocence. It is also about a fundamental principle of law - joint enterprise - which effects us all. On the basis of this conviction, any of us could be found guilty of a crime if we are in the company of someone who commits one.

● **Contact the Michael Callender Campaign, PO Box 2973, London N10 3UQ. Tel. 081 883 6434**

Stand by the accused

JUSTICE

THE JUSTICE FOR the Casement Park Accused Campaign iscalling for Labour movement organisations to endorse this model resolution:

This meeting notes the following -

On the 6th March 1988 three unarmed republicans were shot dead in Gibraltar by the SAS. At the subsequent funeral of the three the loyalist Michael Stone launched a murderous hand-grenade and gun attack on the mourners resulting in three further fatalities.

Those attending the funeral of Kevin Brady (one of Stone's victims) believed themselves to be once again under attack when a car containing two armed men drove at speed into the cortege and a shot was discharged. Acting in self-defence a group of mourners disarmed the two assailants, moved them to the nearby Casement Park and searched them.

It emerged that the two men were undercover soldiers and subsequently they were taken to a piece of wasteground a quarter of a mile away where they were shot, an action later claimed by the IRA.

This meeting further notes -

Those who carried out this shooting have never been identified or arrested.

Notwithstanding this, over 200 mourners have been arrested and questioned by the RUC. Over 41 have been charged in relation to these events, with five men currently serving life sentences although none of them have been accused of carrying out the shootings nor with membership of the IRA.

Three of those serving life, Pat Kane, Michael Timmons and Sean Kelly, were not even present at the scene of the shootings. Their convictions rest on the wholly spurious grounds that they shared a common purpose with an IRA unit of whose existence they were unaware.

Much concern has been expressed about these convictions by Amnesty International, Liberty, the Haldane Society, the Committee on the Administration of Justice and Labour's Ireland spokesperson Kevin MacNamara who has described them as "unsafe and unsatisfactory". The Justice for the Casement Park Accused Campaign seeks to raise these and other matters.

This meeting therefore resolves to:

- invite a speaker from the campaign to a future meeting

- affiliate to the campaign and promote its activities.

● **Affiliation rates: £10 organisations, £5/£2 individuals. Leaflets are also available from the campaign c/o Green Ink Bookshop, 8 Archway Mall, London N19 5RG.**

Sharpening conflict in a shrinking world

The rise of communalism in India, extensively covered in recent issues of *Briefing*, is part of a global phenomenon - and it needs global socialist answers. *Labour Briefing* interviews **Achin Vanaik**, journalist, anti-communal activist and author of *The Painful Transition* (Verso), a seminal Marxist work on modern India.

LB: The British media presented the events in Delhi on 25th February as a bloodbath in which the Hindu nationalist BJP was on the receiving end of brutal treatment by the Indian police. Is that a true picture?

AV: By Indian standards it was an exceptionally peaceful occasion! Something like 100,000 people were mobilised by the BJP but not a single shot was fired. No one was killed. All those arrested were released in a day's time. Politically speaking, it was a success story for the central government and a failure for the BJP.

LB: Can the BJP and the forces it represents be defeated by government bans and police crackdowns?

AV: They cannot be defeated by central government crackdowns alone. You cannot defeat a political force purely by administrative measures. But it does not follow that administrative firmness by the central government against the BJP is not necessary and important. This was the first time in many years that the central government showed any firmness in regard to the BJP. This is welcome but by itself not enough. In fact, some of the repressive measures they've taken, such as the dismissal of the BJP state governments in Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, were quite uncalled for. It was clearly seen as a political manoeuvre by the Congress Party and it backfired. There has to be a systematic political mobilisation of all secular forces against the BJP. If this is accompanied by firmness of purpose shown in a judidicious way by the central government then there is no reason why the BJP cannot be pushed back.

LB: So what's the next step for the BJP?

AV: The BJP is still setting the political agenda. Through its sister organisations, notably the Rashtriya Swamsevak Sangh (RSS), it can engage in sustained mobilisations. The RSS has something like two million members spread out across the country and a well-established infrastructure which provides a tremendous cadre base for the BJP. Their strategy is to keep the political pot boiling. Because the electoral arithmetic still works against them, they have to try to create a communal wave, a surge of popular emotion on a communal basis which spreads across large areas of the country. The most emotive issue at the BJP's disposal is the issue of building the Ram temple on the site of the destroyed mosque in Ayodhya; they are also now testing the waters to see if they should mount campaigns for the destruction of two other mosques in Mathura and Varanasi. The BJP will try to use these issues to instigate a communal wave through planned incidents of communal violence timed to coincide with election campaigns. Much depends on what the government does.

LB: Is the growth of the BJP linked in any way to Congress 'liberalisation' of the economy? Is it also a reflection of the bankruptcy of the Nehruvian model of secular democracy?

AV: There is no doubt that the BJP's rise is intimately linked to the decline of the Congress Party and the vanishing credibility of the Nehruvian model of social justice, secularism and democracy. Though this model has succeeded in establishing what I would call a weak democracy and a weak secular state (or at least a formally non-denominational state) it has not provided social justice and is seen to be exhausted. There has been an escalating sense that India is not a success story and this has been a crucial factor in the rise of the BJP. After all, the message of the Hindu nationalist forces has been the same since 1925 when the RSS was founded. What has changed is the receptivity to this message because of the ideological and political vacuum left by the Congress.

The impact of liberalisation is more difficult. In a general sense it is true that in so far as this policy has increased economic and social polarisation in India then one can reasonably assume that this has been of some help to the BJP. But finding a more direct linkage is a problem. Liberalisation puts the BJP in something of a quandary. They have a mixed social and economic base. They have been reaching upwards; they can now count on considerable support among the upper middle classes and in the India diaspora. These groups are happy with the liberalisation programme, whereas the BJP's original base in the lower middle class, amongst small traders, is uneasy about its implications for increased foreign investment and big business domination. The Congress liberalisation programme has hurt the working class and the poor in the countryside; while the BJP has made some inroads among these groups they are not its main growth areas.

LB: Is there a connection between what's happening in India and the rise elsewhere in the world of various forms of communalism, fundamentalism, regional and national chauvinism, racism, etc.?

AV: Most definitely. The Indian situation must be seen as a specific manifestation of a global trend: *the politics of cultural exclusivism*. What is common to all the phenomena to which you refer is the politics of belonging, the politics of identity in highly negative form. What is common to Christian, Islamic or Jewish fundamentalism, Hindu or Buddhist nationalism, nationalist irredentism in Europe, racism and anti-immigrant xenophobia is, interestingly enough, the fact that the nation becomes the arena of contestation. The questions are: who belongs to the *nation* and to whom does the nation belong? It's whether you belong or not that will decide whether you have access to the cake. In a situation of overall economic and social decay, even in advanced capitalism, the cake is getting smaller all the time and the number of claimants to it

larger. Unfortunately, who 'belongs' seems to be determined first of all by establishing who does 'not belong'. The politics of 'us vs. them' has become more important for this basic material reason: capitalism in this phase has not been able to meet the needs and expectations, even the diminished expectations, it has itself bred.

But there is another factor. Modernity is characterised by change at a rate and a depth qualitatively different from the past. This re-enforces the tendency to try to grab on to something secure. The present and the future are insecure and bleak. The past by definition is more secure. So one looks to past identities or traditional certitudes, even if they are invented within a falsified version of the past, for some sense of stability. This may sound psychologistic but I think it is a dimension that has to be added on to the more traditional materialist explanations.

LB: Are we talking then about a particular phase of world capitalism? A highly globalised and mobile capitalism based on information technology?

AV: Yes. Nobody is an island now - less so than ever before. After 1945, there was the promise of socialism and the promise of capitalism. Now, temporarily no doubt, the record of actually existing socialism has put paid to the first promise. But capitalism has also not delivered the goods. Historically speaking, socialist politics has been about what one might call the politics of life chances. Living a decent life, with decent health, housing, jobs, etc. was what was seen as centrally important. Now in late capitalism the politics of life *choices* has become more important. In the West, after 1945, for the first time substantial numbers of people were able to engage in the politics of life choices. In the Third World, the politics of life chances remains paramount for the vast majority - but here too the politics of life choices is making itself felt. You're talking here about the peculiar problems created by the partial and uneven successes of world capitalism since 1945.

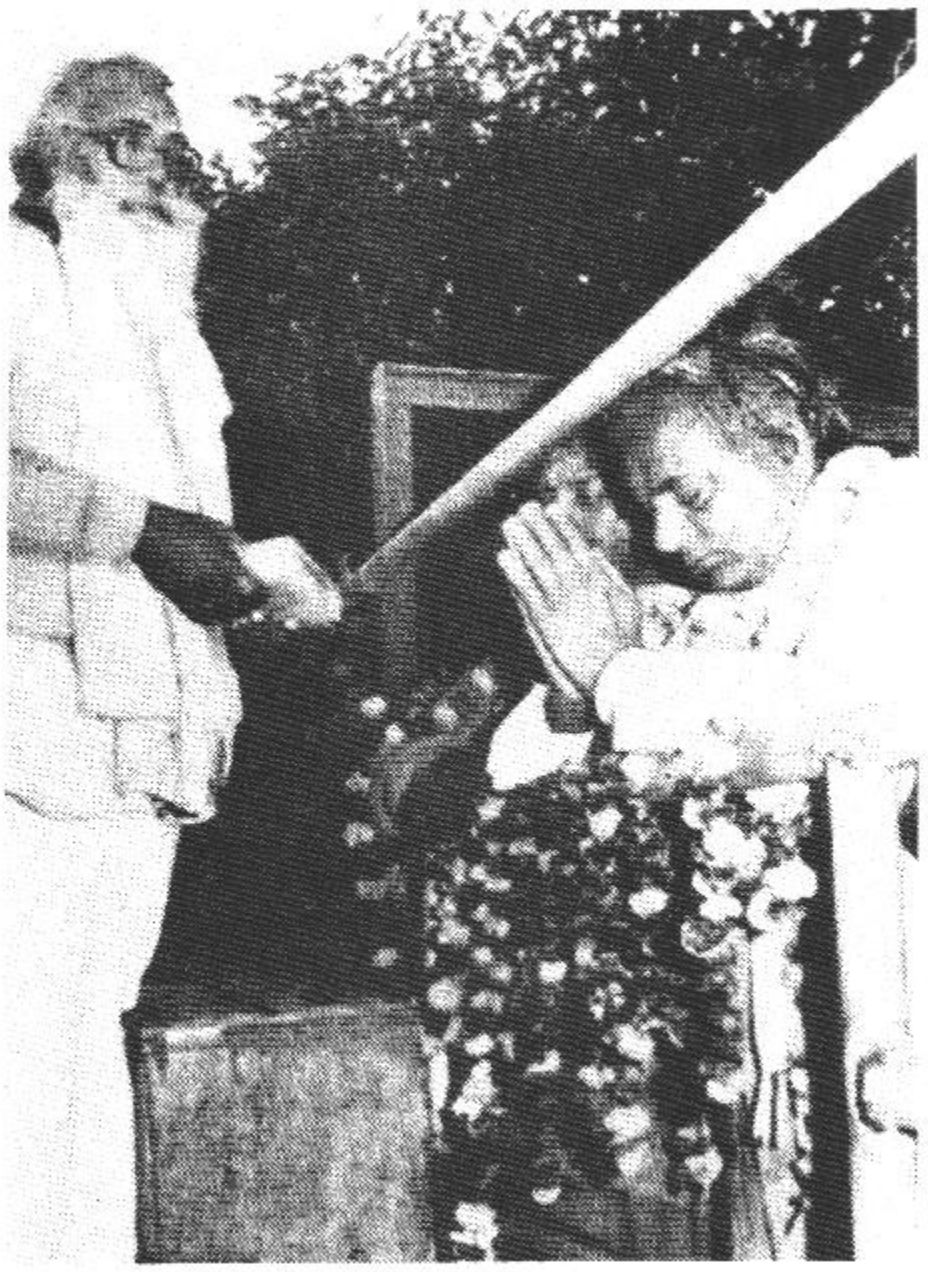
LB: Has 'liberal democracy' triumphed? Is this the 'end of history'?

AV: The 'end of history' rhetoric really comes down to two propositions. First, that there is not and cannot be any alternative to liberal capitalism. Second, that the future of liberal capitalism is bright. The second seems to me entirely unconvincing. As to the first, we have to be open to the possibility that we may just have a continuation of capitalism - this can only mean barbarism, in Luxemburg's formula. But we should also be clear that this is not necessarily the case. There is no good reason for doubting that an alternative does exist; the real question is can it be made a reality, which depends on struggles which change the global relationship of forces.

In the Third World, over the past twenty years, the overall trend, despite many ups and downs, is towards quasi-democracy or guided democracy. The democratic ideal is more important to more people now than ever before. At the same time the prospect of capitalism resolving the problems felt by these huge masses coming under the democratic umbrella seems less and less likely. The crisis of socialism may have inaugurated an era in which the crisis of capitalism becomes more and more visible.

LB: Does that means that democratic processes have to become more central for socialists than they have been in the past?

AV: Absolutely. Everywhere - in the West and the Third World. The central problem for socialists is not to convince people that capitalism is bad. What we have to do is rebuild the promise of socialism. We have to reawaken in great masses of people a belief in the both the desirability and feasibility of socialism. And to do that we have to emphasise socialism's democratic credentials, socialism as a fulfilment of the democratic aspirations felt by the masses.



BJP leaders pray at the site of demolished mosque in Ayodhya

LB: It would seem that in the world you have been describing the fundamental socialist principle of internationalism is more pertinent than ever before.

AV: How on earth is the working class in even the most advanced capitalist countries going to fight even its basic trade union battles against multi-nationals without international organisation? In Third World countries it is even more essential. As capitalism has extended its global reach the gap between their level of organisation on a world scale and ours has widened dramatically. Capitalists understand this all too well; they know they can only survive by internationalising themselves - the same is true for us. And here I must say frankly that the greatest responsibility must lie with the working class organisations where they are strongest, which means in the advanced capitalist countries. Politically, of course, these are precisely the areas where the hold of internationalism is weakest. It is easier for us in the Third World to recognise the need for international organisation but we don't have the same material capacity to initiate and sustain it.

A world proletariat does objectively exist, but the subjective consciousness of it is weak and indeed has taken a terrible beating in recent times. However, the problem is not only one of subjective political leadership or lack of it. It is also the result of something which is happening on the ground - the increasing fragmentation and segmentation of the working class internationally which places objective obstacles to the development of this wider internationalist consciousness. These have to be tackled. To do that I believe socialists have to become more ecumenical. This is not to say that those socialist groupings which are working to build party-type organisations at an international level are wrong - but it does mean that all of us as socialists have to become much more modest. We must defend the value of what we are doing while recognising the value of what others on the left - from other traditions and other countries - are doing. In the new world context we have to find new ways of working together.

● The Alliance Against Communalism and for Democracy in South Asia is organising solidarity with anti-communal activists in India and planning to mobilise against communal forces here in Britain. A number of Labour Councils give grants or other forms of support to bodies linked to the RSS and BJP. Find out more from the Alliance, c/o Southall Monitoring Group, 6a South Road, Southall, Middlesex, UB1.

German government covers-up Kurdish slayings

AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY in *Briefing*, on 17th September 1992 four leading members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) were assassinated in a Greek restaurant in Berlin, Germany. Following a government investigation, *Die Stern* magazine obtained copies of its findings that clearly show a major cover-up has occurred.

Journalists Dieter Krause and Walter Mathes claim that the findings show clearly that the murderers were Iranian agents and that links exist between Bonn and Teheran. The article then goes on to highlight the lucrative deal between Mercedes Benz and Iran that involves selling over 900 heavy vehicles in the last quarter of 1992 alone.

The enquiry had also shown that initial police investigations were actually very successful and that within two weeks they had detained a couple of suspects, with four other people arrested later. Large sums of money [10,000 deutschmarks and 31,500 Lebanese pounds] had been found on the suspects at their arrest. According to confessions, two diplomats at the Iranian Embassy in Bonn were also involved - thereby explaining the German government's nervousness.

In response, the Bonn regime has denied these allegations and has stressed that the German High Court will examine the case thoroughly. However, this is at odds with the investigators' protests against government interference.

To head off this major scandal German government representative Bernd Schmidbauer held a secret meeting with police and diplomatic personnel that resulted in the Iranian ambassador removing the two suspects from German soil.

The bravery of both the Stern journalists and the investigation team is to be applauded. However, this contrasts with the shameful approach of the Bonn government which puts business sales ahead of justice. It should now be inundated with protests to expose its shoddy dealings.

Kurdish socialist paper under attack in Turkey

TURKEY CLAIMS TO be a "Western-style" democracy and has applied to join the EEC. Yet democratic rights do not apparently extend to freedom of the press, particularly for Kurdish and left-wing magazines trying to operate in the eastern vilayets of Turkey under "martial law".

The weekly publication *Azadi* has had 13 out of 36 issues impounded and destroyed. State prosecutors have demanded more than fifty years imprisonment and fines of over one and a half billion Turkish Lira (about £120,000) in court cases still outstanding. Amongst such outrageous "crimes" that *Azadi* has committed has been to publish the Council of Europe's decision on financial investment in Kurdistan. The government immediately impounded all copies.

Nor is the repression simply directed against the paper and its editors - even its freelance correspondents are harassed and put under pressure. Eyub Seyrek publishes the *Viransehir Gazette* and also acts as local correspondent for both *Azadi* and for the left-wing Turkish national *Cumhuriyet* ("The Republic" - somewhat akin to the *Daily Mirror*). Viransehir is a sleepy town on the road between Urfa and Mardin and is neither an area of major guerilla activity nor exactly a hot-bed of radical intrigue. Yet Eyub was arrested and tortured for 15 days and is now being held in Mus prison.

As a result of the repression, many distributors and newspaper kiosks - a major way of selling papers in Turkey - have had to cancel orders and the workers on *Azadi* have to organize sales and distribution themselves in many areas. Now even possession of the paper can result in persecution - a reader was attacked in the Baglar suburb of Diyarbakir on 2nd October 1992 by a gang of plain-clothes policemen for what appeared to be nothing worse than daring to read the paper in public.

Azadi is associated with the newly-relaunched Socialist Party of Kurdistan and campaigns both for social change and Kurdish national self-determination.

Socialists and trades unionists in Britain should protest strongly against this repression.

● **Please write to: Suleiman Demirel, Prime Minister, c/o Turkish National Assembly, Ankara, Turkey, and send copies to Kadir Akel, *Azadi* Foreign Representative, Postfach 42 01 22, D5000, Koln 41, Germany, and to *Kurdistan Focus*, 129a Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QG.**

Newroz - the Kurdish people's celebration

Keith Veness reports. Long ago, before humanity had its organised religions and pontificating priests, the celebrations of people revolved around the key dates in the year - harvest time, midwinter, the coming of spring, the longest day etc.

Organised religions have always resented 'people's festivals' and have converted them into 'saints' days' or banned them altogether. Yet two of these have survived despite repression and proscription and are still with us today. One is the midwinter festival ('Yule') the other is that of welcoming the Vernal (Spring) Equinox, the time when the days become longer than the nights and winter has clearly ended. This festival has been kept alive throughout many communities in the Middle East but none more strongly than by the Kurdish people.

This day is called Newroz (New Day), and has been celebrated for thousands of years in the Zagros Mountains and surroundings areas.

1992 saw Newroz celebrated for the first time in a free Kurdistan - at least in Northern Iraq. However, South-East Turkey saw the massacre of unarmed Kurdish demonstrators in towns like Cizre, Nusaybin, Sirnak and Bitlis. The people were appalled to find that the police and the military were determined to repress any public show of celebration, and banners were torn and crowds attacked in an unprovoked display of violence.

However, there is no doubt that this year will see Newroz celebrated again (21st March) in Turkish Kurdistan - either in secret or in defiance of the government's restrictions. Free Kurdistan will see large and happy gatherings on the day and Kurds in Iran, Syria and the former Soviet Union will ensure another Newroz is suitably marked.

These days there are large Kurdish communities in many countries and Newroz will be celebrated with gusto in Germany, France, Sweden, USA and Britain. It is a tradition that progressive people everywhere could usefully copy!

Clash of capitalist currents

Yeltsin and democracy. Are the two compatible? Who are the real authoritarians? **Gus Fagan** analyses the current political turmoil in Russia.

WESTERN SUPPORT for Boris Yeltsin, in the name of democracy, is transparently hypocritical. He openly threatened use of emergency powers and the dissolution of Russia's elected Congress. But what about the political currents that have formed a loose bloc of support for Congress chair Ruslan Khasbulatov? Are those forces really defenders of Russia's dispossessed, opposing the transition to capitalism?

To avoid some major misconceptions about what is involved in these conflicts, engendered by the drive towards a change of system in Russia and in the rest of eastern Europe, we must realise that neither of these mainstream political currents is opposed to a capitalist transition. The policy divisions and the groupings that were brought to public attention in the Russian Congress recently exist right across eastern Europe, although taking different forms in each country.

There is a fundamental policy split between two groupings. On the one hand, the Westernising current, favouring open-market capitalism and gearing the transition and economic programmes towards Western capital and investment. This orientation, the basis of the policies of the Polish and Hungarian as well as the Russian governments, is provoking a backlash throughout this whole region from disparate groups that are coalescing around a "national capitalist" project of class formation and development. This latter grouping is represented in Poland by the Christian Nationalists, in Hungary by the smallholders and sections of the ruling Democratic Forum and in Slovakia by the ruling nationalists around Meciar.

There is no doubt that, for the moment, Yeltsin is the leader of the Westernising group in Russia. Deputy Prime Minister for Economics Boris Fyodorov, a strongly pro-Western ex-banker, recently described Yeltsin as "our main hope and support". The various groupings around Khasbulatov (who sided with Yeltsin and the radical reform programme back in 1990) are by no means a cohesive bloc. But they do share a common orientation towards a more national capitalist development, breaking with the demands and open market policies insisted on by the IMF, the World Bank and Western states. In its more radical forms, this current can be strongly anti-Western, as well as anti-liberal and anti-democratic. Groups similar to the Osurka group in Hungary, which calls for radical actions against Jews, communists, liberals and assorted enemies, can be found in Russia and in most other countries in eastern Europe.

But the authoritarian threat doesn't come from this grouping alone. As is clear from the case of Lech Walesa in Poland, a strongly Westernising current in economic policy can combine with denunciation of parliamentary institutions and the threat of presidentialist measures. Westernising governments in Hungary and Czechoslovakia have launched strong attacks on trade unions and ex-Communist Parties. Yeltsin threatens disbandment of Congress and strong presidential rule.

The authoritarian threat from the ruling liberal-market currents in these countries is exacerbated by the crisis of political representation. None of the mainstream parties in power are anything more than skeletal organisations completely lacking any social base and in no way representative of the bulk of the population. An opinion poll carried out in Russia recently gave Yeltsin a popularity rating of 22 per cent and Khasbulatov 5 per cent. Faced with the difficulties created by the transition (austerity, declining living standards, massive decline in production, unemployment) and facing annihilation in the next round of elections, the attraction of 'emergency measures' is obvious.



Yeltsin supporters demonstrate in front of the Kremlin

This division over policy options becomes more intense as the various groupings struggle to attract a popular base. Here a more 'populist' authoritarianism makes its presence felt as the more nationalist currents try to capture support among those who feel threatened by the transition process.

The Clinton administration has let it be known that there would be no objection if Yeltsin resorted to special powers, including the suspension of parliament, but it would draw the line at a military crackdown. When asked what he thought of Yeltsin's possible use of emergency powers, Clinton's reply was: "I don't think it would serve any useful purpose for me to try and interpret the Russian constitution right now".

In this intensive battle happening in Russia and many other east European countries over what 'variety' of capitalism is to be created, the interests and views of the working class have little or no place. ❑

REVIEWS

How Yugoslavia fell

Mike Phipps reviews

The Destruction of Yugoslavia

by Branka Magas, Verso Books, £12.95.

NO SUBJECT CONFUSES the left like Yugoslavia. Responses to the current conflict include nostalgia for the Tito regime, hostility to nationalism in general or Foreign Office-led resentment against Germany. Yugoslavia, argues Branka Magas, brings out in some of the left a double standard bordering on racism: "the fetishization of supranational states in the East by the very people who fear them like poison in the West."

Magas studies the history of Yugoslavia to discover the roots of the current conflict. But she makes the important observation that to plumb the depths of time may not explain why events are taking this form at this moment. Certainly Tito's great stature was crucial to Yugoslavia's survival. But equally his purges of the ruling party in the early seventies helped create the leaders who would destroy it.

A turning-point was the emergence in the mid-eighties of Serbian party chief Slobodan Milosevic and his combination of crude populist nationalism and neo-stalinist methods of organisation. His Serbian nationalism and religious bigotry poisoned the intellectual climate in Belgrade, claims Magas, leaving him free to take a repressive and confrontational approach to workers' struggles. His 'enemy within' at this time were the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, but this would soon change.

The media quickly fell into line. Once liberal news weeklies ran admiring articles on nationalist figures elsewhere - Franco in Spain, D'Annunzio in Italy. Given these antecedents, Magas's assessment of Milosevic's regime as "a racially based proto-fascist formation that can survive only by creating new sources of war and conflict" does not sound far-fetched.

Milosevic's aim is simple, argues Magas: to represent all Serbs wherever they live and regardless of the rights of nations and communities where Serbs happen to be a minority. In 1987 he prepared the way for this by constitutional changes.

Purges of all his opponents in the Serbian party followed. When mass demonstrations broke out against this two years ago, the army was deployed on the streets of Belgrade against the people for the first time in the country's post-war history: two people were killed. By then the governments of Vojvodina, Montenegro and Kosovo had been toppled by Serbian loyalists.

Magas argues there was nothing inevitable about this. The idea of Yugoslavia was not a pipedream - but its viability did rest on full equality for its component nationalities. Only twelve months ago Bosnia-Herzegovina held a referendum in which two-thirds of the population voted for "a state of equal citizens and nations". Days later the Serbian army invaded.

Today Yugoslavia no longer exists. The Serbian army is waging a war of territorial conquest in which peace-loving non-combatant Serbs are victims along with all the nationalities that stand in the way of a Greater Serbia. The EC's repeated attempts at a solution of ethnic cantonisation logically lead to and reward ethnic cleansing. The bankruptcy of international diplomacy is matched only by the confusion of the left.

Against that confusion Magas has assembled a clear and powerful case. Some of the book has appeared elsewhere and the editing could be improved, but these minor nitpicks do not disfigure this timely and well-argued book.

Special offers for *Briefing* readers!
30% off cover prices!

Order Branka Magas's new book, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia*, for only £10.57, including p&p, per copy. Also available: Boris Kagarlitsky's new book, *The Disintegration of the Monolith*, for only £7.67 (cover price £10.95) plus £1.50 p&p (£1.00 for each additional copy). Also still available at discount: *Defeat from the Jaws of Victory*, by Richard Heffernan and Mike Marqusee - only £10.46, including p&p, per copy.

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Briefing's guide to travel writing



by Don Rocinante

THERE IS GOOD travel literature and a great deal of bad. Bad travel writing is not necessarily bad just because the author lacks the skill to describe the grandeur of the scenery or activity he or she is describing. It is more a question of attitude: a traveller must be more than a tourist. Points are gained for insight and empathy. A bad travel writer values the geography more than the people. References to the 'locals' or 'natives', Dervla Murphy take note, indicate bad travel writing.

Bad travel writing heaps up too much incidental detail. As a general rule, meals should be mentioned only if they can be written about interestingly for at least a paragraph or are integral to the plot (starvation, food poisoning, etc). Bad travel writing may be superficial or too boisterous. It does not depend on the subject.

In the 1930s Elli Maillart and Peter Fleming both wrote books about the journey they made on pack animals through the Gobi desert together, but the latter's *News from Tartary* is by far the more readable.

Good travel writing is usually more about people than scenery. The very best is multi-dimensional: Ronald Wright's travels in Central America (*Time Among the Maya*) and the Andes (*Cut Stones and Crossroads)* are a seamless texture of historical insight, political analysis and human detail. The cultural and historical observations do not stand apart from daily life but are expressed through natural occurances. Robert Byron, on the other hand, in *The Road to Oxiana* deploys his own off-beat humour to engage the reader's interest in his passion for archaeology.

Seemingly pointless, even gimmicky, journeys do not automatically throw up bad travel writing. Quite the opposite: Gavin Young crossing the world on a succession of different ships in *Slow Boats to China* and *Slow Boats Home* and Alan Booth walking the length of Japan in *The Road to Sata* transcend these limitations because their primary purpose is to meet people. For these writers humanity clearly outranks topography.

Paul Theroux takes this even further. For him the location is almost incidental to the human interaction. In his book on China, *Riding the Iron Rooster*, a rounded picture of the way the Cultural Revolution affected people's lives is built up jigsaw-like, from countless casual conversations rather than recycled research. In earlier work, Theroux's travels are almost a pretext for talking about himself. In *The Saddest Pleasure* Moritz Thomsen takes this to extremes, hingeing the story of his entire life on a retirement trip through Brazil. In his camel-borne wanderings with the desert-based tribes of western Sudan, Michael Asher reassembles his life after years wasted in the army and still finds room for penetrating anthropological and ecological observations in *A Desert Dies*. In *Nothing to Declare* Mary Morris unpicks her unsatisfactory existence as she bums around Mexico. Real travel is not camerawork: it is a highly personal experience full of sensations and associations that connect with half-remembered events and feelings.

One of the best examples of 'travel as a distillation of life' is Patrick Leigh Fermor's *A Time of Gifts*, the uncompleted story of his year and a half walk across Europe to Istanbul in the 1930s at the age of 18, written up in the 1980s, from the original notebooks with the benefit of fifty years' hindsight and learning.

Unfortunately only a few of these greats are assembled in a new Picador edition of *Worst Journeys*. Anthologies are always perilous but this one, in its search for ever more entertaining mishaps and scrapes. contains some of the worst aspects ot travel writing: humourless complaining, the westerner's hauteur, naked racism. There are a few honourable exceptions, particularly Indian writer Rohinton Mistry and Argentinian Alberto Manguel. Some of the war reportage and genuine exploration has a sense of purpose which relieves the unremitting vacuity of the rest, but most of it serves to remind just how self-regarding much travel writing can be.

On the other hand, in Richard Gott's *Land Without Evil*, the author is almost invisible. Tastefully presented but indigestibly written, Gott's journey across the South American watershed in Brazil and Bolivia delves into the history of the region and that of the Jesuit frontier missions in particular. Unfortunately there is so little of interest about the journey itself - much of it made in relative comfort compared to other Latin American travellers - that the overall impression is of disconnected historical episodes, too fragmentary to be a history and too dry to be absorbing.

***Worst Journeys,* ed Keath Fraser, Picador, 1993, £6.99**

***Land Without Evil* by Richard Gott, Verso 1993, £18.95**



Comrades

Clare Short is currently Labour's lucky representative at **Socialist International** nosh-ups and boondoggles. "I came back from last month's meeting of the Socialist International in Athens feeling optimistic for the first time in ages," she told *Tribune* readers. "The SI is growing and becoming stronger. At its meetings, parties from our political tradition hammer out positions that address the realities of life in all parts of the world."

She neglected to mention that one part of the world which the SI bigwigs preferred to pass over in silence was Italy, where the **Italian Socialist Party (PSI)**, a long-standing SI affiliate, has been exposed in recent months as nothing other than a racket, its leaders kingpins of graft who used their positions in local and national governments to defraud Italians of billions of lire.

Apparently Short felt right at home with these gangsters, who remain solidly ensconced within not only the SI but the new "Party of European Socialists" into which we were all involuntarily inducted a few months back. The March issue of *Agenda*, the bulletin of the Socialist Group in the Euro-Parliament, carries a sycophantic full page profile of **Lelio Lagorio**, former PSI Mayor of Florence (one of the municipal governments caught up in the scandals) and leader of the PSI in the Italian and European Parliaments. No mention of the scandals that have probably wrecked the PSI for a generation and helped drive millions of voters in the arms of the far right. Lagorio does, however, recall how a local PSI leader bravely told the Florence military prefect during the political crisis of 1960, "Yes, we are ordinary men, but men of character."

In translation, it's hard to tell if Lagorio was being ironic.

PS on PSI: Thanks to *Tribune* for the latest joke from Italy. "An announcer at Milan railway station is reported as saying; 'Will the PSI members who took the train at platform six please give it back?'"

Fair votes

Where can you cheat on your election returns, spend more money than you are entitled to, yet still hold on to your parliamentary seat? West Belfast, of course, where the SDLP's **Joe Hendron** defeated Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams (with help from Ulster Unionists) by just 589 votes.

The election court chose to accept that the false returns were merely due to the inexperience of the election agent. Apparently, they were fully satisfied that the SDLP's most concerted campaign in years, with the backing of most sections of the Northern Irish media, was entirely in the hands of **some naive soul** who simply didn't understand how much he could spend in an election campaign.

Labour Death Group

The **Labour Life Group** is hopeful that the new 'Christian' leadership of the Labour Party will be "friendlier" to them than the atheist Kinnock.

Sir Patrick Duffy, former MP, has assured them that the "new" Labour Party leadership will be good for the cause of the unborn child. Labour Life expresses special gratitude to Labour's Chief Whip, **Derek Foster**, for "supplying accurate information to combat some of the false information put out by opponents of the Party (which) is sometimes believed by our friends in the pro-life movement". The group is promoting **Chris Sewell** in the Euro-elections as an "ardent" supporter.

Amongst its other activities are lobbying Labour MPs to attend a showing of anti-abortion videos to be held at the end of April in the House of Commons and encouraging **Bruce Kent**, a Labour candidate in the last election, to visit a LIFE house. Following the Group's close work with anti-abortionists in other parties and groups, it wants to use the mailing lists of other "pro-life" organisations to recruit new members and raise funds. Its problem is that its rules requires that members must also be Labour Party members - and there are few of these in the other groups!

The end of history

Another sign of the degenerate times in the **former Soviet Union**: the introduction of dog fighting as a spectator sport.

A recent pit bull terrier fight in Moscow attracted a crowd of 1,500. The first fight lasted for almost an hour. The audience included many dressed in fur coats and expensive western leather jackets with children as young as five.

Fair shares

The Co-op has launched its 'Why Socialists should join the Co-op' campaign at just the right moment.

USDAW has questioned goings-on at **United Northwest Co-op** where one director was paid £370,000 in severance money after leaving his £184,000 job amid allegations of gross misconduct linked to overseas trips. There are also reports of one senior manager receiving a £2.7 million 'farewell package'. Obviously your caring, sharing co-op shares more amongst some staff than others.

Slander

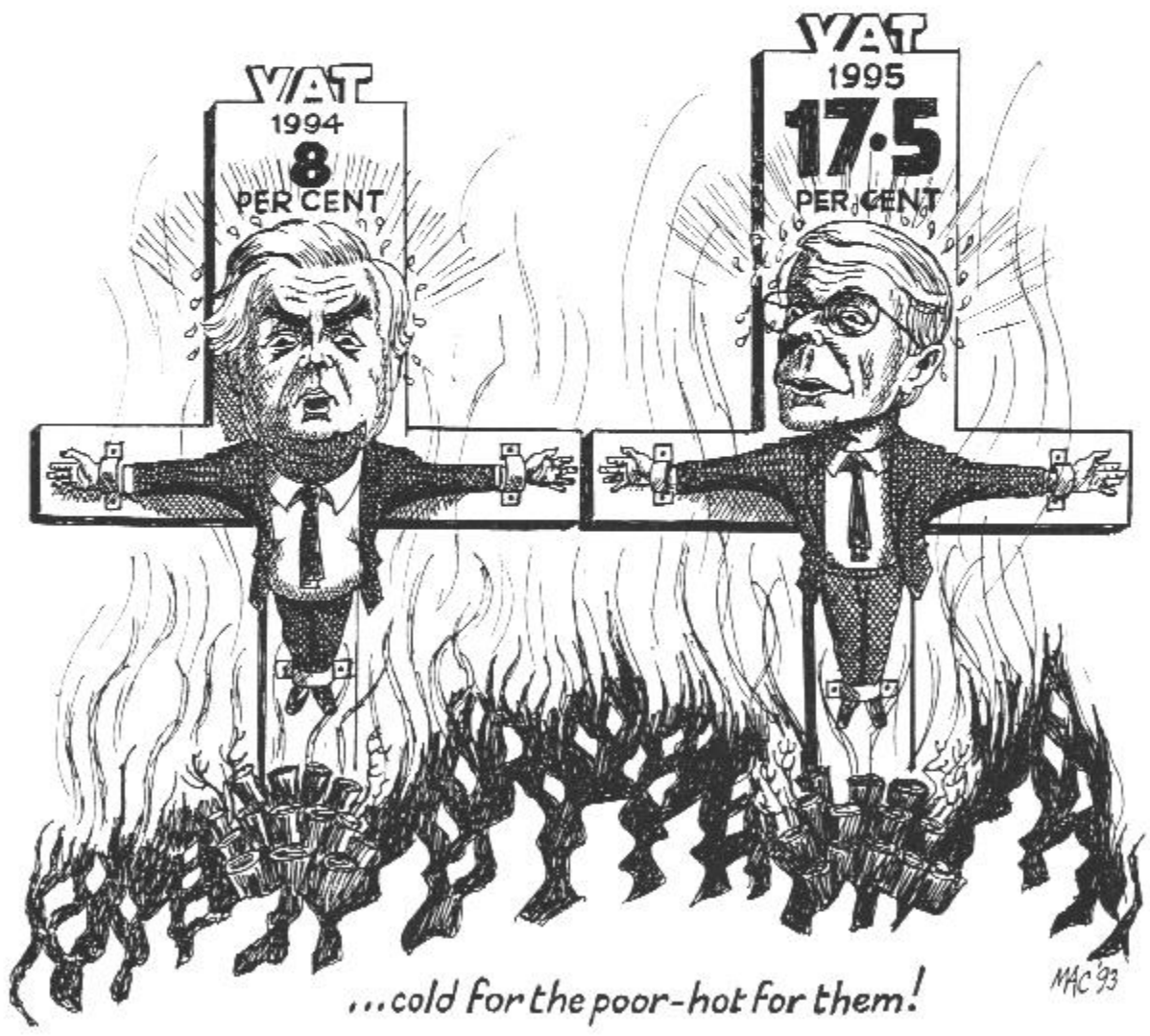
The new *Mirror* management may have dumped the old guard Labour-supporting political journos but seems happy to stick with racist cricket correspondent **Chris (S)Lander.**

Lander was the hack who whipped up the storm around the (completely false) allegations of "cheating" by the superb Pakistan side which took the Test series from England last summer. He cooked up the deal whereby **Alan Lamb**, in return for a tidy sum which he claimed (falsely) to have given to charity, smeared Pakistan on the back pages of the *Mirror* for several days running.

In February, Lander claimed the victorious Indians were "cheating" by scuffing up the pitch - an allegation promptly refuted by all reputable cricket journalists.

Unflustered, Lander repeated the trick in Sri Lanka, claiming that the Sri Lankan spin bowlers were "chuckers".

Somehow one suspects that the Australians will not get the same treatment when they're here for the Ashes this summer. A case for the **Commission for Racial Equality**?



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If Michael Milken can get away with it, why can't we? Let's face it. If you can believe that the Labour Party can be transformed into a vehicle for socialism then you can believe anything else we say.

Briefing Junk Bonds are issued in £5 denominations, specially printed on finest vellum with the blood of Class Traitors. Invest now. You know it makes sense.

Yes, I want to invest in the revolution. I enclose £..... (cheques payable to *Labour Briefing*) for ..... *Briefing* Junk Bonds (issued in £5 units) redeemable at 15% interest above inflation 24 hours after the revolution.

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BRIEFING

Annual General Meeting

"Major, Maastricht and the Miners"

Saturday, 8th May, 10:30am-5:30pm
Durham Road Community Centre, London N4
With speakers from the Socialist Campaign Group and Women Against Pit Closures.
Resolutions, debates, elections.
Creche places must be booked by 1st May; please submit resolutions in advance (contact *Briefing* office).
Admission: £4 waged/£1 unwaged/free to comrades from outside London (assistance with travel costs for those in need).

Famous last words...

From *London Labour Briefing*, April 1983:

"Defending Michael Foot's leadership at the moment is no easy task." - Tony Banks.

"Even in defeat, looking back on the Bermondsey by-election, I can say without equivocation: no regrets!" - Peter Tatchell.

"Republicans, more than any other people, want peace in Ireland. We offer those presently tied to loyalism the guarantee of their civil and religious liberty and we pledge to struggle on behalf of the Irish working class, of whatever religious denomination or none, for a country where the ownership of the means of production and the process of statute-making will be theirs." - Danny Morrison.

"We need more 'law and order', not less. There is not a working class community in London or in the country which doesn't insist on this, and we ignore the sentiment at our peril. A 'libertarian' attitude to law is actually a middle-class - indeed, a ruling class - trait." - Chris Knight.



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



Dave Osler must be getting desperate if he's seriously trying to pretend that proportional representation (PR) isn't associated with back-room deals and coalitions, or that first-past-the-post isn't associated with majority governments. The evidence is all around us: Ireland, Germany, Italy et al. In fact the situation is so bad in Italy that apparently almost all the parties now want to get rid of PR.

Dave also distorted the main point I was trying to make. He contends that "there is no way a government can even think about implementing a radical left wing programme until it commands majority backing". Not only is this static notion a recipe for permanent acceptance of the status quo but it is profoundly anti-Marxist. So long as capitalism and its ideology are dominant there will not be a majority of the population calling for a socialist programme. Contrary to what Dave suggests, I did not say that majority Labour governments are a sufficient condition for the transition to socialism, merely that they are a necessary condition. I take it that Dave would agree with this. If not, one wonders why he bothered to join the Labour Party at all. He'd be more at home in some fringe ultra left sectlet.

The programme of a radical reforming majority Labour government would unavoidably be in advance of the consciousness of the majority of the population. Through the experience of the implementation of this (transitional) programme additional support from all oppressed sections of the population would be gained. It may not be a direct parallel but there is the case of Allende in Chile. Allende started with around 35% and increased his support to well over 40% in the subsequent election. Had he followed Dave's advice, Allende (not to mention Lenin) would still be standing at tube stations trying to sell fortnightly papers which hardly anyone reads.

I'm told that the CBI's reason for supporting PR in the seventies was that it would prevent majority Labour governments. Big business has a better grasp of reality than Dave Osler. And I'm afraid that giving the examples of Ken Livingstone and Arthur Scargill doesn't change this reality. Marx once said that the fact that a few aristocrats supported the French Revolution didn't mean that it wasn't a bourgeois revolution. The fact that Dave Osler, Ken Livingstone and Arthur Scargill support PR doesn't mean it's not a device that benefits the ruling class rather than the working class.

I would be interested to know how Dave defines "working class". He seems to have an all-inclusive definition. If read literally he could be taken to be saying that a simple majority of the working class (ie. 51%) is an absolute majority of the population. Now that really is laughable.

Yours in comradeship,
Pete Willsman
Plumstead

It is a disgrace for Keith Veness to persist with the idea that the break-up of the former Yugoslavia is the result of some CIA-Muslim-Vatican/German plot (Letters, March 1993). This line mirrors the worst in Serbian nationalist propaganda. But it is also plainly ridiculous and has no place in socialist analysis.

A counter plot scenario could easily be put: that the current crisis is due to a Serbian-Greek-Romanian-Russian (i.e., Slav/Christian Orthodox) plot to dominate the region. It is not, of course; plot scenarios are far too simplistic.

The 'analysis' put by Keith Veness is plainly wrong. The West, in fact, tried in vain to keep the former Yugoslavia together. Since the beginning of the crisis, it hasn't had the slightest idea what to do, never mind consciously 'dismembering Yugoslavia'. The West has been anti-Serbian purely at the rhetorical level; practically, its actions have been pro-Serbian. This is graphically illustrated by the UN collaboration in the ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Eastern Bosnia.

We are told that without "unwarranted [Western] interference" the lives of thousands would have been spared. This is rubbish. I wonder how *Briefing*'s apologist for Serbian nationalism would explain the hundreds of unarmed Kossovars murdered by Milosevic's forces between 1987 and 1989, long before the present crisis. Milosevic was preparing the ground for what was to come, when he dumped 'socialism' for nationalism and forcibly took Kosovo's autonomy away.

This crisis is qualitatively more serious than any other not merely because it is taking place in Europe, even though it will create a European refugee problem of nightmare proportions. Nor because the war will go down in recent history as one of the most brutal. Nor because it will leave the usual terrible legacy. It is qualitatively more serious because it has always had the potential of developing into a regional war, dragging in Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey and even possibly Russia.

It is clear that *Briefing* has no idea what to say about the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. The left has often resisted change; it can be very conservative. Which is why Keith Veness, the RCP and the SWP are all clinging to the Stalinist notion that Yugoslavia - a creation of imperialism - should be kept together by force. History will not look kindly on the left's response to this crisis.

Yours comradely,
John Turkie
London SE7

Solidarity with the Miners
Delegate recall conference
Saturday 24th April
11.00am - 5.00pm
Sheffield Poly Students' Union
(opposite Sheffield BR Station)
Organised by: National Miners Support Network, Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, Haldane Society Employment Committee, *Trade Union News*

Mike Phipps ('On meaningless slogans', *Labour Briefing*, March 1993) is being very dumb. *Labour Briefing* comrades must tell us whether the trait is organic or something he affects for political considerations.

First, he suggests that "some comrades active in miners' solidarity work have begun to advocate the slogan 'prepare for a general strike' ". This may well be so, but as Mike will be aware, the one organisation on the British left that has consistently advocated and fought for this slogan is the Communist Party of Great Britain. No doubt, our call has influenced all sorts of people and groups active in the support movement. But if Mike is serious about refuting the arguments implicit in the idea, he should engage the political organisation that has issued it and judge the slogan in the context of the rest of our stated policies on the miners' fight.

As he does not do this, it is no wonder that he can profess himself "at a loss to understand" it. A slogan by definition is the crystallisation of a unitary approach to any particular political problem. To attempt to understand a slogan and its practical application, one must look at the other demands and complementary work of the organisation that advances it. To do otherwise is a little like trying to understand the processes involved in baking a cake, not by reference to a step by step cookery book, but by looking at a scrap of paper with a single word written on it - 'cake'.

For Mike's benefit therefore, we will explain.

First, hearts and minds must be won. The vast majority of the rank and file of the trade movement have to be presented with a sober, realistic and winnable strategy for victory before they can be expected to strike. This poses the task to leading activists in the unions to convince not just themselves of the correctness of the general strike call, but the bulk of the ordinary membership.

In this spirit, we say the NUM special delegate conference was quite correct in October of last year not to call for immediate strike action against the threat to the pits. It simply would not have been won at that stage. Instead the NUM leadership has led a political campaign to win the hearts and minds not simply of the 'British people', but also their own members.

While the Communist Party may have serious criticisms of the content of this political campaign, there is no doubt that the special delegate conference took a serious, mature and 100% correct decision in October 1992. That caution was vindicated by the 60% majority for strike action won in early March.

Second, the movement in support of the miners must be transformed. It has the authority to start reaching out to other sections of the working class and incorporate their representatives and delegates. The TUC clearly will not call a general strike: but a general strike remains a necessity for our class.

If that is so, we have a choice. We could say that the fight for what is necessary is useless. Then we simply accept defeat, as the TUC General Council has, of course.

Alternatively we fight for a general strike to come from a different direction. Generalised action has been launched in the past via the work of the Communist Party's National Minority Movement and Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions. It can and must be done again, possibly we suggest through a transformed miners support movement.

These are the two core aspects of the Communist Party's call for the preparation of the general strike. They are points that the Communist Party has made time and time again in the pages of its paper, the *Daily Worker*, as well as party pamphlets and leaflets. Fairly straightforward really isn't it? I reiterate - Mike Phipps is being very dumb.

Mark Fischer
National Organiser
Communist Party of Great Britain

I have today read the March copy of *Labour Briefing*. An article appears under my name as UNISON London Health spokesperson.

I wrote no article for *Labour Briefing* on this subject.

In fact what you have done is take a press release and converted it into an article, giving a completely inaccurate impression that I wrote the piece for you.

I consider this action to be totally outrageous and a misrepresentation.

I insist that the following statement be printed on the same page and in the same prominent position as the original "article" in the next edition of *Briefing*.

"Pete Marshall, London Regional Secretary of COHSE, wishes to point out that the article headed 'Making London Bitter' in the last edition of *Briefing* which appeared under his name as UNISON London Health spokesperson was in fact an adopted press release presented misleadingly and wrongly by the editors of *Briefing* as an article written by him. *Briefing* offers their apologies to Pete Marshall and regrets any damage done to him by their actions".

Yours sincerely,
Pete Marshall

Editor's note: The contribution from 'Unison London Health spokesperson' Pete Marshall was clearly intended for publication and presented in press release format.

As someone who has just left the Labour Party I was interested to see that membership had fallen to 90,000 members (*Observer* 28th Feb.) Surely this can be no surprise as the "modernisers" of the Party have stripped it of virtually all its socialist policies. This may work with the electorate - although after a fourth defeat that is questionable - but will not work with its members who joined the Party for what it stood for. Change that in a big way and you remove the point of staying in the Party.

Labour is clueless, out of touch and feeble, but survives as it is perceived as the only serious opposition. The modernisers have won the battle for the soul of the Labour Party - the price they have to pay is the decline in membership and the last chance they have of winning the soul of the country.

Yours sincerely,
David Wells
Brockley

Clinton look-alike and Shadow Home Secretary Tony Blair MP is quoted as "concerned to reconnect Labour to its Christian ethical base" and to reassert family values. Have we all got it wrong?

Is Labour in fact not trying to copy Clinton at all?

The message seems to be to go the whole hog - and learn from Bush instead.

Yours fraternally,
John Nicholson
Manchester

Keith Veness (March *Briefing*), can support Arsenal if he likes as long as he realises that the only side for a revolutionary socialist to support is Spurs.

Yours sincerely,
Keith Flett,
Tottenham

Reediculous!

REED-ELSEVIER, Britain's biggest magazine publisher, is terminating all union agreements as of 31st March. Union derecognition has become a plague in the publishing industry but the Reed-Elsevier move is the worst outbreak yet. The union-busters are being fought by the NUJ and GPMU as well as by Dutch journalists union NVJ, which fears that the publishing conglomerate may try to shift jobs from Amsterdam to London. Contact: the Reed-Elsevier Rights at Work Campaign, c/o NUJ, Acorn House, 314 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X.

fREEDom
THE REED-ELSEVIER RIGHTS AT WORK CAMPAIGN

A message from the women of Women's Own:

"IF YOU'VE EVER read a copy of *Women's Own, Women's Realm, Women's Weekly* or *Women*, you will know how concerned these magazines are for the welfare of women - all women.

Well, almost all.

There is one group of women these magazines have no concern for at all. That is the hundreds of women who work for them. IPC, which produces these women's magazines, is part of an Anglo-Dutch publishing giant, Reed Elsevier, which is taking away union rights from their 10,000-odd UK staff - most of them women.

That means maternity rights, health and safety and other conditions negotiated over years are now under threat. But only for staff in the UK because, as many European companies are discovering to their delight, only in the UK can workers be denied such basic rights. Dutch workers doing identical jobs will, of course, continue to be covered by union agreements.

Staff at IPC - and at the rest of Reed Elsevier companies in the UK - can now expect lower levels of staffing, more redundancies for lower pay-offs and consequent speed-ups, overwork and an increase in stress. Ironic, isn't it, that these same women employees will be the ones involved in producing endless articles on how women should have equal rights and should look after their health and keep their stress levels down!"

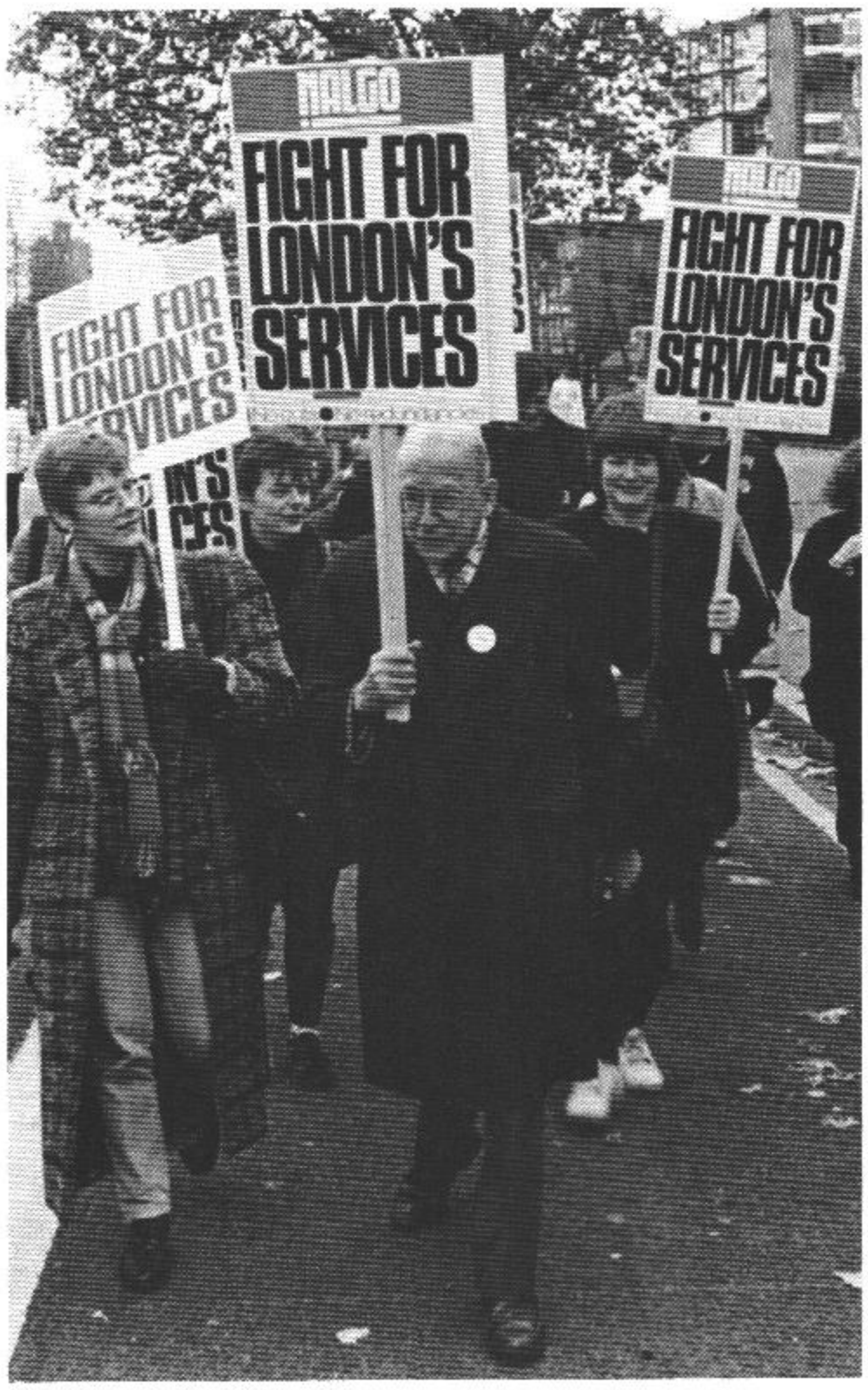


Photo: Bryn Griffiths

Tens of thousands of council workers joined NALGO's March 19th day of action against the Tories' 1.5% pay squeeze and the threatened loss of over 80,000 local government jobs this year alone.

Rallies and marches were held in London (where 3,000 Hackney NALGO members had voted two to one in favour of strike action against plans to slash wages by as much as £1,000 per worker), Glasgow, Edinburgh, Manchester, Liverpool, Bradford, Leeds, Swansea, Walsall, South Tyneside and Newcastle on Tyne.

Meanwhile, the Employment Policy Institute has warned that up to 500,000 jobs across the entire public sector could be slashed over the next year because of government policies.

999

TWO THOUSAND FIREFIGHTERS flouted the law forbidding demonstrations within a mile of Parliament when they staged a disciplined mass lobby of MPs on 17th March (see cover photo).

A lively demonstration blocked off the streets around the Home Office as an FBU delegation met with Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke. Police were taken aback by the size of the turn-out, which reflected firefighters' rage at Tory attempts to break their long-standing fair pay deal, gained after the national strike of 1977-78, and now under threat from the government's 1.5% public sector pay limit.

Since 1980, fire brigade staffing levels have increased by 2.5% while fire calls have increased by 23% and false alarms by 109%.

"Why should those who make the fire service effective have to carry the can for a government whose economic incompetence has led to four million workers being unemployed and unprecedented post-war social problems? We made it clear to the Home Secretary that our members are determined not to return to the poverty level wages which caused the 1977-78 strike," commented FBU General Secretary Ken Cameron.

National Miners Support Network

219 Mare Street
London E8
081 985 1905

Affiliate now!

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