DECEMBER 1993 £1.00

BRIEFING

the voice of Labour's independent, unrepentant left

inside ...

- Arthur Scargill
- Sinn Fein
- NHS
- Kagarlitsky
- 'Date Rape'



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press stop

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● We urge all our readers to respond generously without delay. All donations, big or small, should be sent to: NAC, The Print House, 18 Ashwin Street, London E8 3DL. Telephone: 071 923 4976.

Open Dawe

Chris Dawe is a man much in demand - as propietor of Vietnam's only privately-owned newspaper, the *Investment Review*, he has had a swathe of Western tycoons at his door desperate to buy his company and thus break into the booming Vietnamese economy.

The latest was Rupert Murdoch, preceded by executives from Pearson, which owns the *Financial Times*, and Tony O'Reilly, the Heinz boss who has media interests in Australia and parts of Asia.

It is to be hoped that the Hanoi government will prevent these luminaries from getting their grubby hands on the Vietnamese economy and bleeding it dry, as multinationals seem prone to do.

Bands toll

The three top-placed bands in the recent British Coal national brass bands competition came from collieries closed or facing closure.

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Back to our own basics



JOHN MAJOR'S "back to basics" appeal is as nauseating a piece of Tory cant as we've been subjected to in a long time.

The hypocrisy of the Tory hysteria about crime stinks so high even the tabloids are choking on it. This is the party of crime. This is the party that sells its favours to the highest bidders, who are usually the biggest crooks. This is the party that is cutting the crime prevention budget while stuffing ever more people in overcrowded jails.

The attack on single parents is the bridge between the Tories' economic and social policies. Mass unemployment and continuing recession have put the government deep in debt. The welfare state must pay the price. The feckless single parents are undeserving of state assistance. What's more, they are responsible for the rise of crime. Amazing! The Tories whinge about the break-up of the family but their immigration policies break up black families every day of the year. And not so long ago they were telling unemployed workers to leave their homes, "get on their bikes" and look for work.

Crime is on the rise (though not juvenile crime, which has actually fallen in recent years). The working class bears the brunt of this rise and the Tories are to blame for it. The roles played by mass unemployment and cuts in the welfare state are obvious. But it is more than just a question of economic deprivation. The Tories free-market whirlwind has smashed up communities. The trade union movement - and the idea of collective advance for working class people which it represents - have been attacked remorselessly. Contempt has been heaped on the very idea of social solidarity, which is the only real crime prevention strategy. What is left for many but the individualist road to salvation, which in its purest essence is always criminal?

Yet the Tories are out of sync with the society they claim to speak for. Their blunder on the Child Support Act was proof of that. Driven by ideology and a naive faith in their own rhetoric, they assumed that the root of family break-up was personal irresponsibility on the part of working class parents which could be addressed by coercive use of the state. Their dogma prevented them from seeing that family break-up was a phenomenon confined to no single social class, that it was part of much wider changes in society and was not a mark of moral failure.

It is also clear that the attack on single parents has backfired. The Tory con-trick is not working this time, but, it should be said, this is no thanks to the Labour front bench. There is a serious debate on these issues going on in workplaces, schools and colleges, pubs and social gatherings of all kinds. And Labour just isn't in the frame. Why? Our leaders have mimicked the Tories' law and order rhetoric for the last year. Now they try to score points against them by coupling technical adjustments to existing government policies to vacuous holier-than-thou moral platitudes. What is missing is, first, the articulation of the widely felt outrage over the current Tory hypocrisy and the brutality behind it. Second, a sustained critique of the Tories' free market politics as the source of crime.

Because Labour no longer seems either to believe in or practice solidarity, it is in a poor position to meet the Tory offensive. It is unable to hit back hard at the Tories on either the question of crime prevention or the equally vital question of protection of civil liberties. Labour's drift from ideology has also been, inevitably, a drift from making any serious moral claims, leaving the field of "morality" free to the Tory hucksters. Labour is now widely seen as an "amoral" party, a party which apes Tory "values" because it has turned its back on its own distinctive ones. Major's "back to basics" strategy could be his undoing - but only if Labour gets back to some basics of its own. ❑

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 November 28th. We are happy to offer a right to 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 January 17th.

***Briefing* is the only magazine on the left which is not funded by any part of the labour hierarchy nor 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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Scargill and Skinner. PHOTO Bryn Griffiths

Lonely

As Britain's miners again stand alone, **Arthur Scargill** assesses the all-out Tory attack on the Labour movement while, opposite, *Labour Briefing* looks at the strange behaviour of certain Labour MPs over coal.

AS MARGARET Thatcher's memoirs reveal, the Tories' long-running attack on Britain's nationalised coal industry never had anything to do with economic or energy logic.

It has been an ideological war of attrition against trade unionism in general and one trade union in particular. Thatcher has joined Cecil Parkinson, Nigel Lawson, Peter Walker and others now on record confirming that destroying the National Union of Mineworkers was and still is the Tory aim.

If pursuit of that aim means wiping out an industry that produces the cheapest deep-mine coal in the world, so be it. If it means making Britain dependent on imported energy and the perils of nuclear power and short-life gas reserves, fair enough. If it means bleeding the nation financially to pay for the costs of senseless pit closures, that, for the Tories, is a price worth paying.

Briefing readers are familiar with the course of events over the past year, since the massive London demonstrations of October 1992. Those shook the nation and roused the entire labour movement to hope that (at last) we were collectively on the verge of an effective fight-back against this government.

It was certainly the opportunity of a lifetime. Throughout Britain, there was an excitement unparalleled in recent times. People were (and still are) desperate to feel part of a surge forward, a massive, embracing campaign which needed them and to which they could make their contribution (which is what politics is supposed to be about).

A year on, there's nothing to be gained by recrimination. There are, though, vital lessons for us all and much to learn in examining how that extraordinary upsurge was diverted and in effect dissipated rather than co-ordinated and given focus.

In the aftermath of last October, there were those in the leadership of the Labour Party and TUC who obviously believed that the government could be defeated from within its own ranks by a sufficient number of Tory MPs prepared to put Britain's welfare before class hatred of trade unionism.

That belief set the agenda for a waiting game that proved disastrous. While the NUM from the outset called for days of direct action, the bureaucracy of our movement insisted on the sort of strategy dear to the hearts of "new realists". In our determination to keep building a campaign against pit closures, the NUM participated fully, indeed whole-heartedly, in this strategy.

We've marched; we've lobbied; we've rallied; we've petitioned alongside the churches, local authorities, and organisations ranged across the political spectrum.

Throughout that period, our calls for direct action met with either silence or outright rejection from both the Labour Party and TUC. The two 24-hour days of action in April (called in conjunction with the rail unions) were in themselves extremely successful but after the second one on April 16th (the rail unions having settled their differences with British Rail) the miners were left isolated.

It's understandable if NUM members and their families feel they've been left on their own, yet again, while our vital precious industry faces still further butchery.

Since October 1992, 21 of the 31 pits earmarked for closure by Michael Heseltine have ceased production, and over 20,000 mining jobs have been wiped out with massive redundancy payouts. In addition, as the NUM warned would happen, some 60,000 jobs in rail, power, engineering and related industries have been destroyed as well.

Overall costs to the nation of this butchery have been to date £2.5 billion, while the ongoing costs for redundancy will be approximately £800 million per year!

Meanwhile, the rigging of the electricity market - designed to destroy our industry - continues. The "dash for gas" has been speeded up, despite the fact that it's 30 per cent more expensive than British coal and its use for power generation means its reserves will be gone in 20 years' time.

As for the nuclear industry, the government has now been caught out on the fact that the annual £1.3 billion nuclear subsidy is used to attack British coal. Yet nuclear power, with its uncontrollable dangers and horrific costs, remains under total Tory protection.

The case for our coal has long since been established; it was acknowledged (briefly) even by the media a year ago.

There really is no logic, no sense at all in the government's energy "policy". The obscenity of the current situation is illustrated by the fact that British Coal, having closed so many top-quality, cheap coal pits is now having to import fuel (inferior in quality and dearer in price) to supply its own domestic market.

Far from feeling defeated, I believe I know that it is more important than

are the brave

WHEN THE Tories were announcing the closure of 31 pits and attacking safety legislation in the mining industry late last year, four Labour MPs gave the go-ahead to making miners work longer hours.

Dick Caborn, Stan Orme, Mick Clapham and Ken Eastham sit on the Department of Trade and Industry's Select Committee.

They agreed to produce a report last year which allowed the government to introduce legislation changing shift patterns in the industry.

This will effectively mean weekend working for Britain's miners, whereas the National Union of Mineworkers has always argued that the only work in pits at weekends should be maintenance work on underground machinery.

As the leader of the National Union of Mineworkers, Arthur Scargill, told the Labour Party Conference, he found it incredible that "four Labour MPs should collude in forcing the miners, who have already been battered silly by the Tory government, into working seven-day weeks."

Labour MP Dennis Skinner pointed out that "British Coal has been trying to get round-the clock working for years."

The NUM has always opposed it on the grounds that weekend work should be devoted to the maintenance of underground machinery.

"The DTI committee were meeting last year in the middle of a class battle - there were tens of thousands rallying in Hyde Park, people from all walks of life were backing the miners," added Skinner.

"The Labour MPs on the committee should have realised that they were in the middle of a key class conflict and not done deals with Tory MPs who had little or no sympathy with the mining industry."

Instead, Tory ministers Tim Eggar and Michael Heseltine have been able to attack working practices with the backing of the four Labour members - indeed, Caborn chaired the committee.



Michael Heseltine MP. PHOTO Newsfocus

Continued from previous page

ever that we fight on, and that the entire movement is mobilised to fight alongside us.

This isn't just about pits and miners' jobs; it never was. Our struggle is for the NHS, for the entire education system, for public transport, for public housing, for welfare provision - above all, it's against unemployment and the wanton destruction of people's lives.

We have everything to campaign for, and should follow the examples set for us by colleagues involved in recent and current struggles: including the Burnsall workers, those at Middlebrook Mushrooms and at Timex.

In the coalfields, Women Against Pit Closures have mobilised to prevent British Coal from physically obliterating the pits where it's stopped production. Theirs is a form of protest which should inspire the widest community and labour movement support.

The future, as always, is ours to fight for. Let us take on board the lessons of the past year and build from there. To do so is not only our right, but our responsibility. ❑



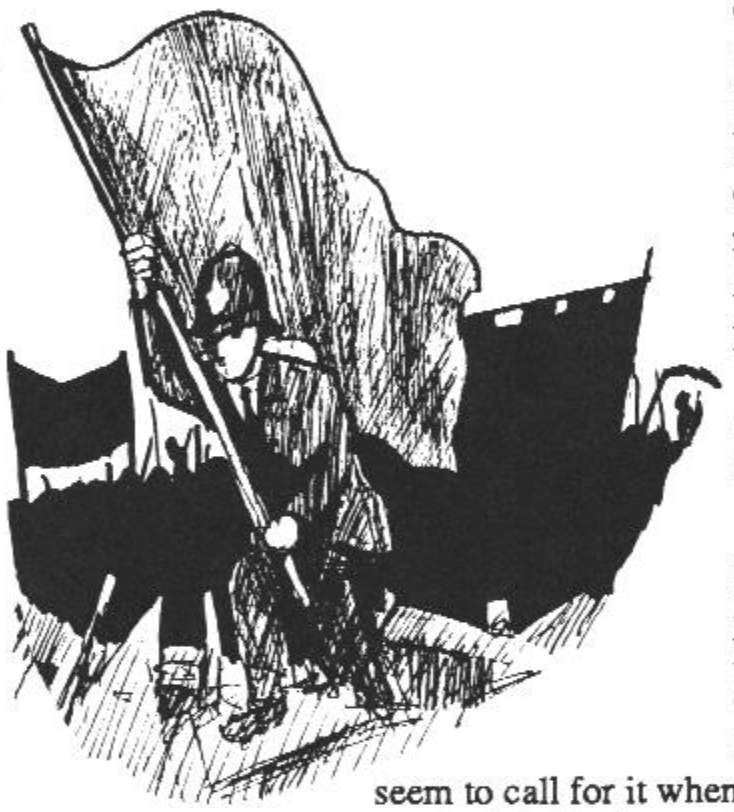
INTERVIEW

Red in blue

John Hayball talked to **Philip Chambers**, chair of Esher CLP who retired a year ago from the Metropolitan Police after 30 years.

John Hayball: You spent 17 of your 30 years as a member of the Metropolitan Police Constables Branch Board. What do you think about the leadership of the Police Federation?

Philip Chambers: Extremely cautious and often conservative. Now they have shown, first, outstanding courage in calling a mass meeting at Wembley which attracted well in excess of 23,000 officers and since then amazing timidity with an almost touching faith in some Tories' ability to overthrow their own puppet's report on police pay and conditions.



JH: When you retired *Metline*, the organ of the London Federation, called you an impossible act to follow. What do you say to this?

PC: It was a very nice tribute but I would have preferred that the board had taken more notice of what I was saying whilst I was on it, off it and then on it again. I have not encountered other Marxist tendencies in the Federation in London but I have outside and the Met is a massive proletarian breeding ground.

JH: What do you think of racism in the police?

PC: We have a colonial culture still and there are "isms" in us all, some much worse than others. Police workers pick up the excretia of a bourgeois society we all try and live in. They are infected. Racism is disgusting because it ignores class and makes a judgement on nationality, race or colour regardless of behaviour. My brother or sister in struggle has red blood whatever their colour. I have nothing but the very highest admiration for ethnic officers. They have a special kind of courage. Anyone who attacks them for being a police officer and purports to be from the left is not a socialist.

JH: How do you stand on the issue of abuse of police powers as with the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four, etc?

PC: Police workers, as I have said before, do some dirty work for our ruling class. They also act as a very useful conduit for scape-goating when, as police officers say: "The wheel comes off." To say "no" to a command in a uniformed, disciplined body of armed men and women requires a special kind of belief. I know! On such kind of actions are revolutions made - for example Kronstadt and Portugal in 1975.

JH: You have single-handedly kept the red flag flying in the Police Federation for many years. What is the relevance of Marxism for police officers?

PC: I have not really been totally alone. Although many of my comrades in the police never had my beliefs they often supported me by word and deed. When I was in danger and being victimised in the mid-seventies my shift at Bow Street were magnificent.

Likewise there was tremendous support for me as the Federation representative at Earlsfield Police Station after I was transferred there in 1978. Solidarity in the police as in the pit or anywhere is probably the most wonderful feeling available to a human being next to that of being with the one you love. Marxism is the science of class forces and their interaction. The Police Federation battling for reasonable pay and conditions for police workers from a reluctant state employer is living Marxism - that is its relevance to police officers.

JH: What chance do you think there is of free trade union rights for the police?

PC: Almost none with the Tories, slim with Labour unless it's very left, although I don't think Tony Blair has actually ruled it out. One of the main problems is that the leadership of the Federation only seem to call for it when they are up against it, instead of on a principled basis, as a human right.

JH: In the early eighties relations between the police and the labour movement were particularly strained. Could this have been avoided?

PC: At that time we had Thatcher in full spate waging war at home and abroad. Her ruling class government used the armed bodies of the state to impose her will and that of the class she so ably represented. It could only have been different under a strong Labour government. Having a free police and prison officers union might also have helped.

JH: What are your recollections of the Grunwick and Wapping disputes?

PC: Grunwick and Wapping were the bleakest moments in my life. They affected everything in it, including my personal relationships. The Grunwick nightmare started early in the morning at about 4 am. We stood in cordons for hours and hours with nothing to eat or drink. The coach carrying the scab workers would arrive and there would be much pushing and shoving but overall it was disciplined on both sides. The dignity of the picketing Asian women was humbling.

We in the Police Federation were engaged also at that time in a fight for a proper wage deal so it was all the more poignant. There is no doubt in my mind that Grunwick saw the beginning of a fresh and concerted attack on organised labour.

Wapping was much more violent. When I was there on some savage days the majority of us kept our heads down, tried to keep our cool and did our best not to get injured by the various missiles that were flying about. I was not a shield-trained officer. Some of us managed to talk to some of the pickets, as some of them tried to talk to us; it was deeply ironic, at times we were talking, at others we faced each other across the divide.

Some of the most frightening moments were when the large, articulated lorries left the fortress at speed and thundered down the narrow streets with crowds of police and pickets milling about. It was very dangerous.

JH: What are your criticisms of the British left?

PC: Very few of them understand the nature of the armed state, or appear to want to. There are a few and some I know are connected with *Briefing*. This was not always so - much work was done by the left in the armed forces and the police in 1914-1918.

INTERVIEW

grey Oranges

Despite the twists and turns of Major and the Loyalists, *Labour Briefing* found Sinn Fein councillor **Mitchel McLaughlin** optimistic about the Hume/Adams initiative.

***Labour Briefing*: What contribution has, or will, the Hume/Adams talks make to the end of the war in Ireland?**

Mitchel McLaughlin: First and foremost it has the capacity to produce peace. It has laid the basis for a real peace process. It has clearly concentrated the minds of both governments on the whole question of the North and their need to address the problem.

The resulting popular reaction has made it clear that people in both Ireland and Britain are not satisfied that their governments have given it the urgency and attention required and that another round of meaningless talks will not bring a resolution. Opinion polls in both countries have also pointed to substantial support for the initiative. And, importantly, it will be the benchmark against which any post-December 3rd position will be judged.

***LB*: Would you expect Major/ Mayhew to move in any direction in the foreseeable future?**

MM: Their record indicates that they are wedded to the status quo. The Orange card is still being played. Their pact with the Unionists is an obstacle to the necessary movement. There is a widespread acceptance that there is nothing new in John Major's Lord Mayor's Banquet speech. Dublin government sources, Unionists, and the media all acknowledge that.

Popular support for the Adams/Hume initiative, however, has imposed a change of tone. While this is evidenced in the public presentation of his approach to Sinn Fein, Mr Major, in his speech, refused to address the substantive issues involved in any attempt to achieve peace. He must do that.

Besides, the fact that protracted contact and dialogue with Sinn Fein representatives has already taken place makes a hypocritical nonsense of the public pre-conditions which Mr Major has again set.

Mr Major has shackled the survival of his government to Unionist support at Westminister. Nevertheless, the onus for movement, as has always been the case, lies with the British government.

The notion that Unionists have a right of veto on British government policy in Ireland is a sham - they have none. This has to emerge if we are to have movement.

In that context, the issue of Unionist consent is an entirely different matter.

Unionist consent on the shape of a new Ireland is desirable. Sinn Fein recognise that any settlement would have to secure the agreement of the Unionists and win their allegiance but this is different from saying they have a veto over future developments as matter of right. In the context of the current pact with the Tories the Unionists are as much the abused as the abuser. Nevertheless, the British government's centrality remains a fact. Their attitudes are crucial to a move in the direction of peace. That ball is firmly in their court.

***LB*: What is your view of the role played by Albert Reynolds and the Dublin government in recent events?**

MM: The Hume/Adams initiative has focused the minds and gained the support of the public in the 26 counties. This is now being reflected in the Dublin government's thinking. Under Albert Reynolds, they are now giving the conflict in the North an urgency of attention unequalled in many years.

The initiative has provided a hope, a sense of optimism and a confidence as to what can be done. Reynolds, in the Dail, acknowledged the need for communication with everybody and stated that he would continue to seek out opinion from all sides in the North. In this the Dublin government is to be encouraged. It is time for courage to be shown by all. To date, all the risks have been taken by Adams, Hume and Reynolds. It's time the British government took its share of the risk.

***LB*: Has the IRA's continued military campaign helped or hindered the political process?**

MM: The IRA has welcomed the Hume/Adams initiative as a basis for peace. Martin McGuinness has asserted his belief in the durability of that position. We welcomed the IRA's statements on the current peace initiative. We believe they are genuine in their statement that they "have a vested interest in peace". The IRA's campaign is a symptom of a political situation. And if we are to have a just and lasting peace then we all have to address the causes of conflict in our country.



Gerry Adams. PHOTO: Paul Mattsson

***LB*: What is likely to be Sinn Fein's next move?**

MM:Republicans are anxious that the opportunity that now exists is seized upon. That is the general mood and desire amongst the peoples of our two islands.

Whatever the outcome, and Republicans are optimistic, Sinn Fein is committed to pursuing a just and lasting peace. The promotion of debate and discussion around our document *Towards A Lasting Peace in Ireland* has been a major part of our political work since its publication last year. We will continue to seek peace in Ireland and a peace between the peoples of our two islands.



Photo: Bryn Griffiths

The greatest menace

With the BNP on the rampage there is a burning need for unity in the anti-racist movement, veteran anti-nazi campaigner and **MP Peter Hain** told John Cryer.

John Cryer: How important is unity in the anti-racist movement?

Peter Hain: I think there's a crying need for unity and, for example, the Anti-Nazi League has backed the demonstration planned for the East End of London for March 19th, which is being chiefly organised by the Anti-Racist Alliance.

The ANL has a major carnival taking place in the spring of next year and we would expect ARA and other groups to support that, and for there not to be any rival activities on the same day as there were on October 16th.

There have been various arguments about who called the October 16th demonstration first. The fact that there were two events on the same day, one in Welling and one in central London, is both ludicrous and very destructive. I urge people to support both organisations because ARA is concerned with the long-term struggle against institutionalised racism and the ANL has a narrower remit which is to tackle the nazis and fascists.

I think the great strength of the ANL is its ability to put people on the streets in great numbers in direct action activity, ARA's strength has been to pull together a wide coalition of organisations like the TUC, the Labour Party, and many of the unions. They do have that broad base but they simply are unable to put people out in great numbers in demonstrations.

JC: With their different remits and aims, what chances do you think exist for some kind of unity in the movement?

PH: I'm interested in fighting the nazis, the racists, and not to squable among each other. I think some of the attacks on the Anti-Nazi League have been nauseating, frankly. The use of right-wing papers like the *Sun* to attack the ANL and to attack people who are not politically aligned as dupes is offensive and deeply destructive, so I believe we must have an end to all that sort of nonsense.

I was involved in a meeting in the spring of last year which was convened by Bernie Grant and was set up to find if there was any raison d'etre for ARA and the ANL working together. The ANL said "yes" but ARA's terms were, basically, that the ANL dissolve and accept some seats on the ARA's ruling body. That was a take it or leave it ultimatum, not a basis for debate.

The position is very complicated. A lot of anti-racist groups like Searchlight are aligned to the ANL but not to ARA, there are Jewish organisations which are aligned to the ANL but not ARA. The idea that the ARA leadership seems to have, that it can monopolise this territory, is sectarian and self-defeating.

JC: What do you think is the main priority for the anti-racist movement?

PH: For me, the BNP is the most immediate concern because they are killing people, their activities are intimidating others and the number of racist attacks is rising alarmingly.

The lesson of the late seventies - when the ANL really did destroy the National Front - is that you have got to take them on.

That's the priority but it has to be done in the context - and this is where ARA's argument is important - of getting people involved in anti-racist activity and then getting them involved in a wider anti-racist perspective. That's very important because we will still live in a deeply racist society and many of our institutions, including the labour movement, have racist characteristics.

So the broader perspective is very important but for me the immediate concern is the BNP - they are going to put up scores of candidates across the country in the local elections next year and they have to be tackled wherever their candidates appear.

Communalism:
a boon for the racists

Labour Briefing's political correspondent **Mike Marqusee** looks at the battle to halt Hindu bigotry among the Indian community in Britain.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 6th sees the first anniversary of the destruction of the historic mosque in Ayodhya in north India by the right-wing Hindu nationalist forces of the BJP-VHP-RSS - known as the Sangh Parivar. Over 1100 died in the communal violence which followed this act.

To mark that occasion and remember the victims of the violence the Alliance Against Communalism and for Democracy in South Asia will be holding a candlelit vigil outside India House (Strand, London) from 4 to 7 pm. All those opposed to communalism and racism are welcome.

The Alliance was established in London earlier this year and has, with meagre resources, worked since then to counter the myths propagated by the Hindu communalists within the Asian communities in this country. "We are amateurs compared to the VHP and their associates," admitted an Alliance supporter. "You have to realise whom you are dealing with here. These people are well-financed, well-organised and well-connected throughout the Asian diaspora. Sections of the Asian media here - newspapers and television - have been intimidated by the VHP people and are now reluctant to deal at all with the communalism issue. VHP supporters have influence on temple committees and community organisations. Their aim is to capture - or create - as many Hindu organisations as possible across the country and become recognised as the official voice of Hindus in the UK."

The Alliance arranged for Dr Ramchandra Gandhi, grandson of the independence leader, to visit Britain and meet with the media and community groups. Gandhi is a devout Hindu who is highly critical of the Sangh Parivar's blend of bigotry and violence. A meeting was held in Brent - stronghold of the VHP in Britain - which attracted 150 people. Thirty of these were VHP supporters who tried repeatedly to disrupt the meeting.

"The meeting in Brent was a success," said Gautam Appa, convenor of the Alliance, "for two reasons. First, Dr Gandhi speaks the language of Hinduism and his condemnation of the VHP and of communalism has a special power because of that. Second, we were able to link the communalism of the VHP and BJP in India to the racism of the BNP here. Just as the racists question the 'dual loyalties' of Asian people here, so the VHP questions the loyalty of Muslims in India. The positive reception for Dr Gandhi showed that the communalists can be challenged."

Ironically the VHP is banned in India but operates freely here. In Newham it runs an advice centre which receives grant aid from the Labour council. The Alliance is keen to encourage Labour authorities to become more wary of giving grants or support to communal organisations of any kind - Muslim, Hindu or Sikh.

"The Alliance condemns any attempt at pitting community against community," said Appa. "We have condemned the recent 'fatwa' by Muslim clerics in Bangladesh against the Bangladeshi feminist writer Taslima Nasreen, who spoke out against retaliatory attacks against Hindus in Bangladesh in the wake of Ayodhya. We also condemn attempts by the BJP to make capital of this issue."

The strength of the BJP, the political wing of the Sangh Parivar, is now being tested at the ballot box in state elections in north India. Meanwhile, in Britain, anti-racists should put December 6th in their dairies. This is not a diversion from the fight against the fascists. The growth of communalism either in the sub-continent or here will be a boon for them and for all racists.

● **Contact the Alliance Against Communalism, c/o 6A South Road, Souhtall, Middlesex, UB1 1RT; tel. 081 843 2333.**



A young couple in India made homeless by an attack by Hindu communalists



Photo: Bryn Griffiths

Enough is enough!

Labour's health spokeswoman **Dawn Primarolo** looks at the attacks and cuts which led to November 20th's health service demonstration in London.

THE CONSERVATIVES' health reforms have failed. The NHS is not better, it is in a crisis which is sadly symbolised by the death of Elsie Westron, "lost" in a casualty department at Greenwich District General Hospital.

There are now more than a million people waiting for hospital treatment - 200 people a day have joined the waiting list since the last election. A two-tier system has developed where getting treatment depends on whether your GP is a fundholder or you can afford to pay.

Morale is at rock bottom among health professionals. They know that the strengths of the NHS - before the onslaught of the internal market, two-tierism and commercialisation - need to be re-established. Take administration for example; the low cost of administering the public health service made the NHS the envy of other countries. The internal market revolution has changed this at a stroke: 18,000 more managers and administrators since 1989, a 900 per cent rise in their pay bill, £1.2 billion spent on introducing the reforms themselves.

Each fundholder costs £174,000 a year. It is expensive to run and has started to destroy the role of the GP as the patient's personal health advocate.

In London, more than 24 hospitals face closure, partial closure or merger as the cumulative effects of Tomlinson, the Specialty Reviews and the internal market wreak havoc, threatening to increase the waiting list of 151,000 and the unemployment queue by 20,000 redundant health workers.

At the same time, the government has orchestrated a debate on health care rationing with the explicit purpose of establishing in the public's mind that a fully comprehensive NHS is not affordable.

Norwich Union are offering an insurance policy which allows private patients to "top-up" NHS services. The prophecies that trusts are a staging post to privatisation have become true sooner than many of us believed.

The increase in private insurance is undermining the concept of a universal NHS. The *Daily Mirror*, which targets itself at Labour voters, recently offered 50,000 of its readers the opportunity of one year's free health insurance. The old, young and sick are, however, excluded.

Dr Sandy Macara, chair of the BMA, forecasts "a winter of discontent with hospitals closing their wards and cancelling non-urgent operations." The full folly of the market place as an inappropriate method of allocating resources and planning services will become all too apparent.

It is important for us to realise that the agenda of socialist health policies should not be dominated by the Government's preferred terrain of what can be afforded and by what means the finance can be raised. Not only must we demonstrate what the NHS will be like under a Labour government, but also how we will raise the resources.

We should repeat over and over again that the problems of the NHS are largely caused by its chronic and continued underfunding for over a decade. Yet Britain is a very rich country and it is inconceivable that we cannot afford the health service we want and need. We have to attack the government's hypocrisy on funding and attack their parading of paltry new showcase money on pet schemes while services are being cut nationwide - not to mention the fraud and corruption that their reforms have facilitated in some regions.

The internal market, trusts and GP fundholders cannot continue to exist in a health service run by a Labour government - they will be abolished. Health priorities will be decided in an accountable, democratically controlled NHS paid for through direct taxation, based on ability to pay. However, we are looking very seriously at the use of an earmarked tax. We need additional short-term funding raised specifically to deal with the chronic cumulative underfunding.

In the short term, it is vitally important to say, as people did on the NHS demonstration on November 20th: "Enough is enough." Labour has called for an immediate moratorium on ward closures and the suspension of the internal market.

Labour takes the view that a healthy nation is one in which access to health is not dependent on the vagaries of market forces and the purchasing power of the individual, but is provided for as a fundamental human right.

This presupposes a nation which is not disfigured by glaring class inequality. Promoting health means preventing poverty. ❑

Demolition men

Alice Mahon MP (right) believes the Tories could be preparing for a fatal assault on the welfare state.

FORMER NURSE Alice Mahon has a better understanding than most MPs of what it's like to work in a public sector threatened by the demolition men of the Tory hard right.

"I think what's happening now could be the beginning of the Tory attempt to completely destroy the welfare state," says the MP for Halifax.

"Undoubtedly, there will be a number of areas in the Budget where the government will go out of its way to attack working people.

"It certainly looks like it will attack housing benefit. The housing associations have been mounting a terrific lobby because they view this as a potential attack on the whole concept of social housing, which it is."

There is also, of course, the much debated attack on single mothers, which Alice Mahon saw in the pipeline many months ago.

"Some time ago," she recalls, "a Tory backbencher put forward a 10-minute rule bill attacking single mothers. The bill said that single, pregnant mothers should have no right to be housed apart from in hostels.

"This was clearly flying a kite for the government. That's how they work - they get a backbencher to put something forward in Parliament and then a few months later the minister comes along with the real thing."

Mahon sees clearly that the Tories' first priority is to crush the unions as a path toward ridding Britain of a welfare state: "The only way the government can crush working people is by successfully attacking the unions and that's what they're doing in hammering public sector pay.

"The unions have got to get organised and work together to have a hope of defeating the Tories. It's no use trying to advance one sector or one group of workers.

"But the Labour Party leadership also has to give a very clear lead to working people. I think we should say very loudly, for instance, that we'll abolish all the anti-union laws.



Alice Mahon. PHOTO: Bryn Griffiths

"We should also be aware that there's an army of young people out there who have never known regular work, have very little confidence and are living on starvation-level benefits."

These youngsters, believes Alice Mahon, are growing up completely unaware of trade unions' existence, never mind their values, structures and the confidence they can give to working people. There are over a million under-25s who have never known a proper job - the labour movement ignores them at its peril.

We need direct action

As ministers launch more attacks on pensioners,

Labour Briefing talked to **Eileen Francis,**

Secretary of Brent Active Pensioners.

Labour Briefing: You have spoken of pensioners being "at war". Could you explain?

Eileen Francis: Many pensioners see no end to rationing and hardship which are similar to the war years. For example, here in Brent the Tory council is charging £3 a week for home helps, attendance allowance contributions of £9 weekly, charges for swimming, meals on wheels increases and huge increase for evening classes. Each increase cuts into the resources of pensioners on the basic pension or on Income Support and forces a reduction on food, heat or entertainment.

At the same time pensions slip further behind inflation. Recently Portillo advised people under 40 to make their own pension arrangements - but here in Harlesden unemployment is 20 per cent. A new generation of poor pensioners is being prepared.

LB: And VAT on fuel?

EF: The proposed rise will lead to pensioner deaths this winter. The government estimates that the 17.5 per cent rise would lead to a weekly increase of £2.25 for a pensioner couple. This is a gross underestimate as thousands of pensioners do not have central heating and are forced to rely on expensive heat. Government advice to wear woolly hats and stay in one room contradicts advice to stay active.

LB: How are pensioners fighting back?

EF: Through pensioner forums and the Greater London Association of Pensioners we are more active than ever. The huge lobby of Parliament on October 20th showed how angry pensioners are.

The recent Panorama programme showing Tory pensioners from Bridlington collaring Kenneth Clarke and Edwina Currie gave a true picture. We are busy mobilising for the big UNISON health demonstration.

We would also like support to defend out free travel pass at our lobby at Islington Town Hall on December 17th at 10.30 am.

Personally, I welcome growing signs of unity in the British pensioners' movement although we could do with a more militant approach. The Greypower movement in America has won many victories by direct action - for example, blocking traffic to achieve access for people with disabilities.

CLASS TRAITOR OF THE MONTH

Lyons made

LYONS BECAME a full-tine regional officer in ASSET, a forerunner of ASTMS, in 1966 at the age of 24. He has spent his entire working life climbing the bureaucratic ladder.

He made it to the top following the merger with TASS when he was elected general secretary of the new MSF union, pledging a clean start and an end to factional warfare. But under Lyons' aegis, "MSF for Labour", an alliance of right-wingers and careerists, have resorted to arm-twisting, press smears, petty harassment and rule-breaking in a drive to secure



Saving OMOV for John Smith in defiance of his union's policy was only the most recent and highly publicised in a series of treacherous manoeuvres that has made MSF general secretary **Roger Lyons** a must for Class Traitor of the Month.

domination of the union at all levels, making it a mirror image of the Stalinists whom it has vowed to destroy.

Last year, Lyons struck a single-union agreement with Toray Textiles, a Japanese-based multi-national, for a greenfield site in Mansfield. The no-strike, pendulum arbitration deal does not even permit MSF to negotiate directly with management. Lyons hailed the deal as a breakthrough but has refused to show the text even to the NEC.

When Zurich Insurance took over Municipal Mutual Insurance, where MSF had about 1000 members, it promptly derecognised the union and cut pension benefits. Lyons hit back with a £100,000 "corporate campaign" involving lobbying, advertising, Paddy Ashdown and a great deal of "liaising". Zurich was so frightened by this assault that it announced 250 redundancies soon after the campaign was launched.

At Timex, MSF members crossed picket lines throughout the dispute. Lyons decreed that "it was not appropriate to make regular donations of MSF funds to the AEEU, who have not sought such assistance."

At this year's STUC, Lyons and MSF press officer Jo Gibbons organised a press conference at which, they promised, they would reveal details of a "historic" single union deal between MSF and Glenfiddich distillers. The MSF press release made much of the fact that the workers at the distillers' Paisley plant - which was to be shut down and moved to Bellshill - had voted to back MSF as their union in the new plant, although most of them were TGWU members. At the press conference, bemused hacks, each presented with a glass of Glenfiddich courtesy of MSF, discovered that:

* MSF had not notified the TUC of its intention to sign a single union agreement;

* Lyons was unable to respond to TGWU concerns that the deal traded away negotiating rights for an "employee forum", perhaps because he had not read the agreement;

* there was, in fact, no agreement and nothing had yet been signed;

* the famous ballot of workers had taken place six months before and half the Paisley workforce had since then taken voluntary redundancy.

Less that 24 hours later, a copy of the agreement was uncovered by the press, who found that it did indeed involve an "employee forum" which would have excluded MSF from negotiating wages and conditions. At a second press conference, without the whisky, Lyons, under pressure from the GMB, had to climbdown and admit that he could sign no such agreement.

The ruthless but thin-skinned Lyons seems to have no strategy other than marketing himself and his union to the employers. Under Lyons, MSF has become the first union to join the Engineering Council, putting it to the right even of the AEEU. Perhaps this is why Bill Jordan is so keen on merging with MSF - with Lyons earmarked to succeed Gavin Laird as general secretary. As is well known, at this year's Labour Conference Lyons got the MSF delegation to vote, at the last minute, by 19-17 to abstain on the crucial card vote on the constitutional amendment on Parliamentary selection. That abstention was the difference between defeat and victory for the 'modernisers'.

MSF's anti-OMOV policy had been carried decisively at the union conference, despite opposition from Lyons. To justify his crude manoeuvre, Lyons engaged in pseudo-feminist sophistry. He claimed that MSF had to abstain because the card vote - which covered rules for selecting women MPs as well as OMOV - represented an "irreconcilable conflict between two aspects of MSF policy."

Other unions with strong commitments to improved representation for women found no such "irreconcilable conflict". The subject was dealt with elsewhere in the conference agenda and was debated separately.

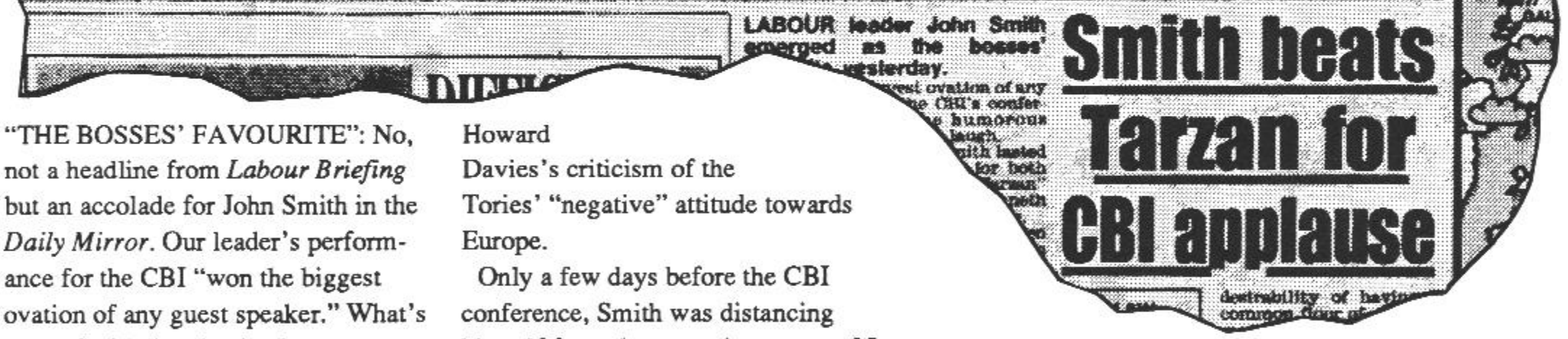
The most damning indictment of Lyons is contained in a remarkable resignation letter circulated by 14-year NEC member Bryn Glover. Glover, a mainstream Labour Party member, had backed Lyons for general secretary because he wanted to see "a new era of openness, democracy, free information, fairness to all and co-operation." Instead, he says, "the rot set in almost immediately...a climate of suspicion has come to dominate our head office...the objective had been defined to rid the union of all vestiges of former opposition...people were being required to sign loyalty oaths and there was suddenly appointed (with, as far as I can tell, no NEC involvement, nor any reference to our equal opportunities people) an individual euphemistically described as the general secretary's eyes and ears...All internal dissent now ceases at 11 am when eyes-and-ears is said to start his working day..."

Glover says the NEC is "regularly and outrageously harangued" by Lyons. "The only other person I can recall from the recent past who so often quoted the sins of her predecessor to excuse her own failings was the unlamented Margaret Thatcher." ❑

THE BOSSES' FAVOURITE



WINNER: John Smith speaking yesterday


LABOUR leader John Smith emerged as the bosses' ... yesterday.

... rest ovation of any ... the CBI's confer... humorous ... laugh. ... with lasted ... for both ...

... desirability of havi... common floor ...

Smith beats Tarzan for CBI applause

"THE BOSSES' FAVOURITE": No, not a headline from *Labour Briefing* but an accolade for John Smith in the *Daily Mirror*. Our leader's performance for the CBI "won the biggest ovation of any guest speaker." What's more, Smith "made nine humorous asides - each getting a laugh."

Smith, the first Labour leader to address a CBI conference, "won over the bosses" with his advocacy of a cut in interest rates, no tax rises, and "a new industrial strategy for Britain in which government and industry work in partnership" (no trade unions need apply). And he echoed CBI chief Howard Davies's criticism of the Tories' "negative" attitude towards Europe.

Only a few days before the CBI conference, Smith was distancing himself from the commitment to a 35-hour week contained in the manifesto of the European socialist parties for next year's Euro-elections. "A 35-hour week!" said Smith. "I can see no justification for a 35-hour week. I have always found that 20 hours a week hanging about the Palace of Westminster is more than sufficient for the performance of my duties."

No, what he really said was that it was a "British" tradition to "settle these matters" through collective bargaining and not through legislation. No wonder the CBI didn't take him too seriously when he earnestly appealed to it to "consider the desirability of having a common floor of employment rights throughout the Community."

How not to fight the Tories

FOLLOWING A 41-day tribunal, Islington's Labour Council has demoted Highbury Grove head teacher Peter Searle.

So what? A little local squabble? Not at all. Searle has become a victim of Labour's terror of meeting the Tory education offensive head on.

Highbury Grove had suffered under several decades of reactionary, old fogey rule. For years its head was the pompous Tory Rhodes Boyson. It had a poor disciplinary and academic record, ran an old-style "house system" and staff consultation was unheard of.

Searle was appointed with a mandate to change all that in 1988. He immediately took measures to correct some of the worst features of the old regime, abolished the house system and instituted wide-ranging staff involvement. An HMI report in 1991 was, however, critical of the school. The Tories and the tabloids used it as a stick to beat Labour education authorities and "progressive education" in general. The Council buckled under immediately. The tabloids reported that Islington's Director of Education had said that Searle should consider his position. Not surprisingly Searle felt undermined and relations with the authority became strained.

Another critical HMI report in 1992 led to Searle's suspension and the convening of the tribunal. The charge was "inadequate management". It was alleged that Searle was too slow in achieving improvements. Last month, by a majority decision, the tribunal ruled that the council had made out 9 of its 11 charges against Searle and decided to demote him.

It was also acknowledged that Searle had made substantial improvements in communications with staff, community and parents. Evidence in support of him was given by numerous Highbury Grove staff members. The schools' academic record continues to be unimpressive but under Searle's headship it had improved at the same rate as Islington schools in general.

There is a widespread feeling among teachers in Islington that Searle has been made a scapegoat, a sacrificial offering to the Tories and tabloids.

A recently appointed Highbury Grove governor is a Tory councillor in Westminster, reputedly close to Education Minister John Patten, and currently masterminding a Tory-led campaign to get the school to opt-out.

One of the charges against Searle dismissed by the tribunal was that of financial mismanagement. Ironically, the case against Searle was prosecuted by Islington's recently departed Director of Education, Chris Webb. Under Webb's aegis, the Education Department overspent by £8 million, causing havoc and cuts.

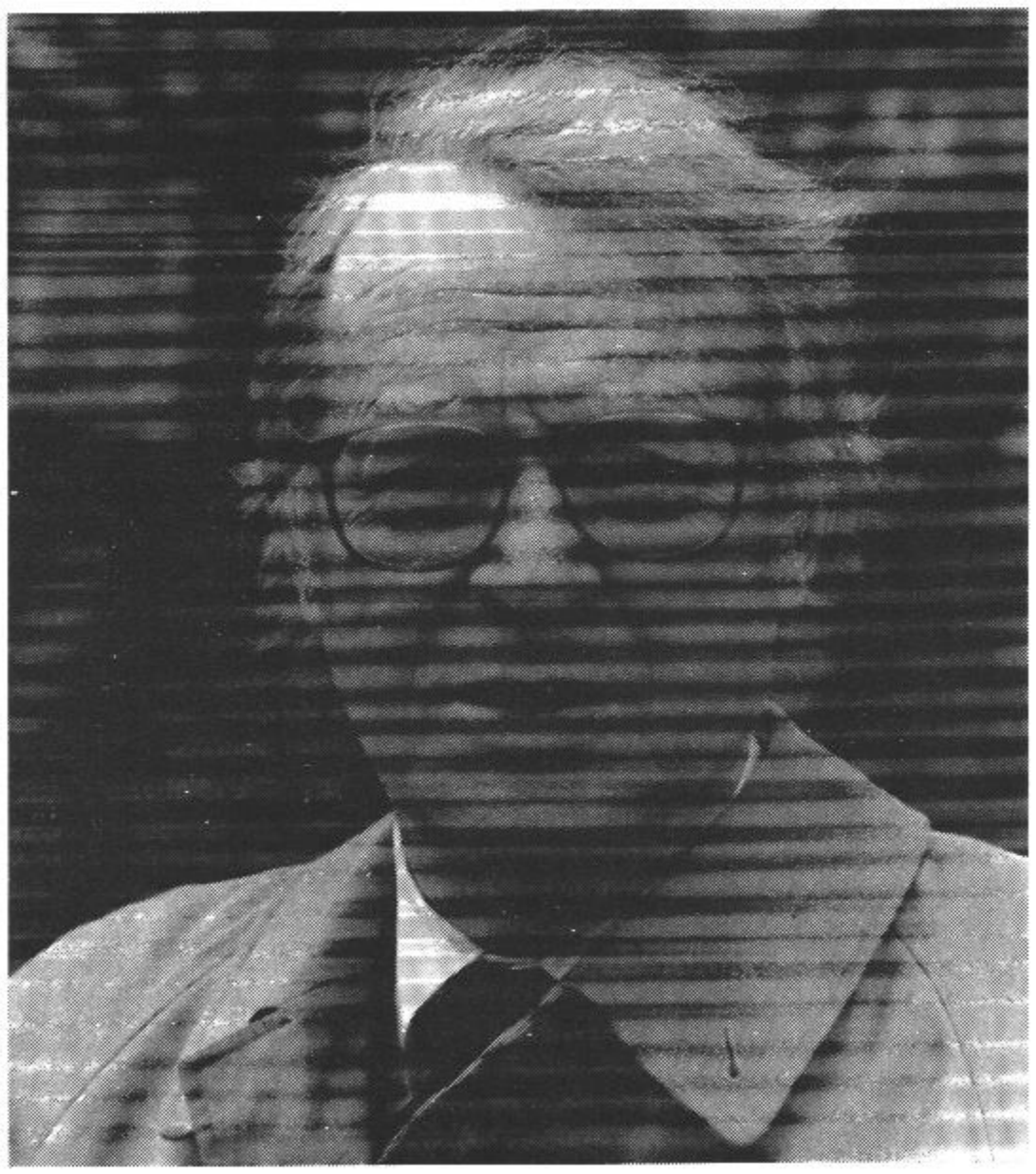
The Labour Group voted last year to get rid of him and that has now been arranged - at a cost to the borough of a rumoured £50,000 payout and an agreement to continue employing the discredited Webb as a consultant at £250 a day.

The Council's action against Searle has so far cost it £232,000 in direct costs and probably the same amount again in staff time and other indirect costs. This is the same amount as the money the Council "saved" by the closure of two popular nurseries in May.

LABOUR PARTY

If Labour wins the next election there will be a mass of new ministers clutching their red boxes for the first time. Former minister **Bob Cryer MP** (below) looks at the menace awaiting them in the shape of the civil service.

Beating the mandarins



GETTING INTO government is something more than hailing a chauffeur-driven government car and carrying a red box.

Labour will inherit a system of administration that is more than ever a creation of the Conservatives. Most senior civil servants are Tories either by education or instinct or both. When the last survey of the so-called "top jobs" was done in 1990, the Oxbridge bias had increased since the previous examination in 1977. Coupled with an Oxbridge degree goes, in most cases, a public school background and not much sympathy for Labour.

Yet these mandarins are the very people behind closed Whitehall doors who are able to influence ministers. Since most of Labour's front-bench "shadows" have little or no ideology they will be an easy target for the established values so well represented by permanent and deputy secretaries.

As an example, one can point to the right of permanent secretaries to refuse to endorse expenditure. For this purpose they are called accounting officers and their refusal is minuted to the Comptroller and Auditor General and then examined by the Select Committee of Public Account. In spite of lavish spending, selling off "the family silver" and the disgraceful "sale" of national Skillcentres, by giving three civil servants several million pounds to take them away, no "minutes" have appeared.

In contrast, during the period of the last Labour government, several minutes were produced by the then permanent secretary at the Department of Industry, Sir Peter Carey.

All related to the workers' co-operatives established to run Triumph motorcycles at Meriden, a Scottish newspaper and an engineering factory at Kirkby near Liverpool, location of high and long-lasting unemployment.

Finally, when the Kirby factory asked for a modest £2.9 million (500 workers were employed) they were refused by hostile ministers in league with hostile civil servants. The factory closed and 500 joined the dole queue. A week later £53 million was given, without a civil service murmur, to a new, wonderful entrepreneur with a new, wonderful car at a factory in Northern Ireland. His name was John Z de Lorean.

With some of the opportunists on our front bench, that sort of philosophical decision-making is all too easily possible, especially with a leader recently ingratiating himself with the CBI at the Harrogate conference. It will not be the basis for a successful Labour government. However, we want to shift wealth and power to working men and women and their families. Well, some of us do.

How can we stop any rot? There are three slightly encouraging signs. First, the commitment to open government is much more popular and in demand than in 1974 when it was part of our policy, though ignored.

Open government allows Labour Party members and the trade union movement to know more about what is going on behind the closed doors of Whitehall. That is, incidentally, why the mandarins are going to resist it. When we know ministers are back-sliding we can at least try to call a halt, maybe even push the ministers forward.

Secondly, the Parliamentary Labour Party should be determined to take into the ministerial private office active members of the Labour Party to provide backing and guidance.

Not the career opportunists spawned from the Labour Co-ordinating Committee but people from the trade unions, factories and offices with a real desire for radical change.

Thirdly, the various subject groups of the Parliamentary Labour Party could be re-shaped to become departmental committees to advise and encourage Labour ministers against the hordes of mandarins.

Labour should be thinking about these problems. The Tories certainly did. In the 1970s, two reports were noted in *The Economist* magazine. One was a plan for beating the miners and the second was to ensure that the civil service was harnessed for Tory policies. The author of both was the late Nicholas Ridley, Tory Cabinet minister and ideologue of the Thatcherite right, and we will need considerable determination if we are to beat his legacy. ❑

More ideas, fewer slates

Alan Simpson MP replies to Dave Osler's article in last month's *Labour Briefing* setting out a future for the Socialist Campaign Group.

APART FROM the notion of Dave Osler having children by me, there was a great deal of what he offered in the last issue of *Briefing* which was welcome and timely.

It wasn't exactly the Socialist Campaign Group being killed by friendly fire, but many of the criticisms struck an uncomfortable chord, which various members of the Group have also raised during this last year or so.

A host of changes have to take place on the left (both inside and outside Parliament) and I want to address just a few of these before responding to the most important points that Dave raised.

For more than a decade the left has been on the defensive. When Thatcher came to power, Labour had lost its way as a party of radical change. We appeared oblivious or indifferent to the ways in which publicly owned industries and utilities failed to deliver services which would be acceptable and accountable to the public.

Industrially, Labour had frequently used the ownership of industries more as a regulator of the economy than as a basis of pushing long-term investment, growth and stability. We had never used office to shift the balance of control away from capital in favour of labour. Opportunities to extend industrial democracy, to move the control of pension funds to the workers themselves, to develop autonomous devolved and more accountable models of local government, had all been spurned.

Labour's response to the Thatcherite assault was not to develop new ideas but to have no ideas at all. Many of us were in the bizarre position of defending in the eighties what we had been increasingly critical of in the seventies.

The Campaign Group came to represent a part of the movement which was not afraid to stand up and fight against Thatcher in defence of socialist policies, but it also focused heavily on Tony Benn as one of the few (only?) sources of fresh ideas and intellectual honesty that the left offered in a Parliamentary context. The Group formed around a core of left MPs who were not afraid to think critically and independently about a



socialist agenda rather than one written for us by the new right. That is why I joined.

But times have changed. SCG members are not (openly) vilified in the way in which I understand they used to be in the PLP. Perhaps it is worse, because now we are humoured. In the space for political debate which has opened up under John Smith, we have not stepped forward to fill the gap with an agenda for radical change which the left throughout the country could pick up and engage with.

In that sense, Dave Osler's challenge to "get it together" is the core of what the Campaign Group must respond to. It is a challenge which is neither unreasonable nor out of reach.

Members of the Campaign Group are among the brightest and most able in Parliament.

They are also the most open and supportive in developing socialist critiques of key issues. Occasionally this has surfaced in debates in Parliament - the Gulf, defence policies, youth policy and benefits. But this has been unstructured and erratic, and we have got out of the habit of being pamphleteers in our own causes.

A number of the Group have already put in considerable efforts to support the development of the national Network, and it is unfair on those who have put most into this to describe it in terms of a bunch of political groupies or a football supporters' club.

The Network's meetings have been about how to rebuild the confidence of the left in the country, and what role left activists want Campaign Group MPs to play in the process. It is to move from slates to substantive ideas. That is now the agenda, and it must not be reduced to the misleading issue of who gets elected on to the NEC. Perhaps it is more useful to ask, even if the whole of the Campaign Group slate had been elected, what would we have expected them to do?

We need a political agenda, which begins from an understanding of how capital has restructured itself over the last 15 years; which is prepared to radically alter the structures of governance and control within the UK; which has an internationalism which challenges the very foundations of contemporary economic and environmental policies; and which can support the networks of intellectual contraband which the left needs to be sharing and exchanging if we are to offer a practical programme which can capture the public desire for something radically different from the mess we are now in.

Almost certainly this will require us to operate in a very different way inside the Campaign Group. But it will also require us to tie into a movement outside Parliament which itself breaks free from some of the sectarianism which has kept the left weakened and divided. Some of the ideas raised by Dave Osler are already being raised within the Campaign Group.

Others, if they are properly understood, have as far-reaching implications for the left outside Parliament as for those of us within it. They demand changes from us all which are long overdue. ❑

Moving the goalposts

Louise Kawakami argues that the recent media focus on 'date rape' is a deliberate attempt to falsify and mislead.

AUSTEN DONNELLAN, a 21-year-old student, was acquitted of the rape of a fellow student last month in a case which in itself was not at all unusual.

However, what followed was a media floodlight, and a good dose of anti-women sentiment, on the issue of 'date rape'. In the legal sphere, the question of anonymity for the accused in cases of rape was raised.

The issue of sexual violence has been deliberately confused with that of sexual conduct in the hysterical press coverage of the Donnellan case and in a few other high-profile cases where the women concerned were vilified for their actions. This has become another example of the wider backlash against liberated women and feminism.

What became the focus of scrutiny was the sexual behaviour of women rather than the violence committed against women.

Naturally, the reactionaries blamed liberated female sexuality and feminism - yet again, the supposed liberalism of the sixties and seventies was portrayed as the fount of our present troubles - but, at the same time, guarded themselves against the charge of misogyny by loudly proclaiming that "real rape" was an extremely serious offence while relegating those cases outside the "real" category to that of trivial sexual misconduct.

What should be a simple point - that of consent - has been turned into an absurd debate on the degree of validity of consent. This is obviously based on the assumption that women either wilfully mislead or are not aware of their own intentions.

Some college halls of residence have even expressed an interest in implementing "sex contracts" - or rape-claims - insurance modelled on those being used in some American college dormitories and fraternities, where it is estimated that one in eight female students are sexually assaulted during their time at college.

When a female signs a "sex contract" with a male student an undertaking is given that if sex does occur it is with consent - this is clearly a bizarre and dangerous path to travel.

The climate and culture of violence apparent in college environments, manifested by notorious traditions such as the "fuck a fresh" week and "hazing" - initiation rutuals where men and women are often subjected to sexual abuse - are being challenged by students and feminists.

The preoccupation with the term "date rape" has diluted the seriousness of the matter to some extent. Thankfully, the expression has not become the catch-phase it is across the Atlantic.

Rape is the crime of sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent and rape by acquaintances is nothing new and is the most common form of rape. In the eyes of the law and in the perception of the public, there is still a clear categorisation of serious and less serious types of rape.

Some progress was made some time ago with the change in the law making rape in marriage a crime.

But very few prosecutions have followed this advance. Violence against women is a reality for all and extends beyond college walls. What is crucial is to extend the discussion and to focus the debate on the institutions which perpetuate the violence.

A case of class

THE CASE OF Austen Donnellan raises the important but severely neglected issue of class in rape cases. A certain Dr Maffat, a police "expert" in such matters, argued: "Rapists are violent men... they are not kind, gentle and reliable."

This statement is indicative of a strong current which constantly underlay the Donnellan case. This bloke was nice, white, middle-class, articulate and dressed in smart suits for his courtroom appearances. Therefore, he could not possibly be a rapist. If he had been black or Irish and working class, one felt, he would have been banged up without hesitation.

Even the supposedly liberal *Guardian* managed to give acres of space to the concept that men are the victims in such cases.

Lord Russell, a man who no doubt carried a certain gravitas in both the courtroom and the television studio, said that he "knew" Donnellan was innocent after interviewing him. No doubt a lot of expense could be saved if he applied his extraordinary powers of deduction to future cases.

It is hardly startling to discover that some men are so unable to relate to women that they suspect the only way of getting one to go to bed with them is if she is too drunk to know what she is doing.

What is rather more shocking is the discovery that this is apparently acceptable behaviour, particularly if the perpetrator is a solidly respectable, middle-class sort of chap.

Cautious?

IT IS intriguing to ponder why a Crown Prosecution Service, led by a notoriously cautious Director of Public Prosecutions, Barbara Mills, decided to bring the Donnellan case to court - a case it must have known it had little chance of winning - against the wishes of the woman involved.

Only a few weeks ago, the former chairman of the Bar, Anthony Scrivener, said: "We have the highest crime rate ever and a fewer number of cases going to court than we've ever had."

Yet, because of the pursuit of a weak case, we now have calls for a woman's right to anonymity to be removed and the portrayal of men as the "real victims".

"They don't matter"

John Nicholson
Manchester Gorton CLP

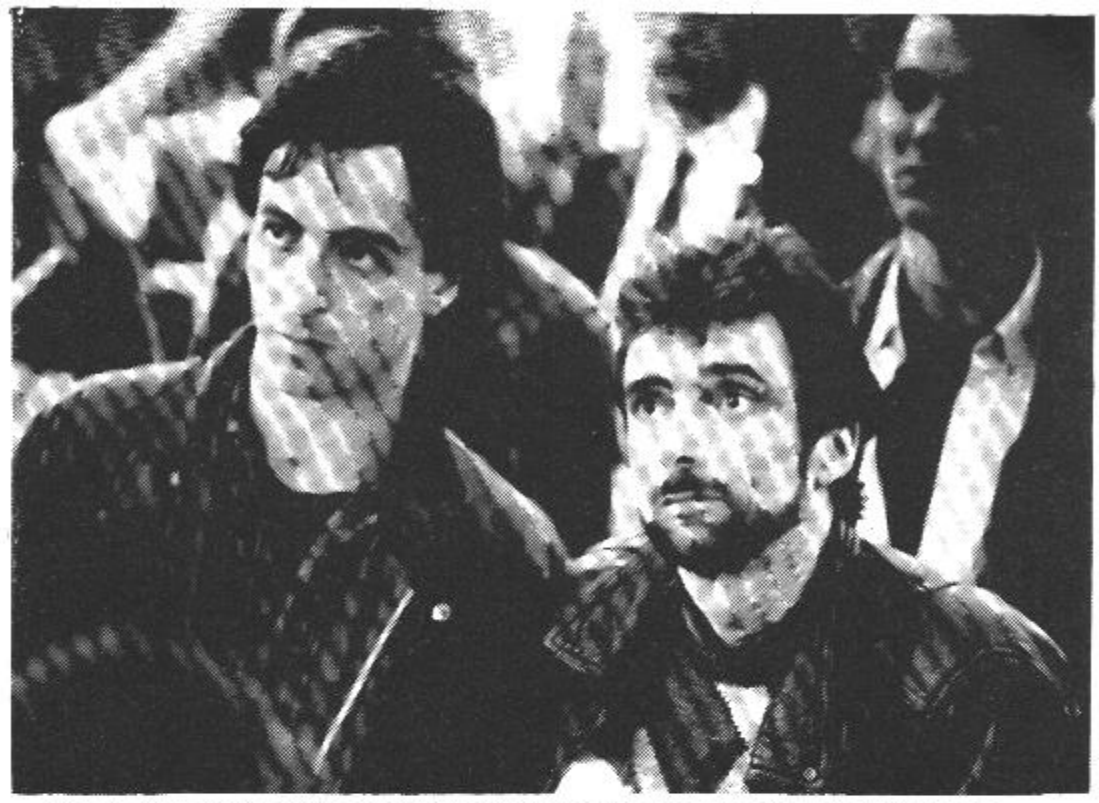
THE SECRETARY of State for Health, Virginia Bottomley, in May this year announced a significant down-grading of initiatives related to HIV disease.

Most tangibly this included a severe cut in funding for two of the largest HIV voluntary organisations, and an early indication that "ring-fenced" or specific funding for HIV services would be ended in the near future.

More important still was the underlying notion the Secretary of State now put forward that HIV no longer affected the heterosexual population, but was only a concern for gay men and injecting drug users (or, possibly as an alternative, black people). Implicitly, this meant that HIV was seen by the government to be associated with people who themselves didn't matter, and so it was fine to cut funding and services for them. The rest of "us" were alright, and did not need to worry about "them".

At the same time, the section on HIV within the *Health of the Nation* White Paper has in practice developed into an HIV prevention initiative which ignores the needs of people already living with the disease. And the Community Care plans often omit people with HIV because they regard the health authorities as the appropriate location for HIV services in general.

The result is that people with HIV fall between two stools, even though they relate to many of the fine phrases contained within both *Health of the Nation* and *Caring for People* White Papers. We must, of course, continue to point this out.



What of the future? A candlelit vigil for AIDS organised by the Terrence Higgins Trust.

But for us to believe that we will change the government's direction at national level by tackling the inadequacies of community care and purchasing plans in local districts would be a tragic illusion.

Rather, we have to emphasise the value we place on people - all people - who are directly affected by HIV disease.

Our society should show that it values people with HIV, by providing adequate, confidential and accessible care for them. Our society should show that it values people perceived to be at risk of acquiring HIV by changing the laws which discriminate against so many of them, such as immigration and sexuality legislation.

Over the counter

Leonora Lloyd
National Abortion Campaign

TWENTY YEARS ago, a family planning expert proposed that the contraceptive pill should be available "over the counter" from pharmacies. Recently, articles in the medical press have raised the issue again and have also proposed that emergency contraception (the "morning after" pill) should also be available in the same way.

It is not often that the medical profession suggests that it be given less power rather than more. Obstetrician and gynaecologist, Professor Wendy Savage, agrees that, certainly in the case of emergency contraception, it should be freely available from pharmacists.

Contraception remains the only medicine available which is free for everyone. But the reality is that it is not medicine and is more properly thought of as a public health measure.

Since the pill was first introduced over 30 years ago, it has undergone a number of modifications and in its current formulations is extremely safe for most women.

Post-coital contraception, which uses similar hormones, is also very safe. There are no reported deaths or serious illnesses following its use in many thousands of cases all over the world.

There is no medical reason why both the pill and post-coital methods should not be freely available from pharmacists, who can explain whether there are any contra-indications and when a woman should see a doctor. The pills should come with expanded instructions for use and follow-up.

However, the draw-back to such proposals is that they would not be free when bought from a chemist.

Under this government, this would quickly lead to a situation where there was no alternative to having to pay. Against this, it must be said that, particularly in the case of emergency contraception, the evidence is that those who would most benefit from using it - young women - are the least likely to know where to get it from, or to be too shy to go to their doctor for it. In addition, doctors are generally closed at the time when demand is highest - at the weekend.

The answer is to have these products available from pharmacists, while at the same time continuing to supply them free from their current sources.

When sold over the counter, they should be at a subsidised price to enable everyone to afford them. Increased use of emergency contraception could reduce the need for later abortions quite dramatically.

The National Abortion Campaign and its sister organisations will be looking closely at the proposals and - if satisfied that it is in women's interests, as the evidence seems to suggest - will be calling for them to be enacted with sufficient safeguards.

JUSTICE

Virtue unrewarded

Andy Parr reports on the tragic case of imprisoned ex-miner Alf Fox: In the increasingly decimated Yorkshire coalfield lies Frickley pit. A former miner from that pit, Alf Fox, has now spent 13 years in prison for a crime he did not commit.

On October 15th 1980, Kathleen Wathey and her daughter, Jacqueline, were found strangled in their South Elmsall bungalow and Wathey's mother bound and gagged after suffering various injuries. She was later found to have died from smoke inhalation.

The bungalow had been set alight in an attempt to destroy evidence of the murder, but had not burned long enough to cause any real damage.

Alf Fox and Jacqueline Wathey had married in 1979, but had separated. At the time of the murder they were making a determined effort at reconciliation for the sake of their six-week-old son. On the night in question, the couple were seen together up to the time Fox escorted his wife to the bus stop to South Elmsall at 9.30 pm.

As a result of the murders the West Yorkshire police, still smarting from their failure to nab the Yorkshire Ripper and trying to claw back some credibility, launched a massive investigation. Initially, they had taken the view that it was a robbery that had gone badly wrong.

Alf Fox co-operated fully with police enquiries and gave details of all his movements on the night in question. Lacking any positive evidence against him, the police decided to set about fabricating it.

The police maintained that having committed the crimes, Alf drove back to his sister's Armthorpe home 17 miles distant negotiating twisting country lanes and Doncaster town centre in a flat 15 minutes. This brings to mind the non-existent hurricane journey from the Elephant and Castle by Carole Richardson (of the Guildford Four) in 1974.

It was also claimed that a car like Alf's was seen parked outside the bungalow and later being driven away at speed. These sightings were later totally discredited by the Rough Justice programme as were the police methods in obtaining such evidence. A former girlfriend of Fox's was asked to sign blank statement papers.

The trial proved a farce. Judge Milmo seemed unable to keep pace with proceedings and constantly favoured the prosecution. He pronounced an estimated 48 major errors of fact.

He even instructed the jury to disregard the alibi evidence of Alf's sister and brother-in-law on the grounds that, as relatives, they could only be expected to support his story!

Inevitably, Alf was found guilty. His appeal was before Lord Lane, who characteristically dismissed it in one day. The hapless defendant was not permitted to attend the appeal.

Despite a burgeoning campaign, Alf Fox has remained in prison ever since. Even at his mother's death bed and funeral he was kept in hand-cuffs.

According to prison authorities, prisoners who claim innocence constitute an escape risk. Parole is unlikely to be offered as claims of innocence are interpreted as a refusal to come to terms with a crime.

Sudden loss

Leonora Lloyd reviews the *Justice for Women* information pack.

IN RECENT YEARS, the way in which the law treats women who kill their violent partners has been shown to be insensitive to the reality of these women's lives. The law on homicide is based on the way men react to stressful situations - when they hit out immediately because of "sudden and temporary loss of control".

Moreover, men attacking women can use their bodies as weapons, as they usually enjoy considerable advantages of height, weight and strength.

Women, however, seeking to defend themselves or their children, generally have to find a weapon, which itself involves a lapse of time. Often they have to wait until the man is asleep or too drunk to resist. All of this weakens any claims to have acted in "self-defence" or "suddenly".

Women's organisations have been taking up these issues recently but it is not always clear what they are asking for, nor what they base their case on. That is why this new publication is so welcome and timely.

This very useful pack was put together in response to requests from students, journalists and many others. It covers the current law, looks at various proposals for change - and not just the most famous cases - and explores such issues as why women do not leave violent men and why they do not intervene when their children are being attacked by violent partners. There is also a very useful list of organisations and further recourses.

There is just one thing that should be amended when a new edition is being prepared. There is rather a lot of duplication of material; for example, a number of organisations give evidence which tends to be very similar. Despite this, it is readable, explains often quite technical material clearly and is to be highly recommended.

● **The pack is available for £10 from the London Justice for Women Collective, 55 Rathcoole Gardens, London. N8 9NE.**

Public meeting

HIV — Could the government care less?

Thursday 2nd December 1993
7.00pm

Conference Room
Manchester Town Hall
Albert Square
Manchester

This meeting provides an opportunity to discuss the government's recent downgrading of HIV and how we can lobby for a positive agenda for people with HIV.

Organised by George House Trust

'Absurd and perverse'

Dave Palmer looks at the extraordinary series of injustices and non-disclosures which surround the case of the M25 Three.

RAPHAEL ROWE, Michael Davis and Randolph Johnson were convicted of murder, robbery, grievous bodily harm and firearms offences in March 1990. They were all sentenced to life imprisonment. The charges related to a series of three violent attacks and robberies committed by a gang of three men around the Surrey section of the M25 in December 1988.

The victims of the crimes gave evidence that two of the perpetrators were white and one black. All three convicted men are black. Police conducted at least one unrecorded interview with suspects who admitted their own direct involvement in the crimes.

These three suspects then became key prosecution witnesses.

One of the victims changed his evidence relating to the time of the first attack because police said his original timings did not "fit". Seven witnesses gave an alibi for Rowe and Davis.

In June 1993 the most important new evidence brought to light was a police officer's notebook, never before disclosed to the defence.

It contained the details of an interview with a victim conducted immediately following the second attack. In this account the victim clearly identified two of the assailants as white, and one black.

In evidence at the men's trial the victim no longer indicated the colour of any of the men.

In a judgement given in July, the Appeal Court judges dismissed the appeals. They claimed there was no basis for saying there was "even a lurking doubt" about the safety of the convictions and decided the non-disclosure of the notebook was an "irregularity" but not a "material irregularity".

Rowe's solicitor described the judgement as "an absurdity in logic and fact". Lord Justice Watkins, who presided over the appeal, announced his retirement soon thereafter.

On September 30th, the men's lawyers applied to the Court of Appeal for leave to appeal to the House of Lords against the decision on the basis that in upholding the convictions the court had provided an alternative basis for the jury's verdict of guilty, in the absence of any evidential support.

The application, heard before the same bench which heard the appeal, was denied. Rowe and Davis's lawyers intend asking the Home Secretary to refer their cases before a newly constituted Court of Appeal for further review, despite there being no significant new evidence. The main basis for this will be the "perversity and illogicality" of the Watkins judgement.

In addition, they are considering referring to the European Court of Human Rights the issue of non-disclosure of evidence under a public interest immunity ruling which has prevented the appellants and their lawyers from discovering whether or not any of a £25,000 reward was paid to any of the prosecution witnesses.

● **For further information contact: The M25 Three Campaign, c/o 75 Scylla Road, Peckham Rye, London. SE15 3PB.**

Honourable discharge

Billy Power reviews
The Volunteer by Shane O'Doherty.
£4.99.

I FIRST MET Shane O'Doherty in gaol at the end of 1977. He joined a group of other Irish prisoners including Frank Johnson, Gerry Conlon of the Guildford Four and his father Guiseppe Conlon, myself and others.

I came to know him well and he discussed with me the decision to write to the former victims of his letter-bombs.

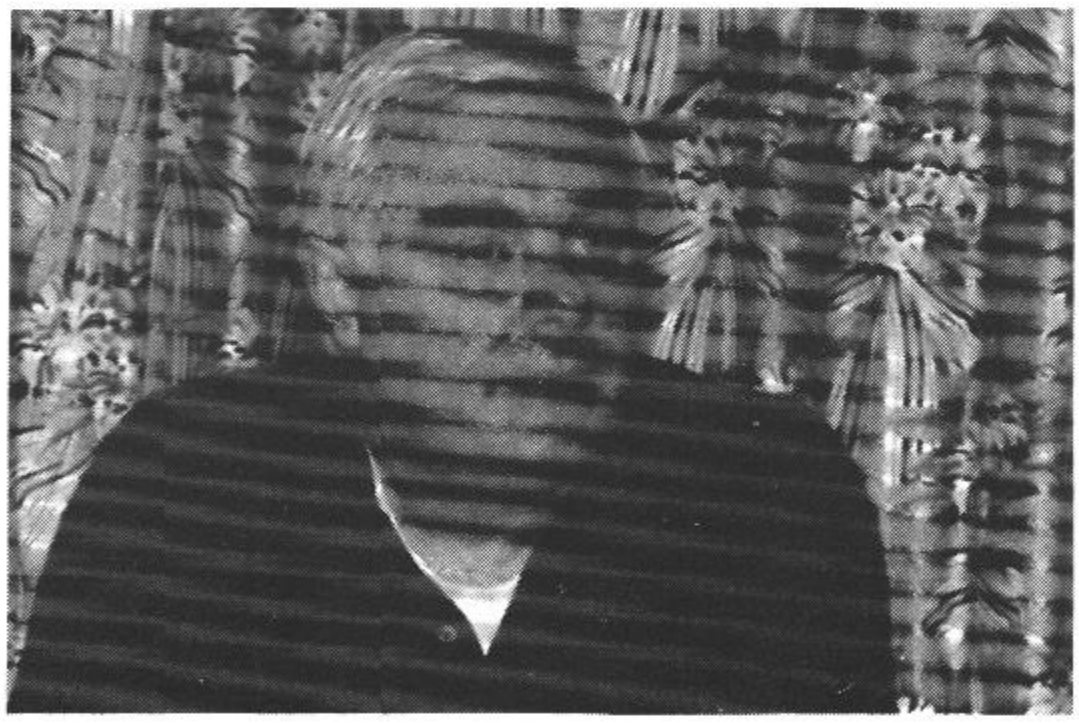
The book is very much what I expected. Shane related many of his exploits to me, centring around his early life in Derry.

It represents an excellent insight into the mind of a young man growing up in the North of Ireland at the start of "the troubles". A man, too, who was very much part of them through his association with the Provisional IRA.

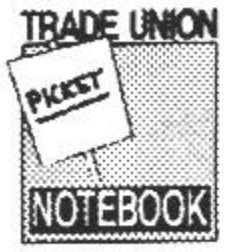
He relates his fight with the authorities comprehensively, and later how he changed his mind about violence: "I realized that I was not putting right injustices - I was creating them."

I well remember the widely different attitudes of his former republican comrades to his change of heart - some ostracised him completely, others accepted it. I regarded his decision as totally honourable.

Much can be learnt from this book about the workings of the prison system - for many months, for instance, Shane was "on the blanket."



Billy Power. PHOTO: Bryn Griffiths



Trade

OVER 300,000 civil servants from five public sector unions staged a 24-hour stoppage on November 5th in protest at creeping privatisation in their work.

The five unions - CPSA, NUCPS, IRSF, SPOA and NIPSA - struck in response to the government's increasing use of "market testing" in wider areas of the civil service's work.

"Market testing" means privatisation by the back door but the Tories simply haven't the guts to admit it.

John Sheldon, general secretary of NUCPS, argued that the overwhelming vote for strike action "totally contradicts claims by the government that civil servants themselves were in favour of Tory policies."

It marks the first time that all five unions have acted together against the government since 1981. Future areas lined up for "market testing" by the government include social security, state pensions, tax assessment and the coastguard service.

The general secretary of CPSA, Barry Reamsbottom, commented: "This government seems to have forgotten that we are living in a democracy.

"It has pushed through rail privatisation when the vast majority of the British public don't want it, and in a poll commissioned by the civil service unions, 69 per cent said they don't want the civil service privatised."

Most of the government offices throughout the country were closed or severely disrupted - ranging from customs to courts, from social security to the Scottish Office, from tax offices to the Tower of London (even the Beefeaters went on strike). Incredibly, the day before the strike, Public Services Minister William Waldegrave announced new targets for "market testing". This included some highly questionable, and utterly unsubstantiated, claims about savings brought about by the exercise.

The civil service unions claimed that, in the weeks following the day of action, significant numbers of new recruits joined all the unions involved.

John Sheldon has said that "further industrial action will have a key role to play in the campaign whether it be at national, departmental/agency or project level".

The TUC claims to be co-ordinating joint action across the public services and has agreed to some sort of major public service event in the New Year.

Claims by that august body must, of course, be treated with a fair degree of caution considering its record of inertia.

But the day of action was undeniably a success. Rallies were held in London, Glagow, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Leeds, Birmingham, Cardiff, Swansea, Nottingham, Blackpool and Belfast, plus smaller meetings in other towns and cities.

Clive Brooke, general secretary of IRSF, commented after the strike: "In spite of the new restrictive laws governing industrial action ballots, our members have sent a very strong message to the government that they do not intend allowing ministers to sell off large parts of the civil service, at the expense of thousands of jobs, without a fight."

Brooke touches on the fact that market testing probably represents the most serious threat to civil service unions for many, many years - if the plans go ahead, tens of thousands of civil servants will lose their jobs. Naturally, that will undermine all the unions in the sector and thus serve the Government's true purpose in introducing such senseless and cowardly measures in the first place. ❑



An interesting body of men - NUCPS members demonstrate at Downing Street.

union news



Winner of this year's Booker fiction prize Roddy Doyle has given his backing to 80 sacked women workers at Middlebrook Mushrooms, a Hull-based firm.

Middlebrook, which is owned by international giant Booker, sacked the women because they objected to changes in terms and conditions which the firm were trying to impose.

This came after a pay freeze and 300 redundancies - the proposed changes included compulsory weekend working and forced overtime.

The workers, backed by the Transport and General Workers Union, picketed the glitzy Booker Prize evening - hosted by the wealthy parent company - in London's West End last month.

This was in spite of a desperate cash offer by the company in an attempt to head off any unseemly protest.

Roddy Doyle, whose novel *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* won from a shortlist of six, gave the women his full support and bought a copy of their book telling the story of the dispute, *Our Bitter Harvest*.

The Writers' Guild has since added its backing to the workers' cause.

The sacked workers celebrated the first anniversary of the lock-out on November 20th with a rally outside Selby, just a few miles from the Middlebrook plant.

● Messages of support and donations should be sent to the TGWU, Bevin House, George Street, Hull. HU1 3DB. Copies of *Our Bitter Harvest* are available at £4.95 each. Make cheques payable to Mushroom Pickers Support Fund.

Sacked engineering workers at Hillier's in Reading have launched a fresh appeal to end the dispute as the first anniversary of the sackings approaches.

Workers at the firm - which supplies components to the aerospace industry - were locked out after a one-day strike in protest at wage cuts of up to 38 per cent and an attack on working conditions.

The two unions involved, the Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Electrical Workers and the Manufacturing, Science and Finance union, have called on the management to enter negotiations but the bosses refuse.

The firm has already had to pay out more than £30,000 in redundancy compensation and wages arrears with more in the pipeline as 30 workers are due to go to an industrial tribunal in December.

The workers are planning a rally in Reading for December to mark the first anniversary of the dispute.

Send donations and messages of support to Ms Lyn Collick, 8 Launcester Avenue, Caversham Park, Reading, Berks. RG4 0SW.

The Construction Safety Campaign has celebrated a court success over two demolition site deaths that are believed to make legal history.

In 1992, a railway bridge collapsed during demolition at St John's Station in Deptford, south-east London. It killed Nicholas Scott and Frank Warren, workers with Tilbury Douglas, contracted by BR to carry out the work.

The jury in the case returned a verdict of "unlawful killing" and the Health and Safety Executive is now considering bringing charges.

The Construction Safety Campaign, comprising largely of UCATT members, has long been calling for prison sentences for employers found guilty of such breaches of site safety.

The campaign reports that "a building worker is killed, on average, once in every three days on a building site". Yet, "no building employer has ever seen the inside of a prison cell for causing a death".

The EC Parliament has sent out a directive on working hours which will eventually find its way on to the British statute book and will limit some sectors to working 48 hours a week.

Alf Lomas, MEP for London North-East and former leader of the British Group of Labour Euro-MPs, said: "This directive is very modest. It will be some years before it is fully implemented and will exclude important sections of our workforce.

"However, it will for the first time give working people legal rights regarding working hours, holidays, night work and rest periods."

Lomas said that as well as limiting working time to an average of 48 hours a week, the directive would introduce adequate rest breaks and limit night work.

Three more pits in the Yorkshire coalfield have been given notice that they will have to cease production.

Frickley is to close on November 26th with Bentley and Hatfield following on December 3rd.

"All three pits would have a positive future but for government energy policy which has rigged the market against coal," said Yorkshire miners' leader Ken Homer.

"The closure of three more Yorkshire pits will put 1,500 more people out of work. It will be a disaster not only for those individuals and their families but for whole communities.

"Subsidised coal imports continue to be dumped in Britain and subsidised French nuclear electricity continues to be imported across through the cross-Channel link. And Mr Heseltine has permitted two power stations to burn imported orimulsion - the world's filthiest fuel.

"It comes as no surprise that coal privatisation has been included in the Queen's Speech."

Seeking common ground

Labour Briefing interviewed **Victor Amaya**, FMLN representative in Britain, who is now returning to El Salvador to help fight the election campaign.

***Labour Briefing*: Does the shooting of Helena Castro, a prominent leader of the FMLN, signify a return to the use of death squads in El Salvador? Will this jeopardise the elections?**

Victor Amaya: It's not only Helena Castro, there are others. The death toll for the FMLN is 21 this year. At first it was only the youth, now it's the leadership too.

Those responsible for the killings are so-called "civilian death squads" organised by the oligarchy, receiving intelligence from the army. This could jeopardise the whole peace process.

We responded politically. An FMLN delegation went to the UN and asked them to asses how much the government is complying with the peace agreement.

Secondly, we demanded that they should get the government to release their information on "civilian death squads" and how they are linked to rightists in Florida, and that the US State Department release its documents and allow the UN to make public what the death squads are doing. That was achieved.

A high-level UN visit went to El Salvador and the State Department is releasing the documents. Now we expect the US Congress to investigate this and take a more active role.

***LB*: Elsewhere, for example in South Africa, revolutionaries and socialists have said that participation in elections or opening a dialogue with the government is not a question of principle - the key issue is whether they can approach this from a position of strength. Is the FMLN approaching this new stage from a position of strength?**

VA: Without any doubt. This is the first time a movement in our position has been able to create a consensus in society on what to do - on the demilitarisation of society and the agrarian reform. We are not isolated from civilian society and our main objective is to defeat ARENA, to win. We are also socialists and we are trying to redraft the transition to socialism. This process will take us to a new stage.

***LB*: What has the FMLN learned from its struggle about the relationship of the party to the community and its grassroots organisations?**

VA: Not only in El Salvador, but also in Nicaragua, Mexico and Brazil we are all addressing this relationship between the party and popular movements. There has to be some autonomy between the mass popular movements and the political party.

We need to get rid of the idea that the party is all-powerful. This is related to our programme, that the workers are involved in managing the means of production. As the workers take direct democracy into their hands over the means of production, we the party take part in participatory democracy, in elections. So when the workers have a problem in their direct role of managing the means of production, we can go through participatory democracy in the political system to argue for the nationalisation of foreign trade.

***LB*: You said recently that the Sao Paulo Forum is coming to Britain to hold a conference in Manchester. Can you enlarge on this?**

VA: The Sao Paolo Forum aims for South-South integration and South-North dialogue, not just with progressive forces but also the main centres of power. There are many strong possibilities in Latin America that the left could take power or have a key say in Brazil, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama or El Salvador. So we have the possibility of a common strategy.

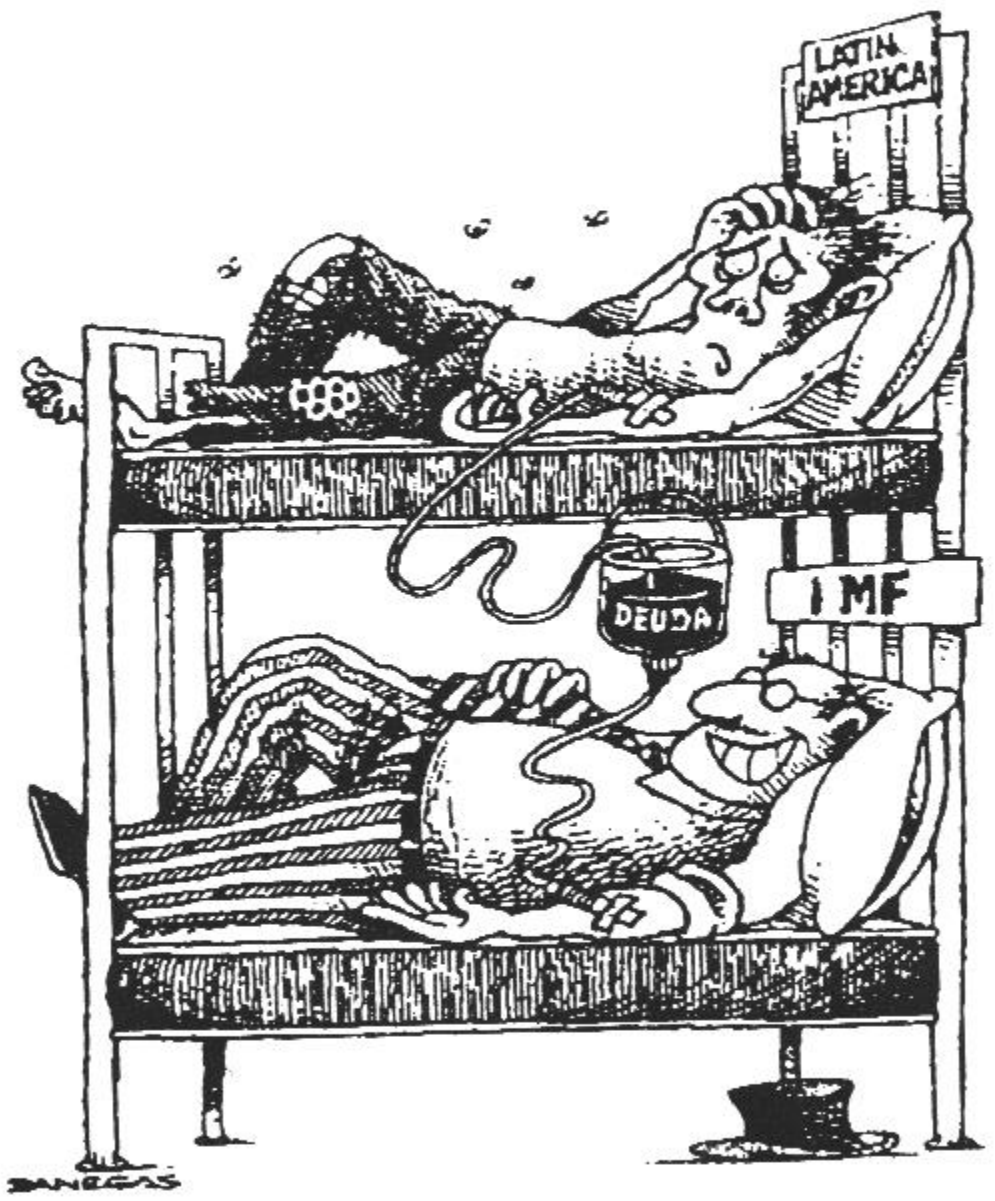
The basic idea is to talk to the left parties in Europe, but also to civilian society and to NGOs here on certain problems: the new international division of labour, the new technological revolution, neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is killing the South, but it's also affecting people in the North. So the idea is to bring 500 people from political parties and NGOs from Europe to Manchester.

***LB*: The experience of the Latin American left in recent years is rich and diverse. Without mechanically transplanting different processes, what are the principal lessons to be learned for socialists active here?**

VA: In the Sao Paolo Forum we are looking for the common ground, not differences. It is a new approach to understanding reality to say humbly, "We don't have the whole truth - let's find it together."

The Sao Paolo Forum has reached maturity - 137 parties in Latin America and the Carribean are now involved. Now we go to the next stage to tackle common problems.

We want to listen to you to find common ground if we can. But we are not looking for differences in Manchester. If you don't like the idea of finding the common ground, don't come to Manchester.



INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING

The Canberra coup

Twenty-one years ago, Gough Whitlam led the Australian Labor Party to a historic victory. **John Cryer** looks at the events which led to Whitlam's dismissal in what amounted to a peaceful coup.

"THE QUESTION is whether any duly elected reformist government will be allowed to govern in future.

"What is at stake is whether the people who seek to change and reform are ever again to have confidence that it can be achieved through the normal parliamentary processes."

They were the words of Gough Whitlam shortly after being sacked from the Australian premiership by Sir John Kerr, the country's Governor-General and Australia's highest-ranking representative of the British sovereign.

Three years earlier, on December 2nd 1972, Whitlam had become the first Labor Prime Minister for 23 years. During the whole of that period, the government in Canberra was formed by a coalition of two minority parties - the Liberals and the National Country Party.

"The Labor electoral triumph of 1972," wrote former Australian Labor MP Joan Coxsedge," was like soaking rain after years of drought."

Australian troops were withdrawn from Vietnam and conscription ended, the foundations of a health service were laid, education spending was doubled and student fees abolished, equal pay for women was introduced, a system of legal aid was set up and legislation giving land rights to the Aboriginal peoples was brought forward.

Such radical policies alone would have caused suspicion and resentment in London and Washington but the Australian government's attitude to American foreign policy reportedly caused paroxysms of rage in a White House presided over by Richard Nixon.

After the US's genocidal bombing of Hanoi in Christmas 1972, an adviser to the CIA noted of the Canberra administration: "Three newly appointed senior ministers ... volunteered public and extremely derogatory remarks about the US President and his administration: Cameron - 'maniacs'; Uren - 'mass-murderers'; Cairns - 'corrupt'.

"Cairns proceeded to call for public rallies to oppose the bombing. Additionally, protesting dockside workers imposed a boycott on American shipping ... Here we should say that the US administration was shocked over what had happened in Australia."

The US and British secret services were fortunate enough to have a powerful ally in Canberra - the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr. As the Australian journalist John Pilger has pointed out, Kerr's connections with secret services "are a matter of record".

Kerr worked for the Office of Strategic Services (forerunner of the CIA), and later played a major role in the attempt to undermine fatally the Australian Labor Party in the fifties. He was also a leading member of the Australian Association of Cultural Freedom, which in 1967 was exposed in the US Congress as being funded and run by the CIA.

Meanwhile, the US secret services set about smearing the Whitlam government. In 1977, 21-year-old former CIA operative Christopher Boyce was jailed for spying. During his trial it was revealed that he had spent some time decoding messages from the secretive US spy facility in the centre of Australia, Pine Gap, during the period of the Whitlam government.

It became apparent to Boyce that the Americans were using their presence in Australia to implicate government ministers in all sorts of scandals. Boyce claimed that his disgust at these actions led to his exposure of US activities and hence to his trial on charges of spying.

Boyce's confession was suppressed by the US authorities and he still languishes in prison - perhaps we shall never learn the full extent of what he knows.

The most notorious and effective smear against the Whitlam administration was the "loans affair." Its machinations are too complex to cover here, but have been detailed by John Pilger in his book *A Secret Country*.

The Australian press was deluged with "evidence", all from highly dubious sources, that various ministers were to receive fabulous bribes for persuading the government to take on huge loans.

Not one shred of evidence has ever been presented which would stand up in court to support such claims. Yet two key ministers - Jim Cairns and Rex Connor - were forced to resign from office.

Shortly after Connor's resignation, and amid all kinds of smears and accusations, the leader of the opposition, Malcolm Fraser, made his move.

He used the opposition majority in the Upper House - the Senate - to delay the Budget Appropriation Bills, thus blocking the money supply and threatening Australia's public services.

Fraser's tactic was unheard of and was roundly condemned by most of the country's constitutional experts. Sir John Kerr, however, took a different view - summoning Whitlam to his official residence, Kerr used his "reserve powers" to sack the elected Prime Minister. He then called on Malcolm Fraser to form a government.

The new administration called an election for December 13th 1975.

Unfortunately, the whole run-up to the election put Labor at a massive disadvantage. As Joan Coxsedge wrote, the former government "had been deprived of choosing the date and the issues for an election. The nature of their dismissal had placed them in the position of convicted criminals, lending credence to the continuing cries of scandal from anti-Labor forces."

Under such favourable circumstances, the Tories won. There is no doubt that the evidence published by John Pilger and Joan Coxsedge demonstrates very forcefully that the CIA - and probably other secret agencies - played a key role in destroying the Whitlam government. And there is a high degree of certainty that Kerr did not act alone but was ordered to use his reserve powers to sack Whitlam.

Yet, as John Pilger put it: "The Whitlam government left many secrets which, until they are known, leave Australian politics disfigured and national independence as remote as ever." ❑

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING

The forgotten revolution

Today the Caribbean island of Haiti is ruled over by a corrupt military junta yet 200 years ago it was the birthplace of a slave revolution, as **Keith Veness** reports.

IN 1780, San Domingo was the jewel in the crown of mercantile France. The richest and greatest slave colony in the world produced huge profits in sugar, indigo, tobacco and cattle hides and funded French Atlantic ports like Bordeaux, Nantes and Brest.

Half-a-million black slaves, snatched from Africa, toiled under appalling conditions to produce these crops. It was permissible to beat slaves to death, or crucify them, or slaughter them in a dozen different ways that were common enough to be given nicknames by the 30,000 white slave-owners.

Over 40,000 mixed race "mulattoes" served as a middle class was despised by the whites and in turn looked down in disgust on the slave gangs.

In 1789 the French masses stormed the Bastille and started the struggle to overthrow feudalism in France. The ruling class split and this was reflected in San Domingo, where the large and small property owners took different sides, opening the way to a slave revolt that broke out the following year.

The most remarkable leader to arise was Toussaint L'Ouverture. He was already in his late 40s when he joined the revolt and eventually rose to unify all the black armies into a strong fighting force based on the military ideas he had read about.

A joint delegation of a black, white and mulatto was sent by the revolutionaries to Paris to ask the new Constituent Assembly to abolish slavery. This was the height of the French Revolution and Robespierre and the Jacobins had recently toppled the 'moderate' Girondins. Under pressure from the masses, who dubbed the slave-owners "aristocrats of the skin", the Assembly abolished slavery.

The decision to abolish was celebrated in revolutionary France with four days of public holiday as millions of French workers and peasants danced in the streets at the thought of defeating the oppressors of both themselves and their black brothers and sisters.

Toussaint and his black army, now sure of freedom, swiftly defeated the neighbouring Spanish colony (then Santo Domingo - now the Dominican Republic), and then crushed the British Army under General Maitland and drove it into the sea.

If France had remained an ally of a free San Domingo led by Toussaint, the history of Europe and America would have been radically different. Toussaint already had plans to launch ships staffed with his army against Jamaica, and even to land in the American South and raise a slave army to overthrow the USA. As leader of the largest and most successful army in the Americas, this was certainly possible.

However, the counter-revolution triumphed in France. Napoleon Bonaparte rose to lead the new Empire and determined to restore slavery. A vast army and navy under the command of his brother-in-law Lacroix was sent against San Domingo. At this point, one of Toussaint's Generals, Dessalines, resolved on a "fight to the finish" and independence. Dessalines saw that the French Empire was not the same as the revolutionary republic and after Toussaint had been betrayed and deported to France - later to die in a mountain prison - he restarted the struggle to free his island.

Among the most amazing of the battles was Crete-a-Pierrot, where a black division of less than 2,000 held off 12,000 of Napoleon's troops for over two months. Every night, the trenches of the black army rang out with the revolutionary songs of the "Marseillaise" and the "Ca Ira".

The final battle took place in front of the capital, Port-Au-Prince. All day the Grand Armee fought the black forces who repeatedly charged into cannon fire and routed the French.

The French General, Rochambeau, asked for a truce and rode over to the black lines, saluting them as the bravest soldiers he had ever seen.

It was the end of French rule in San Domingo. Surrendering to waiting British and US warships in the bay, the French Army went off to be prisoners of war - most to perish in British camps. Dessalines's triumphant army entered the city and proclaimed independence.

Denouncing France as the font of all evil, Dessalines tore the white off the French tricolour and created the new red and blue flag of his republic. However, he still retained the words "Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite".

Dessalines, renaming the place Haiti, was proclaimed ruler. However, the new Haiti was wrecked by years of war, its old white ruling class either massacred or fled and its blacks and mulattoes were left impoverished and isolated. Yet today it still remains the only truly successful slave revolt and one of the great "might-have-beens" of history.

The definitive work on the revolution in Haiti remains *The Black Jacobins* by CLR James. The story of these black revolutionaries is not taught in schools, yet it stirs the political awareness of everyone - black or white - who reads it and stands as a monument to all people who value freedom and the human spirit. ❑



Boris Kagarlitsky. PHOTO Bryn Griffiths

A respectable coup

A London Meeting has launched the Committee for Democracy and Civil Liberties in Russia, based on an appeal signed by 80 MPs, 38 MEPs and dozens of other public figures. The November 15th meeting was addressed by **Boris Kagarlitsky**, author of several books and a member of the Moscow City Council until it was dissolved in October by Boris Yeltsin, following which he was beaten and imprisoned. *Briefing* was there to hear what he said.

"THERE IS a strong resistance to the Yeltsin regime. If repression has been fairly light, it's because they are forced by public opinion to be fairly liberal. Even the army does not fully back the regime.

After October 4th, the government sent censors to the newspapers, the same old censors that were used in the past, who were well-known to the papers. The old system of Soviet censorship was based on the co-operation of the journalists.

This time the censors were met with a total lack of co-operation. One newspaper came out with just a photo on the front page and blank pages with a headline printed where the censored text had been, saying: "This text has been removed by 'democratic censorship'."

The government is very isolated. The anniversary rallies in support of the October Revolution were banned yet Moscow had to be occupied by the police and army - and it's probably the most pro-Yeltsin part of the country.

The old apparatus of the Brezhnev era is no longer there, so they are trying to revive the traditions of the KGB. The new head of the Ministry of Security is the same man who questioned me in 1982. At that time I was accused of 'anti-Soviet activity'. Now Khasbulatov and co are charged with trying to restore Soviet power.

The background is the monetarist reforms. The government was never elected with a mandate to bring in capitalism, but to bring in democracy. They promised us Western prosperity within eight months. It's like an aircraft offering to take its passengers to Beverley Hills, but instead has to go to Burkina Faso. The problem for the government is how to settle things with the crew and passengers when it lands.

The government began democratically but the further it goes, the more it loses support. Even entrepreneurs are turning against the regime because of the collapse of the internal market.

People in Russia are horrified by the level of support in the West for Yeltsin's coup. Of course, the West has supported coups before, as in South Korea or Chile, but never so openly.

On the Parliamentary side, we must recognise that there were real extremists, anti-semitic and racist elements as well as hard-line Stalinists, who supported Parliament only for tactical reasons. But they were a tiny minority. It's a pity that the Parliamentary leadership did not dissociate itself from these groups. This alienated many people and was stupid.

It was the hardline nationalists and Stalinists who were the losers on October 4th. But the defeat of these forces has strengthened other forces.

The trades unions, the democratic left, the left-wing press and the moderate communists survived and were strengthened by these events. We are now getting more support including from liberal intellectuals, who want to close ranks with the left to defeat the authoritarian regime.

Yeltsin faces growing challenges and will respond violently, breaking the trades unions if they react against him and banning opposition parties. The duma he is proposing will be completely powerless, with fewer rights than the duma under the Tsar.

Under the new constitution, if the duma rejects Yeltsin's proposed government three times, Yeltsin can keep his government and dissolve the duma. 50 per cent of the voters must vote for this constitution for it to be passed. If it is not, it goes to the constitutional court who will decide whether a majority of those voting will be enough. That is why the constitutional court has been suspended!

Among the many changes to the rules for parliamentary elections is that only a 25 per cent turnout is necessary to make these elections legitimate. Outside Moscow there is a lot of passive alienation from the regime. The Party of Labour is not participating in these elections for this reason.

From a personal point of view, we know we are not very safe. The people who jailed me for 13 months under Brezhnev behaved like 'real British gentlemen' compared to the gangsters who beat us up this time. But international solidarity can help. We got the trade union international department to spread the news of arrests all over the world on computer networks. People began to call the police station directly from Tokyo, London and so on.

So we were released - it was already curfew, so we had to be accompanied by masked policemen to prevent us from being arrested again! Even these police said they were opposed to what was happening." ❑

REVIEWS

Mike Phipps reviews
Peter Slowe's new biography of Manny Shinwell (Pluto Press, £14.95) along with a selection of right-on stocking fillers from the 1993 catalogue.

The fascinating thing about Manny Shinwell is his longevity. 101 years, most of them in politics, were enough to make him eligible for a "class traitor of the century" accolade. He certainly earned it.

Born in the slums of east London in 1884, Shinwell's early political life was spent organising seafarers on Clydeside in the face of often violent competition. His reputation as a radical was established by the leading role he played in the Glasgow workers' mass strike in 1919, for which he served four months in prison.

But Shinwell was a classic case of a working-class fighter whose lack of theoretical baggage made him rudderless on broader issues - he supported the World War I. As his political career took off, he moved rapidly to the right, serving in MacDonald's two Labour governments. In the 1935 election, however, he trounced his former mentor, who had in 1931 defected to the National government, in his own constituency, by 20,000 votes.

Shinwell was a tough operator. He once crossed the floor of the House of Commons to "box the ears" - as Harold Wilson puts it in his foreword - of a Tory MP who had made an anti-Semitic remark. In fact he perforated his eardrum!

But his political achievement? He rose through the Ministry of Fuel and Power to be Defence Secretary under Attlee, introducing two-year national service. Even Churchill praised him for his patriotism: he later supported the Suez invasion and, much later, the Falklands War.

As Peter Slowe asks midway through this absorbing biography, "What on earth had it all been for?"

Briefing's Christmas crackers

Letters from Lexington,
Noam Chomsky, AK Press, £7.95

THIS COLLECTION OF letters to *LOOT* (Lies of our Time) magazine consists of some of Chomsky's shorter attacks on the double standards and hypocrisy that characterise American foreign policy.

Written between 1990 and 1993, they cover the attitudes of the US administration and media to the Gulf War, the Middle East peace process, Nicaragua, Haiti and the collapse of the Soviet bloc. They are a useful introduction to Chomsky's writings and a good complement to his recent two larger books.

Poets of the Nicaraguan Revolution, translated by Dinah Livingstone, Katabasis Press, £8.95.

"IN COMPLETE contrast to the post-modernist atomisation that reduces poetry criticism and even poetry to a matter of style, the revolution gave the Nicaraguan poets a common culture, a project, a language and a climate, in which they could speak and listen to each other," writes Dinah Livingstone in the introduction to this new collection of revolutionary poetry from Nicaragua. This is perhaps the main reason why the quality of verse here is so good.

A major driving force behind much of Nicaragua's new poetry is undoubtedly Ernesto Cardenal, Minister of Culture during the Sandinista years from 1979 to 1990. He insisted that "Nicaragua's cultural liberation has been part of the struggle for national liberation" and his early poem "Epitaph for the Tomb of Adolfo Baez Bone" opens the collection:

"They thought they were killing you with their order to fire! They thought they were burying you but what they did was bury a seed."

The Latin American Left,
eds Barry Carr and Steve Ellner,
Latin American Bureau, £12.99.

THE RISE OF the Brazilian Workers Party, continental-wide movements like the Sao Paulo Forum and the Sandinistas' reassessment of their eleven years in power in Nicaragua make Latin America one of the most interesting areas in the world for socialists to learn from.

This useful book looks at the left there in the twenty years since the military coup in Chile, the new opportunities it has faced since the fall of most military regimes and the difficulties posed by perestroika and the collapse of Stalinism.

There are some excellent country studies here, especially of Chile, El Salvador and the Brazilian Workers Party's search for a new relationship between mass party and grassroots organisations which breaks from seeing the latter as simply an appendage.

The editors' conclusions are upbeat, arguing that the left is now seen as more legitimate in Latin America, more pluralist in its diversity of views and more willing to give due importance to the struggle for democracy. Despite a few weaknesses, this is a vital book showing real alternatives to stale compromise and dead-end sectarianism.

The Third Revolution,
Paul Harrison, Penguin, £6.99.

THIS AWARD-WINNING book is a readable overview of the global environmental time-bomb we face - deforestation, land degradation, pollution and over-population. What differentiates it from similar efforts, apart from the sheer quality of writing, is Harrison's political analysis, which clearly links the low technical level of farmers in the Third World with the requirements of the international banks.

It is also a book with solutions to the crisis, based on human needs rather than moral injunctions. Disparaging the coercive approaches which ignore these ("Population control is impossible without shooting people") Harrison identifies the need for global extension of women's rights to property, credit, jobs, equal pay, literacy, health and family planning as central to the transformation of the existing order. Overall it's a fine introduction of great scope.

Echoes of Hitler

Kevin Flack reviews
Public Enemies by Leo Regan.
Published by Andre Deutsch. £12.99.

ADVANCE PUBLICITY for this photo-journalistic book, most notably in the *Independent on Sunday* where pictures of a skinhead fascist playing sweetly with a baby in bed coupled with an uncharacteristically bland commentary by Neal Ascherson, will have made many people reluctant to pick up a copy.

This would be a mistake, as the carefully-selected photos of skinheads in the home in the *Independent* could provide possibly the classic dictionary definition of the phrase "out of context".

Leo Regan's book has a refreshing honesty and, read from our own obviously biased anti-facsist viewpoint, actually provides us with an important lesson.

Over two years of study - both in taped interviews and black-and-white photos of a group of fascists around the Blood and Honour political/ cultural grouping - provide a series of images that do indeed portray the fascists in the home, with their kids, but also in pitched battles with anti-fascists at the Battle of Waterloo and in all their tattooed glory at various gigs.

Above all, it shows that when fascists leave the demonstration or the gig, they don't just disappear into thin air. They do have a place in society for the rest of their lives and it is here, too, that they need to be challenged.

One of the main strengths of the book is how it portrays the integral links between skinhead culture and fascist politics. This will not be a popular theme among active anti-fascists, many of whom are skinheads themselves, who will rightly point to the early links between skins and black music. But the pressures of fascist skinhead culture, in particular the feeling of belonging for people often on the fringes of society, comes across as the driving force behind the actions of certainly this section of the far right.

Violence is essential to both their concept of being a skinhead and being a fascist: "Violence gets somewhere. You get listened to. You get attention and you get power. If you go out and smash the enemy off the streets, who's going to argue with you?" The words echo those of Hitler and show why it is vital that anti-fascists today combat the fascists physically on the streets as well as ideologically.

There are contradictions in the fascists' attitudes to the police - from the knuckles tattooed with ACAB (All Coppers Are Bastards) to those who assert that "the police are not the problem".

They see the left and black people as their enemies rather than the state and its agents.

Those featured are clearly in it for more than the thrill of the violence. The commitment to the politics of neo-fascism is as dedicated and fanatical as anything seen on the left. The fascism is very much class-based - a nationalism blended with a warped economic socialism. While seeing themselves as the real face of working-class culture, they cannot see that the divisions in the class that they perpetuate merely serve to strengthen capitalism and not to challenge it.

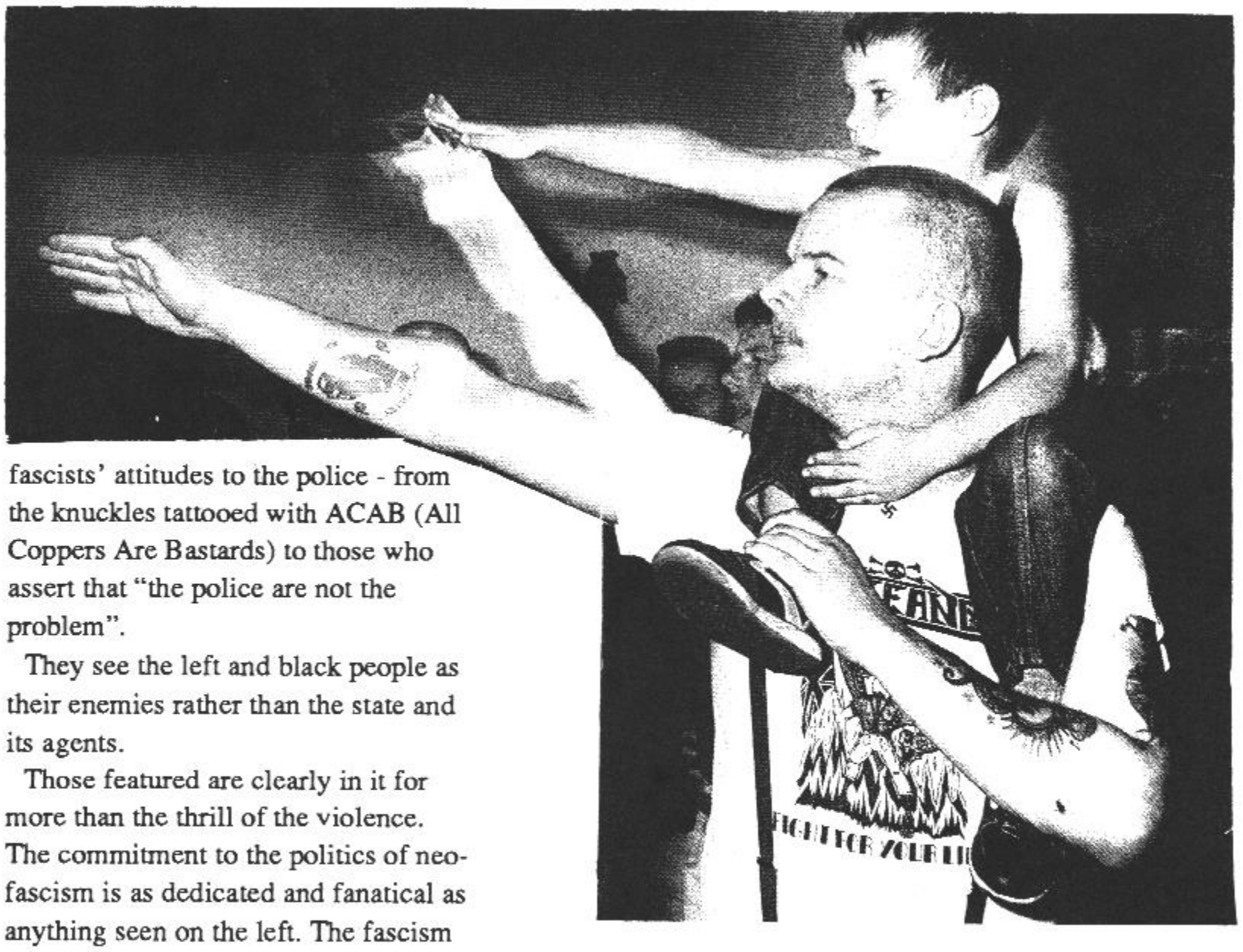
Anti-semitism is strong, as is a hostility to gays. "They're not having babies. That's what women were put on this earth for."

And an authoritarianism that personifies the fascist lifesyle: "If you say to your child, 'This is what I believe in. You believe in it or else', then that's what you will get from your child."

Leo Regan has provided a service in producing this insight into everyday fascist life. But at what cost? He hides behind his alleged independence as a photo-journalist, claiming a repugnance of the fascists' views followed by statements like "but you start to develop friendships, you get to know the families ..."

When some of his "subjects" are arrested for a vicious and unprovoked attack on Asian restaurant workers, it is Regan who stands bail for one of them.

Over two years' work has resulted in just 42 pages of quotes and 65 pictures, and if he ended up with a sympathy for the fascists rather than their victims you have to ask whether it was worth it. Let's face it, it isn't worth thirteen quid. ❑



Scum: One of Leo Regan's many unsavoury pictures.



Acute Ken

"I should imagine the British National Party were rubbing their hands with glee ... I should imagine the BNP would have paid the Socialist Workers' Party to organise that march."

Which establishment apologist could have spouted forth such worthy clap-trap? None other than **Ken Livingstone** MP, appearing on a World in Action programme which clearly showed the police blocking off all exits to the marchers at the October 16th demonstration in Welling.

Glenda Slap

Repercussions from party conference and the arm-twisting of delegates in the OMOV debate continue.

Now the illustrious MP for Hampstead and Highgate, **Glenda Jackson**, has had her wrist slapped for trying to pressurise her constituency's delegates into supporting OMOV. The delegates stuck to their mandate and opposed it.

We would dearly love to know who is going to haul odiously opportunistic Islington councillor **Leo McInstry** over the coals for trying to force Hillingdon delegates to break their mandate and support OMOV, with trite little notes purporting to come from the "Smith Camp".

Over the moon

Fame at last! **Oxfordshire's education authority** recently distributed a reading list of journals and newspapers for BA social students.

Alongside such trusty organs as The *Spectator* and *History Today*, Periscope was amazed to see *Labour Briefing*.

Today Oxfordshire, tomorrow...

Fabric threat

A Labour MP has failed in her bid to the European Court of Human Rights to stop M15 keeping files - including personal details, telephone conversations, etc - on her.

The court believed that the monitoring was legal and necessary in a democratic society, "in the interests of national security". The great threat to the fabric of our British way of life? Mildred Gordon? Alice Mahon? Nope, none other than **Harriet Harman**!

Milking the system

The European Community Agriculture Ministers have decided to reduce **EC subsidies on school milk**, which will hit some 31 million children across the community, including 8 million in the UK.

Because so much of the subsidy is swallowed up in distribution and packaging costs, it has been decided to drop the subsidy from the 125 per cent it currently operates (75 per cent of which is made up by fines on dairies exceeding milk quotas).

You can guess for yourselves whether the British government will make up the balance!

Intriguing positions

Ever wonder what the publishers of Marx, Engels, Lenin and all things Soviet are doing in these post-Stalinist times? Happily, **Lawrence and Wishart** "are pleased to announce that the remaining volumes of the Marx and Engels collected works will be published as planned." Vol 34 is due out next year.

But in case the guaranteed East European market for these products has dried up, Lawrence and Wishart has hit upon a new sideline, with such titles as *Pleasure Principles* ("uncovers a diversity of sexual pleasures"), *Perversity* (sexual fetishism) and *Female Fetishism* (more of the same) all advertised in its latest catalogue.

Principled Positions looks equally intriguing, until one reads the subtitle: "Postmodernism and the rediscovery of value." No thanks.

Mirror, Mirror on the wall, who's the crassest of them all?

Life in the tabloid lane is fast indeed these days, with a volatile market and editorial job security somewhat inferior to that enjoyed by an England footballer.

For staff at the ***Mirror***, it's been a roller-coaster ride ever since **Maxwell** took the big plunge. ("Have you noticed," observed Arthur Scargill on TV's Question Time, "He's the only person who's died that when you mention his name everybody laughs?") At the moment the ***Mirror*** really is trying to face both ways at once. In a blaze of populist, bugger-'em-all defiance it published the silly pics of Diana Spencer Windsor doing her keep-fit routine. Then it humbly apologised if the pics had caused offense to HRH and promised not to use them again. It denounced the **Press Complaints Commission** for objecting to the pics, only to return to the PCC kennel with its tail between its legs the next day.

It launched a campaign in defence of single parents and the welfare state - then tried to tempt readers with offers of private health insurance. Even David Blunkett objected to that!

To prove its nationalist credentials, the ***Mirror*** offered £10,000 to each Polish footballer should the Poles do what England couldn't do - defeat the Dutch and thus allow England to qualify for the World Cup finals. ("Thanks a zloty!" gloated the headline.) Then it took the piss out of the whole thing by saying it would require a "Mirrorcle" for England to qualify: "World Cup? We've more chance of finding the Loch Ness monster!"

Perhaps the problem is deeper than the notorious incoherence of ***Mirror*** editor **David Banks**. Could it be that the conservative "popular culture" which the tabloids exploit is breaking up along with the Thatcherite legacy on which it thrived? Could it be that our rulers are no longer too sure just who it is that they are ruling - and what our real aspirations are?

Man of straw

The ***GMB Journal*** - normally a sychophantic supporter of the Labour leadership - rivals Periscope this month.

It reveals that one of the two authors of the damning report into the Labour Party's Wally Road organisation was in fact reporting under an assumed name, **Arthur Hay**.

Apparently, he is the brother of a certain member of the Shadow Cabinet. Step forward the member for Blackburn, comrade **Jack Straw**.

Good witchunting

Ever eager to fly off on fact-finding missions all over the globe, Labour's self-styled hard man and devout Chrstian **Tony Blair** has been mixing enthusiastically with members of the **FBI**.

Yes, indeed. Blair's recent visit to New York and Washington included a meeting at the J Edgar Hoover Building with **Floyd I Clarke**, Deputy Director, and **Larry Potts**, Assistant Director, **Criminal Investigation Division, FBI**.

The boys at the bureau have a reputation second to none for witchunting innocent citizens of the US, ruining their careers and driving them into depressive illnesses.

Perhaps they could even teach an accomplished left-baiter like Blair a thing or two about witchunting.

The Shadow Home Secretary - "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime" - also met representatives of the **New York Police Department**.

As has been revealed in a number of court cases in recent years, **NYPD** is notoriously corrupt - one hopes that the putative Home Secretary would not try to implement its methods of policing on this side of the Atlantic.

Curse of *Briefing*

No sooner does the **Prison Officers Association** set out its case in the pages of *Labour Briefing* than the government swoops.

Avid readers may remember that in the last issue the general secretary of the **POA**, David Evans, argued that the Tories were lining up the service for privatisation.

Just a few weeks later, the **POA** was prevented by the High Court from taking industrial action.

Heffer remembered

Kenneth Freeman, Banbury CLP, writes: The second annual Eric Heffer memorial lecture held at Banbury took place recently in front of an audience of about one hundred.

Following the success of Tony Benn's lecture last year, it fell on Dennis Skinner to inject some socialist fire into the bellies of the audience, and remind us that there is a real socialist alternative to the current dismal state of both the government and the opposition - the former so complacent after fourteen years that it behaves in an increasingly unaccountable fashion, while the latter, so scared of trying to look like a real opposition, is afraid to present a genuine alternative and start setting the agenda.

Dennis started by denouncing the Liberals, a popular move with many in the audience following a recent district council by-election where many so-called comrades felt it would be better not to stand so as to give the Liberals a free run (the Liberals still won as it happens). He reminded us of the Liberals backing of anti-trade union legislation, and their crucial support to the government over Maastricht.

The lecture continued in the style that we would expect - a condemnation of the government, criticism of the Labour leadership, an analysis of what has gone wrong, why, and what should be done. All of which made a lot of sense.

Dennis spent a lot of time over the tax issue, explaining the need to grasp the nettle and say that the Labour movement should take back the tax handouts given to the richest 5% of the population, and spend it where it is really needed. Labour was too muddled over the tax issue, and was too frightened of the Tory press to stand up and say that wealth should be re-distributed, industry controlled and those industries that have been privatised should be given back to the people.

The issue of Europe was raised, and Skinner emphasised the contradictions of relying on the right in Europe to secure basic social policies for us in Britain when the left in Britain seems unwilling to take the fight for social justice on itself. Whilst the EC remains based on capitalism, there is little point in supporting it to further socialist ends.

The lecture was an entertaining and reassuring speech in a style that always gets blood coursing. It has to be said that he was preaching to the converted, many of whom were there to get a fix of genuine socialism before returning to the real world of inept government and weak opposition.

The next big fix of socialist rhetoric will be at next year's Eric Heffer memorial lecture, which, it is hoped, will be delivered by Bob Cryer.

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Briefing Quiz, part 19
November 27th 8pm

Saturday 27th November at the Kings of Clerkenwell public house, 7 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1

Entrance: £2.50/£1.50

Famous last words ...

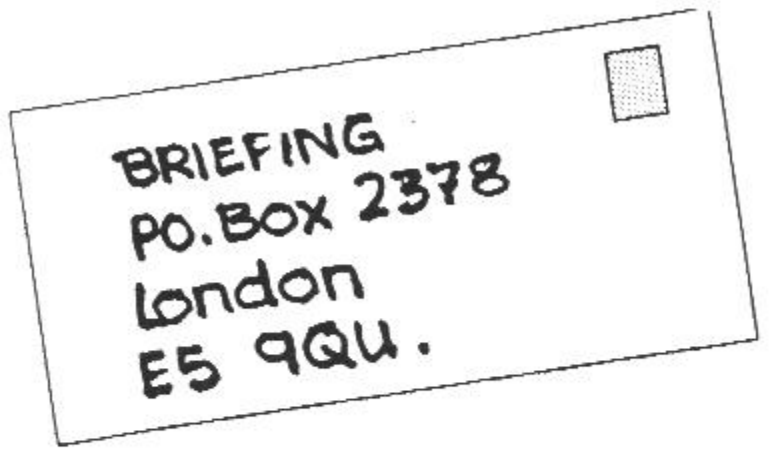
"What if Kinnock cannot qualitatively improve Labour's standing at the next round of elections? Will this indicate that a further move to the right is needed before the ruling class is truly pacified? The battle of Brighton did not take place because capitalist democracy had already ensured that Benn and Livingstone were not in the new Parliament. The ideologues of British capitalism have not yet finished with the Labour Party. In that sense these are still early days. Socialists in the Labour Party and the trade unions have a lengthy battle ahead.

It is the outcome of these future battles that will be decisive in shaping the pattern of working-class politics in the coming period." - Tariq Ali.


LABOUR BRIEFING
NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT
No. 2 November 1983

CRUISE MISSILES:
WE'RE NOT BEATEN YET!
by Tony Benn

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



I would like to give my whole-hearted backing to the views expressed in *Briefing*'s Editorial on '*Unity*'.

Like many people on the left I initially thought that the Anti-Racist Alliance was a good initiative which deserved our support.

But, I was sickened by the red-baiting attacks of their leadership, particularly from people whose own political pasts would not stand up in any Macarthyite tribunal.

I have a great deal of experience of the disasters that face the left if we do not unite against fascism. In the French case sectarian in-fighting, and a stategy by the main anti-racist groups of courting the 'good-and-the-great' (SOS Racisme) failed to stem the rise of the Front National. Those who argued for a more militant approach were treated as 'trotskyists'. The result is that the French nazis have a (claimed) membership of 100,000 and nearly a thousand lcoal councillors. On a recent visit to the 18th arroundisment in Paris I saw entire streets emblazoned with fascist posters.

The SWP are not horned devils. They are people we have worked with in scores of local campaigns, from mobilising during the Gulf War, to the Poll Tax. The ANL involves much larger forces: my local branch includes the Labour left, and the SWP, but the majority are people who have not been politically active before. The principle of the workers' united-front means that we work with people of different political backgrounds.

I would not suggest that the BNP poses a threat on the scale of the French Front National. Indeed we have, in the shape of the ANL, the start of a movement that can make sure that this never happens.

All the best,
Andrew Coates,
Ipswich

I was concerned to see the headline of "Russia's Pinochet" on last month's *Briefing*, and annoyed by Ken Livingstone's throwaway remarks that appear to have produced it.

Firstly, while it is gratifying that 20 years of intensive campaigning have made the words "Chile" and "coup" inseparable in many people's minds, it is sloppy to assume that every coup will be like the Chilean one, and there is an undercurrent of racism: the same one that characterises the whole of Latin America as "banana republics".

This is reinforced by the fact that Livingstone writes that "in Russia there is a powerful working class movement and a strong Communist Party that would win 20% of the vote", contrasting this with pre-Pinochet Chile, as though the Chilean coup was inevitable because the working class movement was weaker there.

The facts contradict Livingstone entirely. When Salvador Allende's Popular Unity (a front consisting mainly of the Communist Party and the Chilean Socialist Party, which was not only a working class party, but too extreme to be allowed into the Socialist International) got him into the presidency of Chile in 1970, it did so with 36% of the vote. Six months later, Popular Unity won 51% of the votes in local elections, and even in March 1973, after a massive U.S. run campaign of destabilisation, the left won 43% in congressional elections: workers rallying to support it quoted as shouting "Este gobierno es una mierda, pero es mi gobierno" (this government is shit, but it's my government).

The mobilisation was not confined to elections. 14,800 committees were set up to organise the presidential elections in 1970, and, as the supporters of the UP's radical programme (which succeeded, for example, in placing 99% of Chile's banking capacity in state hands by 1973), faced new and continuing threats from the US, the Chilean right wing and the military, they continued to mobilise. Committees to organise the distribution of food and break the black market functioned all over the country. When the employers attempted to organise a lock-out by closing workplaces in October 1972, the cordones industriales responded by occupying them: 34,000 occupied, 20 closed. In February 1973, the same cordones mobilised again, to force Allende not to hand factories back to their owners.

These were not isolated militants: demonstrators in Santiago in 1972 numbered half a million (from a population of 8 million, i.e. the equivalent of 4 million people on the streets of London), demanding that the government keep to its programme and ignore the threats from congress: "la tarea del momento es destruir el parlamento (the task now is to destroy parliament)" they shouted (which is a bit more demanding than "please don't close the GLC as we've signed a petition").

In June 1973, when some of the military "jumped the gun" with a mini-coup, 35,000 workplaces were occupied, and arms distributed. On September 4th 1973, a week before the coup, a million people answered the call of the trades union congress to join a demonstration to support Allende after three years in power, and stand firm against a coup.

A week later, the forces of reaction moved in. A year later the State Department estimated that 20-50 people were still being killed every week, about half of them trades union and political party leaders. About a million Chileans left the country, most into exile. The ferocity of the repression is another testimony to the strength and resilience of the movements it was designed to destroy.

I appreciate that politicians of all colours find it easier to talk in soundbites. The left have a responsiblity to make sure they tell the truth, especially when the facile phrase is insulting to the strengths and achievements of so many Chileans who paid a high price for their determination to win through to socialism.

Yours,
Sue Lukes,
Islington

Thank you for sending me the free copy of *Labour Briefing* offered in *Labour Party News*. I shan't be subscribing; your magazine seems to me to be much too preoccupied with negative Labour Party in-fighting at the expense of positive action for socialism and against Conservatism. And where are the promised jokes? Life is too desperate to take it so seriously!

I am sorry too that you devote such a large portion of your space including both front and back covers to an essentially diversionary attack on the BNP. I feel that many BNP supporters are products of poverty, unemployment and racist propaganda, and should be seen as misguided victims rather than subhumans. The real villains are those who use such people and movements as attention distracters. You shouldn't let yourself be taken in by this age-old tactic of ruling classes everywhere - not just the British.

Here's a positive suggestion of my own. Print is fine but sound and moving pictures can sometimes hit harder. Britain has about the world's highest proportion of audio and video players, and audio cassettes are especially cheap to make. Let Party members and the wider population hear some of the demos and management ultimatums as they happened. There must, too, be members who could make and edit videotapes - if TV coverage is one-sided and slanted, why not redress the balance by distributing video cassettes showing the other side of the story.

Here's another. When you run stories such as those about Arrowsmiths or Hilliers, why not give the address of the firms, name some of their customers and any government departments concerned. Protests and letters are sometimes more effective when aimed not directly at the firm, but at related concerns who may be more sensitive to public opinion.

Sincerely,
John Parfitt,
Greece

We propose to set up a Committee to Defend Russian Socialists and Labour Movement as a campaign based in the British labour movement capable of organising support for worker's rights in Russia. Clearly such support must be given irrespective of the views of a particular Russian trade union or workers' organisation.

If you or your organisation is willing to join or help this committee please contact Mark Osborn at the above address or phone 071 639 7965.

For solidarity,
Mark Osborn, Gus Fagan,
Bob Arnot, Don Filtzer

Whilst not wishing to prolong unduly the post-mortem of the October 16th anti-racist marches, I think there is one further point that needs to be made.

That is, that while we had posters about the Welling march on display for months in Brighton, I never saw one for the ARA demo, and only got to hear about it through reading *Socialist Campaign Group News* and *Briefing*. Such papers are not widely distributed in Brighton, so it's not surprising that most of the people I have spoken to locally chose Welling.

(Nor, incidentally, did we hear about it through the local Labour Party - surprising, since the Party was supposed to be supporting it - but then the South-East Region of the said organisation was busy planning a rally in Cambridge on the same day!)

I attended a Conference fringe meeting at which a member of ARA described Welling as "a backwater", whilst "central London" was the only sensible place to be. I have to say that these sentiments are echoed in your November editorial, where you describe the two venues as "inaccessible" and "easy-to-get-to" respectively. In fact, they are both equally inaccessible if you don't happen to live in or near London.

Of course, I may be doing ARA an injustice: it could be that the October demo was always meant to be "Londoners only", the first of a series of regional events which would allow everyone to participate - including people like myself who were unable to attend either of the London marches for domestic reasons. If this is not the case, however, could the various anti-racist groups please take note of the fact that opposition to racism and fascism is not confined by geographical boundaries any more than by ethnic ones?

Yours,
Jim Grozier,
Brighton Pavilion CLP

While the Tory Government continues to attack the vulnerable in an attempt to pull the country out of a quagmire, what are the opposition doing?

As far as the ordinary person in the street is aware, the only initiative that has come from the Labour Party recently has been the long and protracted debate over OMOV.

Since then, the public has seen the Tories attack old people with their "tax on fuel" and single parents with their assertions that a lot of women become pregnant just to get housed. We have seen the vindictive attacks on the mining industry and the re-emergence of the hang 'em and flog 'em brigade who seem to blame young offenders for the economic mess.

Labour has been operating a defensive stance through all this - it should be mobilising and utilising its resources to go on the attack.

All the image-making of Kinnock and co did not put the Party in power but merely helped avoid pertinent issues like the poll tax.

Labour has for too long been carried along in the Tories' coat-tails. At this year's Conference, the leadership jumped on the law and order bandwagon and indulged in the futile OMOV debate.

Then, we had the spectacle of the leader addressing the CBI and being congratulated as the bosses' favourite. The CBI has never been renowned for its fair-handed approach to trade unions or support for good employment practices.

Britain has been in an economic hurricane which has seen 50,000 businesses go bust, home repossessions on a mass scale and four million people out of work.

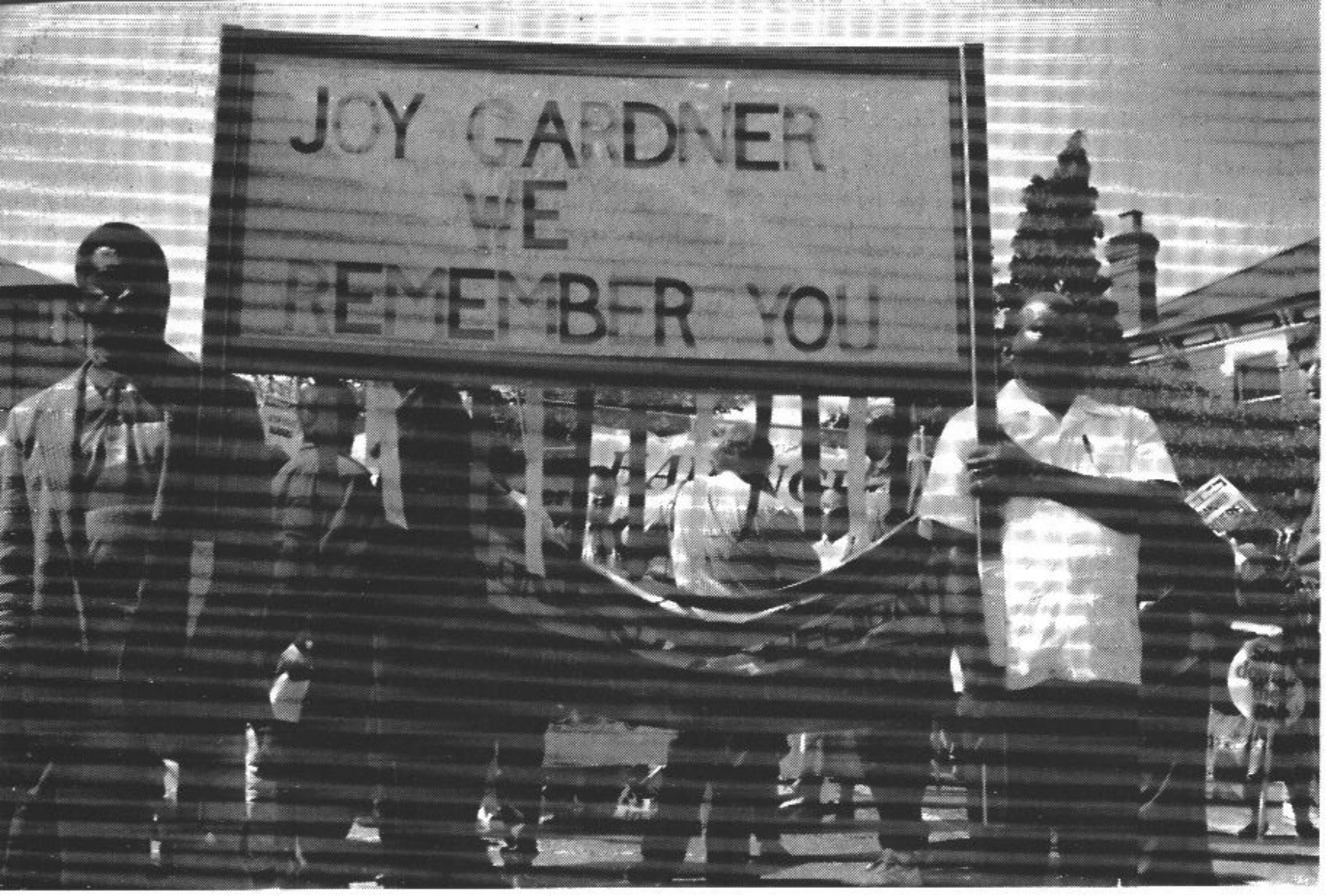
The Labour Party must come out of the closet and develop sound economic alternatives to Tory policies which will assist the mass of the people and not a privileged few.

Yours,
John Noblemunn,
Hackney

The *Briefing* team should follow A. Ringer's advice (Letters) and take a 'Back to Basics' course in page design.

production

Yours,
C. Gum,
Cowley



Joy Gardner demonstration. PHOTO: Bryn Griffiths

Veils of secrecy

Dave Palmer probes the exercise in fog and forgetfulness surrounding the murder of Joy Gardner.

IT IS now almost three and-a-half months since Joy Gardner was killed at the hands of police and immigration authorities. She still remains unburied. Why? Because until the Police Complaints Authority completes its continually delayed report on her death her body cannot be released to her relatives for burial. Even in death the authorities continue to deny Joy any rights, and don't have the basic decency to allow her relatives to grieve in the normal way.

On the morning of July 28th over a dozen police and immigration officers arrived at Joy's home in Crouch End, North London. Six of them - an immigration official, two local police and three members of Scotland Yard's hitherto secret "deportation squad" S01(3) forced their way into Ms Gardner's flat.

On entering, they used a hideous "body belt," handcuffs and adhesive tape to bind and gag her, causing the injuries which lead to her death. All this was witnessed by her five-year-old son Graeme. A post-mortem at the Whittington Hospital established that Ms Gardner died as a result of suffocation.

On Tuesday, August 3rd, amidst growing anger in the local community, Bernie Grant MP called to see Metropolitan Police Commissioner Paul Condon. Condon told Grant that the three officers from S01(3) had been suspended, that he had no knowledge of the use of body belts, the use of which he found "abhorrent", and that the unit's activities would be halted while its procedures were reviewed.

Assistant Chief Constable Peter Conlan of Essex Police was appointed under Police Complaints Authority (PCA) supervision to investigate the case. Charles Wardle, Minister of State at the Home Office responsible for the Immigration Service, announced that there would be a joint secret Metropolitan Police and Home Office review of deportation procedures.

Over three months later precisely nothing has happened on any of the issues relating to Joy's death.

Nothing has been heard of the secret, joint Metropolitan Police and Home Office review, or whether the S01(3) "deportation squad" is now back in activity. No one will, or can, know what the inquiry actually did, nor what its results were. Indeed whether it has been completed or even taken place is not known.

The Labour front bench has, predictably, kept as far away from the Joy Gardner case as it possibly can (in contrast, the Labour Members of the European Parliament at least got a motion passed condemning her killing).

The evidence surrounding Ms Gardner's death is quite simple and clear cut. Charges could have been brought against those involved almost immediately. When Panorama recently did a programme containing allegations that named police officers were selling information on the national police computer, Condon made sure the officers involved were arrested and charged the next day. In the case of Ms Gardner's killing the farce of the police investigating themselves has been used for delaying purposes.

The PCA said that its report would be in the hands of the DPP, Barbara Mills by the end of September - by the middle of November there was still no sign of it appearing.

When Mills receives the report she must decide on bringing murder charges, or lesser manslaughter charges (much more likely), against the officers involved. The PCA can, and probably will, make use of the opportunity to make a report to the Home Secretary on any matters in the case which concerns it. This report must be laid before Parliament and can therefore be discussed in the House. This will be the only point at which the veil of official secrecy does not remain complete.

British justice certainly is blind - blind to its own double standards. Public pressure must be kept on the authorities over Ms Gardner's killing to expose their hypocrisy and racism. The Joy Gardner Campaign would like all its supporters to write expressing their concerns to: Barbara Mills, Director of Public Prosecutions c/o Crown Prosecution Service Headquarters, 50 Ludgate Hill, London EC4M 7EX Tel: 071 273 8000.

On the day following the submission of the Police Complaints Authority report to the DPP, the campaign will be holding a picket of Crown Prosecution Service Headquarters (nearest tube St Pauls).

● **For further information regarding the campaign and the picket of the CPS contact: The Joy Gardner Campaign, c/o the Office of Bernie Grant MP, 3, Devonshire Chambers, 577 High Road, London, N17 6SB; tel: 081 880 9100.**

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