November 1994 £1

BRIEFING

the voice of Labour's independent, unrepentant left

Inside:

- Scargill - defend Clause IV
- Ronan Bennett on Ireland
- Racism in Europe
- Conference reports
- Social Justice Commission



"The struggle for socialism, expressed in Clause IV, is more relevant than ever."

Lynette Burgess, Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures.

LABOUR - TAKE THE POWER!

press stop

Rough justice

Briefing went to press before the publication of the report of the Commission on Social Justice, but we can reveal the remarks of Commission deputy chair, Patricia Hewitt: "I don't think this starts with higher taxes at all. I think it starts with changing the way the Government spends the money it has got."

And on the minimum wage, she is adamant that the Party should not yet set a specific level, as "a lot of businesses ... are really struggling to survive."

So are millions of low-paid workers!

MPs for sale

How much does it cost to buy an MP or a minister these days? The Government is so deep in sleaze that none of its members can be considered free from it. Whilst John Major is said by the press to be "transparently" honest, he allows his ministers to give cushy, well-paid jobs to industrialists who bankroll the Tory Party. He seeks to excuse and "stand by" discredited ministers who grab any and every opportunity to put their snouts in the trough.

The Labour Party is correct in calling for an independent committee to investigate the sleaze at every level. Whilst it is at it, it should also ensure that Labour politicians are above suspicion. It is disgraceful that MPs seeking election as leader of the Party or to the NEC are still allowed to accept large sums of money from anonymous contributors, whilst preventing rank and file members of the Party from showing their support for candidates by distributing material on candidates' behalf.

It is all part and parcel of the same philosophy which underlies the scandals going to the core of this rotten Tory Government: that money can buy anything and anyone. As Diane Abbott MP told *Briefing*: "The sleaze factor is intrinsic to Toryism. People who believe in the market inevitably believe that MPs can be bought and sold as well."

Cost-cutting

The cheap methods used for the new Heathrow tube tunnel are proving to cost millions as the tunnel itself and buildings above it collapse, bringing the world's busiest airport to a halt. It is a kind of ghastly metaphor for the current state of capitalism and a lesson to the Labour leadership - capitalism is costing us the earth.

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Cover: Defiant as the Parkside pit camp ends
Photo by Paul Herrmann

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Our history, our heritage, our future



"PROUD TO BE a socialist, proud to be in the Labour Party and proud of Clause IV of our constitution." Thus Jim Mearns, the delegate from Glasgow Maryhill, moved support for Clause IV at the Labour Party Conference. This is the message we must keep at the forefront of our campaign in the year ahead to defend Clause IV.

With a general election probably only two years away, it is outrageous that Blair has chosen this moment to open up divisions and launch an attack upon the very fabric of our Party. It means that voters will be treated to the spectacle of Party and trade union delegates fighting it out over constitutional issues at the Labour Conference before the next election, rather than hammering the Government and putting forward powerful arguments for socialism.

But now that this battle - not of our choosing - has been joined, we have to win it.

In Blackpool, Blair turned reality on its head when he claimed that, in getting rid of Clause IV, he would be forging a modern, radical, relevant and realistic party. What's so modern in turning the clock back 75 years to out pre-socialist past? What's so radical in stripping the Party of its core mission - enshrined in our constitution - to transform society? Killing Clause IV means supporting capitalism. Opposing common ownership means supporting private ownership and entrenching power and wealth in the hands of this country's ruling class.

What Blair and his supporters want is a Labour Party with a free-market ideology at its core - an ideology which demands that public ownership extends only as far as the utilities (and they're even backtracking on that) while the key centres of the economy remain under the dominance of the free market.

This is simply unacceptable. It betrays a staggering level of economic fatuity - investment in this country is pretty close to a post-war low, while the British economy is marked out from those of virtually all other western countries by its dependence on a shrinking arms industry, the dominance of the financial sector and a strong tendency to invest overseas. Such acute problems cannot be overcome by plugging tax loopholes and vacuous talk of empowering individuals through their communities.

The only real solution is a greatly expanded public sector, driving up investment across the economy and challenging the power of the multi-national corporations, whose untrammelled rampages through whole sectors of the economy have caused destruction and misery over the past 15 years. The drug companies, for instance, which make enormous profits through inflated prices, or the water companies where both dividends to shareholders and disconnection rates have soared. There is also a desperate need for state control of pension funds - corporate raiders have not lost their appetite for buying up firms merely to plunder their pension funds to the future ruin of the workers.

Of course, there is a debate to be had about common ownership particularly in view of the clear limitations of Morrisonian nationalisation. What forms should common ownership take? Nationalisation, workers' co-operatives, municipal socialism? What kind of popular control and industrial democracy? All these questions are relevant and necessary. What is not necessary is to question whether we need common ownership at all. We all decided that when we joined the Party in the first place.

If anyone is naive enough to argue that all Blair wants is a genuine debate, seeing Gordon Brown on *Question Time* a couple of weeks ago would have been instructive. Perhaps unwittingly, Brown confessed: "We are going to get rid of Clause IV."

Clause IV is our history and our heritage. Above all, it is our future. We are on the verge of a Labour Government for the first time in a generation. But how can a Labour Government be fundamentally different from the Thatcherite Tory ones if it throws away the one weapon in its arsenal - common ownership - that can begin to deal with the crisis of decaying, outmoded capitalism?

The problem with Clause IV is that it's never been implemented. Blair can certainly be beaten, for he has chosen to take on not just the left but a broader section of the movement committed to a vision of a fundamentally different and better world. And in fighting to defend Clause IV, we can transform it from an article of faith into part of the living fabric of our movement.

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

***Labour Briefing* is the monthly voice of Labour's independent left. It is managed by an elected National Editorial Board whose meetings are open to all supporters. The next EB will meet on November 6th. We are happy to offer a right to reply on the usual basis to all members of the labour movement.**

All articles published in *Labour Briefing* reflect the opinions of the authors alone unless otherwise indicated. *Briefing* welcomes criticisms and contributions. Deadline for the next issue is November 14th.

***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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defend Clause IV

The left has been quick to respond to Tony Blair's threat to scrap Clause IV. Dorothy Macedo, Secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network reports on the campaign to save Clause IV.

AT BLACKPOOL, people were impressed to find petitions supporting Clause IV being circulated within hours of the leader's speech on the Tuesday afternoon. This was the work of the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network, which produced a daily bulletin at Conference as well as issuing daily press releases giving an alternative view to that being pushed by the Walworth Road media manipulators.

Many delegates had been unclear about the meaning of Blair's veiled comments; the media however received a special briefing from Party officials to tell them "this means the end of Clause IV". Larry Whitty, in his closing speech to Conference, joked that the Party could now offer you "the spin doctor of your choice".

The debate on Clause IV on the Thursday illustrated that support for it extends far beyond the ranks of the left, with a particularly telling speech from David Winnick MP. It also demonstrated the realisation that the desire to get rid of Clause IV is nothing to do with concern about the wording being out of date, but is an attack on the very nature of the Party.

Without a commitment to common ownership, there is nothing to distinguish the Labour Party from the SDP; except that the new Labour of Tony Blair seems to be unwilling even to promise the sort of reforms which typify social democrats. Not only will a Labour Government not repeal VAT on fuel, it won't even reduce it to the minimum allowed by Brussels.

The SCG Network fringe meeting on the Thursday evening assumed an extra significance, with surprise speaker Arthur Scargill urging us to mount an immediate campaign to defend clause IV - defend socialism. As a result, urgent arrangements were made to set up the campaign, which is now up and running.

Initial sponsors were Arthur Scargill, Alan Simpson MP (secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs), Dennis Skinner MP (and NEC member) and Norman West MP, plus myself and John Nicholson as secretary and chair of the SCG Supporters' Network. Latest sponsors include Doreen Cameron (president of NATFHE) and David Winnick MP.

Rallies are already planned for Edinburgh on Tuesday 8th November, London and Glasgow on Saturday 12th, Manchester on Friday 18th and Leeds on Tuesday 29th. Details of speakers are still being finalised, but Arthur Scargill will be speaking at the London and Manchester meetings. Many other local meetings are in the pipeline.

To get involved, write to Defend Clause IV, c/o NUM, 2 Huddersfield Road, Barnsley S70 2LS or phone 071 582 2955. Affiliation fees are £10 (£30 for regional organisations and £50 for national ones).

London meeting

1pm, Saturday 12th November
St. Aloysius Hall,
Phoenix Road, London NW1.
(next to Euston Station)

For the record ...

"Tony Blair is accepting the right's caricature of Clause IV as a dogma of nationalisation. This defensiveness is not a winning strategy. The radical left, long-time critic of Herbert Morrison's public corporation, should provide confident arguments for the full varity of co-operative and democratic forms that common ownership could take from local federations of co-ops to worker and consumer participation in state owned companies."
Hilary Wainwright - political editor, *Red Pepper*

"I have always taken great heart and much inspiration from such old and well-established statements of our cause. I can think of nothing that gives me more pride than being a continuing part of the struggle to gain an equitable share for everyone of the wealth that we all helped to create - something that successive Tory administrations since 1979 have tried their best to whittle down and take away from us and they have gone to great lengths to give this legitimacy in law. Very simply, that's what it's all about and I shall continue to fight for us all to have an equal value as human beings, whatever our status and jobs in life".
Betty Heathfield

"It is not enough for the Party to state its principles, it must also say how it is going to carry them out."
Barbara Castle

"Clause IV remains the dearest and best possible statement of the democratic, socialist faith.
Tony Benn

"Clause IV is one of the Labour Party's fig leaves, perhaps the last one. If nothing else, it represents the commitment of a dwindling number of members to a set of principles of public ownership. It's important because, in its spirit it's the last obstacle to Labour embracing full-blooded monetarism".
John Pilger

"Far from being old fashioned or out of date, the struggle for socialism expressed in Clause IV is more relevant today than ever. It means public ownership and if that isn't essential to socialism we don't know what is. The issue for us isn't about being old fashioned, it's about how out of touch the leadership is with the daily struggles of working-class existence."
Lynette Burgess - Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures

defend socialism

Arthur Scargill passionately believes that Clause IV is crucial not only to the history but to the future of the Labour Party. He argues that it must be defended without hesitation or delay.

AT A TIME when they should be spear-heading a massive fightback against the Tories' ongoing destruction of society and the economy, Tony Blair and his colleagues have instead launched an internal battle over the Party's cornerstone principles. There can be no confusion over the leadership's intentions.

Clause IV embodies the threshold of socialist purpose: the securing for "workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry and service".

Tony Blair's signal that he and his colleagues want to cut loose from this aim is not, as is claimed, a signal to the British people. It's a wave in the direction of the City financiers, the multi-nationals (including the global media barons) and all those whose profits have soared over the past 15 years (alongside unemployment, poverty and social degradation).

Clause IV has obviously become an embarrassment to the Labour Party leadership, which is already far adrift from the principles on which the Party was formed and from policies which mark Labour as a clear alternative to the Tories and Liberal Democrats. Tony Blair has made it clear that he supports a mixed or market economy.

"Clause IV ... is an unambiguous challenge to capitalism. Far from being out-dated, that challenge has never been more relevant to life in Britain."

This concept is in complete contradiction to Clause IV which is an unambiguous challenge to capitalism. Far from being out-dated, that challenge has never been more relevant to life in Britain than it is today.

Clause IV needs no revising, certainly no "modernising". In the days since Tony Blair's speech at Conference, I've heard suggestions (from its supporters as well as its detractors) that Clause IV could do with "up-dating". I disagree completely.

I support the argument that the Party's constitution should stress basic issues such as gender and racial inequality, issues which could have been tackled long before now and which can be dealt with elsewhere in the constitution.

But the key question of ownership/control of the means of production, distribution and exchange needs no embellishment or enhancement.

In trying to ditch it, the Party leadership shows no commitment to its most crucial constituency: the millions of British people who have been damaged by the Tories' long rampage of economic and social destruction.

Miners, building workers, engineers, ship-builders, rail workers, steel workers, textile workers, those throughout manufacturing, health and social workers - these are just some who have seen their jobs destroyed or who struggle on in services which are in utter chaos. School pupils, college students and teachers grappling with an education system in tatters - all these are among the people who will determine the outcome of the next General Election.

The Labour Party was born out of working class anger and frustration with a political system that gave working people no real representation. It was created to speak and act for the disenfranchised, the dispossessed, for all those whose labour creates the wealth of the nation.

Labour's purpose was and is not only to represent but to mobilise people and involve them in building a society in which all have equal opportunities to live fulfilling lives.

As President of a trade union whose members have seen their industry butchered and their communities devastated by the Tories' political pit closure programme, I want the speedy return of a Labour Government.

That Labour Government must, however, be committed to Clause IV and to taking back into public ownership our basic industries and key services, beginning a massive programme of social/economic reconstruction, essential to creating full employment.

I didn't join the Labour Party to try to make capitalism work more effectively and efficiently than the Tories. I joined because I want to see a rotten, corrupt system replaced by socialism, and the abolition of exploitation, inequality and injustice.

I want to live in a society in which all people are eager to participate, in which health, education and the welfare of all are the government's first concerns. I want to see the end of a system whose priority is catering to the needs of multi-national profiteers.

Clause IV represents the very soul of the Labour Party. The campaign to defend it is inseparable from the campaign to secure a Labour Government which this country so desperately needs.

We must win that campaign. The call must be - defend Clause IV, defend socialism. ❑

More for the record ...

The past, present and future are all connected. We cannot deny our history. Rather we should use our past in creating our radical vision of our future.
Loraine Monk

Clause IV means for me the means by which society can be transformed from private profit to social need. Unless we're able to identify fundamental change within society, we cannot expect working people to rally to our side.
Ted Knight

For me, Clause IV sums up why I joined the Labour Party. It's at the heart of what a future Labour Government should do. We need to control the economy and fight privatisation if we are to create a fairer society. Not fighting privatisation has meant the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs in the ex-public utilities.
Maria Exall (Thames Central NCU branch officer, in a personal capacity)

"Why would he (Peter Mandelson) want to be quoted in Labour Briefing. *It is a muck-raking, sectarian rag that has done nothing but attack him in the past."*
Some minion from Peter Mandelson's office

Prizes and dirty deeds

Beverley Klein, delegate for Edinburgh South CLP, gives a personal impression of Labour Conference week.

THIS WAS my second time as a delegate to national Conference and this time I enjoyed myself. At the risk of sounding parochial, the Scottish delegation was seated together and we're such a friendly bunch that I couldn't fail to feel at home.

However, it wasn't all good news, the increasingly obvious diminution of the role of Conference as our policy making forum concerns me greatly principally because I'm a democrat and passionately believe that the votes of delegates best reflect the views of all in the labour movement. I can't say it's perfect but it will get my vote any day.

On the subject of the National Executive Committee, I was heartened to see two Campaign Group MPs winning through - if OMOV can deliver a few more similar victories I'm all for it! But there's no room for complacency; the NEC seems prepared to indulge in all sorts of manoeuvrings in order to persuade unrelenting comrades to remit their motions, and all in the name of the greater good and the unity of the Party. I can testify to their dirty deeds and I'm sure no-one will be surprised that our comrade from Glasgow Maryhill, mover of composite 57, could write a book on his impressions and experiences of this Conference.

There were several highlights - Douglas Hawkins, receiving a lifetime commitment/achievement award, felt moved to comment that religion was yet another drug.

This received considerable applause and laughter from delegates whilst our simpering, smiling christian democrat leader merely looked on with a fixed grin (one of the features of this Conference). Larry Whitty made one of the most telling and incisive speeches of the week with his very subtle snipes not passing unnoticed by those of us aware of the fact that Bambi had sacked him - a move which saw him exceed even the usual considerable powers of the Labour leader.

John Hume gets my vote for best speech of the week. It was reassuring to see a fairly major political figure and be able to use the word integrity to sum him up. Most disappointing feature was that Margaret Beckett wasn't given the chance to address Conference - nothing short of a disgrace.

Best line of the week was, "Let's be tough on capitalism and tough on the causes of capitalism", from Jim Mearns. It got a huge response and made one see that the left and, perhaps more surprisingly, many others within our movement won't be prepared to let go of one of our most cherished goals. ❑

Listen to the women

Leonora Lloyd
GLLP Women's Committee

EVEN BEFORE CONFERENCE started, there was a row about quotas. The new rules require Constituency Labour Parties to send a woman as delegate if a man went the year before. Fourteen constituencies claimed they could not find a woman to send. After being threatened with having no delegate at all, three found a woman after all; the rest were eventually allowed to send a man but their resolutions were ruled out of order.

What is needed now is a training weekend for male officers at every level of the Party on how to make the constituencies and Party more women friendly. One result of the new rule is that it has ended the practice of a few constituencies of sending the same (male) delegate year after year. Some 50 per cent of the delegates were women, many of them attending for the first time. Union delegations also had more women in them. The down side is that new, less experienced delegates may be more open to arm-twisting and there was plenty of that during Conference week. There is a real need for experienced visitors and delegates to offer support to new delegates.

The other big row over quotas was around the new rules concerning 50 per cent of winnable and marginal seats having women-only shortlists. The row ought to have been about whether this went far enough if Labour is to meet its declared intention of 50 per cent representation in the PLP before the year 2020, a mere 100 years after women got the vote. Instead, it was about whether it goes too far. Blair was reported to support moves to backtrack. With lots of pressure from a majority of women MPs and delegates, the NEC agreed a statement supporting current policy and the composite opposing quotas was heavily defeated.

But what does it mean in practice? Clare Short, in welcoming the result, cited the example of the SouthWest Region, where a consensus meeting had agreed which seats should be women-only.

However, the reality is that, of the seats selected as targets, the least winnable are to be women-only. Clare Short also warned against following the example of Brighton Pavilion, where a referendum was held in an attempt to influence the regional consensus meeting. She said it was "immoral" to try and get round Party policy in this way.

Are you listening, Tony Blair? I understand that this is exactly what you are planning to do in order to undermine another rather important aspect of Party policy.

More than a showcase

Terry Liddle, delegate for Woolwich and Eltham CLP, gives his view on Conference.

What is the Labour Party Conference for? During my week as a first time delegate (after 20 years membership) I asked this question many times.

I thought it would be the forum for the labour movement to discuss and debate ideas, policies and the tactics needed for victory. But it soon became clear that for the Shadow Cabinet and the majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party Conference is no more than a showcase for the leader to win the attention and applause of a Tory-controlled media.The order in which motions were taken and the voting system was confusing and none too democratic.

Excellent emergency motions from my own CLP didn't get on the agenda at all. If the US blockade of Cuba and the means of appointing a new General Secretary aren't worth discussing I don't know what is.

MPs, MEPs and union leaders had too many opportunities to speak. Rank and file members had too few - at the most five minutes to move a motion.

Like many delegates I was disgusted that a reception for the leadership was sponsored by Marconi, which supplies arms to Indonesia for its war against the people of East Timor, and that many anti-working class organisations - Tesco, Nirex, British Coal Properties - had stands in the hall. The unemployed and pensioners were kept outside in the wind and rain cordoned off by steel barriers and an army of police.

The voting for the NEC saw the left polling over 200,000 votes and shows there is still a solid base of support in the Party. This base must be consolidated and built on and socialism defended from attack from any and every quarter.

Let's do it

"Comrades, this composite calls for clear, radical socialist policies. It calls for the Party to commit itself to work towards a fundamental and irreversible shift in power in favour of working people:

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

"Not the words of left wing revolutionaries but of the Fabian Society.

"These words are a symbol of our commitment to the working class and a succinct statement of our core philosophy. They didn't stop us winning elections in the past and they won't stop us winning elections in the future.

"Fifteen years of Tory rule have certainly convinced me that unfettered capitalism is evil. It is based on exploitation - the exploitation of the poor, the sick, the weak, the young and the old. Excessive profit comes from pain - usually someone else's pain.

"Let's be tough on capitalism and tough on the causes of capitalism. We must use the powers of office in the interests of our supporters as the Tories have done for theirs.

"Some of you may have read recent press reports on the working of the DSS Compensation Recovery Unit (CRU). Imagine suffering an injury at work which disables you. Imagine fighting a court battle to gain some recompense from a negligent employer and living on invalidity benefit while doing so. Imagine winning. Now, imagine getting a letter from the CRU asking for money back as repayment of the benefit you needed to live on while fighting your case. This is John Major's classless society, his caring Britain, his level playing field.

"Outside this hall, all over the country, there is a battle going on, a battle for survival ... the people of Britain are looking to you for a vision, for a way out of their pain. The Labour Party, still, I believe, the only truly democratic socialist party, can provide that vision. Clause Four embodies that vision.

"Comrades, let's continue to state firmly and clearly what Labour is all about: Socialism. Comrades, do more than sing about it, let's do it, raise the scarlet standard high and keep the red flag flying here."

● Excerpts from the speech given by Jim Mearns, Glasgow Maryhill CLP moving Composite 57 at Blackpool October, 1994.

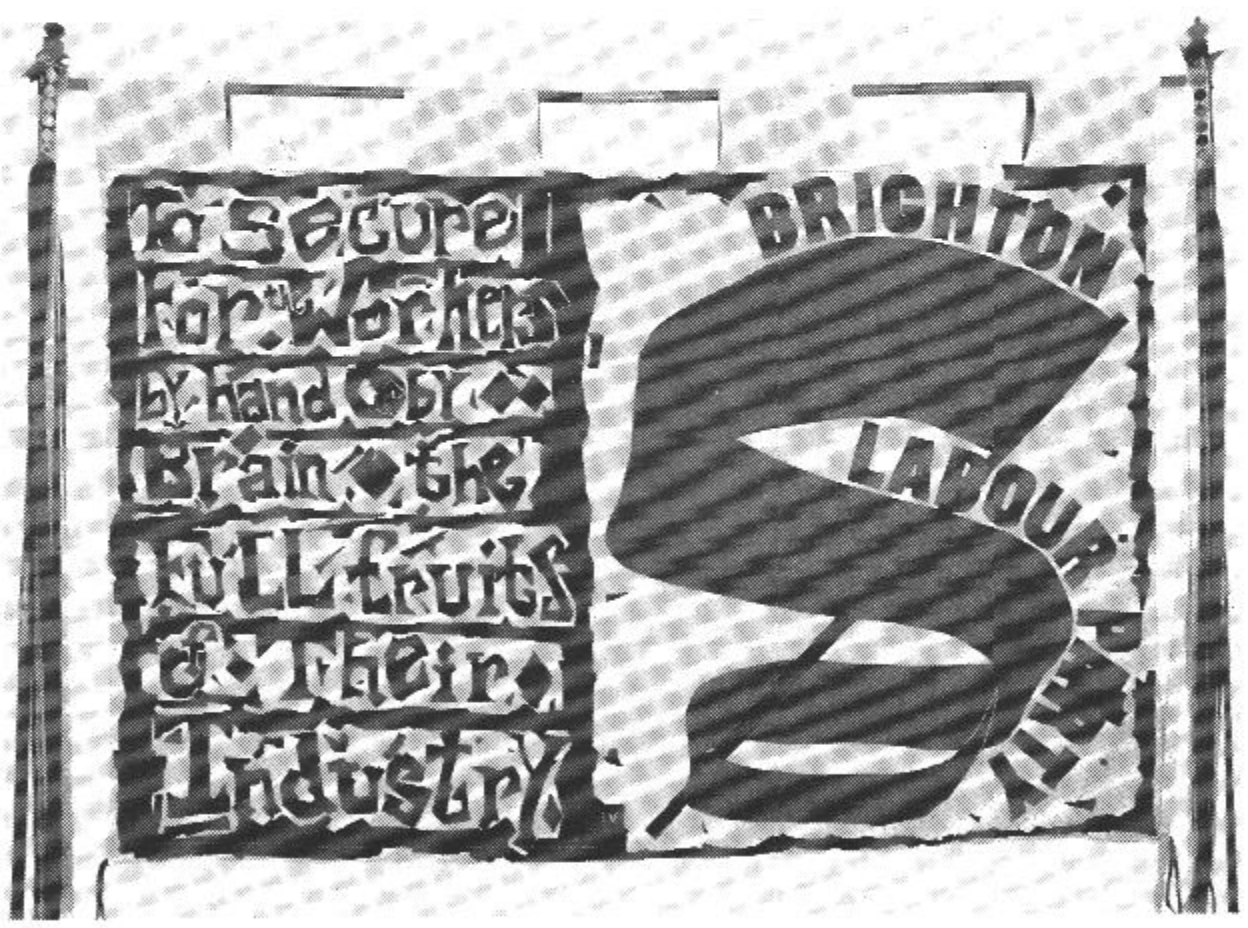


Jim Mearns

● **Dave Lewney reports from Brighton:** The campaign to defend Clause IV has received strong support in Party branches from members across Labour's political spectrum. There is widespread disgust in Brighton at the right-wing's attack on the constitution aided by the Tory press. The move to ditch Clause IV is part of the right's project to disarm the Party of labour and achieve office at the behest of the establishment.

The choice is between a Labour Government whose programme is negotiated between Gordon Brown and the City, or one whose programme is decided democratically by Conference.

Clause IV is the expression of the Labour movement's opposition to market forces and the misery arising from a "mixed economy" in decline. Lose it, and we'll be like a ship drifting without an anchor.



Still flying the flag: Brighton Labour Party banner.



Ripe for purchase

In the wake of Tony Blair's attacks on Clause IV, Michael Furst shows that selling off water and power has unleashed a force for increases in poverty and disease.

SINCE WATER was privatised in 1989, domestic customers in England and Wales have paid an extra £3 billion to the water companies through higher charges. While the businesses' capital investment needs have increased, they have still generated profits from our water bills of £2,183 million, plus another £2,172 million in dividends.

Similarly, in the first three years of privatisation, the Regional Electricity Companies (RECs) took profits of nearly £4.4 billion, and £1,095 million was paid to shareholders. Privatised British Gas has been declaring profits of over £1 billion a year, and up to last year BT had declared over £13 billion worth of profits, with dividend payments of £5,790 million.

Through dividend payments alone, shareholders of these four utilities have received over £12 billion of our money. This is somewhat more important, politically, than the usual ritualistic condemnations of massive payments to the utility bosses - obscene as they are.

Meanwhile, water disconnections have trebled, several companies are now trying out pre-payment meters (so families can cut themselves off, on the quiet), and even establishment bodies like the British Medical Association are saying that disconnections must be made illegal. The Disablement Income Group's latest survey shows intolerable levels of hardship among disabled people, who for simple health reasons, have to keep their homes warm.

These sorts of basic facts (there are many more) should make it clear, even to the most Blairist Party apparatchik, that it's unacceptable for utilities providing essential public services to be run for profit. Failing that, a little historical knowledge should help to make them think.

For instance, well before Clause IV made its appearance, the water industry was being municipalised, having previously been largely under commercial control. King James was one of the first speculators, getting legislation passed in 1607 for a private water supply company in London, with dozens of other private suppliers setting up business in the following two centuries. By the early 19th century they had organised into monopolies.

The companies' lack of concern for health first surfaced after massive cholera outbreaks in London and elsewhere in the 1830s - these continued on a regular basis through much of the rest of the century. But it took another 60 years before constancy of supply and cleanliness could be reasonably assured, and it was found that the only way to do this was by taking water and sewerage out of the private sector. The fight for better public health took so long to win largely because 90 or so MPs were major shareholders in the companies.

While history may not always repeat itself, it's notable that some public health officers say that recent rises in the incidence of dysentery and hepatitis A are due to the growth of water disconnections among families who can't afford the bills. Similarly, fuel poverty - not being able to afford to buy enough gas or electricity - is a major factor in the country's appalling record of deaths from hypothermia, and of chest infections among the three in 10 children who live in poverty.

Even if the "new model" Party lacks the principles and political courage to tackle the ideology of privatisation, some in the leadership might at least consider the ethics of unnecessary hardship, disease and deaths. It could think about the fact that shareholders deserve to be charged for the extra health service costs caused by the illnesses created by fuel and water poverty. They could even turn their attention to the billions of public money used to make the privatised utilities profitable enough to give guaranteed financial returns.

It's us who should be compensated, not shareholders (who have already made fat profits), and a return of the utilities to public ownership should not involve any public spending.

As for telecommunications, who has benefitted from rapid technological change? Not workers, thousands of whom have been made redundant, and not ordinary consumers, who in reality get little more in the way of services than they did 20 years ago. Yet, as the National Communications Union argues, the technology is in place for a massive expansion of affordable and socially useful applications.

Instead, the trajectory of new services is almost solely market-led, leading to further "premium" entertainment and information services. In other words, those with the money get more, while charges for public payphone calls, for instance, continue to rise much faster than inflation. Differential access to affordable services has become a form of regressive taxation - driven by the development of new cartels in the telecoms/information/entertainment field. All this needs to be reversed.

So for both general and specific reasons these utilities are ripe for public control and ownership. And then it will be possible to direct the industries towards policies which put social and economic justice, environmental improvement, and employment at the forefront. We could once again have long-term energy and technology policies. ❑

Seize the moment



Jeremy Corbyn MP probes the attacks on the welfare state and asks why the Labour leadership is failing to take the initiative.

ON OCTOBER 24th, the Commission for Social Justice will have produced its report on the future of the Welfare State.

The Commission, although appointed by the Labour Party, is independent and includes former SDP MP David Marquand and has been charged with looking at all options surrounding the funding of the welfare state.

The obvious question asked at the time of the Commission's appointment was why a Labour-appointed commission should be even considering cuts in the welfare state. This is the result of a jumble of ideas and is the consequence of the shift towards a market economy by the Party.

Ever since the Fowler review of Social Security in 1984 when the cuts in benefits to school leavers, the loss of any benefit to students, and the "actively seeking work" formula were introduced Labour has had a confused position.

Wanting to gain support in the centre ground, the Party's opposition to the cuts has always been muted and this has fitted neatly with the European and economic strategies of the leadership.

Throughout Europe, the right and centre parties have pursued an approach of reducing welfare state spending by means testing and trying to encourage individual private provision. Indeed, the basis of the Maastricht Treaty is to establish a market economy and not to defend living standards or the welfare state.

The argument used goes into the whole question of a competitive economy. The price of the International Monetary Fund loan of 1976 to the Labour government was for it to move away from planning and state intervention in favour of the competitive global market. The resulting cuts forced unemployment to rise, poverty to increase and led to the defeat of May 1979.

The debacle of the 1983 election was the opening for Kinnock to move Labour to the right and cut welfare pledges. In 1987 all that was on offer was a £5 rise in the single pension and the uprating of child benefit. By 1992, Labour's agenda on the welfare state was an embarrassment to many supporters.

The vacuum at the heart of Labour's thinking enabled Peter Lilley to boast that his plans for wholesale cutbacks were also part of Labour's agenda. Never one to miss an advantage he expressed pleasure that Labour had accepted "economic realities on spending plans".

The Tories have produced reams of documents stating that we can no longer afford the welfare state and that the "burden" of pensioners will rise over the next 30 years and that we should move to private provision.

The state old age pension is now worth less than 15 per cent of average earnings and is likely to fall to 10 per cent. The break of the link with earnings in 1980 now costs every pensioner £19 per week. The real causes of increasing costs are not pensions but unemployment and housing benefits, where rent de-regulation is pouring millions of pounds of social security money into the coffers of private landlords.

"The vacuum at the heart of Labour's thinking enabled Peter Lilley to boast that his plans for wholesale cutbacks were also part of Labour's agenda."

John Hills of the London School of Economics has pointed out that the costs of social security could be met by taxation, that it is a matter of political choice to cut and re-trench and that millions depend on the welfare state for their very survival. Opposition to welfare state cuts has been huge in Italy, was a major factor in the Social Democratic/Left/Green majority in Sweden and goes to the heart of the debate on Labour's values.

The Tony Blair leadership is trying to remove Clause IV and with it a commitment to re-distribution of wealth. The refusal to either make spending or tax commitments leaves people wondering what Labour is really going to do for its loyal hard core support.

The Party was founded on the basic principle that the community should provide a safety net for all - this has never been totally achieved - but since 1980 great holes have meant nearly a million live without work or benefit; a fifth of Europe's poor live in Britain and the degree of absolute poverty and homelessness is huge and rising.

Labour must now commit itself to a minimum wage of £4 per hour, the restoration of the pensions-earnings link with pensions at half average earnings, the removal of the rules on invalidity benefit that deny victims of industrial brutality a living income and the re-introduction of benefits to 16-17 year olds and the proper funding of students in post-school education. To achieve this requires a taxation and economic strategy designed to re-distribute wealth and provide for need.

The future of the welfare state is the great issue of the 1990s. Labour ought to be the party that can set the agenda for the debate, not follow that laid down by the Tories.

Why don't we seize the moment? ❑



Incapacity Action demonstration outside the DSS. PHOTO: Michael Stavri, Disability Alliance.

What price disability?

Eddie Barns, of Hackney North CLP and Incapacity Action, exposes the insidious attack on disabled people embodied in new government legislation.

THE GOVERNMENT'S release of the second consultation document on the medical test for incapacity was greeted with silence by the Parliamentary Labour Party front bench - despite the fact that official Labour Party policy is opposed to the Incapacity for Work (Social Security) Act.

The aim of the Act is to save £1 billion next year by restructing invalidity benefit, both through cuts and making it virtually impossible for existing and new claimants to get benefit. By the government's own estimates, 250,000 people will be forced off benefit and considered fit for employment.

Peter Lilley, the Social Security Secretary, has stated that the test is designed to, "target genuine claimants". However, even Lilley's own department has failed to produced a single piece of evidence to substantiate claimant fraud.

When Peter Lilley made this assertion on Radio 4, Donald Dewar, Labour Party spokesperson on social security failed to challenge it. Lilley expressed concern that invalidity benefit claims have doubled in the last decade when people are "getting healthier", despite evidence to the contrary.

There are reports of illnesses that we thought had been eliminated. Tuberculosis and ricketts are re-emerging while new ones like ME, HIV and Aids have reached epidemic proportions. This must surely be connected to spending. Bad housing, homelessness, long-term unemployment and increased environmental pollution have had a disastrous effect on the health of millions of people.

The Act affects both those in receipt of invalidity benefit and future claimants. Workers who are contributing to the scheme through National Insurance payments will find that, should they become ill or disabled, they will receive greatly reduced benefit or no benefit at all if they fail the new medical test.

The test is a bizarre concoction of one-off functional tasks which exclude factors like age, work experience and skills which formed part of the old invalidity benefit assessment. Under the new regulations only the most severely disabled people will qualify.

The casualisation of work increases the possibility of accidents, and the withdrawal of sick pay subsidies to employers means that workers are at greater risk of long-term illness and disability. Socialists have not addresed this problem, perhaps seeing it as a low priority. It is the thin end of the wedge - Tories attack the easiest targets, making future policies such as workfare and the job seeker's allowance possible.

The Government managed to destroy the Disabled Person's Civil Rights Bill which would have given disabled people more opportunities to obtain work. The new Act will create an even larger pool of cheap labour for employers to draw from at will. What chance will disabled people have in this free market free-for-all?

This issue is about defending the welfare state and the basic human right to a decent standard of living. Incapacity Action, a group of long-term sick and disabled people and their supporters have been campaigning for the repeal of the Incapacity for Work Act and its farcical medical test. The main focus of our campaign has been protest demonstrations to ensure that the anger of disabled people is made public. Since the campaign started in May we have been overwhelmed by letters and phone calls from people living in fear of losing their income.

We now need support from the L bour Party and the trade unions. At Labour Party Conference composite motion six was passed overwhelmingly It read: "Conference notes the poverty and employment traps generalised by the current benefit system. Conference opposes government proposals to replace unemployment with a Job Seekers Benefit and to alter the classification of Invalidity Benefit to Incapacity and to introduce for the first time income tax on the benefits."

Opposition to the Act is now Labour Party policy, moved by a trade union and endorsed by Conference. Urgent action is now urgently required. We must join forces with disabled and long term sick people to fight this iniquitous legislation and ensure that a future Labour Government repeals the Act completely.

Please send donations to Incapacity Action, PO Box 9, 136-138 Kingland Road, London, E8.

Reaching for reality

Ronan Bennett looks at the dangers and prizes which beset the path Sinn Fein has chosen to explore.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT of the IRA ceasefire at the beginning of September has pushed the profile of Sinn Fein and its president, Gerry Adams, to new highs: acres of column print, wall-to-wall television pictures of Adams at celebrations in nationalist districts of Belfast, and of his public visits to Dublin, Boston and San Francisco. For a party with the support of about 12 per cent of the electorate in the Six Counties (a third of the nationalist vote), it seems to have done extremely well, in media terms at least.

But in the cold world of politics the Republican movement has taken a huge gamble with the ceasefire. To date, almost the only concrete concession the Government has granted in response to the ceasefire has been the lifting of the broadcasting ban - hardly a significant gain. To date, Sinn Fein has nothing to show its supporters. The streets of Belfast and the lanes of Armagh are as heavily patrolled now as they were before the ceasefire; the Government has ruled out an amnesty for political prisoners.

"There is a long tradition in the British left of active hostility to Irish demands for self-determination."

All this may change, of course, once the parties sit down at the table. But - and this is not to underestimate the solid base of Sinn Fein's electoral support (it is, it should be remembered, the largest single party on Belfast City Council) - once the talking has started, Sinn Fein's position as one of the smallest of the political parties will be all the more exposed. What can they hope to achieve in the face of continuing Unionist and Loyalist intransigence?

Sinn Fein leaders have been clear-sighted enough to avoid self-delusion about the nature and extent of their party's support. Since the mid-eighties they have been involved in a two-pronged strategy in an effort to extend their influence and support. The first was to continue to build Sinn Fein as a political party through a new emphasis on social and economic issues and strengthening its electoral strategy. The second was a search to find allies.

For many on the left, the allies who have emerged - John Hume, the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, and Albert Reynolds, the Irish Taoiseach, and his Foreign Minister, Dick Spring - say much about the distance Sinn Fein has travelled to the centre. Adams's trip to the United States to talk to the Clinton administration and to shore up support among what has always been a relatively conservative Irish lobby is taken as further evidence of the increasing conservatism of Sinn Fein.

But, in reality, Adams had little choice. With some notable exceptions, the British left has not been conspicuous in its advocacy of Irish unity, and, if the truth be told, has paid the conflict scant regard.

There is a long tradition in the British left of active hostility to Irish demands for self-determination: one only has to recall Ben Tillett's reaction to the Easter Rising (Tillett said he was only sorry that he was past military age and so could not join up to suppress the rebels) to get the general flavour of the left's attitude to Ireland. Kate Hoey has fertile ground in which to spread her pro-Unionist message.



Another part of the problem for Sinn Fein has been the collapse of communism: not in the sense that it deprived the IRA of Moscow gold but, in the same way that it has for the left everywhere, it suddenly reduced the scope for what was possible. The present leadership came to political maturity in the late sixties and seventies - a time of exciting international change: Cuba, Vietnam, Angola, Portugal, the Monteneros, the Tupamaros - these were the struggles that helped mould their political thinking. The huge change in the intellectual and philosophical climate since the eighties has affected the left's imagination everywhere, and affected its ambitions as well. What seemed possible 20 years ago now, to many, seems out of reach.

"Many within Sinn Fein now privately concede that the socialist republic is something they will have to put on the back burner for the time being."

Many within Sinn Fein now privately concede that the socialist republic is something they will have to put on the back burner for the time being. But they are still hopeful that their new strategy can bear progressive results, even though they now travel in the company of some politically very dubious people.

The one reason to believe this may be so is the undiminished radical spirit of Sinn Fein's grass roots support. The party leadership will be aware that it cannot move too far away from its base if it is not to suffer the same fate of the Republican leadership in 1970, swept aside after failing to deliver the goods to a people who have been waiting a long time for the right to live in a society free from the malign consequences of British interference and Unionist domination.

Ronan Bennett's new film for television, *A Man You Don't Meet Every Day*, will be screened on Channel Four on November 9th. His memoir of the Long Kesh fire, 20 years ago last month, will be broadcast on Radio Four on October 30th.

Criminalising Compassion

Oliver Knowles of the Ashford Hunt Saboteurs Association sees a terrifying dawn in Michael Howard's attack, through the Criminal Justice Bill, on the peaceful 'sabs'.

IN 1985, when proposals for the Public Order Act were announced, there was much concern that hunt saboteurs would be adversely affected. In fact, many believed that the days of being legally allowed to use direct action against hunts were over. yet when the 1986 Public Order Act became law it was evident that this was not to be the case and hunt saboteurs are still in action across the country to this day using peaceful, yet direct, action.

The construction and implementation of the Criminal Justice Bill has been extremely well engineered. Disguised as a law and order package, it has been welcomed by a national media who have whipped large sections of society into near panic about rising crime and violence.

Having created and in turn fuelled this panic, the media have only given coverage to those parts of the Bill designed to remedy these problems, such as the treatment of juvenile offenders, violent criminals and the prison service. As a consequence, the ways in which the Bill attacks civil liberties and democratic rights have largely been ignored, leaving only those directly affected by the new legislation to resist and oppose it.

Within one month, if the Bill's passage continue through Parliament unimpeded, the act of hunt sabotage will be illegal. Such an outrageous piece of law has been justified by the Conservative Government and the British Field Sports Society as necessary to curb the pursuit of legal activities. However, the Home Office admits that it has no figures on incidents of violence at hunts. In actual fact, the formation of the legislation concerning hunt saboteurs has come about following a series of "loose and informal talks" with the pro-hunting lobby. The legislation in the Bill has been designed by and for the small minority of degenerates in this country who still deem it acceptable to hunt wildlife for fun.

The reality in the hunting field is actually far from the picture painted by sensationalist, pro-establishment media coverage. Far from being a crowd of violent thugs, we hunt saboteurs, or sabs, are compassionate, often pacific individuals, whose aims are to save lives, not to damage them. In truth, it is the saboteurs who face violent attacks - it should not be forgotten that the two lives lost in the hunting field to date have both been those of saboteurs.

In the first three months of 1993 alone, 75 saboteurs were victims of violent attacks by hunters, 13 of them requiring hospital attention as a result. In Kent, as in most other parts of the country, violent attacks upon hunt saboteurs are so commonplace that they have come to be regarded as routine. The police show very little interest in assaults upon hunt saboteurs, often responding, "Well what did you expect?"

The police can no longer retain the position of neutrality which they have claimed to have in the hunting field. The Justice Bill turns the police into hunt stewards, protectors of those who inflict cruelty. The Bill will create a resurgence of anti-police feeling, fuelled by the outrageous police behaviour on October 9th in Park Lane.

Contrary to the news reports, the trouble was not started by a small group of protestors, but by the police, who charged into Hyde Park without warning. In addition, the disturbances were not maintained by protestors, but by the police who charged, charged, and charged again. And no, it wasn't a small group of anarchists who responded to this police behaviour, it was most of the people in the park who chased the police out.

In short, thousands of people were fed up with the police - men, women, old, young, families, ravers, travellers, protestors, not the rent a mob (if such a thing exists) - but thousands of people, many of whom were witnessing for the first time the way the police really treat dissenters.

Yet despite the odds which have always been against us and regardless of this latest onslaught, saboteurs across the country are standing firm, preparing for the oncoming hunting season with the full intention of continuing the disruption. Yet even the hardiest among us realises that there is a limit to how far people will be prepared to go. For saboteurs who have jobs and families the risk of incurring a £2,500 fine or three months in prison is too great, and for others, the prospect of paying fines for months or sitting in cells while hunts continue unabated is an unpleasant one.

The question is, therefore, will direct action resistance against bloodsports continue? If Michael Howard, the Conservative Government or the pro-hunting lobby think that we will simply disappear they are sadly mistaken. Too many of us have witnessed the deaths of foxes, hares and deer, the digouts with terriers and the cheers of the huntsmen and women when they kill.

The many groups of hunt saboteurs across the country are now concentrating on uniting with others who are to be affected by the Bill. In addition, the forthcoming hunting season is likely to witness increased unity between sab groups. Actions such as "national hits" (the convergence of all hunt saboteurs across the country on one hunt) and other acts of mass civil disobedience are likely to be far more common.

Whether the Bill makes Britain a police state is debatable. Yet one thing is sure, it is a strong foundation for a police state, and that may not be too far away. This theory gains credibility if taken in conjunction with the speeches made at the Conservative conference arguing for compulsory ID cards and stating that the Criminal Justice Bill is just the beginning of many changes soon to occur with regard to "law and order".

If there is one positive thing that the Bill is doing, it is helping to unite groups in society who have for too long been branded criminals, extremists and scroungers. We must hope that the unity being created will continue to grow so that social diversity and human freedom will be able to survive the increasing pressure being placed upon it. ❑

Police put the boot in

William Pickering was at the Hyde Park demonstration against the Criminal Justice Bill and saw the full horror of the police tactics.



PHOTO: William Pickering

IT WAS A good day for a demonstration, with the sun shining and everyone in a carnival mood with the playing drums and the chanting slogans ranging from the now infamous "Kill the Bill" to "Oi, you, Tory shites, give us back our civil rights".

After reaching Hyde Park, the festival atmosphere of the day brought out a need for music in many of those present and when a bus playing music arrived crowds gathered round and waited in the park. The police, however, did not. Before this, most of the demonstrators had been doing little more than sitting in a park on a Sunday afternoon.

The confrontation around the bus set the scene for the later events. With crowds bottlenecking at some exits and police blocking the others there was no way for many people to escape and once mass panic sets into a group of that size it becomes very dangerous, not only for the police but for the crowd itself.

As tensions between the two groups rose demonstrators with drums lessened the taut atmosphere by playing rhythms that calmed the crowd. The strength of the cheer as the police appeared to retreat was matched only by the drumming that had brought the crowd together. As the officers on foot moved back mounted police moved in followed again by those on foot. Jeremy Corbyn has called for an inquiry into the tactics of the police on the day and I believe this is justified. If some of the demonstrators had been ready for a confrontation, the police seemed fully prepared to give it to them.

The events of the day have been used by supporters of the Criminal Justice Bill as evidence that it is needed to stop the anarchic elements of society. The question could be asked as to whether, at the Conservative conference, Michael Howard needed the battle to show the party faithful that the bill would stop such riots taking place.

The intense strength of feeling against the Bill has been building up for some time and was released upon the police in the park but if officers had not reacted as vehemently as they did then further violence would have been avoided. "It looks like someone's thoroughly annoyed" was one shopkeeper's succinct, somewhat understated reaction to the evening's events. Yes, people are annoyed and have every right to be.

Frank Johnson update

DECEMBER 16TH marks 19 years since Frank Johnson was first taken into custody for the murder of his employer and best friend John Sheridan.

Andy Parr
Shoreham CLP

Frank Johnson was convicted in September 1976, without the benefit of legal advice and representation, along with two alleged accomplices and jailed for life. One of these accomplices, Jack Tierney, possessed a long history as a police informer and agent provocateur both in England and Ireland. In 1973 he had tried to sell arms to supporters of the Angry Brigade at the instigation of the Special Branch.

Since *Labour Briefing* first took up and publicised Frank's case two years ago, the campaign for his release has gone from strength to strength. It now has the active support of 15 MPs including two Liberal Democrats. An Early Day Motion on Frank's behalf will be presented in November.

In Ireland the campaign successfully located Joey Kervick of Waterford, another victim of Tierney's brand of "justice". On the evidence of Tierney alone he served a ten year sentence for the attempted murder of the latter who claimed to be "recovering guns on behalf of the Irish Government". Kervick had no hand in the incident and was half a mile away at the time it took place.

In October the Mayor of Clonmel and Seamus Healy, of the South Tipperary Workers and Unemployed Action Group, visited Frank, declared him innocent and pledged full support.

Write to: Free Frank Johnson Campaign c/o Green Ink, 8 Archway Hall, London N19 5RG.

INTERVIEW

My face is my passport

In the first of a two-part interview, Paul Field spoke to Frances Webber and Liz Fekete, authors of a challenging new report on racism and fascism in Europe.

PAUL FIELD: How closely are states in the European Union collaborating in their war against immigrants? To what extent is it possible to talk about a unified European state already in place when it comes to immigration?

FRANCIS WEBBER: You can say very closely in terms of conventions on employment, on family reunification and on so-called "safe" third countries to send asylum seekers back to. Also with things like automated fingerprinting - they're setting up a system called Eurodac - an information exchange throughout Europe. So they're collaborating extremely closely and the European states' ministers, civil servants and police meet all the time and collaborate on a daily basis.

The problem, of course, is that this is not under auspices of the European Parliament and so it's completely unaccountable. Policy is being developed by civil servants, by police and by security services. In the absence of any debate about the priorities, philosophy and ideology of asylum and immigration in Europe, what you get is simply a focus on perfecting the technology of immigration control. It's all done in a completely anti-democratic way.

It's also very dishonest because the European Commission has an input into the process but never the European Parliament or national parliaments. So, for example, the Commission wrote papers in 1989 setting out the agreed objectives and tasks which basically consisted of deterrents for asylum-seekers like universal fingerprinting, detention and reduced social security benefits, without having to consult a single elected person.

LIZ FEKETE: What we've been trying to do here at the Institute of Race Relations with our work on the rise of European racism is to explore exactly what we mean when we talk of an undemocratic Europe. I think people on the left are becoming aware of the degree of secrecy and unaccountability associated with groups like Trevi, but our understanding needs to move beyond describing what the mechanisms of immigration control are at a Euro-state level to monitoring and campaigning against what such decisions mean in terms of policing and immigration control on the ground, what it means in terms of the human cost.

Sivanandan has talked about the way that immigration policy in Europe is being developed in terms of the lowest common denominators of each country's immigration practice - that's one thing we're monitoring. But we're also interested in democracy, and the lack of it, in its widest sense.

At a national level, governments are increasingly by-passing democratic procedures in decision-making on immigration. We've had cases in Europe over the last few years, like Tamilgate in Denmark, that have illustrated this. You only have to look at the current situation in France where Pasqua, the Interior Minister, is saying, "I am going to be the sole arbiter of immigration policy, and won't tolerate any challenge to my authority from the judiciary". What we are saying, then, here at the IRR, is that the erosion of democracy is not just happening at a Euro-state level, it's taking place at a national level too.

PF: British policing methods have long provided a model for forces throughout Europe in the saturation policing of immigrant communities. But does the murder of Joy Gardner point to the existence of new specialist deportation squads in line with the "common market racism" of Maastricht. And is there evidence of similar state forces being formed across Europe?

FW: As each state's immigration policy is harmonised in line with the practice of the worst state, the same is also true of border policing.

One of the problems is that there is no policing of the police at the borders. Who knows what really happens on the eastern borders of Germany? Occasionally, you might get a delegation going and reporting back about the atrocities that occur as refugees are turned back.

What we have seen in recent years is not only increasing brutality at border controls, but also the criminalisation of asylum seekers. People who arrive at the borders are either forcibly turned away or are put into detention in so-called transit zones and waiting zones, which are in effect detention camps. Violent deaths occur in such places.

In fact, Joy Gardner's case was prefigured in the Netherlands, in the attempted deportation of a Rumanian asylum seeker who ended up not dead but with very severe brain damage by being gagged in a similar way.

We are also witnessing the export of immigration controls, whereby people who arrive, say, on the eastern border of Germany are simply sent back to Hungary or Poland which they travelled through. It is also happening to the south.

The Moroccan army now patrols the Moroccan coast, pursuant to an agreement between Spain and Morocco, to prevent Africans and migrant people leaving north Africa and going to Spain. So we've reached the point where the countries of the periphery around western Europe are actually doing the policing on behalf of western Europe.

LF: I want to respond to the first part of your question - are British policing methods providing a model for the rest of Europe? This is both true and untrue. Untrue in the sense that each country has its own traditions of policing.

You'll find, for instance, that there are traditions of authoritarian policing in countries that have come out of fascism, such as Spain and Portugal, but in other countries, like France, Belgium and Britain, colonial methods of policing, which have always been there, are becoming much more intense now. But it's also true to say, though, that the rest of Europe looks to Britain's police as providing a blueprint for the policing and social control of immigrant communities.

What British black communities first experienced in terms of "Sus", saturation policing, targeting, and high-profile police operations, are all taking place now across Europe. Again, this links into what I said earlier about how we've got to look in far greater detail at how anti-democratic Euro-decisions are played out at a national level, because the

constant identity checks and Sus policing are leading to more confrontations with the police, more deaths on the streets, the erosion of civil liberties and, overall, an intensification in colonial styles of policing.

One thing we did in our book *Inside Racist Europe* was refuse to treat racist attacks as manifestations of xenophobia, prejudice, or as an inevitable result of "the economic crisis". What we're saying is that when you have this level of state racism, institutionalised racism, this level of "Sus" policing, it's inevitable that there are going to be more deaths in police custody. And how can you say that these deaths are less important, less racist, than the murders on the streets which get far more publicity.

PF: The Trevi group of ministers and police chiefs drew a direct link between immigration and terrorism. In what ways have immigrants been stigmatised as terrorists?

FW: Trevi's been overtaken now by this K4 Committee under the third pillar of Maastricht - which means it's a more institutionalised albeit still unaccountable group.

What I've seen in Britain over the last few years is immigration authorities' treatment of Kurds, Sikhs and Tamils in which they have said to those claiming asylum: either you're an ordinary citizen and therefore you have nothing to fear from the security forces in your country, or you support the terrorists, in which case you're not a legitimate refugee. Bear in mind that since the pogroms of 1983 in Sri Lanka only about a dozen Tamils have been granted asylum in the UK.

That approach to asylum is no longer confined to Britain, it's Europe wide. For example, there is now an agreement between Switzerland and Sri Lanka for the repatriation of all the Tamils, who, although they were not granted asylum, had been allowed to stay in Switzerland throughout the eighties and early nineties.

There are similar developments in Sweden towards the Kosovo Albanians and in Denmark also with the Tamils again. The Kurds are being stigmatised as terrorists in Germany, as are the Algerians in France.

It is necessary to pin the label of terrorist on them in order to enable repatriation to take place with the least amount of fuss possible. But the other thing that is important in relation to that is the way in which the "terrorist threat" has been used to create what is almost a "super-police-state".

Yesterday, I read an article about biometric immigration control. It's called "fast future automated screening for travellers". In the US, frequent travellers don't have a passport, they just put their hand on a screen. The screen will then electronically register their hand and will link up to a computer that contains all the details concerning their immigration status, and who knows what other data.

Sivanandan talked about black people carrying their passports on their faces. This is now literal truth, carrying your passport on your hand. So there's biometric testing, fingerprinting, identity cards, smart cards. It's clear that the "terrorist threat" is being used to erode everyone's civil liberties.

LF: To these examples, I would add the detentions on national security grounds of suspected terrorists. We saw that most clearly during the Gulf War but national security arrests have been repeated in many other instances where the definition of what constitues a threat to national security is being defined in ever-widening terms.

The latest example of this is in France where 26 Arabs were interned (accused of supporting the Algerian FIS), 20 of whom were subsequently deported without the case being heard against them.

We are also seeing, at a national level, states indulging in high-profile show trials of suspected terrorists, very similar to the Irish experience in British courts. A case that we illustrated in the book was that of the "Mucadele" in Switzerland - the trial of several Kurds accused of extortion deteriorated



into farce when the police could not provide any evidence against them. These kinds of show trials will, I believe, become more prevalent in the coming years which is why it's important to place what's happening in a context, otherwise we're not going to be able to challenge the status quo.

Different countries are taking emergency powers (without, of course, passing emergency legislation, another example of the erosion of democracy) to deal with the threat posed by so-called terrorism. You cannot divorce Europe's increasing focus on Third World terrorism from the new world order, and from Europe's search for a role in a new imperialism.

Increasingly, Europe is reaching economic and military agreement with authoritarian regimes which is one reason why you have the enforced repatriations of groups of asylum-seekers en masse which Frances has already described. What Europe is saying is, "yes, we've got a lot of your exiles in Europe and yes, we'll ensure that they are stopped from doing anything to support the struggles in their countries of origin."

The most clear example of this is that of the Kurds in Germany who are, at the moment, under threat of mass repatriation to Turkey. The Turkish prime minister has promised to wipe out the Kurdish struggle within a year and, if she is to be successful, it is vital that financial support for the Kurds from their exiles in Europe is stopped. And this is where Europe comes in.

Inside Racist Europe is available from the Institute of Race Relations, 2-6 Leeke Street, Kings Cross Road, London. WC1X 9HS. Price £4 plus 75p p&p.

The price of capitulation

Daniel Evans
Willesden Rail
RMT branch secretary

WHILE THE RMT leadership try desperately to convince the media that the union achieved a great victory in their 16-week dispute with Railtrack, signal workers are being confronted with the grim reality of the "negotiated" settlement on the ground.

While basic pay has risen substantially this is due mainly to the consolidation of allowances and will anyway be clawed back fairly rapidly by the reduction of overtime rates.

Compared to the original proposals put forward by Railtrack for signalling grades restructuring back in June the only concession, apart from a few trifling adjustments, gained by the RMT in their days of secret and intense negotiations at ACAS was that Sunday should remain outside the basic week. However, even this was achieved at the expense of a capitulation. Sundays are now paid at time and a half instead of time and three quarters.

Everything else in the restructuring package remains. In comes a new system of job evaluation which will see a substantial number of jobs down-graded; role flexibility; flexible rostering; annual assessments; pilot schemes for annualised hours; a new toothless national bargaining structure and the end to promotion on the basis of seniority. Local reps have already been called in by management to be informed of where they intend to reduce staffing levels by, for instance, getting rid of meal reliefs in the larger power boxes.

Had the RMT entered discussions on restructuring prior to the strike we would have achieved the same outcome - the near total destruction of our existing conditions of service.

This miserable betrayal of signal workers was carried through at the RMT's signalling grades conference at the end of September. Our original ballot called for an 11 per cent pay rise with no strings to restore our pay differentials with other grades as they had fallen way behind over several years. It was the intention of the RMT leadership, since admitted in the press, to overturn that ballot result in the grades conference.

Assistant General Secetary Vernon Hince, with the agreement of "several members of the Executive Committee" sought to achieve a change of mind by signal workers. However, this was done not through persuasion but through the most disgusting trickery.

First of all a stalking-horse emergency motion, the only emergency motion that the conference executive would accept, calling for an end to the strike and for binding arbitration, was dangled before the conference. A succession of scabs and right-wing lackeys spoke in favour of this option. The militants spoke against. The motion was then dropped and a supposedly hastily penned compromise motion was put forward by the executive. This motion called for the action to be stepped up but also contained a fatal clause which instructed the RMT leadership to explore the possibility of talks on restructuring. In the desire to maintain unity and also because it now seemed clear that the leadership was taking the strike nowhere the motion was passed unanimously.

The RMT and Railtrack began talks immediately and signal workers were finally given two days to read and vote by phone on the final package (a 16-page document). The excuse given for this railroading was that everything had to be in place before the new pension scheme came into effect on October 1st. However, we suspect that the more important deadline for the RMT leadership was the forthcoming Labour Party Conference. Given the united front presented by the RMT and Railtrack in selling the package to the signal workers, it was quite remarkable that 406 militants still voted against it.

Militant signal workers went to the grades conference with the honest intention of discussing how the strike could be taken forward and a possible victory attained. The RMT leadership went there with the exact opposite intention. Fully aware that the only way forward for the dispute was to step up the action and broaden it to other grades on the railway by confronting the Government's anti-union laws the leadership were determined to end the dispute even if it was on Railtrack's terms rather than risk their assets.

As with every other attack on every other grade worker on the railway in the run-up to privatisation their motto has been "protest and survive". Unfortunately their ability to do either is undermined by each successive betrayal.

After the strike was over, the Tory Transport Minister, Brian Mawhinney, was interviewed on television and asked if he thought that privatisation had been put back by the strike and the subsequent deal. On the contrary, he replied, it has been brought forward.

McLatest

● The McDonalds Workers Support Group has been set up by people who work for the fast-food giant to support the two unwaged campaigners being sued by the McDonalds bosses in the notorious McLibel case.

Dave Morris and Helen Steel were allegedly involved in the distribution of a London Greenpeace leaflet, *What's Wrong With McDonalds*, and the multinational sued for libel on June 28th this year.

The pair have been denied their right to a jury and have no access to legal aid - they are conducting their own defence which will eventually include a total of 170 witnesses giving evidence of the effects of the firm's advertising and the effects of its operating practices on food products, the environment, millions of farmed animals, the Third World and McDonalds' own staff.

Dave Morris and Helen Steel are also helping to organise a national network to provide solidarity for any McDonalds' workers in dispute with their bosses and the Transport and General Workers Union have circulated details to their south-eastern branches.

trade union notebook

The workers at Yorkshire-Tyne Tees Television have been warned by their bosses that if they fail to accept new pay and conditions they will face the sack.

Letters have been sent to workers which state: "If, regrettably, you refuse to accept the new conditions, there is no point in reporting for work on your next scheduled duty day as this is not a situation which the company is prepared to accept and unfortunately, can only result in your dismissal."

Clearly, the move by the management could amount to a lock-out of the workforce. Colin Bourne, regional organiser for the National Union of Journalists, quickly condemned the letters as "trying to intimidate staff and ignoring all their contractual obligations".

He added: "They are trying to stoke up people's fears while acting unlawfully because they know they do not have a legal leg to stand on."

Negotiations on pay and conditions with the three unions involved - the NUJ, media union BECTU and the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union - have been going on for some time but the employers unilaterally decided to push new personal contracts down the throats of the workers.

THE STRIKE at JW Arrowsmith - at 18 months the longest in Bristol's history - has been called off by the print union the GPMU.

The workforce of 120 was dismissed last year when it voted for industrial action in pursuit of a national pay claim. The company also used the opportunity to derecognise the union.

The GPMU chapel has maintained an official picket ever since and although the head of the firm, the infamously medieval Victoria Arrowsmith-Brown, offered individual contracts and a pay freeze to anyone wishing to return, only three strikers took up the offer.

At one point, Arrowsmith-Brown, who likes to be known as "Miss Victoria" to her workforce, managed to obtain a court injunction which actually prevented pickets from shouting at scabs going into work.

TUC General Secretary John Monks, as ever missing the point entirely commented that the dispute "should serve to show other employers that such shortsighted, unjust and anti-union management is no way to build a successful business". Arrowsmith's has reduced its size over the past year and is seeking to sell its Bristol site and move to smaller premises.

Two South Yorkshire pits which were mothballed in recent months are to be filled in and sealed permanently because they failed to attract bids in the government's sell-off of British Coal.

Goldthorpe Colliery near Doncaster and Kiveton near Sheffield once employed around 800 between them.

THE National Association of Head Teachers has warned that a third of secondary schools will have to lay off teachers to balance their books.

Primary schools will also face severe difficulties, claims the survey - released ahead of next month's Government announcement of how much money schools will have to spend.

The NAHT claims that schools are currently raising about £170 million a year of their own cash, often to pay for basic things like text books.

The union's General Secretary David Hart said that the survey showed that class sizes were already getting bigger and would continue growing alarmingly with teacher redundancies.

"It is idle for politicans to deny that schools are facing a funding crisis," he said.

"The Government simply cannot avoid the need to back its reforms and its drive for higher standards with better financial support."

The Health and Safety Executive has announced that it will axe 100 specialists - including scientists, inspectors and doctors.

The Executive has already lost 100 posts and the latest round of cuts are blamed on the HSE budget being frozen at 1993 levels.

More than 2,000 people are killed each year in workplace accidents.

The Fire Brigades Union has scored an outstanding victory on Merseyside as management has withdrawn its attempt to impose new contracts.

June saw the Merseyside Chief Fire Officer unilaterally introduce new contracts without any negotiation or consultation. This was followed by a demonstration in Liverpool itself by 10,000 firefighters and an overwhelming vote for strike action.

Two hundred managers, engineers and technicians employed at six sites by the United Kingdon Energy Authority have rejected privatisation.

They voted 92 per cent against the sell-off of the facilities services division in a 73 per cent turn-out.

Tony Wickett, branch secretary for the specialists' union IPMS, said that staff were angry that their terms and conditions could be altered and that they could face the sack after the sell-off.

"They are in the mood to take industrial action," he said.

The supposed highlight of the TUC Public Services Week of Activity was a rally at Central Hall Westminster. As usual, the occasion seemed to be aimed more at the media than trade union members, which may account for the less than overwhelming attendance.

The main theme was the destruction of public services by privatisation, mass redundancies and lack of accountability. Speakers outlined what they were against but had less to say about what they wanted, or how to achieve it.

Michael Meacher called on the electorate to stop further privatisation but didn't say what the Labour Party would do about it. He criticised massive job cuts lined up in Government Departments, excessive spending on consultancies, overspending on Trident and bosses of privatised utilities lining their own pockets.

Alan Jinkinson of Unison condemned the undermining of local government and the centralising of powers. He called for an end to capping and compulsory competitive tendering, more accountability and greater user involvement in the delivery of public services. He acknowledged that very little of this was achievable under present Government dogma.

Simon Hughes of the Liberal Democrats said that the Government had become the enemy of democracy. Public servants were the defence against this enemy and there was a need for campaigning and action!

Finally, John Monks quoted Ted Heath's opposition to the sale of the Post Office and work done by the Inland Revenue. A survey just published said that the majority of the public was opposed to more privatisation. The tide was running in our favour.

By this time, the *Briefing* reporter was so underwhelmed by the event that his attention wandered and he couldn't recall whether John Monks (or Ted Heath) had any plans for turning the tide into a flood. No-one else remembered either.

A new rule book has been agreed by the executives of two major civil service unions - the Inland Revenue Staff Federation and the National Union of Civil and Public Servants - as a merger came a step closer.

The new organisation would be Britain's biggest civil service union, with 150,000 members and an annual income of £15 million.

The two memberships will ballot on the merger next year.

A new union would be likely to emerge in October next year.

Another country

The general election shows a very different Germany emerging, one where the left could have a decisive role, argues Peter Thompson.

SOME TIME ago, Michael Hindley MEP accused me of offering a message of hope over reality when I wrote of German politics that the left needed to find a way to unite in order to move forward. The problem, he maintained, was that the SPD and the Greens would not touch the PDS with a bargepole and that the PDS (former Communist Party) didn't want to co-operate with anyone anyway. Apart from the fact that I thought that the whole point of being a socialist was to bring about the triumph of hope over capitalist reality, the outcome of the German elections over the past year has shown how the hope I expressed is already becoming reality.

In Saxony-Anhalt there is now a coalition government between the SPD and the Greens which is only maintained in power by the support of the PDS and it is possible that there may be two further states which will have straight SPD/PDS coalitions. The general election results also show that the PDS is not going to go away and I am sure that now the election campaign is over, there will be a much more sober assessment of the possibilities for alliances of the left.

The first thing to be said about this election is that although the coalition under Helmut Kohl has survived, there has been a significant shift to the left with the SPD, Greens and PDS together increasing their share of the vote by 6.7 per cent and the CDU/CSU and FDP together losing 6.4 per cent.

The SPD alone increased its share of the vote by 3 per cent, actually a very good result for a first-time Chancellorship candidate like Scharping, and the PDS's 30 seats will continue to send shock waves through the political establishment. The CDU/CSU's result, on the other hand, was their worst since 1949.

In a sense, although nothing has changed, everything has changed with this election. The government has a very vulnerable majority with many commentators predicting its fall before long, the FDP is in a very precarious position, the Greens are back as serious contenders, the PDS has made the breakthrough at an all-German election, the SPD seems to have found new wind and now has a blocking majority in the upper house and, perhaps most important of all, the Government does not seem to have any idea how it is going to tackle the enormous economic and social problems which are looming.

The consequence of this is that the FDP is in a much weaker position within the coalition than before. Something which is also often overlooked is that between 1990 and 1994 the CDU could have formed a coalition with the FDP and still have had a majority without the CSU (the CDU's right-wing Bavarian sister-party). This is no longer the case.

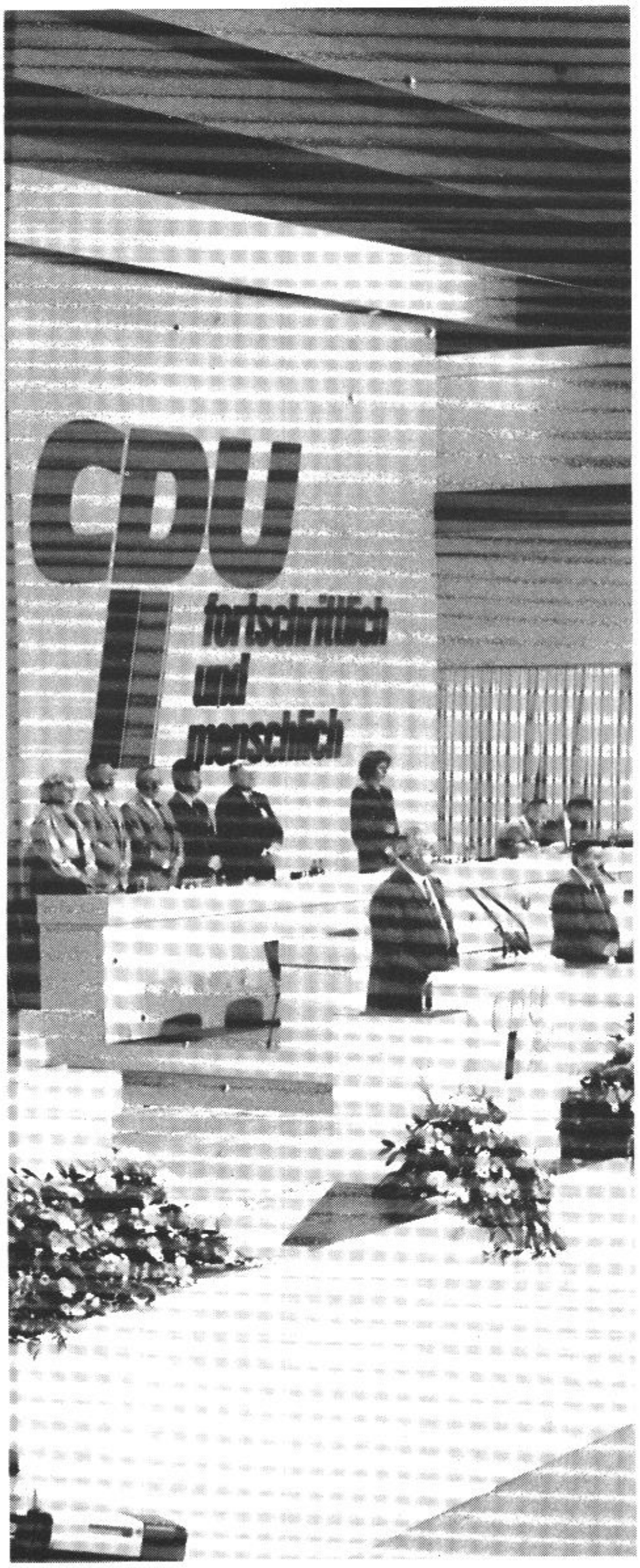
All three parties are now needed to form a coalition and even then they have a majority of only 10 seats. The CSU is now in a much stronger position and will attempt to make its more conservative voice heard much more clearly. Already on election night, Theo Waigel, the CSU finance minister, was emphasizing this point.

As a result of this election, the FDP is likely to undergo considerable internal upheaval. Rivals for the leadership of the FDP have already made it clear that "personal consequences" are to be expected within the party. It would not be surprising if the FDP were to leave the coalition and try to put together an alternative majority with the SPD and the Greens, the so-called "traffic light" coalition.

On election night both Ralf Dahrendorf (a prominent supporter of the FDP) and Claus Leggewie predicted that as a result of the very slender majority, the coalition would not last longer than a few months or at most a year and that there would soon be either a grand coalition between CDU/CSU and the SPD or new elections.

As Dahrendorf pointed out, the FDP has to gain a new profile as an effective party and it can only do that against Kohl and the CDU. Otherwise it will continue to be unclear what role it actually plays in German politics.

Initially, there was also considerable uncertainty as to whether the Greens and their east German allies in Alliance '90 would be present in Parliament although as the campaign progressed



Kohl addressing CDU conference

their position seemed to strengthen. However, there was a different result in the west where the Greens grew stronger while in east Germany it was clear that many ex-Alliance '90 supporters swung to the PDS.

The most widespread feeling was that the campaign was the most boring and insubstantial and yet the most open and important one since 1949. On the other hand the Americanization of the election campaign and the reduction of politics to personalities was not even done very well by the major parties.

The CDU/CSU increasingly relied on the profiling of Kohl above policy considerations with giant posters of the Chancellor in front of German flags and surrounded by crowds of smiling faces. The SPD switched from banking on Scharping as the representative of a new, post-ideological generation to a leadership troika involving Scharping, Schroder and Lafontaine, all of whom seemed to take a slightly different line on certain issues. Paradoxically, the party which handled the very westernised and personalised election campaign better than anyone was the PDS and in particular Gregor Gysi. The party's TV adverts were lively and exciting compared to the dull worthiness ones of the others and the posters presented a party which is very attractive to young, first-time voters and women.

During the campaign, Gregor Gysi also started to lay the groundwork for a new political strategy. On October 12th he hinted at this when he said that "the real contradiction in society is not between east and west but between the haves and the have nots". The PDS will probably start to profile itself as the "real" Social Democratic Party, a position left open by the SPD's shift to the right.

Even if the CDU/CSU/FDP coalition does survive it is going to have to face some very serious problems over the coming years. The national debt which has been accrued as a result of the process of financing recovery in the east is now running at over DM2 trillion.

This puts the Federal Republic well outside of the convergence criteria set out in the Maastricht treaty and will at some stage soon have to be dealt with. The government is already saying that cuts will be made in all spending programmes and that wages must be squeezed.

However, workers and trade unions have operated a very moderate wage claim programme over the past two years and have been prepared to accept cuts in real wages in the name of national recovery. The major unions have now said that it is time for workers to reap the benefits of those sacrifices and have put in wage claims of between 6 per cent and 7 per cent in order to compensate for past increases in productivity and wage restraint.

In addition, the fast growth rates in Germany have led to a levelling out and even slight increase in inflation rates. This will soon require an increase in interest rates and, taken together with measures taken against the inflationary tendencies which are still present in the US and British economies, could lead to a short recession in the next two years.

There are other areas too where the coalition will face difficulties, not least over the question of Europe. The increased strength of the CSU within the coalition has also strengthened the embryonic Euro-sceptic tendency.

At a meeting on "The Left and the National Question" before the election, Tilman Fichter, a prominent SPD member, spelt out quite clearly where all these problems were likely to lead. He argued that there would be a massive transfer of resources in all sorts of directions over the coming years. There would be a need to address further financial transfers from east to west and the issue of wealth distribution between the classes.

The ageing of the population coinciding with mass unemployment raised the question of financing the social state and the extension of the EU to the east would mean that even more resources would have to be redistributed. His conclusion for all of this was that it could only be achieved if the culture of a national community of interest, which would help people to accept sacrifices for the good of the country, could be created.

His contention was that all of these problems could lead to an explosion of nationalist sentiment and that therefore the left needed to develop a form of patriotism which went beyond an adherence to a constitution but which addressed a nationalist agenda. If the left were not to do this then the right would surely take up the challenge.

What the election results show, however, is that people are unhappy enough with having to bear the sacrifices already made. The prospect of further pain and the growth of German nationalism cannot be ignored. This election has shown that the new Germany is not simply a quantitatively larger Federal Republic but has become a qualitatively different nation. FDP leader Klaus Kinkel claimed throughout the election that if the PDS were to gain influence over the government of Germany, then Germany would become "a different country". The problem is that very few of the parties have noticed that it has already become one. ❑

Left turn

Goram Karrman reports from Sweden:

September's general election in Sweden was stunning proof of the widespread disaffection with the right-wing, four-party coalition that governed Sweden since 1991. The Social Democrats increased their share of the vote from 38 per cent in 1991 to more than 45 per cent, and with the Left Party (former Communists) and the Greens it secured a majority of almost 5.7 per cent.

The right-wing populists of New Democracy, with their peculiar mix of traditional right-wing policies, modern myths and overt racism were decisively removed from parliament with just 1 per cent.

The electorate also clearly rejected the right-wing coalition's free-market line, its draconian cuts in the welfare system and skyrocketing unemployment.

During the election campaign the Social Democrats' leadership accepted all the cuts made by the Government and proposed measures for the further demolition of the welfare state. Thankfully, the protest votes against these right-wing policies went by and large to the left. The Left Party scored more than 6 per cent - its best result since 1948 and the Greens made a strong comeback with around 5.5 per cent.

The result of the elections showed the deep dissatisfaction with the political course that was followed by the now ousted government. But what will we get from the Social Democrats? Will they take the same road again that led to the right-wing electoral triumph in 1991? Or could the Left Party and the Greens become a credible force to the left of the Social Democrats, which could begin to mobilize the mass resistance needed to stop the destruction of the welfare state and trade union rights?

Divide and rule

As India 'liberalises' its economy, opening up the vast Indian market to the multi-nationals, it is beset by caste and communal conflicts and a severe crisis in public services, highlighted by the recent plague outbreak. Arun Daur, research officer with Hind Mazdoor Sabra, a major independent trade union federation, reviews the problems facing Indian workers.

THESE LAST few years have been particularly hard on the wage and salary earners, as well as India's unemployed millions - for whom the prospects of jobs are quite grim. The Indian economy is now in its fourth year of a structural adjustment programme. While the Government is sounding optimistic about the economy's future, the fact is that the economy is far from sound - at least on the unemployment, industrial relations and the inflation fronts.

Deregulation of the economy and import liberalisation have not given the necessary impetus to productive employment, while it has brought many industrial units to the brink of closure. The privatisation drive is compounding the problems facing public sector workers. The new GATT deal could add to the unemployment and impoverishment facing the vast majority of people.

While the collective strength of the trade unions has forced the Government to acknowledge the need for a social safety net for those directly affected by the structural changes, our ability to ensure that adequate resources go towards social and economic security is limited. Those in the unorganised sectors will pay an even higher price.

The present political scenario indicates that the Government faces no real opposition to its economic policies in Parliament. The opposition parties are busy fighting within their own camps and are splitting every second day. The Janata Dal has split into so many groups that it has become no more than a party of individuals - which has disillusioned most of its supporters. The Left Front, especially the CPI(M), Communist Party of India (Marxist), makes protesting noises, but when it comes to West Bengal, where it runs the state legislature, it follows the same policies, favouring privatisation, relaxing implementation of labour laws, allowing employers to get away with imposing illegal lockouts, selling off public sector units, etc.

The growing economic and political crisis seems to suit the right-wing BJP quite well. In any case, the BJP, Bharatiya Janata Party, has no significant difference with the Congress over economic policies. It is quite content with fueling the people's anger over economic hardships, so that it may benefit later in elections. The BJP hopes that what the "temple issue" could not deliver, hardship imposed by the Government's economic policy might - that is, give it a chance to run the country.

The way the Government is running this country, disregarding all public opinion, it seems that BJP might not be wrong. The past year has seen plenty of scandals, such as the sugar import scandal, the Action Taken Report of the Government on the JPC findings, the dubious contracts in oil exploration, telecommunications, in purchases of railway engines and rolling stock, charges of corruption and links with organised crime against certain Congress leaders at the highest level, etc, etc. Despite the opposition parties making a great fuss over the corruption issues, nothing much really seems to be changing. It is indeed a sign of the times that charges of corruption do not seem to disturb anyone in power or in politics.

As far as ordinary people are concerned, the various political parties are trying their best to divert their attention from the real issues facing us. Nobody is talking of providing the right to work for all Indian citizens, but all political parties are busy dividing people along caste and communal lines. Populist "reservations" quotas are being announced by the union and state governments for lower castes, while at the same time they are implementing policies that will eliminate most of the public sector jobs (through privatisation, the sub-contracting of public services and voluntary redundancy schemes).

The fight against poverty, for equal rights and for the right to work is being severely weakened by these divisive political programmes. Unleashing passions for temple construction will hardly create conditions for jobs, prosperity or even ensure two square meals a day for the vast majority of daily wager-earners. While our politicians have been busy stirring passions over reservations and temples, the World Bank and IMF, with their skilled negotiators from developed western countries, have succeeded in redrawing the rules of international trade as well as the role of governments in domestic economics - through GATT - to which people are now expressing opposition.

On the whole, on the political front, there appears to be very little choice before the workers, except to depend on their own collective strength and unity. The weakness in the workers' movement is that it is cleverly divided up by the political, religious and communal divisions which are encouraged by these political parties and their front organisations. This is one of the biggest challenges before the independent and democratic trade union movement - to forge a collective identity of workers, irrespective of religion, caste, and other divisions such as those between contract, casual labour and regular, organised sector workers. Only this will ensure that the political parties and the political process pays due attention to the needs of the workers. ❑

The right fight

Carmel Budiardjo, of the Indonesian Human Rights Campaign, TAPOL, looks at workers demands for the right to organise.

THE INTERNATIONAL Confederation of Free Trade Unions recently published a report strongly condemning the Indonesian regime for systematically crushing independent trade union activity in Indonesia.

Focusing on the trials of several dozen trade union activists and workers now under way in Medan, North Sumatra, the ICFTU declared: "It has been Government policy to stop workers from organising in free trade unions." It described the Medan trials as "a flagrant breach of internationally recognised standards on freedom of association and the right to organise".

For the first 20 years or so after the military came to power in 1965, Indonesian workers rarely stirred. All independent trade unions were disbanded and the corporatist state permitted only a single union, the SPSI, to exist. This union is under strict Government control and is prevented from taking action that would "disrupt harmonious relations" between exploited workers and their exploiters.

But the rapid growth of manufacturing industries to produce goods for the world market, mostly well-known brands of shoes, garments, textiles, electronic goods, sportswear and foodstuffs, has created the basis for a new type of militant trade unionism. Wages are lower than in any of the Pacific Rim countries and workers are kept in check by the army in collusion with the bosses. Women have come forward as organisers. In many factories, more than 60 per cent of the workforce are women. Local army officers are paid handsomely by employers to intimidate activists in the factories when a dispute is brewing.

Since 1990, there has been a tidal wave of strike actions. Most focus on demands for payment of the minimum wage which, at around 90 pence a day, is far from adequate to cover basic physical requirements for a single person, let alone a worker with a family.

Many workers who lead strike actions have lost their jobs, in some cases after the workers' demands were conceded.

In May 1993, a young woman worker, Marsinah, was found dead a few days after she had led a strike for higher wages at a watch-making factory in East Java. She had been raped and her body bore the signs of extensive torture.

Marsinah, now widely acclaimed as a workers' hero, had challenged the local military command for pressing for the dismissal of her 13 male colleagues who also took an active part in the strike. There has been a cover-up about the circumstances of her murder which, according to legal aid activists, was clearly the responsibility of the local military command.

The cause of independent trade unionism was greatly promoted by the founding in April 1992 of the Indonesian Prosperity Trade Union, the SBSI. The union has been refused recognition by the Government on the grounds that it encroaches on the "right" of the SPSI to represent the workers.

As the first successful independent union since 1965, the SBSI has won impressive support from workers in many parts of the country despite the fact that a large number of activists have lost their jobs and suffered harassment at the hands of the military.

Although most recent strikes have not been under the union's leadership, there is clear evidence that its very existence is proving an inspiration to workers. Now that a number of its leaders are on trial in Medan, the reputation of the union has soared.

The trials are the consequence of a huge rally in city of Medan, on 14th April in support of four demands: a doubling of the minimum wage, the right to set up their own union, severance pay for hundreds of workers dismissed by a local factory and an investigation into the death of a worker whose body was found floating in a river after a strike rally had been broken up by the police.

Within days, all five leaders of the SBSI Medan branch were arrested, along with three other labour activists involved in organising the rally and dozens of workers accused of rioting. In August, the chair of the SBSI, Muchtar Pakpahan, was arrested in Jakarta and taken to Medan where he is now on trial. Like the branch leaders, he is accused of 'inciting workers' and could face up to six years in jail.

The regime clearly hopes to intimidate and decapitate the union which has thrived despite Government pronouncements that it is "illegal".

The ICFTU report provides powerful support for a union under heavy attack in its own country. Trade unionists in Britain should urge the TUC to campaign along with unions in other countries to support the SBSI and its courageous leaders and activists.

The British Government is one of the Suharto regime's staunchest supporters. Economic assistance to Jakarta has leapt ahead in the past few years and Britain is well on the way to becoming the prime supplier of military hardware to the Suharto regime. Workers are among the many victims of this repressive regime. Their demand for the right to organise can only succeed with effective support and solidarity from around the world.

For more information, contact: TAPOL, Indonesia Human Rights Campaign, 111 Northwood Road, Surrey CR7 8HW Phone: 081 771 2904 Fax: 081 653 0322

Turkey's dirty war

Heather Clarke visited the Kurdish region of Turkey twice this year as a member of delegations of writers and human rights activists

WE WENT to the region to investigate reports of internment camps. The Turkish authorities were rumoured to be keeping hundreds of Kurds in conditions of squalor and hunger close to the Iraqi border.

On our first day we were flagged down by a small group of Kurds who asked us to visit their village. As we arrived at Gunduz, formerly Bulbul, the villagers were loading their possessions on to trucks. The Imam explained that the gendarmes came five days earlier, demanding that all adult men joined the village guards. The houses of the first three men who refused were destroyed.

The commander gave the others a week to accept or the rest of the village would be razed. The villagers had no doubt that the commander would keep his word, with three neighbouring villages having been burned this year. Six men agreed to become village guards while the rest of the villagers were preparing to leave. Many will end up living in slums on the outskirts of Diyarbakir, the regional capital.

The village guard system is a state scheme which sets Kurd against Kurd. After we left Gunduz reports reached us that violence had erupted against the six "volunteers". The guards are well paid, by local standards, and armed supposedly to protect the village from attack by the PKK. In fact, the PKK view them as legitimate targets. Villages with guards have been attacked and the guards shot dead.

There are reports that village guards use their position to terrorise, loot and rape. A woman I spoke to, who was living in a partially deserted village in the Tunceli area, said she was more scared of the village guards than she was of the gendarmes.

Recent protests from the Tunceli region have put the issue of the destruction of Kurdish villages high on the Turkish political agenda. In early October a delegation of muhtars, elected village representatives, risked their lives by making a highly publicised protest in Ankara.

The Turkish government has always denied that Kurdish settlements are being destroyed or has blamed it on the PKK. Embarassed by the muhtars ridiculing the idea that the PKK was responsible, the deputy Prime Minister, Murat Karayalcin, promised to investigate the muhtars' complaints. However, when he visited the area the military refused to allow him out of the town centre "for his own safety".

This once again raises the question of who is ruling Turkey - the government or the generals. Since Tunsu Ciller came to power in 1993 she has collaborated with the military to mount a sustained attack against the Kurdish people. Lawyers, journalists, MPs, writers, trade unionists and human rights activists are in gaols across Turkey. In the last four years more than a thousand settlements have been attacked and more than a million people displaced.

For further information contact Kurdistan Information Centre, 10 Glasshouse Yard, London EC1. Telephone 071 250 1315.

The Turkish Prime Minister, Tunsu Ciller, as seen by the Kurdish magazine ARMANC, published in exile in Sweden



In our second report on the war between the Kurdish nation and the Turkish state, Mahmud Karatepe looks at the momentous history of the conflict.

THE CIVIL WAR now raging in south-east Turkey ("North Kurdistan") is between the forces of the PKK (the Kurdistan Workers Party) through its armed wing, the ERNK, and the police, army and paramilitaries of the Turkish state.

The 15 million Kurds of eastern Anatolia have been trapped in the state created by Kemal Ataturk in the 1920s, despite the promise made after the First World War that there should be an independent Kurdish state covering the present Kurdish populations in Turkey and Iraq.

For many years, the Kurds in Turkey suffered almost total repression, cut off from any world interest and subjected to what amounted to cultural genocide.

There were at least ten uprisings or rebellions between 1923 and 1960, all brutally crushed by the Turkish army, and the Kurds settled down into a resentful acceptance of their conditions. As Turkey modernised in the sixties and seventies, many young Kurds became involved in left-wing politics and joined various student and trade union organisations.

A military coup in 1980 drove many of the left into exile, including Abdullah Ocalan's group which fled to Syria and went on to become the PKK. From 1983 the PKK infiltrated many of its armed militants into Turkey and clashes with the police and army became more frequent.

Side by side with the armed struggle, various politicians in the Kurdish areas tried to use what little constitutional mechanisms were available - it is illegal in Turkey to form any party that promotes "separatism" or autonomy for any group.

In 1991 the largely Kurdish Peoples Labour Party stood in the Kurdish provinces as part of the wider socialist ticket and was overwhelmingly successful in winning 22 seats.

Since then, this group of MPs has been hounded and attacked by the authorities at every opportunity. Recently, six MPs were arrested and seven others fled to western Europe.

Turkey is vulnerable to international pressure and protests should be sent to the Turkish embassy here and Prime Minister, Tunsu Ciller, in Ankara. They should also be raised with British MPs and MEPs, as Turkey is also sensitive to pressure from the European Parliament.

The hidden price

James Ferguson, a researcher with the Latin American Bureau, kicks off a discussion on Haiti with a controversial viewpoint. *Briefing* would welcome contributions to the debate.

EVENTS IN Haiti are not proving easy for anybody with a well-justified suspicion of US policy in the Caribbean. Now that it looks as if President Aristide can resume power, it is hard to deny that Washington's strategy of gradually marginalising the Haitian military regime has worked. The three main leaders of the junta have gone, few casualties have been incurred and the vast majority of Haitians are genuinely relieved that the US acted to oust the military.

Of course, it should have been done much earlier. Thousands of Haitians died at the hands of paramilitary attaches while first Bush and then Clinton mistakenly tried to do deals with the coup-leaders. Nor do Clinton's motives bear close examination; quick foreign policy success in time for the mid-term Congressional elections, a way of stemming the much feared "invasion" of boat people and a politically expedient gesture of tough leadership.

But the results, if not the motives, are so far positive. After three years of repression and hardship, the US military presence has given people in Haiti the space and confidence to come back on to the streets, to reorganise and to rid themselves of the habit of fear. The raucous reception given to General Cedras's resignation speech was clear proof that the military, and to a lesser extent their paramilitary supporters, are on the run.

What would have been the alternative to the US action? Despite a tradition of grassroots organising and resistance, the Haitian people stood no chance of overthrowing the de facto regime from within. Activists were being murdered daily, peasant and slum-dweller organisations were prime targets for the attacks. Sanctions were literally starving the poor, but the posh restaurants of wealthy Petionville were still open for business. The suffering could have gone on indefinitely.

There has been much talk of a new era in US foreign policy, of the use of "soft power" and multilateral coalitions. Clearly, this was no classic piece of gunboat diplomacy (juntas aren't normally ousted to make way for reformers). But just in case we start believing that the US actually supports what Aristide stands for, we should look at the conditions attached to their intervention and ensuing aid package.

The World Bank-approved Strategy of Social and Economic Reconstruction, on which US$800 million hangs, calls for "an open foreign investment policy", a "comprehensive reform programme" and "a comprehensive divestiture" of state enterprises. In other words, a standard Structural Adjustment Programme.

If the irony of US troops reinstating a radical president wasn't rich enough, the prospect of Aristide presiding over a classic SAP certainly is. While the intervention may have been the best of available evils, perhaps the price is yet to be paid by those Haitians who are still welcoming it.

The Latin American Bureau has just published *The Haiti Files: Decoding the Crisis*. Telephone 071 278 2829 for details.

A taste of justice

Val Veness reports on what could be a remarkable victory for justice against the bigotry of the US police and courts:

The growing campaign in the USA, Mexico and internationally to save Manuel Salazar, a young Mexican-American, from the death sentence in Illinois has secured two recent and remarkable successes.

The Illinois Supreme Court ruled by six votes to one (a large margin in US verdicts) to order a retrial after serious discrepancies came to light.

In addition, pressure from both inside Mexico and from Europe forced the Mexican authorities to demand the commuting of his death sentence.

Manuel was originally convicted of the murder of a police officer in Joliet, Illinois - despite clear evidence that it was self-defence and that the policeman involved was both violent and under the influence of alcohol at the time. After fleeing to Mexico because he rightly concluded that no young Hispanic would get a fair trial in Joliet, he was abducted and returned to US jurisdiction.

International treaties on extradition make clear that no-one can be extradited to face capital punishment if the state they are being deported from does not itself have the death penalty. Mexico does not have a death penalty and Illinois should not have placed Manuel Salazar on "Death Row".

His case has proved a watershed for justice campaigners in the US. In Britain, we have grown used to exposures of miscarriages and police "fit-ups" as a result of cases like the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, Judy Ward and the East Ham Two. Across the Atlantic, these sort of breakthroughs are only just occurring. The British left has a clear duty to support both Manuel and his band of supporters over there.

● Further information available from "For the Defense", 1413 West 18th Street, Suite 5, Chicago, Illinois 60608, USA. Letters of support to Manuel Salazar (N.54378), Pontiac Correctional Centre, PO Box 99, Pontiac, Illinois 61764, USA.



Valerie Veness and Gerry Hunter (of the "Birmingham 6") with Manuel Salazar in the "Death Row" wing of Illinois State Prison in Pontiac - January 1994.

REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS

Bent and blue

Dave Hammond reviews
Bent Coppers, by James Morton,
published by Warner Books, 1994.
£5.99

"IF YOU want to know the time ask a policeman." The reason? In days gone by it was common knowledge that officers of the law were adept at relieving drunks of their time pieces.

Morton traces the history of criminals and delinquents involved in the police from day one in this sometimes fascinating, sometimes tedious book. He tells stories of coppers "on the take" and those, more seriously, in the pockets of major criminals. Presumably because his values are a little different from ours he tells as well of the honest policemen trying to establish a trade union and being expunged for their efforts.

The first half of the book is a simple chronological recounting of cases of police officers being captured for various crimes and fit ups - so that takes up a large amount of paper by itself. The problem with such a structure is that the evidence is simply overwhelming. There is not enough analysis of what the conflict between police and public is all about, simply that it exists. We already knew that.

It is interesting, however, to read some of these stories: many of those documented are cases of high-ranking detectives involved in fraud, perjury and organised crime, but the author also digs deeper to question the morality of constables accepting the odd free cup of tea from the local cafe.

One former policeman quoted in the book claims that the dishonesty prevalent in any force is something handed down from above - thieving constables are not short of money to pay the electricity bill, they steal because it is an example set by their superiors. Such thieving and dishonesty is part of their culture, which makes it rather difficult for them to play the role of police in a real sense of the word. As one judge is quoted as saying "I have watched jurors refuse to convict ... I do not blame them with their knowledge of how men like you [police officers] behave."

Part two of the book tries to analyse the difference between coppers "bent for themselves" and those "bent for the job", which raises many questions about the manner in which crimes are investigated, solved and recorded.

If, while off your guard, you think that being "bent for the job" is simply a way of securing convictions against known and confirmed criminals you are wrong: included in this category are fit-ups of people the police know full well to be innocent, such as the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, etc.

With their warped view of the world most policemen/women will see the issue of right and wrong in a rather different light to anybody else. As Morton points out, police culture is divided from that of the rest of us, and is mostly in conflict with everybody else, creating a siege mentality and a modus operandi to match.

At times Morton seems to be lucid, with good insight, but at the end of the book claims: "With the right of silence being more vigorously observed, the implementation of PACE and the tightening of the courts of the exclusion of evidence in breach of the Codes of Practice, the police are now fighting with what appears to be a hand tied behind their back."

Are you sure?

Heroine of Sandino

Mike Phipps reviews
Life for Each by Daisy Zamora,
published by Katabasis, 1994.
£5.95

LIFE FOR EACH is the first collection in English of poems by Nicaraguan writer Daisy Zamora. Daisy was a Sandinista combatant during the liberation struggle and ran the clandestine Radio Sandino, which broadcast the call for a general insurrection in June 1979. After the revolution she was Vice-Minister of Culture and is now a professor of literature in Managua.

Some of the poems are deeply personal, some unashamedly propagandist. Dinah Livingstone has done an excellent job on the translation.

We publish a poem written after the FSLN attack on the National Palace, which led to Daisy joining the guerrillas underground.

And I cursed the moon
September 1978

There was a sort of truce: no shots were heard.

We began shouting out our numbers again and we were regrouping on a small rough field.

We believed we were the only survivors and discussed what we were going to do:

the only thing possible was to attempt to rejoin the San Judas squads.

We tried to make our way through some scrub behind us; the road was very steep and difficult.

We came to houses but some dogs sniffed us out from about a kilometre away and every time we tried to move they barked like mad.

We had to keep still all night.

There was a most beautiful moon, and for the first time I cursed the moon.

Expensive leader

Next time you get a begging letter from Walworth Road, remember how much **Tony Blair** spent on his campaign to be elected Labour leader. A staggering £79,000!

The situation is becoming so ludicrous that Labour's National Executive has had to set a limit of £25,000 - nearly double the amount spent by **John Prescott** - for future campaigns.

Money that could otherwise been put to a good cause came from Melvyn Bragg, Ken Follett, David Puttnam and was organised by London Weekend TV's director of corporate affairs Barry Cox.

Plain speaking

Joe Haines, once Harold Wilson's press secretary, has made a comeback to journalism with a regular column in *Today*. For the benefit of new readers he explained what they can expect from him. His column "won't refer to homosexuals as the 'gay community', nor will it de-sex men and women by calling them persons.

"People who are black, white, yellow or brown will be described as such if there is a point in doing so. As a kid, I played cowboys and Indians, not cowboys and 'native Americans'."

If *Briefing* writes about Haines, we won't describe him as racist, sexist or politically incorrect, we'll just call him stupid!

Tory Blair

Our leader's speech at Conference gained him praise from an unexpected source. **Teresa Gorman**, the Thatcherite Tory MP for Billericay, told reporters: "If you had had your eyes shut, you would have thought that chunks of this had been spoken by a Tory secretary of state. We had law and order. We had sack the bad teachers. He's like a Tory plant in the Labour Party."

Not a gay day

Save The Children charity has dropped one of TV's most popular comediennes from its 75th anniversary celebrations.

Sandy Toksvig, a frequent star of *Whose Line Is It Anyway* recently came out as a lesbian mother. This was too much for Save The Children who thought this "might distract from the events of the day."

Spaced-out

After Peter Mandelson attacked **Ken Livingstone** as the enemy within, **Livingstone** retorted: "There must be something really tragic



that happened to him in his childhood but I am prepared to forgive him his bitter little asides and I hope he will get better soon. The alternative view is that he is a Martian sent to the planet to exterminate all forms of life on Earth. But I take a charitable view."

Hot air

Unlike **Teresa Gorman**, Labour peer **Lord Soper** is not a fan of our leader. He says, "I don't think much of Tony Blair's eloquent prospectus. I know from my own life that when I am not sure what I'm talking about, that's when my eloquence increases."

SEVENTH SOCIALIST CONFERENCE & A GATHERING OF THE NETWORKS
at Manchester Town Hall

sponsored by Red Pepper - the Green Socialist monthly magazine

Saturday 5th November 1994

Neither global capitalism nor racist nationalism: red and green alternatives.

11.30am Opening plenary with **Jeremy Corbyn MP, Hilary Wainwright** *Red Pepper*, a **Sinn Fein speaker, Camilla Berens**, Freedom Network.

2pm Choice of mini-plenaries:

Division and Diversity: gender, nationalism, racism, fundamentalism - how does socialism come to terms with identity?

Speakers: **Mary Mellor**, author *Breaking the Boundaries*; **Mehdi Kia**, *Iran Bulletin*, **Sinn Fein speaker**, **Clara Connolly**, Women against Fundamentalism.

New Economics: credit unions, LETS, sustainable regional development, land reform, basic income - do these add up to an alternative to global capitalism?

Speakers: **Tim Lang**, author of *The New Protectionism*, **Ursula Huws**, author of *What Price Flexibility?*, **Michael Linton**, a founder of LETS, **Ken Coates MEP**.

Global and Local: democracy, federation, decentralisation, empowerment, workers control - how should decisions be made?

Speakers: **John Palmer**, Socialist Society and *The Guardian*, **Louise Christian**, civil liberties lawyer, **Bob Colenutt**, community planner, Docklands.

followed by workshops and report back.

8pm till late **Concert for Real Justice** with **Corner Shop**, Asian Indie band, **Claire Mooney**, socialist feminist singer-songwriter, **Ian Saville**, Marxist magician.

Sunday 6th November 1994

A Gathering of the Networks

10am Plenary: Creating Networks of Opposition - with **Maria Black**, Sao Paulo Forum, **Mark Johnston**, Earth First (Lancs), **Allan Green**, Scottish Socialist Movement and *Liberation*, **Dave Boardman**, Socialist Network.

11am Confirmed Self-organised workshops: Freedom Network; Manchester Host (telematics); Campaign against Domestic Violence; Shut Sellafield; *Big Issue*; CND; Red Green Network; Womenwith Peace Camp; Psychology, Politics, Resistance; Arms Conversion Project; Labour Land Campaign; Latin American Info Service; Scientists for Global Responsibility; Citizens Income and Monetary Reform; World Court Project; Socialist Society; Red Green Study Group; Stop the Hawk Deal; Swords into Ploughshares; Irish in Britain Representation Group; Anti-Nazi League; North West Fightback; John Talbut; Troops Out Movement.

2pm - 4.30pm The Way Ahead introduced by **Tony Benn MP** and decision-making session - Can we create a Congress of Networks in England, Scotland and Wales?

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LONDON LABOUR 40p

BRIEFING

No 44 NOVEMBER 1984

IT'S WAR!

WAR HAS been declared on the whole trade union movement. The 1200,000 case on the NUM means that the entire working-class movement must be placed on a war footing from now on.

Our position on the Law is made clear in this issue of BRIEFING in statements on other pages. Basically, we are insisting that no trade union must have any jurisdiction over the status – official or otherwise – of a strike. For these purposes, the highest courts in the land are the TUC and Labour Party conferences, and in this case both have affirmed the official status of the miners' strike. Since the Tory High Court disputes this, it is a battle between our law and theirs. If we were to allow the NUM to be prosecuted, then the Tories' law would rapidly compel itself to be used class discriminately against violence by the state to crush all opposition from the organised working class.

In this situation we could not allow the trade unions leadership to cower idly by while the strongest union in our movement is wounded. The Trade Art Scot on all-out class war. We must respond in kind – including preparing for general strike action should this course be forced upon us as the only way forward. It is the trade unions and Labour Party leaders who have the responsibility to act. And it is our task, too, to ensure that they are not allowed to evade this responsibility. Mass industrial action to defend the miners must be passed up from the grass roots all every means to the top. The base level combinations being co-ordinated by the Miners' Defence Committees are a powerful means of organising support and of mobilising to give adequate political expression to such industrial action as can be pledged or prepared.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Famous last words ...

"I am strongly opposed to attempts to cook our books to cling on to office for a limited period and for little purpose ... The whole point of our administration is that we are a challenge to the central capitalist state. To accomodate at this critical stage would be to accept without challenge our subservience to Tory class rule."

An open letter to Ken Livingstone from John McDonnell, deputy leader of the GLC. Labour Briefing, *November 1984.*

Briefing Quiz

Briefing's politically incorrect quiz
8pm sharp
Saturday 3rd December
Lucas Arms
245 Grays Inn Road, London WC1
Quiz Inquisitor: Leonora Lloyd
£3/£2

Free Satpal Ram

In November 1986 Satpal Ram was the victim of a racial attack. Both Satpal and his attacker were taken to hospital but the latter refused treatment and died two hours later.

Satpal was later convicted of murder by an all white jury, and has spent eight years in prison, enduring beatings, humiliation and segregation. He has continued to fight against his conviction and has won the right for a judicial review which takes place at the High Court on Friday 4th November.

If Satpal wins his judicial review that will put massive pressure on the Home Secretary, Michael Howard to allow the case to be heard at the Court of Appeal.

For more information contact: Free Satpal Campaign, 101 Villa Road, Birmingham. B19 1NH (021) 551 4518 or Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (071) 837 1450

Help wanted

Labour Briefing

seeks editorial worker
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Striking truck drivers who blocked key roads outside Johannesburg as part of their campaign for better conditions, higher pay and shop steward recognition have suffered a military crackdown. At least one driver was shot, and many were arrested by soldiers using teargas, rifle butts and pistols.

The non-violent protest by the Turning Wheels trade union was attacked after a front-page press witch-hunt against the union which had recruited 3,000 truckers in their fight for a better deal.

The union's detractors have dismissed it as a front for the left-wing Workers List Party, but its founder Richard Madime argues that the union's success lies in its refusal to compromise or bow to President Mandela's call for belt-tightening by South Africa's workers.

Since the new Government's election, tens of thousands of workers have been involved in strike action. In the high-profile Pick 'n Pay dispute, police used dogs and rubber bullets to attack strikers.

Yours,
Mike Phipps,
Brent.

During the 1987 general election, East Lewisham Labour Party and its candidate, Russell Profitt, fought a hard-hitting campaign to try to oust sitting MP and Sports Minister, Colin Moynihan.

As a result of scurrilous leaflets put out by Mr Moynihan, we took out a legal injunction followed by a libel action in order to force him to set the record straight. We were successful in winning the injunction to stop the distribution of the leaflets.

However, earlier this year - seven years later - the Tories' legal officers decided to claim their full costs, as we had not pursued the matter of the claimed libel. As a result, we are faced with a legal bill of £12,000, for which our former candidate is personally liable, and therefore faces bankruptcy if the money cannot be raised.

Several of the leaflets put out by Mr Moynihan during the election campaign focussed on the issue of race, because of our selection of a black candidate who was actively involved in the fight for equality. We took a firm stand against racism in the hope of winning the seat for Labour. We would do this again if faced with similar circumstances, as would always be the case when Labour stands on a point of principle.

Every effort is being made to raise the amount owed. If all Labour Party members who can afford to, all branches and all affiliated organisations made a donation - however small - the sum required is achievable.

Please send donations, payable to Russell Profitt Legal Defence Fund, to Lewisham Labour Club, Limes Grove, Lewisham, London SE13.

We are happy to provide a speaker or further information on request.

Yours sincerely,
Russell Profitt, candidate 1987.
Kevin Flack, Agent 1987.
Lesley Lee, Chair 1986-87.

It was sad to see Pete Willsman (Woolwich CLP) defeated in the elections to the Conference Arrangements Committee, after so many years of hard work.

He was always ready to help delegates, explain procedure, and provide information for constituency parties. Above all, he effectively battled against the bureaucrats, maintaining CLPs' input to Conference.

I am sure all socialists in the Labour Party would recognise his exemplary record as a faithful representative of the rank-and-file, and thank him for his service.

Yours fraternally,
Richard Hanford,
Henfield.

Saying that it is "arguable whether any public money should be spent on de-privatising" utilities other than water because "there will be plenty of prior demands on public spending", Michael Furst concludes (*Briefing*, October) not that therefore wealth should be taken off the rich when the other utilities are brought into common ownership but that they should not be "de-privatised".

He assumes the rich have a right to own "their" wealth and that we have to give back in "compensation", from "public money", what we have supposedly taken off them. But if the workers by hand and brain have a right to "the full fruits of their industry" (Clause IV(4)) the rich do not have a right to their wealth. To avoid taking money off small shareholders they can be given compensation from money taken from the rich by a wealth tax.

This is one reason why it is vital to defend Clause IV(4). It is for ending exploitation.

Yours,
David Harris,
Brighton.

I've just hacked-up my passport to cheap-deal half price *New Statesman* by cutting out your ad! However, since I am currently shit-broke, even at half price *NS* is out of reach and as you are offering a possibly scurrilous read for nothing I shall manage to bear my disappointment. Assuming, that is, that you dispatch my copy of *Labour Briefing* at once.

Thanks in anticipation,
Andy Crow,
Cumbria.

Andrew Coates's analysis of Ralph Miliband misses the point. Miliband stuck to a class view of society but he remained unsure what this meant politically. He wavered between attempts to shift Labour to the left and to replace it altogether. In the era of Blairism this wavering is a luxury which socialists can no longer afford.

Yours sincerely,
Keith Flett,
London N17.



Detainees revolt at Campsfield. From Tasting Freedom shown on Channel 4 in September. Made by Migrant Media, 90 De Beauvoir Road, London N1 4EN. (Video may be available)

Communities of resistance

Gilly Mundy, of the community anti-racist organisation, the Newham Monitoring Project, reports on NMP's latest activities.

NMP ARE PRESENTLY involved in a number of community associations, one of which is the Beckton Community Association in east London. The BCA highlights once again the resolve and determination of the black community to combat racism and challenge those statutory agencies unable and/or unwilling to deal with racial harassment.

The community in and around Nightingale Way, north Beckton, has had enough of racist abuse and, with assistance from Newham Monitoring Project, has formed the Beckton Community Association.

One horrific incident was the unprovoked attack on Mr and Mrs S by two men and a woman on their own doorstep. The ferocity of the attack left Mr S unconscious with teeth missing and Mrs S in a state of shock. After the police arrived on the scene and questioned them both proceeded to the perpetrators' home where, for some unknown reason, they arrested only the woman, ignoring the two men who has also taken part in the attack. When the woman was taken to court she was merely fined £75.

The police have failed to show any commitment to fighting racism even though the activities of the perpetrators have been highlighted to them on a number of occasions.

The Council, also, has not only failed in providing adequate support and advice to the victims of racial harassment but has failed in providing positive and firm action in dealing with the perpetrators, such as evicting them. The BCA's demands are simple: firstly, that all perpetrators of racist violence should be evicted from their homes and, secondly, that they should be pursued in the courts.

A strategy we have found most effective is to offer more than just help for those suffering from racial harassment or police harassment - we offer welfare help, help on housing issues, DSS benefits and much more.

This helps build up the links with the community, letting the community feel that it can trust us. Trust is perhaps the greatest requirement when it comes to building links with those who are suffering the evil of racism.

Community associations have significantly reduced racism in many areas. This localised approach means that those who are the victims of racism are allowed to become fighters.

Although it may be a cliche, the black community has to be empowered, given the resources which are often denied to them, so they can have the tools to fight the racists. Throughout our work we will always encourage the community to organise and defend itself against the racists. Unless national political organisations recognise this and attempt to emulate this trend, black people will feel increasingly isolated and vulnerable to racism.

NMP can be contacted on 081 555 8151 (24-hour emergency number).

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