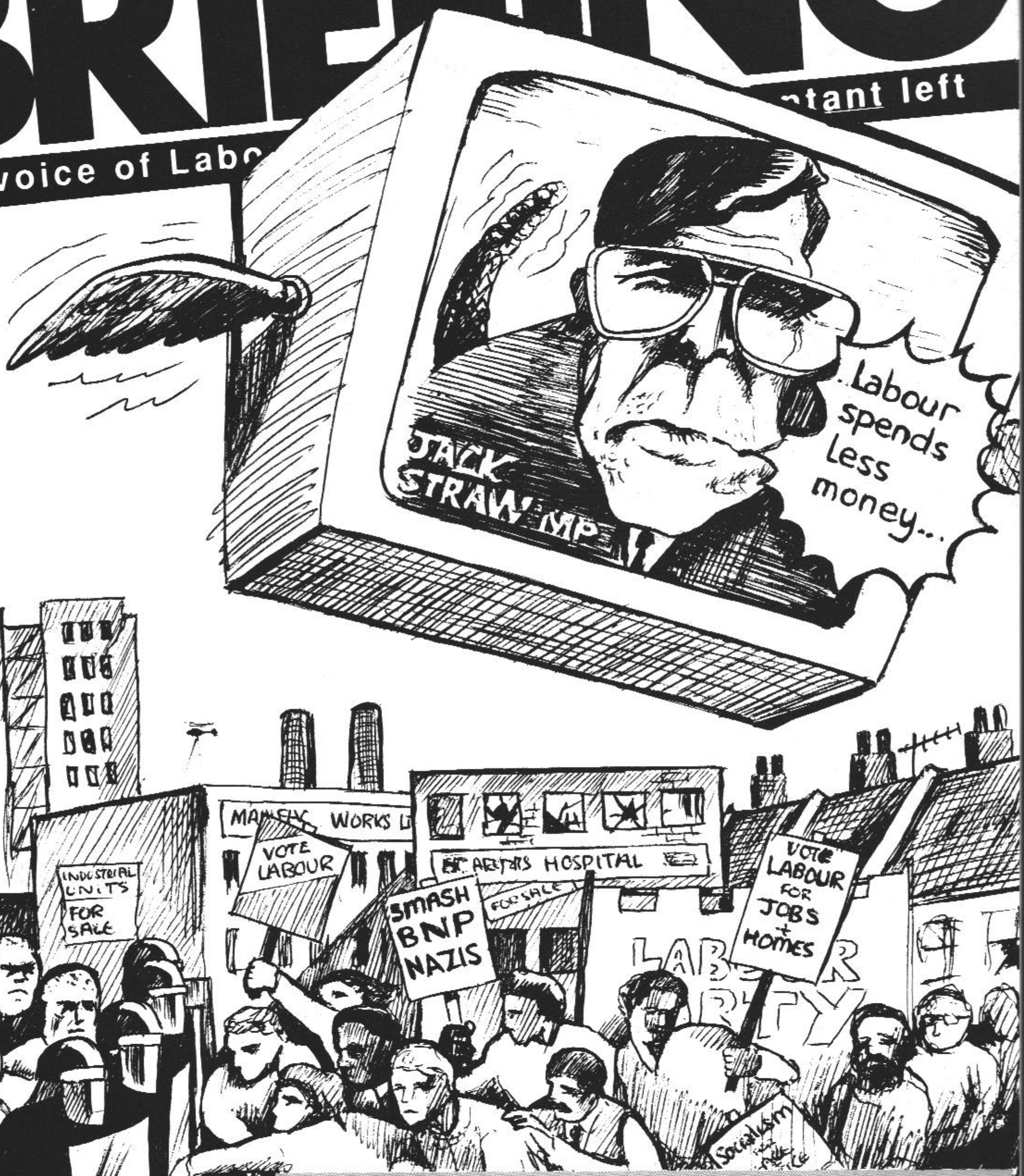
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BRIEFING

the voice of Labo[u]r[']s [i]mportant left



inside ...

• Squatters fight back • Alan Simpson • Dissent on Ireland • Voices from Chiapas

LABOUR - TAKE THE POWER!

stop press

Tribunal on racial violence

NEARLY ONE hundred people attended the People's Tribunal on Racial Violence organised by the Stephen Lawrence Family Campaign and the Southall Monitoring Group on April 23rd.

The event marked the first anniversary of Stephen's murder and drew together the experience of the families which have born the brunt of racial violence and miscarriages of justice.

A speaker from Lambeth Black Workers Group, which organises in Unison, called for "intelligent, effective, pro-active organisation to defend ourselves", including training for physical self-defence and the setting up of a team of legal experts to provide direct assistance to people under attack.

Rajiv Menon of the Newham Monitoring Project spoke about the campaign to defend the Tower Hamlets Nine (arrested during a police attack on a vigil for Quddus Ali) and against the BNP candidates standing in Newham.

Relatives of Stephen Lawrence, Rohit Duggal, Rolan Adams and Joy Gardner spoke of the possibility of a united campaign to fight for justice for all those murdered by racist thugs, whether fascist, state-employed or freelance. The organisers will collate and publish the evidence submitted to the Tribunal in the near future.

Kate Magee trial date

JULY 18TH has been set as a trial date for Kate Magee, who faces charges under Section 18b of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Kate, who was detained two years ago under the PTA following the killing in Derby of an army recruitment officer, is charged with "failure to disclose information", which carries a maximum five-year jail term. A second charge of "impeding arrest or prosecution of persons unknown" was dropped after 66 days in detention. The Derby-based Kate Magee Support Group, a campaign of Irish welfare groups, trades unions and civil rights activists, is hopeful that the remaining charge will be dropped.

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Cover design by Gary Drostle

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Labour's virtual reality



LABOUR'S LOCAL government election campaign has enthused few Party members and even fewer Labour voters. It appears to exist in a media-circumscribed universe of contentless assurances that nothing unpleasant or risky will happen if you vote Labour.

Jack Straw's ceaseless assertions that Labour councils cost you less achieve only one thing: they confirm voters' belief that all politicians are opportunists who will say anything to get elected.

Labour councils should be spending more money than Tory ones. We serve a wider constituency and a broader range of needs - needs which have grown ever more acute during fifteen years of Tory rule. The real questions about taxation are: what is it spent on and who pays what proportion of it? By refusing to come up with a credible answer to either of these, Labour's leaders are feeding the popular cynicism on which the far right - from Michael Portillo to the BNP - thrives.

Should any of the fascist candidates win on May 5th, that news will overshadow Labour's performance, however good it is. Already, the BNP has gained both exposure and legitimacy denied it for many years, and its impact can be seen in the increasingly strident ravings of the Tory right, especially in the eagerness of Tory and Liberal Democrat politicians to play the race card.

Fascism has to be defeated at both the ballot box and on the streets. And the broader racism and bigotry on which it fastens have to be challenged and eradicated. Whatever happens on May 5th, that task will be more pressing than ever.

The virtual reality inhabited by the Shadow Cabinet makes them oblivious to these challenges. Theirs is a simulation of democratic politics, increasingly adrift from the authentic item, and therefore profoundly encouraging to all the forces of reaction.

These forces, however, are not the only players in the game. The public disgust at the Tories' attempt to exploit the D-Day commemorations is a heartening development. Both the media and the Labour leadership climbed on the bandwagon after it had been set rolling by grass-roots protest. Earlier, the NEC had advised Labour local authorities to join uncritically in the festivities being organised by Tory PR supremo Tim Bell. On this one, Dame Vera Lynn ended up well to the left of Labour's Parliamentary leadership. ❑

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 May 8th. 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 Friday May 13th.

Briefing **is the only magazine on the left which is not funded by any part of the labour hierarchy nor by any organised grouping. To survive and thrive we need the support of our readers. Why not take copies to sell at your local Labour Party, trade union or campaign meeting?**

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PHOTOS: David Pope.

Homeless folk fight back

David Pope, a NUCPS member working in Westminster, reports on direct action to deal with the housing crisis.

OUR MEMBERS of Parliament, like others working in the London Borough of Westminster, will be familiar with the imposing Victorian facade of Artillery Mansions, a block of 411 flats that has been deliberately kept empty for 18 years.

Five of the flats had been occupied for 11 years by senior citizens waiting to be re-housed. On February 18th, the building was occupied by 50 squatters, partly to provide a shelter for homeless people for the remainder of the winter and partly to protest against the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which places criminal sanctions on squatters.

At one point more than 100 homeless people sheltered in the building. Some had been homeless almost as long as the flats had been empty. The occupation was organised by various squatters' groups and green organisations.

The owners of Artillery Mansions are Great Bear NV, a multi-million pound company registered in the Dutch Antilles. Now that somebody has found a use for the flats, which the owners failed to maintain for 18 years, Great Bear wants to convert them to luxury penthouses and office accommodation. The company has now taken legal action to throw the squatters back on the streets.

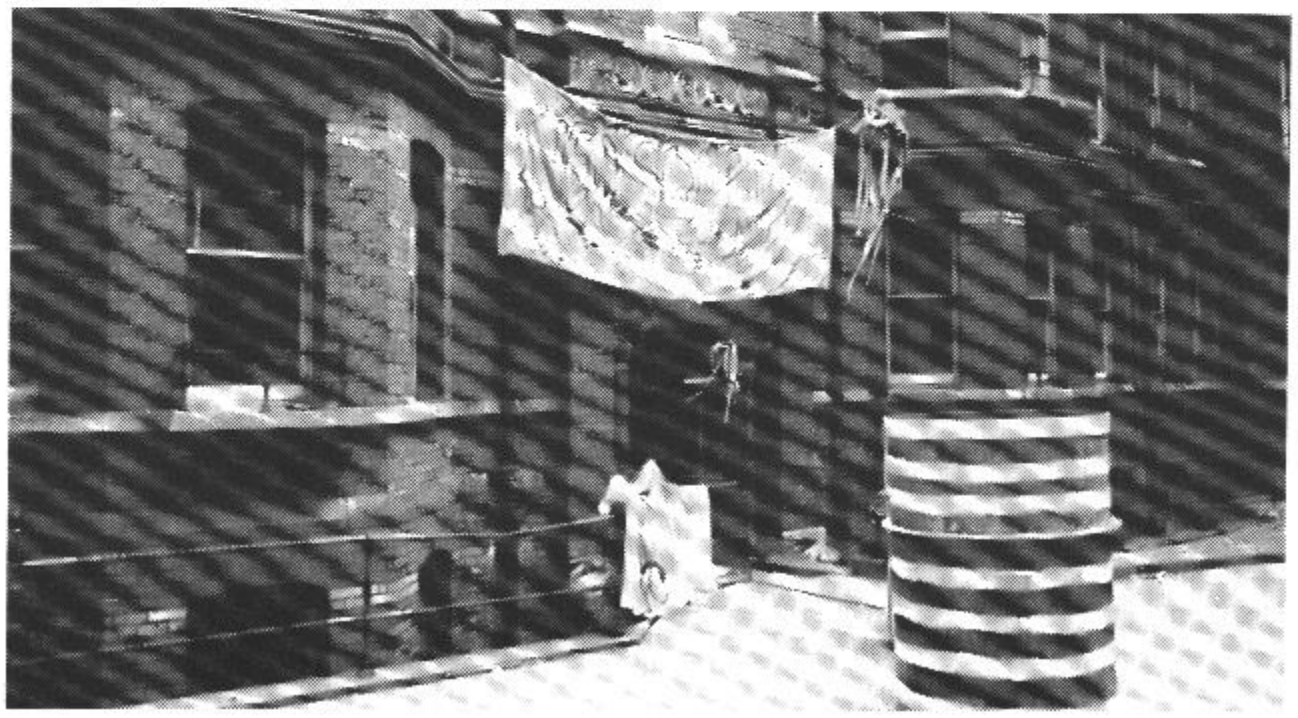
The occupiers have enjoyed strong support from the public. Sandwich bars and bakeries have provided free food. More than 4,000 people, including staff from nearby government departments and Westminster City Council, have signed a petition backing the occupation.

Great Bear have obtained planning permission for 36 luxury flats in the front part of the block. They plan to leave the other 375 vacant until the property market improves, when they will be demolished to make way for offices. The squatters have suggested a compromise whereby they would occupy and maintain the flats at the rear of the block, leaving the front free for development. The Empty Homes Agency (a Housing Association charity) has attempted to negotiate short-term use for the homeless until development begins, but to no avail. All efforts to make direct contact with Great Bear have elicited only a "no comment" from their legal representatives.

On April 12th, Great Bear secured a High Court injunction to evict the squatters. They have nowhere to go but the streets. Anne, one of the occupiers, told *Briefing* she had been living on the streets for five months before moving into Artillery Mansions. She laughed when asked if the Council had offered her alternative housing.

Westminster Council has shown no interest in housing the homeless people currently living in Artillery Mansions. This is the same Westminster City Council that kept council flats empty to sell them to yuppies moving in from outside the area, the same council that refused to house people on its own waiting list and deported local homeless people to distant Hillingdon.

In the same week that Great Bear obtained the High Court injunction, the Department of the Environment admitted there were 864,000 empty homes in Britain. At any time over the past 18 years, Westminster Council could have slapped a compulsory purchase order on Artillery Mansions and commandeered it for council housing. Like Great Bear, the Tory Council preferred to let the building rot rather than use it to shelter people in need. ❑



Campaigners defy McLiers

The McLibel Two are due back in court to harry the malign multi-national. *Labour Briefing* spoke to **Dave Morris** and **Helen Steel**.

BRITAIN'S LIBEL laws are often exploited by the rich to silence opposition. The McLibel Two are currently being sued by McDonald's, which employs any means necessary to crush criticism of its activities.

The three and a half year saga of the Two - unemployed environmental campaigners Dave Morris and Helen Steel from London Greenpeace (no relation to Greenpeace) - will soon culminate in a full libel trial.

In 1984, London Greenpeace initiated a successful campaign against the company, whose turnover last year was $24 billion, $1 billion of which is spent on advertising and promotions. They issued a factsheet entitled *"What's wrong with McDonald's? Everything they don't want you to know"* which accused the multi-national of exploiting workers and animals, damaging the environment and promoting unhealthy food. The campaign spread worldwide and leaflets were distributed in millions.

Almost immediately, threatening letters were sent to campaigners telling them to stop "defaming" McDonald's. The company's security staff - who spend much of their time sniffing out and sacking potential trade unionists - were ordered to put the campaigners under surveillance and infiltrators were sent into the group to gather evidence. In September 1990, five activists - fingered by Ronald McDonald's finks - received writs from the company suing them for libel and malice for producing and distributing the factsheet.

The campaigners were faced with the prospect of a hugely expensive, time-consuming and blatantly uneven legal battle (there is no legal aid for libel defendants) and the likelihood of crippling financial damages. Many other more powerful sections of society, including the mainstream media, have been intimidated by threats and forced to apologise publicly or in court to McDonald's (often paying costs).

Three of the activists understandably backed down. Proceedings against them were dropped. Dave and Helen bravely decided to fight on. They were determined to fight censorship and get a multi-national into court to apologise for its crimes. The pair have had to organise their own defence, with little legal assistance and no financial resources except public donations. They will have to represent themselves at the trial as they have already done at twenty pre-trial hearings.

In contrast, the burger bums with unlimited funds are deploying a large team of legal professionals. They are estimated to have already committed up to £1 million. More than 80 witnesses will give evidence for McDonald's, including top executives from the UK and US. These will be countered by 70 defence witnesses (fifteen from abroad, if funds can be found to pay their fares).

The 'finest judiciary in the world' has done plenty to stack the course of 'justice' in McDonald's favour. At a preliminary hearing, Justice Bell ruled that the evidence would be too difficult for a jury to understand, thus overturning the normal principle that holds in libel cases: that issues of great public interest should be tried by jury.

He also struck out many statements from defence witnesses on the grounds that there was "too little evidence". This would have prevented Dave and Helen from using these statements in their defence as part of their claim that what they had said about McDonald's was true.

Dave and Helen appealed against these rulings. Last month the Court of Appeal unanimously rejected their request for a jury trial. Dave and Helen have now taken the issue to the House of Lords. The second part of their appeal was successful - the parts of the defence case which Justice Bell struck out can be restored. This important victory will benefit all libel defendants in future. It also means that McDonald's should have to hand over relevant documents - particularly on their use of beef from cattle reared on ex-rainforest land in Central America and their world-wide activities against organised labour - which they have so far withheld from the defence. In defiance of the Court of Appeal, McDonald's claims it cannot find a single relevant document on these matters! This means that the start of the trial - scheduled for the end of April may once again be put off.

McDonald's solicitors, top managers and publicity material have mis-informed the public about the company's involvement in the destruction of rainforests. Their policy of not using beef reared on 'recently' (meaning within the last 25 years) deforested land was only formulated in 1988. Prior to this date rainforests that had been cleared as recently as ten years earlier had been employed. The McLibel Two have credible evidence which shows that the company purchased beef reared on land that had been cleared at the height of the deforestation frenzy of the 1970s.

At the trial, McDonald's will also admit responsibility for a serious outbreak of food poisoning in Preston in 1991 which resulted in 14 customers being hospitalised. Thirty ex-staff will testify on appalling working conditions at McDonald's. One witness will explain how his friend was electrocuted and died at their Manchester restaurant in 1992 due to faulty equipment.

The ex-Attorney General of Texas will testify how he took action to stop McDonald's advertising their food as nutritious. The Court will also hear how the actor who played Ronald McDonald throughout the 1980s, Geoff Guliano, apologised to the peoples of the world "for brainwashing children".

The McLibel Support Campaign has launched a Free Speech Pledge, and hundreds of groups and individuals are continuing to circulate anti-McDonald's leaflets in defiance of legal action. In this way McDonald's efforts have backfired and only exposed the corporation further.

●For further information contact: *McLibel Support Campaign*, c/o *London Greenpeace*, 5 Caledonian Road, King's Cross, London N1 9DX Tel: 071 837 7557.

Tenants defeat Tory council

Cllr Steve Kilsby reports: Cherwell District council in Oxfordshire suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of council tenants, who voted against changing landlords, despite the council pulling every trick in the book to persuade tenants that they would be better off under Housing Associations. The Tory-controlled council announced its intention to sell off its council houses two years ago. The Labour Party took several months weighing up the pros and cons of sell-off before deciding to fight a hard-hitting opposition campaign.

A series of public meetings were then held by Labour at which tenants made it abundantly clear - as they had to Labour councillors before the campaign got underway - that they were totally opposed to the sell-off.

Labour knew that the task before it was not an easy one. Cherwell's tenants had lived under a Tory council for many years and young people, in particular, did not feel that their vote ever changed anything, as the council went its own sweet way however they voted - rather like central government in fact!

The council was canny enough to recognise that the major town, Banbury, was Labour's heartland, and thought that by dividing the stock in two, it could solicit a vote to stay with the council in Banbury, and a vote to go to Housing Associations in the rest of the District. In the event, both areas voted to stay with the council, and Labour's activities in cultivating the area in which it did not have much representation paid off with a greater vote to stay with the council than was obtained in the Banbury area!

The strategy adopted by the Labour Group paid off handsomely. There were no tenants' associations whatsoever in Cherwell when the campaign began. Indeed, the last one folded ten years ago. Labour's first task, then, was to establish TAs.

This was done through a series of public meetings and by using the expertise in the matter within the Labour Group. Four TAs now exist in Cherwell! These organisations carried much of the weight of the campaign; the Bicester and District TA and the Hardwick, Arden and Ruscote TA, in particular, mounted effective campaigns. Bicester extended theirs to cover every single village in the district!

To co-ordinate the TA's and the campaign generally, the CLP set up the Tenants' Associations' Support Committee, which, although including Liberals in its ranks (the District council's very small Liberal group was in favour of the sell-off, while Banbury Town Liberal Party was against), provided the political thrust and public face for the campaign, as the TA's had to protect their chances of getting grants from Tory councillors in the future.

Hard work pays off in Birmingham

Brian Bracher reports: **A remarkable victory was recorded by Labour in a Birmingham council by-election last month in Quinton ward, part of the Edgbaston constituency. Although Labour has come close to winning the seat in recent years, the Tories have always managed to hold on by their finger-nails.**

Labour's newly-elected councillor, Rev. Richard Bashford, won the seat with a majority of nearly 300 (a 9% swing to Labour). Richard was described by a local *Briefing* reader as "clearly a socialist vicar". Prior to his election he had been active on numerous social issues in the Winson Green area.

The Quinton Labour Party conducted a full-throttle campaign. Hundreds of Party members from across the City, five local MPs and the new Leader of the council, Theresa Stewart, helped with canvassing and many union branches contributed to the election fund.

The local Tory Party was demoralised throughout the campaign as they found it extremely difficult to launch personal attacks on a clergyman. Their top priority appeared to be to rid the ward of dog-shit! Electors felt betrayed, isolated and forgotten, complaining frequently about cuts in the NHS, crime and VAT on fuel when canvassed.

Since his election Richard has been busy setting up local action groups to push for improvements in the ward and holding weekly surgeries. In Edison Grove (a run-down council estate with a high proportion of single parent families) he has helped set up a pressure group to get the council to renovate housing stock in the area and expand facilities for children.

In his acceptance speech Richard was proud to acknowledge the work done by John Wilton, who fought several elections in the area, as well as the commitment of local Party members who campaigned hard for a Labour victory over many years.

Another factor which must have contributed to the result was the retirement of Dick Knowles as Leader of the council and his replacement by Stewart. Birmingham's Labour council has increased spending on education and is keen to renovate council housing rather than fund prestige projects such as the National Convention Centre and Super-Prix.

The Party that dare not speak its name

A North Oxfordshire council Tory candidate has put out an introductory leaflet without any mention of the Conservative Party. The trick seems to be working. At least one voter was convinced by the leaflet that Tory John Brooks, who is black, was the Labour candidate!

Local activists report

Geoff Mann reports:

Coventry: Fears that the BNP would enter candidates have proved unfounded. Militant Labour has also declined to fight the elections this year. The right wing Labour council has done little to oppose the government's policies, but has an unassailable majority. Coventrians are furious with the Tory Party's attack on the council's policy of twinning with towns and cities overseas. Most of these links were set up after the war in the spirit of peace and reconciliation and include places such as Dresden, Lidice and Volgograd (Stalingrad). These attempts to promote international co-operation and understanding are in stark contrast to Major's jingoistic celebrations planned for the 50th anniversary of D-Day.

Islington: Labour is fighting hard to kick the council's single Tory out of Quadrant ward. Liberal Democrats are playing the race card by promisng to give "local people" priority in housing; they may make some gains in the south of the borough. The deselection of a prominent tenants' leader and sitting Labour councillor by the new right yuppies who have taken over most of the Party branches caused resentment on the estates. The only specific promise in Labour's entire manifesto is to re-open Spingdale nursery, a victory for parents who had occupied the closure-threatened facility for nearly a year.

Macclesfield: Labour is fighting hard in East ward, where two by-elections are being held in addition to the seat which automatically comes up for re-election, and hopes to make gains from the Liberal Democrats. In Central ward, Labour is asking Liberals to vote tactically to keep the Tories out!

Newcastle: The Tories have not found enough candidates to contest all the seats this year. Labour is hoping to win one ward from the Liberal Democrats. Canvassing returns are as good as they were at the time of the Poll Tax.

Oldham: Two years ago Labour lost seven seats and now has a majority of just four. The right-wing Labour council has continued to implement Tory policies and risks losing control of the council to the Liberal Democrats. *Briefing* has been told that the electorate "is sick to death with Labour". The Commission for Racial Equality has been critical of the council's policies. A row has erupted over the council's decision to evict close relatives of council tenants who have died, "practically on the day of the funeral".

Sheffield: Over the past eighteen months the Liberal Democrats have won two by-elections in previously strong Labour areas, and it is likely that they will make further gains, particularly in the semi-rural Hillsborough constituency, this year. In many more seats the Labour majority is likely to be squeezed. The electorate is disillusioned with the right-wing Labour council which is widely perceived as incompetent. It has even turned what should have been a major advantage to the Labour Party, the construction of the Super-tram, into a liability, through the mismanagement of the construction which has caused chaos and misery for travellers.

South Tyneside: Splits in the Labour Group have led to fist fights and threats of expulsions from both sides. This shambles could enable the Liberal Democrats to make gains.

Sunderland: The BNP is standing a candidate against Labour in a ward covering a large council estate.

York: Labour currently holds 34 seats to the Tories' seven and Liberal Democrats' four. This year the council implemented £0.75 million of cuts but was careful to ensure that frontline services were protected. Labour members have been campaigning against the imposition of VAT on fuel, especially on some of the council estates which have expensive heating. Wards to watch are Westfield, which the Liberals could take from Labour, and Monk, which is a Tory marginal.

Battle against Newham racists

There are five BNP candidates standing in Newham: three in Custom House and Silvertown ward and two in Beckton ward.

To combat the BNP's campaign, the Newham Monitoring Project has been leafleting parts of these wards since January. Whenever they hear of an area that has been leafleted by the BNP, they put out a counter-leaflet straight away.

Also standing in these wards are five Tories under the banner "Conservatives Against Unfair Labour Ethnic Policies". Conservative Central Office has made an attempt to distance itself from these racists but the Chair of Newham South Conservative Association justified their stance: "Labour have funded an African-Caribbean builders scheme to promote opportunities among that group - what about the other builders in the borough? They have an Asian restaurant owners support scheme, well what about the Greek and Italian restaurant owners."

Island Housing Costs Shocker

FOCUS fighting for YOU!

Labour has failed. Extremists will not help. The Island Community needs action. That means policies that have worked in Liberal Neighbourhoods, and councillors who will make sure you spend your own money.

Strange priorities in Millwall: "Extremists will not help" is as much as Liberal Democrats on the Isle of Dogs can bring themselves to say about the pernicious threat of the BNP - their real venom is reserved for Labour. Tower Hamlets Lib-Dems recently sacked 130 specialist teachers who help children for whom English is a second language. Teachers' unions staged a one-day strike in protest. Labour has opposed the cut.

● IN THE LONDON Borough of Hillingdon 69 Labour Party candidates, having been duly endorsed by the local Labour Party, are standing for election on May 5th. One of these is Wally Kennedy, a sitting councillor and member of the current Labour Group. In February, Kennedy's Party membership was suspended for alleged links with Militant, although no evidence in writing has ever been produced. The Labour Group, local Labour Party and the 68 other Labour candidates all support Kennedy. The election campaign for all 69 is being handled by the same agent, John Bartlett.

The Greater London Labour Party and Walworth Road decided to impose a candidate in Kennedy's ward, Hillingdon East. The candidate they chose is Alan Bindings, who will be described as "The Official Labour Party Candidate" on the ballot. Bindings is a well-known, widely disliked local character who is described by one Hillingdon Labour veteran as "quite likely to bring the Party into disrepute".

Because Kennedy is standing against this "official" Labour candidate, he has been expelled from the Party. Walworth Road is now threatening the agent and anyone who campaigns for Kennedy with expulsion, all of which cannot help Labour's campaign to hold onto control of Hillingdon council.

Full employment conference - June 11th

LABOUR PARTY leaders were hastily converted to the idea of full employment when they needed to woo union leaders to support OMOV (One Member, One Vote) at last year's Labour Party Annual Conference.

Dorothy Macedo
SCG Supporters' Network

They have failed however to spell out the policies needed to achieve it. Their continuing refusal to countenance any effective government economic intervention means full employment will be added to the list of things a Labour government will be in favour of, but unable to do much about. If we leave it to the modernisers, it will be yet another empty promise of the sort which makes people so disillusioned with politicians.

According to media pundits full employment is now a utopian dream. As socialists, we reject this casual abandonment of millions of people to the scrap heap, but we need to specify and develop the arguments against it. This year's Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network conference hopes to do just that.

The theme of the conference, on Saturday June 11th at Manchester Town Hall, is "the policies Labour needs for socialism and full employment". It promises to be a major event for the left in the labour movement, providing an opportunity to arm ourselves with arguments as well as giving us the chance to meet left activists from other areas and discuss future tactics.

The conference will open with keynote speeches on full employment. In the afternoon there will be workshops on detailed policy aspects. Each workshop will be chaired by a Socialist Campaign Group MP and will feature speakers with specialist knowledge. Jonathan Michie, co-author of *Beyond the Casino Economy*, will be leading the workshop on public ownership and job creation. Other workshops will deal with strategies for defending jobs, unemployment and racism, welfare cuts, arms conversion, and the international struggle for jobs. The final plenary session will take reports from the workshops as well as electing the Network officers for the coming year.

There will also be time for caucus meetings for various unions and for young Labour Party members.

● **Details of the conference are in the latest *SCG Network News* bulletin, along with suggested model resolutions for Labour Party Annual Conference, lists of local groups and details of the SCG slate for the NEC. If you have not received a bulletin, it means you are not on the SCG Network mailing list! To remedy this, send £5 (£2 unwaged) to SCG Network, 3 Blades House, Kennington Oval, London SE11 5TW. Extra copies of the bulletin and leaflets for the June conference can be obtained from the same address.**

Recapturing Labour's base

"LABOUR LOST IN 1979 due to the huge loss of working class votes ... There remain 5.2 million working class adults who do not vote. This is the largest target group available to the Labour Party, but it does not so far appear to have been a major focus of its attention." This important finding emerges from an interesting new *Tribune* pamphlet *Realignment on the Right*.

Author Alan Taylor, a former academic advisor to ITN, examines recent voting behaviour and concludes that the much-trumpeted defection of skilled workers (C2s) in 1979 may have been over-estimated. The real problem was a longer-term alienation of working class voters from Labour. Underpinning this was the attempt to project Labour as a party "capable of governing in the national interest, but manifestly failing to do so". Meanwhile, the Tories moved in the opposite direction, becoming an overtly sectional party of the economically secure against the worse off.

Taylor's conclusion is that Labour should project itself as a sectional party, committed to public services and full employment. It should be the party of the majority who lose out from Conservative policies, through the collapse of public services, for example. But the author warns: "The problem for Labour is that it is full of interests which are likely to block progress in this direction."

● ***Realignment on the Right* by Alan Taylor, published by *Tribune*, 308 Gray's Inn Rd, London WC1; £4.**

Urgent Notice NEC elections 1994

THIS YEAR ELECTIONS for the NEC's Constituency division will be conducted by postal ballot.

In order to vote, you must pay your 1994 membership fees by May 13th!

Don't miss your chance to vote for the Socialist Campaign Group slate. Contact your local Party at once. Time is running out!

If you don't vote, you won't be able to moan about how useless the NEC is!

Leaflets for the SCG slate will be issued in early July, after nominations close. Let the SCG Supporters' Network know how many you will be able to distribute, contact address above.

Bob Cryer - a socialist champion

Jeremy Corbyn, MP for Islington North, pays tribute to the late Bob Cryer.



Bob Cryer, much-missed and admired comrade. PHOTO: Tribune

BOB CRYER'S death has shocked all those who ever met him.

This shock has turned to anger that a man who gave so much to the cause of socialism died in such a tragic way.

Bob had many facets to his life and a huge range of interests in many causes all of which he pursued doggedly and the supporters of which he never let down.

Peace and the cause of disarmament were always close to his heart. As a member of CND for over 30 years he stuck to the view that nuclear weapons are evil and immoral, despite the shifts of the Labour leadership. When the Party entered the insane world of presentational politics, in which all principles became expendable, he insisted on reminding MPs, trade union leaders and activists of the realities of war and the need to struggle for peace. He never missed an opportunity to oppose Trident, support non-proliferation or expose the military listening-post at Menwith Hill.

Tenacity in the pursuit of cases was Bob's watchword. He was a superb participant in Parliament and vied with Dennis Skinner for the best attendance, voting and speaking record. Indeed, he and Dennis lead a list of the best voting records of Labour MPs, a list dominated by the Socialist Campaign Group, of which Bob was a founder member in 1982.

As chair of the House Committee on Statutory Instruments, he would regularly expose Tory attempts to by-pass Parliamentary scrutiny. Bob believed that Parliament should be the place to hold the executive in check. He abhorred the way in which patronage is used to remove principles and reduce Parliamentary effectiveness.

Railways and the interests of railway workers were dear to Bob's heart. The existence of the Worth Valley line is mainly due to him and his support for the Settle to Carlisle line was crucial in saving it - market forces were halted there!

As MP for Keighley, MEP for Sheffield and MP for Bradford South, Bob's head was never turned by glitter or ambition. The Labour Party desperately needs people like Bob Cryer and could ill afford to lose him at this hour.

To Ann, Jane and John, our deepest sorrow at this tragedy. ❑

Class struggle on the playing field

Mike Marqusee, *Labour Briefing* political correspondent, recalls Bob Cryer's socialist commitment to cricket.

I WAS LUCKY enough to get to know Bob Cryer in recent years through *Briefing*'s work with the Socialist Campaign Group. Readers will be familiar with Bob's political achievements. Many, however, may not be aware of his passion for cricket.

As a player, Bob's proudest moment was trapping Ray Illingworth, recently appointed Chair of the England Test Selectors, Leg Before Wicket while bowling for Combined Yorkshire Universities against Yorkshire County Cricket Club in a pre-season friendly.

Bob was an enviably competent cricketer who played for Saltaire in the Bradford League and later for Silsden in the Airedale-Wharfedale League. He also appeared several times for the Lords and Commons XI. When the latter celebrated its centenary with a Lords v Commons match at the Oval, Bob was proud to represent the elected chamber in such august surroundings, but he refused to receive a mini-presentation bat from John Major.

For Bob, the class struggle didn't end inside the boundary rope. He recalled fondly how league cricketers at Saltaire had abused scabs during a bitter engineering dispute in the 60s. He was scathing about the racial and class prejudices of Yorkshire CCC. He believed that the posh, country-orientated Yorkshire League in the north of the county treated the working class leagues of the south and west with contempt.

Last year, he proposed an Early Day Motion condemning the Test and County Cricket Board for selling the England side to sponsors Tetley Bitter. He regarded the cricket authorities as parasites on a great game. "Cricket in England has survived," he told me, "not because of the largesse of fat cats but because of the voluntary, collective efforts of ordinary people."

Bob's death has robbed Labour and the working people of Bradford of a socialist champion who was also a kind and immensely likeable human being. His loss will be felt by the whole movement, but, of course, with greatest intensity by his family.

Over the last year, his son, John, has become a respected comrade and friend of many of us at *Labour Briefing*. This has made us feel Bob's death especially closely.



Major in a mess of

Alan Simpson, MP for Nottingham South and secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs, calls for a new politics of international inter-connectedness.

"DUMP MAJOR!" has been the *cri de coeur* of panic-stricken Tories in recent weeks. "Give us Heseltine, Clarke, Portillo, Howard, Thatcher, French and Saunders ... anyone to get us out of this mess!"

Major is undoubtedly a bit of a plonker, but I would offer a word of caution to anxious Tories: the mess is more than the man.

There are two elements to this mess which need to be looked at separately: Britain in Europe and the general state of British politics.

It is fair to say that 'Europe' has been the downfall of more political careers than any other single political issue in post-war Britain. You would have to be an absolute idiot to think that any successor to Major would not inherit the same irreconcilable differences that Major himself has had to live with. The Tories biggest millstone is that all of their 'greatest triumphs' in European negotiations have been built on denying people in Britain the same social and employment rights as their European counterparts. You may be able to sell this as a virtue to footloose multi-national capital, but to British pensioners, parents, young school-leavers and anyone bothered about the environment, it just sounds like a bit of a bummer.

Europe has serious issues to face up to. Paradoxically, the end of the Cold War has made war in Europe more likely. In the former Yugoslavia it is a gruesome reality. In other eastern European states it seems to hover less than another food shortage away.

In western Europe we seem caught between the twin fears of jobs moving out and people moving in. When the Ukraine announced that it was not going to close down its (unsafe) nuclear power production, because up to a third of its population might have frozen to death in the winter, the west simply breathed a sigh of relief that another wave of economic migrants would not (for the moment) be heading our way.

But the fear has already arrived. Freddie Krueger strides the political landscape, looking for those who will let him into their dreams.

The Conservatives' vision of a way through the nightmare is essentially this: if it moves, privatise it; if not, sell it anyway. Is it any wonder that the public won't be talked into the illusion of a recovery? Better the Freddie you know than the one who whispers invitations to try to shop your way out of the recession.

The flip-side of the government's message is even uglier. Across Europe, from Zhirinovsky in Russia to Berlusconi in Italy to the BNP in Milwall, neo-fascist and nationalist movements are becoming politically more acceptable and electorally more successful. No one should underestimate the power of the offer of a job. If fascists promise this on the basis of taking it from someone else, what's the problem? They were probably foreigners anyway ... or Jews ... or blacks. Racism gives you that extra populist ride off the politics of free-marketeering: getting people to blame each other for the problems that their governments have created.

When I look at the sanitised veneer of the new right political movements in Europe I am reminded of Roger McGough's lines:

Beware of fascists,
Pretending to be humanitarians.
Like cannibals on a health kick
Eating only vegetarians.

This is your empire, Mr Major, yours or whoever follows you. It is the 'magic' world of monetarism and multi-nationals your party has dragged us into. So what is the way out? Well, to begin with, we need at least to avoid the misleading lures of fantasy football. The press has been full of 'pick and mix' competitions among candidates for the Tory leadership. One 'dream ticket' after another is being lined up in imaginary penalty shoot-outs ... as though any of them would make a ha'p'orth of difference! Parliament is already enough of a world of virtual unreality.

The way out is to set down a different set of paradigms for the century ahead and demand that politicians address these, rather than the dead or dying dogmas of the present. And this means taking a hard look at the mess itself and understanding the possibilities beyond it. I want to offer an outline of the heresies this approach might need to embrace.

We are entering a new era of feudalism. The untrammelled power given to corporate, multi-national capital makes it the greatest of the modern evils. It knows no loyalty to people or place, only the urgent pursuit of short-term profit and long-term power. Its playground is as much the developing world as the industrial one. In the past, feudal lords believed they had the right to 'have their way' with their serfs and subjects. Now, the movers of money have taken to bonking whole countries and continents.

It is a mistake to see them as the wealth creators in society. Rather they are prestigious crack addicts whose dependence on the next quick fix is defined as an entrepreneurial virtue rather than an ecological vice. A political agenda for civilised life in the twenty-first century would have to confront the free movement of capital and the power of the multi-nationals, and in doing so it would need to turn the devastatingly destructive policies of the World Bank and the IMF upside down.

Having begun with a premise which is tantamount to smashing the idols in the temple, I may as well carry on. Early in the next century we will come to see world trade in less desirable terms. Expending huge amounts of energy in the transport of goods half way round the planet just so we can have early strawberries or cheaper

global proportions



tellies will become a symbol of the polluted thinking of the past. The sooner we face this the better. There will be an environmental premium placed on producing and trading locally where possible, regionally where necessary, and globally only when unavoidable. Environmental taxes will have to underpin this change, but what is really needed is a new sense of self-interest in seeing others produce to the best environmental standards rather than the worst. There is already a creeping realisation that all the shit we thought we were dumping 'safely' on the other side of the planet has developed a discomforting habit of making its own way back home to us via the food chain, through polluted waters, the ozone layer and in the wind. It will also confront our own dependence on the water-thirsty, residue-dumping technologies of western agri-business.

To address these challenges, Labour has to go beyond free-market philosophies. Yet so far we seem to have confined ourselves to discussions around the periphery. Far from confronting the unaccountable power of the multi-nationals, we have often colluded with it. We would not otherwise have gone along with an independent (and unaccountable) European central bank. We would not have signed up to terms of economic convergence in the Maastricht Treaty into which monetarist priorities were unambiguously woven. Even domestically we have appeared reluctant to challenge the dead-hand that short-term, speculative interests have laid upon the economy. A Britain (and Europe) which is serious about 'full employment' demands an awful lot more.

We might start with developing policies for a new partnership with pension funds. A definition (in law) that pensions are workers' deferred wages and belong to the workers themselves, not the managers of the funds, would help to fend off some of those who currently circle the skies ready for an early raid on other people's money. A redefining of trust law would make it possible for the elected representatives of workers themselves to introduce different priorities into funds' investment decisions: pursuing longer term interests in jobs and ethics rather than narrower ones based solely on the rate of profit. A recognition that higher levels of employment generates higher levels of pension contributions would also help to reconnect us to an understanding that we have common and collective self-interests in putting aside sensibly today what we hope to be able to draw upon tomorrow.



This re-defining of common self-interest will be central to an understanding of the decades immediately ahead of us, an understanding based on hope rather than fear. If we recognise that Europe would be in turmoil if faced with massive population migrations driven by poverty and civil war, then we have a self-interest in investing in the infrastructures of democracy, sufficiency and stability beyond Europe's borders. This is not charity but common sense.

If we want stability in our own cities and society we must invest in the infrastructures of civilised living. Although two-thirds of our pension contributions come directly back to the individual contributor within their own life-cycle, we depend upon the contributions being sustained from one generation to another. It means that those of us who are wage-earners today have a selfish interest in ensuring that today's children receive the best education and the most secure upbringing we can offer them. All too soon they will be wage-earners asked to support the increased numbers of us who will be pensioners.

To survive in the next century we will have to rediscover the sense of our own inter-connectedness and inter-dependency. It requires a new economics and a different commitment to internationalism on a very small planet. It needs a commitment not just to 'fair' taxation, but to 'wise' taxation (where investment in the future matters as much as consumption in the present). These are the issues that capitalism can no longer address and to which fascism offers only nihilistic answers. They can become the bedrock for a new era of democratic socialism - if only we are not afraid to address them.

My daughter tells me that we are coming to the end of an era of 'men's economics' when a detailed knowledge of the fragments of life was mistaken for an understanding of the whole. She tells me that making sense of the years ahead will begin once economics becomes 'womanised'. I might have a place in this, but I'd better not be standing in its way. And that is the problem that the Tories face. It's not that they have a plonker for a leader, but a plonker of a philosophy. Playing games of 'change the leader' may be a pleasant distraction. But it will not narrow the gap between the fantasy league they play in and the real world that the rest of us must live in.

So what about Labour? I am often told to steer clear of the specifics of any serious alternative. To challenge the destructive powers of corporate capital or to talk openly about a return to more progressive taxation or to call for a renewal of public and common ownership is more than the public could bear. We would be crucified at the polls. Is this truth or merely an expression of our own loss of faith and direction?

There are difficult, turbulent and (just possibly) exciting times ahead. Enough people live in silent fear of them already. Nonetheless, wherever I go I find people looking not for easy answers, but for a politics driven by informed optimism rather than blind prejudice. Better to be nailed for addressing this than for unfathomable silences about the sea changes that are taking place around us. ❑

NEWS & VIEWS

THE DIRECTOR General of Water Services, Ian Byatt, has been accused by Helen Jackson and other Labour MPs of placing business and Treasury friends on the ten regional consumer service committees.

These committees are supposed to represent the ordinary consumers who have been clobbered by higher bills since privatisation in 1989. Byatt's appointments include: David Edwards, a director of construction company John Laing, which has contracts worth £10 million with Anglian Water; Edwards' brother-in-law; and the wife of one of Byatt's former Treasury colleagues. Meanwhile, the chair of Yorkshire's consumer committee, Diana Scott, who publicly disagreed with Byatt's mania for water metering, has been dumped.

Ordinary consumers have found it hard to make their views known - at a time when water bills have gone up in real terms by over 60% and when the number of households disconnected from water supplies has trebled. Over the same period, the ten big water and sewerage companies in England increased their operating profits from £979 million to £1,644 million, dividends went up by 120% and the water companies' shares easily outperformed the *Financial Times* all-shares index.

The higher prices paid by consumers have provided the water companies with an extra £1.4 billion in the four years since privatisation. A significant proportion of this went towards redundancy costs, as the 'liberated' industry chiefs tried to live up to their new self-image as thrusting entrepreneurs. No longer was water supply to be seen as a boring, essential, municipal-style service.

The only apparent curb on the ambitions of the industry bosses was the regulatory body, OFWAT, and Ian Byatt. But protecting ordinary consumers is only one part of his job - he's also supposed to encourage competition in the industry and to ensure that the companies make a satisfactory return on the capital employed. He's certainly done well by the companies. Competition is a bit more tricky. For instance, how can people in the south west, with the highest bills on average, choose a competing water supplier offering a cheaper service - perhaps one of the (non-privatised) Scottish suppliers?

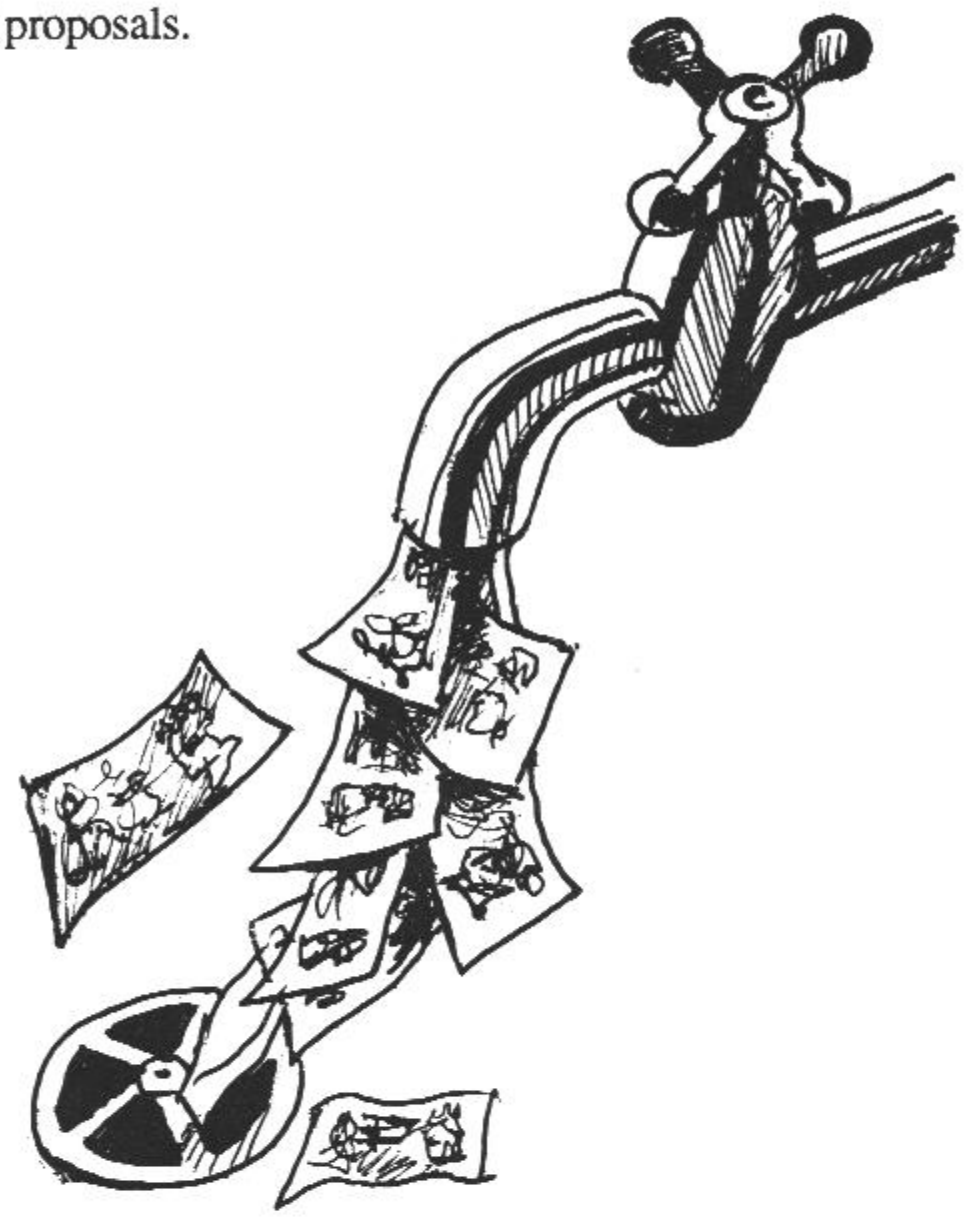
So far, the only policy produced by Labour on the privatised water, gas, electricity and telephone industries is Gordon Brown's promise to tax the companies' excess profits - however they are defined. But there's nothing about recouping the massive sums of public money spent on launching these new enterprises - £14.4 billion for water alone (procured by cash injections and discounting outstanding debt). Where's our compensation? Where's the long-term policy and planning for these key monopolies? Or are they to continue to be run, even under Labour, as private fiefdoms? And if the industries aren't to be re-nationalised, which seems likely, how can democratic control be brought into the regulatory system? How can workers and customers get the power to express their legitimate interests?

The latest wheeze, pioneered by Severn Trent Water, is to introduce pre-payment meters for poorer families, so that people can quietly cut themselves off from water without local councils or indeed anybody else knowing.

The strong grass-roots campaign is one of many similar campaigns against compulsory meters in new homes. While some Labour MPs and councillors are active in these campaigns, there is an awful silence at the top of the Party, and that's not good enough. ❑

Down the drain

What will a Labour government do about the privatised utilities? Examining mounting evidence of corruption and profiteering in the water industry, **Mike Fuerst** says it's time for some radical proposals.



No compromise on equality

Disability activists are calling on all MPs to support the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill which receives its third reading on May 6th.

FOR THE FIRST time, the Civil Rights Bill has made it to committee stage with no amendments from Tory MPs. Two hundred and thirty one MPs supported it at the second reading. The Bill will give 6.5 million disabled people the same rights as non-disabled people and would force organisations, services, recreational and educational facilities in the public domain to adapt their buildings for disabled people.

If the Bill passes, employers will no longer be allowed to exclude people from any part of the selection process on the grounds of disability. If the most suitable person to do the job is disabled, then an employer must make reasonable accommodation.

Simone Aspis, vice chair of the Integration Alliance and a member of People First, says the legislation is long overdue. "I am a special school survivor who felt that she was denied a right to a mainstream education and had great difficulty being accepted in study groups and employment in voluntary organisations on the grounds of having learning difficulties.

"All the organisations took one look at my application form, saw I went to a special school and then rejected me."

When Simone made a request to be trained as a youth leader, she was confronted by the head of recreational services at one well-known voluntary organisation who said to her: "You have not come to terms with your disability. Everyone leaves your school with a chip on the shoulder."

He made no effort to enrol Simone on the course or to allow her to acquire the skills to be a youth leader. The Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill will outlaw employers asking disabled people different questions from non-disabled people.

"I need you to lobby, lobby, lobby your MPs and drive them out of their constituencies into the House of Commons on May 6th to support the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill," says Simone.

Commons makes silence a crime

Labour's desire to wrest the mantle of "law and order" from the Tories knows no bounds.

On April 13th, the Commons debated the Criminal Justice Bill, which had its origins in Michael Howard's "young hooligans" speech at Tory Conference last October. The Bill seeks to criminalise anyone who does not fit into Tory ideas of normal behaviour, as well as attacking the rights of everyone facing a criminal charge.

The Bill creates a new offence of criminal trespass, specifically aimed at hunt saboteurs and travellers. It also provides a "speeded-up" procedure for evicting squatters. Landlords will be able to obtain eviction orders without giving any notice to the occupants, and squatters who fail to leave after 24 hours will be committing an offence.

There are provisions to sentence children convicted of crimes to up to 14 years imprisonment. Bail will be refused for certain serious offences. New stop and search powers reincarnate the old, much-hated "sus" powers, allowing police to harass any section of the community they choose.

Perhaps most alarmingly, the Bill abolishes the right to silence: the right for anyone arrested not to answer questions when in a police station. Labour's reaction has been, as usual, an attempt to muddle through and please both sides, ending up by pleasing nobody.

The Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers held a lobby of Parliament on April 13th. Sadly, the lawyers felt they had to spend time lobbying Labour MPs, because of initial indications that Labour would abstain on the abolition of the right to silence. Inevitably, the most sympathetic Labour MPs were members of the Socialist Campaign Group. Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn and Dennis Skinner all made an effort to meet the lawyers, while the front bench made itself scarce.

During the lobbying, rumours flew around about Labour's confused position. After a Shadow Cabinet meeting at 5pm, the socialist lawyers were informed that Labour would, after all, vote against the abolition of the right to silence, and indeed Blair spoke in the House against abolition.

However, once the clause was passed, Labour abstained on the Bill as a whole, with the exception of 44 rebels, most of them members of the Socialist Campaign Group. One excuse for abstaining given by some Shadow Cabinet members was that the Bill as a whole contained the reduction of the age of consent for gay men to 18 - something which the majority of Shadow Cabinet members had previously condemned as insufficient. The true reason is doubtless that Labour, and Blair in particular, felt that they could not be seen supporting the likes of hunt saboteurs, squatters or juvenile criminals whose minds and morals have been unhinged by video nasties.

The Bill is now in the Lords, where it is likely to receive a much more critical response than it did in the Commons.

● MPs voting against the Criminal Justice bill: Abbott, Austin-Walker, Barnes, Benn, Burden, Chisholm, Clapham, Eric Clarke, Clelland, Connarty, Corbyn, Corston, Jim Cunningham, Denzil Davies, Dunnachie, Gordon, Graham, Bernie Grant, Gunnell, Heppell, Home Robertson, Hood, Kevin Hughes, Robert Hughes, Glenda Jackson, Helen Jackson, Lynne Jones, Jane Kennedy, Lewis, Livingstone, Loyden, McAllion, Macdonald, Madden, Mahon, Jim Marshall, Bill Michie, Pickthall, Sedgemore, Simpson, Skinner, Watts, Wise, Wray; tellers: Gerrard and Bennett.

Fighting fascism on the terraces

British fascists have long seen football fans as potential recruits, but in recent years their tactics have shifted, reports **Paul** of the fanzine *Our Day Will Come*.

DURING THE England football squad's tour of the United States in 1993, Paul Ince became the first black player to captain the national side.

Ince commands a breath-taking level of respect from the Manchester United terraces. Through sheer endeavour, black players like Ince, Viv Anderson and John Barnes have done much to diminish the racism that was once so prevalent on the soccer terraces.



"God save the Queen" PHOTO: Craig Brewin.

Unfortunately there is no reason to hang out the bunting and proclaim the death of racism in British football. That will only come when we see the death of racism in British society. During the 1970s the National Front targeted football supporters for recruitment. Recently, the BNP's growth (albeit from tiny to merely small) has encouraged some fascists to look again to the terraces for recruits.

The largest fascist mobilisation of 1993 (and one that was completely ignored by the major anti-fascist organisations) was the attack on the Bloody Sunday commemoration in January. An unholy alliance of fascists, Loyalists, pot-bellied squaddies and ageing football hooligans stomped around Edgware Road before 357 were arrested by the police. Those that remained treated the marchers to the usual incoherent abuse - they didn't take too kindly to being told that one of their union jacks was upside down!

The spadework for this mobilisation had been done by prominent members of the BNP leafleting London soccer grounds such as Millwall, Charlton Athletic and Crystal Palace. Members of the NF leafleted army barracks in the south east. At the 1991 England v Republic of Ireland international at Wembley I observed the sectarian prejudices of many England fans. In their "Chelsea Loyalist" T shirts and with their constant cries of "Fuck The Pope" they seemed to be trying, desperately, to bring the prejudices of Northern Ireland to English football.

The greatest danger fascists present to football is not NF-style racial abuse of black players (after all, if you are a young male, who would you choose as a role model, Paul Ince or Derek Beackon?), but through a development of the fascist/Loyalist axis.

Having been chased out of Brick Lane in the autumn of 1993, the only guaranteed safe paper sale the BNP have left is at Ibrox Park, home of Glasgow Rangers. Rangers, described by their former manager Graeme Souness as "the biggest football club in Britain", is home to an unpleasant collection of fascist and Loyalist paper-sellers, fund-raisers and activists.

The BNP has realised that it has to develop its politics beyond mere anti-black and anti-immigration statements, and as a result has adopted the Loyalist cause. While it would be idle to see all Loyalists as racist bigots, fascism and Loyalism do share certain core elements. Deference to leaders, blind patriotism, virulent anti-communism and the complete negation of any class pride or unity. Hitler believed there was a Jewish conspiracy to run the world; Paisley believes there is a Catholic world conspiracy. No wonder the BNP has fitted in so well around Ibrox Park.

Elsewhere in the country, the fascist presence is minimal. While they produced a large number of football supporters to oppose the 1993 Bloody Sunday march, they were conspicuous by their absence in 1994. Indeed, when BNP members tried to whip up support for their absurd "Hang the IRA" march in April 1993, their leafleting of London's football grounds produced little interest. A cowering group, estimated by the press at 200 strong (the group I saw contained no more than 80), skulked behind a massive police presence.

Anti-fascist organisations - and the Anti-Nazi League in particular - are often guilty of counter-productive exaggeration, gossip and rumour-mongering. At the moment there is no prospect of the English soccer fan swopping his Reeboks for jackboots. What we do have, however, is a situation where fascist and Loyalist football supporters are working together at some grounds to spread sectarian bigotry, rather than simple racial hatred.

At many football clubs, fans have produced excellent anti-fascist fanzines (eg. *Marching Altogether* at Leeds United) and Anti-Fascist Action has produced a good range of football stickers. Such activity, when it comes from genuine fans, is invaluable. What could be counter-productive, however, is middle-class, student-dominated organisations such as the Anti-Nazi League lecturing football fans on the need to oppose racism. At the Manchester United v Liverpool game in October 1992 *Socialist Worker* paper-sellers were met with bemused indifference by most fans. A lecture on racism on the terraces by someone who has never actually stood on the terraces is the last thing the anti-fascist movement needs.

If fascism has been about anything in this country in the last 25 years, it has been about the battle for the hearts and minds of the working class. It is within that class that fascism can be beaten, and part of that struggle will be on the football terraces.

● ***Our Day Will Come*** **is available for 50p (plus a stamp) from PO Box 467, London E8 3QX. Please made cheques payable to K Brown.**

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING

Is there still time to save the world?

In the second of a series of articles on the issues facing September's International Conference on Population and Development, **Leonora Lloyd** asks if socialists are ready to cope with the problems posed by rapid population growth.

AFTER 100,000 years, the world's population had grown to four billion by the early 1980s. By the end of this century, it will have reached six billion.

Most of that growth will be in the poorer parts of the world, which means a major increase in the absolute number of poor people. Between 1970 and 1985, the proportion of poor people fell from 52% to 44%, but the numbers rose from 944 million to 1,156 million.

In many Third World countries half the population is under 15. Education in these countries therefore consumes a huge share of national resources. In practice, however, many children get little or no education and work for themselves or their family. The number of children receiving education is growing - from 311 million in 1970 to 480 million in 1986 - and the rate of illiteracy is falling - from 55% to 39% in the same period. But the absolute number of children not receiving any education at all has grown, as has the number of illiterates - by 65 million between 1970-1986.

Another result of fast population growth is depletion of land, the source of renewable energy and food. A vicious cycle of deprivation ensues: with less food, fuel and water, poor populations (particularly women and children) have to work harder and walk further to procure essential items, thus spreading degradation of the land, and receive an ever poorer return for their labour.

Most land and other wealth in the developing world is owned or controlled by multi-nationals. Throughout the south, self-sustaining agricultural systems and forests are destroyed to make way for profitable monoculture - growing crops for export to the west - or to provide luxury items like hard woods. Unwanted by-products of western industry are dumped in countries with little environmental protection and poor health service systems.

It is too easy to say that this is simply the effect of capitalism and neo-colonialism. The 'planned' economies of the Soviet Union and eastern Europe created enormous environmental damage in their drive for industrial development. Marxists have some hard questions to answer. Marx saw nature as something to be controlled and mastered, rather than as something to be understood and nurtured. Experience has shown that we cannot rely on science alone to provide the answers.

Between 1969 and 1985, the proportion of malnourished people dropped from 27% to under 22%. But because of population growth, the actual numbers rose from 460 to 512 million. The so-called green revolution of the 70s and 80s led to further degradation of the soil, reliance on chemicals (which increases debt to the multi-nationals) and destruction of biological diversity. It benefited rich farmers at the expense of small peasants and landless labourers.

It is a truism to say that there is enough for everyone, if only our resources were more evenly distributed. However, there are two troubling points to be made about this.

First, in the last year or so, the rate of population growth has slowed, but at the same time the production of food has decreased - for the first time in many years. The green revolution has faltered.

Second, for the west, any new, more equal distribution of wealth raises uncomfortable questions. At the moment, for example, less than 10% of the world's population owns all its cars, a major source of environmental damage. Obviously, improving public transport would lessen reliance on cars, but research suggests that people are unwilling to give up the (illusory) convenience of personal transport. In parts of the world where there are few private cars, ownership of one is seen as the ultimate achievement. Can we in the west tell the rest of the world that they cannot have more cars, while we merely try to stabilise our own use of them? The same applies to other goods, such as refrigerators.

Until now, capitalists and many socialists have seen rising levels of production and wealth as inherently desirable; the arguments have been around the politics of distribution and the mode of production. But increasingly many socialists have come to understand that there is a price to be paid for "progress".

Raising the standard of living in the Third World is an urgent task for humanity, for many reasons. The most important one is a commitment to basic human rights: the right to clean water, sufficient food, clothing, housing, education, leisure and worthwhile employment. History also tells us that a rising standard of living is a prerequisite for reducing population growth, a major source of war and environmental degradation.

Out of 82 countries, the 41 whose population growth slowed during the 1980s showed increases in average income, while in the 41 others average income fell.

It is clear that most women - including in the developing world - would have fewer children if they could. When women are given the information and services they need, they welcome safe birth control. But in 1990, 300 million women still had no access to safe methods of contraception.

In recent years, under pressure from feminists in both the first and third worlds, birth control agencies have changed their practice and rhetoric. But have they changed enough? Is there still time to save the world - without harming women? ❑

TRADE UNION PICKET NOTEBOOK

MSF at the crossroads

Leonora Lloyd, Vice-President of MSF London Region (writing in a personal capacity), predicts a battle between left and right at this year's MSF Conference.

THIS YEAR'S MSF conference, to be held from May 6th-11th, is important for many reasons. The battle lines between left and right in the union have never been clearer. While Roger Lyons and his fan club, "MSF for Labour", seek to impose their control over the union, the left is equally determined to strengthen the role of conference and the union membership.

This is a rule change conference and, while dozens of proposed amendments from branches have been ruled out of order, the NEC has produced nearly a hundred of its own. This could have been the opportunity to create a single union with one set of rules; instead, the divisive federalist structure resulting from the many mergers has been allowed to continue, for an obvious reason: it allows the leadership to divide and rule.

The biggest rows at conference are likely to be around this year's NEC elections and what happened at last year's Labour Party Conference. Last year's elections to the NEC were marred by canvassing outside the rules, with the suspicion that it was carried out by paid officials, or done with their connivance. Lyons refused to carry out a thorough investigation. In this year's elections, illegal canvassing was more blatant, with many letters sent out with postmarks which suggested that union officials were again leading the rule breaking. The London region, unhappy with the leadership's response, has agreed to set up its own inquiry, and several emergency resolutions call for an independent investigation.

A resolution from Hammersmith MSF, confirming last year's conference decision to continue Labour Party links, has attracted the greatest number of amendments. They censure the decision of the Labour Party Conference delegation to abstain on union policy, call for a campaign to restore the links and for the union to carry out the decision to campaign for members to join the Labour Party. Some of the delegates who attended Labour Party Conference will also be seeking to put a minority report.

The leadership recently distributed a document, *MSF into the 21st Century*, which, while making valid points about how society and work are changing, seeks to change our union into a servile organisation, where "professional" full-time officials service a passive membership. Though it acknowledges that the main reason people join unions is for collective bargaining, the document raises the prospect of a union assisting employers to "manage change". Union branches are pictured as places where you can meet nice, friendly people, rather than as the place where policy is made and carried out. There is no discussion of how to wield the disparate parts of the union into a strong whole and rather than recruiting non-trade unionists, the leadership seeks growth through further "mergers" - in reality, taking over small unions.

Meanwhile, the leadership refuses to divulge the real state of finances of the union, nor how many members we have.

The union is at a crossroads. Recognising this, left groups, under attack from the leadership, have been working more closely together. There will be a series of discussion papers on the main issues, a daily bulletin, a new journal from Unity Left and a number of meetings and social events. The aim is to attract union members to a renewed left with a clear agenda: to build a fighting democratic union, in opposition to the leadership's conception of a company union.

Last July two CPSA members at a JobCentre in Bristol, Steve Goldfinch and Amanda Lane, were dismissed for walking out in protest at the advertising of jobs belonging to sacked printworkers at JW Arrowsmith.

In response, a Defend Your Union Campaign was set up and supporters have spoken at over 200 union meetings in over 30 different towns.

Last month the Civil Service Appeal Board decided that Amanda had been unfairly dismissed, but she has yet to be reinstated. The CSAB upheld Steve's dismissal as he was in his 'probationary' year of employment.

The campaign against this victimisation will continue until both Steve and Amanda are re-instated. Letters supporting the pair should be sent to Mr M Fogen, Head of the Employment Service, 30 Orange Street, London. For more information, contact: Defend Your Union Campaign, 84 Carlyle Road, Greenbank, Bristol BS5 6HH.

BIFU leaders are calling on the Commission for Racial Equality to launch an enquiry into Barclays Bank's recent 432 redundancies in London and the South East. The bank's own figures show that one in five workers sacked were black people - who make up only 10% of Barclay's staff. BIFU officer Linda Gregory commented: "We are convinced that racism has taken place in the selections for compulsory redundancy and that is why we are formulating a complaint to the CRE."

Congratulations to the Fire Brigades Union whose show of strength in mobilising 2,000 members representing every brigade in the country helped stop a proposed 40 redundancies in Hereford and Worcester.

A successful TGWU campaign in Sandwell has forced the Council to award all four housing maintenance contracts to its own Direct Labour Organisation six months after three of the contracts had been privatised.

The privatisation was overturned under a ruling that has implications for competitive tendering throughout Britain. TGWU District Secretary John Walsh said, "Our members stood firm. The community backed us. And the union, locally and nationally, swung into action ... The Council's decision was a total vindication of our view throughout."

Hackney
Trade Union Council

sends
May Day greetings
to everyone and demands justice for all pensioners and retired workers.

Link pensions to wages!

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Secretary: Derek Kotz
Treasurer: Keith Veness

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Briefing readers

send
May Day greetings

UCATT, the building workers' union, is the first trade union to win a "whistleblowing" case over a worker sacked for calling in the Health and Safety Executive. An industrial tribunal ruled that the dismissal was unfair after Select Timber Frame of Basingstoke sacked the supposedly self-employed worker for complaining about potentially dangerous fumes from wet wood treated with the chemical lindane, which he was forced to use without proper safety precautions or ventilation. After calling in the HSE, which gave the company a written statement on the safety improvements required, the worker was fired. The tribunal awarded him £8,760 in compensation.

JT Boyd, the US firm advising the government on pit closures, has stated that privatised coal will be more expensive. Boyd believes that the estimated 40p a tonne extra cost will be "a major disincentive to buyers". Arthur Scargill, NUM President, says the fact that the government intends to continue with privatisation despite Boyd's advice "underlines once again that the sell-off is motivated only by political dogma and the Tories' blind hatred of the NUM."

Dracula's in charge of the blood bank again! For just £2.50 plus £1.50 p&p you can obtain from the EETPU section of the AEEU *The Electrician's Guide to Good Electoral Practice - Second Edition*. God knows what gems the first edition contained. Look out for future publications, including *Frank Chapple's Guide to Socialism* and *A Printworkers Tribute to the Organising Power of Eric Hammond.*

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

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calls for repeal of all anti-trade union laws.

President:
Bernard Laker

Secretary:
John Barr

Ireland's dissident sisters

A correspondent in the North of Ireland has sent us this despatch from the front line, outlining grass-roots discontent with the current "peace process".

THE HUME/ADAMS document was the end product of five months of intense dialogue between the leaders of the SDLP and Provisional Sinn Fein. Only selected paragraphs have so far been released, yet Seamus Mallon, the SDLP's 'Security' spokesperson, claimed in the House of Commons that there was little difference between Hume/Adams and the December 15th Joint Declaration by the British and Irish governments. Others, who have seen Hume/Adams, claim the difference is "but a few words".

This allegedly minimal difference is causing concern within the nationalist communities, both at home and abroad. Publication of Hume/Adams could expose Gerry Adams to a leadership bid, as many suspect that the document contains major concessions amounting to what some describe as "a sell-out" of traditional Republican values.

In essence, it looks as if Hume/Adams accepts what is known as the 'Unionist Veto', i.e. that there can be no final agreement on the North of Ireland unless the Unionists accept it, which copper-fastens partition.

The IRA's three-day cease-fire during Easter has not succeeded in securing the desired clarification from John Major. Major's weak hold on power confirms that he dare not antagonise any further the hard-line Ulster Unionists, who keep him in Number 10 by maintaining his narrow majority in Westminster.

A growing list of Republicans has spoken out against the London Declaration. Opposition to it is more widespread in the North of Ireland than indicated by recent public opinion polls. Many feel that these polls reflect middle-class opinions. They note that people in the ghetto areas are rarely canvassed, yet it is in the ghettoes that political militancy is strongest.

The Joint Declaration is being viewed in many areas in the North as a British-Unionist consensus document, designed to split the Republican forces as part of an age-old divide and conquer strategy. Several US politicians, as well as leading SDLP figures, are suspected of being heavily engaged in this tactic, which many feel is being cunningly disguised as a "peace process".

As in the 1920s, when Britain proposed and then imposed partition in Ireland (using 40,000 troops), thus turning its back on the 1918 election results where the majority favoured the establishment of a 32-County Irish Republic, women have become the backbone of resistance to the latest declaration from Downing Street. Back in the 1920s, such women were described as "Unmanageable Revolutionaries". Although not all women dissidents today would describe themselves as either republican or revolutionary, they do agree on one thing, and that is that they need to mobilise around their own radical agenda, within their own organisations.

They say that they are sick of the secrecy surrounding the peace initiative in nationalist areas. They want an open and democratic debate. They want the Hume/Adams document to be published. They don't want to be kept in the dark while the men settle Ireland's future.

Mary Ward, a prominent figure within Republican Sinn Fein, gave a lead to other women when she declared that any peace settlement must include an amnesty for political prisoners and a British "declaration of intent" to leave the Six Counties. She told a well-attended meeting in Belfast's Conway Mill:

"We require no further clarification. Republican Sinn Fein does not merely seek a united Ireland. That is an inadequate objective. We are working to establish a peaceful, democratic Ireland of self-governing communities which would replace both the Six and Twenty Six County states".

Ward said the three steps to "lasting peace" were: a British declaration of intent to leave Ireland; a new Ireland negotiated by the Irish people; a general amnesty for all political prisoners.

For many, Mary Ward symbolises the pain of the past twenty-five years. She lost her husband, Pat, in 1988. He was in his early forties, and had participated in four hunger strikes (in Curragh in 1972, Mountjoy in 1973, Portlaoise and Curragh in 1975, and again in Portlaoise in August 1975).

Most women interviewed by this correspondent were quite clear about why they oppose both the Joint Declaration and what they know of Hume/Adams. Central to their opposition is the fact that the Unionists form only some 2% of the combined populations of Britain and Ireland, and that the majority of people canvassed throughout these islands favour both 'troops out' and a united Ireland. Within Ireland as a whole, those who support the union represent a mere 18%, which in effect means that the wishes of the remaining 82% of the Irish electorate are being blocked.

Mary Ward posed a crucial question for many women when she asked: "What is in the Hume/Adams report? We have called for its immediate publication so that Irish people may assess its merits. It is being urged in some quarters as an alternative to the London Declaration, yet it still remains largely undefined - a veritable 'pig in a poke'. Realism demands fact, not speculation, as the basis of current debate. The disclosure of the so-called 'principles' of Hume/Adams would allow people to see what is acceptable to both the political and military organisations of the Provisionals and what is not. Republican Sinn Fein offers a new Ireland to be negotiated by the Irish people themselves. There would be no room for the British in such a situation and they must declare their intention to withdraw to allow the Irish people to exercise self-determination throughout Ireland."

Sile de Valera, grand-daughter of Eamonn de Valera, Ireland's first President, and Independent TD for Clare, said that she believed that the Joint Declaration on peace in the North is not radical enough. She felt there

was "little new" in the document, adding: "I would have hoped that the document would have contained a radical approach to encourage everyone to take part in the political process."

Cumann Na mBan (the historic republican Women's League), in late February rejected the London Declaration because of its "re-iteration of the right of Britain to rule in any part of Ireland". It continued: "We stand for the 32-County All-Ireland Republic, based on the 1916 Proclamation and the First (All-Ireland) Dail Eireann of 1919 and we reject the right of a small section of the Irish people to veto the progress of the entire nation".

Their statement warned: "The London Declaration will not bring peace. It does not address the issue of Irish freedom. No organisation has the right to tell the nationalist people of the Occupied Six Counties that the last 25 years of sacrifice have been endured in order to produce a second guarantor to the Unionist veto in the form of the Dublin administration. The adoption of the Declaration can only lead to further and more terrible resistance against British rule in the near future ... Cumann Na mBan stands ready, as in the past, to defend the All-Ireland Republic in the face of this new sell-out."

Bernadette McAliskey, former Independent MP (Mid-Ulster), is one of the most vocal opponents of the Declaration. When asked what should be done about the Declaration, she has no doubts: "Get it off the table, put it in the bin, go back to the drawing-board and come back with something better!"

She continues: "I recently went to Belfast and addressed a very productive conference of 150 women delegates. It was organised by a new group, about a year old, called Clar Na mBan, that means Women's Agenda. Its main concern was to contribute to the creation of a genuine peace process. These women were no dozers. Not one delegate spoke in favour of the London Declaration, yet most believed that a British withdrawal from Ireland would be achieved."

Taking over our interview, McAliskey demanded: "Now ask me something about a real peace process."

"OK ... what do you think?"

"I do not believe that a real peace process exists because the mechanisms needed to end the conflict are obviously missing. The British still are refusing to recognise that a war has existed here for quarter of a century. When they talk about 'an end to violence' they are very selective. What they mean is the Provisionals handing over their guns, not the repeal of emergency legislation which brings state violence into our homes every day, and general repression daily, or stopping sexual violence in general, or against female prisoners in particular. There is no genuine discussion about peace, instead it is being presented as a commodity up Gerry Adams' sleeve, in John Hume's back pocket, on several bits of paper in the [Dublin] Department of Foreign Affairs and in the Downing Street Declaration.

"At the conference I told the women that I had not devoted my life to resisting British rule merely to watch a small group of men play high-class intellectual poker with Ireland's future while refusing to consult or inform the masses. By expecting blind obedience and not practising democracy, a movement cannot secure democracy."

The Belfast conference, held in the Culturiann on the Falls Road in West Belfast on the second Saturday in March, was evidence of the alienation of many nationalist women in the North from a male-dominated peace process. The *Irish Times*' reporter, Suzanne Breen, conveyed the mood when she wrote that: "The women's voices were full of anger and resentment."

Other prominent speakers were highly critical of Provisional Sinn Fein. Brenda Murphy, a west Belfast republican, said that the organisation was dictating what questions could be asked about the peace process at meetings, often refusing answers, and then ordering people not to speculate. Margaret Caraher, of Cullyhanna in South Armagh, whose husband Fergal was shot dead by the British army on December 30th, 1990, said that Provisional Sinn Fein was "refusing clarification to its own voters" on the secret Hume/Adams document. Marie Mulholland, a community worker in Derry, said that a just and a fair state, striving for sexual equality, could not emerge from a secret, male-dominated, elitist process.

Many other women who have lost lovers, husbands, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters in the conflict for Irish self-determination, including some mothers of the ten dead 1981 hunger-strikers, have expressed solidarity with the Clar Na mBan movement during recent days. They say that they would gladly rally to the banners and join the 'Unmanageable Sisters' in struggle.



Bernadette McAliskey

One delegate told the conference: "Gerry Adams wants me to trust him. I would like him to trust me back. I don't want to wake up some morning in a 32-County republic. I want to know what is going on now."

Bernadette McAliskey concluded our interview by talking about some of the responses to her publicly stated position on the Declaration.

"When I refused some elements my support, some men patronised me. They described me as 'rural', 'female', 'too old', 'too bitter', 'too narrow', 'too long in the struggle'. Perhaps they thought that I should take a wee break, go back home and wash the dishes, mind the children, look after the family". She was adamant there was no chance of that. ❑

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING

Voices from Chiapas demand clean elections

Following the assassination of the leading candidate for the presidency, Mexican politics is in turmoil. **Enrique Saenz de Sicillia** reports.



PRESIDENT CARLOS Salinas of Mexico has moved swiftly to convince voters that the cracks within the Mexican political system and the rule of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), in power now for 65 years, are not beyond repair. But the assassination of the PRI's presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio, could turn out to be a blow to the prospects of a smooth electoral process in Mexico.

Public discussion has shifted for the moment from the indigenous uprising in Chiapas to entertaining one thousand and one theories on the reasons that led to the killing of the PRI candidate. Negotiations between the government and the Zapatista Liberation Army are on standby as the latter fears a backlash to Colosio's murder in the form of a hardening of the regime, which would be felt first in Chiapas. Some analysts have already warned about the emergence of right-wing paramilitary groups in the region.

Days before the assassination, Manuel Camacho Solis, rejected by the PRI, backed off from a threat to join the electoral race and thus split the ruling party. This only allowed deeper divisions within the PRI to emerge - some attribute the killing of Colosio to these.

In a damage limitation action, the Clinton administration was prompt not only to show its confidence in the Salinas government but also to reassert that a socially and economically stable Mexico was a vital US national interest, particularly now that Mexico is a partner within the North American Free Trade Agreement. Only last month, the country became the newest member of the OECD. After Colosio's death and the turbulence in the financial markets that followed, a US credit line of $4 billion was thrown to Mexico.

The struggle within the PRI meant that it took nearly a week to select a new presidential candidate. It was finally resolved in what was clearly a triumph for Salinas, but at a cost. Already, one of the most critical figures within the PRI has left, saying that no room exist to democratise the party and that the organisation no ,longer has the strength to lead the country.

All of Salinas' hopes, and no doubt the hopes of many within the PRI, now rest with the new candidate, Ernesto Zedillo, a so-called technocrat with an economics doctorate from Harvard. He is set to continue Salinas' neo-liberal policies which have already led to the privatisation of public services, telecommunications and the banks, the opening of the economy to rampant foreign capital and the selling to the Mexican people the idea that free trade is Mexico's key to opening the door to the 'first world'.

That not everyone in Mexico is impressed is best testified by the indigenous rebellion of the Zapatistas in the southern state of Chiapas, where 15,000 people die every year because of impoverishment. The demands of the Zapatistas might seem localised and specific but have reverberated throughout the country. While the willingness of the authorities to respond to the rebels' demands is still to be tested in practice, opposition political parties have been able to push for new reforms to the electoral legislation which would at least make it harder for the PRI to rig the voting. For the first time, Salinas has conceded that international observers will be allowed in the elections.

For Zedillo's campaign to be credible he must convince the voters that he is committed to clean elections and that the PRI is united behind him. The motives and authors behind the killing of Colosio will probably never be known. However, the Mexican government will need to persuade the public that it has exhausted all avenues of investigation before giving up on uncovering the truth behind the assassination. Critics have already complained that the investigation is not independent as it is under the control of the PRI-run Justice Ministry and the Attorney-General.

Zedillo's other problem is the Mexican economy. Having achieved what many would regard as remarkable signs of recovery over the last five years, its prospects are less clear since the armed rebellion in Chiapas and certainly worse following the killing of Colosio.

Should Zedillo win the election, the majority of Mexican people will be short-changed. In continuing the current policies, he may be able to achieve decent micro-economic figures and benefits for a small minority, but little for the grass-roots. As the clock ticks, the voices in the mountains of Chiapas grow loud. ❑

The French turn against the market

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING

Is French society falling apart? The former right-wing President Giscard d'Estaing caught the apocalyptic mood. Unemployment and the "destruction of social bonds", he declared, had created an "explosion". **Andrew Coates** reports.

THE LAST few months have seen hundreds of thousands of students, workers and the unemployed out on the streets in frequently violent demonstrations. Prime Minister Edouard Balladur has not been able to stem the tide. Amid burning cars and shattered shop-windows, the authority of the state has been shaken. School and university students humiliated the government by forcing it to abandon plans for a special, "youth" minimum wage (Contrat d'Insertion Professional - CIS).

The programme of the RPR-UDF government is taken from the British model. Its aim is to "give freedom to the economy". This means de-nationalisation and weakening social protection. By selling off public enterprises, the government hopes to reduce the size of the democratically-owned economy from 24% in 1985 to 12% in the near future. Companies, such as ELF Aquitaine, which are highly profitable and efficient, are being hived-off at knockdown prices.

France's tough laws on redundancy are also threatened, as is the system of minimum wages. Balladur has hoped both to please employers and to outflank the extreme right by tougher immigration laws and a diversion of state funds to the predominantly Catholic private schools.

The official opposition has found it difficult to react. The outgoing Socialists were tainted by financial scandals which culminated in the suicide of Prime Minister Pierre Beregovoy. President Mitterrand cultivated contacts with dubious figures, including Silvio Berlusconi, who was given a television channel that failed. The economy was left in a mess. Socialists openly quarrelled about who was to blame.

The new leadership of Michael Rocard united the Parti Socialiste. He intends it to be the "leading party of opposition", but one that accepts the principle of denationalisation. Those really opposed to neo-liberalism, like the Parti Communiste Francais, and Jean-Pierre Chevenement's Mouvement des Citoyens, represent only around 10% of the electorate. The labour movement is weak. Union membership has continued to decline to under 2 million and is split between three major federations. Real membership is largely confined to activists.

Nevertheless, the waves of opposition have mounted in ever greater force. Outside the traditional political structures the government's plans have met overwhelming resistance. Since the 1986-7 railway workers' strike, protest movements of all types have been organised by 'co-ordinations'. This new syndicalism unites employees or campaigning bodies across old divisions. The educational reforms were overturned by a movement that brought together unions, parents, pupils, and secularists (an important constituency in France). Some co-ordinations, operating independently of normal industrial relations procedures (notably in the Air France conflict), have used direct action. The Communist union federation, the CGT, has learned from this experience. In February and March, the largest workers' demonstrations for over twenty years drew together a variety of campaigns, such as the students' opposition to the CIS, and others in defence of social rights. It is this unified counter-attack, rather than the activities of a few 'casseurs' (hooligans) from the suburbs, that has broken Balladur's resolve.

Unemployment is the central political issue in France. During the 30s the country was largely cushioned by its agricultural base from mass destitution. Today's figures of 3.5 million registered unemployed, dependent on an inadequate and complex benefit system, are therefore a major shock. Students of constitutional reform will be interested to know that a kind of 'right to work' forms a part of the Fifth Republic's founding documents. To noone's surprise, unemployment has not stopped growing just because it is constitutionally prohibited.

Giscard and the UDF continue to talk of making the market more 'flexible' by accepting free-trade and eroding social legislation. On the statist right, however, there are doubts. The maverick conservative, Marie-France Garaud, has called for active government intervention. The political landscape is changing. Market economics have lost their sheen. Local elections increased the left's vote and drove the Front National into fourth place. The ecological alternative, once trumpeted, has all but disappeared. Even so, the socialists have failed to develop new policies. For the European elections, their stand is simply for some trans-continental action by the European Union to alleviate the recession. The new Communist Party Secretary General, Robert Hue, has launched an appeal for unity on the left and more aggressive social action. So far, only Chevenement's friends seem likely to respond.

The sight of students celebrating their triumph was deeply unpleasant for France's right. An easy cliche has it that in 1968 the students were marching against the system, while today's protestors wanted to be part of it. However, the 'system' is mass unemployment, low wages and poverty, breeding racialism and violence. The French right, like its British counterpart, believes social rights cannot be afforded and that decentralised market mechanisms should replace democracy. The people in France's streets show how democrats can overcome the market and begin to build their own system of priorities.

Meanwhile the railway workers have began a fight against restructuring. While it is only a possibility, the worst nightmare of the right may still come true: yet more movements uniting workers and students against the government. ❑

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING

Common cause

Sean Coyne takes a global look at the economics of the New World Order - and the emerging resistance to it.

OVER THE last decade, millions of people in developing countries have expanded their vocabularies to include a new range of economic 'buzz' phrases that are now implacably linked to suffering, malnutrition, mass unemployment and relentless poverty.

When workers in Nigeria hear these phrases being used in relation to India or Mexico, they understand immediately and intimately the human costs being paid by workers in those countries. Gather together worker activists from developing countries anywhere in the world, and before long, a common experience begins to emerge, reflected in the common language they use to describe it.

Unfortunately, this is not the language of international solidarity, but the language of the IMF and the World Bank. Privatisation, retrenchment, conditionalities, debt repayment, devaluation and the now all too ubiquitous Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP).

More than 30 African countries are now engaged in implementing some form of World Bank/IMF-inspired SAP. All follow the same pattern: loans are only granted if stringent 'conditions' are met. Chief among those conditions is always the rolling back of what little social provision exists.

These conditions effectively transfer sovereignty from African states to Washington. Edicts from the IMF require governments to reduce budget deficits through swingeing cuts on public expenditure and punitive interest rates.

These are backed by the World Bank demands for deregulation, import liberalisation and "flexible" labour practices.

This is what the New World Order is all about: the systematic impoverishment of the world's poor in favour of rich minorities in the industrialised north. It is super class exploitation on a world scale.

Interestingly, the World Bank, in its latest review of SAPs, after blandly asserting that there is no alternative, goes on to admit that one of its most prestigious successes, Ghana, is somewhat problematical. It concedes that it will take at least twenty years to raise the majority of the population to the standards of living prevalent thirty years ago! Furthermore, the average Ghanaian worker can expect to live below the poverty line for the next half century. So much for the commitment made by the once revolutionary Jerry Rawling (now echoed by Mugabe in Zimbabwe) to give adjustment "a human face".

In Nigeria, an oil-rich nation in which vast amounts of wealth have been stolen by successive military regimes, the IMF and World Bank have imposed a classic SAP, indifferent to the need for a democratic governmental framework for development. It wasn't until the military regime was unable to repay the mounting interest on its illegitimate loans that the IMF and World Bank suddenly discovered democracy. Meanwhile, the streets of Lagos are crammed with young people dangerously weaving their way in and out of the endless traffic jams (public spending on transport and road repairs has vanished) trying to sell a few items in the baking heat in order to raise enough money for a square meal.

On a world scale, a popular and radical alternative to the IMF and World Bank has yet to emerge. It is a sad indication of the paucity of ideas within the international trade union movement that organisations like Oxfam are well in advance on these basic economic questions. In the aftermath of the collapse of the so-called Communist regimes, Social Democratic parties and their counterpart trade union movements have been unable to move much beyond demands for more 'consultation' before SAPs are implemented.

But equally inadequate have been the seemingly politically correct calls of the revolutionary left. A shopping list of abstract demands which does not connect with actual struggles will inevitably remain on the shelf.

What is missing from all these scenarios is a recognition of the decisive role of those who are actively engaged in struggles against SAPs. In Nigeria, for example, a massive general strike at the end of last year mobilised over eight million workers against the removal of oil subsidies, a condition demanded by the World Bank and IMF. The five-day strike resulted in the collapse of a phoney interim government and wrung substantial concessions from a ruthless military regime. In India, railway workers' unions successfully mobilised hundreds of thousands to prevent the privatisation of the Indian rail network and argued successfully for increased public investment.

In every region of the developing world, despite the absence of a shared popular world alternative, there is a willingness to fight even against seemingly insurmountable odds. Where bold and democratic leadership has been established, real gains have been made.

The beginnings of a radical alternative are being forged out of these disparate struggles. The Organisation of African Trade Union Unity has published its own programme as a basis for a discussion. Trade union movements in South America and in Asia are investing resources into developing alternatives, including demands for an end to military spending and institutionalised corruption, as well as for the immediate cancellation of debt repayments.

Above all else, our response must be democratic. It must give constructive expression to the anger and the aspirations of the working class.

As a new South Africa emerges, the role of the IMF in the reconstruction of an economy based on the super-exploitation of the working class will demand a serious elaboration of alternative policies. British workers still remember with some anger the conditions imposed on the last Labour government by the IMF, and how this paved the way for 15 years of Tory rule. Common cause between workers of developing and developed countries has never been more needed . ❑

El Salvador elections

Mike Phipps reports: First-round election results in El Salvador show the right-wing Arena bloc just short of outright victory in the presidential contest, which goes to a second round at the end of April.

With three-quarters of the votes counted for the new Parliament, the right-wing are also ahead. Arena have 36 seats and the Christian Democrats 16. On the left, the FMLN have 22 seats and Convergencia Socialista one. Among the FMLN deputies are five major women comandantes, including Ana Guadalupe Martinez.

The elections were marked by widespread fraud. 420,000 people were unable to vote because electoral identification cards had not been issued. A further 70,000 were excluded because their birth certificates were not available.

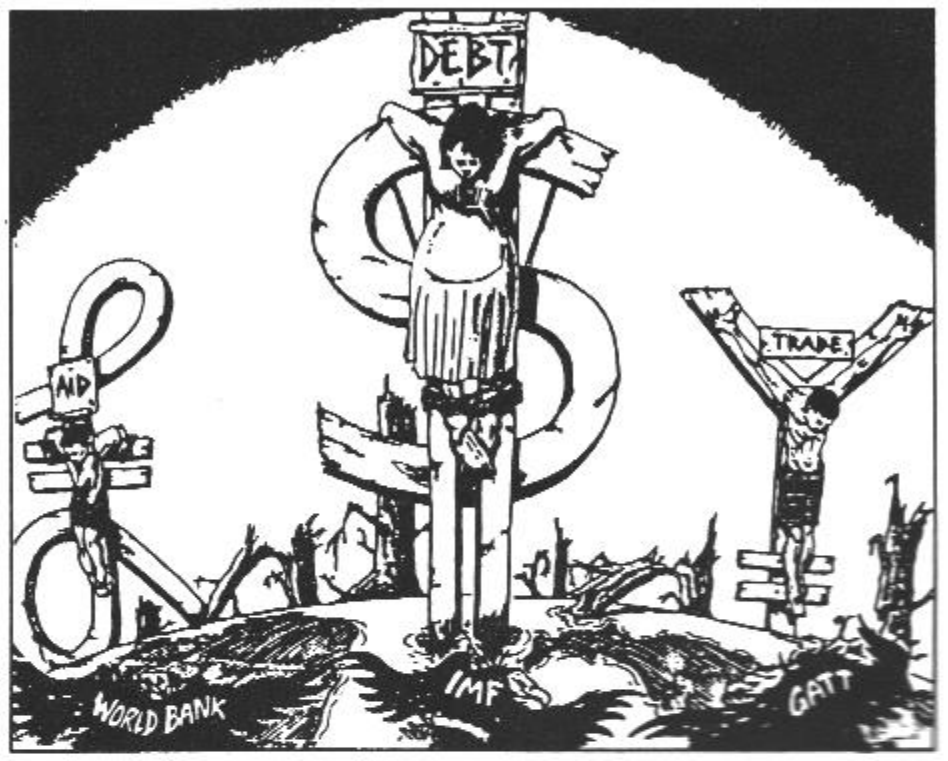
About 600,000 dead people were on the register. And 30,000 people with sight disabilities (mainly ex-guerillas) were barred from voting on the grounds that they couldn't be assisted in the polling booth as it was a secret ballot!

FMLN leader Joaquin Villalobos has pointed out, "Our expectations about peace should be proportionate to the nature of the war. The conflict lasted 22 years."

Between 1981 and 1992, 80,000 people died, one million emigrated and thousands disappeared. The US invested $6 billion in the war and about 14,000 FMLN members were killed - all in a country the size of Wales.

Since then there have been 700 days of peace. The transition has been uneven but the process of democratisation is unprecedented: constitutional reform, the scrapping of the National Guard and reduction of the army, the legalisation of free radio stations such as Venceremos and Maya, a new electoral code and the allocation of land to ex-combatants.

Next month, *Briefing* will carry a more detailed assessment following the second round of the elections.



Czech unions take to streets

Asian Student News

John Wilton reports: Last month saw the biggest workers' demonstration in the Czech Republic since the 1989 revolution. Over 30,000 union members crammed into Prague's Old Town Square to protest against government amendments to the country's labour code which raised the retirement age for men from 60 to 62, allowed for wider use of temporary contracts and eliminated restrictions on pregnant women working at night.

The amendments were passed by the Czech parliament the next day. The right-wing Premier, Vaclav Klaus, dismissed the demonstration as the action of a "factional group" and informed journalists that important issues were no longer dealt with in the streets.

On paper, the unions have a say in the country's legislative agenda via the Tripartite Council (certainly more of a say than their western European brothers and sisters). The Council must by law come to an annual General Agreement mapping out the coming year's social and economic policies. In theory, new laws and amendments - from revisions to the labour code to the lifting of rent freezes - must be approved by the Council. In reality, however, the Council is little more than an "advisory board" and has no means of enforcing compliance with its agreements.

If the demonstration achieved little else, it seems to have convinced people that they can mobilise against the development of capitalism just as they did against Stalinism.

Turkish elections disaster

Keith Veness, Hackney UNISON, reports: **Local elections in Turkey at the end of March proved a disaster for the Social Democratic People's Party (SHP) - another example of how tying a workers' party to a "Lib-Lab" coalition invariably results in defeat. The SHP's failure allowed the Islamic fundamentalists of the Refah (Welfare) Party, funded from Saudi Arabia and Iran, to attract votes among the urban poor.**

Refah scored successes in Istanbul and Ankara as well as in the Kurdish south east, where the turnouts were low (though the total boycott demanded by the PKK did not happen). The main party supporting Kurdish self-determination (the Democracy Party or DEP) withdrew amid a massive crackdown by the army and paramilitaries on the civilian population and attacks from PKK guerillas. The SHP held on in areas where its politicians had campaigned for local demands (Gaziantep and Hakkari, for example), but elsewhere Refah won because Kurdish people voted for the party they saw as the most oppositional to the Ankara regime.

When the split left vote is added together it still totalled nearly 30%, showing that some unification of the workers' parties is vital. However, unless the SHP leaves the government coalition and starts to mobilise its trades union base and link up with the democratically-elected Kurdish opposition, it is hard to see how it can regain support in the major cities and Kurdish areas.



Non-event of the season

PR consultancy **Hobsbawm Macaulay Communications** is to organise a fundraising dinner for the Labour Party.

Companies will pay up to £9,000 a table to rub shoulders with **John Smith** and **Margaret Beckett**, as well as celebrities like **Ben Elton** and **Stephen Fry**. The European Gala Dinner is being held at the Park Lane Hotel on May 11th.

Managing Director Julia Hobsbawm, always identified in press releases as the daughter of historian Eric, masterminded Labour's 'High Value Donors' initiative, in the course of which she visited the US at Party members' expense.

According to Julia, the agency, which has just moved to new offices in Soho, "is known for its lunches".

Hoey ad libs again

Speaking on Breakfast TV, **Kate Hoey** issued a rounded denunciation of the IRA. Said organisation, she explained, is demanding a united Ireland, and added defiantly: "They are not going to get it."

A united Ireland is, of course, official Labour Party policy.

Love me, I'm a liberal...

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that it is OK for the British government to place **Vanessa** and **Corin Redgrave** under surveillance without explanation.

The *Guardian* reported the outrage, but declined to print an article from Corin on the subject, saying it wasn't "urgent" enough. On the tenth anniversary of *Guardian* editor **Peter Preston**'s fingering of whistle-blower **Sara Tisdall**, it's comforting to know that Britain's liberal conscience still finds abuses of civil rights a less than "urgent" matter.

Drink a pinta ...

Tory MP **Tristel Garel Jones** says: "My profession does not allow me to go swanning around buying pints of milk. I wouldn't be of sufficient service to my constituents if I went into shops." So what does he do? Steal them?

Nixon is dead! Hooray!

If further proof were needed of Bill Clinton's ineffable folly, his declaration of a national day of mourning for **Richard Milhaus Nixon** provided it.

Clinton is old enough to know that Nixon was a conscious perpetrator of mass murder in **Indo-China**. With the blood of more than one million Vietnamese on his hands, not to mention the guilt of an illegal, barbaric invasion of Cambodia, Nixon should have been tried as a war criminal. The fact that in the end he was done for the pathetic **Watergate** break-in and cover-up is as if Vito Corleone had been jailed for a parking violation.

Nixon's death, which was not nearly long and lingeringly painful enough, should have been declared an international day of celebration.

The birds and the bees

David Blunkett has followed up his disgraceful vote against an equal age of consent for gay men with an attack on sex education in schools.

Following a media-generated outcry on sex education sessions for 10 and 11-year-olds in Leeds, at which the nurse giving the lesson answered questions about oral sex from pupils who already had detailed knowledge of the subject, he commented: "I'm very worried that this crass and inappropriate provision of sex education ... could set us back a very long way in making the case for sensitive and appropriate health education in schools."

Blunkett presumably wants a return to the stork and the gooseberry bush.

You never had it so good

Trawling through clippings from the 1959 general election, *Periscope* discovered a ringing declaration by Party leader **Hugh Gaitskell** to the effect that there would be no increased taxes under Labour. From that point on, Labour was losing ground to the Tories.

Still waiting?

Coventry's Labour council has written to a local man twelve years after he applied for a council house asking if he still requires accommodation. The head of housing allocation said the letter was one of hundreds sent to people still on the housing list. He added that the oldest application dates back to 1944!

Still defiant

Two thousand people have been jailed in England and Wales for non-payment of the poll tax. In the latest twist magistrates in Cheshire jailed 64-year-old **Dorothy Pittaway**. However, police refused to carry out the sentence after a police surgeon declared her unfit to stay in custody.

Labour's vanguard

Disastrous results in the selection contests for upcoming by-elections in Barking and Dagenham.

In Barking, **Margaret Hodge** swept to victory, aided perhaps by her supporters phoning some Barking members to inform them that it was Jo Richardson's "dying wish" that Hodge should succeed her.

In Dagenham, local Party members have chosen MSF hack **Judith Church**, her reward for helping Roger Lyons deliver OMOV to John Smith at last year's Party conference.

In 1992, Church stood in Stevenage. "There's all these defence workers there," she cheerfully told a *Briefing* supporter, "I tell them Labour's all for defence spending!"

Both Hodge and Church benefited from high-powered support at Walworth Road and canvassing by full-timers. OMOV, it seems, is even more open to abuses than the old system of delegate voting. In Barking, the poll was conducted among a mere 390 individual members. Thanks to OMOV, the CLP's 4,000 plus affiliated trade unionists were not consulted.

ARA meltdown

Friction in the **Anti-Racist Alliance** has mounted in recent weeks as **Ken Livingstone** and his *Socialist Action* groupies have battled with **Marc Wadsworth** and his cronies.

At the TUC Black Workers' Conference in Scarborough, Wadsworth declared that the ARA was "under attack from white factions who want to take it over. Whenever we build a strong movement, some characters want to take it over. The ARA is our organisation, created by black people, for black people, led by black people. We must keep the ARA in our hands. That means defending the ARA from white attack."

Following his well-publicised (and some say grossly exaggerated) physical confrontation with Wadsworth at an ARA executive meeting, Livingstone offered to resign if Wadsworth would do the same. Wadsworth refused - which was not surprising as he would have had to forfeit the £24,000 plus salary he currently receives as ARA Secretary.

Your team tonight!

Comrades on the ***Briefing*** **Editorial Board** who are members of **Middlesex County Cricket Club** have recently spent many hours trying to work out the left slate for the committee elections.

This task has proved impossible given the calibre of the candidates - a mixture of Monday Club, "No Turning Back Group" and BNP types.

The management of county cricket clubs is nominally democratic, especially when compared to other sports. But given the lack of a real choice the elections are never likely to disrupt the establishment status quo.

Labour Briefing

Help Wanted

Editorial worker with sub-editing, word processing and journalist skills, 90 hours per month, £7 per hour, for ten months a year (no holiday pay).

A job at *Labour Briefing* may not lift you out of grinding poverty, but it will give you a chance to write original articles, sub-edit contributions from labour movement activists, MPs and assorted know-it-alls, commission articles on a wide range of topics and work collectively as part of a team of incredibly nice, friendly, easy-going, talented, dedicated socialists with only minor personality disorders.

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Supporters of Frank Johnson, now serving his eighteenth year in prison for a crime he did not commit, picketed the Home Office on March 25th. Billy Power and John McDonnell handed in a petition demanding a re-opening of Frank's case. Contact the Free Frank Johnson Campaign, c/o 129a Seven Sisters Road, London N7.

Labour Briefing

Public Meeting

Question Time with Tony Benn

Tony will speak and answer questions about the themes in his new video, *Speaking Up in Parliament*, including the Gulf War, Maastricht, the miners and constitutional reform.

Who needs David Dimbleby? Your chance to quiz Tony face to face.

Speaking Up in Parliament will be on sale at the meeting

7:30 pm, Tuesday May 17th
Abbey Community Association
34 Great Smith Street, London SW1
Nearest tube: St James' Park
Admission £3/£1

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Troops out!

"Britain out of Ireland" is the title of a fortnight of action in Manchester (from April 22nd-May 8th) organised by the local Troops Out Movement. Highlights include a Socialist Movement May Day Event on Sunday, May 1st at 5:00 pm in the Mechanics Institute, Princess Street, with speakers Mike Mansfield QC and Sinn Fein's Mitchell McLaughlin.

On Friday, May 6th at 7:30 pm Hugh Callaghan of the Birmingham Six and co-author Sally Mulready will read from *Cruel Fate*, their book about Hugh's experiences of British justice, at Frontline Books, 1 Newton Street, Manchester (admission £2/£1).

Mitchell McLaughlin also addresses this year's Bobby Sands-James Connolly commemoration rally on Sunday, May 8th, at 2:00 pm in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (details: 071 278 3746).

Famous last words ...

"The miners' strike has clearly radicalised the political situation in Britain and is giving a powerful lead to the working class in how to confront the gang of asset strippers and union busters who masquerade as a government."
- Alan Thornett, *Labour Briefing*, May 1984.

"March 29th was an important day in Liverpool. While the likes of Neil Kinnock and Len Murray were singing the praises of 'Democracy Day', more than 20,000 Liverpudlians were out on the street to show what a real fight for local democracy means."
- Kevin Feintuck, *Labour Briefing*, May 1984.


LABOUR BRIEFING
NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT
No. 7 May 1984

MINERS' STRIKE:
WE WILL WIN!

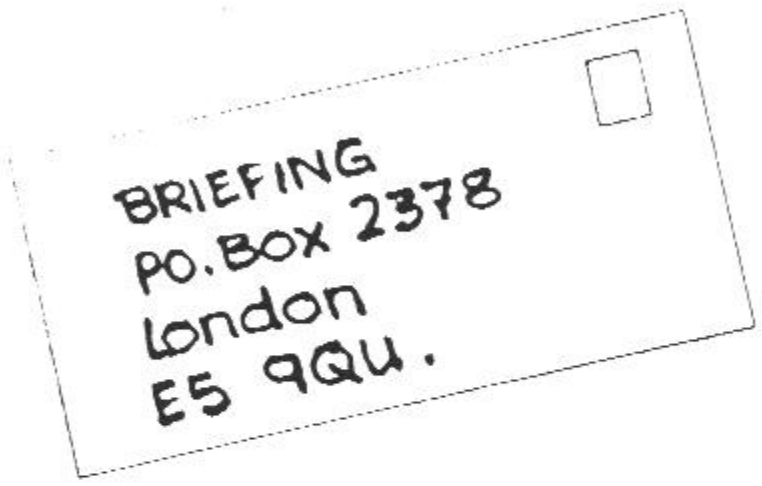
"It's going to be won. It'll be won because of the solidarity between miners and by extending that solidarity to other sections of the class. It doesn't matter if Neil Kinnock doesn't give us full support because the cheques coming in from local Labour Parties shows that the members of the Labour Party do support us. We'll appeal directly over the heads of the renegades to the workers.

The right-wing in the unions should be ignored. It would be a disaster to hand over our struggle to the TUC. Len Murray's been on his backside for so long he'll only get involved to sell us out."

Jack Collins, President of the Kent Area of the NUM

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

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



Briefing has lost a lot of bite over the past 12 months. It is difficult to believe that the Labour Party has disappeared, almost without trace, into social democracy during this period. The left is drowning in silence in my view. Exactly what are our left wing MPs up to - do they really think that once elected a right wing dominated Party will start to listen to them? We have all travelled this road before - it leads nowhere.

Yours,
GV Pendry,
Congleton.

Your editorial on Labour and local government notes that the latter remains 'an unavoidable focus of struggle'. This, of course, is absolutely correct. What, however, is the connection between this statement and that which begins the final paragraph. 'We need to elect as many Labour councillors as possible'?

Yours sincerely,
Keith Flett,
London N17.

Peter Thompson's conclusion in his article on Germany, that there could be unity between the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Socialists (PDS), is a triumph of hope over reality. The left has to abandon this kind of wishful thinking if we are to understand other situations. Because left unity is desirable, it does not mean it is going to happen, nor should we write from that point of view.

The overwhelming feeling in the SPD is implacably opposed to co-operation with the PDS - sad, but true. Particularly in the east, the SPD sees the PDS as the main rival for left votes. Recent communal elections in the east produced several run-offs between the two. The PDS itself does not seek coalition with the SDP, preferring realistically to provide real opposition to the cross party consensus between the front benches of the SPD and the Conservative CDU in Bonn. This consensus could yet turn into a grand coalition government later in the year. Proportional representation (PR) ensures that the SDP will not gain a majority in Bonn.

Thompson misses an important point in his report on Lower Saxony by failing to mention the joy expressed by the SPD at being able to drop the Greens as a coalition partner there.

The Greens compete for the left vote, particularly in the west, and the SPD leadership would clearly prefer a coalition with the liberals (FDP), rather than with any other minority party.

The odds are still in favour of a "grand coalition" in Bonn after the general elections in autumn - especially if the FDP do not achieve the necessary 5% to get into Parliament. The last time there was such a "grand coalition" in the late 'sixties the resulting frustrations on the left led to the very founding of the Greens who emerged from the extra-parliamentary opposition. Unfortunately, this time round there is a well organised extreme right as well, the Republicans, who could be in Parliament, and will certainly gain from the inevitable disillusionment with grand coalition politics. Any grand coalition could also face two parties left of the SDP in Parliament, the Greens and the PDS.

The unity for which both Thompson and myself wish, could only come about if there is a massive reversal in the SPD, which is unlikely before the anticipated disappointments among the grassroots of being a governing party; by the Greens abandoning their own present tack on coalition at any price, and this will only come about if they are eventually rejected as a coalition partner in Bonn; and by the PDS extending their appeal beyond the larger of the former East Germany. All these are very unlikely in the immediate future; impossible this side of a general election and not without the shock of further economic collapse in Germany.

Yours fraternally,
Michael Hindley, MEP,
Brussels.

verso

John Smith
by Andy McSmith

Never a Yes Man
by Eric Heffer

Defeat from the Jaws of Victory
by Richard Heffernan and
Mike Marqusee

Verso - publishers to HM Opposition

Here in Greece, the only Balkan EU state it is difficult to believe the news broadcasts about the situation in the former Yugoslavia.

The high patriotic feeling - Greece supports Serbia and fears the intentions of Macedonia - is complemented by satellite stations such as "Euronews".

Planes seem to be shot down in such a matter of fact way, and UN troops are "attacked" as if it's been happening for years.

Yet when nothing was happening it was all "the ultimatum", loads of hype etc. I don't know which news to believe, but I do know one thing - it's usually better not to trust CNN and the "Tory" BBC these days!

What have Russia, Serbia and Greece got in common? They all have been, or are being, raped by western economic powers, or to put it mildly, there are still too many commies floating around.

With the Greek media it is not a case of those evil Serbs shelling those poor innocent Muslims, it's more a matter of those brave socialists sticking up for themselves against a country backed by "Thatcherite" Turkey and a stupid American President with a political identity crisis. Notice that the real peace makers in Bosnia are the Russians. The west never gave Russia, Serbia and Greece credit for their role in opposing fascism in 1945, and they still don't.

Euronews is so terrible it's a good thing the weather is warm again to cheer me up. Oh no, here's another "Let's patronise the poorer countries and make a packet out of their misery at the same time" news programme - I'm off to the beach!

Yours,
Paul Mann,
Greece.

As I sit reading *Briefing* and counting my weekly Income Support I wonder how I can possibly afford to buy the book reviewed in the April issue priced at £65.

I know! If I don't eat for a month I'll be able to get it. Alternatively, I could see if my local library has a copy. What are the chances of this, considering the swingeing cuts my council is making to the library services?

Well, I suppose I don't really want to read it anyway - doesn't sound that interesting to me. Maybe I'll get the novel on the Vietnam War - written by Bao Ninh.

The reviewer has really made me want to buy this book, and it sounds a bargain at £8.99.

Yours,
Dave Martin,
Coventry.

May Day greetings

from

Mildred Gordon MP

All out against racism
Send the racists packing
on May 5th.

May Day greetings from

Alf Lomas MEP

Elect socialist Euro MPs on June 9th.

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National Women Against Pit Closures

Still fighting! Bring down this immoral government! Save our pits!

Chair: Sylvia Pye



PHOTO: Bryn Griffiths

Amnesty

AN AMNESTY is being sought for refugees forced underground by the heavy-handed tactics of immigration officers.

The Standing Conference on Racial Equality in Europe and the National Union of Refugee Organisations (NURO) have joined forces to launch the Amnesty Campaign for Refugees and Unregistered Migrants. Backing the campaign, Bernie Grant MP highlighted the inhumane treatment routinely handed out to refugees and migrants, such as the use of body-belts and gags which caused the death of Joy Gardner last July. Alfred Banyo of NURO commented: "Amnesty will resolve the injustice of the substandard conditions in which unregistered migrants are forced to live and also legitimise their contributions to British society."

Close Down Campsfield

National Demonstration

Saturday, June 4th

10:30 am: feeder march leaves St Giles, Oxford
1 pm: assemble, car park, Exeter Hall, Kidlington. March to Campsfield Detention Centre.
2 pm: rally with Jeremy Corbyn, Mohammed Idrish, Bob Purkiss and ex-detainees.

Sponsored by SERTUC, Oxford TUC, ARA, Southern Region Unison

Women Unite Against Racism

WOMEN UNITE Against Racism is an independent anti-racist, anti-fascist group based in Tower Hamlets. The group was formed last year following the racist attack on Quddas Ali and the election of BNP councillor Derek Beackon in Millwall.

Those involved were concerned that women were being excluded from anti-racist movements and community politics. Realising the need for information, communication and a different approach to anti-racist protest, a small group of women living and working locally began meeting. Within a short time, the group had grown significantly.

Juley Begum from Women Unite Against Racism states: "The group arose out of frustration women felt about anti-racist groups. We wanted to be involved in anti-racist protests but found that they were dominated by men and boys."

Local women were vocal and eager to become active, but found that their response to the BNP's by-election victory in Tower Hamlets had been hijacked by male-dominated anti-racist groups.

The aims of Women Unite Against Racism are to involve women of all backgrounds in local and national anti-racist and anti-fascist struggles through:

- collecting and disseminating information by using bulletins, multi-lingual leaflets, networking with other organisations and outreach work with women and girls;
- providing space and opportunities for women to organise by holding meetings where creche and safe transport are available;
- enabling women to take part in anti-racist and anti-fascist actions
- providing support for women who suffer racial harassment.

Nehal Rashid of WUAR says: "Women have so much potential and provide so much support for each other on issues such as racism and racial harassment. We hope women will come together in this group to pool their energy and expertise in order to fight racism in Tower Hamlets and other areas."

The group is presently concentrating its efforts on the May local elections, distributing leaflets in English and Bengali and providing transportation and escorts to the polling stations.

● **Contact Women Unite Against Racism at: PO Box 3608, Whitechapel, London E1 5ET.**

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