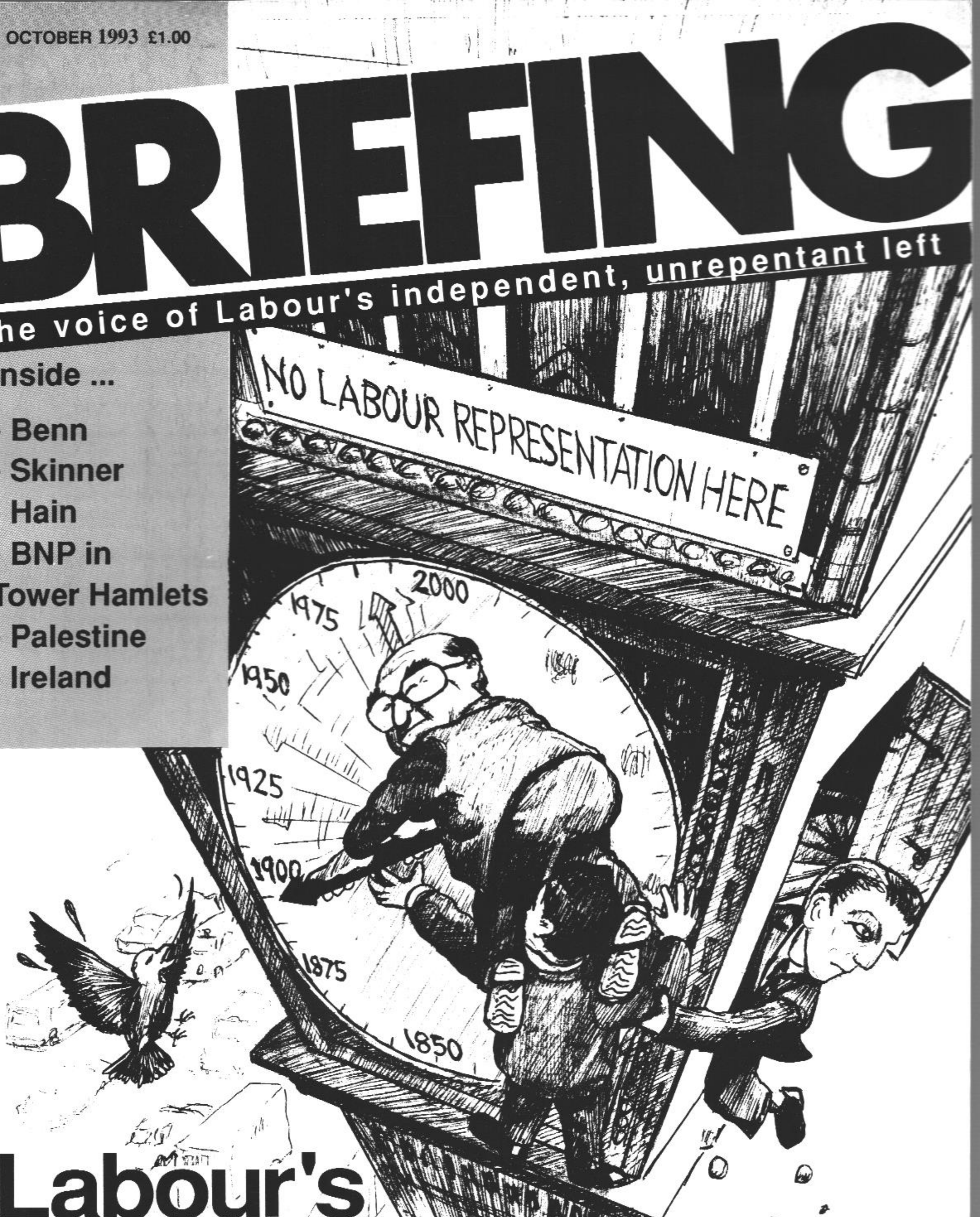
OCTOBER 1993 £1.00

BRIEFING

the voice of Labour's independent, unrepentant left

inside ...

- Benn
- Skinner
- Hain
- BNP in Tower Hamlets
- Palestine
- Ireland



Labour's moderniserstheturning the clock back

LABOUR - TAKE THE POWER!

press

Bernie Grant MP on the fascist victory in London's Tower Hamlets:

"The government is primarily to blame because it is responsible for the state of the local economy in the Isle of Dogs and the withdrawal of government funding for housing, education and other services.

"It is also responsible for creating the Docklands Development Corporation which has prioritised the needs of big business and gentrified the area against the wishes of local people.

"The Liberal Democrat council has exploited racial divisions for electoral purposes and have used discriminatory policies in housing and education.

"The Labour Party nationally has put race on the back burner in an attempt to garner the white, middle-class vote - it has failed to give a clear vision of society which would give hope of a future to young and old.

"There is now a vacuum in British politics which the fascists are beginning to fill.

"Resources must be put back into inner city areas and cuts in local authority spending must be reversed.

"The Docklands Development Corporation must be disbanded and planning controls returned to local authorities.

"The Labour Party must immediately set up a commission on racism in the inner cities which must come out with new policy initiatives to combat the evil menace of rising fascism and racism - the party ignored this at its peril."

top

March to the BNP Headquarters

Assemble at 1pm
Winns Common
Plumstead
London SE18
Saturday October 16th

Mildred Gordon MP

sends greetings to Labour Party delegates

The past, present and future strength of Labour lies in our roots in the trade union movement!

In this month's

BRIEFING

Skinner on union links 4
Conference v. leadership 5
Benn and Hain on left unity 6
Class Traitor of the Month 9
McNamara's Irish plans 10
Joy Gardner 11
Abyss comes to Tower Hamlets 12
Child Support sabotage 14
The student rent boy 15
Behind bars 16
Miners' lost chance 17
TUC round-up 18
Clarke's big chill 19
New path for arms convention 20
Bosnia aid convoy 21
Blood and oil in Berlin 23
PLO-Israeli accord 24
Mass party for South Africa? 25
Reviews 26
Periscope 28
Letters 30

Cover design by Gary Drostle

Subscribe now ... the only way to make sure you get your monthly *Labour Briefing* before it sells out!

Annual subscription: £14 ordinary, £20 supporting sub, £30 overseas.
Cheques payable to *Labour Briefing*.

Name .....
Address .....
.....
Tel .....
Amount enclosed .....

Return to *Labour Briefing*, PO Box 2378, London E5 9QU

Modernisers — turning the clock back



WHEN A CAPITALIST boasts of "modernising" a factory or a Tory Minister prattles about "modernising" the health service, we know they have no intention of updating production or procedures for the general welfare. By cloaking their attacks on working people in the rhetoric of "modernisation" or "reform", they hope to make them sound inevitable and irresistible. They also hope to depict opponents as "traditionalists" and "dinosaurs" speaking for "vested interests" which, so often, turn out to be majority interests.

Labour's "modernisers" are no different. There are plenty of traditions in the labour movement crying out for reform: the dictatorship of the Parliamentary Labour Party, male domination, loyalty to the Foreign Office in international affairs, subservience to the City, inertia in the fight against racism, to name but five. The "modernisers", of course, have no interest in tackling these; indeed, they are themselves the great conservators of many of these unsavoury customs.

The modernisers' targets are the trade union link, universal benefits, public spending, public ownership, Clause IV, the remaining powers of Party Conference and the Party membership itself. Their aim is to deconstruct the Labour Party as a whole. By detaching it once and for all from its working class base, they hope to make it a safe haven for career politicians. By ridding themselves not only of the unions but also of any paper commitments to long-term economic change, they hope to be left in peace to get on with endlessly renegotiating the same barren turf with the media and the rest of the establishment.

If they succeed, they will have turned the clock back a hundred years. The working class will have been stripped of a political voice and a means of organising in the electoral arena. In place of the Labour Party there will be neither a new left-wing socialist party nor an open plurality of competing ideologies and pressure groups. There will be dead conformity and the grip of economic, social and political orthodoxy. Without a party dedicated explicitly and specifically to their interests, millions of working class people will simply not vote. Worse yet, as we've already seen in London's East End, many will be drawn to the far right.

The modernisers have encountered much stiffer resistance from both trade unions and Constituency Labour Parties than they expected. At last, it seems, people are waking up to the dangers posed by the limitless drift to the right. Gordon Brown's renunciation of Labour's commitment to increase pensions and benefits was greeted with dismay and outrage right across the movement. When it comes to bedrock convictions, to the commitments that motivate people to join the Party in the first place, the modernisers are clearly out of touch.

They are also out of touch with public opinion, which is now well to their left on a wide variety of issues. According to a *Guardian*/ICM poll, 77% think there is "one law for the rich and one for the poor". 52% disagree that "it is more important to control inflation than to reduce unemployment". 71% disagree that "profitable state industries should be sold off and run as private corporations". 64% would be happy to see cuts in defence spending and 59% favour increased higher tax rates.And 46% agree (against 28% who disagree) that "more socialist planning would be the best way to solve Britain's economic problems".

At Labour's Brighton Conference, the modernisers, though pushed on the defensive in recent months, will be seeking support in key votes on the union link, the Plant Report, taxation and benefits, among others. Whatever happens in these votes, the fight against the modernisers - which is nothing less than the struggle to retain and rebuild the Labour Party - will go on. In that fight, the left has many unexpected allies, both in the unions and in Parliament. It should also remember that its most useful ally, its greatest potential strength, is an aroused and combative working class. ❑

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 3rd. 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 October 18th.

***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?**

Co-chairs: Liz Davies and Sue Lukes
Editorial worker: John Cryer
Political Correspondent: Mike Marqusee
Editorial Board: Graham Bash, Pranab Chakrabarti, Liz Davies, Gary Drostle, Graham Durham, Paul Field, Kevin Flack, Bryn Griffiths, Richard Hanford, Richard Heffernan, Louise Kawakami, Chris Knight, Francis Koch-Krause, Dave Lewney, Leonora Lloyd, Sue Lukes, Dorothy Macedo, Geoff Mann, Mike Marqusee, Mick McKeever, John Nicholson, Eddie Niles, Dave Palmer, Andy Parr, Mike Phipps, Camilla Power, Ihsan Qadir, Jon Rogers, Dave Spencer, Karl Statten, Jane Stockton, Laura Sullivan, Neil Taylor, Keith Veness, Valerie Veness, John Wilton, Richard Woolven.

Production team: Graham Bash, Liz Davies, Gary Drostle, Paul Field, Bryn Griffiths, Dot Lewis, Dave Lewney, Geoff Mann, Paula Smith

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

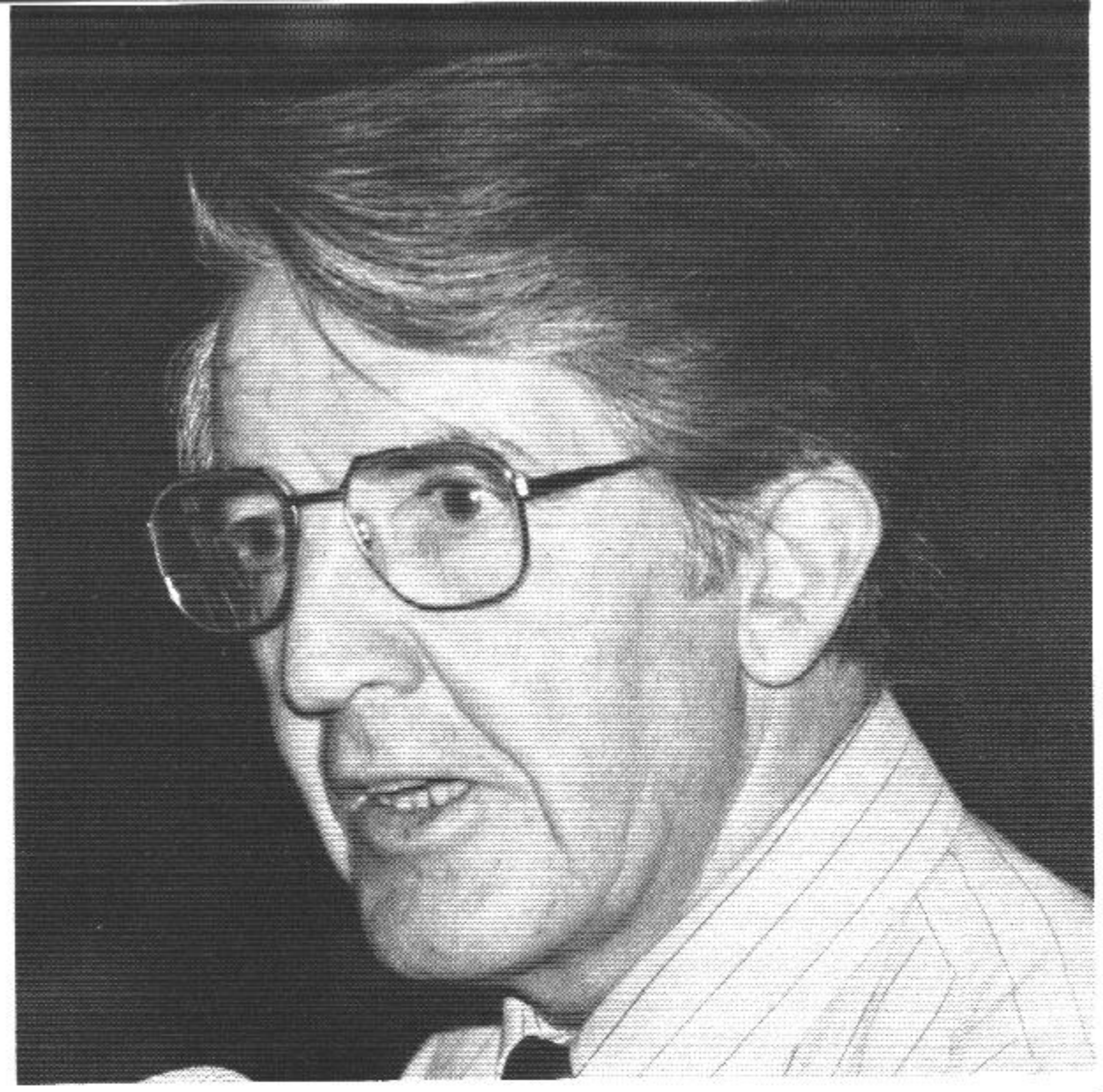


PHOTO: Bryn Griffiths

Bedtime for modernisers

Dennis Skinner MP exposes the tricks behind the attempt to smash the Labour-union link.

THE ATTEMPT to smash the Labour Party's links with the unions and concentrate power right at the top of the Party has been underway for a long time.

One of the first things Kinnock did as leader was to push a compliant National Executive Committee to agree to a review and to set up joint committees between the Shadow Cabinet and the NEC.

That was the first real break for the right because hitherto the Party constitution had been quite clear - that the Shadow Cabinet's job was to implement policy set down by the Annual Conference and interpreted between conferences by the NEC.

What Kinnock and his group succeeded in doing, together with the marshmallow left, was to get the Shadow Cabinet involved in making policy. So it was a very significant move - the first attack, by implication, on trade union influence in the Labour Party and an attempt to take power from the Conference and the NEC.

What lies behind the attempt by the right-wing "modernisers" to smash the link? The pollsters now dominate party thinking - every time the leadership are worried about a subject they ask "what do the polls say?"

Pollsters have told them that it would be better to discard "the cloth-cap image" - because that's what it's about. So the modernisers - Smith, Brown, Cook, Blair and Blunkett - want to break the link but they haven't got the guts to come out and say it, so they're doing it by stealth.

They're also desperate to attack the link because they believe that if they can discard the unions they can then get into bed with Paddy Ashdown and the Liberals.

Unfortunately, despite all the talk in the media in recent months, there could well be a majority for Smith at the Party Conference because I don't believe the unions are going to deliver what their annual conferences asked them to deliver.

Most of the trade union conferences took place before July and many of them took the decision against breaking the link and in support of having a say not only in electing the Labour Party leader but in selecting Labour Parliamentary candidates, which is a vital part of the link.

In July, the NEC met - after most of the union conferences had decided their positions - and produced a report by a majority of 20 votes to 7. They then put out a statement which would allow union leaders to say very quietly: 'Look, there's a different set of proposals on the agenda. We didn't discuss these at our annual conference because they hadn't been put forward.'

So my guess is that a lot of those delegations to the Labour Party conference will be confronted by both their conference decisions and a new set of NEC proposals.

Some of these union leaders will argue that John Smith is clearly on their side because of his speech to the TUC and that he's not really attacking the principle of the union link.

They could well be taken in by all that rhetoric and by this new set of proposals.

If the modernisers win this year, the next thing they want to do is to break the block vote into pieces. Let's say a union votes 2 to 1 for defence cuts - instead of a solid vote of say, a million for the cuts it will be divided by two thirds to one third.

This plan really is sinister because a trade unionist could well turn around to his general secretary and say: I voted against going on strike and if it's alright for you to go to the Labour conference and split the vote why can't I go through the picket line?

Once the solidarity of the block vote is broken, it's meaningless.

For the life of me, I cannot understand a leadership which goes about propagating the idea that a trade union block vote is the only one in existence.

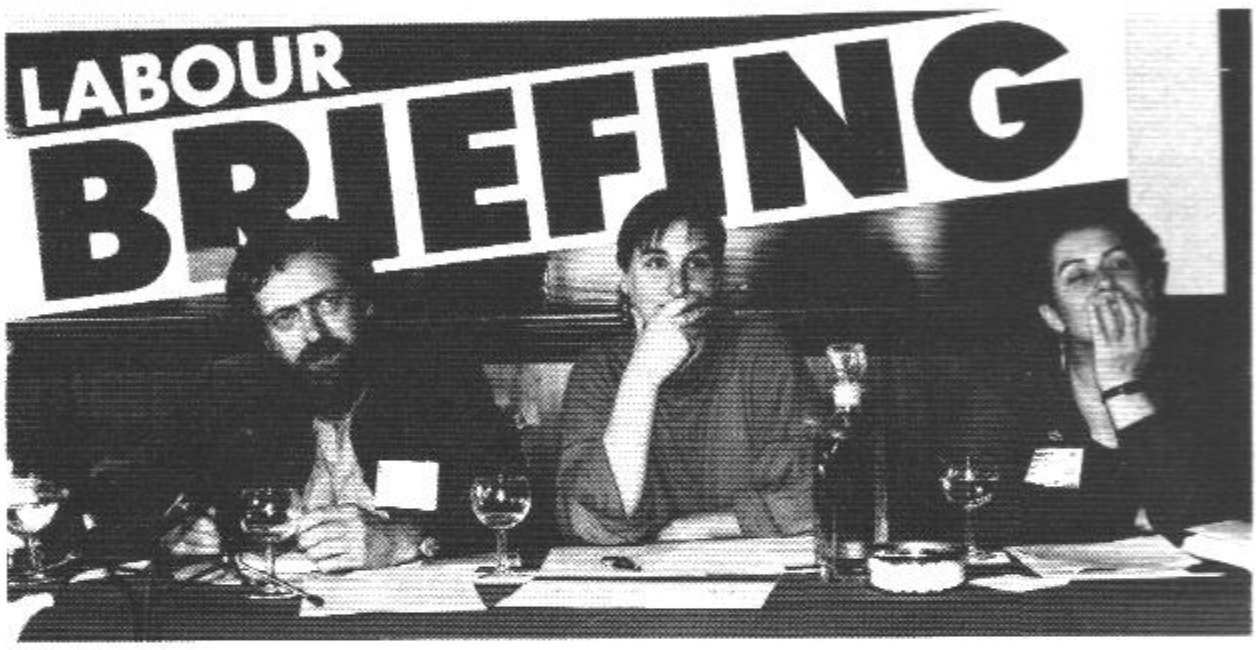
Big business has block votes - at the AGM of a big firm a few people can turn up with millions of votes in their back pockets and decide to re-elect the board of directors and strip off a few million pounds of the workers' pension fund, all in a couple of minutes. But that seems to be okay as far as the "modernisers" are concerned.

We have to remember that the Labour Party is unique because it has industrial and political wings and when they work together, we usually win. The link means that the trade union movement is political in Britain.

Once the link is severed, trade unions are going to be merely defensive organisations in a capitalist world. ❑

Conference v. Leadership

Liz Davies, delegate from Islington North CLP, looks at the issues being debated at this year's Annual Conference.



Liz Davies chairing last year's Briefing fringe meeting. PHOTO: Bryn Griffiths

THE CRUCIAL debate at this year's Conference, over the trade union link, has been rehearsed at all the major trade union conferences over the spring and summer. In defiance of the modernisers and their friends at *The Guardian*, trade union conferences (and at least half the constituencies) have overwhelmingly rejected the leadership's proposals to abolish the trade union vote in Parliamentary selections and leadership elections.

As a result, the NEC proposals have been watered down. A phased elimination of trade union involvement is proposed. Trade union members would be able to join the Party at a reduced rate and vote as individuals on Party matters. The trade unions' share of the electoral college for the leadership would be reduced from 40% to 30%.

Party decision-making attracts the largest numbers of motions and amendments to Conference. Forty-four motions/amendments (including from NUPE and the GMB) oppose the reduction of the trade union link or call for the abolition of the trigger mechanism for reselecting MPs. Sixteen, including the AEEU, support the NEC proposals for a phased elimination. None of these motions suggest that trade union affiliation fees should also be phased out - a case of wanting to have your cake and eat it!

In July, the NEC carried out a consultation on Parliamentary selection, election of the leader and deputy leader, and balance and method of voting at Conference. Only 45% of CLPs even bothered to respond and in any case there was no mechanism to ensure that respondents consulted their members or branches before replying. The questionnaire was clearly slanted against the retention of the trade union block vote, counterposing various convoluted forms of organising the trade union vote against a blanket "one member, one vote" option, which, unsurprisingly, received the highest single number of preferences. However, if all responses in favour of some kind of trade union involvement are added up, there is a clear majority against OMOV.

Only three weeks before Conference, the NEC rushed out its "Agenda II" containing dozens of proposed changes to the Party's constitution. The NEC has also decreed that these are to be voted on in large blocks, with no chance of amendments from affiliated bodies. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy has noted that under the NEC's "Agenda II" it will not be possible to vote against the OMOV proposals without also voting against a reduced CLP membership fee. Clearly, Conference will have to be on its toes, especially with the possibility of a deal being struck by some of the big unions over OMOV in an attempt to save the leadership from humiliating defeat.

Electoral reform is another big issue for the "modernisers". There are 18 motions against PR and 11 in favour.

Gordon Brown announced that Labour would not tax the rich after the deadline for motions and amendments to Conference. There are no motions specifically on his speech on the agenda as a result, though some emergency resolutions have been submitted. The motions on taxation and welfare show overwhelming support for universal benefits. Even motions broadly supporting the Commission for Social Justice call for retention of universal pensions and child benefit. One motion alone calls for "a debate" on universal benefits. None are in favour of their abolition. Other motions call for progressive taxation on higher earners and there is massive condemnation of the Tories' proposal to introduce VAT on fuel.

The debate on Europe is evenly divided - half the motions supporting Maastricht Treaty (albeit with a Social Chapter) and half calling for opposition. On defence, the vast majority of motions submitted reaffirm existing Conference policy (perpetually ignored by the leadership) to reduce defence spending. There are also several calls for the abolition of Trident.

On women, the NEC has compromised yet again. It has called for women-only shortlists in 50% of Labour-held vacant seats and target seats. So nearly all the current Labour MPs would have to have retired before women reached 50% of the PLP. There are motions calling for women-only shortlists in all vacant Labour seats and winnable seats.

Two motions call for all-black shortlists, in seats where 15% or more of the electorate is black. The Anti-Racist Alliance has done well. Twelve motions contain details of racist attacks and call for support for the ARA.

The conference agenda reveals a Party well out of step with the policies of its leadership. The leadership is criticised on defence, taxation and benefits, electoral reform and the trade union link. Conference will no doubt reaffirm its commitment to reducing defence spending, support for universal benefits and opposition to Proportional Representation with no guarantee that these policies will be followed by the leadership which prefers to look to the unaccountable and unrepresentative Commission for Social Justice or the Plant Commission. ❑

Left in the cold ...



Does the end of the Kinnock era and the failure of Labour's modernisers herald an opportunity for a realignment of the left? **Paul Field** talks to **Peter Hain** (left) and **John Cryer** talks to **Tony Benn** (right).

Paul Field: I'm sure most *Briefing* readers welcome the criticisms you have made of the Labour leadership, and in particular your call for an end to the bi-partisan consensus over the economy. Could you briefly outline your main differences with the "modernisers" and explain why you have chosen to air them now?

Peter Hain: Well as I say in my pamphlet *What's Left*, I don't think the modernisers can win us an election. If I did then for my constituents in Neath who so desperately need a Labour government I might be willing to part with my principles and swallow my doubts and simply get my head down and help with the task of winning.

But we've had two elections now in which we had the impetus and we've lost both times, the last one being in the most favourable of circumstances. In essence I don't think the electorate believe that Labour stands for anything clear any more. As a result they are very susceptible to the charge that we will do anything to get into power and can't be trusted.

Although the modernisers use the poll findings that show a lack of trust in Labour to their advantage, claiming that this proves further policy sanitisation is needed, I think the opposite conclusion is correct. What it shows is that we need to be much clearer and positive and more radical about where we stand.

PF: Are you interested in a broader co-operation with the hard left or Campaign Group, and if so on what basis do you think co-operation will work?

PH: One of the things I say in the pamphlet is that the left has lost its momentum, its confidence and therefore its influence. Although that's part of a European-wide problem we have to address, it is also the product in Labour Party terms of a great deal of sectarianism, over-emphasis on "purity" and a product of the history of the last ten years in which there's been a lot of divisions.

I think that the left really has to decide where its common purpose is. In my opinion, it's not to fight the leadership. In many respects, for instance, I thought John Smith's speech to the TUC was extremely welcome compared to those made previously. He gave a succinct series of commitments on the economy and on employment rights which we're not had for a long time. So I think we should be careful not to set ourselves up as an anti-leadership movement.

What we're about is strengthening the forces for radical socialism within the Party. That's our common purpose. For example, the battle that is going to be waged around the public sector pay freeze will be an important point of reference for us all.

Likewise, what the Party does to defend the firefighters if they go on strike. And whether MPs are going to join picket lines if they are asked. These are all important questions for the left. I think that there is a lot of common ground that we can build upon around these issues. But we've first got to grow up and decide whether the points that divide us are more important than the points of unity on which we can go forward.

PF: One issue that remains essential to many activists - because it effects our freedom and rights to participate in the Party - is the witchhunt. Would you be prepared to join us in trying to redress and correct some of the injustices that have occurred?

PH: Well in the past I've made it clear that I was opposed to the expulsion of people for their political beliefs as opposed to breaking the Party constitution. When you break the constitution you exclude yourself from the Party and not much can be done about that.

I've signed petitions and appeals against the witch-hunt of people for their beliefs in the past. But I have to be blunt and say that I don't think fighting the witch-hunt is very high on the agenda. I say this because the left is a position now where we have to decide what the priorities are on policy and on unity in action.

PF: For many years you've stressed the importance of the need for extra-parliamentary action and for Labour to adopt mass politics. Do you still believe that there is a need for mass action and if so, on what issues?

PH: I certainly do. Indeed, it is one of the central arguments in the pamphlet. The way in which the modernisers have sought not just to sanitise policy but also to de-energise the membership has been a disaster.

We have become a Party of passive credit card members who cast a vote every now and then by post on questions decided from the centre, or appoint a list of individuals who are to be judged by their appearance on TV.

When that happens you destroy the Party's very lifeblood. In fact what you've really destroyed is any prospect for socialist organisation, which depends upon people acting collectively and

or fighting back?

"THE IDEA that there's a soft left and a hard left is all ablsolute rubbish and has no relation to reality. What's happening now is that reality is breaking through - and that's marvellous because it's well overdue."

Thus Tony Benn sees the apparent convergence of opinion within Labour's Parliamentary left. He has always seen the concept of a "hard" and "soft" left as something of a media creation - this is now being born out, perhaps, in recent comments by figures in the Tribune group like Clare Short and Peter Hain.

Short roundly attacked the Party's "modernisers" in a column in *Tribune* newspaper.

Hain concluded his recent pamphlet *What's Left - The Future of Labour* by declaring: "Labour's left has remained silent for too long, either out of an understandable desire to promote Party unity or from lack of confidence. It now needs to regroup and redefine its purpose".

Surely that's what Tony Benn and others in the Campaign Group have been saying for some time?

Certainly, Benn pulls no punches when it comes to those who want to change Labour out of all recognition. "What we must do is to break down the central bureaucracy of Walworth Road.

"The centralised membership scheme is for two purposes - for discipline and for fundraising. It is being used to actually degut local constituency parties.

"The National Executive Committee has now become the handmaiden of the Parliamentary leadership, who all have their own researchers paid for by the government so the link between top and bottom is becoming all the more tenuous.

"As to OMOV, who's suggesting OMOV for the election of the Shadow Cabinet? When there is next a Labour government there won't be any democracy in the PLP because all ministers will be appointed by the Prime Minister.

"OMOV is really an argument for breaking collective links with organisations and dissolving everything into individualism."

Benn maintains a suspicion of deals done in Westminster - or anywhere else for that matter.

"Some of the so-called modernisers are saying 'we'll never win on our own so let's do a deal with the Liberals.' Similarly, there are people on the left who argue that we're so weak, we have to do a deal on a broad organisational basis.

"I'm not sure that's the right approach at all. I believe that the right approach is to take the issues that have to be confronted like unemployment and trade union rights and argue for them and people will be influenced by that.

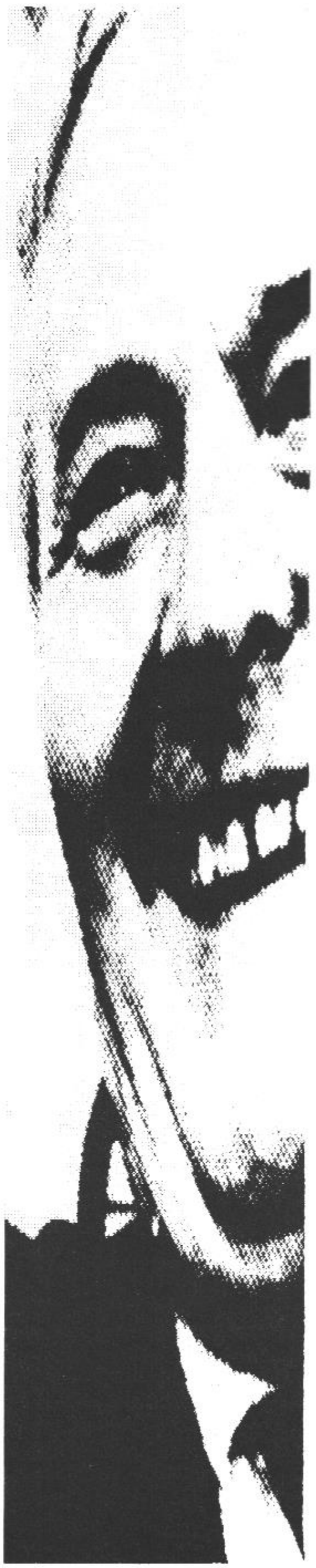
"What I'm saying is that you can't solve problems by doing deals, what you have to do is to broaden the argument. Now, when you look at it that way some marvellous things have been said by people in the Tribune group.

"What I have always objected to is the idea that it's all a sectarian struggle between this group and that group trying to win support for their own organisation. I want to win support for certain ideas."

For Benn, not deals but debate and movement, both in and out of the Palace of Westminster, are key: "If you win the argument, the alliances sort themselves out. What you see is that a lot of arguments which have been allegedly marginalised eventually become accepted.

"This is an issue-based approach to socialism rather than an ideologically pure base. The process of denouncing certain individuals never wins support in my view and I'm anxious to win support for a clutch of ideas which would address the problems that confront us.

"When you look at what happened in the 1980s, major changes were brought about by people on the right who had clear ideas and enjoyed media support. What the left has to do is bring about comparable change." ❑



Continued from page 6

working together in a hostile capitalist culture.

On the question of mass action I think that whether it was the miners' strike of 1984-85 or what is undoubtedly going to be the coming battle over pay is the public sector, Labour's not simply got to endorse mass action - we've actually got to march alongside it. Strikes are part of a process of change that Labour MPs should be identified with and involved in.

PF: In the final section of the pamphlet *What's Left* you talk about Labour in the past having gained office but not power, something Tony Benn has also written about in his diaries. Do you see mass action as a necessary precondition for a future Labour government to deliver socialist policies?

PH: I do because I think that when you are in office you are imprisoned by hostile forces of capital, of bureaucracy and of a very right wing civil service establishment.

You therefore have to create a counter-veiling force of the Party, from the unions and from extra-parliamentary movements from which you can draw strength and which gives you the power and confidence to continue.

So yes, I think it's not just a question of working with extra-parliamentary movements. We should be encouraging and helping to organise them.

● What's Left? The Future of Labour, £3, available from Tribune, 308 Gray's Inn Rd., London WC1.

Browned off

GORDON BROWN, seeking respectability in the City, has announced that Labour no longer has any spending

Jeremy Corbyn MP
Islington North

commitments. Even our minimal 1992 commitments to increase pensions and child benefit, he says, have been suspended until the Commission on Social Justice reports.

Over one-fifth of all Europe's poor live in Britain; over twenty per cent of the UK population is living at or below income support levels. Since 1979 nearly three million have been added to the poverty list.

Tory policies, laid down by Fowler in 1984 and carried out by his errand boy John Major, created the concept of targeting, the end of single payments and extensive powers of control by the DSS.

These powers have removed 800,000 people from access to any level of state benefit.

Now, with a government deficit running at £50 billion per year, Clarke and Portillo have the knives out for the welfare state as a whole.

The tragedy of this is that the opposition is not being led by the Labour Party. Instead we get Gordon Brown and the Commission on Social Justice - headed by Sir Gordon Borrie, who is definitely not a Labour voter.

Now is the time for Labour to declare it will defend universal benefits, increase the state pension to meet the demands of the National Pensioners Convention and adopt a strategy to eliminate poverty. This would mean re-distribution of wealth through taxation, cutting arms spending and cancelling Trident.

We lost in 1992 because we had too little to offer the poor, homeless and unemployed. We will lose again unless Labour turns its back on the Brown strategy and boldly undertakes to do what it was founded for: eliminate poverty.

● The good news is that the Party recorded a surplus last year of £1,337,000. The bad news is that it was all instantly swallowed up paying off the huge debts incurred under the Kinnock regime.

The 1992 surplus reduced the accumulated deficit since Larry Whitty took over as General Secretary from Jim Mortimer to a mere £1.558 million and cuts our overdraft at the Co-op bank to a manageable £1.9 million.

Scrutiny of the Party accounts reveals that the surplus is not the work of streamlined management or hyper-efficiency. Much of it is down to the £3 increase in subscription fees, all of which went to Wally Road and none to Constituency Labour Parties. Then there was £600,000 transferred from the Party's long-term Business Plan. Cuts in the press and campaigns budget were due to much expenditure being transferred to the general election account.

The Organisation Department cut its spending by some £600,000 - all of this attributed to a decline in spending on unitemised "other expenses of the department" from a staggering £776,000 last year to a mere £77,000 this year. Is this the result of *Briefing*'s three year-long campaign to expose this boondoggle? We know that Larry Whitty was getting very uptight about our references to it.

In 1992 we spent £144,000 in salaries for "targeting" (women, youth, etc.) but actual expenditure on the Women's Organisation was a meagre £9,000 and £19,000 on the Youth Organisation (how did they spend that on the 18 remaining Young Socialist branches?)

This year the fiction of hundreds of thousands of pounds of "members' subscriptions" going to our old friend *Labour Party News* has been dropped. The magazine is now subsidised by a purely notional "fundraising income" of £448,000 - exactly the same amount as last year!

A small cut in net spending on "Personnel, Resources and Training" arises from the £100,000 allocated to it from the General Election Fund.

Though we recruited 39,000 new members in 1992 (pitiful in an election year), only 36% of these were on the full rate. And we lost 22,000 existing members. In addition, the disparity between claimed members and membership fees actually paid continues. In 1990 there were 42,000 non-paying members still on the books. In 1992, the gap appears to be at least 50,000.

The cost of membership processing (excluding substantial computer costs) rose to £515,000 in 1992. Meanwhile, we spend a grand total of £633,000 on the National Agency Service (and only £347,000 of that comes from Wally Road, the rest from unions and constituencies).

Is this value for money?

● Four former surcharged Labour Councillors in Lambeth, South London, have been refused admission by the NEC to the panel of candidates for next year's local elections.

The grounds for not allowing them to stand as local councillors are apparently that they "do not show commitment to a necessary change in the image of Labour in Lambeth" and that they have "an unacceptable public profile".

The councillors were surcharged and disqualified for abiding by Party policy in 1985.

The labour movement raised hundreds of thousands of pounds to help the councillors avoid bankruptcy.

The four have an unlikely supporter in David Blunkett who commented: "Exclusion on any grounds whatsoever that relate to the action taken at the time of rate-capping would be an outrage."

An emergency resolution supporting the ex-councillors' right to be on the panel has been submitted to Party Conference. The London Women's Conference in September voted to support the resolution after speakers asked how the Party could justify keeping these comrades off the panel while allowing a known racist to stand in Tower Hamlets.

The Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network will be producing a daily bulletin for all Conference delegates at Brighton. The Network's office for the week will be at 11 Marlborough Place (near the Pavilion). Please drop in and help out!

Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network

Labour Party Conference fringe meeting

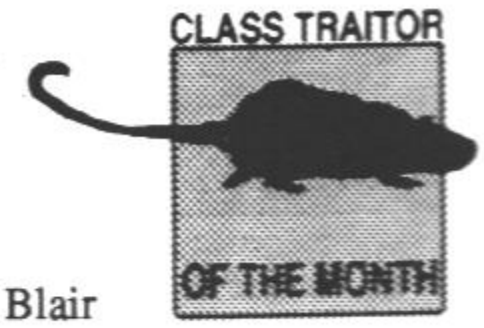
Building the Network, linking the grass-roots left

7.30pm Sunday 26th September
Royal Albion Hotel, Old Steine, Brighton
Speakers: Tony Benn MP, Loraine Monk (National Women's Committee), SCG Network councillors, regional SCG Network supporters.

Hear how the left is organising to defend the Labour Party from the "modernisers" ... the Network can put you in touch with other SCG supporters in your area!

admission £1 (50p unwaged)

The Horlicks leader



It's the fashion now to exonerate **John Smith** and pin all the blame on the push-me pull-you boys, Blair and Brown. You wouldn't expect *Briefing* to go along with such facile nonsense, would you? So welcome to the safe, smug world of the Leader of HM Opposition, our Class Traitor of the Month.

WHILE IT'S certainly true that Blair and Brown have often hidden behind Smith, it is also true that Smith himself has hidden behind Blair and Brown. At the very least he has allowed the tepid twins to make all kinds of threats in his name. Smith does not stick his own neck out for anybody or anything.

It was Smith who set the ball rolling on breaking the union links. During last year's leadership election, he jumped on the anti-union bandwagon launched by the media by calling for "reform" of the Party's electoral college. Though he then set out to reassure union supporters he valued the link, he allowed Brown and Blair to go on to the offensive. Again and again he has let it be known, Kinnock-fashion, that on the question of OMOV he is placing his leadership on the line. Indeed, in the last year of massive indignation at the Tory regime, the one initiative for which Smith has achieved any public recognition is his attack on the link with the unions.

In response to criticism of his Shadow Budget for the 1992 general election, Smith set up the Commission for Social Justice with a not very well hidden agenda to scale down the Party's commitment to universal benefits. Not only did this stunt remove control of Party policy from any Party structures (and lay the basis for future coalition with the Lib-Dems), it left Labour hamstrung in answering the recent Tory threats on the welfare state and public spending.

Since December, there has been a swelling chorus of complaints from MPs and union leaders about Smith's inertia, cautiousness and downright laziness. His is a minimalist approach to leadership in which power is exercised with sublime confidence but with little exertion.

This laid-back attitude stems from his conception of his job. For Smith, becoming Leader of the Opposition was simply arriving at the top of the designated greasy pole for his profession, that of Labour Parliamentarian.

His TUC talk of "full employment" was a sop offered to the big unions in hopes of a deal on OMOV. But embracing "full employment" as a goal is worthless unless Smith also embraces the economic policies that can actually deliver it - precisely the policies that his Shadow Chancellor has rejected so publicly in recent months. Smith should no more be let off the hook for Brown's disastrous performance than Major should for Lamont's.

Last year's sterling crisis was a body-blow to the Tories - they are still reeling from it. Smith's response was feeble. He fulminated against Tory "incompetence" but this counted for little because he supported essentially the same policies which had got the government into the ERM mess. Having ignored pleas to support devaluation from John Edmonds and Bryan Gould in the month before the sterling collapse, he was reduced to demanding "an apology" from Major when what the public wanted was a decisive shift in policy.

The Tory divisions over Maastricht gave Smith a chance to cripple or even topple the government, but he wasted it. Instead of seizing the opportunity to destroy a treaty whose very existence puts paid to any hopes of full employment, this long-time Europhile hid behind the Social Chapter, re-enforcing the widespread impression that the leaders of all three main parties belong in the end to the same club.

Having refused to attend last year's TUC, he was forced by the sheer scale of popular outrage to turn up at the rally for the miners in Hyde Park in October. There he urged the "public" to keep up the pressure, which is precisely what he didn't do. As mining communities came under the hammer during the spring, he was mute and refused to attend the annual Durham Miners Gala. He did not even bother to reply to the NUM's appeal for support for their call for a one-day strike.

Shortly after being elected leader, Smith promised an "all out assault" on the government's economic record. So far, this "assault" has been confined to routine point-scoring - widely perceived by the public as opportunistic. Despite abject Tory failure, recent polls show only 30% think Labour is the party "most likely to produce successful economic policies" (24% still prefer the Tories and 20% the Lib-Dems).



Where Kinnock was obsessed with hands-on control of the Party machinery, Smith regards it as an irrelevance. He hopes to wind it up and place all power in the inner circle of the PLP as soon as it can be done without too much of a ruck. At the NEC he is more polite and less uptight than Kinnock, mainly because he is more indifferent to it. He lets the NEC know what he intends to do and simply gets on with doing it.

Compared to his predecessor, Smith has run a tolerant regime. He is an altogether more secure and somewhat more able person. But he is and always has been an establishment man to his fingertips.

This is what makes him, at just this moment of history, exactly the wrong man to lead Labour. He is clearly incapable of tapping the current popular disgust with the Tories and mobilising it at the polls. ❑

Future imperfect for McNamara plan

Mary Mason of the Troops Out Movement explores Labour's vision of power-sharing in Northern Ireland.

ANGLO-IRISH 'joint sovereignty' has been proposed as an option for Northern Ireland by Kevin McNamara. The option would be put into place regardless of opinion within Northern Ireland and would last for 20 years after which a new arrangement would be brought into force.

Whatever our reaction is to 'joint sovereignty' this is an important and significant move for two main reasons.

It challenges bipartisanship, the consensus between all main British parties, which has stifled debate and stunted understanding of Britain's role in Ireland.

It points to a willingness to move from a previously sacrosanct position that the majority within Northern Ireland holds a veto over its future.

The Labour Party has had a paper commitment to a united Ireland since 1981 but only with the consent of the majority within Northern Ireland.

Similarly the Tories have said they will accept Irish unity if there is a majority in favour. Unionists - the majority within Northern Ireland - have therefore had a veto over its future.

By publicly exploring an alternative, McNamara has broken a very rigid mould. By opening up the possibility that the unionist veto is not so sacrosanct to Labour policy, other options become possible.

Although there are as yet no details, the implication is that joint sovereignty would mean the creation of a distinct legal entity whose government would involve joint participation by London, Dublin, locally elected representatives and even possibly the EC.

After 20 years another arrangement would come into force. It is not clear by whose agreement and whether any future arrangement would be included in a treaty.

What would be expected after the intervening 20 years? At that stage how could the Irish and British electorates both be entitled to determine Ireland's political future?

Uncertainty about these questions now can only lead to an entrenchment of opinion as all sides attempt to play out the intervening years so that any eventual resolution is in their favour.

In this context the balance of power under joint sovereignty would be crucial. It is almost inevitable that northern nationalists and Dublin representatives would be in a minority.

It could of course be argued that a Labour government firmly committed to the aim of Irish unity could team up with Dublin and northern nationalists and use the joint sovereignty framework to push through progressive changes against unionist opposition.

Surely though if a Labour government is willing to pursue such a radical approach and deal with the degree of unionist hostility that this implies - then it makes much more sense to pursue their objective from the start and not create an artificial period of twenty years' uncertainty.

To make peace and end nationalist alienation from Britain's presence, Britain would have to withdraw its troops and intelligence machine and in some form declare an intention to withdraw.

Anglo-Irish joint sovereignty would create a prolonged state of political uncertainty. Whenever Britain has appeared to be seeking to renegotiate the political basis of its presence in Ireland, Protestant paramilitaries have stepped up sectarian attacks.

There could be no stronger incentive for loyalists to put pressure on the British government by these means than 20 years of uncertainty.

That joint sovereignty could represent a breakthough rests with a basically flawed notion that the root of 'the problem' lies in the inability of two communities to reconcile themselves to each other. It does not take into account the crucial position of the British state as guarantor of the loyalist regime.

● This article draws on discussion at a forum of trade union and Labour Party activists held on 10th September 1993. It was originally written for the Troops Out Movement magazine.

Oranges or lemons?

Dorothy Macedo reviews *Oranges or Lemons? Should Labour organise in Northern Ireland?* Pamphlet by Kevin McNamara MP, Roger Stott MP and Bill O'Brien MP, published by Kevin McNamara £2.

MOST *BRIEFING* readers will need no convincing that the campaign for Labour to organise in the north of Ireland emanates from closet unionists.

They may nevertheless find this booklet useful. It examines all the arguments put forward by Democracy Now and similar organisations, and demolishes them in detail, demonstrating their secret unionist agenda and giving facts and figures from elections and public opinion polls.

It explores the history and demise of the Northern Irish Labour Party and of previous attempts by British parties to operate in the north.

An analysis of the probable effects of Labour Party intervention shows how, far from being a stepping-stone to unity, it would actually reinforce partition: "The demand for Labour to organise is not based on democratic ideals, but on a deliberate attempt to ignore conflicting national identities in Northern Ireland, and to cement the union."

The pamphlet praises Labour's current policy of unity by consent, but it is the weakness of this position which has left space for the Democracy Now crowd. Kevin McNamara has weathered previous attacks over Labour's refusal to organise in the north, but this time the integrationists have assembled important new allies, notably the new regime at the *Daily Mirror*.

It was either very bold or very foolish for McNamara to choose this moment to unveil the joint sovereignty plan. His position as shadow spokesperson for Northern Ireland has been based on presenting himself as the moderate between the extremes of "Troops Out" and unionism, but this is becoming a very narrow piece of territory.



Joy Gardner's mother speaks at demo. PHOTO Bryn Griffiths

Death and disinformation

A previously secret police squad was involved in the agonising death of Joy Gardner. **Dave Palmer** reports.

BETWEEN 7:00-8:00 am on Wednesday, 28th July over a dozen police and immigration officers arrived at Joy Gardner's home in Crouch End, North London.

Six of them - an immigration official, two local police and three members of Scotland Yard's hitherto secret 'Deportation Squad' S01(3) - forced their way into Joy's flat.

On entering they used a hideous "body belt" - reminiscent of instruments applied to black people during slavery - handcuffs and adhesive tape to bind and gag Joy, causing the injuries which lead to her death. All this was witnessed by Graeme, Joy's five year old son.

At 8:04 am an ambulance was called. Joy was taken to the Whittington Hospital and placed on a life support machine, but she never regained consciousness. At 9:30 pm on Sunday, 1st August she was officially pronounced dead. A post-mortem has established that Joy died as a result of hypoxic brain damage caused by lack of oxygen. In other words, Joy had been suffocated.

On Tuesday, 3rd August, amidst growing anger in the local community, Bernie Grant MP was called to see Metropolitan Police Commissioner Paul Condon.

Condon told Grant that the three officers from S01(3) had been suspended and the unit's activities halted while its procedures were reviewed. Condon admitted he had no previous knowledge of the type of equipment employed on Joy and found its use abhorrent.

On Saturday, 7th August thousands of people joined a peaceful demonstration through Crouch End to express their anger at Joy's murder. Instead of the officers involved being arrested and charged, Assistant Chief Constable Peter Conlan of Essex Police was appointed under Police Complaints Authority supervision (PCA) to investigate the case. He will report to the Crown Prosecution Services (CPS) as to whether to bring charges.

Charles Wardle MP, Minister of State at the Home Office responsible for the Immigration Service, announced that there would be a secret internal inquiry into deportation procedures. He dismissed the family's call for a public enquiry.

From the beginning we saw the usual tactics employed by the authorities when they commit a crime against a black person: spreading disinformation and defaming the victim. The police and the Home Office have consistently been caught out lying.

Stories appeared in the gutter press alleging Joy had a history of mental instability and violence and had persistently evaded the authorities in order to stay in Britain. Extreme right Tory MPs Teresa Gorman and Terry Dicks characterised Joy an "illegal immigrant" who had caused her own death.

An article in the *Evening Standard,* claiming to put the suspended officers' side of the story, said they were being "scapegoated". The Joy Gardner Campaign was characterised as a vehicle for "ultra left agitators" out to cause a riot.

The campaign is determined to address the real issues arising from Joy's murder: a secretive, brutal and racist immigration policy; a police force beyond the law; ministers who refuse to take reponsibility for the system over which they preside.

What is likely to happen now? The authorities' main weapon is bureaucratic delay and lack of accountability. The Conlan/PCA report on Joy's killing is expected to go to Barbara Mills, Director of Public Prosecutions by the beginning of October. She must then decide whether to bring charges and if so, whether they should be murder charges or lesser ones.

The performance of Mills and the CPS in prosecuting police officers is appalling, especially in "politically sensitive" cases. This is shown by her failure to bring charges against the fit-up merchants in the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad and the farcical prosecution leading to the acquittal of the Guildford Four cops.

The Joy Gardner Campaign aims to maintain pressure on the authorities to bring the police officers involved in Joy's death to trial and to hold a full public enquiry into the circumstances of the killing, including a review of all immigration policy and deportation practice.

If we are to succeed, we need the broadest possible support from all sections of the public.

● **For further information and affiliation contact: The Joy Gardner Campaign c/o 3, Devonshire Chambers, 577 High Road, London N17 6SB.**

Staring into the abyss

Christine Shawcroft, a Tower Hamlets Labour councillor from the Isle of Dogs, probes the disturbing BNP by-election victory.

HOW COULD the British National Party have won a council seat on the Isle of Dogs - in a ward which until recently was one of the staunchest Labour strongholds in Tower Hamlets?

Their vote more than doubled from last year's Millwall by-election, when they got 20 per cent. The Labour vote increased by a couple of hundred, but the vital seven needed to beat the BNP eluded us.

The fact that the BNP won by a small margin is irrelevant. They won with 1,480 votes which is 1,480, not seven, too many.

A Labour Party activist in the Isle of Dogs told *Briefing*:

"Labour candidate James Hunt has regularly attended public meetings run by the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Committee and frequently denied there were such things as racial attacks. He said: 'The Pakis make it up to get rehoused'.

The Millwall ward selected him earlier this summer following a takeover by extreme right-wing, racist elements.

The chair of Millwall ward told a public meeting that she would instruct local Labour councillors to allocate council housing only to people whose fathers were born in the Isle of Dogs.

Local left activists were excluded from the by-election campaign, told they could not canvass and were not even sent posters.

Their work in the by-election had to be done secretly, behind the back of the ward chair."

I've often been told, by people harking back to the infamous "dockers support Enoch Powell" march, that Islanders are inherently racist.

This is hysterical nonsense. Only a few hundred workers out of several thousand supported that march. The reality today is that Islanders live surrounded by luxury housing - yet there are no homes for them.

They live in the shadow of opulent, marble-floored office blocks, but there are no jobs for them. The BNP vote contains only a small number of committed fascists. If the rest are bitter, angry and confused, wanting to hit out at somebody - anybody - is it any wonder?

Such racist views as there are, possessed by a vocal minority, have been given legitimacy and made to sound like plain common sense by racist propaganda about "Island homes for Island people" emanating from the ruling Liberals.

Paddy Ashdown has always looked the other way in the past - only now that we are staring into the abyss is he taking it seriously and talking about an inquiry into Liberal tactics in Tower Hamlets.

Even so, the canvassing I did early in the campaign gave no indication that the BNP were running Labour close. Rather, the result seemed similar to last year, so that I was afraid the Liberals might win, but didn't guess the horror to come.

That is, until the week before polling-day when, in the worst political miscalculation since Napoleon marched on Moscow, a decision was made to leak fake canvass returns to the press showing the BNP pulling ahead.

Which incisive political theorist came up with this brainwave, and what arguments there were on the campaign committee about it, I do not know.

I was removed as the Local Government Committee representative on the campaign committee early on when the chair of the ward and the candidate refused to sit in the same room as me - the highest accolade of my political career.

But I'm told that the object of this immoral exercise was to talk up the BNP vote both to take votes from the Liberals and to panic doubtful Labour supporters back into the fold. And as the intention was to boost the BNP, who can deny that it succeeded brilliantly?

A band-wagon started to roll, with the BNP redoubling their efforts. Newspaper journalists and TV crews from all the national and local media, and some from abroad, descended on Millwall.

Slavering hacks invaded the shops and the pubs, thrusting microphones under local noses, begging to be told how much local people hated Bangladeshis. This media circus, plus many organisational problems on the day, delivered the vote to the fascists.

Now the left councillors on the Isle of Dogs have to try and pick up the pieces. We will not allow the BNP councillor to use our neighbourhood meetings as his platform.

The council workforce will not co-operate with him in any way. On Friday afternoon after the by-election they all came out on strike in protest.

Searching questions have to be asked about the Labour campaign. How did the local ward become infected with the "Island homes for Island people" virus, leading the candidate to write to local papers attacking the chair of the local Bengali Action Group?

Why was the organisation on the day left in the hands of amateurs incapable of crossing off polling numbers from the right register?

Many of us feel that the Regional Labour Party should run an inquiry into the whole disaster.

Tower Hamlets fightback

A defence camapaign has been set up in East London's Tower Hamlets following the savage beating inflicted on 17-year-old Quaddas Ali by a white gang.

Ali was set upon by a group of seven white men and one white women on September 8th.

Hundreds of people gathered outside the Royal London Hospital, where he was on a life support machine, for a peaceful vigil. Police attacked the crowd, which understandably led to a fightback and lurid media stories of a "race riot".

The Tower Hamlets Nine Defence Campaign - named after the nine arrested at the vigil - has been set up with the help and advice of the Newham Monitoring project.

Bengali youngsters in the area have also come together to form a group called Youth Connections which aims to combat racism on the streets.



AFA Demo. PHOTO: Bryn Griffiths

The white smokescreen

Anti-Fascist Action's **Nick Stone** responds to an article in the last issue of *Briefing* by Ann Kane of the Anti-Racist Alliance.

ANN KANE'S article "A New Type of Anti-Fascist Movement" begs so many questions it is difficult to know where to start.

The most bizarre aspect of the article is its failure to understand the agenda of the fascist far right, or its attraction to an audience of predominantly white working class kids who should, logically, be part of the natural constituency of the left.

We are told that "the ARA is founded on an advanced political principle, namely that the victims of racism and those who are today in the front line of attack by fascists and the far right should play the leading role in the anti-racist movement."

Surely those best placed to lead the anti-fascist movement are those most experienced in the struggle against fascism. Those, whether black or white, gay or straight, whose knowledge of the beast has been gleaned from struggle.

In reality, Ann Kane's argument is a smokescreen. ARA is led by Mark Wadsworth, Lee Jasper and their white, middle-class, left hangers-on.

But even accepting this, "black self-organisation" and "those who are today in the front line of attacks by fascists" aren't the same thing.

In recent months, the British National Party and National Front have organised concerted opposition to the annual Bloody Sunday commemoration March and to the James Connolly march in Edinburgh, and have attacked the Irish community in Kilburn.

By the twisted logic of Ann Kane's politics, ARA should now be calling for the anti-fascist movement to be led by the Irish community.

Drawing up a league table of oppression misses the point. Fascism is a threat to the working class as a whole and requires a class-wide response.

For us in Anti-Fascist Action an effective anti-fascist movement has to have two clear tasks: combating fascism ideologically and physically.

Fascism's main audience at present is the white working class - principally youth - those most demoralised and stripped of opportunity by the misery of the Thatcher/Major years.

Groups like the BNP aren't just a mob of racist thugs. They present themselves to their audience as a radical alternative to the ills of capitalist society.

The BNP's statement of political objectives, *A New Way Forward*, tells us: "We fight, not just against chaos and muddle, but against powerful vested interests, whose profiteers fear and hate us for the challange that we pose to their position in the rotting corpse of the old order."

Like their German and Italian forefathers, the modern day fascists present themselves to the working class as a nationalist but avowedly socialist force. The anti-fascist movement should present a class-based alternative to this kind of crap.

It should be a concern of the left to fight for the estates and football grounds which the BNP sees as uncontested ground, and for the hearts and minds of the kids the BNP addresses. It should be, but it isn't.

Instead, for suggesting that BNP arguments be met with radical arguments from the left, AFA has been denounced as "racist" or "pandering to racism" by the likes of Mark Wadsworth and Ann Kane.

As for physically combating fascism, the history of Cable Street, of the 43 Group, the 62 Group, of Lewisham and beyond - a militant tradition to which all the left pays lip service - should tell us that the violence of the right has to be met in kind.

In fact, ARA, ANL et al flinch from this. Far from supporting "no-platform", Mark Wadsworth has sat down with NF's Patrick Harrington on national television.

We take no comfort from this. Like the interminable series of candle-lit vigils outside Bexley Council, it serves only to demonstrate to the fascists the impotence of their opponents.

For the left to be effective in its anti-fascism, it has to beat down the physical challenge of the far right.

Don't take our word for it. Take Hitler: "Only once they could have stopped our movement - if our adversaries had understood its principles and from the first day had smashed, with the utmost brutality the nucleus of our new movement."

The successes of an anti-fascist movement should be measured by its effect on its opponents, not by the number of trade union resolutions in support of this demo or that festival. Judged on this scale, ARA and ANL count for little.

Last year AFA engineered the crushing of Blood and Honour's attempts to go public again at Waterloo station.

With the new football season, we again begin work at football grounds across the capital. It might not get us on the James Whale show, or give us the full backing of the TUC, but at least it will challenge the fascists! ❑



Hitting those who hurt

Leonora Lloyd looks at the pernicious Child Support Act and urges Labour to take action.

LAST YEAR'S Labour Party Conference passed an excellent composite opposing the Child Support Act and calling for "every possible step" to be taken by the leadership "to combat the effects of the Act and to publicise its effect".

This year nine resolutions call for implementation of the composite and for opposition to the Act.

The reality is that the Party has done little or nothing to oppose this pernicious Act. It is not as if there is not plenty to oppose.

All the warnings about the effects of the Act have been borne out and a campaign against it led from the front bench would win many friends for the Party.

The Government brought in the Act with claims that it would help women get money off errant and missing fathers.

The reality is that it has not helped those most in need of help - women bringing up children on inadequate social security.

It has also penalised the worst-off men - the unemployed and those on low pay. It is now clear that those who claimed that the reason behind the Act was to save the Government money have been proved completely correct.

Gingerbread, the organisation for single parents and their children, believes that lone parents do not want to live on state benefits.

Mary Honeyball, Gingerbread's chief executive, points out that "it would be far more constructive if ministers were to direct their energies into providing employment opportunities and childcare instead of continually running down lone parents and their children".

Gingerbread accepts the principle that maintenance should be paid by absent parents, but has major concerns with the Act, which are shared by the proposers of the resolutions to this year's conference.

These include:-

• The poorest women will not gain anything from the Act, as any money obtained will be deducted pound for pound from benefit.

• Women who refuse to name the father for reasons the Child Support Agency does not accept lose 20 per cent of benefit, increasing rather than alleviating poverty.

• Women are being pressurised into naming men whom they left because of violence, opening them up to more attacks.

• The scheme actually deepens the poverty trap. If maintenance is paid, the formula does not include childcare costs, trapping the lone parent into benefit - if the maintenance replaces benefit, then the parent is no longer eligible for free school meals and prescriptions, etc.

• For the parent paying maintenance, the amount assessed does not take into account the fact that they may have heavy travel costs to see their child. Better-off absent parents can increase housing and pension costs to reduce or avoid maintenance payments.

• But most important of all, the scheme is designed to save the government money and all the evidence is that the Agency is going for easy targets, such as men already paying.

The Campaign Against the Child Support Act has produced a rights sheet which sets out all the available options. This costs £1 for claimants and £5 for others. It will be holding a fringe meeting on Wednesday lunchtime at Conference to underline the message in the resolutions.

Clearly, the Act is a disaster, designed to save the Government money, put civil servants in an impossible position, and increase rather than lessen women's dependence on men and the benefits' system.

The Labour Party must oppose it at all levels and develop policies that really help women and children out of poverty and into independence. ❑

Students for sale

Jim Pride recounts the story of a young man forced into prostitution to continue his college studies.

THINK OF GAY prostitution in this country and you think of the sterotyped King's Cross rent boy. There is, however, a different side to it.

Andy was just starting his second year at the University of London. Despite working through the Christmas and Easter holidays Andy had, by the middle of his third term, predictably used up his student loan and had exceeded his overdraft limit when a friend suggested prostitution as a solution. When the bank took his cheque card away Andy decided this was the only realistic option open to him.

Before beginning work at the brothel Andy was interviewed by the manager, who was reluctant to employ him because of his "chicken" status (the term used to refer to boys under the age of 21, the minimum age for legal consenting gay sex).

Andy describes the brothel as "opulent". The six cubicles were each equipped with shower and couch, pictures and silk drapes. The boys sat in a TV lounge, watching Sky TV, with a one-way mirror along one side of the room allowing clients to pick the boy they want. Clients were told the prices, which varied between £75 and £100, before meeting the boy. Once the boy had been selected the client was sent to a cubicle and the chosen boy joined him.

The boys earned £25 a client plus tips, a situation which is good for the new boys - most regular clients are eager to try out someone new - and a £15 bonus is given if the client wished to fuck the boy.

The boys earned nothing if they were not chosen. They had to work three nights from 11 pm to 2 am a week including either Friday or Saturday. The brothel also ran a call-out service.

This was obviously more dangerous for the boys so they were given a £25 bonus for call-out work. Without bonuses or tips Andy made up to £200 a week, but also had bad weeks where he might only clear £50.

The profession attracts a varied cross-section. The average boy is aged around 23, and spends no more than two years doing the work. Virtually all claim benefits and predictably ethnic minorities are over-represented.

Andy met middle-class men choosing it as an alternative to a "normal" job, "habitual rents" who have usually got in to prostitution at an early age and depend on it to provide them with a life style they would otherwise be denied.

There was also an Australian who had run out of money touring Europe, and an out-of-work TV graphics designer. Understandably Andy described his first night as one of the most incredibly nerve-racking times of his life. This was eased slightly by the manager who arranged sympathetic clients for a boy's first time.

For the most part the client-pro relationship was so impersonal that Andy didn't get involved and could treat it as just another job. When asked if he had felt degraded or humiliated, he said that he often came away feeling that the client had been humiliated. The most common emotion amongst the boys while working was hilarity.

In contrast to the varied backgrounds of the boys the clients were white and middle-class. Andy's clients included a TV company director, a prominent barrister, a minor TV presenter, an American historian, sailors and, of course, the obligatory vicar. While a few of the clients were pleasant most, especially the businessmen, were distinctly unpleasant.

This attitude was mutual with the boys ridiculing the client's physiques afterwards and laughing at them for paying £50 a time for hand-jobs.

This arguably warped sense of humour helped the boys distance themselves from their work. A prime example of this was Andy's description of a call-out job he did.

Called to a hotel room, he walked into find a German businessman tied to the bed hand and foot, a black dustbin liner taped over his head containing cotton wool soaked in "poppers" while another boy sat tugging a piece of string tied to his genitals. While this does have a comic side, to disregard the danger so readily seems not only unusual but unhealthy.

Brothel work, at least within the gay community, is regarded differently to rent, partly because there is much less physical risk for those working in brothels.

Andy lost his job in bizarre circumstances. The brothel he was working for knew that they where about to be raided and while they decided to stay open they were worried about the implications of Andy's "chicken" status.

The manager arranged for him to be transferred to another gay London brothel. This was fine until the owner of the second brothel began to lust after Andy. When Andy rejected his advances he was sacked.

Andy describes his experience as "just part of my life, I won't go back to it but it helped me out when I was in a very tight position".

Food for thought the next time Nigel Foreman, Education Minister, claims: "There's no such thing as student hardship." ❑

Socialist Campaign Group Network

sends greetings to all delegates at Labour Party conference

Organise for a socialist Labour Party

JUSTICE

Barred from the light

The Birmingham 6 and Judith Ward are free, but there are still many people in jail who ought not to be. **Val Veness** reports.

THE MASS MEDIA have seemingly fallen silent in recent months over cases of wrongful conviction.

After all the great successes of two or three years ago that released the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, two of the Tottenham Three and Judy Ward, the going has become considerably tougher for justice campaigners.

However, Liberty (formerly the National Council for Civil Liberties) estimates that there are still over 800 prisoners in British jails who are innocent of the crimes they were sent down for.

Of course, it is never easy to argue that people convicted of horrendous, crimes are innocent - a right-wing press for whom the Boys in Blue can do no wrong, distraught relatives wanting to forget their horror and a deeply flawed legal system which steadfastly refuses to admit its mistakes all add up to formidable obstacles.

As someone who was involved in the Guildford and Birmingham campaigns, I know how difficult the actual battles were and how desperate the people in prison and their relatives often feel. It is worth briefly outlining just a few of the campaigns still struggling to exonerate various people fitted up.

● **The M25 Three**

Three young black men have been jailed for a series of crimes committed around the outskirts of London in Surrey, including murder.

Strangely, both the victims and police initially reported the attackers as "two white and one black man"

All three convicted men are clearly black and have alibis - yet they are now in prison awaiting an appeal to the House of Lords after recently losing their case in the Appeal Court.

● **The East Ham Two**

Sri Lankans Prem Sivalingham and Sam Kulasingham were convicted of the firebombing of a house in Newham that resulted in the deaths of three other Tamils.

Both men have always proclaimed their innocence and point to the role of a police informer in both the attack and frame-up.

Another informer was subsequently shown to have lied in court. After two heroic hunger strikes by Sam Kulasingham, they are now awaiting a new appeal hearing at which the campaign is optimistic they will be freed.

● **The Carl Bridgewater case**

The long campaign to prove the innocence of the four men convicted of killing newspaper boy Carl Bridgewater at Yewtree Farm in the West Midlands is still continuing despite a great many disappointments over the last few years.

One of the convicted men, Pat Molloy, is now dead, but the other three - Michael Hickey, Vincent Hickey and Jim Robinson - are all still locked up.

The campaign has been spearheaded by Ann Whelan, Michael Hickey's mother, and supported by Anita Richards - former Birmingham Six campaign national secretary - and by journalist Paul Foot.

For the full story, read the book *Murder At The Farm* by Paul Foot - which has now been updated.

● **Maynard, Dudley and Clark**

A longstanding miscarriage concerns three Islington men sentenced for a murder they never committed.

Sent down for the killing of a man named Moseley, the so-called "torso murder", their campaign was even supported by Billy Moseley, the victim's son, yet they still languish in prison.

Reg Dudley's daughter Kathy is still battling to prove these men are innocent.

● **Frank Johnson**

Frank Johnson has served 17 years of a life sentence for allegedly murdering friend and employer John Sheridan in Whitechapel in 1975.

He was convicted solely on the basis of evidence given by two alleged accomplices - one of whom was a documented police informer and agent provocateur.

He was denied proper legal representation at the trial and has always insisted on his innocence.

The campaign to get Frank another day in court and a fair trial has drawn support from Judy Ward and Billy Power, one of the Birmingham Six, and has attracted extensive press coverage in Ireland.

Others still await justice - even after their friends have been freed. Winston Silcott (Tottenham 3) is still in prison but awaiting a decision soon. Paul Hill is returning for the "Share murder" trial in Belfast in October.

Neil Latimer - the only one of the UDR Four still in jail - awaits a chance to clear himself despite the freeing of his three co-accused.

We could fill a book with all the people wrongly incarcerated by a legal system only too happy to pin things on scapegoats.

There are many women in prison who should not be there - victims who are sometimes totally innocent but may also simply be the person to take the rap for domestic violence, drug couriering or shielding more serious male criminals.

Not all of these are miscarriages but they are all clearly victims of a legal system much more likely to lock you up if your female - or black or Irish or anything not part of the white male, ruling class establishment.

● **Campaign Addresses:**

M25 Three Campaign, c/o Hazel Rave, 75 Scylla Road, Peckham Rye, London SE15 3PB.

East Ham Two Campaign, c/o Valerie Veness, Room 8, 219 Mare Street, London E8 3QQ.

Frank Johnson Campaign, c/o Red Rose Centre, 129 Seven Sisters Road, Holloway, London N7.

The Free Frank Johnson Campaign sends greetings to all Labour Party delegates

Justice now!

Labour Briefing

Fringe Meeting

British Justice: what a joke!

Monday, September 27th
7pm-9pm
Royal Albion Hotel
(opposite Palace Pier)
Speakers:
Judith Ward, Billy Power (Birmingham 6), George Silcott, Jeremy Corbyn MP.
Admission £1.50 (75p unwaged)

Building our forces again

Graham Durham responds to an article on the miners' struggle by *Briefing*'s political correspondent in the last issue.

THE SAD DEATH of Edward Thompson, who did so much to resurrect the lives and struggles of the early English working class, serves to remind us how quickly the fog of myth and invisibility can fall on even the most recent events.

Even now such a consensus view of the struggle against pit closures of the last year is descending on the left and choking the truth. This version usually begins by correctly berating the TUC and Labour leaderships and then concludes that the working-class was too weak, too out of practice and too defeated to save miners' jobs.

Indeed even *Briefing* (July 1993), through its political correspondent, concludes that it was not possible to have built general strike action because "the labour movement ... simply did not have the strength to burst the bureaucratic chains".

For those of us present at the October 1993 demonstrations the inspirational power of the working class shown and felt requires that we expose and rebuff the gloomy consensus of our historians of defeat.

Militant miners and their supporters, particularly in Women Against Pit Closures, showed time and again that they had the dedication and audacious fighting power to inspire workers across Britain.

Whenever miners met up with other workers - rail and busworkers, council and healthworkers - a great mutual strength and desire was experienced. The eerie silence of London and other cities on April 2nd was a potent demonstration of our strength and the possibilities of further action.

Even Jimmy Knapp was forced to lead - briefly - from the front.

There were and are great issues to be fought over - pit closures, rail and bus privatisation and a host of smaller dynamic disputes such as Burnsalls waiting to be won. Our enemies were and are weak and divided - yet we lost a vital moment.

Of course it is correct to blame John Smith and Norman Willis and their ilk for their role in blocking solidarity and nudging the miners struggle into respectability, select committees and certain defeat.

What is undoubtedly more difficult to say is that the NUM leadership itself sidetracked the campaign into rallies, petitions and glossy propaganda.

As soon as it became clear that the trade union leaders were not prepared to organise effective strike action to defend the pits and other jobs under threat then the NUM should have used its considerable resources to build links with every workplace and encourage and support action to defend jobs.

The widespread anger of miners coming to London to walk round Hyde Park should have been channelled into local strike committees appealing to and helping to organise local strike action.

In this way the energy wasted on endless rallies and lobbies would have led workers experiencing calls for action and practical support - all the evidence suggests that such a call would have met a clear response.

A national rank and file organisation of militant workers should have emerged to provide information and support. Instead the National Miners Support Network was bureaucratically controlled by those who now tell us of the inevitability of defeat. Instead of regular bulletins on organising strike action the NMSN produced bland irregular reports of speeches and endless rallies.

Months were lost during the autumn until the struggle was revived by the women's pit camps and eventually by limited strike action led from above. The demoralisation which set in amongst the most militant workers was movingly recorded on video by Brenda Nixon.

From a fuel injection of strength in October to the defeat of May with thousands of militants forced into redundancy and 21 pits closed was not the inevitable path.

Throughout the period the weak and divided Tory government staggered from crisis to crisis, only clinging on as no organised strike wave pushed it from power.

A great chance was lost and a terrible defeat has been suffered. Our tasks are to build again a rank and file trade union response to attacks - the mass pickets at Timex show potential. ❑

Announcing the sixth Socialist Conference

The Winding Wheel, Chesterfield
Saturday 30th October — Sunday 31st October 1993.

The Socialist Movement/Network presents a weekend of non-sectarian discussion, debate, information, ideas (...and fun). Looking beyond the Age of the Individual and the Free Market, the theme of the conference will be OPTING IN...

* the fight for democratic public services.
* and a sustainable and equal economics to pay for them.

Confirmed speakers so far:
Tony Benn, MP (new book - *Common Sense*)
Moses Mayekiso (South African National Civic Organisation)
Hilary Wainwright
(new book - *Arguments for a New Left*)

Plus many activists from trade union and community campaigns to defend and improve public services; and socialist, green and feminist economists working on alternative economic strategies. Space for self-organised workshops. Creche. Disabled access. Food and bars. Saturday night benefit for the Chesterfield Labour Club Appeal.

Socialist Movement/Network 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW or Freephone Answerphone 0800 58 16 11.

TRADE UNION PICKET NOTEBOOK

Fat cheques and smooth words



Dave Osler takes a less than enthusiastic view of the twists and turns of this year's Trade Union Congress.

THE 125TH Trade Union Congress opened in Brighton exactly one week after the prosaically titled Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993 (Commencement No 1 and Transitional Provisions) Order 1993 came onto the statute book.

The timing was a calculated insult.

Wages councils - the last remaining protection for the low paid -were unceremoniously scrapped and the Bridlington Agreement preventing inter-union poaching rendered a dead letter.

Unions must now give seven days notice before striking, while a "citizens' right" to stop unlawful industrial action through the courts has been instituted.

Workers will now have to contract in before union dues can be deducted by check-off. The financial implications for many unions, and ultimately the Labour Party, could be devastating.

Despite this desperate backdrop, the possibility of building a fightback scarcely figured in TUC proceedings.

The major questions of the week were labour-union links - technically not even on the agenda - and the readmission of the electricians in the form of the newly-merged AEEU.

There was also, of course, the big fuss over the new, media-friendly TUC general secretary John Monks.

John Smith cleverly devoted his speech to a major intervention in his drive to win one member one vote, without even mentioning the subject.

Briefing doorstepping journalists as he arrived at the Grand Hotel at lunchtime, the Labour leader bluntly reiterated his no compromise stance. Two hours later, he stepped onto the rostrum and turned on the charm.

Delivering a carefully crafted blend of Tory-bashing and praise for the unions, he offered the audience a charter of rights at work. This was a repackaging of existing policies but included a new commitment to protection from unfair dismissal from day one, abolishing the present two-year wait.

The speech was designed to strengthen Smith's negotiating hand in meetings with union leaders that evening. Garfield Davies, general secretary of the shopworkers' union USDAW, duly announced that his union would ditch conference policy and back OMOV.

Thursday saw heated debate over the return of the electricians. The result had been stitched up well in advance, but nevertheless, standard procedures were manipulated so that nothing was left to chance. What price democrary when a cheque for £1 million-worth of affiliation fees is on the table?

The old EETPU electricians' union was expelled from the TUC in 1988 for persistently recruiting from other unions. But in 1992, it merged with the engineering union AEU, and the combined AEEU earlier this year voted 91 per cent in favour of a Congress House comeback.

Some 14 unions objected, and a conciliation committee was duly formed under UNISON'S Rodney Bickerstaff. It cobbled together a peace deal, presented to the conference as a supplementary report.

The majority of objectors backed an emergency resolution delaying a decision until a special conference in the new year. This was ruled inadmissible.

During the debate, a succession of general secretaries, including Bill Morris of the TGWU, argued for the clear constitutional right to move reference back.

No way, said Alan Tuffin of the UCW in the chair; a straight yes-or-no vote was all that was on offer. Anywhere else, such a ruling would have sparked a challenge to the chair. But in Brighton, no-one had the bottle.

Despite the harsh words, and the spectacle of Morris ripping up a letter from AEEU's Bill Jordan guaranteeing adherence to TUC rules, the report was agreed by 4,303,000 to 2,837,000.

The argument that if the electricians were not readmitted the AEEU would form a rival union federation carried the day. Yet the Tories' abolition of Bridlington means that the AEEU will do pretty much what it likes, inside or outside the TUC tent.

The "no" camp was undoubtedly in the right, but for all the wrong reasons. For most general secretaries, the issue is essentially one of turf wars.❑

Hackney Unison No. 3 branch

sends greetings to Conference and calls on the Labour Party to support action to defeat the 1.5% pay policy.

Terry Sims Chair
Keith Veness Secretary

Winter of our discontent

TRADE UNION PICKET NOTEBOOK

THE ANNOUNCEMENT by Kenneth Clarke of an effective pay freeze for over five million public sector workers could spark a round of escalating disputes through the winter and into next year.

Jane Connor
Hackney UNISON

Most public sector workers reluctantly settled for 1.5 per cent this year, although UNISON white collar workers are still being balloted over strike action.

Hopefully this latest attack may help swing the UNISON ballot. But the pay freeze - unless substantial productivity increases are met - will not be swallowed so easily.

In the public sector increased productivity means job losses. How can health workers increase productivity, presumably by treating more patients, when the Government's NHS reforms stop patients being offered treatment?

With most union leaders already trying to rule out strike action whilst whining at the unfairness of it all it won't be easy to build the fighting unity that is essential if the Tories' incomes policy is to be broken.

The new anti-union laws make strike action in the public sector harder - but not impossible - to organise.

That's why initiatives like the launch of the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic UNISON (CDFU) on October 30th are more important than ever.

Above all, we need to support those public sector workers fighting back now, like at University College Hospital, to rebuild workers' confidence that the Tories, and the bureaucrats, can be taken on and beaten.

Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic UNISON

London Launch Conference

Saturday 30th October, 1.30pm - 4.30pm at Friends Meeting House, London NW1
Contact Brian Gardner, Islington UNISON A Branch, 2 Orleston Road, London N7 8LH.

Workers on London Underground's Central Line started balloting on industrial action on September 13th in response to the sacking of tube driver Pat Sikorski.

At the TUC conference this month, 18 general secretaries, presidents and deputy general secretaries of various unions signed a petition backing Sikorski. The petition was also signed by Labour Transport spokesman John Prescott who agreed to write a letter of protest to London Underground's general manager.

The dispute was sparked off when a driver and guard were accused of "malicious damage to the seating of a tube train". Both strenuously denied the allegation. Proceedings were dropped against the driver but the guard - on precisely the same evidence - was sacked.

Tube workers decided to meet to discuss industrial action but an Underground manager tore down notices of the meeting. When Pat Sikorski objected to this he was sacked; his appeal earlier this month failed to get his job back.

All four major civil service unions are balloting for one-day strike action on November 5th in protest at the government's market testing - privatisation by the back door.

The unions - CPSA, NUCPS, IRSF and NIPSA - have consistantly shown that flogging off the work of civil servants, with its inevitable job losses, has no benefit for the public.

Tory ministers have failed to answer these charges and surprisingly the unions have received no response to their request for a meeting with the Prime Minister.

Market testing has already sparked walk-outs in Glasgow, Liverpool and Bristol.

Bus worker and London trade union activist Gerry Downing has been sacked by bosses for distributing copies of the rank-and-file newspaper, *Busworkers' Punch.*

Management at London bus companies have been trying since last October to force workers to take a 20% pay cut and 20% increase in hours. TGWU officials tried to persuade the workers to accept the deal but ballot after ballot went in favour of action and a group and newspaper - both called *Busworkers Punch* - were launched to continue the battle against the attack on pay and conditions.

Downing says that the official reason given for his sacking was "unreasonable behaviour, intending to disrupt normal business and industrial relations".

● *Busworkers Punch* can be contacted at PO Box 30, London SE15. To give messages of support, telephone 081 694 1454

Performance-related pay, cash limits, fixed term contracts, budget capping, centralised control, incipient privatisation. Sound familiar? This time it's the police under the Tory hammer, and they don't like it at all.

Dick Coyles, the new chairman (sic) of the Police Federation, says, "It's market forces coming into a service-orientated organisation." The 140,000 member Federation, with support from virtually all other police organisations, is mounting the biggest campaign in its history against the proposals contained in the Sheehy Report and the White Paper on policing. In a surprise move it has turned to the labour movement for support, recognising that what is happening to its members has already happened to other public sector workers.

The Federation was set up by statute in 1919 after the police strike in Liverpool. It is not allowed to strike and forbidden to affiliate to the TUC. The quid pro quo has always been formal recognition and a guarantee of negotiated settlements on wages and conditions. Now these long-standing rights are under threat. In June, the Federation staged a 30,000-strong rally in Wembley against the Sheehy proposals, but since then has concentrated on lobbying politicians. While welcoming support from the Labour front bench, the Federation is banking on a backbench Tory revolt. While the police may expect more sympathy from these quarters than certain other groups of workers, they shouldn't bank on it. If the government decides to railroad the Sheehy proposals through the Commons, some rank and file coppers will begin to wonder whether their leaders are wise to eschew all industrial action, legal or not.



Ivan the Terrible, Galtieri, Pinochet - all purchasers of British arms - escorted from this year's Aldershot arms fair.

Swords into ploughshares?

Converting military industry into socially useful production requires a new kind of politics, argues **Will McMahon** of the Campaign Against the Arms Trade.

WHEN THE Indonesian government bought 24 Hawk combat/trainer aircraft for £500 million in June 1993 there was an almost deafening silence from the labour and trade union movement.

Not a protest was heard against a regime whose 18 year occupation of East Timor has led to the starvation or murder of one-third of its population.

Instead there were sighs of relief from union officials that jobs had been saved at British Aerospace plants in Lancashire and Humberside.

The end of the cold war and the collapse in global military procurement has meant that across the metropolitan capitalist world military budgets are being slashed. This, inevitably, has led to job losses - 25,000 in Britain from April 1992-3. The military industry can be expected to contract by a further 15 per cent in the next five years.

As a result there has been a big push to sell more weapons abroad. Just under 80 per cent of Britain's exports go to Third World countries - in particular the Middle East and more recently East Asia where a massive regional arms race is now in progress. Even so, military exports have fallen every year since 1988.

How should the labour movement respond? Simply calling for military conversion to socially useful production, while nice in theory, does not answer many practical questions. The experience of Lucas Aerospace Combine proposals twenty years ago and other attempts at single company or site conversions show it is not possible to develop a politics of conversion factory by factory. The new politics of conversion must be based upon a global solution to the crisis facing British military industry.

There is an obvious economic and political agenda for the left in all of this. Such an agenda requires strategic government intervention coupled with decentralised involvement of all those working in military industry.

The rationale for a national conversions strategy is two-fold: jobs and economic development.

Military expenditure costs thousands of jobs. Military production has the highest capital to labour ratio of any industrial production.

Studies have shown that a switch from military expenditure to civil production could produce more jobs per pound spent. For example a 50 per cent cut in military expenditure diverted to other sectors could produce at least half a million jobs by the year 2001.

Simply trying to export more to the Third World - leaving the ethics of this aside for a moment - will not replace the orders lost due to cuts in domestic procurement. The overseas market is shrinking and Eastern European manufacturers can make more or less the same aircraft at half the price.

Given that military production diverts resources from the civil economy without producing any real benefit and has produced hidden job losses there must be a real incentive to change priorities.

Yet the trade unions have backed off from the idea of conversion in the hope that a wider audience might be addressed. The Labour leadership seems to be chewing the issue over. The politics of conversion has disappeared from view.

The first step must be to create a national conversion agency which would be a centre for expert information and practical advice for employees, local authorities and employers. Its role would be to inform government and to aid grass roots initiatives. This should be created before the next election so that it can prepare analysis and planning now. It could be called "The Shadow Conversion Agency" - to emphasise the government implications of the project.

Such a body would need funding for those attempting to convert from military to civil production. Millions of pounds of government money is spent each year on underwriting arms sales which could be used to underwrite conversion plans.

Various macro-economic policies could be developed to encourage the development of conversion programmes. For example, fiscal policies could be adapted to benefit companies that decide to move away from military to civil production. Military companies could be required by law to spend a certain percentage of turnover on developing conversion strategies.

Meanwhile the government could develop civil projects appropriate to conversion, by using engineering and electronic skills in an upgrading programme for British Rail.

Whilst a Labour government could provide the legislative framework, implementation should be carried through at a local level.

An economy re-orientating in this way would allow other issues to be considered. For example, the popular perception of Britain's role in the world would shift.

The military pragmatism that underlies so much of government policy (development of the H-bomb and support for US intervention in Vietnam, for example) would begin to lose its industrial base. Instead of sending weaponry to the military rulers of Indonesia a political and economic boycott of that regime would be more viable. ❑

Drawing together

Jeff Ryan recounts the story of the Workers' Aid for Bosnia Campaign's convoy which is carrying food and supplies to that devastated country.

THE UNITED STATES and the European Community are pushing hard for the Bosnian government to accept the "peace plan", albeit with a few amendments giving the rump of Bosnia access to a sea port.

The plan would split the territory of Bosnia into three on ethnic lines, and give the Bosnian state only 30 per cent of its former territory.

This will mean the death of a multi-ethnic Bosnia and set the seal of approval on "ethnic cleansing".

Before the war, there was little demand from Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats for a break-up of Bosnia. People who have lived side-by-side for generations, who inter-married and worked together, have been forced into conflict first by reactionary Serbian chauvinism and then by Croatian nationalism.

The Workers' Aid for Bosnia Campaign defends the right of multi-ethnic Bosnia to exist and brings a message of solidarity to the people of Bosnia.

The convoy set off for France after its successful tour through Britain culminating in a visit to the TUC on September 9th. The convoy has split into two in order to visit more countries but even so it is not able to respond to floods of requests coming in from all over Europe.

The organisers even considered not visiting some of the towns on the route as the lorries are full and the pressure on the ground has been so tremendous. In Brescia, Italy, the whole of the left has united around the campaign: the Communist Party and 50 trade unions are giving support.

Morale is high and as the convoy travels through Europe the teams are becoming more organised and cohesive. So far the convoy has collected over £70,000 plus tens of thousands of pounds' worth of material aid.

The convoy has agreed to take in 200,000 tons of goods collected by Muslim Aid on the condition that it is distributed to all the people in Tuzla - Muslim, Serb and Croat.

In Paris the Communist Party has given the campaign a free stall at the huge annual Humanite fete and 25,000 leaflets will be distributed. The French trade union federation CGT is allowing the campaign to collect at its conference — which is unprecedented.

The convoy was joined by two juggernauts from Scandinavia in Berlin on September 15th.

These two vehicles are currently touring round Denmark and Sweden - in the same way the convoy travelled round Britain — and will visit the TUC equivalent in Copenhagen before going on to Berlin.

In Denmark, they collected £8,000 and in Sweden £10,000 in addition to filling the lorries with goods.

In Courtrai, Belgium, the northern leg of the convoy held a very successful press conference and appeared on national TV. In Hungary, the National Miners' Union and the Socialist Party have agreed to support the convoy and a series of events have been organised.

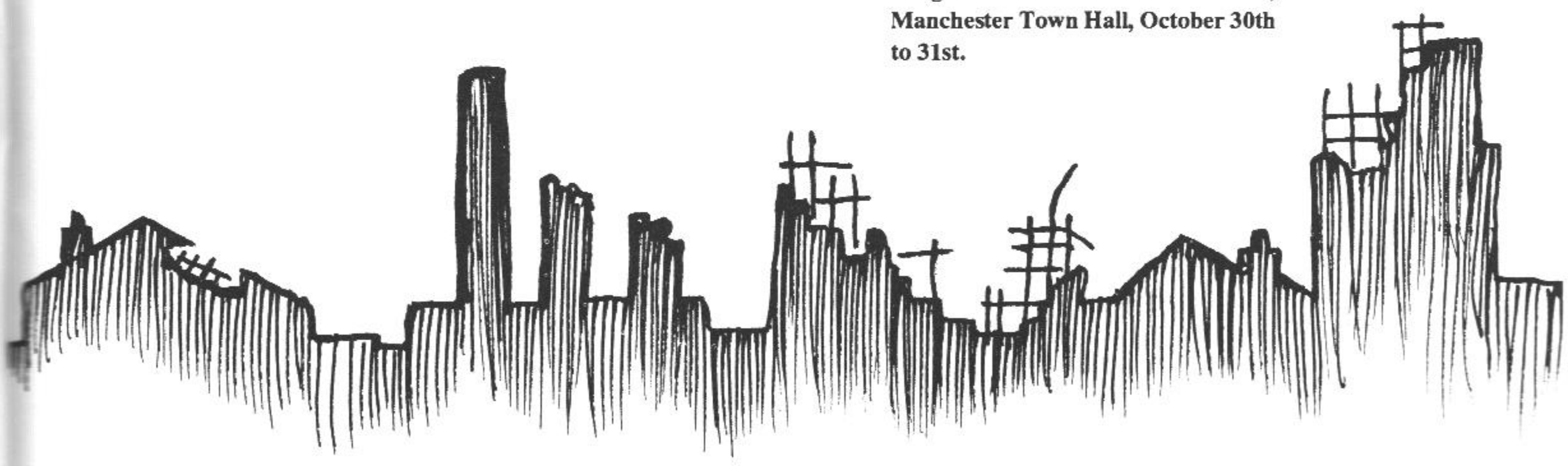
The convoy route currently covers the following cities - Lille, Biege, Courtrai, Antwerp, Oberhausen, Hamburg, Cologne, Berlin, Vienna, Graz, Paris, Leige, Charleroi, Nancy, Strasbourg, Basel, Geneva, Brescia.

At the same time Irish Solidarity with Bosnia is organising support for the convoy.

Politically the campaign has huge significance. The co-operation of the Parti Communiste Francais, support from the Hungarian Socialist Party and from the Communist Party in Brescia for a convoy which not only brings material aid but carries a political message of support for the "multi-ethnic state of Bosnia" and solidarity with all its people, is a remarkable breakthrough for a campaign launched by small groups in Britain.

This campaign has pulled together strands of the European workers' movement in a practical way unprecedented for many years.

● **Affiliate to Workers' Aid, PO Box 30, London SE15 5EP. Get your Labour Party or trade union branch to send a delegation to the National Conference, Manchester Town Hall, October 30th to 31st.**



Spread the word

During his recent visit to London **Mustafa Hejri**, general secretary of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, talked to **Keith Veness.**

KV: What is the current strength of the KDPI, both internationally and inside Iran itself?

MH: Our party is the most popular and closest to the people in Iranian Kurdistan. Of course no political parties are legally allowed there but the KDPI has overwhelming support from the Kurdish people. We are totally opposed to the "Islamic Republic" and its lack of democrary.

Look at the recent bogus "presidential election". The Iranian government does not issue figures but our sources in Kurdistan tell us that there were massive abstentions in the Kurdish provinces, with the few votes cast coming from government officials and the military. Even the local Persian and Azeri populations supported the boycott - which is tremendously encouraging.

Internationally we enjoy a growing status. Our clear aims are democracy and autonomy, with the eventual goal of a federal state.

Most progressive and democratic organisations internationally now know this. We are opposed to any dictatorship and strongly favour safeguarding human and social rights for our people.

It therefore goes without saying that we are opposed to terrorism as a tactic. These have been our objectives for many years but sadly now even some of our friends in the West will not speak out publicly because of their trading links with Tehran. But thankfully many others now recognise the real menace the Iranian government poses.

KV: What are your relations with the other Kurdish organisations?

MH: We have very close relations with all the main Kurdish organisations in Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran.

We enjoy an equal partnership with all of them but we respect each others' autonomy and individual needs.

KV: What are your links with, and views of, other Iranian opposition groups?

MH: There are so many different opposition groups it would take an hour to list them all! However, we enjoy good relations with almost all of them with two notable exceptions.

One is the People's Mujaheddin and its National Resistance Council. We originally joined it to help unite the opposition but it became clear to us that they simply want a Shia Islamic Republic with themselves in charge instead.

The other groups we want nothing to do with are the pro-monarchy/Shah ones. We believe that monarchy is fundamentally undemocratic and repressive.

KV: What does the future hold for Iran?

MH: The way the Tehran regime treats all its subject peoples daily weakens its powers. More and more of the population are realising that only a pluralist democracy will allow real freedom. In the long run the Islamic Republic is doomed.

The last few years have seen many oppressed peoples gain their freedom and many new nations come into existence.

This has galvanised the Kurdish people and increased support for the KDPI, but we remain firmly committed to a federal system within Iran. The real speed of change will depend on two things - international support and solidarity, and a real unity of the pro-democracy opposition within Iran.

KV: What are your views about Free Kurdistan - can it survive?

MH: Free Kurdistan currently still enjoys some support in the West. Because its administration has been truly democratically elected and represents the people, I believe it will survive despite all its enemies.

We have excellent relations with the Kurdish National Assembly in Erbil - because we respect each others' organisations and are very aware of each other's problems.

KV: What can supporters of the KDPI and Kurdish freedom in general do to build support for the cause in Britain - particularly in the Labour and trade union movement?

MH: The first and most vital task is to expose the real nature of Islamic fundamentalism.

Even now, sadly, a great many British politicians still do not understand its appalling character and are seeking to renew trade relations with Tehran. This simply strengthens the dictatorship and weakens any move towards democracy. We would ask all our supporters to promote our slogan of "Democracy in Iran - Freedom for Kurdistan". Support for these principles is vitally important.

Everyone must also understand the horrendous nature of the mullahs' regime. There has literally been 14 years of war between the state and its peoples. The government has censored all news of this internally and there is no free press, TV or political process. All mention of the growing Kurdish struggle is suppressed.

Over 40,000 civilians have been slaughtered in the Kurdish areas and we have lost 5,000 of our Pesh Merga soldiers and party cadres as well. Over 270 towns and villages have been demolished and their inhabitants killed or forcibly relocated - yet many parts of the Western media seem reluctant to expose these horrors.

Can I thank all our supporters in Britain for your efforts on our behalf. It is vital to build a real movement of material solidarity amongst ordinary people. As a working class person myself I know this is the key to any success.



Mustafa Hejri

Blood, oil and cover-ups

Keith Veness reports on four murders which connect the German police to the Iranian regime.

IN A GREEK restaurant in the Wilmersdorf suburb of Berlin in September last year a number of friends were eating dinner when, at 11 o'clock, three men armed with machine guns and revolvers burst through the door.

The three screamed insults in Farsi - the Persian language - before shooting dead four of the men at the table. They then fled in a car parked nearby.

The four dead men had been attending a routine meeting of the Socialist International in the German city. Said Sharafkandi, Fattah Abdoli and Homayoun Ardalan were representatives of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran - an avowedly socialist party and the largest opposition to the Iranian regime.

Nouri Dehkourdi was an Iranian oppositionist with strong sympathies towards the Kurds and had been acting as the party's translator.

There was an immediate outcry throughout Europe over the attack. Dehkourdi, who lived in Germany, was buried in Berlin on September 25th 1992.

His funeral was attended by leading members of the German left and speeches were made by Frau Dagmar on behalf of the Berlin Regional Parliament, Ismail Koshan on behalf of the German Green Party and Luis Ayala, General Secretary of the Socialist International.

The bodies of the three KDPI leaders were flown back to France, where they had lived in exile, and were buried in Pere Lachaise Cemetery, a fitting place for them which holds the bodies of the martyrs of the Paris Commune of 1871.

In front of a massive crowd, funeral speeches were read by Danielle Mitterand, wife of the French President, Claudia Roth, a German Green MEP and many other supporters of Kurdish freedom.

Messages were sent by the French Socialists, the German SPD, the Swedish and Finnish Social-Democrats, the French Communist Party, the German Greens, regional and national parties from Brittany, the Basque lands, Switzerland and from many voluntary groups and campaigns as well as all the major Kurdish political parties.

The European Parliament sent its formal greetings and many local mayors and councils throughout the world added their voices.

As usual, Britain managed to show its utter lack of international awareness. The Labour Party was not represented and the only support given was by Jeremy Corbyn MP who got 47 MPs to sign an Early Day Motion condemning the murders and fixing the blame squarely on Tehran.

The aftermath of the murders, however, started to raise serious questions about the German state's role and its relationship with Iran.

The initial response of the German police was strange as they tried to blame either the PKK - a Kurdish group from Turkey, most of whose members cannot speak Kurdish let alone Farsi and who had no quarrel with the KDPI - or put the slayings down to an internal dispute.

This approach quickly collapsed after strong denials from both the PKK and the KDPI.

Immediately after this, the German authorities changed tack and announced the appointment of a 25-strong team of investigators. They swiftly found the murder weapons, an Uzi machine gun and a Lama revolver with a silencer.

Two Lebanese Arabs, Abas Rhayel and Youssef Amin, in the pay of Tehran, were arrested and their fingerprints matched some of those on the murder weapons.

As supporters of the Iranian-backed Hizbollah it is not surprising they were involved, but they clearly were not the Farsi speaker present and the evidence began more and more to point to Kazem Darabi, an Iranian attached to the consulate in Bonn.

His arrest would have probably tied up the case but would then have led on to a full investigation of the role of the ayatollahs and their representatives abroad.

Now things started to go wrong. One of the prosecution team, Herr Jost - a lawyer in Karlsruhe - received a phone call from the justice ministry in Bonn requesting him not to press any points that connected the two Lebanese with Tehran.

Then Bernd Schmidbauer, senior minister in charge of co-ordinating the various German secret service departments, apparently put a lot of effort into suppressing any public statements linking Tehran to the killings.

According to *Stern* magazine: "Schmidbauer called a top secret meeting in his office at the Chancellery. The result of it was that he agreed with the Iranian Ambassador in Bonn that the two diplomats implicated in the murders would be discreetly recalled to Tehran."

There is now clearly little doubt that Iran and its Islamic fundamentalists staged and planned the Berlin assassinations. As early as September 18th 1992 Jalal Talabani, leader of the Iraqi Patriotic Union of Kurdistan who was also in Berlin for the SI meeting, had stated clearly: "This is a continuation of Iranian terrorism against the Kurdish people".

Every finger pointed at the mullahs and yet the German government has refused to expose their involvement and has covered up each bit of evidence that might have damaged the lucrative trade deals being conducted by German firms with Tehran.

Western governments, including Britain's, allow the poison of theocracy to seep into international relations as an easy way of doing deals for oil with Iran.

The murders in Berlin, at an international socialist gathering, show the real face of Iran and its ayatollahs. They must be stopped and their international supporters exposed.

One of the best ways of doing this is to support the Iranian democratic opposition and to ensure that the world knows the blood-stained story of the Berlin murders. ❑

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING

Birthright sold for mess of pottage

Opening a debate on the PLO-Israeli accord, long-time anti-Zionist activist **Tony Greenstein** argues that the deal is a historic setback for the Palestinians.

FOR 20 YEARS the PLO has adhered to a two-state rather than a democratic-secular state solution to the Palestinian question. De facto it came to accept, after the 1973 war, the existence of an Israeli/Zionist state alongside a Palestinian one. In practice the PLO looked not to changing the Arab regimes which plundered their own peoples but to relying on them - the junior partners of US imperialism - to help achieve the goal of an independent Palestinian state.

The reality of the PLO-Israeli Accord is that such a state will not be achieved within even a part of the Occupied Territories. The proposed autonomous Palestinian areas will have even less independence than the Bantustans of Transkei, Ciskei and Bophutatswana under the apartheid homelands policy.

The Palestinians will have autonomy, but the Israeli state will retain sovereignty. The Israeli settlements, which control over 60% of land in The West Bank and 40% in the Gaza Strip, will remain untouched. The Israeli army will be withdrawn from Jericho and Gaza and the major centres of population, but will be redeployed in the settlements and highways of the territories. The settlements were purposely located so as to divide Palestinian towns and villages from each other.

The agreement provides for a Palestinian police force up to 30,000 strong. Their first duty will be to suppress Palestinian dissent and any resistance to the Accord. Little wonder that this provision evokes such Israeli enthusiasm.

The PLO as the "sole legitimate representative" of the Palestinian people is no more. Its democratic institutions have turned out to be hollow, manipulated by a self-perpetuating leadership riddled by corruption.

It is understandable that a people who have suffered as much as the Palestinians should welcome any concession, however small, as better than none. But the reality is that this agreement will lead not to an independent state but to further misery and defeat. The one concession, recognition of the PLO by Israel, means little when all that the PLO symbolised is now forsaken. Maybe a biblical analogy is most appropriate: Esau selling his birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage.

The Accord divides the Palestinian nation in two. It excludes not only those Palestinians living inside pre-1967 Israel, but the two million Palestinians who were exiled in 1948 and 1967. It explicitly rules out the right of return. Israel continues to control the Allenby bridge to Jordan.

Under the Accord Israel will retain control over land, water and resources. The Palestinians will collect their own garbage, control education and health and police themselves.

In effect, the prison guards will be removed from inside to outside the prison walls.

The promise of massive international investment - in a situation in which Israel holds all the cards, militarily and economically - means that the Occupied Territories will become a market for Israeli produce, a source of cheap labour and a conduit for the development of economic relations with the Arab and Gulf states. This is the other calamity of the agreement: it gives the green light to the Arab states to make their peace with Zionism.

Of course the settler lobby and the Israeli right (though only some sections of Likud) are opposed to the Accord. To them any agreement with the Palestinians is a concession too far. In this they are no different from the far-right in any colonial transition; the key difference is that they retain - by virtue of the settlements - an unparalleled ability to wreck even the most limited autonomy. There will be plenty of pretexts for the Israeli army to go back into the 'autonomous' areas: the death of a settler, for example, or a guerilla attack on the army.

A future Likud/Nationalist government would need little encouragement to tear up the agreement. The proposed "Final Settlement" in five years' time seems even more tenuous. The PLO/Arafat administration will forever be straining to prove its "reliability".

This is an agreement built on shifting sands. It represents a massive victory for imperialism (following on from the Gulf War) and its Zionist allies. ❑

A new politics for the region

Julia Bard, a member of the Editorial Board of *Jewish Socialist* gives a personal reaction: The settlement is contradictory. I welcome the recognition of the PLO by Israel and the PLO's recognition of the right of Israel to exist. On the other hand, I agree with Edward Said's view that the crucial questions of Palestinian autonomy, the occupation of the West Bank and the fate of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and elsewhere are serious problems which need to be put on the agenda quickly.

The PLO leadership is negotiating from a weakened position caused by Palestinian dispersal and the attack from the right-wing religious fundamentalists. However, the settlement cuts away at the position of right-wing political forces amongst Jews and Arabs. For mainstream Jews, seeing Peres and Arafat shaking hands will change conceptions of Palestinian Arabs. The arguments of Jewish socialists have suddenly become acceptable. What is becoming clear is that secular progressive Jews and secular progressive Arabs have more in common with each other than they do with right-wing fundamentalists on either side.

The state of Israel exists and will not go away. This agreement is the starting point for a new politics in the area. However, despite potential gains for Israeli socialists and the weakening of the fundamentalists, there are also many dangers in the settlement which could lead to fresh problems.

South African workers seek voice

CALLS FOR THE setting up of a mass workers' party have received backing from South African's largest trade union, NUMSA.

Despite leadership opposition, the metalworkers' conference voted for the formation of a working class party and for COSATU, the main union federation in South Africa, to call a conference on socialism. Many members of the South Africa Communist Party in NUMSA are thought to have backed the proposal, despite the SACP leadership's hostility to the idea.

SACTWU, the textile workers' union, has also voted to call on COSATU to withdraw from the ANC alliance after elections for a constituent assembly are held next April. Even among pro-ANC trade unionists, there is concern that some South African union leaders wear "too many hats", holding positions in the SACP and ANC as well as their unions, and that this is blunting the independent representation of working class interests within the liberation movement.

The Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) has been at the forefront of calls for a mass workers' party. Writing recently on the national political situation, national chairperson Neville Alexander said: "Even though the conditions under which we conduct our struggle have changed, the struggle continues. We do not break up the struggle for liberation into stages that can be separated from one another. We do not assume responsibilities for the problems of the bourgeoisie. The fact that they can no longer govern in the old way does not mean that we have to rescue them by sharing power with them and helping them to rule our people. It means, instead, that they must stop governing, they must be made to relinquish power."

WOSA sees the key issues for a workers' party as jobs for all, a living wage, no retrenchment, free education and healthcare, decent housing, women's rights, self-defence and the environment.

With unemployment in South Africa officially at 50%, and over 80% in some areas, and growing dissatisfaction over compromises made by the ANC in the negotiations, the call for a mass workers' party has support in several unions and generated wide press interest in South Africa.

Brazil: workers resurgent

THE BRAZILIAN Workers' Party held its eighth National Meeting in Brazilia in June 1993. The meeting was dominated by discussion on strategy for the 1994 elections.

For the first time there was no clear majority group within the Party. The dominant grouping, Articulation, which included most of the main party leaders, split into two factions. Presidential candidate Lula and other key figures found themselves in a minority as a new internal synthesis was built.

The meeting reaffirmed its opposition to the new Liberal government of Itamar Franco and approved an Alternative Strategic Plan based on the Party's democratic socialist and anti-imperialist principles. The centre of the Party's economic policy will be the creation of a mass internal market based on economic growth and a redistribution of wealth.

The meeting is said to mark a slight shift to the left for the Party. In what Lula described as an act of generosity, however, the meeting agreed to suspend disciplinary measures against Luiza Erundina for joining Franco's government.

Latest figures show the CUT, the union federation which supports the PT, now has 3.8 million members. It has bought time on one of Sao Paulo's TV channels and workers are getting up early on Sunday mornings to watch its 8am show.

RURAL WORKERS in north-eastern Brazil, facing a cholera epidemic and the region's worst drought this century, have achieved a significant victory against the Franco government.

11.4 million people are affected by the drought and many are eating cactus and roots to survive. 50% of the region's cattle stock has been sold off, at dirt cheap prices, by farmers who have no hope of replacing this key source of food and transport. In a period of three weeks there were 84 incidents of looting of supermarkets, a traditional response to hunger in the area.

Yet rural trade unionists have fought back. 800 occupied the offices of Sudene, the government development agency for the North-East of Brazil. As a result, ten of them were flown to Brazilia for a meeting with President Franco, who accepted their demands and allocated $180,000 for a work programme expected to create a million jobs.

Elsewhere in the country, however, rural activists are facing repression from local landowners. Arnaldo Decidio Ferreira, President of the Rural Workers' Union of Eldorado do Carajas in the region of Paris, is the latest murder victim. Despite numerous death threats and three previous attempts on his life, the authorities made no effort to protect him and have made no arrests. He leaves a widow and eleven children.

Labour Party Fringe Meeting

Nobby Clarke Memorial Lecture

Dennis Skinner MP

Trade Unions and the Labour Party

7-9pm
Monday, September 27th
Brighthelm Centre, North Road

"Reds on Tour"

Live Irish music, Disco
The Concorde, Madeira Place
Monday 27th September
9.45pm until late
£3 waged, £1.50 low waged / unwaged

REVIEWS

Secured by Ambush

Paul May reviews *Ambushed* by Judy Ward.
Published by Vermillion Press. £9.99

IN MAY 1992, Judy Ward was released by the Court of Appeal having been wrongfully imprisoned for the best part of her adult life. A few days later, the court gave its reasons for exonerating her. The miscarriage of justice she suffered, said Lord Justice Glidewell, was "secured by ambush".

Ambushed tells Judy Ward's own story of how for more than 18 years the criminal justice system incarcerated a woman who, from the outset, they knew to be innocent.

The book also recounts how she survived one of the harshest prison regimes to be found anywhere in the world, the slow gradual fight to clear her name and her work since her release on behalf of other innocent prisoners.

For all but her last couple of years in prison, she was in HMP Durham's H Wing. A claustrophobic women's high security facility within a large, decrepit Victorian male prison, H Wing is known to inmates and prison staff alike as The Submarine.

Judy describes in vivid and poignant detail the life of prisoners on the wing and the harsh, relentless security regime to which inmates are subjected.

Outside, the wing is surrounded by a 20-foot high perimeter fence and flanked with TV cameras. Inside, the wing is cramped and insanitary with virtually no natural daylight. The cells in which prisoners are banged up from 8.00 pm until 8.00 am measure less than 45 square feet.

The wing has known many suicides and the opening chapter of *Ambushed* recounts how, in the early days of her imprisonment and despairing that her innocence would ever be established, Judy attempted to take her own life.

Food provided by the prison failed to meet even basic nutritional requirements. After a few years of prison diet, Judy tells how she woke up one morning with large red spots covering her body.

The outside dermatologist called in to examine her was amazed. He had only previously encountered her condition when he worked in Third World countries. She was suffering from malnutrition.

In the 1960s the wing accommodated Category A male prisoners including the Great Train Robbers and the Kray Twins.

Following protests, hunger strikes and a major riot, a Home Office report officially concluded conditions were unacceptably oppressive and inhumane and it was closed down in 1971. With the impeccable logic which typifies the Home Office, H Wing was reopened in 1974 for women prisoners after £100,000 had been spent on making the security regime even more oppressive.

For the first 13 years of her sentence, Judy was prohibited from corresponding with or receiving visits from anyone she had known before her arrest. It is little wonder, therefore, that it took so long for her case to come to public attention. In the words of her solicitor, the redoubtable Gareth Peirce, Judy was for most of her imprisonment "buried alive".

Despite the harrowing experiences she suffered as an innocent prisoner, *Ambushed* is not a depressing book to read. Judy conveys much of the humour which is vital for prisoners' psychological survival.

That a confused and terrified 25-year-old who entered H Wing in 1974 emerged some 18 years later as the ebullient and commited woman of today is, however, no thanks to the English criminal justice system.

It is probably too much to hope that Michael Howard will take time off from his current absurd posturing about making Britain's prisons "more austere" to read *Ambushed*, let alone to visit Durham or any other of the country's penal dustbins.

For anyone with even the slightest doubt that the Home Secretary's notions about the "soft" British prison system is not based on total fantasy, I strongly recommend this book.

Children of May

Keith Veness reviews
The May 1968 Events in France by Keith Reader
Published by Macmillan Press UK. £35

THIS MASSIVE upheaval in a key advanced West European state has surprisingly never received the coverage it should have in socialist literature - perhaps because so many groups on the left got it so hopelessly wrong.

The Reader book is useful as it catalogues the whole background to the few days that started with student barricades, led onto an all-out general strike involving over 10 million workers and ended with massive pay rises that defused the struggle and led on to a general election where the Gaullist parties won a landslide victory as the frightened bourgeoisie climbed back into the driving seat it had been ejected from and looked liked losing permanently.

The book is unusual in that its last chapter is devoted to the role played by women in the May events - something, shamefully, that is usually overlooked in such works.

The evidence presented is frankly depressing as it shows that the so-called New Left male students mostly looked on women as sex objects who were invited to lose their inhibitions mainly to satisfy the needs of the male "revolutionaries".

The older Stalinist leaderships of the Communist Party and CGT seem to have considered any woman activist as "not a real worker" and frequently dismissed any speeches by women trades unionists as "hysterical".

It was three or four years before an avowed feminist organisation appeared in France - but it clearly arose under the influence of the swirling currents stirred up by May '68.

The gulf between the various Maoist, anarchist and pseudo-Trotskyist groups like the JCR and Lutte Ouvrier, and the mass organisations of the French working-class dominated largely by the Communist Party, was one that could not be bridged by heroism alone - and the young student radicals *were* heroic in their nightly clashes with the vicious CRS riot police.

A political answer was needed - one that demanded that the CP and its Socialist Party allies take the power that was being forced on them and which they were actually terrified of being handed.However, this could only have been done if the revolutionaries had seriously played a role based on years of hard work in winning positions in the trade unions and the political parties. It is a lesson the infantile left sects in Britain still have to learn.

Farewell to Edward Thompson

Paul Foley recalls the contribution of a great socialist historian and thinker.

I can still remember my first encounter with Edward Thompson as an undergraduate history student.

I read the preface of *The Making of the English Working Class*. It is difficult to express the impact and inspiration of that preface. It was a manifesto for socialist historians.

"The working class did not rise like the sun at an appointed time. It was present at its own making.

"I do not see class as a structure, nor even as a category, but as something which in fact happens in human relationships.

"Class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences, feel and articulate the identity of their interests against other men whose interests are different from theirs.

"I am seeking to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the obsolete handloom weaver, the utopian artisan from the enormous condescension of posterity."

With an all-too obvious neglect of working class women, Edward Thompson outlined the task of socialist historians. The working class were not unfortunate casualties of history.

Working class people made their own history as much as history made them. They articulated their own interests and fought long and hard against the immense power of the capitalist class and the capitalist state.

The traditions, values and activities of the first working class were important in themselves and as lessons for those continuing their struggle today. The task of socialist historians was to resurrect the traditions, values and activities of the working class, not to see working class people as victims of history forever doomed to defeat at the hands of the capitalist class and its all powerful state.

In a period when capital has inflicted so many massive defeats on the working class, and in a year when the Labour Party "modernisers" seek to abandon socialism, the working class and the trade union link, it may be difficult to imagine the seminal influence that Edward Thompson's ideas have had on generations of socialist youth.

His enthusiasm and ideas inspired literally thousands of people to write "our" history, interpreting the lives of generations of working class people, and to participate in the struggle for socialism today.

For Edward Thompson people made history and still make it today. The working class was not a theoretical abstraction which had to be endlessly refined.

So he bitterly attacked the French structural Marxists, Louis Althusser in particular. Real people were not present in the Althusserian universe. Traditions, values, and experience did not matter to Althusser as people existed only in a theoretical model.

Althusser et al did not write about the working class as it is but as it ought to be. This was not only bad history but literally inhuman. Inevitably, the politics of structural Marxists would degenerate into substituting themselves for the working class because working class people were not as the structuralists wished them to be. This is a lesson which is still valuable today.

The humanity of Edward Thompson was most evident in his work for European Nuclear Disarmament. I remember well his addresses to the huge anti-cruise rallies of the early 1980s.

From the platform, he urged us to "feel our strength". We were the makers of our own history. We could stop Cruise. We could stop American imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy in the quest for mutually assured destruction.

We, the people of the planet, could stop "exterminism, the last stage of civilisation". Partly as a result of Edward Thompson's warnings tens of millions of people showed they weren't prepared to sacrifice their lives and the planet for a sordid victory in the cold war.

For his warnings and his inspiration, we must thank Edward Thompson. A debt of gratitude is owed by thousands of socialists to this man.

He gave us the intellectual tools and arguments not only for researching the history of the working class but for continuing those struggles today.

A sense of cruelty

Val Veness reviews *Cruel Fate* by Hugh Callaghan Published by Poolbeg Ltd, Knocksedan House, Swords, County Dublin, Ireland. £16.99

I VISITED all the Birmingham Six on many occasions before their release from prison and most of them intended to write books about their ordeal. Hugh Callaghan is the first to succeed in this task and it is a good effort.

However, even now the British state has not left them alone. Because of the forthcoming trial of George Reade, the copper in the case, this book has been caught by the sub judice laws and cannot be published yet in Britain so you will have to send off to the publishers in the Irish Republic to purchase a copy!

Nevertheless, this book is well worth it as it tells the plain facts in an honest way that so characterises Hugh Callaghan. Born in the Ardoyne in Belfast in great poverty, Hughie typifies a generation of Irish Catholics who were forced to emigrate due to lack of work.

However, he does not moan or seem bitter about this and his basically easy-going nature shines through the book in a way that lends it great warmth and dignity.

He drifted in and out of various jobs throughout the 60s and 70s.

Such experiences were common amongst Irish immigrants and nothing marked him out until the fateful events of November 21st, 1974.

When young James McDade blew himself up trying to plant a bomb on behalf of the Provisionals in neighbouring Coventry, Callaghan thought it sad but was not greatly involved.

It was, however, a cultural tradition that one went to the funeral of any neighbour or person from your area. Hugh did not have the money for a trip over to Belfast but did have a drink with the others before seeing them off from New Street station.

The rest is history - the five being arrested and framed at Morecambe when snatched from the train, naming Hughie as a friend, his arrest in his home, subsequent beating and terrorising into signing a bogus confession.

The most scarey part of the book is how he was broken into signing this confession by physical beatings and sleep deprivation. The book tells of the early hell of the years in prison and the uselessness of their early legal representation.



Sack the lot!

A report has emerged from the House of Commons which recommends the sacking of all the Westminster messengers and their replacement with bleepers for all MPs.

It goes on to argue the case for providing members with loads of new office equipment - at roughly the cost of three new hospitals or a few hundred houses. There is currently an experiment providing only 10 MPs with the new gear at a cost of £250,000.

And who has come up with these breathtakingly fatuous and arrogant notions? Why, **a review committee of Labour MPs** set up by the Parliamentary Labour Party.

This cosy coterie of yuppie chums will now move on to examine MPs' hours of work. They want them shortened, naturally.

With shorter hours will go the automatic curtailment of bills, enabling yet greater amounts of Tory legislation to go speeding through the Commons.

Of course, it would be myopic to suggest that such a committee should busy itself with peripheral questions like how to achieve full employment or a properly funded health service.

No. For these boys and girls, socialist zeal means finding ways of sacking people in order to make their own lives easier and more comfortable.

Larry's filthy lucre

Labour Party members may have been surprised to find in their copies of *Labour Party News* a pamphlet proclaiming the joys of proportional representation - after all, it is not and never has been Labour policy.

Of course, it would be outrageous to suggest that the leaflet's distribution was given the go-ahead by Party General Secretary **Larry Whitty** purely because of the cash which was paid to Walworth Road on behalf of the leaflet's author, the Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform.

The pamphlet, *Plant special: Labour for Democracy*, was entirely paid for by the Joseph Rowntree Trust. Both Walworth Road and the Campaign for Electoral Reform were rather coy about how much cash was actually handed over to the Party.

Derek Fatchett, front bench education spokesman and chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party First Past the Post Group, asked: "Where do you draw the line on this sort of commercial exercise? Would Walworth Road be prepared to accept propaganda from, say, the Socialist Campaign Group supporting their slate for elections to the National Executive Committee?"

Hatchet job

Peter Hain's reward for giving measured voice to what so many Labour members think of our Party's recent performance is to find himself on the receiving end of a classic Wally Road press office hatchet-job.

His new pamphlet, *What's Left*, so annoyed members of the Party's inner circle that they hit back by accusing Hain of misrepresenting it as a product of the *Tribune* Group of MPs. In fact, as the pamphlet itself makes quite clear, it is published by the Tribune newspaper, which has no formal link to the Group.

A letter to Hain from the Group's Chair, George Howarth MP, complaining about the alleged misrepresentation, was sent out to the press even before Hain had received it.

The guilty party was none other than Jo Moore, Haringey's witless right-wing witch-hunter, who succeeded to the post of Labour's Chief Press and Broadcasting Officer after it became clear that no candidate with real journalistic experience or skills would touch the job.

Mandelson's once-mighty Campaigns and Communications Directorate has been dismantled, with David Hill despatched to the Commons to work for the PLP as the Party's "Chief Media Spokesperson". This leaves Moore with the dreary routine of everyday press work, a routine she will try to spice up by seizing any chance she gets to use her office to dish dirt on political opponents.

Eurofraud

Imagine you run an organisation which has discovered that £360 million (270 million ecu) worth of fraud has been perpetrated against it.

Then you admit: "No reliable method exists for estimating the level of fraud with an acceptable margin of error. However it is safe to say that the scale of fraud...far exceeds figures reported."

Yes, it's that same **European Community** so beloved by our Party leadership.

Back from the grave

We may have seen the last of **Joyce Gould** following her retirement as the Labour Party's Director of Organisation. But spare a thought for the people of South Africa.

As if they didn't have enough problems, she has been called over by the **ANC** to "help choose its candidates for the forthcoming elections". Repeat after me, "Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of..."

I suppose they'll be OK as long as they don't try to set up a black section.

Red scare

Sports commentators have launched into a new red scare.

Rather than celebrate China's return to international sporting events, and congratulate them on their amazing successes in the women's middle distance races at the World Games, what do we see? "Three blank-eyed ghosts, summoned from the open grave of state-sponsored sport, stalked the stadium. It was a sight to chill the blood, a spectacle to shrivel the spirit."

What was behind these women's success? You've guessed it - "the principle focus of suspicion is the recruitment of a small group of coaches...drawn principally from East Germany during the upheaval of reunification." Couldn't possibly be sour grapes, of course.

The record-breaking Chinese women have passed all drug tests administered to them.

Memory lapse

Harriet Harman has written to all Constituency Labour Party secretaries with the following observation:

"The issue of VAT on gas and electricity has put the Tories on the defensive on a tax issue, and puts Labour ahead of the Tories on a tax issue. This is the first time this has happened for many years."

Can our Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury have forgotten already that little squabble about the Poll Tax? Surely not. It must have just passed her by completely.

History of trust

"The essence of making Labour electable is trust. Trust in Labour's leadership, in the team, in Labour's ability to manage the economy competently. Trust that Labour knows where it's going - and trust in the policies designed to take it there. It is intelligent optimism to believe that the basis for trust is there."

Yes, it's **Patricia Hewitt** in the *New Statesman* in August 1989. Trust some people to learn nothing from history.

Image problems?

Obviously our front-bench team is working hard on image-building. Let's think, now, how can we best put forward the idea of Labour as the alternative party of government?

I know: let's get drunk on free Scotch, pretend you're Batman - reports vary, it could be any sort of superhero who can fly - and assault a passing copper.

This is particularly sensible if you already have a conviction for drink-driving.

Helpful chaps

So very helpful of those boys on the defence front bench to provide all Constituency Labour Parties with a detailed breakdown of why scrapping **Trident** would not save a penny.

That's right, getting rid of these weapons of mass destruction won't pay for new hospitals, schools or houses so we may as well tear up all those resolutions on defence.

The circular points out: "In order to facilitate an informed debate at conference we feel that it is important to point out that cancellation of the Trident programme will not lead to the windfall that some expect."

Perhaps we should even argue for the purchase of oodles more missiles since they clearly cost nothing.

Alf Lomas

MEP
London North East

Working for peace and socialism in Europe

Stan Newens

MEP
London Central

Defend the Labour Party - Trade Union link

Help wanted

***Briefing* seeks promotions worker**
(basic publicity and advertising work).
Two days per month; £35 per day.
Contact *Labour Briefing*.

Volunteers needed

Treasurer

Accountant

The *Briefing* Editorial Board, top heavy with the innumerate and unworldly, desperately needs help from a voluntary treasurer and voluntary accountant (the latter to help prepare our annual accounts for scrutiny by the state).

Please contact *Labour Briefing*, PO Box 2378, London E5 9QU. Tel. 081 985 6597.

Out now!

The Complete Class Traitors of the Month

Less than flattering profiles of Labour's high and mighty reproduced from the pages of *Labour Briefing*, 1991-1993.
36 pages of vitriol and abuse for only £2 including postage.
Send cheques to *Labour Briefing*, PO Box 2378, London E5 9QU.

Your daily link with the labour and trade union movement

Morning Star

TO MY NEWSAGENT

Please deliver/reserve* my copy of the Morning Star each day until further notice. *(*Delete as required)*

Name.....

Address.....

.....

In case of difficulty ring our Circulation Department on 071 254 0033

Fraternal greetings from
***Labour Briefing* ex-editor**
Richard Hanford
Hayling, Hewitts, Henfield, Sussex

Fire Brigades Union

Greetings to
Labour Party delegates

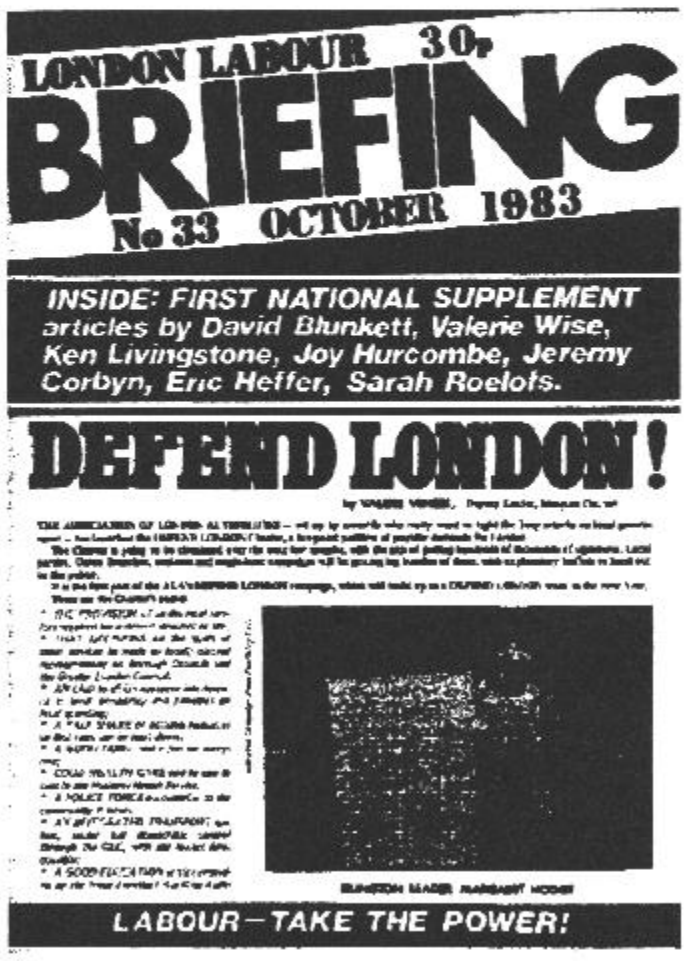
Famous last words...

From *Labour Briefing*, October 1983.

"I'm not sure whether I'm even criticising Hain's book from the right or the left." - Nigel Williamson reviewing Peter Hain's *The Democratic Alternative*.

"Thatcher knows better than many senior politicians in the Labour Party just how important a socialist local government can be in rebuilding a Labour Party which originated not from Parliament but from the community itself." - David Blunkett.

"Some TUC leaders wish to distance themselves from the Party and depoliticise the trade unions, making them as much like American business unions as possible." - Eric Heffer.


LONDON LABOUR 30p
BRIEFING
No 33 OCTOBER 1983
INSIDE: FIRST NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT
articles by David Blunkett, Valerie Wise, Ken Livingstone, Joy Hurcombe, Jeremy Corbyn, Eric Heffer, Sarah Roelofs.
DEFEND LONDON!
LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

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



The left's abject failure to support the multi-ethnic Bosnian state is amply demonstrated by Andrew Coates in the July/August *Briefing*, where he advocates its ethnic partition and pushes Karadzic's line: that Izetbegovic is a closet ayatollah, scheming to institute an Islamic state in the Balkans.

In fact, the real fundamentalists are the Bosnian Serb nationalists who want to live in a Serb republic cleansed of Muslims. And the tragedy is that the "Islamic state" Andrew Coates fears will be the certain result of the policies he supports.

This is because the carrot offered by the West to persuade the Bosnian government to accept ethnic partition is lots of Saudi cash to build a Muslim republic.

Andrew Coates manages to analyse what he dubs a "civil war" without a single reference to the aggressive role of Serb nationalism — with no mention even of Milosevic, the key player in the crisis gripping the Balkans.

Even more incredible, given western support for the ethnic division of Bosnia, is that he can still convince himself that western interests "are lined up against the Serbs".

The West has consistently appeased Serbian aggression, graphically illustrated by UNPROFOR's current alliance with Karadzic and its insistence that Sarajevo is not held under a Serbian siege.

The extent to which the West has capitulated to the racist ideology of Karadzic is such that it supports the ethnic division of Sarajevo, an aim Karadzic had from the beginning and exactly what the people of Sarajevo have heroically fought against for eighteen months.

The left's response to the war in Bosnia must be to take sides; not with the Muslims, but with Bosnians, whether they be Muslim, Croat or Serb, who are fighting for the principle of a multi-ethnic Bosnia.

This means supporting the lifting of the arms embargo and arguing against ethnic partition and forced population transfers.

Excuses that we shouldn't take sides in a "civil war" or that arming the Bosnian government will "only create more bloodshed" are bogus and won't wash.

After all, the left had no problem demanding "Arms for Spain" during the Spanish Civil War.

The war in Bosnia will not "burn itself out". In the years to come, when the Bosnian Liberation Front is setting off bombs in London and Paris, we will be faced with explaining to our children why it was that we didn't support Bosnia in 1993.

Yours comradely,
John Turkie,
London SE7

Keith Veness (July/August *Briefing*) obviously holds sincerely his anti-religious views. However, he is doing no good at all in denigrating those who draw some inspiration from their religion in standing firm for socialism.

Yes, great crimes throughout the centuries have been committed in the name of religion. Since the 3rd century AD the early Christian church's compromise with Rome was a tragic mistake.

Communist and socialist governments in power have a sorry record. In neither case does this invalidate basic religious beliefs or socialist thinking.

Looking around my local Labour Party at the active and dependable socialists, I see quite a number who are practising Christians of various denominations, and Jewish socialists. In other areas no doubt Labour Party activists of other faiths will be found.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Religion is not going to go away. Many basic truths about human co-operation, loving one's neighbour and sharing the resources of this planet spring as much from religious thought as left-wing ideology.

If the Labour Party is to remain a "broad church" then persons like Keith and myself must recognise and respect each other's beliefs, pool our ideas and refrain from misrepresenting those whose basic starting point on the road to socialism may be different to our own.

Yours fraternally,
Ron Huzzard,
Kent

I was disappointed with what I read in Mike Phipps' article on nationalisation in the July issue of *Briefing* in which he effectively dispenses with public ownership as a component of a socialist programme.

I am frankly nonplussed that at a time when socialists should be developing new ideas about public enterprise, incorporating autonomy, responsiveness and any number of possible improvements to older styles of nationalisation, an "unrepentant" socialist magazine cannot produce better copy than this insipid piece, which could have appeared verbatim in any soft-left journal circa 1985.

Do even "unrepentant" writers now need reminding that common ownership of key sectors of the economy is the minimum defining feature of socialism? That without this arm, socialism will cease to exist as a cause and will become another redundant synonym for do-goodery? In fairness to the writer, the Labour left as a whole has palpably failed to put and keep the reversal of privatisation at the heart of its struggle, choosing instead to expend disproportionate amounts of energy on secondary issues such as unilateralism or the trade union link.

Nevertheless, if *Briefing* should see fit to continue this slide into repentance, I for my part may have to avail myself of my market empowerment to discontinue my subscription.

Yours,
Richard Barrett,
Luton

Serbia's genocidal aggression against Bosnia is being rewarded by the dismemberment of that country — with the blessing of the western powers.

A formidable precedent has been established that, as long as US interests are not affected, a state may pursue as murderous a policy as it chooses against a neigbour.

Unsurprisingly, Israel was the first country to take advantage of this new legitimacy for state terrorism.

The indiscriminate shelling at the end of July of southern Lebanon which killed over 120 civilians was undertaken with the declared intention of creating half a million refugees.

This would concentrate the attention of the Lebanese government on preventing the independent rival Hizbollah faction from harrassing Israeli troops.

No-one on the left expects the Clinton administration to do anything which might dishearten its ally in the region. Nor do we believe on principle that the US should have a privileged position in resolving international conflicts.

All the evidence from the Gulf to Somalia indicates that American military intervention is the worst possible option for the people, whatever its alleged purpose.

But whilst it is correct to say "imperialist hands off", the left's abstention in conflicts such as that in former Yugoslavia does not look very different from that of the British government or the EC.

The revolutionary left really ought to do better than complacently sermonising that the problems in Bosnia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, etc, can only be solved by the working class in the region.

It should know from its Marxist ABC that traditional working-class action does not stand much of a chance against tanks and artillery.

The imposition of a working-class solution against the military necessarily involves splits in the army on class lines.

This is quite possible in a conflict of a class character, as in Iran in 1979, but seems excluded in these current nationalist struggles in which class contradictions have been subordinated to the powerful grip of local chauvinism.

Should the left stand idly aside - like western governments - whilst national minorities are ethnically cleansed off the face of the earth?

Propaganda about forging a class-based solution is meaningless when the precondition for any successful working-class initiative is peace and the right to life. Can we help create the conditions for this with reference to universal rights and international law?

The idea of the United Nations was based on these principles. As Paul Field pointed out in the last issue of *Briefing*, however, its whole history has been guided by a different ethos: namely, that it has only ever taken action at the behest of, and as a vehicle for, American imperialism.

But this practice does not invalidate the idea of a community of nations and the principles on which it should be based, any more than the class-ridden workings of the British legal system invalidate the idea of, and need for, justice.

Tony Benn has argued that the UN needs to be radically restructured so that it is under the democratic control of the whole international community through the general assembly rather than in the grip of a handful of superpowers.

The left needs to explore these ideas as part of an alternative strategy for the UN. What should be the role of UN agencies in countries swept by famine? Can the UN create protectorates, as I have argued elsewhere for Bosnia, to prevent the wiping out of a civilian population?

Is it desirable or feasible for UN forces to be deployed to give effect to UN resolutions, for example, for the rights of the Palestinian people and against Israeli expansionism - or are such resulutions meant only to have moral force?

The alternative for the left, if it does not face up to these questions, is abstention and marginalisation in relation to the growing international conflicts.

For small nations and national minorities in the world, that means a triumph for the Serbian strategy of expansion by terrorism.

Yours,
Mike Phipps,
Brent

Steven Hepburn's letter in the June issue of *Briefing* which castigated the interesting article by Sinn Fein's Gerry MacLochlainn in May's *Briefing* was typical of the sanctimonious English left-winger who, no doubt pleased at selling two extra copies of socialist DIY, seeks to lecture a member of a party that has created more problems for the British state than all the telephone-box tendencies put together.

After tortuously trying to weigh a balance between republican, loyalist and state violence his letter finally decides to dodge the difficult arguments surrounding British imperialism's occupation of Ireland by opining that "it may be more useful to dwell on mass unemployment, poverty, sub-standard housing" etc, as if by dwelling on what he perceives as non-sectarian issues - even a cursory study of the history of the orange state proves they aren't - the thorny question of national self-determination won't come up!

This type of fatuous argument was exposed by James Connolly when he wrote "the doctrine that because the workers of Belfast live under the same industrial conditions as do those of Great Britain, they therefore are subject to the same passions and to be influenced by the same methods of propoganda, is a doctrine almost screamingly funny in its absurdity." (*Selected Writings* p267).

Of course, Steven Hepburn's real reason for brushing aside the question of Irish self-determination isn't his professed need to achieve "working-class unity", it is his abject horror at having to actually choose sides in the Irish war and then confront the hard political reality of compaigning against the chauvinism in our class and in the labour movement.

For just as socialists take sides in the class war they should also take sides in the Irish war for, as Trotsky wrote, "the British socialist who fails to support by all possible means the uprisings in Ireland deserves to be branded with infamy, if not with a bullet, but in no case merits either the mandate or the confidence of the proletariat" (*Writings on Britain*, Vol 3, p159.)

So let's support our comrades in Sinn Fein by building an effective mass withdrawal movement against our common enemy, the British state.

Trodfudh ar la,
Alan Bedford,
Goole

National Union of Mineworkers (North East Area)

sends fraternal greetings to the Labour Party

It is essential if we are to become a mass membership Party to retain and reinforce the links with the British Trade Union Movement and not forget our Socialist Ideals - remember Clause IV (4):

"To secure for the Workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service."

General Secretary Dave Hopper
President Dave Guy

You missed

the lowdown on

▼

- *B*ritain's new super-unions
- *G*ay rights in Europe
- *R*acism in the UK legal system
- *T*he millionaire company directors
- *U*nions in South Africa
- *C*ivil rights for disabled people
- *W*omen in politics

if you didn't subscribe to the last 12 issues of

LABOUR RESEARCH

*G*et the next 12 issues for only £24.95 and you *won't* miss out on a *whole* lot more!

Cheques payable to Labour Research Department

*N*ame _____

*A*ddress _____

_____ *P*ostcode _____

*R*eturn to: Labour Research Department, FREEPOST, 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8YX LB

Troops Out Movement Fringe Meeting

"Ireland's self-determination: the way to peace"

with: Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, Bill Etherington and Anne Bradley (Relatives for Justice), Richard Stanton (Troops Out Movement)

12.45pm Tuesday 28th September
The Concord, Madeira Drive, Brighton

verso

Books for intelligent socialists (also available to the Shadow Cabinet)

MSF London Region

MSF Conference policy on Labour Party links

• maintain participation of trade unions in the election of the party leadership and NEC of the Labour Party.
• representation of the local trade union branches, co-operative parties and affiliates at every stage in the selection of Parliamentary candidates by CLPs.
• representation of the trade unions, co-operative parties and affiliates at local, regional and national level.
• the continued exercise of the block vote by the trade unions in accord with their rules, and specifically the voting strength should not be allowed to fall below 50% of the total conference vote.

Printed by Wernham Printers Ltd (TU), 4 Forster Road, London N17