NOVEMBER 1993 £1.00

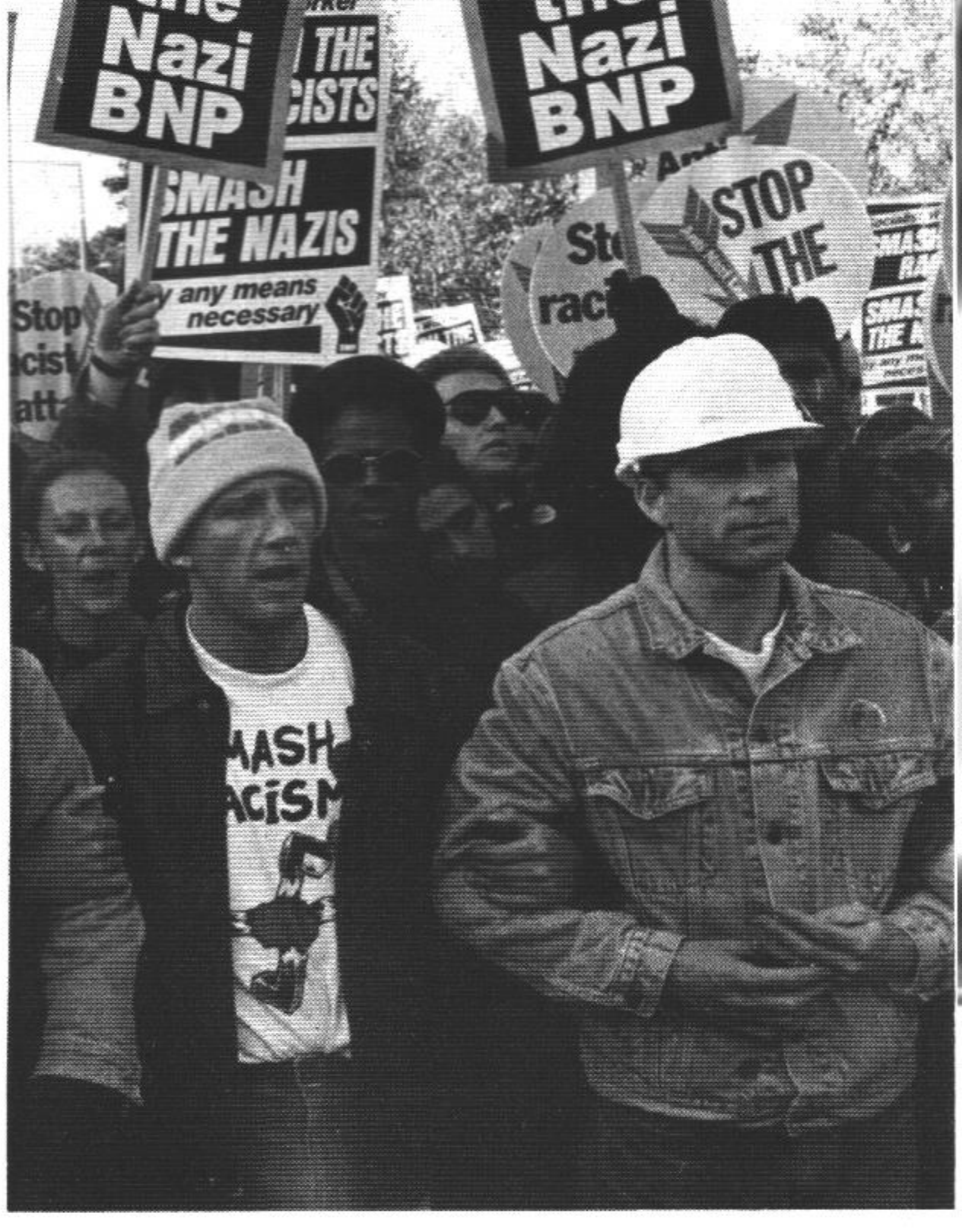
# BRIEFING

the voice of Labour's independent, unrepentant left

## inside ...

■ Russia's Pinochet ■ Ronan Bennett on Irish talks ■ Class traitor of the month ■ Pits massacre ■ Dennis Skinner




# what price unity?

**LABOUR - TAKE THE POWER!**

# Stop press

## By-election gains!

Labour has made two important gains in council by-elections in territory which is normally dominated by Tories, Liberal-Democrats or even Independents.

In Oxfordshire, Kenneth Freeman managed a 16% swing from the Tories to gain a seat on Cherwell District Council.

On Staffordshire Moorlands council, Jocelyn Finn took the Werrington ward in a seat usually the scene of Lib-Tory battles.

## Block vote

As the Labour and trade union movement shifts away from the block vote, *Briefing* is amazed to discover that a bastion of capitalism is embracing the concept - none other than the Lloyd's shipping market.

Lloyd's List reveals that plans are afoot to make voting strength within the institution commensurate with one's power in the market.

We trust that Gordon Brown, Tony Blair and their followers will swing into battle against changes at Lloyd's with the same zest they are now applying to attacking the unions.

## Militant

The Militant Labour Party has only just failed to win a council by-election in Greenock, Scotland, polling 34% - just over 100 behind Labour.

Greenock is significant in that it marks Militant's best attempt yet to electorally break out of Glasgow, where it has six city councillors.

# Top shit

## Shad-cab latest

Having lost her Shadow Cabinet post in the recent elections, Ann Clwyd is spending her time inventing all sorts of plots among her colleagues.

"There was a cynical and deliberate alliance between some hard-left MPs and some on the right, resentful of the rule-change favouring more women", she claimed.

Clwyd also revealed that many male MPs had voted for no-hope candidates. This could be a reference to the Campaign Group's Mildred Gordon, which is not only offensive but wrong.

Anyone who has listened to Gordon and Clwyd knows that the former is the more able, articulate and knowledgable by a mile.

Could it be that Clwyd lost her seat because, like that other intellectual pygmy Harriet Harman, she's actually a pathetic Commons performer?

In this month's

# BRIEFING


East End fightback ..... 4
Dennis Skinner on joining Labour ..... 6
Pits massacre ..... 7
Ronan Bennett on Hume-Adams talks ..... 8
Ken Livingstone in court ..... 9
Class Traitor of the Month ..... 10
Black Socialist Society ..... 12
Women's quotas ..... 13
Reports from Brighton ..... 14
Labour's Islington scandal ..... 15
Prison sell-off ..... 16
Labour's defence disaster ..... 17
Union news ..... 18
The Russian Pinochet ..... 20
Ghada Karmi on Palestine ..... 22
Angolan tragedy ..... 23
Housebound hardship in South Africa ..... 24
Sao Paulo Forum ..... 25
Reviews ..... 26
Periscope ..... 28
Letters ..... 30


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# A question of leadership



EIGHTEEN MONTHS ago, *Labour Briefing* welcomed the formation of the Anti-Racist Alliance. We were excited by the ARA's orientation toward the labour movement and its dual commitments to black leadership and to serious, long-term campaigning not only against organised fascism but against the popular and state racism on which fascism fattens.

Tragically, the ARA, or rather the clique which dominates it, has since then devoted most of its energies to waging sectarian warfare against the Anti-Nazi League and the SWP. In doing so, it has antagonised the families of the victims of racist attacks and bewildered, demoralised and divided activists, both black and white, at the grass-roots. Rather than mobilise against racism, it has preferred to court the good and great of the labour hierarchy. Worse yet, it has done so by engaging in persistent public attacks on "the ultra left", "extremists", "Trotskyites", etc.

In the run-up to and aftermath of October 16th's massive march on the BNP HQ in south London this red-baiting became obscene. Some ARA spokespersons made it their business to echo police propaganda and tabloid attacks not only on the ANL, but on all those whose hatred of racism and fascism led them to south London. It is irrelevant who called which demonstration first. The fact is that on the day, there were roughly ten times as many demonstrators in inaccessible Welling as there were in easy-to-get-to central London. What's more, the south London demonstration involved not only the ANL and SWP, but also Youth Against Racism in Europe, Militant, and - more important - a large number of the most well-established black community campaigns and the families of a number of victims of racist attacks.

In the run-up to the march, the police did everything possible to create a climate of fear and discourage attendance. At the march itself, they blocked off all possible march routes and then systematically attacked demonstrators in what was clearly a carefully planned series of manoeuvres. After the march, with the aid of the media (and the ARA) they sought to portray anti-racist marchers as violent criminals.

Marching on the BNP is not the be-all and end-all of anti-racism, but in the wake of the Millwall by-election, it was clearly a priority. The ARA leadership's failure to understand that, and worse yet, the smears and insults it hurled against anyone who did, have jeopardised any future constructive role it might play in the broader anti-racist movement.

Black leadership remains essential; but it must be an accountable, sensitive and pluralist leadership. Neither the ARA, nor for that matter, the ANL, seems capable of providing that, though anti-racists should support any genuine mobilisations against racism called by either of them.

Across the anti-racist movement, and not least in the black community, there is a deep and widespread desire for unity in action. People are desperate for an end to the bitter and damaging wrangles. The TGWU proposal for a labour movement march against racism through Tower Hamlets is an excellent idea. Both the ARA and ANL should support it and work to make it a reality. Labour Party Conference voted to back such a march, but we know Walworth Road and the NEC will take no action to implement that vote. Grass-roots anti-racists should wait on neither the ARA, the ANL or the Labour leadership. The only way to marginalise misleaders of all stripes is to use community and labour movement bodies to mount and sustain non-sectarian mobilisations against racism in all its manifestations. Building a huge demonstration in solidarity with the black community in the East End of London is one way to start that process.


**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 October 31st. 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 November 15th.**

***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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NEWS & VIEWS

The Newham Monitoring Project is a community-based organisation in East London determined to tackle racism. Here, members of the project analyse the response to fascism.

# Unite and fight

FOR ANTI-RACISTS, it has been a busy month, with the election of British National Party thug Derek Beackon in Tower Hamlets once again focusing debate upon racist violence in East London.

The arrest of nine young Bengalis following the "riot" in Whitechapel, the organising of the Tower Hamlets Nine Defence Campaign, the defence of the local community by a Bengali youth alliance, Youth Connection, against attacks on Brick Lane by the BNP - all has helped galvanise community resistance against the racism of the BNP and the police.

Now the media is trying to cause further divisions within an already fragmented anti-racist movement by searching out black community groups to condemn the "white" Left, following the demonstration in Welling against the BNP headquarters and the subsequent battle between police and protesters. Newham Monitoring Project (NMP), a community organisation which has been fighting racist violence and police harassment since 1980, was one of those approached.

Our response was to accuse the media of shifting the debate away from the day-to-day reality of racial harassment. Unfortunately, there have been some who have been unable to resist taking the bait against old adversaries.

In the face of attempts to divide us, the imperative now is for unity, against the BNP and in support of community self-defence. What we don't need is sectarian fighting over who are the "genuine" torchbearers of anti-racism. For NMP, the only leadership that means anything at a local level is the "leadership of experience", which comes from a history stretching back many years of black people fighting back against racist attacks.

In Newham, NMP makes no claim to be leading that resistance. Instead, we aim to work alongside community struggle, trying to make sure that the lessons of past campaigns - the successes and the failures - are not forgotten. We urge other anti-racists to do the same. It is on this basis that NMP supported the march against the BNP bunker in Welling, and welcomes the efforts of the Anti-Nazi League in the Isle of Dogs to reverse the election of the BNP at the local council elections next May.

However, we will continue to urge our comrades in the ANL not to forget that between its demise in the early eighties and its relaunch in 1991 there is a history of community resistance, including the Bradford 12, the Newham 7, the fight against racists in Dewsbury and so on, that must not be ignored.

In Tower Hamlets, anti-racists will be judged on their willingness to work with, rather than on behalf of, progressive community campaigns.

One such campaign which urgently needs the support and assistance of the whole anti-racist movement is the defence of the Tower Hamlets Nine (TH9). The Nine face riot charges which carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. Their arrest and treatment by police contrasts with the response of police officers after the BNP stormed down Brick Lane in Whitechapel attacking shops and individuals.

There were, according to Bethnal Green police, almost 650 police officers in the Brick Lane area, and yet no attempt was made to arrest the BNP thugs.

At a meeting the following day, the most senior officer in Metropolitan Police Area Two, Detective Assistant Constable Taylor, admitted that this was "a mistake". However, the local community remains convinced that when it comes to a choice between criminalising Bengali youth or defending black communities under attack, there is no doubt where their priorities lie.

Therefore the only way that justice will be achieved is if the labour and trade union movement support the Tower Hamlets Defence Campaign, which is already supported by the family of Quddus Ali and by Youth Connection.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

**● SUPPORT initiatives called by the campaign, including pickets and a proposed march in 1994.**

**● ORGANISE the Support Committees around the country, seeking support from trade unions, Labour Party wards and local community groups.**

**● DEMAND that the charges against the TH9 are dropped. Flood the Crown Prosecution Service and the Home Secretary with letters of protest.**

**● A CAMPAIGN pack has been produced which is available from the Campaign. It is vital that the TH9 are not forgotten.**

**● Tower Hamlets 9 Defence Campaign, PO Box 273, London E7. Tel: 081-584-0099.**

**Support the fight for justice and truth — at last!**

*Join:*
*The London Campaign for the "Bridgewater 4"*

**Full details: "Bridgewater 4" Campaign, 129a Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QG**

# Where's my shoe?

**Chris Knight** ponders his trip to the anti-racist march in South London.

"WHERE'S THE map?" We pore over the crinkled paper. Confirmed. Up there's where we turn. The police say left; we say right.

Brilliant blue sky, crisp air. Morale high. Ahead, I discern our snaking army of shimmering placards coming to a halt, congregating. That must be it. A tingling down the back of my neck. To our left, a grassy cemetery. Along our right, neat gardens, policed by our stewards, pleading. They're anxious about the lawns. We beat our placards to a ferocious rhythm - like marsh reeds in a hurricane.

Pressure from behind; total blockage ahead. Amid all the confusion, some genius shouts "forward!" I've heard some clear slogans, but rarely one so wittily utopian - or so perfect for the occasion. With all my lungs, to a slow beat: "FOR-WARD! FOR-WARD!" Chorused, amplified, the street rings out to the beat and - magic - we all actually glide forward, surging through the impossible crush....

In no time, we're wafted unexpectedly to the very front. And now: a surprise. It turns out that whilst negotiating, the stewards have been holding the march back some distance in front of the line of police blocking that right turn, leaving a no-man's land between the two sides.

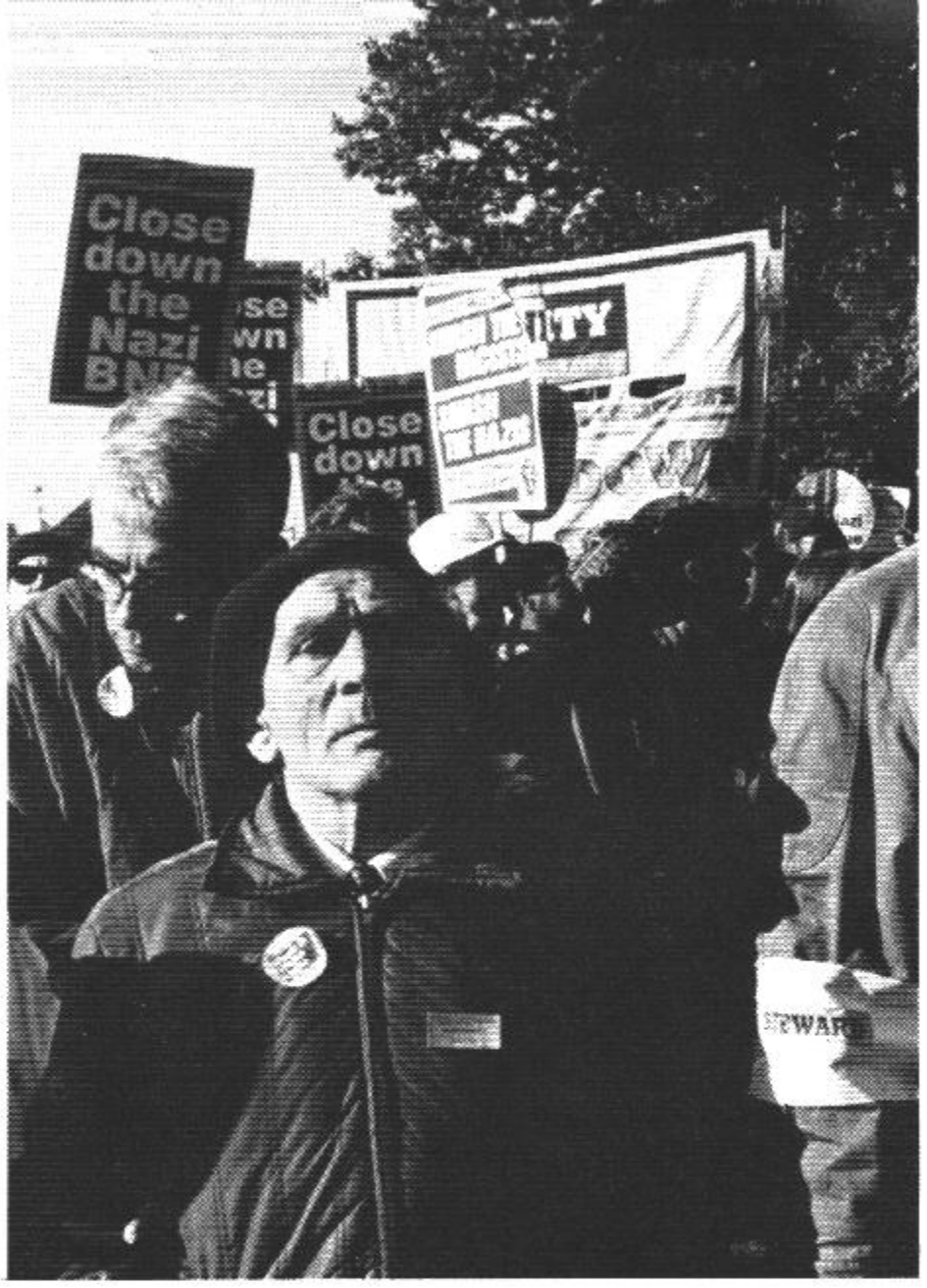
Squeezing to the right, our errant column has a will of its own. Borne on by sheer momentum, still chanting "FOR-WARD!", its current won't be blocked. "Link arms!" We do, and now I'm somewhere in the middle of a human chain spanning the road, propelled willy-nilly into that shrinking patch of empty in-between.

Both arms tugged to breaking point, it takes all my strength just to stop falling over. The police don't use their truncheons - yet. They're opening a passage for the horses. God - here they come! Incredible courage (where did we get it from?). Arms linked, clenched, none of us flinches. We just embrace tighter, as lovers might, seeking refuge in oneness. Mounting pressure from behind. We couldn't retreat even if we wanted. The gap between armies narrows, narrows. Contact!

I'm falling backwards, pressed by a surge of horses and flailing uniformed bodies. No way can I keep standing. Arm-holds snap under the strain. My closest partner disappears (to be discovered later, truncheoned heavily, her face blood-bespattered). My right shoe is being pulled off. Rolling over on the road, I protect my head, just hoping to survive. An eternity of crush and mayhem. Looking up, I notice three expanisve horse-bellies floating over me. The clever animals are stepping on road in preference to flesh and bone, but I can't say I feel safe.

More rolls, and I reopen my eyes to take stock. Under my face is a wooden police truncheon, its handle snapped off. Which of my comrades took that blow, I wonder? Or was it aimed at me? Alarmingly, I notice a stream of lumpy masonry exploding on the road, sometimes inches from my head. I now realise where I am - cut off some yards behind the serried police ranks! Shields held skywards, the forces of the state are taking quite a pounding. It feels the wrong place to be.

Or is it precisely the right place? Further along this road is the BNP headquarters; somehow, I must have rolled clean through the line of horses and police! But alone, with just one shoe, I'm unsure of the usefulness of this. From the direction of the BNP building, more mounted chargers are arriving, ready to canter in. Police vehicles stretch as far as the eye can reach. Pointless to go on. Dodging an impressive barrage of anti-fascist missiles, I limp across the road to a safe-looking niche in a wall. Has anyone seen my shoe?




*Auschwitz survivor Leon Greenman on the ANL Demo, October 16th.*

# ARAsquib

**STRANGE HOW things - and figures - can change. Nowhere has this been more starky illustrated than by the Anti-Racist Alliance's central London rally of October 16th.**

**ARA's Saturday march to Trafalgar Square, on the same day as the Plumstead, South London, protest, apparently attracted 1,000 people. This figure quickly went up to 3,000 and by Monday morning had reached an amazing 10,000.**

**The rally did attract the backing of some major unions and there were speeches by TUC general secretary John Monks and Labour MPs Ken Livingstone, Diane Abbott, Mildred Gordon and Joan Lestor.**

**Yet the clear evidence is that, whatever criticisms can be levelled at the Anti-Nazi League and Youth Against Racism in Europe, they are able to mobilise far greater numbers of people than ARA.**

# The most dangerous job

FIVE BLACK mini-cab drivers have been murdered since last year in racist attacks while many others are forced to accept racist abuse and assaults as routine.

The latest victim was Fiaz Mirza who went missing after taking a fare to Custom House in Newham, East London - his body was recovered from the docks two weeks later.

Ricky Lee and Mark Lee were convicted of his murder earlier this year.

Other victims include Mohammed Sarvar who was battered to death in Manchester by a gang who, three days earlier, had hacked to death shop-keeper Siddile Dada.

A report by the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism describes mini-cab driving as "one of the most dangerous jobs for black people in Britain today."

Attacks which resulted in serious injury included a driver in Wakefield who was stabbed 13 times and left in the boot of his car, abandoned in a forest, and a driver in Leeds who was racially abused by passengers who put a cheese wire to his neck and threatened to burn his cab.



*Dennis Skinner MP. PHOTO Phil Maxwell*

# Now is the time

With the right wing of the Labour Party intent on breaking the union link, **Dennis Skinner** MP told *Labour Briefing* why those on the left should join up.

**Labour Briefing: Why should people join the Labour Party now?**

Dennis Skinner: "It's important for people to understand that if we're going to maintain the link between the Labour Party and the trade union movement, which is unique in Europe, we need more trade unionists inside the Party.

"One or two very significant things happened at Brighton. One was that, whereas most people thought the unions would back one member one vote, the truth is that some of the unions stood firm. That means that there's a strong body of opinion within the trade union movement which wants to keep that link.

"The only way that can be sustained is by lots of trade unionists joining the Party.

"Bear in mind that the direct membership of the Party is not much more that 150,000 - it only takes a few in each Constituency Labour Party to change the nature and outlook of the organisation.

"Furthermore, we're coming up to reselections for 270 Labour MPs and there are probably around 100 marginal seats to be considered. In the present climate and with the right policies, the Labour Party could completely rout the Tories at the next election.

"Now, those kind of policies can't be shaped by a few MPs in the Campaign Group. We need lots of people on the left, and from the trade union movement, to get involved.

"Two of the major unions - the TGWU and the GMB - voted solidly against OMOV at the Conference and I don't think it would take too much to get a much stronger left within those kind of unions. Even some of the smaller unions have had a swing to the left over the past two or three years.

"Therefore, I think there's an opportunity for people to get involved in the Party not just for the sake of it but to use that voice and influence for a stronger left in the local Parties, the Labour Party nationally and within the trade unions."

**LB: If there isn't some sort of change in the Party, what will happen over the next two or three years?**

DS: "If we allow the yuppies to continue in the ascendancy, then clearly we're heading for a Labour Party no different from the one David Owen wanted when he left it. If it goes on in that way, the umbilical cord between the trade unions and the Labour Party will be lost forever.

"I think we need to ensure that link remains or the Party will be like the social democratic parties on the continent, hardly any of which have ever been particularly successful. In Germany, for instance, the SDP has never governed outside a coalition and in France the party has recently fallen apart."

**LB: Could you give a rough outline of the kind of programme working people would like to see Labour presenting at the next election?**

DS: "It stands out a mile that at the next election we're going to be faced with mass unemployment. They can fiddle the figures as much as they like but the truth is four million haven't got a job and the likelihood is that will be the case at the next election.

"The only way the British economy can get off the ground is by a massive injection of public investment.

"That means we should have a programme of shorter working hours and lowering the retirement age to 60. It also means returning all the money robbed from local government over the past 14 years.

"All you need to do is look at any school or hospital and you can see where the work needs to be done - there are people out of a job who could be doing it.

"Part of a Labour programme should also be returning benefits to 16 to 18 year olds - one of the reasons many young people didn't vote Labour at the last election was because they couldn't see anything in it for them.

"Similarly, we need a radical programme for the NHS - if you say you're going to get waiting lists of over a million down, you've got to spend money on it.

"All this means taxing the rich - it's pretty well known that the top 5 per cent in Britain have received more than £50 billion from this Tory government - we have a Public Sector Borrowing Requirement of £50 billion.

"Of course, one of the other problems with the PSBR is that £30 billion is spent on paying people to be out of work. Once you start reviving up the economy you start to remove a lot of these problems.

"We should also say we're going to get rid of VAT on fuel. Many in the leadership would say that the Common Market would make such a pledge impossible. I think we should say to the Common Market and anyone else who tries to dictate policy, 'get stuffed'.

"There are many things we could do which would really set the agenda and set the people alight.

"You could argue that the last three elections have been fought on right-wing tickets; they always promise that we'll win and it just hasn't happened.

**John Cryer** looks at the latest - and perhaps final - attack by the ruling class on Britain's mining industry.

BRITISH COAL and the government have set the stage for a pits massacre which will leave Britain with only 12 to 15 mines by the spring of next year.

It marks a bigger programme of closures than the one Michael Heseltine announced a year ago and will include the repeal of 1908 legislation which puts limits on hours and provides extensive safety protection.

The latest attack on the country's remaining 30 pits - announced by Energy Minister Tim Eggar - demolishes the protection given a year ago to the 19 so-called "core" pits.

Leader of the Durham miners, Davey Guy, accused the Tories of "misleading the country, misleading Parliament and misleading the miners, who have been encouraged to adopt new working practices in the belief that they would increase productivity and make mining jobs secure.

"The real sufferers will be future generations because we have the likelihood of being without anything like a realistic energy-producing capacity.

"Gas will run out in 20 years, although it will be nearer 15 because of rising consumption, and it is not possible to increase nuclear capacity because no one wants the power stations in their area."

Yorkshire miners' leader Ken Homer stressed that "we have pointed out all along that the problems facing the coal industry stem from a rigged market.

"The Tory government have not addressed that problem at any time in the past 12 months and Heseltine's so-called 'reprieve' was no more than a confidence trick.

"The massacre of the mining industry is a direct result of the Government's privatisation programme - it follows the privatisation of the electricity industry and is taking place in preparation for the privatisation of coal."

Labour MP Dennis Skinner argued that the TUC must finally take some action against the attack on the pits.

"Sadly, the TUC failed in October 1992," he said. "I believe that there were times, with the massive crowds backing the miners, that we had the flavour of one of the east European capitals when they started to fall to the people's action. The TUC seemed to think that a couple of select committees inside Parliament along with a few Tory MPs making noises about the mines would deliver the goods. What they should be doing now is mounting a campaign with the National Union of Mineworkers in order to give them maximum support in the event of industrial action.

"We've now got five million people with a pay freeze which effectively is a pay cut, plus many more workers like the miners suffering under the Tories - the TUC should realise that there are times when you've got to stop talking and start taking action."

The repeal of the 1908 Mines Act was given the green light some months ago by the Commons Trade and Industry Committee, chaired by Labour MP Dick Caborn.

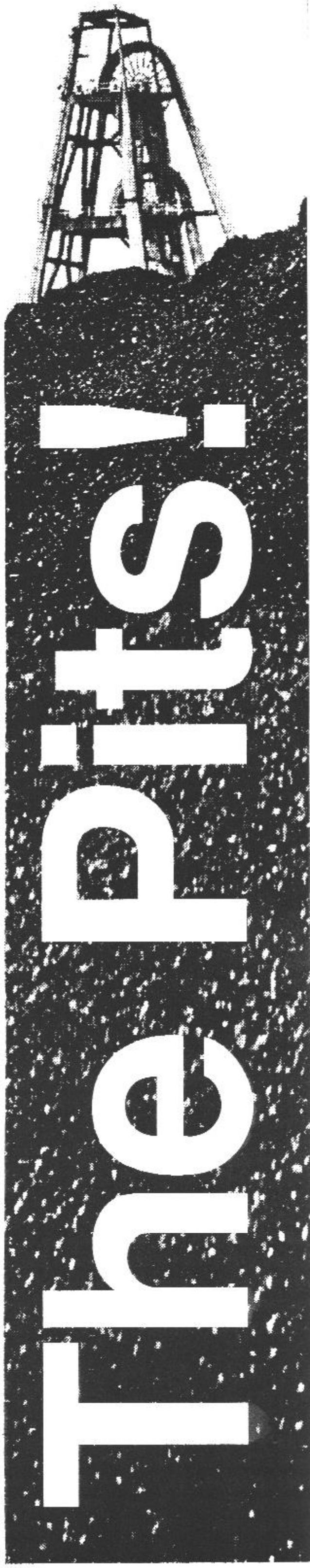
Caborn, along with three other Labour members of the committee, took the view that dismantling safety laws was the path to greater productivity and therefore secure jobs.

But as Nottinghamshire NUM leader Henry Richardson pointed out to *Briefing*, "Eggar was at pains to stress that the changes in the law had been recommended by four Labour MPs.

"At the moment, a pit deputy can stop a job if he thinks it's dangerous - that power will be taken away, exposing miners to far greater dangers underground.

"It also means that you'll get miners working very long shifts, seven days of the week."

Consultations will begin soon, according to Eggar's announcement, on all 30 pits. It remains to be seen whether the TUC will get off its knees and do something about the wholesale slaughter of an industry.




# Fighting for Lancashire's last pit

**PARKSIDE - the last pit in Lancashire - is still being occupied by Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures who are battling on to save the mine.**

**The women have chained themselves to the pit's barrier, prevented the arrival of lorries carrying stone and cement for sealing the mine and were even attacked by riot police who accused them - unjustly - of breaking the law.**

**A spokeswoman for the women said, "British Coal and the government have been trying for the past year to take the energy out of our pits and the campaign for coal.**

**"By illegal methods, lies, deceit and delaying tactics they have sought to confuse the British people about the decimation of our coal industry.**

**"Throughout this period, Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures alongside the miners and our supporters have stood firm in the face of these tactics.**

**"We have maintained a 24-hour vigil for 275 days outside Parkside colliery, and we intend to stop British Coal from destroying a viable, valuable pit.**

**"We will occupy indefinitely. We know we have the support of ordinary working people. We are fighting for a decent future for mining communities and we intend to stand firm until our pit is once again producing coal."**

# Tory twists and turns

**Ronan Bennett** probes the tangled web woven by Conservative Ministers over the Sinn Fein-SDLP talks in Northern Ireland.

LAST MONTH, Gerry Adams and John Hume released a joint statement that they had agreed on a set of proposals which they believed could form the basis of a settlement of the conflict in the north of Ireland. Adams, president of Sinn Fein, and Hume, leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, passed the proposals - which have not been detailed in public but are believed to include provision for a referendum, . north and south, on eventual reunification - to Albert Reynolds, the Irish Prime Minister.

Subsequently, Reynolds's Cabinet endorsed the document, which the Irish will present to the British government at the next round of meetings under the Anglo-Irish agreement.

While many see the Hume-Adams initiative as the most positive development to come out of Ireland for many years, reaction from Britain has been disappointing, if predictable. Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, has said he will read the proposals but "that doesn't mean I'm going to be impressed by them in any way". He went on: "Nor should it be supposed that we are going to join the ranks of the persuaders and say 'Please do your best to agree on a United Ireland', because Northern Ireland is part of a democracy called the United Kingdom".

John Major echoed Mayhew at the Conservative Party conference earlier this month when he said: "We are and will remain the Conservative and Unionist Party", confirming the Tories' recent rapprochement with the Unionists.

Reaction from the Unionist-Loyalist camp has been equally inflexible. The Ulster Volunteer Force, and the Ulster Defence Association and its death squad the Ulster Freedom Fighters condemned the "pan-nationalist front" of Dublin, the SDLP, Sinn Fein and the IRA, and promised to commit "mass murder" of Catholics to destroy the initiative.

It is a promise the Loyalists have done their best to make good. The UVF and UDA have stepped up their campaign of sectarian assassination.

Government ministers have picked up on the Loyalist violence and used it as a reason not to pursue the Hume-Adams initiative. This is simply unacceptable, for the Loyalist campaign is nothing more than the old Unionist veto on any constitutional change stripped to its most brutal and naked essentials. From a government that insists there must never be any surrender to "the men of violence", it is odd to hear that it considers the threat of an increase in Loyalist violence sufficient excuse to consign the nationalist initiative to the dustbin.

In reality, the threat of Loyalist violence is being used cynically by a government that has pledged its political future to the handful of bigots and political reactionaries that make up the Ulster Unionist parties.

Ireland, used as a political football during the Maastricht votes, now finds itself paying the price for the government's survival. Major has had his position safeguarded in the short-term by the Unionists; in return he has renewed the Unionist veto.

Yet such is the desire to see the conflict settled that if the government responds inadequately to the nationalist initiative it will be ministers - and not Hume or Adams - who will take the blame. Aware of this, the government has deployed threadbare arguments to bolster its case.

Apart from the spectre of Loyalist violence, Mayhew has raised the possibility of progress through the talks between the "constitutional" parties begun by Peter Brooke before the April 1992 elections. Sinn Fein, which regularly wins around 12 per cent of the popular vote, is excluded from the talks, while that well-known democrat Ian Paisley is welcomed.

Everyone knows these talks have stalled because of the absolute intransigence of the Unionists. They have no chance of getting anywhere. Ironically, it was left to Sir Edward Heath to state that any talks would have to exclude Paisley and include Sinn Fein.

The British government also maintains it will not talk to Sinn Fein until peace has been established. This is a serious case of putting the cart before the horse. The purpose of talks is to try to establish peace; if the conditions of peace already existed, there would be no need for talks.

Adams adds that the IRA is unlikely to agree to call a unilateral ceasefire while allowing the army, the police and the Loyalists to continue their own operations.

The idea that the conflict in Ireland is insoluble runs deep in Britain, and not just in the Conservative Party. I recently had a long talk with a member of the Shadow Cabinet about the north. "But it's insoluble." he told me towards the end of our conversation. No, it isn't. It's complex, it's not going to be easy, it will take political and moral courage.

Nearly three years ago I published a piece in the *Guardian* arguing that Sinn Fein be included in the talks process. At the time the piece attracted a certain amount of criticism: some "democrats" wrote that by taking this line I was being undemocratic and should not be given space to publish my odious views.

It is with amusement that I now find talks with Sinn Fein dominating the agenda of the mainstream media. Sinn Fein certainly feels it has won the argument about its inclusion in the talks process. The government knows this, and its increasingly empty rhetoric and transparent arguments look all too much like a hopeless rearguard action.

Talks with Sinn Fein will come. It is important that no one thinks the talks are an end in themselves. They will throw up many difficulties. There will be more deaths, more manoeuvring. What's up for grabs is not yet clear. But the alternative is to persist in the present policy, which has done nothing more than allow people to continue to die needlessly. Talks will be difficult, but they are the first stepping stone to a lasting, just peace. ❑

# in Northern Ireland




**Ken Livingstone** MP (right) explains to John Cryer how the British government unwittingly paid for him to appear against it in a US court and **Pat Reynolds** (below) explores MI5 undercover tricks against Irish people.

ALWAYS A powerful critic of Britain's role in Northern Ireland, Ken Livingstone MP was recently invited to give evidence to a federal court which was hearing evidence on the potential extradition of Jimmy Smith from the USA.

Smith is wanted by the security forces in the six counties in connection with the attempted murder of a prison officer. The evidence against Smith, Livingstone points out, "makes the care against the Birmingham Six look solid.

"In the 1980s," explains the Brent MP, "the British government had great problems extraditing republicans from America because the US law allowed a defence of political motive.

"So people were winning cases on the basis that they had committed political crimes against an occupying power. In each case, Reagan's attorney-general would then find some technicality on which to send them back. So Britain was winning the cases but it was taking a long time.

"Thatcher then berated Reagan into changing the law - so there is now no political defence. This has forced defence counsels into attacking the role of the British state in Northern Ireland, into arguing that you can't send someone back to a police state.

"I met Jimmy Smith and his defence attorney, Karen Snell, at an Irish Americans rally in Los Angeles last year. She thought that I might have valuable information so I sent all the questions I've asked in Parliament - the dirty war, the dirty tricks, Colin Wallace, Kincora - over to her.

"They planned to argue in court that Smith wouldn't be safe if he returned to Northern Ireland and they asked the British government to provide the reports of the Stalker-Sampson inquiry and the Stevens inquiry.

"The government refused to submit the documents to the court, which is unheard of. The Judge therefore allowed that I be called as an expert witness on British government policy."

Undoubtedly the greatest irony of the whole case is that, under the extradition treaty, defence costs are paid for by the British government so Ken Livingstone's trip to the US was financed by the very establishment so desperately trying to suppress his evidence and haul Jimmy Smith back across the Atlantic.

Livingstone thinks that the case will be won by Jimmy Smith's defence counsel but that it will probably go all the way to the Supreme Court. This, of course, could prove to be an endless spiral of embarrassment to Her Majesty's Government, with the MP ever ready to give more evidence on the shoot-to-kill policy and the various dirty tricks going on in Northern Ireland.

Already, the "British government has been taken to pieces in court; the head of the Northern Ireland civil service refused to answer questions; altogether British government witnesses refused to answer questions 31 times."

The US media has relished the trampling of Whitehall in the American courts. If the case does go to the Supreme Court there will undoubtedly be not a little lost sleep among certain ministers and civil servants.

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**● The recent case of self-confessed MI5 agent Pat Daly raises the most fundamental questions about the role of the British state in entrapping innocent people in war games. In February 1993, two young Irishmen, Martin McMonagle and Liam Heffernan, were arrested at a disused quarry in Somerset and charged with possessing firearms and conspiring to steal explosives with intent to endanger life.**

**Behind the arrests lies a remarkable story centering around MI5 agent Pat Daly. Daly's name first came to light after the trial of Peter Jordan and Billy Grimes when he was named by Jordan during the trial and later named as "Romeo" in the *Observer* in February 1986.**

**Daly has once again been in the news. Statements released to McMonagle's and Heffernan's solicitors and detailed in Irish and British newspapers reveal Daly's role in the arrest of the two men.**

**According to the published reports, after meeting the pair in Ireland, Daly supplied the men with cars, safe houses, maps and equipment, as well as directing the men to the quarry. It is claimed that MI5 provided everything needed for the "raid" including the fake explosives.**

**Because the men spotted the police at the quarry and a third man escaped, the police were forced to use Daly's evidence to build the prosecution case. Daly claims to have been paid over £400,000 for his work including a new house and a pension.**

**MPs in Britain and Ireland have raised questions about Daly's role in this case. But the case goes further. What was Pat Daly doing in an Irish community organisation, the Irish in Britain Representation Group, in the early 1980s and what was his role in the Peter Jordan/Billy Grimes case, during which Dr Maire O'Shea, the President of IBRG, stood trial and was acquitted? Was it, as the IBRG stated at the time, an attempt to damage the organisation?**

**Why was Daly later employed by MI5 to act as an "agent provocateur" in the Republic of Ireland and entice people into a carefully prepared trap, and to get a handsome payment for his work?**

**Home Office guidelines on handling informants indicate that they should not act as agent provocateurs and must not counsel, incite or procure the commission of a crime. Given the recent Court of Appeal ruling in the Taylor sisters' case where the Judges ruled that financial considerations had a major effect on the evidence of a main prosecution witness, where does that leave Daly and the British government?**

CLASS TRAITOR OF THE MONTH

# The lapdog

The media like to take the piss out of his accent and meandering syntax. But our problem with him isn't his way of speaking. It's his double-dealing politics and sheer self-serving hypocrisy. We refer, of course, to Labour's new Employment spokesperson, **John Prescott** MP, our Class Traitor of the Month.

AS A STEWARD on the Cunard passenger line in the 1950s, Prescott joined the NUS and later supported the rank-and-file revolt against the union's right-wing leadership. He claims he was one of the "politically motivated men" denounced by Harold Wilson during the seamen's strike of 1966, but like so many of his claims to socialist credibility, it is hard to verify. We do know that in that same year he contested the hopeless Tory seat of Southport for Labour and that two years later he was selected for Hull East, which he duly won in 1970.

In 1974, he became Peter Shore's PPS and was thought to be stridently anti-EEC. But in 1976, he hopped on the Brussels gravy train by putting himself forward for the Labour delegation to the European Parliament (before direct elections for MEPs were introduced in 1979) and became leader of the Labour Group there. It is said that the Euro-dosh he collected from that job enabled him to purchase his eight-bedroom Edwardian folly in Hull for £28,000 in 1978.

The next year he turned down Callaghan's offer to make him a European Commissioner and stood for the first time for the Shadow Cabinet, coming in 20th with 56 votes. He repeated the effort for the next four years with little improvement. In 1983, he nominated Kinnock for leader and was then elected to the Shadow Cabinet with 88 votes. Kinnock made him Transport spokesperson for a year before promoting him to Employment in 1984. In this capacity, he backed the miners in 1984-85 with exceeding caution, playing no role in pushing the issue in the Commons or in the media or on the picket lines. After the miners' defeat he was linked by the press with the disastrous "realignment" of the left. In November 1985, he came in third in the Shadow Cabinet poll with 112 votes.

For Kinnock and Mandelson, however, Prescott was exactly the wrong person to front Labour's jobs policy in the run-up to the general election. As Shadow Chancellor, Hattersley effectively disavowed Prescott's training levy proposals in November 1986. In the months that followed, his "one million jobs in two years" package fell victim to a whispering campaign orchestrated from Kinnock's office. In an attempt to climb back on board the band-wagon, Prescott told union conferences



that they would have to restrain wage demands if they wanted a Labour government to cut unemployment. It was to no avail.

Completely outmanoeuvred by Kinnock's office, Prescott was banished from the election campaign.

After the 1987 defeat, Prescott began his long (and still ongoing) campaign for the Party's deputy leadership, saying that the post should be about "building the Party in the country". He came second to Bryan Gould in the Shadow Cabinet poll with 130 votes - but was rapidly given the cold-shoulder by Kinnock who refused his demand for the Environment brief and stuck him with Energy instead.

After that, he began letting his chums in the press lobby know that he would be standing against Hattersley for the deputy leadership. Under pressure from Kinnock's office, he beat an undignified retreat, announcing the withdrawal of his candidacy (allegedly in return for a promise that the "role" of the deputy leader would be debated at the conference) in January 1988 - only to throw his hat back in the ring after Eric Heffer announced his candidacy in March.

In the months that followed, Prescott went out of his way to reiterate his undying love for "Neil." In return, "Neil" pulled out all the stops to derail Prescott's challenge. Despite support from NUPE, ASLEF and the NUM, he secured a total of 23 per cent in that autumn's electoral college. He promptly plummeted to 15th place in the Shadow Cabinet ballot with 94 votes and was "demoted" to Transport by the now all-powerful Kinnock.

As it turned out, Kinnock had done "Johnny" a favour. With the King's Cross fire, the Lockerbie aircrash, the Clapham, Purley, and Glasgow rail disasters, Prescott was rarely out of the news. Throughout 1988-89, he hammered the hapless Tory Transport minister, Paul Channon, to the delight of the press and the Party. The next year he stood for the NEC for the first time and won a place at the expense of Ken Livingstone.

His most contemptible performance on the NEC came over the Gulf War. Sensing that the rank and file were restive about the leadership's pro-war stance, he briefed reporters to the effect that he and other putative Shadow Cabinet "rebels" were meeting in a secret "supper club".

The reality is that he never once voted either in the Commons, the PLP, or the NEC against the war, though he had plenty of opportunities. Kinnock, of course, always had Prescott's number; Mandelson told the press that Prescott's "disloyalty" meant that he would not get a job in a Kinnock Cabinet. As the bombs fell on Baghdad, Prescott at the NEC was reading from a prepared statement vowing eternal fidelity to "Neil."

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# Get it together

**Dave Osler** outlines a plan of action for the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs.

THE SOCIALIST Campaign Group of Labour MPs are without exception truly wonderful human beings, and I dearly want to have their babies.

Now that we've got that out of the way, dare I suggest that when a politician of the calibre of Harriet Harman knocks a politician of the calibre of Tony Benn off Labour's national executive committee, it's time the hard left did some hard thinking?

As last year's leadership and deputy leadership stitch-up demonstrates, the Campaign Group does not currently act as a cchesive unit. Less than half of its membership was prepared even to sign nomination papers for what were ostensibly Campaign Group candidates.

Not only is it clearly failing to put its message across, it is scarcely attempting to do so. Its newspaper, *Socialist Campaign Group News*, consists primarily of frequently predictable monthly outpourings from the same dozen hand-picked pens, to the exclusion of all campaigning content.

The pamphlets that came out under the Campaign Group imprint in the eighties are no more. Badges, posters and placards supporting current political struggles? You must be joking. Even humble press releases are inexcusably rare.

Meanwhile, there has been an unseemly outbreak of debate in the labour movement. Parts of the Tribune Group, the inheritors of the anti-Common Market right and even some major union general secretaries are starting to look afresh at economics, especially the mechanics of job creation.

Despite the readily apparent limitations, the beginnings of intellectual opposition to the modernisers inside the Labour mainstream can only be welcomed. Yet the Campaign Group, with one or two exceptions, has remained aloof.

Even the little-vaunted Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network remains hardly more than a mailing list, barely capable of getting 200 people to a one-day conference.

Many MPs view the SCGSN as an embarrasment. Others dare openly to blame the network's supposed failure to canvass sufficiently hard for their inability to make it onto the NEC.

The name of the outfit encapsulates this relationship completely; supporters' clubs may be a suitable for football fans, but for serious socialist activists the idea is an insult.

Most of the Campaign Group are first-rate socialist MPs, clocking up truly prodigious work rates. But there are other yardsticks of political efficacy than the number of meetings addressed multiplied by the number of picket lines attended.

Given their special position, left MPs have a responsibility to provide a lead for Labour's rank-and-file. It is high time the Campaign Group got its act together.

As a minimum, it needs a part-time paid secretary to alleviate the burden on the surely superhuman incumbent. One MP should be empowered to put out agreed statements in the group's name, and act as a point of contact for the media.

Many MPs would fight shy of such steps for fear of being branded "a party within a party," so it should be stressed that the Tribune Group follows exactly the arrangements above. The Campaign Group should go further and employ a full-time organiser, perhaps by way of a £500-a-head annual levy from the MPs' considerable staff budgets.

Giving the SCGSN a meaningful presence will be a massive task, probably beyond the scope of the voluntary effort of a few grossly over-committed activists alone.

The worker could also ensure the resumption of occasional pamphlets, while the possibility of producing books in collaboration with left-wing publishers could also be explored.

Some parliamentary researchers to the modernisers openly use their jobs, and the facilities their employment opens up, to organise for sectional advantage.

Those employed by Campaign Group MPs could at least have set about running up the House of Commons' phone bill to lobby against one member one vote.

*Campaign Group News* must be democratised, so that it reflects the debates and initiatives within the whole Labour left. Its coverage of the last SCGSN conference, for instance, was minimal in the extreme.

The idea of an elected editorial board is obviously too revolutionary to contemplate, but what argument can there be against elected supporters' network reps?

Lastly, isn't it time to stop running a full slate of seven for the constituency section of the NEC, when we are currently unable to win even one?

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*Continued from page 10*

vote to ensure the Party's policy on defence cuts and increased pensions was in the manifesto and to ensure Labour campaigned to renationalise privatised industries, withdraw from the ERM, repeal anti-trade union laws and tax the rich. In every instance he voted with the leadership and against socialist policies.

In Brighton last month came his 15 minutes of glory. Never mind that large portions of his speech were incomprehensible. Never mind that his wild gestures and hysterical demagoguery were actually an embarrassment to most of those present. What mattered was the bit where he told delegates that they had to support John Smith, "our leader, who has put his head on the block".

David Owen, who first proposed "OMOV" for Parliamentary selection back in 1980, must have smiled to see this self-styled working-class hero finishing his dirty work for him. And in front of the whole conference, Neil Kinnock patted him patronisingly on the head, which said it all. The man Cecil Parkinson dubbed the "rottweiler of the Shadow Cabinet" had turned himself into the Establishment's lapdog. It was the culmination of years of two-faced manoeuvring by a shameless hustler.

Despite the "pugnacious", "bluntly spoken", "tough-talking" image, Prescott is thin-skinned, self-obsessed and comically pusillanimous whenever the going gets rough. In Brighton the "modernisers" couldn't get one of their own to carry Smith's shit, so they lighted on Prescott, who positively wallowed in it. He readily sacrificed his trade union credentials to prove his loyalty to Smith.

However, in the process, he may have ruined his chances of becoming deputy leader - still his burning ambition - as neither the GMB nor the TGWU will ever vote for him for anything again. ❑

# Seeing justice done

The only black woman councillor in Scotland, **Neelam Bakshi**, also sits on the Steering Group of the new Black Socialist Society - here she reports on its early days.

BLACK ACTIVISTS in the Labour Party fought from the early 1980s to have the black voice heard. For years the Black Sections Movement campaigned unsuccessfully for the setting up of a Black Section equivalent to Women's Sections and Youth Sections.

Black people in the Labour Party seemed invisible, their issues (the Black Agenda) were ignored, and black people as elected representatives were not even discussed.

Eventually, the Labour Party Conference voted for the principle of black self-organisation. An NEC working party recommended a Black Socialist society. The NEC amended this two weeks before the 1989 Conference and put forward the infamous "choc-ice" proposal of a Black Socialist Society which could have white members, a proposal which was ridiculed by speaker after speaker - including me - and which led to at least one union withdrawing their support for the NEC proposal and abstaining.

Both Black Sections and the "Black and White Socialist Society" fell - a clear instruction to bring back an acceptable proposal. Conference finally accepted the Black Socialist Society - open to Labour and non-Labour members of African, Caribbean and Asian descent or discriminated against on the basis of colour.

A National Steering Group was appointed in 1992/3 and it moved swiftly to arranging an inaugural conference in June 1993 attended by over 100 delegates, all five black MP's and fraternal speakers from the Labour Party.

Conference elected the first Executive Committee of the BSS, with Gloria Mills (Chair), Bob Purkiss (Treasurer), Jatin Haria (Secretary) and Kingsley Abrams, myself, Palma Black, Irma Critchlow, Muff Sourani and Marc Wadsworth elected as committee members from 23 candidates.

The election of 50 per cent women was no accident but part of the constitution containing the electoral means to achieve this.

The name provokes resistance from those unwilling to see the word "black" used politically to denote all who are discriminated against because of colour. The Labour Party NEC changed the name to "Black and Asian Socialist Society" only to find that both the Steering Group and the inaugural conference preferred the original version.

The Labour Party hasn't given up and the NEC recently expressed its concern that BSS has changed its name. Has any other affiliated socialist society had its name decided by the Labour Party or is this special treatment reserved for the BSS?

The Steering Group has overseen the setting up of over 30 local societies and by June 1993 there were more than 1,000 recorded individual members and 215,000 members affiliated via TGWU, NUPE, MSF, NCU, BECTU and GMB.

However, according to Labour's National Executive Committee, the BSS has not yet reached the trigger figure of 5,000 members which will give an automatic seat on the NEC to the Black Socialist Society. This is a matter which must be resolved swiftly, along with parallel representation at regional levels and the right to send resolutions. Non-party members also have much to contribute as well as being able to examine what Labour Party membership could offer black people.

The BSS National Executive also has the task of taking forward resolutions and reports passed at the inaugural conference - the first was the BSS motion to the 1993 Annual Labour Party Conference calling for fairer representation of black women and men in Parliament within the next 10 years, including mechanisms such as all-black shortlists in specified seats (fair representation would mean at least 30 black MPs - six times the current number). This debate did not generate the attention given to all-women shortlists which has now been conceded.

The BSS has a programme for action including building more local societies, campaigning against racist legislation such as the Asylum and Immigration Act, and against racial discrimination and fascism.

It includes active support for collaborative work with, for example, the Anti-Racist Alliance, and with trade unions as well as on international issues such as solidarity with the peoples of poorer continents in their struggle for economic and social justice.

Our most pressing task is to persuade the Labour Party to release to the BSS the money paid by BSS individual members and trades union affiliates.

Even with the financial and administrative support being offered by the Labour Party the total cash does not amount to much given the work still to be done. We need to actively recruit members and build a strong and thriving society overcoming the deliberate slow strangulation and hostility of those (black and white) who see their own power dissipating.

The success of the Black Socialist Society (and ultimately of the Labour Party itself) will depend on black and white comrades who are determined to see justice done, who are prepared to actively work for it, and to recruit members. Contact us for more information if you are willing to help.

● **The Black Socialist Society can be contacted at 16 Sandbank Avenue, Glasgow G20 0DB.**

**Dorothy Macedo** (right) looks at the recent dramatic moves in the decades-long struggle by women to achieve real power in the Labour Party.



THE QUESTION of all-women shortlists has been dragging on for so long that it seems almost an anti-climax that the Labour Party has actually agreed to them, albeit in very few cases.

But even this token effort at redressing the imbalance of the Parliamentary Labour Party - 87 per cent of Labour MPs are men - has caused an outcry.

Several men have already complained to the Equal Opportunities Commission that all-women shortlists will breach the Sex Discrimination Act, although the Commission has swiftly decided that it will not back them.

The history of quotas for women in general, and all-women shortlists in particular, is complicated but can be summarised as follows.

In the 1970s and '80s, many feminists joined the Labour Party and became active in the women's organisation. They discovered that the Party was happy for women to do the donkey work, but treated the women's organisation as an optional extra. So women organised to demand real power for women in the Party.

These proposals were adopted at Women's Conference year after year, and approved by the majority of women's sections after a lengthy consultation exercise.

The pressure was so great that something had to be done; but there was no way the NEC was prepared to let women elect their own NEC representatives, or allocate significant resources to the women's organisation.

Clare Short was on the NEC and was well respected by women; she could have used her position to convey the wishes of the women's organisation to the leadership, but in fact she was used to sell the NEC's alternative plans to the women.

She came to the 1989 Women's Conference with a totally different proposal: quotas. These were going to give us power gradually via a different route; we were assured that quotas for women had worked wonders in other socialist parties.

There is a lot of confusion about quotas. They are about enabling more women to represent their ward or CLP, where they will represent both women and men. Empowerment for the women's organisation had been about women representing women and their specific interests.

Harriet Harman was quoted recently as supporting women-only short lists because "until recently there have been hardly any Labour women MPs, and men and women still have different concerns". Of course, a big influx of Labour women would transform the ethos of Parliament, but any woman who seeks election in order to represent women will soon be reminded that an MP has to represent all of her or his constituents!

So quotas were introduced as a diversion from the justified demands of the women's organisation. Those demands are still supported by Women's Conference. At the 1993 Women's Conference, Clare Short said she supported the principle of women electing their five NEC representatives, but Women's Conference was still not "representative" enough to be allowed to do this. There were 400 women present, including major figures from the unions - what an insult.

Nevertheless, quotas have a valid role in the struggle to make the Party more woman-friendly. The "gender gap" was correctly identified as one of the key reasons for Labour's defeat in 1992. We were neck and neck with the Tories among men, but trailed by 9 per cent among women. In other countries, social democratic parties poll better among women than among men.

The 1990 Annual Conference carried a resolution setting 40 per cent quota for women on GCs etc and a 50 per cent quota for the PLP within three elections.

The NEC implemented the first part of this (though there has been significant resistance at the grass roots, particularly outside London) but failed to introduce any measures likely to make a dent in the PLP.

The suggestion of women-only shortlists whenever a Labour-held seat became vacant was designed to minimise opposition; no MP would be deselected - perish the thought! The 50 per cent quota would not be achieved within the original time limit (barring epidemics at Westminster) but the Party would look as if it were taking women seriously.

The NEC's alternative of women-only short lists in just half of these seats, which was passed at Conference last month, means decades of delay. The other problem it causes is the interesting question of which seats are chosen, with all the potential for outside interference by regional officers or Walworth Road.

Interestly, the regional executive in Scotland (one of the main male bastions) has now asked the NEC to look again at compulsory women-only shortlists in all Labour vacancies. I don't know whether this is due to a recent feminist coup north of the border, or just fear of the in-fighting if only half such seats are to be chosen.

Even if the NEC sticks to its current position, many men will complain that they are being denied their chance to be MPs. What about the generations of women who never got a chance? The unspoken thought is that men are somehow entitled to political careers.

The Labour Party needs to decide which is more important - men's ambitions or our chances of winning the next election. ❑

# Ambition or victory?

LABOUR PARTY

# The balance at Brighton

Was Labour's Brighton Conference a disaster for socialism? *Labour Briefing* Political Correspondent **Mike Marqusee** weighs the evidence.

THIS YEAR'S Party Conference was not the undiluted triumph for the right-wing leadership that the media would have us think.

On the key issue, OMOV, what has actually happened, after all the huffing and puffing, is that trade union branches have lost their right to participate in Parliamentary selections. However, branches continue to enjoy all other rights at CLP level and a form of collective trade union input remains in the electoral college for leader and deputy leader and in Conference voting, though it will now be open to unions to fragment their block vote if they wish.

This is a setback for the left but it is by no means the end of the road. The "modernisers" paid a heavy price for this limited victory. Encountering far more resistance than they had expected, in both CLPs and unions, they had to make several concessions to claw their way out of what would have been a humiliating defeat. They were compelled to embrace "full employment" - a phrase banished by Kinnock in 1986.

Unnoticed by the press, a composite resolution calling for unions to be allowed to "determine their own rule books", effectively pledging repeal of the Tory anti-union laws, was passed with NEC approval.

The "modernisers" lost the argument in the movement even though they enjoyed heavy support from the media. In the end, they only got their way by appealing to leadership loyalty and by combining the OMOV proposals with a commitment to quotas for women, a cynical manoeuvre that enabled MSF General Secretary Roger Lyons to brow-beat his delegation into backing Smith.

Even then the MSF delegation only agreed to abstain on the crucial constitutional amendment by two votes, which gave Smith his margin of victory. The TGWU composite calling for collective union input at all levels of the Party was passed, but was simply ignored by the NEC, which claimed the vote on the constitutional amendment took precedence. MSF was one of three unions to violate their Conference mandate by voting for OMOV (the others were the UCW and USDAW).

So close was the likely result that personal assistants of Shadow Cabinet members were despatched to bully humble CLP delegates into submission. This was because this year the CLPs carried more weight - 30 per cent of the total conference vote - than in the past. This extra weight was felt in the Conference's rejection of the leadership on a number of important issues, including defence cuts, scrapping Trident, renationalising the coal industry if it is privatised, and reaffirming Clause IV.

Unfortunately, the NEC was not challenged over its refusal to commit the party to repealing VAT on domestic fuel. And, of course, Tony Benn lost his seat on the NEC. Benn's defeat was widely predicted and did not seem to trouble Tony, whose political diary is as full as ever. Nonetheless, it left many of us feeling bitter.

But on examination the NEC results are little changed from last year. The fall in the total number of CLPs voting for left candidates reflected the concentration of right-wing votes around the sitting NEC members plus the dimwit Harman.

Next year we'll have true OMOV (if Walworth Road can manage it) for the CLP section of the NEC, instead of the hybrid system we've used recently. This should produce a more accurate picture of the left's strength in the Party.

The atmosphere at Conference was markedly more relaxed than in the grim days when Kinnock's boot boys and girls patrolled the hall looking for dissidents to intimidate.

Smith is less bothered about dissent than Kinnock, not because he is more open-minded but because he is less insecure.

The feeling at Conference was therefore desultory rather than oppressive. Many of the CLP delegates seemed uninterested in politics. They were just pleased to be surrounded by Party celebrities. Some applauded Scargill, Skinner, Blair and Brown with equal fervour.

The Brighton Conference has certainly made life even more difficult for left-wing Party activists, but it does not mark the end of the Party as we know it. In fact, it shows that resistance to the "modernisers" is possible and that the working-class base of the Party may not be as easily dismantled as some have suggested. ❑

## Spend, spend, spend

IF LABOUR'S new-fangled scheme for "registered members of affiliated organisations" (ie OMOV) actually succeeds in attracting many trade unionists, it could spell bankruptcy for the Party.

The new "registered" members will pay £3 in addition to the political levy they pay their unions to enjoy the same rights as all other CLP members. Of that £3, £1 goes to the CLP, £1 to national HQ and £1 to regional organisation. The costs to national HQ of processing each new registered member is thought to be in the region of £6 in total.

Larry Whitty did try to alert the NEC to this little difficulty. Shortly thereafter, the *Guardian* reprinted lengthy excerpts from a phony "study" of Walworth Road that implied none too subtly that the General Secretary had to go. Any connection?

## Hooray!

**HARRIET HARMAN has been ejected from the Shadow Cabinet by an electorate, her fellow Labour MPs, who have seen her close up and know that she is lazy and a bit thick.**

**Pity that the CLPs, which just put her on to the NEC in place of Tony Benn, have not had the same opportunity. Still, with John Smith showing just what he thinks about democracy by letting Harman keep her job as Michael Portillo's shadow, there will be plenty of opportunities for Party members to see this walking waste of space in action, or rather, lack of action. And would somebody please tell the *Guardian* that Harman is not a feminist! In her recent book she goes out of her way to distance herself from the women's movement and associate instead with the pernicious trends of "post-feminism".**

**The snide insults heaped on Mildred Gordon only showed just how ill-informed political correspondents can be. Because Mildred is 70, it is assumed that she is not "up to" a Shadow Cabinet job. As anyone who has seen her in action knows, Mildred is a better public speaker and has a better grasp of policy details than most of the current Shad Cabs.**

# Hodging the issues

**John Newman** of the GMB's London Regional Committee recounts the alarming and sinister attack on his union by Islington's Labour council.

THE RELATIONSHIP between Labour and the trade unions in over a decade of local authority service provision has been conditioned by the largely successful Tory government strategy of blaming the necessity for cuts on profligate councils unable to control town hall bureaucracy.

In Labour boroughs, affiliated trade unions have sought to understand the problems of compulsory competitive tendering and the need to cut costs and have nevertheless co-operated in achieving the best possible service delivery in difficult circumstances.

In Islington, this co-operation saw the growth of the Direct Labour Organisation from 250 to 700 in the years 1983 to 1990. That the DLO survived and prospered in the teeth of the savage Tory attack on public service provision which killed off or decimated many others was a reflection of the persistence of the manual unions in seeking real gains - like the ending of bonus, harmonisation of conditions, contracts compliance, equal opportunities, comprehensive safety policies - which enabled the council led by Margaret Hodge to ensure better decentralised service provision.

As things got tougher the manual unions were still able to resist compulsory redundancies and successfully argue for more work to be brought in-house and for the reduction in overhead costs and unnecessary town hall bureaucracy.

But the backlash of chief officers fearing for their influence and their jobs only awaited the fourth Labour election defeat of 1992.

Without any of the consultation process demanded by Islington's staff code, 150 building workers were put under notice and the redundancy list was manipulated to include the convenor, his deputy and half the stewards' committee.

All the arguments in terms of breach of procedures, victimisation of stewards and the complete lack of justification for compulsory redundancies when 100 workers had gone voluntarily, their work given away to sub-contractors, were put and won.

But it became evident that certainly the Chair of Personnel, Leo McKinstry, and the Chair of Direct Services, Dave Barnes, were working to their own hidden agenda, which did not include listening to the irrefutable union case.

As for Hodge, her 10-year development from caring community leader to new realism had now reached its logical conclusion with her impending transfer to Price Waterhouse and so the lobby of her farewell ALA meeting at the 1992 Labour Conference proved fruitless.

The sackings went ahead in October, but the political battle continues. Despite attempts to stifle it, a GMB amendment was overwhelmingly carried at the Greater London Labour Labour Party AGM in March 1993 roundly condemning Labour councils which indulge in anti-union, anti-direct labour practices.

In April, the GMB received statements from senior DLO managers unexpectedly and completely vindicating its position. These statutory declarations from people intimately involved in the process say that chief officers conspired not only to manipulate the redundancy list to capture the convenor but also withheld vacancies to prevent any possibility of redeployment.

Even more seriously, they are revealed as undermining the viability of their own DLO by undercharging the client, while at the same time assisting a rival contractor in preparing tenders.

Whether these serious breaches of contracts legislation and council standing orders are the end result of simple incompetence or something more sinister is not known.

But leading councillors like Barnes and McKinstry certainly must have been aware of what was happening and therefore had plenty of reasons for supporting bureaucracy at all costs against exposure by the unions.

Rather than publishing this extremely damaging information, the GMB sent it to Derek Sawyer, Hodge's successor, with copies to Terry Ashton, Larry Whitty and Jack Straw offering a last chance to resolve the dispute.



*Former Islington leader Margaret Hodge. PHOTO: Newsfocus*

By the time of the GMB annual congress in June, nothing was resolved, but it was evident that the unpleasant experience of more than one so-called Labour council sacking workers and victimising shop stewards had produced its effect on the attitude of the union towards links with the Labour Party.

The London Region of the GMB motion calling for the withdrawal of political and financial support to Labour councils who fail to engage in even basic consultation with unions was overwhelmingly carried.

Since the passing of a similar motion in 1992, hundreds of workers had successfully won tribunals against Liverpool and other Labour councils for unfair dismissal and it has become apparent that public money was set aside in anticipation of losing them.

This looks to be the course that Islington is still set upon, for despite finally agreeing to an inquiry by its own Chief Executive, there has been no move to reinstate those wrongly sacked or to suspend anyone on what is surely prima facie evidence of gross misconduct.

The value of a relationship with an organisation that is simply reproducing the worst Tory employment practices in local government, as it desperately seeks to make itself "respectable", is now seriously being questioned - by trade unionists. ❑

# Prisoners of profit

**David Evans**, General Secretary of the Prison Officers Association, examines the sudden Tory obsession with selling off Britain's gaols.

THE GOVERNMENT has unleashed its privatisation dogma into the prison service. There are already two private prisons in operation and plans are laid for many more to be hived off.

Prisoner escorts are going the same way, for despite the disaster of Group 4 escorts on Humberside, the Government is adamant that it will hand over all but the most highly dangerous escorts to private interests within two years.

Prisons for profit have come a long way, quickly. Only six years ago Douglas Hurd, the then Home Secretary, told the Commons that he "did not believe that there is a case ... for auctioning or privatising prisons."

At about the same time the Adam Smith Institute, when first trying to make the case for selling off prison management, were laughed out of David Mellor's office, then Hurd's deputy.

Yet by the time the 1991 Criminal Justice Bill was published, the Government's prison policy had turned on its head. The Bill in its original form contained clauses allowing a limited experiment in privatising remand prisons. However, on its way through the parliamentary process all limits on privatisation were lifted.

Leading Tory privateers, Sir John Wheeler and John Greenway, slipped in amendments which were readily accepted by the Government. And when the Bill became the Criminal Justice Act it contained clauses which effectively allow the Home Secretary to privatise any prison at any time.

So how was the Government sold the concept of private prisons?

Some say that it was sold as a means to break the Prison Officers' Association which increased its membership by a third during the 1980s.

That growth should be of no surprise, for as Thatcher's social and economic policies swelled the prison population so it became necessary to increase prison officer numbers.

It is also argued that the Government's desire to attack the POA has become more pressing because in recent years the union has built potent alliances with other prison trade unions and with influential prison reform groups, campaigning hard for "expensive" improvements in prison standards.

Another persuasive argument accounting for the Government's change of heart on private prisons suggests that companies and their lobbyists, desperate for new business in a recessionary climate, engaged upon a parliamentary charm offensive.

Playing on Tory prejudices against the public sector and their trade unions and linking those to the problems within the prison service, they began to overcome the reservations over privatisation set out by Hurd.

Tory politicians allowed themselves to be convinced that privatisation would resolve the complex problems of imprisonment, deliver savings and weaken the ability of prison unions to defend the conditions of their members.

It is also plain that the private security industry has won friends in high places. For example, Sir Norman Fowler, Tory Party chair, was until a couple of months ago on the board of Group 4, while Sir John Wheeler, former chair of the influential Home Affairs Committee, has in the past been associated with a leading trade group for private security firms.

Group 4 opened the gates of the Wolds prison - the first private gaol - for business in April 1992. That was followed by the launch of private escorts in April 1993 and the opening of Blakenhurst the following month.

Both the Wolds and Blakenhurst are state-of-the-art prisons built at the taxpayers' expense with the kind of facilities that state employees only dream about. Most POA members must work in crumbling and overcrowded Victorian edifices.

Since its inception the whole privatisation programme has faced a barrage of independent criticism and it is widely accepted that the Government's obsession with privatisation has led to the abandonment of the much-vaunted agenda for prison reform proposed by Lord Woolf.

However, in response to those criticisms, all one hears from Government ministers are grandiloquent eulogies to what is being achieved by Group 4 and UKDS, the shady American-led consortium that runs Blakenhurst.

These accolades, astounding in their disregard for reality and objectivity, are repeated by the new chief executive of the prison service, Derek Lewis. He was recruited from the private sector and until he was offered the job by the then Home Secretary, Kenneth Clarke, had never set foot inside a prison.

The official misty-eyed belief in privatisation shows no sign of waning even after the damning criticism of the Wolds, published in August by the prisons inspector, Judge Tumim.

He said that the regime offered by Group 4 was "corrupting" and "lethargic" and that there was no way of telling if the prison was cost effective.

But while it is clear that Group 4 have lost a lot of public credibility as well as a host of prisoners, the one thing it looks unlikely to lose in the short term is the steady supply of Government contracts coming its way.

However, the POA along with other prisons unions continues to campaign hard for an efficient and humane public prison service in line with the recommendations of Lord Woolf.

The POA rules out nothing in its strategy to bring the Government to its senses and abandon the ideological red herring of profit prisons. POA members are now being ballotted to take part in civil service wide action against privatisation on November 5th.

We shall not rest until the Government delivers a public prison service fit for the 21st century and we are confident that in the end common sense will prevail. ❑

# Britain in a new world ... ?

**Bob Cryer** MP examines how the Labour front bench managed to fall into the midden of backing the Government's Defence Estimates.

THAT WAS the heading in the Labour Conference Arrangements Committee Report for the section on defence. Composite 49 reaffirmed Labour's commitment to reduce spending to the average level of west European countries and composite 48 called for the scrapping of Trident.

It also pointed out with absolute accuracy that the deployment of Trident "flouts the non-proliferation treaty". Both resolutions were passed but that could hardly be detected in the speeches from Labour's front-bench team during the recent two-day debate on the Defence Estimates in the Commons.

When Labour had a policy of getting rid of nuclear weapons the stock argument of the Tories was that the Soviet Union was about to invade and we, therefore, needed to be able to blow the planet to pieces. When the nonsense of this was pointed out their usual riposte was the intellectual gem, "Get back to Moscow". Today the Tories are feverishly searching for an alternative threat.

It remains even beyond their imaginations to produce any credible reasons for retaining Trident. They therefore claim that Labour's Conference policies will strip the country of all defence and Defence Secretary Rifkind produced the accusation that Labour had passed resolution 48 calling for Trident to be scrapped.

He could not have asked for greater collaboration. David Clark, our shadowy defence spokesman duly responded to such a slur: "The motion at the Party Conference attracted no more votes than it did last year or the year before. The reality is that we will keep Trident."

He then continued with the extraordinary statement: "Our vision of a nuclear world is enshrined in Article Six of the Non-Proliferation Treaty".

The treaty referred to is the United Nations Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and it has become fashionable in Parliament-speak to drop the UN reference. This is because the Government and the Labour leadership were at pains during the Gulf War to fervently express support for the United Nations.

Close observers might reasonably point out that breaking the UN Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty contrasts with the Gulf position.

Article Six of the Treaty calls on the nuclear signatories, such as the United Kingdom, to take steps to get rid of their nuclear weapons. The treaty has been signed by 150 non-nuclear nations such as Canada, with a Tory Prime Minister refusing to allow Cruise missiles to be flown over their territory with nuclear war heads because of their non-nuclear policy.

Underlying the agreement is the position that the non-nuclear nations have signed on the basis that the nuclear powers agree to get rid of their nuclear weapons.

The Labour leadership needs to examine the present hypocrisy of its position. Even the right-wing resolution emerging as Composite 46 and moved by the steel union ISTC with backing from the engineers and electricians union wants the non-proliferation treaty "made permanent and strengthened". There is thus a ready formula for getting rid of Trident. Its time we made use of it.

Abandoning Trident and reducing defence expenditure must be accompanied, however, by planned conversion of defence industries to peaceful purposes.

Composite 49 recognised the importance of this and so too did the Commons resolution put down by Labour on the Government's Defence Estimates, estimates covering some £23.5 billion of public expenditure. Included were references to non-proliferation, strengthening the United Nations, and a call for a Defence Diversification Agency. All reasonable, indeed laudable, aims against a Government which steadfastly refuses to accept planning in key engineering sectors to keep jobs except by building weapons.

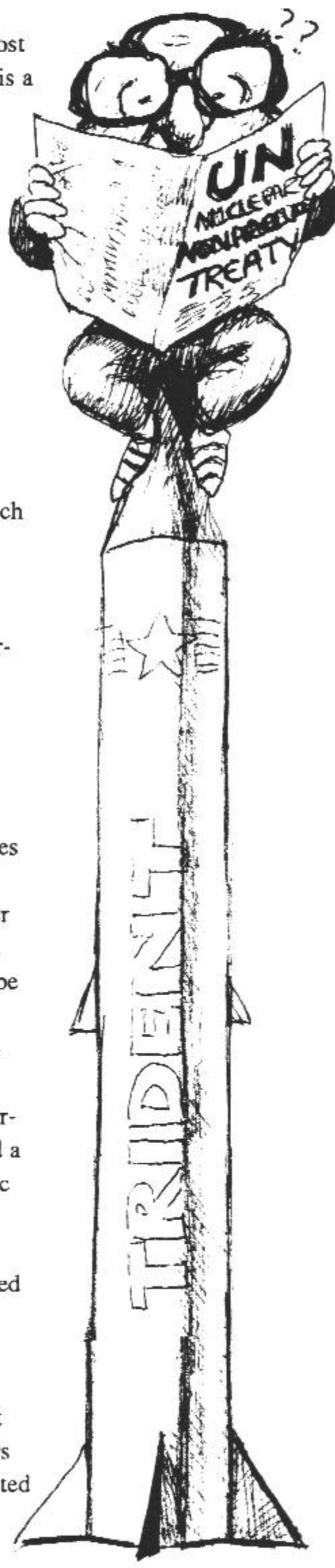
Take, for example, the European Fighter Aircraft which is going to cost the tax-payer around £10 billion. It is a plan we do not need, is almost two years behind schedule and yet is supported on both sides because it keeps a great many people at work.

This is one of the few areas in which the Tories admit public expenditure creates jobs. There are some 40 Tornado aircraft in store and at £21 million each they represent considerable waste of tax-payers' resources, yet the arms juggernaut rolls on precisely because no alternative products are being planned.

Logically, Labour should have opposed the whole Defence Estimates package after our resolution fell.

Alas, logic had little to do with Her Majesty's Opposition who appeared apprehensive that comments might be made if we were so bold as to carry our criticisms into the lobby. Therefore the official line was to abstain against a Tory Government squandering our money and who had rejected a constructive criticism of their lunatic policies. A very good alternative amendment representing even more accurately Labour Party policy, tabled by Jeremy Corbyn and supported by the left, was not called and so we divided against the estimates.

Only 34 Labour MPs voted against the estimates. I invite Party members to inquire as to whether their MP voted against - and if not, why not. ❑



TRADE UNION PICKET NOTEBOOK

# Trade Union

An attack by print firm JW Arrowsmith on its employees' union rights has become so vicious that it has led to the sacking of two civil servants who refused to advertise scab jobs at the plant in the window of a local Jobcentre.

The dispute at the Bristol-based firm started in April when members of the print union GPMU were involved in a national pay claim for £6.50 a week on basic pay plus an extra day's holiday.

Most of Britain's print industry had already agreed to this claim but Arrowsmith's, which had already tried to derecognise the union, refused. This led to a ballot - the workforce voted by 89 to 14 for a work-to-rule with no overtime.

Victoria Arrowsmith-Brown, the firm's chairwoman, told the workers that unless they signed letters disassociating themselves from the action they would be sacked. No one signed and an hour later 121 people were thrown out of their jobs - these included workers who were sick or on holiday, two women on maternity leave and one employee who was due to retire the following day after 43 years' service.

In July, members of civil service union CPSA took one-day strike action after the Employment Service advertised the scab jobs when refusing to pay ex-Arrowsmith's workers any unemployment benefit.

CPSA branch secretary Amanda Lane along with member Steve Coldfinch were sacked and seven other union members had pay cuts imposed on them.

GPMU general secretary Tony Dubbins told a meeting at the Labour Conference last month that Victoria Arrowsmith-Brown now had a court injunction making it illegal for sacked workers even to shout at scabs or management.



*Primarolo: backing the workers*

"I have to say that there is not another single country in the EC where this could happen," Dubbins said.

"This employer has managed to get an injunction which shows just how draconian are British anti-union laws.

"Effectively what it means is that you can't call a scab a scab now without breaking the law.

"I ask you where is the real intimidation?

"Is the intimidation from our pickets at the plant trying to defend their jobs and families or is the real intimidation from the employer who by her actions has taken away the ability of our members to support their own families.

"I want to make it clear that the GPMU is going to support its members until this dispute is brought to a just and fair conclusion."

Bristol Labour MP Jean Corston commented: "Make no mistake - the current Tory legislation and disputes like Arrowsmith's are taking industrial relations in this country back to before the 1906 Trade Disputes Act."

Fellow Bristol MP and Labour frontbencher Dawn Primarolo condemned the management as "attacking the ability of working people to earn a living, backed by the Conservative government.

Both Corston and Primarolo have consistently raised the Arrowsmith's lock-out in the Commons.

● **For further information, messages of support or donations contact Mike Vine, 45 Leinster Avenue, Knowle West, Bristol. BS4 1JN. Telephone 0272 633164 or picket line phone 0272 530208.**
**Messages of support or donations for the CPSA workers:**
**DE Avon, c/o GPMU, Print House, Baldwin Street, Bristol BS1.**

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When management at Hillier's, an engineering company in Reading, announced wage cuts of up to 38 per cent and a drastic attack on working conditions, workers ballotted and took one-day strike action. They were promptly sacked.

That was on December 7th 1992. The workers continue to picket the plant demanding their reinstatement under the old conditions.

The package of cuts sought by Hillier's included the abolition of the sick pay scheme, reduced holidays, compulsory overtime whenever necessary, paid at a flat rate and shift working whenever required.

One of the workers sacked had been with the firm for 35 years. None received any unemployment benefit for weeks.

The company meanwhile tried to sue workers - unsuccessfully - for up to £2,000 for alleged loss of equipment. Some workers have not yet been paid for the last month they worked.

The unions - the AEEU and MSF - have taken the cases to Industrial Tribunals and are seeking a negotiated settlement. But with the company employing scab labour and having derecognised the unions, support needs to be stepped up for this 11-month old strike.

The two unions are now planning a rally to mark the first anniversary of the start of the dispute.

● Send donations to Ms Lyn Collick, 8 Launcester Avenue, Caversham Park, Reading, Berks, RG4 OSW.

**Ministers stand accused of leaving British Rail pensioners completely unprotected after it was found that the Tories had failed to produce promised legislation.**

**The Railways Bill, which paves the way for the rail sell-off, originally failed to protect the £8 billion pension fund from the grasping hands of future rail owners.**

**Labour peers put down amendments which would give some protection but withdrew them after the government promised, in a memorandum of understanding, to incorporate suitable measures in the legislation - the measures have failed to materialize.**

**Jimmy Knapp, General Secretary of rail union RMT, said: "The government's current proposals for pension provision in the Railways Bill don't fully protect existing employees, pensioners or deferred pensioners to the extent that they are currently protected.**

**"In addition, the government's promises under the solvency guarantees contained in the memorandum of understanding are not contained in the Bill".**

The National Communications Union (NCU) has revealed a number of categories of files that the Post Office keeps on its employees. It keeps computer records of members of staff's political opinions; habits; personality and character; marital history and "other social contacts".

The Post Office has authority to hold these records under the Data Protection Act and told the NCU Journal that staff are sent a print-out of the information that is kept on them. However, further investigations by the Journal have yet to find anyone who has been sent the records.

# News

**RMT members Ray Stelzner and Pat Sikorski have been reinstated as guards on full pay at Leytonstone, the depot from which they were summarily dismissed over two months ago by London Underground.**

**They will both now be able to return to work after the final binding decision by industrial relations service ACAS.**

**Management conceded the whole union case except for the return to work at talks at ACAS on the Monday following the successful one-day strike by RMT traincrew on the Central Line on Thursday October 7th.**

**The day after the strike the RMT national executive had unanimously decided to call a ballot of all RMT members on London Underground and extend the one-day strikes by the Central Line traincrew throughout the five-week ballotting period.**

**The strike call had been overwhelmingly supported by the RMT traincrew and even by a handful of principled members of drivers' union ASLEF.**

**However, the overwhelming majority of that union and all its local branch officials crossed** official picket lines.

**Picketing on the east end of the Central Line was particularly lively and effective with anything up to 50 workers at both Leytonstone and Hainault at the peak of the booking-on times.**

**As a result 80 per cent of rush hour trains and 75 per cent of off-peak trains were cancelled.**

**The other major factor contributing to the success of the campaign was the activity of about a dozen women who organised as the Partners Support Group.**

**They put out their own leaflets three times every week and distributed them to every train as it went through key stations on the line.**

**Ray and Pat will now get back their jobs with London Underground. In this climate, this is a major victory for the Tube union and for the movement.**

**Management's plan was simple and that was to behead the RMT on the tubes by victimising Sikorski, the District Council secretary.**

**It was also well known that he was the frontrunner in the current elections for a three-year term on the union's NEC.**

**As LUL gear up for another major round of attacks on the workers, their union busting operation has gone disastrously wrong.**




*The women from 10 Downing Street*

Despite the withdrawal of official recognition by general union GMB after a year in dispute, sacked Burnsalls strikers (pictured above) are continuing their campaign for reinstatement.

On Saturday October 30th there will be a rally for supporters at Birmingham Health Centre at 2.00 pm.

Readers may have seen Anne-Marie Sweeney's recent Channel 4 documentary "The Women from 10 Downing Street", in which union officials bullied the mainly Asian women strikers into accepting their low-key strategy only to abandon them a year into the dispute.

But the links made by the strikers themselves with Women Against Pit Closures and support groups in the Asian community have kept the strike in the public eye.

● Please send donations and messages of support to Burnsalls Strike Fund, c/o 82 Rosefield Road, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B67 6DX, tel 021 565 5416.

**Middlebrook Mushrooms sacked 89 part-time women workers in Hull on November 20th last year for taking industrial action. The women were involved in the action because, even after accepting a pay freeze and over 300 redundancies, the company wanted to drastically change their terms and conditions of employment.**

**Changes included compulsory weekend working, forced overtime, overtime previously paid at time and a half to be paid at single time and overtime paid at double time to be paid at time and a half.**

**While negotiations were going on, the firm tried to introduce casual labour at even less than the proposed new rates.**

**They were unable to recruit enough people on such poverty pay so they simply issued new contracts of employment to the women, who were fully backed by the Transport and General Workers Union.**

**The new contracts sparked a strike ballot and the women were sacked - they have been carrying on battle for their jobs ever since.**

**● Messages of support and donations should be sent to the TGWU, Bevin House, George Street, Hull, HU1 3DB. Cheques should be made payable to "Sacked Mushroom Pickers".**

Seven Macclesfield print workers - all members of the Graphical, Paper and Media Union - have been sacked for defending union rights by Harvest Printers.

In 1991, the firm stopped shift working whcih effectively meant a 20 per cent pay cut for the GPMU members. This was followed by eight compulsory redundancies - out of a workforce of 21.

Early this year the workforce joined their union's national pay claim of £6.50 per week but the Harvest management claimed they were unable to fork out for this highly reasonable claim - the industry has just about the most successful productivity record in the country of recent years.

The workforce ballotted to take industrial action short of a strike and an overtime ban began.Management made an offer of £4.24 on the condition that the workers agreed never to take industrial action again.

No one signed but the bosses then employed non-union labour and, when union members met to discuss the situation in late July, they were sacked.

● Write with messages of support and donations to the Sacked Printers Picket Line, c/o 27 Lyon Street, Macclesfield, Cheshire. SK11 6QX.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING

# Is Tsar Yeltsin the



**Anthony Arblaster** probes the Moscow Monarch's tactics and their coverage by the Western media.

EVERYONE ON the left is familiar with media bias. And by bias I do not mean the odd error of fact or journalistic invention. I mean the systematic misrepresentation, sometimes deliberate, sometimes merely habitual, of attitudes and actions outside the mainstream and especially to its left. We have grown used to this, perhaps even resigned to it.

But there are times when even the most wearily cynical are stirred to outrage by the brazen one-sidedness of the official account of great events. Recent happenings in Russia are a case in point.

We know, of course, that the West supports President Yeltsin, more or regardless of what he does. We know because we have been told so over and over again by Clinton, Major and Hurd. But does it follow that the BBC, ITN, and most of the press should also give the Russian President a blank cheque? I think not. Their duty is to present a truthful and balanced account of events. And this they have totally failed to do.

In the conflict between Yeltsin and his parliamentary opponents, the British media never left us in any doubt as to who was right, since Parliament and its leaders were never referred to without the prefix "hard-line", and very often the suggestion that this was merely a rump of old-time Stalinists who were resisting the final dissolution of Communist power. The struggle was presented, in other words, in traditional Cold War terms.

You would never have guessed from this travesty of an account that:

• President Yeltsin was acting unconstitutionally in seeking to close down Parliament;

• the Russian Parliament was elected in what were considered to be free elections in 1990, and contained only a minority of communists;

• Alexander Rutskoi, leader of the so-called hard-liners, had been Yeltsin's vice-presidential partner in the Russian presidential elections;

• this was the same Parliament, meeting in the same building, that had been the focus of what little resistance there was to the real hardliners' attempted coup against Gorbachev in August 1991; and that they were then led by this same Boris Yeltsin.

Two years is not really a long time, but the media cynics rely on their audiences having short and hazy memories.

With one or two honourable exceptions, like Jonathan Steele in *The Guardian*, no one sought to explain how the democrats of two years ago had become the "hardline communists" of today, or why Yeltsin had managed to alienate so many of his one-time supporters in so short a time.

Most damning of all, no one sought to explain how it had come about that a constitution largely modelled on that paragon of democracies, the United States, had suddenly become an obstacle to Russia's progress towards democracy, and would have to be re-written.

For the division of power between Parliament and President, of which Yeltsin and his apologists complain so bitterly, is not essentially different to that between President and Congress under the US system. Both are elected bodies, and they have learned to live with the mututal restraints implied in this balance. Both also know that they have to respect and abide by the authority and judgements of the country's ultimate constitutional body, the Supreme Court.

But to Yeltsin none of this is tolerable. He likes to govern by issuing decrees, and he can brook no limits on his power. So not only has he closed down the Parliament and proscribed the most important opposition parties. Not only has he closed down opposition newspapers and retained an iron control over television. He has also compelled Valery Zorkin to resign as chairman of the Constitutional Court, and plans under his new constitution to reduce the Court's powers to a shadow of what they now are.

Of course Yeltsin's supporters could, if they chose, argue that Russia is not "ready" for democracy. That what the country needs is "strong leadership", and that Yeltsin, a kind of Russian Pinochet, is the man to provide it. That would at least be an honest argument.

But they are too cowardly and dishonest to put it forward. Instead, they made the preposterous suggestion that Russia's route to democracy runs via an anti-parliamentary coup d'etat and an authoritarian presidency. As they say, if you can believe that, you can believe anything.

The truth is that Yeltsin and his western admirers are not much interested in the fate of Russian democracy. What they want is the rapid destruction of every last vestige of socialism in Russia, and the equally speedy incorporation of Russia into the global capitalist system. And while paying hypocritical tribute to "democracy", they know and accept that Yeltsin's planned authoritarian presidency is the quickest path to the capitalization of Russia.

No wonder that no tears were shed over the nearly 200 deaths in the Moscow uprising. No wonder that *The Times* hailed its defeat in a headline as a "Triumph for Yeltsin". It will prove also to be a triumph for tyranny and intolerance. ❑

# Russian Pinochet?

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING

**Ken Livingstone** MP tells *Labour Briefing* about his recent visit to Moscow (right) and (below) Russian academic and writer **Yevgeni Pashentsev** gives his view of recent events.

***Labour Briefing*: You recently met the former speaker of the Russian Parliament, Ruslan Khasbulatov while in Moscow. What was your impression of him?**

Ken Livingstone: "The truth is that he would be in the Tribune Group of MPs in this country - he would consider the Campaign Group too hardline. The idea that this man is an intractable hardliner is absurd.

"He's a Keynesian but a genuine Keynesian - he thinks the move toward a market economy, which he supports, should be made as painless as possible for the people and this isn't possible given what the IMF want. That's why Yeltsin had to smash the Parliament.

"Khasbulatov said to me that a quarter of the Parliament were old communists and a quarter supported Yeltsin. The rest were centre or centre-left.

"What Russia requiries, if it's to carry out the IMF package, is a regime like Pinochet's in Chile in the 1970s and 1980s.

"You can't have a functioning democracy and vote to end subsidies to industry and generate perhaps 30 per cent unemployment.

"I see Yeltsin as very much a Russian version of Pinochet - but without the personal charm."

***LB*: Is there an emerging, effective left in Russia?**

KL: "It's almost there but I strongly suspect that it won't be in the near future. I was asked to go out there because the Russian equivalent of the TUC General Council had a conference of various socialists and social democrats from Western Europe, discussing how a Russian Labour Party should be set up.

"This was working toward a conference actually creating a Russian party. If they had another year, say, they would probably get it off the ground but Yeltsin's now moved decisively against the unions - he's going to remove their responsibility for distributing benefits, which will dramatically weaken them.

"Yeltsin knows that the unions are very strong - they are genuinely free trade unions which have been renewed from the ground up. They present a real problem for him so he has to wreck them!

"I really don't think in the long run Yeltsin will get away with it. Due to the control of television, the banning of the opposition parties and the attacks on the unions he may well win in the December elections. But in the long term, I don't think he'll succeed.

"The big difference between Russia and Chile is that in Russia there is a powerful working-class movement and a strong, genuine Communist Party which would get 20 odd per cent of the vote in a free election. In Chile, when Allende came to power, the left was actually in decline.

"I have not the slightest doubt that a new broad Labour Party - comprising the Communist Party, the unions, groups led by people like Medvedev and Kagarlistky - will emerge as the main opposition in December and will eventually win power."

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**I was in Moscow all through the tragic events at the Parliament.**

**My impression was that people could see no alternative to Yeltsin, no way out, no political grouping which represented the majority expectations. But they were certainly against all the bloodshed on the streets, the tanks and the taking of Parliament.**

**The Russian people are generally in support of democracy and the development of our democratic processes.**

**Yeltsin certainly destroyed some elements of the constitution. He declared previously that, as the first democratically-elected President of Russia, he would uphold the law.**

**It is tragic that our first democratically-elected President is actually now breaking our laws.**

**A democratic way out of this situation must be found. We must not forget that all the bloody events at the Parliament building took place only a few hundred yards from the control centre of the second most powerful arsenal of strategic weapons in the world.**

**So to play political games, as Yeltsin has done in this contest, is extremely dangerous.**

**If the British Parliament had blocked Maastricht, as the Danish people did, and the executive power replied by shooting parliamentarians, what would the world think?**

**According to Russian law, Yeltsin is clearly a dictator - he betrayed the principles on which he was elected.**

**Yet according to western propaganda, all the opposition consists of communists and fascists and there are some extremists in the communist movement.**

**Moreover, these extreme groups are growing but it is because of the complete lack of capacity among the executive power to solve our problems.**

**In the long term, using tanks will eventually narrow Yeltsin's options because army officers will start to argue that, because they carried out orders, they deserve a share in power.**

**My own great fear is that we could start to see the rise of a Russian Hitler because we have many of the conditions which existed in Germany in the 1930s - unemployment, poverty, political confusion, the undermining of democracy.**

**And the question I would pose to the West would be, if a Russian Hitler did arise, who would stop him?**

# A joy in chains

**Ghada Karmi** is a "1948 refugee" from Palestine who works as a writer and doctor in London. Here, she casts a critical eye over the recent deal between Israel and the PLO.

GIVEN ALL the euphoria that has greeted the agreement between the PLO and Israel which was signed on the White House lawn on September 13th, it is difficult to imagine that some people, particularly amongst the Palestinians who are supposed to be its great beneficiaries, do not support it.

Indeed, there is a growing tendency to assume that they must, instead, be supporters of the 10 extremist Palestinian groups based in Damascus and Beirut who have publicly denounced the agreement and some of whom have threatened to kill PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat. Otherwise, they are seen as linked to the Islamic extremist movement in the Occupied Territories, Hamas.

Yet this is not true; many leading Palestinians were openly opposed to the plan when it was first made public. They included the Palestinian peace negotiators in Washington; people such as Dr Haidar Abdul Shafi from Gaza. They included leading PLO officials; even one of Yasir Arafat's leading collaborators, Farrouk Qaddoumi.

They even included leading Palestinian intellectuals such as Professor Edward Said of Columbia University in New York and artists like the Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish. Of course, many have now closed ranks around the PLO leadership but their secret reservations remain.

So, why do they feel that the agreement is, in some sense, a betrayal and that Palestine remains, for them, a homeland which is "a joy in chains"? The betrayal begins with the way in which the agreement was formulated - in secret.

There are, of course, very good reasons for assuming that it could not have been negotiated in public; after all, the peace process in Washington had bogged down partly because the negotiators on both sides knew that, eventually, whatever they discussed would become public knowledge.

The result was that they were unable to show flexibility in case their constituencies - in the Occupied Territories or elsewhere - simply rejected what was agreed. Nonetheless, it is a basic principle of Palestinian politics that decisions over such crucial matters should be collective.

It was also important that the Palestinian movement carried Arab opinion, and particularly Arab governments, along with it to ensure that it had widespread support. The agreement between Yasir Arafat and Shimon Peres (for this agreement is intimately connected with its authors) did not comply with these vital principles. How, now, will the PLO persuade Arab states to continue to support the Palestinians when the next stage of negotiations - over a final status for the Occupied Territories - opens in two years' time when Arab states will already have reached their own deals with Israel and thus have no further interest in the issue?

Much more serious is the fact that what Mr Arafat actually obtained through secret negotiation was even less than what was on offer in the Washington peace process, which the Palestinian negotiators had virtually rejected because they did not believe it could be successfully sold to the populations of the West Bank and Gaza. All there is is autonomy for the Gaza Strip and the oasis town of Jericho, with the promise of more autonomy over the next year, if things go well - and, supposedly, nothing, if they do not.

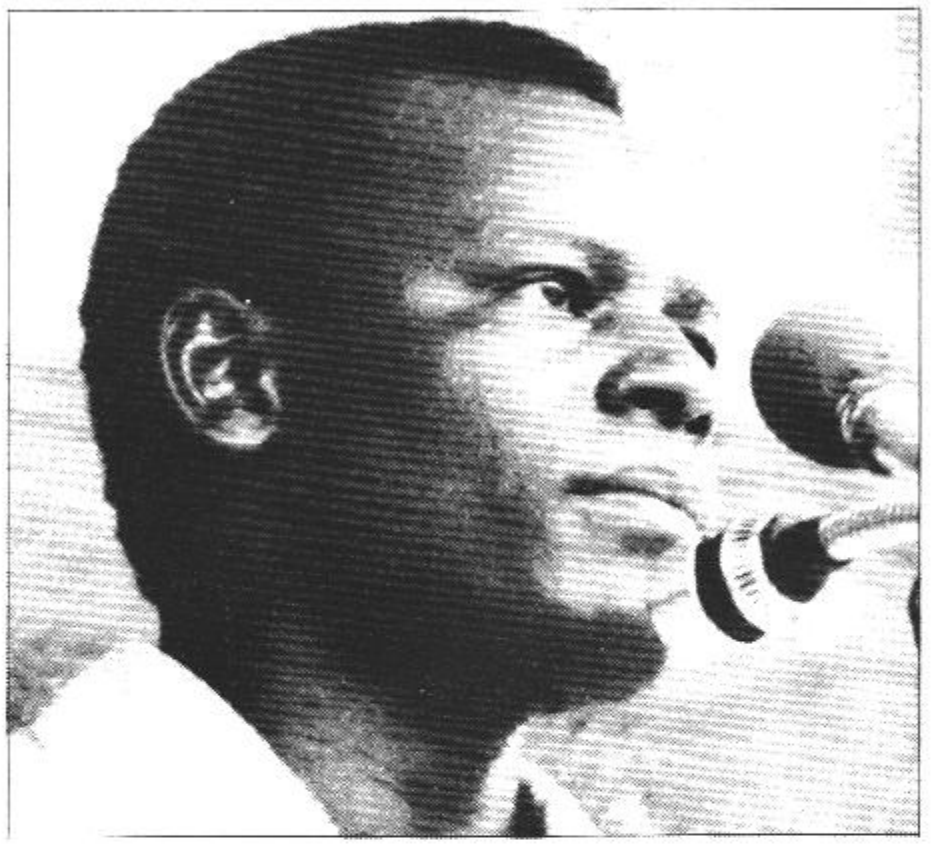
Just as at Washington, the issue of the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories is excluded, as is the status of Jerusalem and as are the future of Palestinian refugees from both the 1967 and the 1948 emigrations. Some of the 1967 refugees may be allowed to return; the PLO claims around 500,000, Israel says only a few thousand family members may be reunited.

Basically, the PLO has gained the tactical advantage of being recognised by Israel as the Palestinian negotiating partner - an important victory, surely, particularly given the PLO's terrible and debilitating financial weakness - but at the price of the strategic loss of the opportunity for independent action.

The PLO's ability to ensure that autonomy will be extended over the whole of the Occupied Territories during 1994 - as laid down in the agreement - will depend entirely on Israeli goodwill. And that, in turn, depends on Israeli perceptions of its own security, for the Israeli army will only withdraw from population centres, not from the autonomous regions themselves. Furthermore, it is also clear that Israel will expect the PLO to enforce order at Israeli behest, whatever the political cost.

Of course, it is difficult to ignore the growing awareness in the Israeli press and elsewhere that the granting of autonomy must ineluctably lead to an independent Palestinian entity in some part of the Occupied Territories. But that "entity" will be in economic bondage to Israel, for that is what the agreement provides for in its three annexes, and its political future will be integrated into that of Jordan by the confederal arrangements on which Israel has insisted. Political independence, then, will merely be a chimera.

There is still a further irony for the PLO has, by recognising Israel's legal right to exist, implicitly accepted that Zionist objectives are valid. That, in turn, must question the PLO's own legitimacy as the representative of Palestinians dispossessed of their homeland, for the concept of the homeland has itself been sacrificed. The agreement, in short, is a tremendous gamble and the price of its failure will be the legitimisation of Palestinian dispossession. ❑



*President Jose Eduardo dos Santos PHOTO: Morning Star*

Britain's media has only just discovered that there is a war going on in Angola - probably the most bloody in the world, where 1,000 people are dying each day. *Briefing* investigates.

# Unreported savagery

VERY RECENTLY, the television news has carried horrifying pictures, especially from the besieged city of Cuito, together with reporting, often admirably critical of the bestial Jonas Savimbi and his UNITA forces.

One would have thought that the tragic civil war in this vast African country had either just broken out or had lately taken a turn for the worst.

Such is not the case. Indeed, Angola's war has been raging for over 30 years, since before the Portuguese withdrawal in the mid-1970s. At that point, the socialist MPLA - led by Jose Eduardo Dos Santos - was lined up against UNITA and the now-defunct FNLA, both of which were backed by Washington and South Africa.

Just over a year ago, peace accords were signed and Angola had its chance to vote in multi-party elections. The poll was held under United Nations monitoring teams and the turn-out was huge.

Labour MP Kate Hoey, an official observer at the elections, later reported how she saw a disabled old woman who had half-walked and half-crawled through the night to cast her vote. She barely managed to cross the threshold of the polling station and, refusing all offers of help, took 15 minutes to cast her vote.

Such was the Angolan people's enthusiasm for peace and democracy, so exhausted were they by years of civil war and colonial repression.

Jonas Savimbi, however, had other ideas. He fully expected to win the election and it was clearly a shock of incalculable proportions when Dos Santos triumphed and UNITA took a battering.

Within days, Savimbi's troops were back in action attacking the MPLA, who in many areas of the country had been disarmed in compliance with the peace accords. UNITA had not disarmed and, indeed, had infiltrated armed units into the cities.

Since the end of last year, 100,000 people have died in the war. In the past few months, over 1,000 have been dying every day directly and indirectly due to the fighting. Over three million Angolans are threatened with starvation, hundreds of thousands have been displaced and the infrastructure of the country is in shreds.

The central highlands town of Cuita has been under siege by UNITA forces for 10 months. Over 20,000 people have died and the survivors have been reduced to eating corpses.

Another town in the central highlands, Huambo, was reduced to rubble in a UNITA siege early this year.

When they entered the city, Savimbi's men butchered the entire family of the Prime Minister, Marcelino Moco, and bayonetted patients as they lay on their hospital beds.

UNITA now has over half the country in its grip, including the diamond mines in the north, whereas the MPLA probably has the support of around 75 per cent of the population.

Savimbi attacks World Food Programme aircraft and convoys, such is his contempt for a people which refused to be bullied and blackmailed into voting for him.

Labour's Overseas Aid spokesperson Michael Meacher recently commented: "The election slogan of Jonas Savimbi boiled down to 'vote for me or I'll blow your head off'!"

Yet from the restart of the war, the UN's representative in Angola, Margeret Anstee, continually tried to get negotiations moving between UNITA and the government in Luanda.

When Anstee left her post in the summer, she was replaced by the former foreign minister of Mali and an old mate of Savimbi's, Alioure Blondin Beye. Within days he was visiting Savimbi and then persuaded the UN to hold off imposition of sanctions against UNITA.

He then went on a tripping spree around Angola and Africa, trying to build up pressure on Dos Santos to agree to UNITA's power-sharing proposals. This failed, yet the UN still gave a 10-day extension to the two-month period of grace.

Finally, in September, oil and fuel sanctions were imposed. Next month, the freezing of assets and refusal of travel rights is due to come into force.

But Savimbi still has the profitable diamond mines, offices abroad - including one in London - and a propaganda radio station provided by the CIA.

All this must be dealt with if any sort of pressure is to be brought to bear on one of the West's most savage puppets.

It is to be hoped that the belated media coverage of the Angolan war will not prove to be transitory but will begin to help in the application of such pressure. ❑

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING

**Leonora Lloyd**, after visiting South Africa for the first time in 41 years, reflects on the daily struggle of the large black domestic workforce.

# To serve them all my days

I RECENTLY returned to South Africa for a family reunion. As a child, although I was only there for a few weeks, I had been aware of apartheid - it was impossible not to be. Blacks and "coloureds" (known collectively as "non-Europeans") were not allowed to use the same seats on stations, the same train carriages, the same bit of beach, or even the same post-office counter.

So the most obvious difference was the ending of this "petty apartheid". Nowhere could you see any "whites only" or "non-Europeans only" signs. But the reality for most black people has changed little.

Although it was too dangerous to visit any townships, it was possible to see many of them from the main roads, and I did go to the hospital serving Sharpeville.

The feeling one gets from white society is that it is pulling up the drawbridge before the "new South Africa" (a phrase that keeps recurring) comes after the elections. Whilst the shanty towns have no water, electricity or roads, new shopping centres are going up, new roads are being built, all at a time when the country is supposed to be in deep recession due to the boycott.

Two aspects of South African life in particular showed what a long way the white population has to go yet. One was the level of fear they all seem to live under. Johannesburg in particular has a horrifying level of violence, with the third highest murder rate in the world. The white response is to increase security.

Every house seems to have two dogs, high walls, expensive security systems and plaques stating that they are connected to one or more "24-hour armed response units".

In addition, most areas have Neighbourhood Watch Schemes, which are in effect armed vigilantes. A new development is the building of houses in small groups, surrounded by high walls, sharing security systems.

The idea of improving the townships does not seem part of this response. In fact, whilst I was staying in Cape Town, the big talking point was rates. It is recognised that for years, the townships and "coloured" areas have been paying over the odds in return for which they get little or no services. They have had no vote for the councils (which will change after April 27th).

Now that, as a last throw, the white councils are trying to increase the rates for white residents, in order to be able to start making some improvements, they are meeting stiff resistance from those residents.

At one time, black people could only live in white areas as domestics living at the home where they worked, and although this is no longer the law, practically every house in white areas has purpose-built servant quarters where they still live.

These usually consist of a room six-foot square, plus a small bathroom, and a cooking area, which is sometimes in the open air. Sometimes they have to cook in their one room.

More liberal families allow their domestic servants to eat the same food, most don't. One of my cousins required left-over food to be thrown away rather than be eaten by the servants.

Less well-off whites might only have a "char" coming in for so many hours a week. A number of domestic servants live with their "main" employer, whilst going out to char for some hours each week.

One of my uncles lived in a block of flats near Cape Town. Outwardly, it looked exactly like a small block of council flats you could see in London. However, it included a windowless basement where the servants lived. He shared his servant with a number of other residents. I asked him why he didn't let her sleep in his spare room, but he claimed it was against the rules to let her have a key, which she would have needed as she also worked in a restaurant, coming back in the early hours. Obviously, this was not true, as under the law they could have lived together as man and wife.

One of the results of this servant culture is that houses are big, with wooden and stone floors (lots of polishing) and light-coloured fabrics and furniture (lots of cleaning).

Everything has to be of the best - unless only the servants use it. For example, we noticed that ironing boards and irons were usually worn and often dangerous. Large domestic machines, such as washing machines, have started to come into use only recently on any scale.

Servants work whenever the employer wants, because they know that not to do so puts their jobs at risk - there are hundreds waiting for any vacant job.

All this is set to change - in theory. A new law came in in September, requiring a contract between employer and employed, laying down maximum hours - under which work over five days will be counted as overtime - statutory holidays, minimum pay, etc. However, the servants I spoke to felt that this law would be more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

Domestic work is important to the black South African economy. Black leaders also have large homes and domestic servants, as do most of the non-white middle classes. So after April 27th, there is likely to be little change, even though some attempts have been made over many years to organise domestic workers.

Until there are real educational, training and employment opportunities for all South Africa's women, domestic work will continue to be one of their few options. ❑

# Not a penny for the differences

**Mike Phipps** reports on progress in the international socialist initiative, the Sao Paulo Forum, and (bottom) the forthcoming elections in El Salvador.

THE FOURTH meeting of the Sao Paulo Forum, an international initiative founded by the Brazilian Workers Party, took place in Havana in July, attended by 137 different organisations.

Social Democrats, Christian Socialists, Trotskyists, Communists, Maoists and others from across Latin America were there, along with 44 organisations from Europe, Asia, Africa and North America.

At a recent meeting in London to discuss the Sao Paulo Forum, Victor Amaya, representative in Britain of the FMLN of El Salvador, explained how the Forum had grown from 47 organisations at its first meeting in 1990 due to the readiness of the participants to seek out common ground.

"This is a difference from when the left used to found chapels and attack each other," he said. "The FMLN itself is five different organisations - not tendencies but organisations. In Uruguay, there are eleven organisations in the Frente Amplio.

"I don't give a penny for the differences between us but I would give my life for the common ground," he added. "Debates about Lenin versus Plekhanov or Marx versus Bakunin are for the historians. Socialism is about the future."

Victor pointed at that the British delegation in Havana made up the largest group of observers at the conference. He talked of plans to bring the ideas of the Sao Paulo Forum to Britain next year and made an appeal to the left.

"We from the South have a complaint to put to you. Social Democracy used to be a real hope for us, but now it has given way to neo-liberalism everywhere - in France, Australia, Venezuela and elsewhere.

"This has created a political emptiness. We want to ask you: why is this emptiness being filled by neo-Nazism - in France, Spain and elsewhere? Where is the left? That is why we are coming to Manchester to help draft an answer to this important question."

Asked if the Sao Paulo Forum could grow into a new international, Victor replied, "It is a Forum, and a very broad one. The internationals of the past were Eurocentric, giving the line to Latin America.

"For us, Eurocentrism is dead. Maybe a fifth international is possible, but this is not the time. First, we need a common strategy for the south and then we'll come and talk to the north."

The meeting, chaired by Trevor Carter of Caribbean Labour Solidarity, was also addressed by representatives of the Workers Party of Brazil and Monica Baltodano of the Sandinista Assembly in Nicaragua. ❑

# Universal suffrage? Poll the other one

**● With just six months to go to the first genuinely free elections ever held in El Salvador, open to all tendencies of left and right, there are still 700,000 Salvadoreans without voting cards - more than half of all votes cast in the last election there.**

**There is a discrepancy of some 400,000 names between census estimates and the electoral roll. Up to 12 per cent of names on the register may be duplicates or deceased.**

**Much hinges on these elections. They are the first after 12 years of civil war and the signing of peace accords in 1992.**

**Responsibility for voter registration lies with the Supreme Electoral Tribunal.**

**It waited until just four months ago to launch a $190,000 publicity drive to register voters. Since then, 18,000 applications have been processed, although far fewer cards were issued.**

**This means that around $10 - two days' pay at El Salvador's minimum wage - were spent in publicity for each new application.**

**Staff estimate they can process about 50,000 applications a month between now and the registration deadlines although this is only about two applications per member per day. It falls well short of the 700,000 estimated non-registered voters.**

**A recent article in *Venceremos!*, bulletin of the FMLN in Britain, argues that a campaign against voter apathy, a clearing up of existing electoral rolls and international aid to the Electoral Tribunal will all be necessary to maximise participation in the elections in March 1994.**


**Annual St. Andrew's Day Demonstration against racism**

*"For a racist and fascist free Europe! Stop the BNP"*

Assemble 10.30am, Saturday 27th November
Blythswood Square, Glasgow

**Organised by Scottish TUC, Scottish Asian Action Committee, NUS Scotland, Scottish ARA.**

REVIEWS

# A liberal splutter

**Andrew Coates** reviews
*Labourism and the English Genius*
by Gregory Elliott. Published by Verso. £11.95.

AS LABOUR'S leaders are turning backwards to nineteenth century Lib-Lab politics, how is the intellectual left reacting? Gregory Elliot, of the Radical Philosophy collective, has written an often intelligent attack on British reformist socialism. Unfortunately it splutters out in left-liberal commonplaces.

There are two books inside *Labourism and the English Genius*. They are never really reconciled.

The first can be highly recommended. It tears apart all the rightward trends inside the British labour and socialist movement. This gives an overview of the exhaustion of Labour's compromisers. The 1974-79 Labour government is described as wizened conservatism. Kinnockism was even emptier, "it started conservative in opposition, alienated the activists in advance, and promised little in government." There are excellent swipes at the modernisers' attempt to form a US-style Democratic Party, free from class politics.

Nor does Elliot stop at the leadership. He has acid words for those "cowed by Thatcherism" into "complaisant postmodernism". Social movements are not spared. The principles of liberty, equality and solidarity are better than squabbles over identity. And perhaps even the Labour left will recognise the problems of "resolutionary socialism".

The second book is a disappointment. Elliot puts Labour's failures down to the "deforming matrices of British trade unionism and the British Constitution". The familiar list of corporatist faults is trotted out, as if unions were a major barrier to socialism.

But it is Labour's support for parliamentary sovereignty, and the state, that really renders it unfit as a socialist vehicle. Not that socialism is, Elliot claims, on the agenda. The convulsions following Stalinism's death, and international pressures, make that unlikely. Instead he advocates Charter 88's reforms, supplemented by a vague social citizenship. These are needed to democratise Britain. Proportional representation in particular will enable socialists to escape from Labourism.

Constitutional change, from on high, with the degree of consensus to make it workable, will create the conditions for real socialist politics.

Dissent from these views is dismissed as "Labouro-Trotskyist". But while most of the left would support radical changes in the state, many are hostile to the reformers for reasons Elliot never considers.

Firstly, he does not seem to have thought deeply about constitutions. A restriction on parliamentary power by an "independent reformed judiciary" and a constitution written in terms of individual, rather than collective, rights, are central demands of Charter 88. Countries with these instruments are noted for the way large chunks of political debate are monopolised by lawyers and judges.

The US Supreme Court is perhaps the worst example. It's difficult to see how democracy is extended by letting legal grandees interfere with the decisions of a sovereign assembly.

Secondly, if some ills stem from Britain's feudal legacy, the New Right has added many of their own making. They have led the way, internationally, in privatising. They have created a state based on financial control and conformity, which surrenders political choice to the market. To get rid of this requires the overwhelming popular sovereignty Elliot rejects.

Unlike Tony Benn, Elliot confuses the struggle for rights with constitutionalism. His neglect of mass action leads him to ignore the Labour left's efforts to win over a labour movement constituency to build democratic and social freedoms. In turning to what Elliot calls the "uncompleted radical agenda of the 19th century" the old New Left, and Labour's modernisers, drag us back to time when working-class politics were submerged by the very liberalism that the first part of Elliot's book so clearly demolishes. ❑

# Putting justice in the dock

**Mike Phipps** reviews
*Double Jeopardy: The Retrial of the Guildford Four*
by Ronan Bennett.
Published by Penguin. £4.99

**WHEN THE Guildford Four were released in 1989, even the *Daily Express* felt moved to write: "The process of establishing their innocence took far too long. And those responsible for robbing them of 14 years must be punished." Nearly four years later, three policemen were acquitted of fabricating evidence against the Four. What happened?**

**The whispering campaign against the Four began immediately after their release. The insinuation was that the police had cut corners, but if the Four were innocent, why had they confessed in the first place?**

**In the most moving section, Ronan Bennett recalls the terror of his own frame-up by police for a murder he didn't commit.**

**Drawing on this, his acquaintance with the Four, and the books now written by two of them - Paul Hill's *Stolen Years* and Gerry Conlon's *Proven Innocent* - Bennett pieces together their original interrogation and the Four's reaction to the intolerable pressure and sense of powerlessness.**

**The brutality, the police "coaching", the existence of over 100 discrepancies in the Four's statements - none of this came out at the trial of just three police officers in 1993.**

**Instead, the jury were asked simply to decide whether certain police notes were contemporaneous with the interrogation. With the prosecution case against the officers narrowed down to this issue alone, it was hardly surprising that the police defence felt free to smear the Four.**

**They were echoed by a pliant media happy to suggest that they may have been guilty after all, despite all the evidence, including confessions volunteered by members of the IRA.**

**The Four may be free, but to date no-one has been convicted for this miscarriage of justice. Ronan Bennett's short book helps to put the record straight and puts British justice firmly back in the dock.**

# Strange disappearances

**Liz Davies** reviews
*By Faith and Daring: Interviews with Remarkable Women*
by Glenys Kinnock and Fiona Millar.
Published by Virago. £6.99


*The missing author - Fiona Millar*

THIS IS A book that is meant to challenge the invisibility of women by focussing on successful women. A pity, therefore, that whilst the cover is festooned with photographs of successful women, one of the two women authors is not featured. Three guesses which author does not have her photograph on the cover!

The introduction is a lucid precis of women's oppression today.

Glenys Kinnock quotes Mary Wollstonecroft, parades useful figures about women's earnings, lack of publicly-funded childcare, the prevalence of domestic violence etc.

The "remarkable women" fall loosely into two categories - labour movement heroines and professional women. The labour movement establishment range from the well-known - Betty Boothroyd, Hilary Armstrong, Brenda Dean -to comparatively less well-known Labour councillors.

Without exception, all the labour movement activists featured talk exclusively about themselves - how they got started, pitfalls they encountered, how glad they are now to have made it into the male establishment. Where are the labour women activists who have not made it? Who keeps together local wards, constituencies and trade union branches, whilst usually holding down jobs and busy family lives as well? Where are the trade union activists?

Other than Brenda Dean, former General Secretary of print union SOGAT, where are the women who have led successful trade union disputes? Could not Kinnock and Millar have interviewed women from Timex, Burnsalls or Grunwicks?

The professional women are far more political. They talk about reforms in their professions that should benefit women. Cerilan Rogers talks about women and the medical profession - concerned both to increase the numbers of women doctors and to improve the health service for women.

Helena Kennedy also talks about legal reforms that benefit women, not just women wanting to enter the legal profession. These women clearly approached the interviews with a feminist agenda, unlike the women politicians who just wanted to talk about themselves.

A shining exception to this rule is Pragna Patel from Southall Black Sisters. Her picture is not a portrait of herself, but a picture of the group. She talks about the origins and works of Southall Black Sisters, not about herself. She is the only one to mention domestic violence.

The book is most notable for its omissions. There is no reference to lesbian liberation. None of the women interviewed are out lesbians.

Whilst Kinnock talks in the introduction about single parents struggling to survive on benefit, there is no interview with anyone on benefit. All the local community activists are in fact councillors. This book ignores the reality of most women's lives, but concentrates on the famous successes. It fails to challenge the establishment definition of success, preferring instead to deal with politicians, professionals and businesswomen.

The first chapter contains an ironic twist. Headed "Out of the womb into the labour movement" Betty Boothroyd declares "there is no way I would leave the Labour Party". *Briefing* readers will of course have heard the rumour that she has allowed her Party membership to lapse. ❑

# A life to celebrate

**Leonora Lloyd** remembers socialist battler Kate Truscott, who died recently.

KATE TRUSCOTT, a fighter for women's rights all her too-short life, died recently of cancer, aged only 43.

I first met Kate when she was working with Big Flame, a socialist liberation group, in West London. She was active in a number of campaigns, including the National Abortion Campaign, and the Vietnam, Chile and Irish solidarity movements.

She was a shop steward in a health workers' union, participating in an 18-month hospital occupation, before becoming the national organiser for "Fight Back".

On the picket line she met Carl Brecker, a South African exile, through whom she became increasingly interested in southern African affairs. In the 1970s, she worked with other socialists in West London as part of the Socialist Unity platform, joining the IMG about this time.

Kate went to Zimbabwe with Carl, where she became a founding member of the Women's Action Group in 1981, working on a development project organising rural women's groups.

When Kate and Carl moved to South Africa in 1980, she joined the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action, working side by side with women activists from Azapo, PAC, ANC and the trade union movement.

Kate was a lovely, gifted women. She loved music and art, sang and composed, drew and wrote poetry. A gifted photographer, her pictures of women in struggle and work featured prominently in her life. Above all, she had the gifts of friendship and struggle and involving others in struggle.

Kate lived as she died. She did not allow her cancer to stop her fight, instead starting a support group for women with cancer. Although she and Carl had split up some time before, they remained friends and he came back as one of a group of loving friends who cared for her until the end.

Hers was a life to celeberate and remember.

● **With thanks to *Speak* magazine (SA) and Charlie van Gelderen.**




## Burlison backs *Briefing*!

Some interesting revelations came during the debate on Party finances at the Brighton Conference.

Delegates, forearmed by the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network daily bulletin, asked Treasurer **Tom Burlison** why the Party was picking up the £40,000 tab for Jack Straw's legal fees in defending himself against the libel action brought by Lambeth councillors.

They asked how it was that *Labour Party News* swallows up over £400,000 of precious Party funds, some 5 per cent of total expenditure, when *Labour Weekly* was closed down as being too costly when it consumed only 1 per cent.

They also queried the discrepancy between the number of members claimed and the total income from membership fees (reported in last month's *Briefing*). Finally, Bob Cryer MP asked how it could be sensible for approximately one third of the income received from individual membership to be spent on "processing" that membership.

Burlison waffled on all these questions but did not deny the accuracy of any of the figures or the truth of the allegations.

His choicest answer was to Cryer's lambasting of the centralised membership list: " ... in modern times we must keep up with the times".

## It's not cricket

Well, knock me down with a feather. The *Sunday Times* has revealed that the ANL is a "front" for the SWP! Under the headline "Duped by the nasty people from the **Anti-Nazi League**", the paper painted a predictably lurid picture of a small sect dedicated to "revolutionary violence". The Anti-Racist Alliance's **Marc Wadsworth** helped out the Wapping hacks with his now-familiar attacks on the ANL, in this case accusing them of "shouting abuse and advancing menacingly" at him.

That was on page 16. On page 13, Peter McKay (aptly dubbed "the world's worst columnist" in *Private Eye*) explained that "we may be approaching a time when it becomes necessary to wonder if there are some crimes which are specifically black in nature".

He then mentioned "steaming" and crack-dealing as "colour-specific". He also revealed that "blacks in proportion to their numbers ... far outnumber any other race in prison ... as a race, it is not an exaggeration to say that they are in crisis".

Wadsworth, a veteran NUJ activist, has no excuse whatsoever for aiding and abetting Murdoch's bigots.

While we're on the subject, what a pleasure to see the *Sunday Telegraph* grovel to the Pakistani cricketers whom it last year described as "pariahs" and "cheaters". In an out-of-court settlement the *Telegraph* apologised to Javed Miandad and "to all Pakistani cricket-followers" and accepted that the team played cricket "in accordance with the game's internationally-accepted laws."

Sometimes the good guys do win!

## Quiz query quiets quarrels

*Briefing*'s politically incorrect quiz on the Thursday night of Conference was thoroughly enjoyed by all present, especially this year's winners, the know-it-all reformists from the *New Statesman*, clearly determined to avenge their defeat last year at the hands of the dreaded Trotskyists of *Socialist Outlook*.

*Outlook*'s failure to carry off the coveted title for the third year in succession could not be attributed to the assistance they received from *Socialist Organiser* supporter Tom Rigby, who went all out in breaking the sectarian mould by donning a *Briefing* tee-shirt at the end of the evening.

Quiz inquisitor **Keith Veness** kept the questions rolling and the bar staff kept the booze flowing. One of the latter was, however, perplexed by the proceedings.

"Aren't you all from the Labour Party Conference?" he asked.

"That's right."

"Then how come everybody laughs whenever **Neil Kinnock**'s name is mentioned?"

For the answer to this question and many others, make sure you and your comrades take part in the next *Briefing* Bumper Quiz

## No Moore!

Thanks to a Labour Party official, viewers of Sky TV were told the result of the crucial vote on trade union links before Conference delegates.

Conference Chair **Tony Clarke** apologised to delegates for this breach of courtesy and promised that the official responsible would be dealt with.

As so often on these occasions the finger points to Chief Press and Broadcasting Officer **Jo Moore**.

Of course no Periscope would be complete without an attack on Moore, who has been dishing dirt on socialists for years.

As spin doctors go, Moore is in the third division, but not for want of trying. In Brighton she informed hacks that the problem with the TGWU and GMB composites was that they would let "people who don't support the Party, people who support other parties" vote in Labour's internal elections. Of course, as a cursory glance at the composites made clear, they did no such thing - unless Moore has decided that levy-paying members of affiliated trade unions are no longer part of the Party.

But that was nothing compared to her response to **Mildred Gordon** MP when Mildred refused to appear on BBC TV with BNP Councillor Derek Beackon. Moore thought it was "stupid" to miss such an excellent opportunity for media coverage.

## Tayling off

A survey for the *Observer* revealed that the academics and politicians questioned thought **John MacGregor** was the best Education Secretary of the last 10 year.

Let's face it, there wasn't much choice! The teaching union NASUWT's *Career Teacher* revealed that there is bad news for the Labour Party in the survey - only 59 per cent managed to correctly name Ann Taylor as Shadow Secretary.

## What's cooking?

The narrow-mindedness and arrogance of the modernising tendency with the Labour Party was never better illustrated than in **Robin Cook**'s shabby treatment of **Peter Shore** at the Brighton conference's debate on the EC.

Trade spokesperson Cook was in the chair for that session and called five pro-EC speakers while ignoring Shore, one of the few Labour MPs with Cabinet experience and a longstanding critic of the Brussels machine.This was despite the outraged protest by a number of other MPs sat near Shore at the time.

Of course, Peter Shore can always reflect upon the fact that while he has been on the winning side in a general election on many occasions, Cook and his chums have never had that happy experience in spite of their decade-long ascendancy with the PLP.

## Mark of O'Kane

Defending the exclusion of **Ted Knight** and other former surcharged Lambeth councillors from the panel for next year's local elections, NEC member **Colm O'Kane** told Party conference that Ted and Co. had refused to sign the usual pledge to abide by the rules of the Party.

This was a massive porky.

All those excluded from the panel had agreed to the pledge and indeed had affidavits to that effect. As the London Regional officials made clear, the surcharged councillors were barred because they failed to conform to the "new image" of the council in Lambeth.

Presumably this means that they may not go along with the current Council attack on staff members allegedly involved in benefit fiddles.

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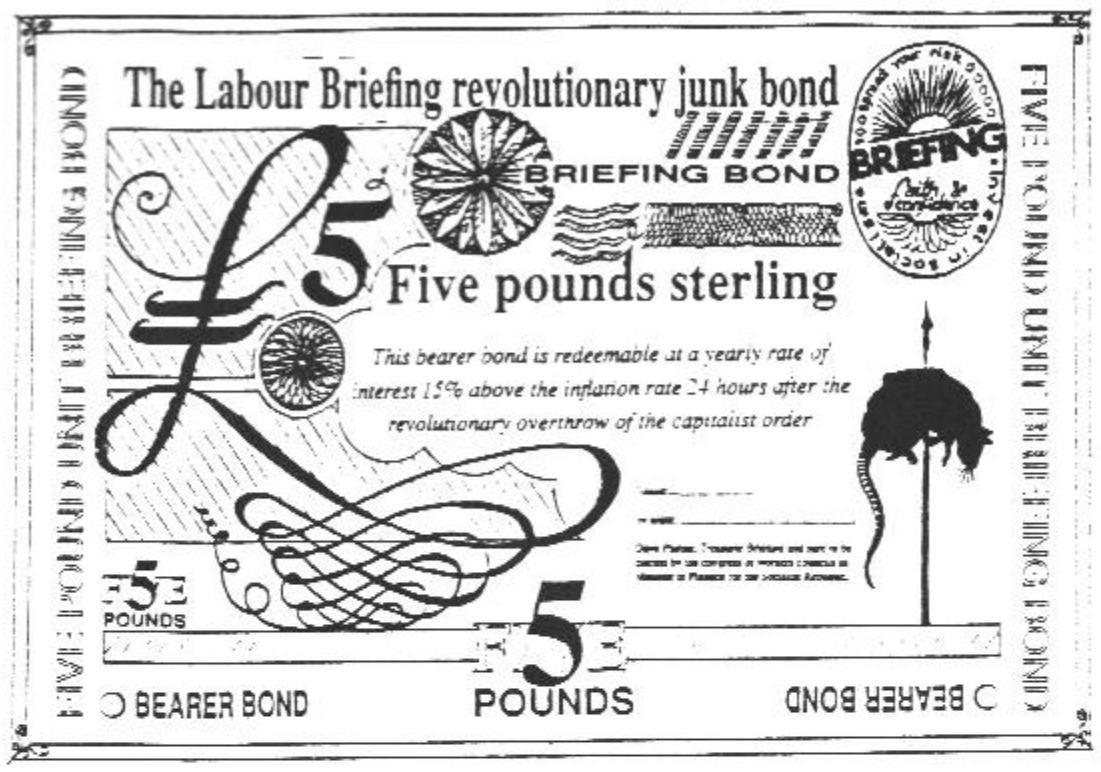
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## Famous last words....

"The Labour left is in considerable disarray following the Tories' landslide victory in the general election, and the subsequent replacement of Michael Foot and Denis Healey at Conference. Reaction to these bruising defeats has been defensive: in fact, far too defensive. One gains the impression that large sections of the Party wish to forget the experience of the past 10 years, and long for the return of the simple life before we all lost our innocence."
– Reg Race


LONDON LABOUR 30p
BRIEFING
No 34 NOVEMBER 1983
INSIDE: NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT articles by Gerry Adams, Joan Maynard, Tony Benn, Mandy Moore, Tariq Ali, Andrea Campbell.
Save Our Hospitals!
Lewisham & N. Southwark DHA lobbied on September 26th.
LOBBY OF THE DHA
(CONTINUED OVER)
LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

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




I would like to draw the attention of your readers to the existence of Red Rope - a socialist climbing and walking club for people who are interested in walking, mountaineering and rock-climbing and for the preservation of the countryside for these activities.

The club has branches throughout the country. Daywalks, weekend and weeklong trips are organised by different regions, publicised to members in a monthly information sheet and open to all members. The cost of the trip to each member is in proportion to their income.

All trips are organised collectively with members sharing cooking, driving, co-ordinating and leading walks or climbs, and/or childcare. Children are welcome on all trips and there are also some "kids trips" each year which specifically cater for children's needs.

Women are very active in the club and form the majority of the membership. Several trips are set aside as women-only trips. There are also training trips throughout the year for skill sharing.

Red Rope actively campaigns for conservation of the countryside and for rights of access, regularly being involved with events organised to highlight these issues.

If you are sick of going to meetings and want to enjoy the countryside, you can obtain further details from:

Paul Maguire, 181 Main Street,
Burton Joyce, Nottingham NG1 SE1.

*Yours faithfully,*
*Dermot McKibbin,*
*London SE6*

The recent TUC and Labour Party Conferences should have been the main political forum where disadvantaged people, in particular black people, could express their views and put issues of inequality and racism formally on the respective agendas and policy formulation.

What actually came out of these conferences were a mish-mash of statements from the hierarchy and no real constitutional changes that take the representations of black people within the TUC or the Labour Party seriously.

It can be guaranteed that at any conference where the delegations display a "spot the black" phenomenon, two opposing views will be forthcoming. One argues that structures cannot be changed overnight and the other says that black people must have a say in the decision-making bodies of this country.

Of the 800 delegates at the TUC Conference in September 1.25 per cent were black. The delegation at the Labour Party conference faired slightly better with 2.1 per cent of the 1200 delegates being black.

This in a society where black people represent 5 per cent of the general population is totally unacceptable in terms of adequate representation.

When the race issue is raised, delegates run for cover in the bars or cafeteria and organisational blocks get put in place to make changes in the structure as difficult as possible in redressing the imbalance of black representatives in the higher positions of the TUC or the Labour Party.

For example, at the TUC two motions were put forward for three black people to have reserved seats on the General Council. The trade unions voted this proposal down by a massive majority of 1,992,000 on a card vote.

Similarly, at Labour Party Conference a motion from the Black Socialist Society was lost again by a massive 8-1 against majority. This motion called for all-black shortlists in certain parliamentary seats.

People should not wonder at the lack of progress for black people in the higher echelons of the trade union movement or political parties because, apart from the obvious obstacles put in black people's way, many do not get involved in organisations which decide on issues affecting our everyday lives.

In fact, many black people do not get involved until their backs are against the wall.

What should be consistently demanded is adequate representation at all levels in organisations such as the trade union movement and political parties.

Systems as they stand will not change by themselves, black people need to strive to achieve positions. The apathetic attitude of a lot of our people only make these changes harder to achieve.

There are some role models such as Bill Morris, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, and the few black members of Parliament.

It is not reasonable to suggest that these people carry the mantle for the black population in this country. They were elected on merit to represent all people, both black and white.

What is needed is more black people in high office and to move this inadequate representation position forward, our people need to get involved at each level of the different organisations. Lets hope that future conferences address race issues seriously and that the input of black people is seen as a way of furthering the aims and objectives of the TUC and the Labour Party in a positive manner.

*Yours,*
*John Noblemunn,*
*Hackney*

I have read *Labour Briefing* for a number of months now and while agreeing with its political stance, I am dismayed at some of its 'design' features.

For instance, a headline should appear at the top of the page — why else call it a headline? You also appear to be short of copy, judging from the acres of white space on many of the pages. I enclose a copy of the *Leninist* for reference.

*Yours,*
*A. Ringer,*
*Barnsley*

I have been a Labour Party member for 20 years but have decided to join the Green Party because I believe that it is the only political party which is going in a direction which is consistent with the politics of the future and because I believe that the old agendas of the established political parties are in terminal decline.

The Conservatives are splitting because they cannot come to terms with the growing rejection of their monetarist experiment by an increasing number of those who were once their natural supporters.

They are becoming despised for their callousness and arrogance in assuming that their last election victory has given them a mandate to dictate by imposing policies like rail privatisation and inequitable taxation like VAT, to which the vast majority of people are opposed.

The Thatcherite right is holding John Major to ransom by threatening the existence of his government against the wishes of the centre-left of the Tory Party.

In true fashion, the Tories are falling back on the politics of hatred to restore their fortunes. With a loathesome and contemptible display of sanctimonious bigotry designed to create yet another sacrificial minority to feed the vile instincts of the gruesome grass roots of the Tory Party Conference, Peter Lilley demonised young single mothers and their children.

The hangers, beaters and floggers were feted and wooed by one Tory Minister after another desperately trying to persuade us all of the baseness of human nature and how our greed and fear must be kept under their control.

The Labour Party has become an irrelevance except by its presence as an alternative to the Tories. The Party which once drew many socialists, environmentalists, peace campaigners and visionaries into its ranks changed direction at the very time when it should not have done so, and is now trying to catch up with yesterday.

Cowed by Thatcherism, seduced by the establishment and betrayed by its former leader, Neil Kinnock, it adopted an agenda in the mid-1980s set out by the Tories in the 1970s which it is developing today even as that agenda is becoming discredited.

Whatever rationale is expounded in support of its one member one vote preoccupation, the fact that cannot be denied is that it is a response to a perception nurtured by the Tories that there is something unacceptable about trade unionism, that it taints those who support it and that it is not respectable.

The Labour Party has effectively succumbed to the idea that the problems faced by future generations can be overcome by handing the world's economy over to the business elites to exploit for profit, and that the well-being of the people will remain a spin-off of capitalist economics rather than the impetus which should determine economic policy. In that, it stands rooted and stranded in the 1980s as the millenium begins to reach its end.

If there is a lesson to be learned from the victory of the British National Party in Tower Hamlets, it is not that fascism has any future. It is that the established parties, including the Liberal Democrats, do not.

It is clear from what has emerged from the mouths of the people of Millwall ward since, that most of them used the BNP to tell the established parties that they no longer mattered, that in their own way, they were no better than the BNP.

In joining the Greens, I shall look for the party to speaking out on all major issues affecting the lives of people. It must speak in practical ways asserting credible policies conforming to principles of sustainability and material needs.

It must not be intolerant of people whose conditioning by the materialism of the greedy society blinds them for the moment to the realities of the dead end into which they have always been led.

Alienation by sanctimony will hinder the higher aims of green politics. Greens must address the needs of people who are alive today as well as address the future size of the population. In housing, health, transport, energy and employment, the Green Party must be ready to adopt policies for today as well as long-term strategies for the future.

It must have policies for the social security system which recognises and adapts to social change and does not pretend, for example, that single parent families are deviant institutions to be discouraged or that unemployment is a blight to be penalised.

I am one of tens of thousands of former Labour Party members who left quietly during recent years while Neil Kinnock spent hundreds of hours over a number of years expelling two hundred Militant supporters and freezing out the left, of which he was once a leading and inspirational figure.

To those tens of thousands of socialists and peace campaigners who feel as I do, I make an appeal to them to join the Green Party, if they have not already done so, and to organise and campaign for the party to take its place with other green parties worldwide as a party belonging to the strongest international political force of the future.

*Yours,*
*Peter Nielsen,*
*Worcester*

Paul Foley's appreciation of Edward Thompson is quite correct to draw attention to the enormous influence his work has had on socialists and others worldwide.

He is right too to underline the importance of his anti-nuclear activism in the 1980s. But surely socialists must part company with Thompson over his theory of determinism which suggested that the class struggle must be postponed while the threat of nuclear war was fought.

I would suggest that it was the class struggle in Eastern Europe which eventually, after 1989, reduced the possibility at least of a major nuclear war.

Equally, I am surprised that a magazine like *Briefing* fails at least to raise a question mark over both the continuing influence of his Stalinist origins on Thompson's historical and political work and his historical position on the struggle of women.

*Yours sincerely,*
*Keith Flett,*
*London N17*

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