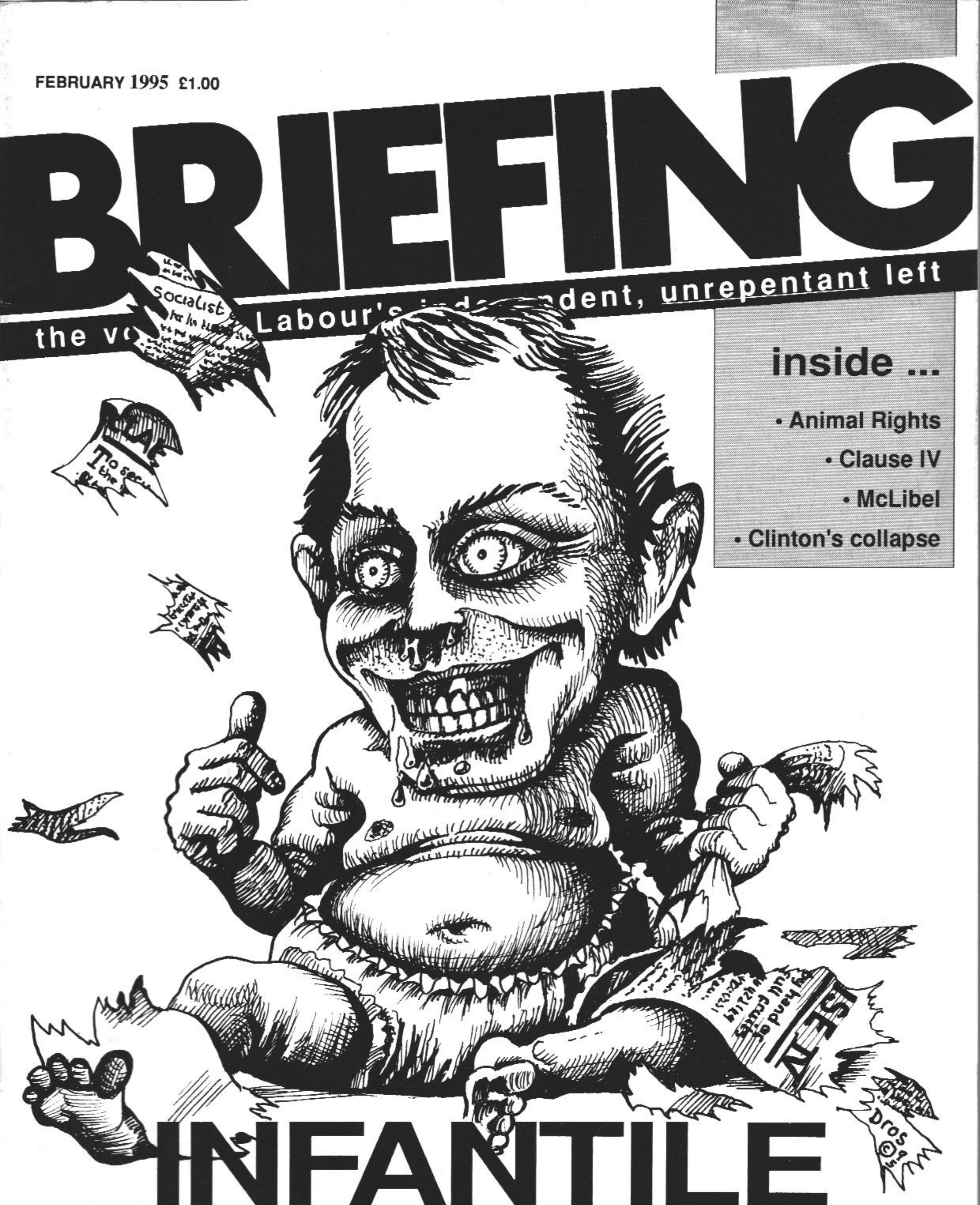
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BRIEFING

the vo[ice of] Labour's i[nd]ependent, unrepentant left



inside ...

- Animal Rights
- Clause IV
- McLibel
- Clinton's collapse

INFANTILE Incompetence

LABOUR - TAKE THE POWER!

Leo the sad

HOW ABOUT THIS for a scumbag? Leo McKinstry, former Islington Labour Councillor, Chair of the Council's Personnel Committee and not so long ago the golden boy of the Labour right, has turned Tory mouthpiece in a fit of pique at losing his seat.

In widely touted articles in *The Spectator* and the *Daily Express*, both entitled 'Forget Mr Blair, Look at the Record', he repeated all the familiar Tory denunciations of Labour local government's alleged bureaucracy, over-staffing and 'political correctness'. He announced he was resigning from the Party and from his job as an assistant to Doug Henderson MP, a Labour front bench spokesperson.

To anyone who knows him McKinstry's ravings read like an agony of self-hatred. He rails against "local professional politicians" claiming that in Labour councils "political obsessives, public sector groupies, ambitious hacks and further education lecturers predominate. I have rarely come across a Labour Councillor who works in the private sector."

For the record McKinstry's first job after leaving Cambridge University was as personal assistant to the then Deputy Leader of Islington Council, Alan Clinton (now Leader of the Council and probably the person McKinstry has betrayed most). After two years he went to work for Harriet Harman at the House of Commons before moving to Henderson's office last year. McKinstry has never had a 'proper job'. He has always had the luxury of pursuing his political ambitions at work - use of Commons phone, post and photocopier can come in handy to a busy Labour careerist.

He claims, "When I served on Islington Council, it was riddled with obscure bodies, such as the Notional Tenants Account Working Party and the Central Heating Charges Review Group". But Leo himself was never happier than when attending the "Leader's Absenteeism Working Party" (which he set up) at its regular 8:30 am meetings. He was at a loss on Friday nights because there were no committees to attend.

In the run-up to last May's elections, McKinstry was widely touted as the Labour right's candidate for the Council's Deputy Leadership and even as a future Leader.

However the electorate intervened and Leo lost his Council seat to the Liberals.

McKinstry then became CLP Secretary explaining that he wanted to "continue to serve the Party". He lasted only two months before resigning the post, pronouncing himself "over-committed" -he had just set up a private consultancy business.

With his dreams of a Labour Parliamentary career in tatters, McKinstry was presumably unable to rebuild the social life he had junked in pursuit of a political career. This sad little man has now ratted on his former friends to the Tory press. In the hope of what? Money? Status? A Tory seat? The Labour right-wing created him, employed him and (for a brief while) idolised him. He has turned out to be Frankenstein's Monster.

top press

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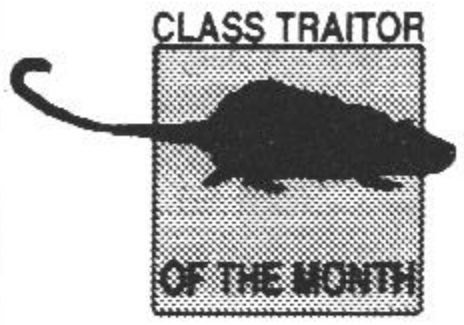
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Blundering Blair

Our Class Traitor of the Month just has to be Tony Blair, whose New Year's blunders have taken the heat off John Major.

First, he sacrificed his son to the 'political correctness' of educational elitism, sending a calculated message to middle class voters that he would not threaten their privileges. He then confirmed this impression by slapping down his own Education spokesperson, David Blunkett, for implying that Labour might even consider levying VAT on private schools. This policy had been ruled out, it appears, at a meeting with the Shadow Chancellor some months previously - pity no one bothered to inform Blunkett, the Shadow Cabinet, the NEC or even the Policy Forum (remember that 'modernising' innovation?).

Blair followed this up with his attack on dissident MEPs, guilty of taking part in a debate which the leader himself had kicked off (again without consulting any Party body) at Blackpool. The leader's Brussels foray was accompanied by Mandelson-style news management reminiscent of the worst days of Neil Kinnock. Once again, a Labour leader is trying to demonstrate his "strength" by attacking his own side.

It is only two years ago that Blair and his acolytes were boasting of their links with Clinton and touting his administration as a model for Labour. Now they are silent on the subject. Clinton's many failures alienated his own supporters and opened the door for the Republican far right. Like Blair, Clinton combined a subservience to neo-liberal 'free trade' orthodoxy with an increasingly reactionary social agenda. And just as Clinton paved the way for Gingrich and Dole, Blair may well pave the way for Michael Portillo.

That is why the stakes are so high in the current struggle over the future of Clause IV. We all want to see the election of a Labour government that can defend and extend the welfare state, build homes, create jobs, improve education and health care, protect the environment and attack inequalities. None of that will be possible without an overall strategic determination to strengthen the public as opposed to the private sector. Dropping Clause IV now will leave the next Labour government rudderless and vulnerable. It will hasten the 'Clintonisation' of Labour and make it more likely that the next Labour government will collapse, disorientated and divided, without making any dent on the legacy of Thatcher and Major.

Recent events have confirmed the left's fears that Blair's born-to-rule arrogance would prove an embarrassment to the Party. From the beginning, we have pointed out the authoritarian nature of Blair's approach. In contrast, what used to be known as the 'soft left' insisted that the leader had to be taken at face value. In an attempt to intervene in what they fondly call a "debate", the *New Statesman* and *Tribune* circulated a new Clause IV which, they hoped, would straddle the divide within the Party. Again and again they have failed to grasp that debate is precisely what is not on offer from the leadership.

For years Labour's leaders have redefined the Party's strategy to suit their own tactical convenience, and the faint-hearted critics on the "soft left" have followed in their wake. But now, it's crunch time. The head-on ideological confrontation precipitated by Blair's attack on Clause IV has exposed the intellectually vapid foundations of the modernisers' rhetoric - and the evasive modishness of the "soft left".

What has been revealed so starkly in this debate and the leader's attempt to bend it to his will is just how antiquated and out of touch the modernisers really are. Their slogans are half-baked echoes of arguments advanced in more substantial form by Hugh Gaitskell nearly 40 years ago. Indeed, Blair is merely the latest in a long line of middle class modernisers who have sought to replace Labour's socialism with a blind faith in a 'technocratic' European capitalism.

Party members who have attended discussions about Clause IV will have seen for themselves the modernisers' inability to address the core of the argument they have started.

They always run away from the central question of economic power: how can we wield collective control over collective resources? It is not enough to declare an abstract commitment to a fairer or more democratic society. We have to stipulate the means by which we intend to make it fairer and more democratic. Common ownership remains the only realistic strategy for building a society which embodies Labour's values of equality and solidarity. As long as the balance of economic power remains with private capital, economic policy will be dictated by the interests of the few. ❑

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 two EBs will meet on January 29th and February 26th. 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 February 16th.

***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?**

Editorial worker: Martyn Fryer
Co-chairs: Dorothy Macedo and Sue Lukes
Political Correspondent: Mike Marqusee
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Contact *Briefing* at PO Box 2378, London, E5 9QU. Telephone: 081 985 6597; fax: 081 985 6785

The truck stops here

Protesters have won a fine victory over the veal trade in Shoreham, where Richard Hanford spoke to Marxist vegan Chris Halls (Brighton Kemptown CLP), who believes that socialism and vegetarianism will ultimately defeat cruel, capitalist agribusiness.

"AT FIRST there were very few gathered here, mainly from Compassion in World Farming. Then more and more came along to block the road, stopping the lorries loaded with veal calves reaching the ferry. Police were brought in from all over the south-east to push the protesters away. The violence was the result of these police attacks. A thousand police were here some nights.

"I think Shoreham has shown that the state cannot afford to deploy such vast resources. With such widespread opposition the end of the veal trade and live exports is in sight.

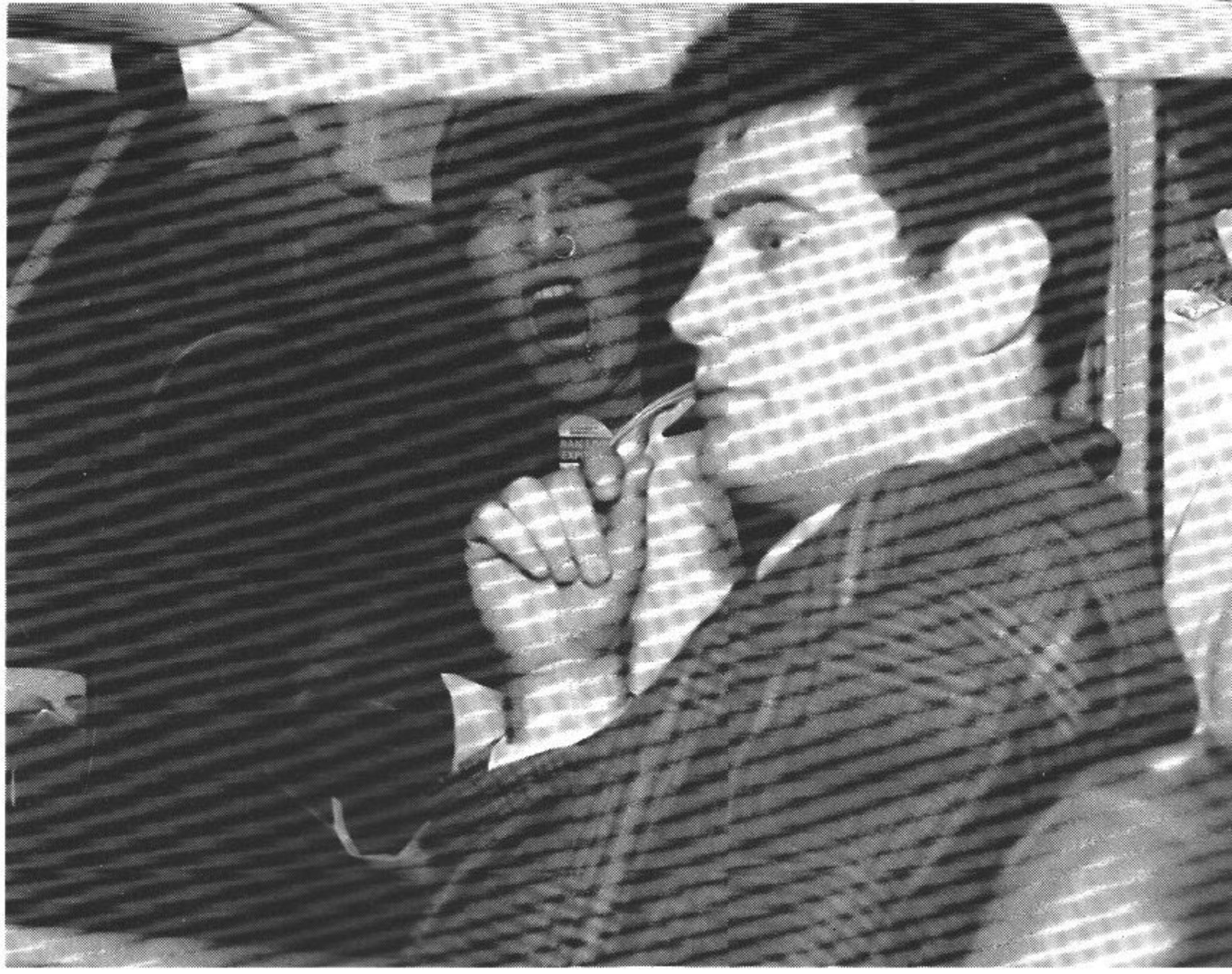
"The campaign against live exports has shaken the Tory Government. They are horrified that the demonstrators are mainly just ordinary local people disgusted by the trade in live animals. The public are also angry seeing their taxes funding a massive police army to protect the profits of rich farmers. While 150 police went to the Isle of Wight to hunt three dangerous prisoners who had escaped from Parkhurst, 1000 were sent to Shoreham to protect the veal trade. This shows up the Tories' priorities.

"Labour leaders think demonstrations are unpopular vote-losers, and they prefer sound-bites and PR to political action. But these demos, by people who are not political activists, but impatient with the passivity of the official Opposition, have shown how non-violent direct action can succeed. The majority of protesters are women and there are encouraging numbers of youth as well. School students have given very vocal support. It is interesting that so many people are prepared to prevent physically the lorries gaining access to the port, rather than protesting at the roadside.

"It should be remembered that veal calves are a by-product of the milk industry. In order for the milk industry to be profitable, surplus male calves must be used for veal. Cows will not continually produce milk unless they are kept continually pregnant. Calves are taken from their mothers, causing distress to both, and put into veal units. These may not be so cruel as the continental veal crates, but are still very restrictive. In countries where veal crates remain legal, calves have no room to move around or even sit down. In neither case do they have natural lives as baby cows. Their diet is deliberately iron-deficient, to produce white meat. People could extend their protest at the veal trade by boycotting dairy products entirely, to hit the whole milk industry.

"The point needs making that there are sufficient crops produced globally to feed the entire planet. But there is widespread starvation and malnutrition because so much is wasted on cattle feed to produce meat - and profits. We can lead protest beyond animal exploitation issues, because the protest against agribusiness is a challenge to the wealth and power of the capitalist structure, of which it is an integral part. The socialist future, I believe, has to be vegetarian."





Lamb exporter Richard Otley, from John Major's Huntington constituency, comes under verbal attack when in a pathetic act at bravado he attempts to drive through the cordon set up by protestors at Brightlingsea. You've read about him in the national press; *Briefing* has the exclusive photo.

PHOTOS: Martyn Fryer.





Animal rights protesters at Brightlingsea were grateful for the refreshments provided by the local community centre, which reported that sales have never been so good. Ironically, ham rolls were the best sellers - outdoing the cheese option by two to one.

Do these people look like the stuff of riots? Essex police seem to think so. Just hours after these pictures were taken, riot police baton charged the protesters, knocking many to the ground and hospitalising some.

On Monday, 16th January, there were 300 demonstrators present and only 45 police officers. By Wednesday of that week the number of police, now including helmeted members of the riot squad, had risen to 300. According to official police figures, however, there were still only 300 demonstrators.

An Essex police spokesperson said that there have been so many complaints that a special incident room has been set up just to process and investigate them. She insisted that the police operation would continue, unchanged, as long as people were demonstrating at Brightlingsea, although she was sorry if some people were frightened.

When asked why it was felt necessary for police officers at Brightlingsea to carry batons, a spokesperson at the Essex Constabulary Headquarters explained, "People have the wrong idea about the batons; there is a special technique that our officers use, so that if demonstrators are lying in the path of an oncoming lorry, the baton can be used to rescue them by hooking it behind their knees and pulling them clear."

Unfortunately *Briefing*'s correspondent forgot to ask why the riot helmets were thought necessary. Presumably these are yet another bit of humane equipment, designed in this instance to protect police officers from the indignity of getting seagull shit on their heads.

'Blair faces Clause IV humiliation'

No, it's not a *Briefing* headline. Credit goes to Tony Blair's most slavish supporters - the political staff at the *Guardian* - which ran the revealing words on its front page on 30th December. Alistair Ward, National Organiser for the Defend Clause IV campaign, reports on a leadership initiative that has not gone to plan.

THE YEAR began with a wave of media reports to the effect that Tony Blair's project to dump Clause IV and with it the Labour Party's strategic aim of transforming society has run into unforeseen obstacles.

Major resistance from Constituency Labour Parties emerged last year. A *Tribune* survey found that among the 60 CLPs which had debated the issue all but two supported the retention of Clause IV. Blair's response was to spread panic in the Party's upper reaches in hopes of frightening the trade unions into accepting his demand. However some of the trade union tanks he tried to marshal in his defence have begun to turn against him demanding the renationalisation of certain privatised industries in exchange for their support on Clause IV. It seems that his message to the unions is: 'You must say what I mean and mean what I say."

The special conference called by Labour's NEC has been set for 29th April so that the only union - USDAW - which has its conference before that date, will have a chance to make a democratic decision on the future of Clause IV. Trade unionists must demand that their executives mandate delegates to the April conference to vote to retain Clause IV.

The NEC is circulating a questionnaire to every affiliated union and individual Labour Party member. This questionnaire is rigged to solicit answers that will give the impression that people want Clause IV to be dumped. The NEC refused to adopt Dennis Skinner's proposal that one of the questions put should be: "Do you want to retain Clause IV as it stands?" Affiliated organisations must return the questionnaire by the 3rd March indicating that they wish to retain Clause IV in answer to every question. Model answers are available from the campaign.

The campaign has made dramatic progress. We are winning the political arguments - but we do not have the financial resources of the Blair camp.

Please make sure that your branch affiliates to 'Defend Clause IV, Defend Socialism', c/o NUM, Huddersfield Road, Barnsley.

Bulk copies of our newsletter and model resolutions can be sent to you by phoning 071 207 3781.

defend Clause IV

Leader's puppet lets cat out of bag

The strategic thinking guiding the Labour leadership was revealed in the course of an Islington Labour Group debate on January 11th.

Demanding disciplinary action against Labour councillors who refused to vote for the closure of adventure playgrounds (see page 9), Cllr James Purnell, a member of Tony Blair's personal staff, warned that the dissidents would have to be dealt with now because in 1998 (when Islington councillors face re-election) "we will be in the middle of an unpopular Labour Government".

This is not the first insight into the leader's thinking vouchsafed by Purnell (who is 25, looks 12, and talks like he's 80). A few months ago he laughed off the prospects of a Labour Government releasing capital receipts to allow local councils to build homes.

Clearly the leader is taking the lessons of Bill Clinton's experience to heart. He has already written off the idea that his Government might actually do something to win popular support.

Defend Clause IV Public Meetings

Friday 27th January, Hanley Town Hall, Stoke, 7:30pm, with Arthur Scargill.

Saturday 28th January, Defend Clause IV, National Committee (members and affiliates welcome),11am, Manchester Town Hall.

Friday 3rd February, Bradford, with Arthur Scargill.

Wednesday 8th February, Fabian Debate, 7pm, Central Hall, Westminster.

Friday 10th February, London Committee (open to members), 6:30 pm, Queen's Head, Acton St, WC1.

Friday February 10th, Union Club, Pershore Road, Birmingham , 7:30pm, with Arthur Scargill.

Tuesday 14th February, Spennymore Trades Council, 7:30pm, with Arthur Scargill.

Wednesday 15th February, 7.30pm, with Alan Simpson MP, Clair Hall, Haywards Heath, Sussex (two minutes walk from Haywards Heath station)

Friday 17th February, Cardiff, 7:30pm, with Arthur Scargill, Royal Hotel, St. Mary's Street.

Thursday 23rd February, TGWU offices, Liverpool, 7pm, with Arthur Scargill.

Friday 24th February, London rally, Conway Hall, 7:30pm, with Arthur Scargill.

Pay up now!

Defend Clause IV with your pocketbook as well as your vote! Join the campaign now. Send £10 to Defend Clause IV, c/o the NUM, 2 Huddersfield Road, Barnsley, Yorks S70 2LS. Telephone the campaign at 071 733 3403.

The New Clause IV?

"To secure for the wealthy, by hand or by brain, the full fruits of other people's industry."

The real meaning of Clause IV

The *Guardian* newspaper advert that sent Tony Blair ballistic was based on a longer statement prepared by Stan Newens MEP from an original paper by Ken Coates MEP. It has now been signed by 32 MEPs - over half of the European Parliamentary Labour Party.

CLAUSE IV insists on three crucial commitments: equality, common ownership and democracy.

'Equality' does not just mean equality of opportunity. Even before the welfare system had been undermined by Mrs Thatcher large numbers of people were afflicted by poverty. Today poverty and deprivation are growing by leaps and bounds. Socialism must surely mean a commitment to aim at the complete abolition of poverty entailing a profound redistribution of wealth as implied in Clause IV.

'Common ownership' is not a synonym for nationalisation. Sydney Webb said it left open the choice of common ownership "from the co-operative shop to the nationalised railway". Today it encompasses all forms of social ownership - municipal, regional, national, perhaps even supranational (eg. the proposed European Central Bank); it includes co-operatives of many types, and schemes for workers self-management.

Pension funds represent deferred wages and should be seen as the property of the workforce and those who have retired. They are surely an example of common ownership but such funds are not normally under the control of the "owners". The establishment of democratic control of such funds would totally transform the significance and perception of common ownership.

In recent years local democracy has been undermined both by cuts in public expenditure and the remorseless advance of unaccountable quangos. There is a strong case for decentralisation - transferring relevant powers down from the centre to the regions and the localities.

The restoration of democracy also requires constitutional reform to establish Scottish and Welsh Assemblies and to devolve appropriate powers to the English regions. The democratic deficit in the European Union must be reversed.

Industrial democracy, which has been gravely undermined both by mass unemployment and negative legislation, should be a fundamental objective of our Party. Employees and consumers alike should have the right to be fully informed, to express their views freely and to take part in making decisions which concern them.

Clause IV represents the long standing commitment of our Party to achieve this. The object of the present debate suggested by Tony Blair should therefore not be to change it but to build upon it. What is called for is a separate statement to express the Party's aims to-day.

In 1959-60 when Hugh Gaitskell sought to revise the Party's objectives a twelve-point statement was produced which was at the time frequently described as "the New Testament" in contrast with the "Old" as represented by the 1918 version. Clause IV was to be retained as the historic touchstone. This provides a precedent which we should follow to-day.

To rescind Clause IV would simply serve to confuse or dishearten our supporters and encourage our opponents. Only those who disagree with these basic arguments will insist upon repealing them and no powerful argument has yet been advanced which justifies this course of action.

Clause IV should therefore be retained in its present form exactly as it was in 1960 and we should seek to promote the principles and the values enshrined in it.

LABOUR PARTY

Political footbinders

Martyn Fryer writes: A good friend of mine - I won't name her - has aspirations to join the Parliamentary Labour Party. For the last decade she has worked to fulfil this ambition, playing a highly active role in both the Labour Party and her trade union, and honing her skills as writer and speaker.

Last week I contacted her to ask which seats she had her eye on. She had obviously been doing her homework - a short list had been drafted. Knowing her as I do this did not surprise me. What did, was the rest of the conversation.

For as long as I have known her she has always thrown her weight behind socialist causes: the NHS, social equality, scrapping weapons, universal benefits, etc. I told her that I was now working for *Labour Briefing* and would be happy for her to submit articles for publication. When she said that it would be impossible because she had to toe the Party line I was dumbfounded. Apparently she is worried that if she associates herself with *Briefing* her chances of securing a seat at the next election will be next to none. The footbinders of Walworth Road are at work.

In the nineteenth century, for the sake of fashion and to please those whom it was necessary to please, women's bones were broken and their feet bandaged, so that in a few years' time all the women's feet looked the same and fitted their masters' preferred image. The folly of this was plain even then - but those who spoke against it were castigated. "Footbinding is what the people want," they were told, "it may hurt, but we have to meet the challenge and make the change."

At the end of the twentieth century the footbinders have risen again - this time to tamper with our minds and our politics rather than our feet. Since 1983, Walworth Road and the leader's clique have shaped how our Party is presented, what we as Party members can say, and even, it often seems, what we can think as well.

Ever since Tony Blair came to the Party he has been hell-bent on personal advancement. Of course, he presents himself well to the public - who wouldn't with a £60 short back and perm and a designer suit? But perfect teeth do not a perfect leader make. Of course, he answers questions fluently - he is like a five year old who has studied a book - but he has no real grasp of the meaning of the book, how it came to be written or even how to add to or improve its content.

I'm sorry to say that it looks unlikely that my old friend will add to the numbers of the Socialist Campaign Group after the next election.

Defend socialism.

A vote too far

Labour Party democracy is the first casualty of Tony Blair's drive to dump Clause IV. Martyn Fryer reviews the latest antics from the leadership camp.

I HAVE JUST listened to Gordon Brown castigating Labour MEPs for taking out a front page advertisement in The *Guardian* supporting Clause IV. According to the Shadow Chancellor, the MEPs were out of order for prejudging the issue and thereby preventing full and free debate.

This was only one hour after Tony Blair had appeared on the television saying, "This [the Clause IV vote] is one we don't intend to lose." If that is not prejudging the issue, what is?

Blair's media manipulators accused the dissident MEPs of derailing Labour's "New Year publicity offensive". This consisted of the usual press releases sent out by all political parties in the first week of the year to capitalise on the fact that for the media it is a "dead" news week otherwise. The content of the "offensive" is revealing. Blair's "big initiative" for 1995 was to be the single European currency, a policy which is a) hugely unpopular, b) never approved by any Labour policy-making body, and c) downright stupid.

With all the heated arguments over the content of this one paragraph people have lost sight of what could have far greater consequences for us in the Labour Party: the sleaze, misuse of funds and complete disregard of Labour's rule book and its policy-making body, annual Conference. Indeed Conference has already voted to keep Clause IV with exactly the same wording as at present.

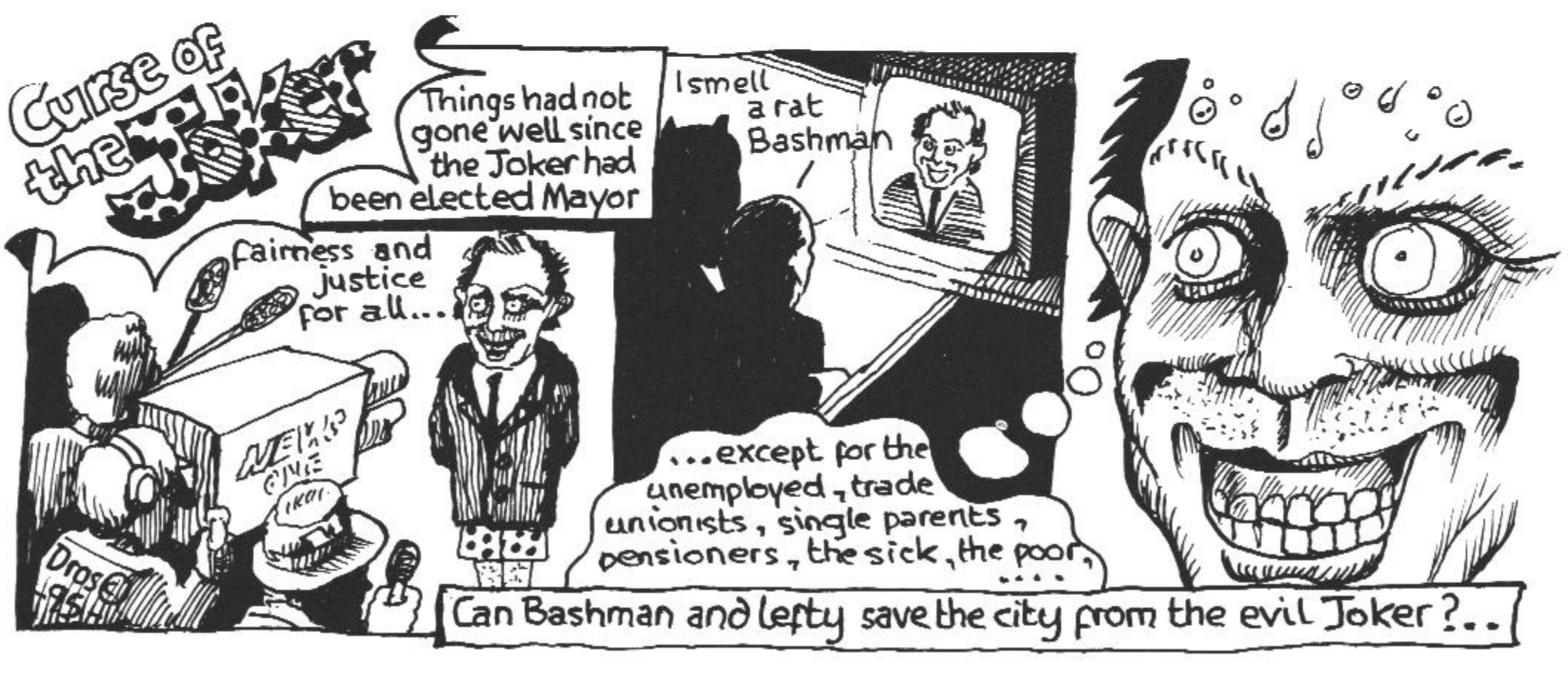
And what happened then? All hell broke loose as the leader decided to have his own way come what may. Never has an assault by so few been committed on so many in such a short time. Not only do we see Joker & Penguin with their supporting cast nearly every day on nearly every news bulletin, but can anyone remember the last time a branch received direct communication from Walworth Road? Recently, one of these rare items appeared, not about recruitment, not about fundraising, not about campaigning, but, yes, you've guessed it, about Clause IV, and how it needs changing.

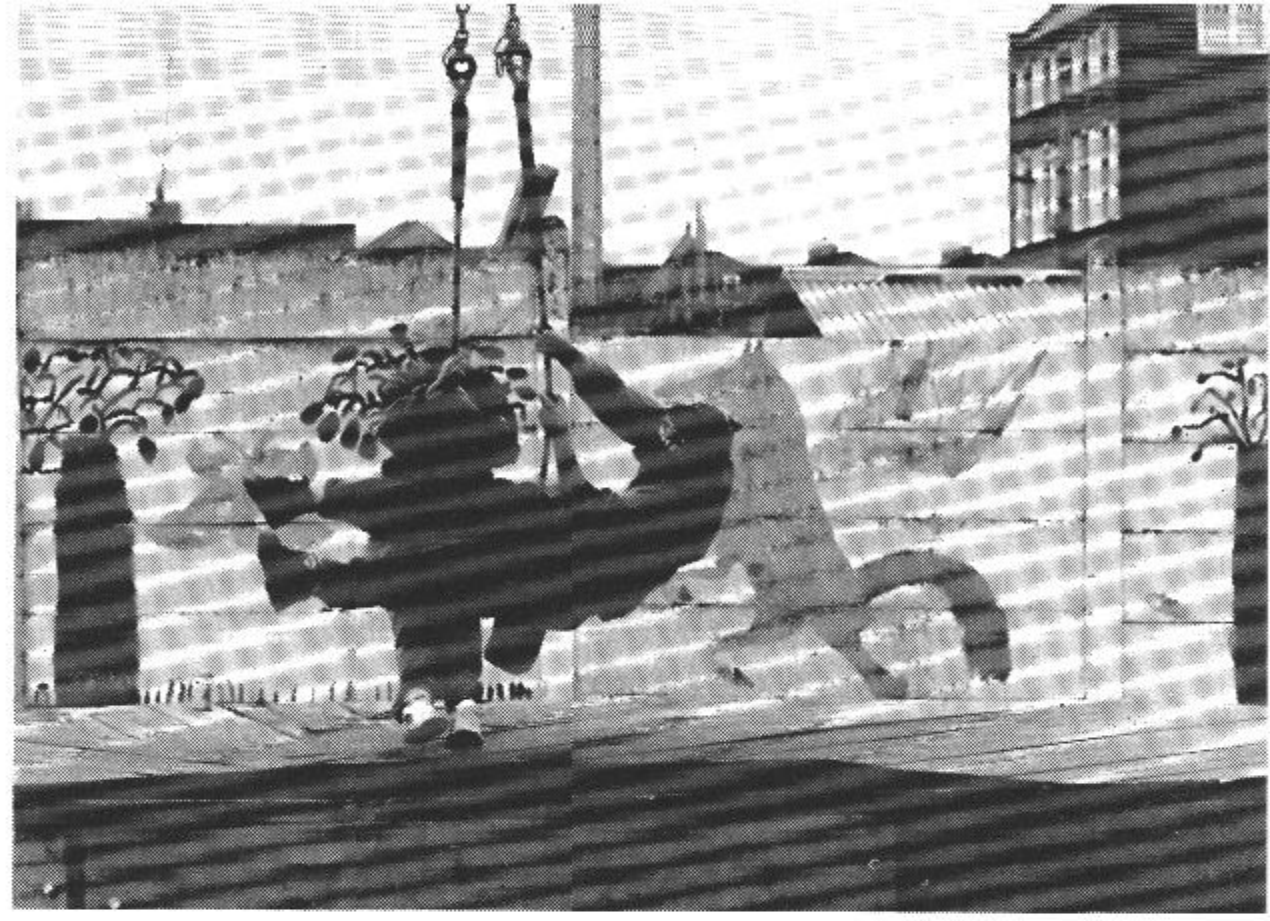
Blair seems to have forgotten a key paragraph of his Blackpool Conference speech. He said, "We are not going to win despite our beliefs. We will only win because of them." How can he square this circle with his vitriolic attack on one of the longest held and strongest of Labour beliefs?

He has also forgotten, on the way, another key Labour belief: that Party policy comes from the members, not from the Leader. Having been defeated at Blackpool, Blair went on the attack. The way in which consultation on his proposals has been scheduled means that proper discussion and decision-making among Labour and trade union members is all but impossible.

Blair's stranglehold on the Party is getting tighter. But even if, as he himself has asserted, he wins this battle, the victory will owe more to circumventing democracy than taking part in reasoned argument. The reformers, having already lost one vote at Conference, have called for another at a special conference on 29th April. If the leader loses the vote here as well when will the next special conference be held? Blair's groupies are expending a not inconsiderable effort at the moment in communicating with trade union leaders, presumably doing a bit more than just asking how they will vote. Funnily enough, the GMB's boss, John Almonds (well, he should be crushed), has come out in support of a change in Clause IV. Strange, because the GMB hasn't voted on the issue.

The reason given for holding the special conference at such an early opportunity was that "it is not in our interests to drag this issue on any longer than necessary". Presumably, it was felt that the publicity of a debate could be damaging. Headlines such as "Labour split", "Loony Left back", etc. were guaranteed. Of course, as predicted, this has happened anyway; it is just that all the bad press is being compressed in a time when we should have the Tories on the run. Had the debate been allowed to run its full course, then such negative and biased reporting would have been spread over the boring and less politically damaging summer months. That is assuming the debate should have been opened in the first place or kept open after having been voted down at the first hurdle. The arrogance and naivety shown in the way the Clause IV issue has been handled shows a remarkable lack of political nous for someone like Tony Blair - then again, maybe it doesn't. ❑





Martin Luther King Adventure Playground, Islington. PHOTO: Paul Mattsson.

"Nice suit, shame about the brain"

If you want a foretaste of the next Labour Government, go to Islington where Tony Blair's acolytes are closing playgrounds and suspending dissident Labour councillors. Mike Marqusee reports from the much misrepresented north London borough.

YOU WOULDN'T know it from the media image but Islington is home to some of the poorest people in western Europe. As if high unemployment, poor housing, pollution, crime, racial violence and a deteriorating health service were not enough they are also burdened by a Labour council now in the clutches of the "Blair babes", a clique of youthful factionalists dedicated to their leader's vision of a Labour Party of, by and for the middle class.

This council now finds itself locked in conflict with a section of the community and the local Labour Party over the future of the borough's 13 adventure playgrounds, most of which are run by voluntary management committees and all of which are used by working class children without votes and, normally, without political clout.

In order to stay within central government limits, the Labour Group decided to reduce the 1995-1996 budget by 2.5%. The education service - which accounts for some 40% of council spending - was to be 'protected'. i.e. cut by only 1.8%. But within the education budget, spending on adventure playgrounds was to be slashed by £77,000 or 12% - resulting in a 25% reduction in opening hours.

When these proposals were put to an Education Committee meeting on 30th November 300 local residents turned up to object. For many of those present particularly the children who use the adventure playgrounds it was a first taste of politics. Phil Kelly, the Labour Chair of Education (and a former editor of *Tribune*), gave them a lesson in democracy they are unlikely to forget. Unable to withstand the barracking of the protesters, and unwilling to rehearse in public the arguments for and against the council's policy, Kelly pushed the issue to a hasty vote (failing in the process to call for votes against or abstentions) and adjourned the meeting. The local newspaper accused him of "steamrollering" the debate.

Labour's chief whip, Stephen Twigg (a former NUS president currently working for Margaret Hodge, once Islington Council leader now, MP for Barking), wrote to the paper denouncing the "organised disruption of the meeting by a minority of protesters". The following week several of the youngsters who had attended the meeting replied. "We were there for a good reason and Phil Kelly felt that he could do as he pleased," wrote one. "Did he honestly believe we would sit back and do nothing? Did he expect us to give up without a fight?"

"It's crazy," said Alan Laws, a Labour councillor, who has opposed the cuts from the beginning. "Islington leads the country in play provision. Instead of defending our own achievements we're tearing them down. Does the council really think that disaffected and displaced young people will be good little children and spend their leisure time indoors? The financial saving will be nothing compared to the bill we will face for increased vandalism."

The cuts were approved at a full council meeting on 15th December. Not for the first time Labour's intransigence made it easy for the twelve Liberal Democrats and the lone Tory to posture as the champions of open government and community sentiment. More telling opposition came from within Labour's own ranks. Councillors pointed out that only Islington is cutting staffing levels at adventure playgrounds. Elsewhere they are being increased not least to meet the demands of the Children Act. Moreover, the Council's figures don't add up: they leave an annual shortfall of 200 hours part-time staffing for every adventure playground.

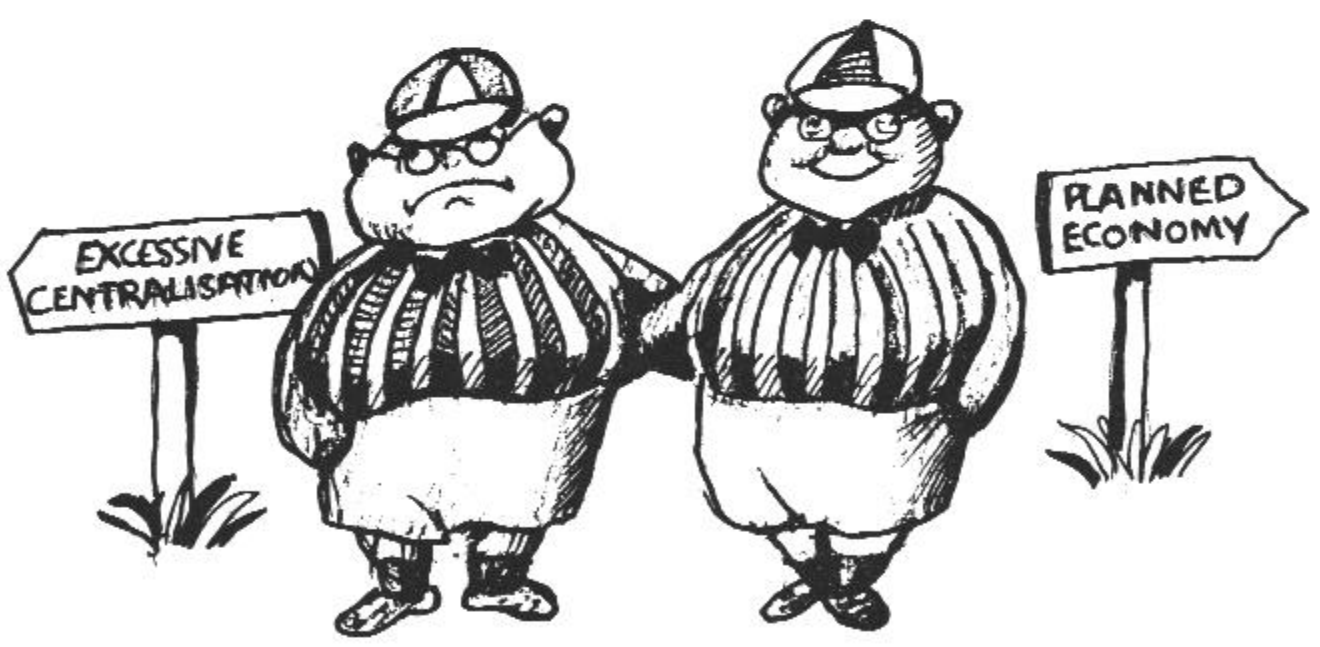
Some of the dissidents also proposed alternative cuts packages, among them the deletion of two senior management posts (Islington has 40 officers paid over £35,000 a year) and the withdrawal of the £110,000 earmarked for the provision of lap-top personal computers and associated paraphernalia to councillors.

In the council debate the Blair babes resorted to wild invective against the public gallery and railed against the imagined deficiencies of adventure playgrounds. The Deputy Chair of Education, James Purnell, who works as a researcher for Tony Blair, declared, "We are not going to change our mind. We are not going to give in to mob rule."

Tal Michael, another youthful front bench researcher, delivered a tortuous defence of his support for the closure of the Whittington playground which is in his own ward. When he concluded a 14-year old shouted from the gallery: "Nice suit, shame about the brain."

In the end seven Labour councillors voted against the closure and three more abstained reducing Labour's majority to only four votes. On January 11th the seven rebels were suspended from the Labour Group. They are by no means all hardened left-wingers and have already received support from several normally right-wing wards. Like their master in Westminster Islington's Blair babes may be going too far, too fast and in the wrong direction. ❑

Clause IV and the economics of socialism



Just what do we mean by 'common ownership'? Has the notion been permanently discredited by the collapse of the command economies in eastern Europe? In this second article in a three part series Dave Palmer outlines some basic premises for the renewal of socialist economics.

THE BIGGEST advantage enjoyed by Blair and the modernisers in the Clause IV debate is that we now live in an age in which the belief in the possibility of ever replacing capitalism with a socialist economic order is historically probably at its lowest ever ebb. At the end of the twentieth century those who wish to abolish the capitalist order face a profound crisis of perspective as to just what would constitute a workable socialist alternative.

The demise of Stalinist 'bureaucratic state socialism' has demonstrated that a political economy based solely on state ownership and central planning - the 'one big factory' model of economic co-ordination - has profound and decisive shortcomings. The centrally planned economies were notably unable to raise productivity and foster intensive growth. This failing was the source of the stagnation and collapse of 'bureaucratic socialism'.

The absence of socialist democracy and the hostility of the capitalist world order were undoubtedly major contributing factors to the weaknesses of the centrally planned economies. However, they were not the only ones. The 'one big factory' concept of socialism - common to all traditions of Marxian socialism which have attempted to maintain 'classical' orthodoxies - has defects which cannot be resolved merely by the addition of institutions of socialist democracy. Those who fail to recognise this have joined the 'ostrich' tendency.

How should those who continue to aspire to the goals of Marxian socialism respond to this challenge? How do we re-construct the political economy of socialism in ways which can convince masses who have experienced or observed the demise of the centrally planned economies that socialism will be economically superior to capitalism? If Marxian socialism is to revive in influence we must identify viable frameworks for economic co-ordination in a post-capitalist society. Three main postulates may help us establish the parameters within which we can work to develop viable models of socialism.

First, the primary mechanisms of economic co-ordination must be derived from the principles of planning (i.e. deciding upon the use of resources in advance) and common ownership. These principles are necessary prerequisites to the conscious and collective control of social resources. Replacing the 'anarchy of markets' with planned production - aimed at the most effective use of resources to provide for collective and individual needs - means allocation of resources through deliberate choices made by social bodies.

THE REPLACEMENT of the unconscious, blind co-ordination of the market mechanism by a process of conscious, planned co-ordination is the decisive difference between relations of production under capitalism and socialism. Assigning social labour through the 'visible hand' of planning brings into the open the social nature of work and human labour. As such, planning is an indispensable means of establishing the basis of a socialist society - and is impossible without the socialisation of property relations.

Secondly, if Marxian socialism is to offer a viable political economy it now seems beyond doubt that the traditional model of state ownership (and control) and central planning must be substantially revised. In doing so, there are two major inter-related problems which socialists must address.

The first is the 'information problem'. Until the distant dawn of an era of total material plenty scarcity will continue to exist in various forms. In addition, most production will continue to involve costs for the foreseeable future. Therefore choices will have to be made regarding the allocation of productive resources. Market forces allocate resources as a result of the myriad of decentralised and atomised decisions of consumers, producers and investors. Central planning replaces the way in which this is done - direct control of the economy from a single centre. But is this possible?

Command central planning allocates resources in the following way. In order to convey all the necessary information (what to produce, how much and what to do with it) to units at the lower level in

the form of mandatory directives the planning body must first obtain a considerable amount of information from all prospective consumers (a summary of needs) as well as from all producers (a summary of productive capacities). The central planning body then establishes input-output tables and material balances for each different major commodity in the economy. It then sends a part of the aggregate information in the form of binding targets to the subordinated units in the planning hierarchy.

THE CENTRAL planning board can never attain anything even close to the 'perfect knowledge' of the local circumstances of enterprises or consumers that it requires. There is just too much vast, diverse and unpredictable information - much of it qualitative, not quantitative - in a complex economy for the allocation of resources to be dealt with effectively on a centralised basis. Indeed it is questionable whether much of that qualitative information can ever be available through central planning mechanisms. Nor do these mechanisms make conflicts arising over the allocation of resources transparent at the central level.

Which decisions can and cannot be effectively planned? Which economic decisions are necessary or unnecessary to plan? What decisions should be taken centrally and which can be decentralised? How should those decisions be taken? On what system of signals will economic decision-making be based? These are the questions which need to be debated again in the political economy of socialist planning.

The second problem concerns property rights and incentives.

In the capitalist system the pursuit of individual self-interest, the protection of private ownership and competitive pressure all inter-act to provide strong, spontaneous incentives at the micro-economic level; owners and their agents are spurred by these incentives to respond to price signals by reducing costs, maximising outputs and pursuing innovations. Of course, under capitalism, this is all done at tremendous human cost. Nevertheless, if productivity and rates of growth are to be raised a socialist economic system needs to be organised in such a way that it also produces incentives to such behaviour at the enterprise level.

One of the problems of Stalinist 'bureaucratic socialism' - where productive assets are owned by everyone and no one - was what conventional economics dubbed the 'principal-agent' problem. No one had an immediate stake or self-interest in ensuring the effective utilisation and management of resources. Worse yet, each production unit actually had incentives to under-declare potential outputs and over-declare necessary inputs.

The result was what is known as the 'slack plan'. Enterprises tended to strive for a plan which demanded the production of less output than was possible and the use of more inputs than was necessary. This enabled the enterprise to meet centrally-dictated targets by a comfortable margin causing systemic inefficiency and chronic shortage. Enterprises lacked the incentives to be economically efficient - to use minimum input and maximise output - or to develop dynamically by innovating in production methods, technologies and products.

How should socialist property relations and incentives be organised to ensure the efficient use and management of productive resources and their dynamic development? Should socialist property relations be unified or pluralist? Is there a necessary trade-off between incentives to efficiency and innovation and the degree of socialisation? We must begin to find answers to these and related questions if we are to make socialist planning coherent and credible.

Thirdly, none of the many variants of so-called 'market socialism' can provide answers to the above questions. This is because market socialism effectively abandons the principles of common ownership and planning. In short, it gives too much ground to the enemies of socialism.

MARKET SOCIALISM deals with incentives and the 'information' problem by establishing an institutional framework in which there is an increasing domination of forms of quasi and de facto private property. Resource allocation is the result of atomized decisions, independently taken and motivated solely by the individual decision-makers' perceptions of their individual self-interest, not consciously co-ordinated by them in advance. Crucially, market socialism systems - if they are to be coherent - have to develop financial markets to allocate investment and trade ownership rights. This means a crucial loss of social control, notably over investment flows.

Market socialism therefore excludes the possibility of humanity ever having the degree of conscious, collective control over production necessary to achieve social equality and meet a host of human needs. It amounts to dismissing the objective possibility of economic co-ordination taking any form other than the capitalist one. Logically, this leads to conceding the superiority of capitalism. This is why it must be rejected. (This is not to say that prices and exchanges will not play a major role in a socialist economy.)

If countries with socialist economic systems are to survive in a hostile world environment dominated by capitalism they must be able to: respond effectively to the diverse and decentralised nature of economic information and decision-making; allocate productive and social resources efficiently and effectively; constantly innovate and develop dynamically. Democratic socialist planning involves jointly and freely defining collective and individual needs, then acting together to fulfil them.

IT IS clearly true that social control of production cannot be adequately organised purely by centralised command planning. It is equally true that socialist goals cannot be achieved where there is complete or even a very high degree of decentralisation and local autonomy.

Decisions about what needs are and how to meet them have to be made both centrally and locally. At the least, society as a whole must decide after open and pluralist debate the main economic choices, the priorities for investment and the general lines of economic development. But there is also a need for a high degree of localised and autonomous decision-making - and probably pluralism in forms of social ownership - if society is to be free and self-governing and its economy efficient.

The next article in this series will look at ways of organising the planned democratic allocation of productive resources in a socialist society. Future issues will address some of the questions raised above regarding socialising property rights, incentives, efficiency and innovation. ❑

McLiers McTorturers McCancer

After slugging it out with a top QC for seven months, Helen Steel and Dave Morris, the McLibel Two, have Big Mac on the ropes. Mike Marqusee reports from the High Court on what has become one of the longest running libel trials of the century.

BEFORE THE McLibel trial opened last June, Richard Rampton QC, McDonald's barrister, forecast that it would last 3-4 weeks. By the Christmas break, 29 witnesses had been grilled. Another 150 are scheduled to appear. The hearings are now unlikely to conclude before December.

The origins of the case go back to the mid-eighties, when activists in a small group called London Greenpeace (which pre-dates and has no links with Greenpeace International) produced a McDonald's "Factsheet" accusing the company of damaging the environment, promoting an unhealthy diet, cruelty to animals, exploiting children through advertising and workers through low pay and hostility to trade unions.

McDonald's sent private investigators into London Greenpeace meetings and in September 1990 served libel writs on five individuals connected with the group. Advised that there was no legal aid available to fight libel actions and that they stood little chance of even getting to trial, three of the five apologised to the burger chain. Steel and Morris refused and resolved to fight the case themselves. That has meant mastering court procedures, legal jargon, cross-examination techniques and a welter of scientific and technical detail as well as 30,000 pages of trial documents. "It's been hard work," Steel admits, "But I think we've got better at it as the trial's progressed."

Defence costs, restricted to faxes, photocopying and air fares for witnesses from abroad, have been entirely met by donations from the public. In contrast, McDonald's legal expenses are estimated at over £5,000 a day. By the end of the trial, the company could find itself out of pocket by £2 million.

Since June, a procession of sober suited McDonald's executives from both sides of the Atlantic have taken the stand in the High Court. For many, it has clearly been an unfamiliar and at times trying experience. "They can't walk away from the witness box the way they've walked away when confronted by critics in the past," Steel observes. "They have to come up with answers to our questions."

During the first six months, the trial has covered an astonishing variety of topics, from the living conditions of chickens, pigs and cattle raised for McDonald's to the effects of styrene in its styrofoam packaging, from industrial relations to child psychology.

The latter cropped up in the course of testimony regarding McDonald's alleged use of "pester power" - advertising and promotional gimmicks which aim to get children to nag their parents into taking them to the company's restaurants.

In this argument, the familiar figure of Ronald McDonald appeared alternately benign and sinister. Paul Preston, President of McDonald's UK, said the clown was intended not to "sell food" but to promote "the McDonald's experience". The defendants quoted a statement issued by the actor who had originally played Ronald McDonald: "I brainwashed youngsters into doing wrong. I want to say sorry to children everywhere for selling out to concerns who make millions by murdering animals." They also read out extracts from McDonald's own internal "Operations Manual": "Ronald loves McDonald's and McDonald's food. And so do children, because they love Ronald. Remember, children exert a phenomenal influence when it comes to restaurant selection."

When asked why McDonald's 'Hamburger Patch' portrayed happy burgers growing on plants, David Green, McDonald's Senior Vice President of Marketing in the USA, said that the truth about where hamburgers come from "would not be very appetising".

McDonald's has taken particular umbrage at what it sees as damaging attempts to undermine its carefully-promoted environment-friendly image ("a business leader must be an environmental leader," says the corporation). Preston insisted that if one million customers each brought a soft drink (and McDonald's serves about one million customers a day in Britain) he would not expect more than 100 to 150 cups to end up as litter. He was then shown photographs of 27 items of McDonald's litter on a stretch of pavement surrounding a single store.

Before Christmas, Edward Oakley, McDonald's UK Chief Purchasing Officer and senior vice-president, was asked about a "recycling" project in Nottingham (publicised in one of the company's nationally distributed 'McFact' cards) in which customers were asked to put polystyrene packaging into a special bin. Oakley admitted that in the end the waste collected in the bin had been dumped, not recycled. Currently, with the exception of a pilot scheme in five Manchester stores, all the company's post-consumer waste ends up as litter on the streets or in landfill.

Over the years, McDonald's has threatened legal action against a number of bodies which have suggested it may be responsible for rainforest destruction. However, testimony at the trial has revealed that Brazilian beef was imported to Britain for McDonald's use in 1983-84 and that its outlets in Costa Rica have used beef raised on ex-rainforest land. In a filmed interview screened in court, a McDonald's supplier in Costa Rica stated that this beef had also been exported to American fast food chains like McDonald's.

So far, the most detailed testimony and the most heated exchanges have concerned McDonald's claim (contained in the "Nutritional Guide" available in

all outlets) that "every time you eat at McDonald's you'll eat good, nutritious food."

McDonald's executives explained that the word "nutritious" simply meant that the food "contained nutrients". Under cross-examination, they accepted that all foods contain nutrients (though there was some debate about black tea). Asked to define 'junk food', Vernon Wheelock, an expert witness for McDonald's, said it was "whatever a person doesn't like" (in his case, semolina). Rampton then rose to point out that McDonald's was not objecting to the description of its product as "junk food".



PHOTO: Nick Cobbing

When the defendants suggested to Purchasing Officer Oakley that the company might switch from deep-frying to oven-baking its fruit pies out of "concern for your customers' health", he replied, "We do not see it as a concern." "You do not see reducing fat content as a concern?" asked Steel. "No. Why should we?"

Steven Gardner, a former Assistant Attorney General in Texas, flew to London to give evidence for the defendants. In the mid-eighties his office had grappled with McDonald's over food labelling and advertising guidelines. Ultimately, Texas (along with two other states) had ordered the company to "cease and desist" further use of advertisements which portrayed McDonald's food as nutritious. "The reason for this is simple," the state official said, "McDonald's food is, as a whole, not nutritious. The intent and result of the current campaign is to deceive customers into believing the opposite."

The defendants asked Dr Sidney Arnott, McDonald's expert witness on cancer: was it "reasonable" to say that "a diet high in fat, sugar, animal products and salt and low in fibre, vitamins and minerals is linked with cancer of the breast and bowel and heart disease"? Arnott replied: "If it is being directed to the public, then I would say it is a very reasonable thing to say." Morris then pointed out: "That is actually a quote from the London Greenpeace Factsheet which is the subject of the libel action."

At the pre-trial hearings Rampton had characterised that quote as the most "defamatory" of the allegations in the 'Factsheet' and said if proven it would be the "kiss of death" for a fast-food company. The supposed scientific complexities of this issue had been one of the main reasons for denying Morris and Steel a jury. Now, however, Rampton told the court: "We would all agree" that there is a link between a high fat, low fibre diet and certain forms of cancer. McDonald's has since amended its original 1990 statement of claim (the basis for the court action) so that it is now asking the defendants to prove that "McDonald's serves meals which cause cancer in their customers", an allegation that does not appear in the offending 'Factsheet'.

Over the next few months, testimony will concentrate on packaging and litter, hygiene and animal welfare. Sometime in March, the focus will move to employment practices. The defendants plan to call 30 former McDonald's workers as witnesses, including two from Lyons, where five McDonald's managers have been charged with violating French labour laws.

Has McDonald's miscalculated in pursuing Morris and Steel this far? After all, the company has no hope of ever recovering costs or damages from the penurious defendants and in the course of the trial the allegedly libellous allegations have been given far more exposure than London Greenpeace could have hoped for when it printed the offending leaflet a decade ago.

"They have no choice but to see it through to the end," explained Morris. "In the past they've used the threat of libel action to intimidate critics. If they back down against us, then that threat is exposed as a paper tiger."

McDonald's plans to expand its 580 British restaurants to over 1000 within the next ten years (including new outlets on motorways and in hospitals and schools). Globally, it has 14,000 restaurants in 70 countries. After Coca-Cola it is the most widely recognised brand name in the world - and it spends a billion dollars a year on advertising and promotion to keep it that way. It may seem like McDonald's is using a legal sledgehammer to crack the McLibel nut, but the company is aware that its high global profile is giving rise to global protest, and the McLibel action may be an attempt to stop the rot.

In recent months there have been anti-McDonald's demonstrations from Australia to the Philippines, from Canada to Israel, from Ireland to the Czech Republic. On October 16th, UN World Food Day, Ronald McDonald was put in the stocks outside the biggest McDonald's in Wellington, New Zealand. Unrelated to the McLibel case, 400 rioting youth in Copenhagen ransacked McDonald's on New Year's Day, heaping the restaurant's furniture on a bonfire in the street. According to the AP report of the incident, the youth were angry because McDonald's "symbolises capitalism and money".

In Britain, the McLibel Support Campaign has launched 'Operation Send it Back', urging people to collect McDonald's refuse from the streets and return it in sacks to local restaurants on April 15th, the company's fortieth anniversary.

"Thousands of people have pledged to continue to hand out leaflets critical of McDonald's," Morris says. "No matter what happens to us, these leaflets will circulate in even greater numbers than before. The whole McDonald's effort has been about silencing critics and campaigners - and they have failed."

Send donations and requests for information to: McLibel Support Campaign, c/o 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX (tel. 071 713 1269).

The future of hope

Can socialists learn the hard lessons of the twentieth century? Achin Vanaik, a leading Indian Marxist author and thinker, issues a challenge.

AS THE second millennium draws to a close a number of features stand out about this remarkable twentieth century. The emergence of an ever more modern capitalism has been inextricably linked with the emergence of more clearly defined and centralised nation states some of which were uniquely powerful. At the same time non-state actors (above all, social classes and social movements) have become increasingly important. To make this point one has only to list chronologically the various crisis points of revolutionary, pre-revolutionary and radical upheavals wrought by non-state actors in this century: the Russian revolution of 1905, Persia 1906-09, China 1911, Mexico 1910-17, Ireland 1916, Russia 1917, Germany 1918, Poland 1918-19, Hungary 1919, Bavaria 1919, Italy 1919-20, Germany 1923, China 1925-27, Indonesia 1929, Indochina 1930, Spain 1931-34, 36-37, France 1936, Yugoslavia 1941-45, India 1942, Italy 1943-48, Greece 1944-45, Indochina 1945-54, Indonesia 1945-48, China 1947-49, Bolivia 1952, GDR 1953, Algeria 1954-62, Cuba 1956-62, Hungary 1956, Poland 1956, southern USA 1954-66, Angola 1962-76, Indochina 1964-75, France 1968, Czechoslovakia 1968, Chile 1970-73, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau 1973-75, Portugal 1974-75, Ethiopia 1974, Spain 1975-77, Iran 1978, Nicaragua 1979, Poland 1980, the Palestinian Intifada 1988-89, Poland, Hungary, GDR, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria 1989-90, the republics of the ex-USSR 1990-91, Eritrea 1992, South Africa 1990-94.

The focus of all of these struggles was either national liberation, political democratisation or socio-economic transformation. Not all succeeded at the time. Not all the gains have endured. But the overall result, on balance, has been the greater empowerment of masses of ordinary people and the stronger endorsement of the legitimacy of popular aspirations. The unique importance of the twentieth century has been its inauguration of mass politics as never before, of what Anthony Giddens has aptly termed the 'politics of life chances' (the politics of emancipation) and the 'politics of life choices' (the politics of identity). Though there is a sense in which these two dimensions of 'life politics' are linked, it is nevertheless necessary to recognise that they do have different dynamics, agencies and purposes. In the advanced capitalist democracies it is the considerable success achieved in respect of the 'politics of life chances' that has partly promoted and reinforced a new cultural politics of identity. Elsewhere it is more often the relative failure to make sufficient progress in the more basic politics of emancipation that has promoted and reinforced distinctive forms of identity politics.

As Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out, this has been the short twentieth century with its fundamental character defined within two dates: 1917 and 1989. 1917 inaugurated not just the first and most important challenge to capitalism, the prevailing dominant system. It also provided a new ideological horizon of the possible and the desirable. Without the Russian Revolution and the emergence of a socialist alternative (however flawed in practice) the history of the twentieth century would have been very different indeed. The emergence and spread of this systemic alternative contributed positively and decisively in three areas: in the contribution to the defeat of fascism, in the enormous impetus given to decolonisation and in the decisive stimulus given to the reformation of capitalism (via Keynesianism and the welfare state) in its own heartlands.

For nearly seventy years, despite all ups and downs, retreats and betrayals, there was a real sense in which socialism and the socialist vision could be thought of by very many as the "wave of the future", something that the "big forces of history" seemed to be backing.

1989 brought an abrupt and dramatic halt to this somewhat teleological vision. Liberal democratic advanced capitalism won the Cold War - but it has turned out to be a pyrrhic victory! Bereft of its most formidable challenger, capitalism-imperialism now stands like the fairy-tale Emperor, in great risk of more and more people pointing out that it has no clothes on. It cannot generalise prosperity throughout the world. The logic of its accumulation process represents a continuing and deepening threat to global ecological balances. Even a qualitative expansion of liberal democratic political systems cannot be taken for granted.

There is a triple crisis of modernity to which neither pre-modernist indigenisms nor post-modernist meanderings provide any hope of a solution. Each of the three principal forms of the modernist promise - assured capitalist prosperity, socialism and capitalist developmentalism - is in crisis. The golden age of capitalism (roughly 1948-73) is over for good. That long boom was only made possible by the accuracy of the Keynesian diagnosis and the temporary validity of its curative prescription. Capitalism left to itself cannot work well. It tends not just to relative inequalities but to high absolute levels of unemployment of human and material resources. Unemployment, excess capacity, over-accumulation, under-consumption, poverty amidst plenty: these are the necessary givens of capitalism even where it works best - in the advanced imperialist countries.

Neo-liberalism is not just an economic doctrine but a political one. In the realm of economics it advocates a decisive

shift away from all forms of social control (not just statism) towards an increasingly unencumbered market. In the realm of politics it advocates a decisive shift away from democratic and popular political participation - which is seen as a danger to the 'spontaneity' of the market because it leads to the formation of collectivities and interest groups which must then be assuaged on the basis of principles of distribution inimical to the logic of the market mechanism itself - towards a hardline conservatism. The hallmark of this conservatism is its commitment to the principle of formal equality before the law, not to the search for greater equality in the making and shaping of the law, which in its view is highly dangerous!

For a contemporary capitalism unable to promise much by way of generalised economic prosperity or generalised democratic empowerment, yet determined to preserve and justify existing structures of unequal social power, the ideological value of neo-liberalism is obvious. This is not even capitalist liberal democracy at its best and most humane; it is a shrunken and miserly vision of its own capacities. That this neo-liberalism should seem for so many, both in the richer and poorer parts of the world, to be the "new common sense" or the "only feasible ideal of our times", is itself a reflection of just how much has been lost as a result of the declining appeal of a socialist alternative, in respect of human compassion and positive aspirations.

But the crisis of advanced capitalism is still not nearly so acute as the crisis created by the failure of actually existing socialism in the former communist world and the crisis of developmentalism in most of the post-colonial world and Latin America. The overall significance of this triple crisis has been the rise of a politics of cultural exclusivism which has spanned the globe, both advanced and backward regions, and has taken four basic forms: the rise of Christian, Jewish and Islamic fundamentalisms; the rise of Hindu and Buddhist nationalisms; the rise of cultural chauvinisms and irredentist nationalisms in eastern Europe, ex-Yugoslavia and ex-USSR; and the rise of anti-immigrant xenophobia and racism.

Everywhere the politics of cultural exclusivism has centred on ethnicity, religion and nation, separately or in diverse combinations. It is these imagined communities of belonging (communities which one is born into, which are seemingly permanent, and which one can escape from only with the greatest difficulty) that have provided the most sought for continuities with the past. In times of despair and deep uncertainty when visions of future progress shrivel, the search for such continuities of belonging provides some solace and hope, something to cling onto and fight for.

Eric Hobsbawm commented on these imagined belongings: "After all, nobody can change the past from which one descends, and nobody can undo who one is. And how do men and women know that they belong to this community? Because they can define the others who do not belong. In other words, by xenophobia. And because we live in an era when all other human relations and values are in crisis, or at least somewhere in a journey towards unknown and uncertain destinations, xenophobia looks like becoming the mass ideology of the 20th century fin de siecle. What holds humanity together today is the denial of what the human race has in common."

Yet this is only a part of the picture. Identity or cultural politics has also taken much more positive forms - anti-racism, anti-casteism and anti-sexism. Nor should one forget ecology and peace movements, as well as the persisting struggles for emancipatory aims - the enduring politics of life chances! There is still a rich and open-ended agenda for the future. But there is something missing and it is a vital something.

Specific struggles against specific oppressions will remain as much a part of the global politics of the twenty-first century as they have been of the twentieth. But in so far as capitalism has ceased to be viewed as the principal enemy, and in so far as its dominant logic of oppression and exploitation is ignored, then the gains of progressive sectoral struggles, however welcome, will remain partial and limited as well as constantly threatened with retreats. Even though it is virtually certain that well into the next century the world will experience mass poverty, burgeoning population-migration pressures and deepening ecological crises, these dilemmas will not on their own suffice to point a way out of the threatening



morass that is the continuity of capitalism itself. For that to happen the appeal of an alternative global and systemic vision - one that represents a transcendence of capitalism - will have to be resurrected. The only name so far given to such a transcending vision has been socialism. But that vision and the understanding of socialism which underpinned it will have to be significantly reformulated and sounder strategies for its realisation will have to be pursued. And there can be no guarantee that this is achievable.

Marx was mistaken. History can set tasks for humanity which it may not be able to fulfil! The history of the twentieth century has set problems which we must try to resolve but without any blind confidence that we will be able to do so. Yet the promissory note first issued with the advent of the Enlightenment stated that in a broad and general sense history could now be directed. Indeed, there would be cumulative human progress, i.e. ever greater social and individual emancipation. After the contradictory and tumultuous experiences of the twentieth century, a more sober judgement requires that the 'would' of cumulative progress be replaced by a 'could'. This is still saying a great deal. That promissory note of early modernity can still be redeemed. There is still everything to fight for.

This article is an abridged version of a chapter in Achin Vanaik's *India in a Changing World*, a booklet in Orient Longman's invaluable 'Tracts for the Times' series, available from Orient Longman, 1/24 Asif Ali Road, New Delhi 110002.

Clause IV - union update

DESPITE BLAIR'S best efforts many trade unions have already made it clear that they will support Clause IV at the special conference on 29th April.

UCATT, the building workers' union, has the clause written into its own constitution. ASLEF, the train drivers' union, reaffirmed its enthusiasm for Clause IV at its conference.

The NUM will of course be at the forefront of the battle for common ownership, joined by the Bakers' Union and the FBU.

With early indications showing heavy backing for Clause IV among the Constituency Labour Parties, it looks like Blair will have to rely on the bigger unions to carry through his sabotage.

USDAW, the shopworkers' union, is the only big player to hold its conference before 29th April; resolutions have been submitted supporting the Clause and these stand a good chance of being carried. The USDAW leadership has pledged itself to support Blair, but this stand could prove somewhat premature.

The TGWU, with a left majority on its executive, has now set out its stall, with a demand for a commitment to public ownership. This Union is a key battleground which will determine the fate of Clause IV. This call presents Blair with more problems. His response has been to accuse Morris of being "confused".

It was no surprise to see Roger Lyons, the fundamentalist Blairite general secretary of MSF, throw what little weight he has behind the drive to dump Clause IV. No surprise, that is except to the regional officers of MSF who had not been consulted before Lyons' press release left his word processor. In a forced climb-down, the like of which has not been seen since ... well, not since David Blunkett caved in two weeks previously, the MSF head office has now stated that no executive decision over Clause IV will be taken until 27th February. So democracy rules in MSF - but only just.

Meanwhile, John Edmonds, the GMB general secretary, has been equivocating, trying to use the controversy as a bargaining chip with the Party leaders, but is likely to back them in the end. The GMB, like other unions, is carrying out a consultation exercise but it is unlikely this will reach fruition before Blair reveals his new clause to the world on 15th March. That means consultation results will be rendered meaningless and conference delegations will still have to hammer out their positions before 29th April.

This is where the fun could really start. Because of OMOV each member of a union delegation carries so many thousand votes and, in theory, is entitled to vote whichever way he or she chooses.

If that happens Blair will be in deep trouble as there will undoubtedly be a substantial number of delegates from both the GMB and MSF who will prefer to use their individual 'block' votes for Clause IV.

UNION NOTEBOOK

TRADE

Happy New Year to all the workers - from your caring Government.

The TUC has warned that people who are seriously injured at work are in danger of being left without compensation following new Government regulations announced during the Christmas recess.

From the beginning of January this year companies with several subsidiaries will only have to take out insurance cover with a total liability of £2 million in case of work-related injury and ill-health. Previously each subsidiary had to be separately insured for a minimum of £2 million by parent companies.

Trade unions have long argued that even this figure, set in 1971, is too low and have suggested a more realistic cover should be £10 million.

John Monks, General Secretary of the TUC, said, "This step backwards heralds a bad start to the New Year for workers. The Government should be ensuring that companies take out adequate insurance cover. That is not a substitute for a proper health and safety programme at work but it is a vital fall-back in the event of a disaster. And it benefits both employers and employees."

Stuart Bell, Labour's spokesperson on Insurance in the Trade and Industry Front Bench team, could not be contacted to ascertain Labour's position.

Banking union BIFU has attacked TSB's plans to close 200 branches.

The bank, privatised by the Tories and led by the president of the British Bankers' Association, Sir Nicholas Goodison, has also announced record pre-tax profits of £504 million.

BIFU's assistant secretary John Townsend said: "The closures are crazy economics and bad customer relations." The TSB got rid of 1,000 workers last year.

The Greater London Association of Trades Councils is holding a conference on full employment on Saturday, 25th February at Congress House, London, priced at only £2 (free for concessions). To register or for further details please write to Kathy Pick, 243 Felsham Road, London SW15 1BD.

The TUC is launching its own television programme, which will go out every Monday at 5.45 am until the autumn. It will be broadcast as part of the BBC 'Select' series and aims to reach 300,000 trade union lay representatives.

TUTV will cost the TUC £100,000 and follows similar ventures by the Royal College of Nursing and MSF, both of which met with modest success.

The Tories are about to repeal seven pieces of health and safety legislation and something like 100 sets of regulations which makes the publication of a new pamphlet on health and safety rights and how to use them in the workplace by the Labour Research Department timely indeed.

Health and Safety Law - a Guide for Union Reps can be obtained from LRD, 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HF Price £2.65.

Tyneside trade union officials are calling for a national day of action on March 22nd.

After being faced with projected cuts of £20 million over the next three years - £7 million in the next financial year alone - local government workers across Tyneside have decided enough is enough.

The joint NUT/UNISON initiative aims to unite all those across the country who want to stand up against the Tories' latest assault on the public sector.

In the latest pension fund abuses to come to light BT, one of Britain's largest employers, had to increase benefits by £200 million after union legal action confirmed that a surplus was concealed from members. Also Nuclear Electric failed to consult properly with elected member trustees over a plan to use part of its £114 million surplus to fund redundancies. See page 18 for the Tories' big attack on our pension rights.

Over half of all part-time workers are on poverty pay. More than half of all part-time workers (3.2 million out of a total of 5.9 million) earn less than the Lower Earnings Limit for national insurance contributions, currently £57 per week.

Postal workers win illegal strike

ON JANUARY 19th and 20th, 13,000 London postal workers defied Tory anti-trade union laws, their own UCW officials and the leaders of the Labour Party. And they won.

In excess of 15 million letters were held up during a lightening action called after the introduction of the Computer-Assisted Delivery Revision system. This is an ultra-modern version of a time-and-motion monitor.

The system was accepted nationally by the UCW last year, and Camden became one of the first offices in Britain to introduce it. Limited unofficial actions have taken place over the last month, culminating in an official ballot for a one hour stoppage on Thursday, 19th January. The result was a walkout of all sorting office staff between 6am and 7am that day.

In an all too predictable response from management - when in doubt, stick the boot in - workers were told to sign new contracts containing a no-strike agreement and obedience clauses.

One hundred workers refused to sign and were immediately suspended. In a marvellous show of solidarity the remaining 1250 staff followed them out of the gates.

Not surprisingly the Post Office went to court and won an injunction against the strikers. This only strengthened the resolve on the picket lines.

Alan Johnson and the UCW hierarchy rapidly distanced themselves from their members.

Then against all odds justice was done. On Saturday 21st January the Post Office climbed down. Through reasoned argument and direct action the postal workers secured the assurances necessary to enable a full return to work, thus highlighting the power of solidarity and the uselessness of the marsh mallow class warriors in positions of power and influence in the Labour Party and the UCW.

Blair's own goal

Dave Hammond writes:

Tony Blair's speech at a Sports Writers' Association event in honour of Stanley Matthews was breathtaking in its audacity. Saying that footballers are over-paid and the transfer market is inflated is an easy goal to score. But for Blair to make the point is like Julian Dicks accusing Vinnie Jones of being a dirty player.

In a capitalist society sport obviously takes on a commercial appearance and certainly there is a lot of money in football. For Manchester United to pay £7m pounds for the services of Andy Cole suggests that somebody within that organisation has asserted that the club can afford it and it is a good investment. Cole, as a working man with a short career, has quite rightly employed someone to negotiate as good a deal as possible for himself - rather like trade union representatives used to do in the old days.

The over-commercialisation of football is not a Tory phenomenon. Long before the Tories' election success in 1970 clubs were marketing silk scarves, records and replica shirts. George Best was marketing a revolutionary boot with side lacing long before Reebok existed.

What was most outrageous about Blair's speech was not the fact that he really knows nothing about sport and working class culture. It was the fact that he wanted to bemoan footballers' wages, claiming that the stars have lost touch with their roots and that football is growing away from its working class base. Blair himself is paid very large amounts of money and is absolutely divorced from the people he claims to champion. Graft (in the footballing sense) is a foreign word to him and I can assure you that, over-paid as he is, Andy Cole is far more in tune and in touch with his roots and his followers than the self-seeking Prime Minister-in-waiting who has added new meaning to the term 'dishonesty'.

Dave Hammond is author of *Foul Play*, a book on the politics of sport, and editor of *South East London Sportscene*.

In December Frank Johnson began his twentieth year in prison for a crime he did not commit. Billy Power of the Birmingham Six led a picket of the Home Office demanding "Justice for Frank". The campaign to free Frank was launched in the pages of *Briefing* two and a half years ago. Contact: Free Frank Johnson, c/o Green Ink, Archway Mall, London N19.





Older and poorer

One day, we'll all be pensioners. Lorna Grist urges the left to wake up to the dangers in the Government's latest assault on workers' rights.

THE NEW Pensions Bill now in the House of Lords aims to set up a new regulatory framework to prevent another Maxwell fraud and to equalise the state pension age at 65. Its provisions are inadequate to achieve the former and its proposals for equalisation will leave most women worse off than they are now.

The Bill also contains proposals to alter the arrangements for contracting-out occupational schemes from SERPS and ending the guaranteed protection against inflation. The Government has admitted that state provision will still be needed for the most vulnerable but this Bill is part of a long-term plan to end state provision for the majority, thus giving the Tories' friends in the pension industry more profits.

Far from being an exception Maxwell was one of many who seem to think that pension funds are just another source of investment funds or another way to pad out dividends. In most cases schemes have no employee members among the trustees, leaving the company free to make arbitrary changes without consultation or to take contribution holidays. When firms go bankrupt pension schemes often turn out to be inadequately safeguarded.

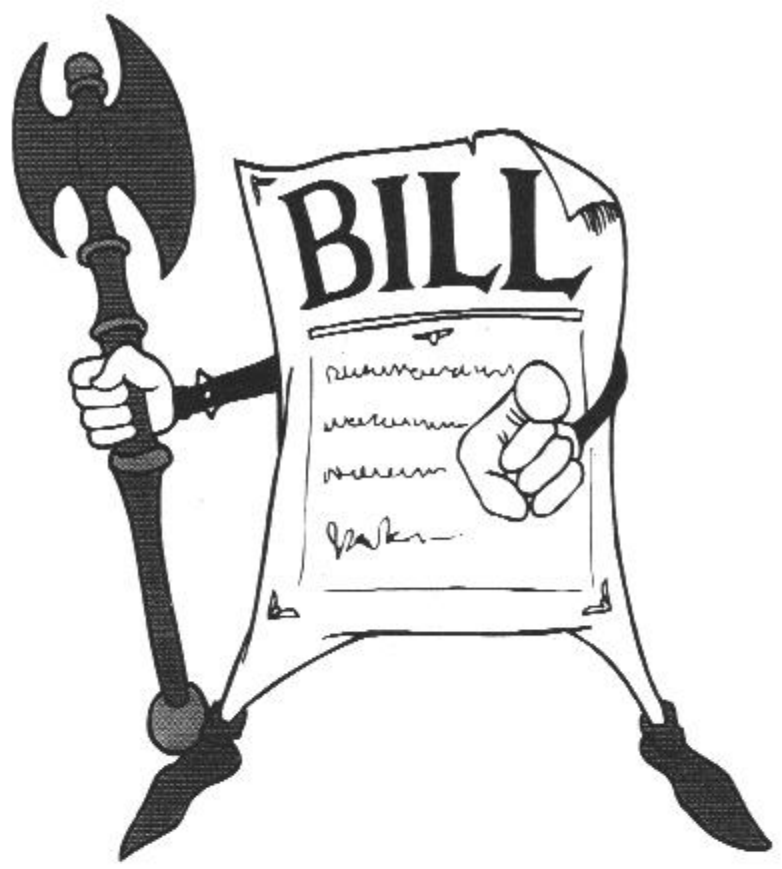
What is needed is strong representation on boards of trustees and training for the trustees. Above all there should be a firm regulatory framework and an independent regulator who holds the paper work for all the schemes so preventing another Maxwell using trust funds for the wrong ends. The Bill provides for none of this or does so only inadequately.

The Bill abolishes the Guaranteed Minimum Pension that ensures that every pensioner in an occupational scheme receives the same pension he or she would have obtained from SERPS. Changes in the way state pension rises are calculated mean that its value is being whittled away.

The main reason for equalisation at 65 is to save the Treasury money - up to £5 billion every year on its own estimates. However, it has cited a number of other justifications: increasing longevity, the greater burdens on a smaller number of workers (the demographic argument), women's growing economic activity and the costs of equalising at 60.

Research by trade union actuaries and the Equal Opportunities Commission has exposed these arguments as mistaken.

Despite the increasing numbers of women entering the work force their patterns of work are still quite different from those of men. Most men work full time and remain in employment throughout their lives. Childless women may follow the same pattern, although they are more likely than men to have to care for older relatives and to experience employment discrimination as they get older. Typically, women who have children give up work altogether for a few years or work part-time for up to ten years. Even if they return to full-time work, they may have to start working part-time later, because they will be expected to take care of elderly relatives or their infirm husbands. The advent of 'care in the community' has increased the burdens on women.



Many women in work are badly paid and often do not earn enough to gain credits towards a pension, much less to afford to pay into an occupational or private pension. At the moment women need to work for 39 years to accumulate credits for a full pension and this will go up to 44 years under the new proposals.

However, if they are not working because of child or other types of care responsibilities, this period can currently be reduced by up to 20 years - this is known as Home Responsibilities Protection. This recognition of women's caring role was introduced by a Labour government. Although women will now be expected to work until they are 65 HRP will only be increased by two years. In any event, the Bill should have taken the opportunity to replace HRP with positive credits towards a pension.

The current pension provisions are based upon the assumption made by Beveridge that women would be dependent on their husbands. When their husbands die, divorce them or go into long-term residential care, women who in the past elected to pay the "married women's contribution" may be left in great poverty. Nothing in this Bill will change this situation. In addition, all the moves towards reducing the role of state pensions will affect women disproportionately as they are much more dependent on state pensions than are men.

Even some back-bench Tory peers have expressed deep misgivings about this Bill which is so badly drawn up that the Government itself will have to initiate numerous amendments. Because it is a complex issue and one that few people think about until they themselves near pension age it is not one that normally arouses great passions. However the reality is that pensions are important to us all and we must watch what happens to this Bill with great care. Unfortunately the PLP is going to be hamstrung in its opposition if it is not prepared to make definite commitments to spend money on state pensions and to set up proper regulatory bodies to safeguard occupational pension funds. ❑

Promises, promises

In September the fourth United Nations world conference on women takes place in Beijing. But, as Leonora Lloyd reports, unless you're involved in a one of the women's organisations taking part, the chances are you've heard nothing about it.



FOR OVER a year now the Government has been preparing a report on women in Britain to take to the UN conference. In October a European regional preparatory conference was held in Vienna. As well as the official delegation (headed by that well-known feminist, Ann Widdecombe), there was a strong non-governmental presence preparing for the parallel conference also being held at Beijing for NGOs. The Government's report presents an idealised version of women's position in this country only hinting at the many remaining problems such as the huge increase in poverty among women and children.

These conferences, which take place every five or ten years, provide important opportunities for women to network on an international level and provide a platform where women can hold their governments to account for their lack of progress in advancing equality agendas, and where women can learn from any successes in other countries. In many other European countries the conference has been used by the media to initiate wide-ranging discussions. In Britain the press has been silent.

At the European preparatory meeting the Government committed itself "at the highest political level" to a 'Platform of Action' whose measures include active promotion of "equality and partnership among women and men" in all areas of public and private life.

The distance between reality and promise is laughable. For example, our Government has agreed to take "urgent" action to eliminate all forms of violence against women. That's the promise and it's an inspiring one. The reality so far has been a two-week campaign costing a few thousand pounds. The Government has done nothing to implement the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women which would have committed it to a national plan of action including the education of men and boys. The platform encourages men "to assume full responsibility as equal partners" in the home including opportunities for parental leave. That's the dream. The reality is that our Government has refused to sign a European directive allowing men to take three months paternity leave. The platform has 37 pages of analysis and commitments which the British Government is breaking even before the ink on the page has dried.

There is also argument about the venue. There are those who argue that holding the conference in China will highlight the abuse of women's rights in that country and in Tibet and force the Chinese government to consider reform. Others including the Campaign for Free Tibet argue that the Chinese authorities will clamp down hard to prevent demonstrations and will keep the local population well away from the conference. However the problem is that it is Asia's turn to host the conference and the Asian countries selected China. To boycott the conference means boycotting a whole continent!

What can we in this country do to promote the Platform of Action and push the Government into honouring its promises? Individuals and organisations need to write to their MPs asking them to commit themselves to the Platform and to ensure that as many people as possible are made aware of its proposed measures. It is also important for organisations to promote the proposals by writing about them and organising meetings particularly in the lead-up to the Beijing conference itself.

Since 1979 the position of women in this country has worsened; with the end of the wages councils, women's wages have actually decreased. Despite the fiasco of the Child Support Act a smaller percentage of women are getting financial help from absent fathers than 20 years ago. Child care - the single most important requirement if mothers are to be economically independent - has always been inadequate in this country and is now actually being reduced because local authorities have suffered such swingeing cuts in funding.

We must use the opportunities presented by the 1995 conference to explain the reality of women's position in this country and campaign for the very basic platform of action to which our Government has agreed.

Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network

International Day School

Saturday 11th February 1995
10.30am - 5.30pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square
Holborn, London

Creche available
Registration £7waged £3 unwaged
Further details:
SCGSN International Dayschool
c/o Pete Firmin,
1 Garfield House,
Canterbury Road, London NW6

The Gingreening of America?

Not so long ago, the modernisers hailed Bill Clinton's election victory as a model for Labour. The US President's political eclipse certainly has lessons for Labour but they're not the ones Tony Blair is likely to draw as is shown by these extracts from the current issue of the American socialist monthly, *Against the Current*.

THE 1994 election offered a striking combination. It was the most ideological election in recent national history - which, in itself, ought to be a positive rather than negative thing - yet at the same time, it presented the least substantive choice and probably the greatest level of personal viciousness of all time. The reason is that the entire left side of the idcological "debate" was missing.

It is not surprising that the more coherently right-wing party, which had the further advantage of pretending to run "against Washington", succeeded in bringing its voter base to the polls. As for the party in power - with nothing to run on except two years of virtual failure to produce any of the reforms it promised and offering a feeble echo of the right-wing opposition rather than a meaningful argument against it - its voting base was disproportionately represented among the five-eighths of the electorate who did not vote at all. Indeed this was the first election since 1970 in which more Republicans than Democrats voted.

The result was obvious at state as well as national levels. In New York, for example, research published in the *Village Voice* shows that 100,000 fewer African Americans voted for Mario Cuomo for governor than had voted for David Dinkins in last year's mayoral race. They stayed home and without their votes Cuomo had simply no chance. Add that kind of dynamic to the mass abstentions among white working class Perot-voters on the national level, and the Democrats in November 1994 were road kill.

There is no point dredging out the old tired rhetoric denouncing heartless Republican policies. We heard it all during the Reagan-Bush era from Democratic leaders like Teddy Kennedy and Mario Cuomo refusing even to admit they were liberals and whining about policies they hardly resisted or even initiated themselves. It's no more edifying now that these hacks have been run over by the bus carrying Newt Gingrich and Bob Dole to power.

The fact remains, however, that the debris of this administration remains in the road occupying space until someone removes it. Even out of power in Congress and with its executive power basically crippled the Democratic Party continues to prevent the political self-organisation of the potential majority for progressive change.

It does this most importantly by retaining the institutional support of the ever weaker leadership of organised labour. The struggle within the labour movement to build a base of support for a new independent party for working people - an effort that is being spear-headed by Labor Party Advocates - has become more vital than ever, along with the kind of grassroots effort represented by the New Progressive Party in Wisconsin, the Greens in several states, the "Campaign for a New Tomorrow" and local campaigns.

The so-called conservative tide is not irresistible. The fact that well-rooted progressive independent politics can succeed, when it runs in its own name, has been demonstrated once again by the successful re-election of the socialist congressman Bernie Sanders in Vermont. Although Sanders has been subjected to criticism in the left press - some of it justified, as in the case of his "lesser-evil" vote for Clinton's hideous crime bill - his re-election constitutes an important symbolic victory for the left nationally provided that we learn the necessary lessons from it.

The lesson is that it's time to get the debris out of the road, to create a party that openly puts working class, multi-racial America ahead of corporate profit. That task in part depends on a commitment to serious independent electoral work - but far more upon active social resistance in a very nasty period that is now upon us.

Against the Current, Letter from the Editors

Take their law

Jim Lauderdale, Business Agent for SEIU Local 660 in Los Angeles, looks back on the campaign against California's anti-immigrant Proposition 187 and forward to future resistance.

PROPOSITION 187 passed but one thing remains certain: the voice of those whom the right wing and the neo-liberals sought to make marginal, invisible and silent will continue to speak with power, clarity and conviction.

The campaign gave the lie to any myth that those most affected by 187's draconian provisions had any intention of being silenced. On 16th October a demonstration of 100,000 people, mostly immigrant workers and supporters, filled the streets in front of Los Angeles City Hall in opposition to Proposition 187.

This historic outpouring which surpassed even the largest Vietnam era marches in Los Angeles was organised by several pro-immigrant rights coalitions, the union-based Los Angeles Organising Committee to Defeat 187

The many crises of Clinton

Did November's elections for the US Senate really represent a mass rejection of left-wing ideas? AJ Julius and Harry Brighouse, active members in Wisconsin's New Progressive Party, explode a few media cliches.

THE DEMOCRATS turned right after 1972 and throughout the eighties. Party leaders chose less to oppose Reagan in the name of economic fairness or working-class living standards than to offer variants on his agenda. Their hopes lay in piecing together a coalition of capitalists disgruntled by Republican policy while recasting their own electoral appeal to fit a perceived white working-class rejection of racial equality and taxes. The party's conquest by centrist business groups begun in the mid-70s employers' offensive was completed by the Democratic Leadership Council coup of the mid-'80s.

The "economy, stupid" campaign of 1992 might seem to mark a departure from this course. The lingering effects of a severe cyclical downturn, a long-term decline in real wages, the erosion of job benefits and of the social wage, all lent urgency to "putting people first" - a campaign projecting job creation, public investment, universal health care, and progressive tax reform. To be sure, such pledges were invariably joined by "New Democrat" appeals to racism and anti-big government sentiment.

The liberals' high hopes for the administration turned largely on the popular vote rounded up by Clinton and the anticipation that it would lead him to implement the reform agenda whose promise apparently won him the election.

Did Clinton's 43% popularity represent the long-sought return of working-class affections to a Democratic presidential ticket? 1992 saw no significant rise in turnout by working-class voters. As for those who did vote, Ruy Teixeira has shown that among the crucial groups corresponding to the Reagan-Democratic white working class, Clinton did no better, and in some cases much worse, than Democratic presidential candidates of the 1980s. Great numbers, especially among those hit hardest and longest by the decline in real wages, voted for Perot instead.

From the perspective of 1995 and the defection of Clinton voters witnessed now, it is hard to see 1992 as bucking the long trend of the Democratic Party's separation from a wistfully-recalled working-class base. Exit polls this time showed a sharp erosion of working-class Democratic voting accounting for much of the 1994 loss.

Democratic support among voters making less than $15,000 was down 7% from 1992; the decline in the Democratic vote among people making $15-30,000 was a full five points; union households showed a similar drop. Among all lower-income brackets 1994 continues a downward trend in Democratic voting that amounts to a drastic ten-point fall from 1982.

A record 20% identified themselves as "white born again Christians," casting 76% of their votes for Republicans, suggesting that such cultural conservatives made up a much higher percentage of the working class vote in 1994 than during the 1980s. Clinton's failure to deliver on economic problems kept many other low-paid voters at home.

Against the Current

Available from 7012 Michigan Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48210, USA; overseas subscription: $25 for one year.

and shove it

and hundreds of community groups from the Latino, Asian and Pacific Islander and Indian sub-continent communities.

Under the provisions of Ballot Initiative 187 public school teachers, public health professionals and other citizens would be legally required to report suspected "illegals" to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

As of January 1995 up to 400,000 students currently enrolled in the public schools will be subject to a 90-day notification of intent to dismiss prior to deportation to a school in their country of origin. Among teachers and health workers there is sizeable sentiment for open resistance and mass non-compliance campaigns. They have official union support among the heavily unionised workers in both sectors. Other semi-public and private sector unions also realise the disastrous consequences that passage of this initiative implies for organising and bargaining in the LA area.

For these reasons the organisation of the 16th October demonstration had a high profile among public sector unions like Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 660, the United Teachers Union of Los Angeles, and service unions like the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Local 11. Private sector unions ranging from the ILGWU and UFCW to UE were also represented not only numerically but as organising resources.

It was in the wake of the demonstration that a substantial list of newspapers and even some of the Democrats most responsible for contributing to anti-immigrant hysteria like Senator Dianne "Send the Army to the Border" Feinstein came out against 187. Most important a popular movement had been born.

In the aftermath of the march hundreds of high schools state-wide (but mostly in LA) experienced walk-outs. Rallies, teach-ins, marches and walk-outs involving 10,000 students followed one another in dizzying succession.

The power and dynamism of this movement will be tested in the aftermath of the election. But it will not be silenced. In that, regardless of the vote, lies the hope of victory.

War, what war?

Viki Bakic, born and raised in former Yugoslavia, takes a sceptical look at both sides of the brutal conflict.

WHEN THE killing stops, the physically and morally battered people in the ruins of what was Yugoslavia will still be forced to live within the same relatively limited geographical space.

And one question is always present. Was this civil war really inevitable? And which side is to blame? Only one, both or none? Most of the historians are saying that the answer for what is happening now lies in the recent past.

A century before the Yugoslav state was created the South Slavs, former subjects of the Ottoman and Hapsburg empires, resolved to build a union, a single nation. It was assumed that the two different religions, Orthodox and Catholic, would be submerged and that the South Slavs would find more to unite them to divide them.

Under the shadow of World War II the British-educated Prince Regent, Paul, realized that without making concessions to the Croats (who were under the rule of Ante Pavelic installed by Hitler) his threatened kingdom could not survive. He made a deal with Vladko Macek, the leader of the Croatia Peasant Party, giving the Croats substantial autonomy. After a visit from Hitler Prince Paul promised him that Yugoslavia would join the Axis. But returning, he was promptly deposed by a Serbian military garrison responding to public opinion which was pro-Allies and anti-German. From then on Hitler bracketed the Serbs with the Jews as people to be destroyed.

Hitler gave Bosnia to Pavelic and provided two SS divisions and a local militia. They both wore on their uniform the chequered insignia, a traditional emblem of the Ustasha. Today it's the banner of independent Croatia.

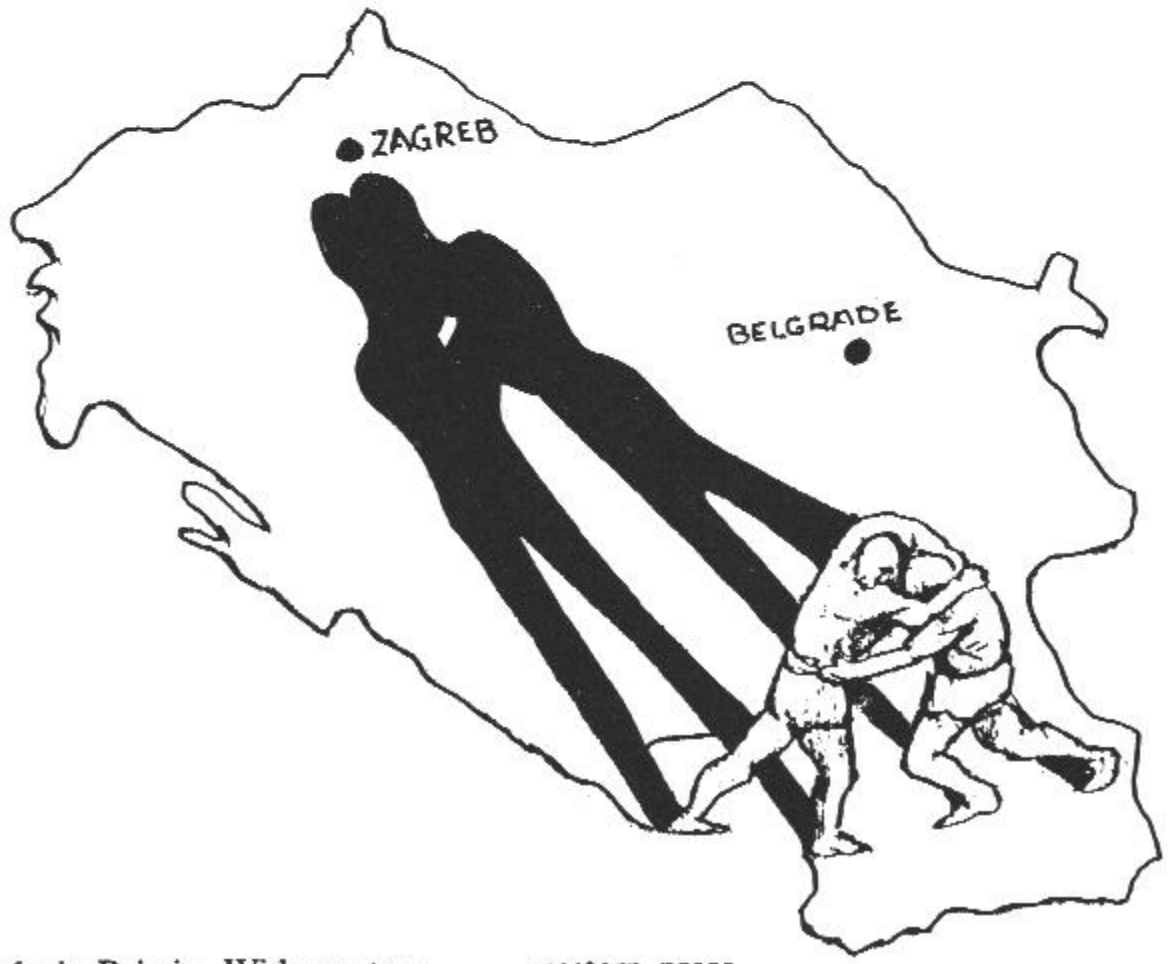
The Serbs expected that the western armies would help them but the Red Army beat them to it. The overwhelming majority rallied to Tito's partisans. The way was open for 45 years of Communist rule under the direction of Josip Biroz Tito who used the epithet "federation" to identify his highly central personal dictatorship.

After the breach with Stalin Tito could do no wrong. His stand was cheered, particularly in Britain. With western material and financial support, the Yugoslav army became the second largest and one of the best equipped forces in Europe. Before Tito's death in 1980 he was already bemoaning the "eight little autarchies" (six republics and two autonomous provinces) for ruining the country.

Two men have been blamed the most for not stopping the bloodshed - the Croat and the Serbian leaders.

Franjo Tudjman - although he was a general with the partisans - is anti-Serb, and was jailed by Tito on nationalist charges. In his concept of a unitary Croat state there would be no special status for the Serb minority. The killing started when, in the summer of 1990 he sent his followers to take over the police stations and town halls previously manned by Serbs. In his internal policies TV and press are rigorously controlled and a racialist ideology has been revived.

Slobodan Milosevic - mostly described as an artful and ruthless Communist boss - set himself up as the champion of Serbdom. He pledged to defend Serbian minorities outside Serbia. Blamed for trying to manipulate the presidential elections he has been pilloried in the western press.



Although the pressure is growing for more forceful international intervention in Bosnia it remains difficult either to justify or to organise an armed intervention. At present the arguments for and against are well balanced. There is a national desire to bring the suffering to an end and a growing international desire to stop the conflict before it gets worse. But it is questionable whether more powerful outside intervention would in fact stop the war.

In the absence of a compromise solution to the basic political problems the fighting will continue. More people will lose their homes, their land, their families, many without ever really knowing why. ❑

Socialist Campaign Group MPs, Jeremy Corbyn and Tony Benn, have sent an urgent letter to the Russian Ambassador protesting at the continued bombardment of the city of Grozny by air and ground forces and the attacks on people all over the Chechen Republic. Their letter complains of the terrible loss of civilian and military lives and emphasises that they support the right to self-determination by the peoples of Chechnya.

Out of the death camps...

In confronting the holocaust, particularly its consequences for both Jews and Palestinians, political analysis is needed as much as human compassion. Charlie Van Gelderen provides both.

THE FIFTIETH anniversary of the 'discovery' of the Nazi death camps is being commemorated on a wide scale in the media. In fact, their existence had been known to the British Foreign Office and US State Department for at least two years before the world was told. Nonetheless, it is right that post-war generations should be reminded of the evil which was Nazism. The systematic physical extermination of millions of Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, trade unionists, socialists, etc., must never be forgotten.

One of the most important historic consequences of the death camps was that it gave a great impulse to Zionism - the movement whose aim was the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

Up to the outbreak of World War I, the great majority of working class Jews were socialists. Jewish immigrants pioneered socialist organisations in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Latin America. After the Russian Revolution, with its promise to eliminate anti-semitism and other forms of racism, they turned to communism in their tens of thousands, especially in eastern European states like Poland and Lithuania, where anti-semitism was rife. Some, like the Paole Zionists, tried to combine their socialism with Zionism. It is no coincidence that the most powerful political party in Israel after the establishment of the Zionist state was the Labour Party which paid lip-service to socialism.

The failure of the socialist movement to overthrow capitalism in any of its heartlands, the coming to power of Hitler and the spread of anti-semitism throughout the world and the revival of anti-semitism in Stalinist Russia were the catalysts for Zionism. An extreme fringe group of Jews in Palestine of which Yizhak Shamir, later Israeli Prime Minister, was a militant member even tried to negotiate with Germany, via Damascus, then under Vichy rule, for help in liberating Britain from Palestine which they regarded as a top priority for Zionism.

For those who survived the holocaust, for the remnants of Jews in the countries which had been over-run by the Germans, Zionism, the establishment of a Jewish state, appeared to be the only solution. Because of the traditions of Judaism, with its annual intonation of 'Next year in Jerusalem' at the Passover, it had to be Palestine. Not only would a Jewish state be a haven from persecution but the re-construction of the Jews as a 'normal' people with the class divisions of capitalist society would erase the stereotype of the Jew as money-lender and extortionist. This they thought would eliminate anti-semitism.

Alas, this has not been the case. Anti-semitism is still virulent even in countries like Poland where the Jews have been reduced from millions to a few thousand; it thrives in the former Soviet Union; the formerly tolerant Muslim communities are now filled with hatred for the people who have driven tens of thousands of their co-religionists from their native land, Palestine, into exile. Israel can still only exist as an armed fortress. Its treatment of Palestinians provides fuel for all those who want to stoke anti-semitic fires.

But with the socialist movement in full retreat before the onslaught of capitalism, with the Jewish working class in the capitalist world now almost non-existent, Zionism will continue to provide the main focus for Jewish aspirations. This is part of the tragedy of our age, part of the retreat into barbarism which is the characteristic of this epoch. ❑

Briefing - your very own conference platform!

Send messages to the labour movement:

Labour Women's Conference

1st, 2nd April, Derby (copy deadline: 16th March);

Labour Special Conference on 29th April (copy deadline: 20th April);

May Day greetings (copy deadline: 20th April).

Rates: £10 per column inch, £30 1/8 page, £50 1/4 page.

Is McGuinness good for you?

Martin McGuinness who has been leading Sinn Fein delegates in their current talks with British Government representatives will be the Sinn Fein speaker at the annual Bloody Sunday march, to be held in Manchester on Saturday, 28th January. Other speakers will include Jeremy Corbyn, Bill Etherington, Sylvia Pye from Women Against Pit Closures and John Kelly, a relative of one of the victims of Bloody Sunday.

This will be the first speaking tour for McGuinness in Britain since the lifting of the exclusion order. He will also be appearing at meetings in London on the 26th January and Birmingham on the 27th.

REVIEWS

Anatomy of the enemy

Nick Stone of London Anti-Fascist Action reviews
The New Right in Britain,
by Mark Hayes, Pluto Press.

THE LEFT in Britain has spent much time debating the nature of Thatcherism. "Marxists" like Stuart Hall have focused on the hegemonic aspects of the New Right agenda and concluded that Thatcherism has proved attractive to both working and middle class voters because it has focused on individual liberty rather than propping up the "nanny state". The reality that individual liberty has come to mean the denial of the right to work or the right to a home, and that the machinery through which these rights have been denied has been the state in both local and national forms, seems to have passed over the well-heeled "Marxist" professors.

Mark Hayes, in contrast, has produced an examination of the key theoretical issues which is lucid and comprehensive. More than that, he's raised some awkward questions for the left. Hayes examines in detail the writings of New Right theorists like Roger Scruton and Peregrine Worsthorne, mapping out the authoritarian agenda which has defined the political terrain for 15 years. Worsthorne, at least, is refreshingly blunt. The primary purpose of Conservative political activity is, or ought to be, "the evolution and maintenance of a securely established ruling class with a justified sense of its own honourable superiority".

Scruton, Worsthorne and their co-thinkers in the Salisbury Group is predated by right-wing pressure groups like Tory Action, Common Cause and WISE and has fed into mainstream Conservative thinking through conduits such as Keith Joseph's Centre for Policy Studies.

The practical agenda of Thatcherism was the reversal of the post-1945 political consensus that "government ought to play a more positive and proactive role in the economy in order to ameliorate the worst excesses of capitalism". Thatcher, Joseph, Howe et al had concluded that the unleashing of the "worst excesses of capitalism" was the only guarantor of future profits, that what Geoffrey Howe called "the political over-strength" of the state was a fetter on the productive capacity of capital. Of course all of this involved a sleight of hand. The "political over-strength" of the state was cut back to allow a programme of privatisation; the reduction of public sector spending led to the creation of four million unemployed. But when the agenda was resisted - whether by miners, nurses, squatters, whoever - the "political over-strength" of the state was increased by repressive anti-union legislation and the militarisation of the police. As Scruton put it, "It is as possible for a conservative as it is for a socialist to be, should the need arise, totalitarian ... although it is not the height of wisdom to declare oneself."

So far so straightforward. "Maggie/Major - OUT" may well seem like a sufficient response at this stage but, as Hayes argues, the Thatcherite agenda wasn't shared only by Reagan in the USA and Kohl in Germany. It was embraced by social-democratic parties in office in France, Australia and New Zealand and out of office the political chameleons who head the British Labour Party.

Thus the real success of the New Right has been the extent to which it has forced its opponents to wear its colours. As we've seen in Italy if every politician offers a variation on the same solution then the ones with cleanest hands and the ones who seem most likely to implement their agenda are the ones who get the prize. We've seen already how in areas like Tower Hamlets the shared failures of Tory, Liberal and Labour let in the British National Party.

The lesson to be drawn from Hayes's excellent book is that the parties of the mainstream share a common ground. Major's agenda and Blair's are the same (in Worsthorne's words, to maintain "a world made in the image of the top dog with his values uppermost".) If the left's only response is to back (critically) the rose-tinted version it will be seen to share this agenda in practice. "Major Out - Blair in" is an inadequate response to 15 years of working class misery. If we want to see an end to the "pre-existing social order" which Scruton defends we have to establish a working class left as a political, social and physical force in its own right.

The Cause of Ireland

The Cause of Ireland,
by Liz Curtis, Beyond the Pale Publications,
£12.95 paperback.

Liz Curtis, a long-standing campaigner for British withdrawal from Ireland, has taken eight years to write *The Cause of Ireland* but the result amply justifies the effort.

The book is a radical, readable, exciting history of Ireland from the United Irishmen through to the War of Independence and partition. It is packed with detail, particularly in its portrait of the latter period where the depth of nationalist sentiment in Ireland is contrasted to the second-rate complacency of political leaders in imperialist Britain.

The role of women in the struggle, usually overlooked in earlier histories, receives welcome attention. Overall *The Cause of Ireland* is an impressive tract which more than lives up to its advance notices.

Mosley told to 'fork off'

Kevin Flack reviews
In Excited Times *by Nigel Todd,*
Bewick Press/Tyne &
Wear Anti-Fascist Association, £5.95.

THIS IS one of the few studies of anti-fascism published in recent years to reveal something new. It provides fresh detail of the activities in the north east in the 1930s and a new analysis of the need to confront the fascists physically as well as ideologically. It is also noteworthy for the welcome enthusiasm of the author.

As the working class fought back against the sell-out of Labour leader Ramsay MacDonald and the reactionary policies of the National Government, both the left - in the form of the ILP and the Communist Party - and the far right - in the form of Mosley's British Union of Fascists - made gains. At first, the Communist Party made a point of debating with the fascists, but as the fascists gained ground and the anti-working class nature of their policies became clear (to say nothing of a change in policy from Moscow), the Communists joined the united front resistance to the fascists. The Anti-Fascist League was formed, and mass demonstrations took over fascist points and disrupted rallies.

Nigel Todd has discovered links between security service plans to repel possible Nazi invasion and the targeting of a prominent Conservative Party individual believed to be the former Secretary of State for Air, the Marquess of Londonderry. The book documents Londonderry's pro-Nazi views and activities and has discovered M15/ Special Branch documents that appear to relate to the need to silence him.

Physical resistance to Mosley was not confined to Cable Street and Bermondsey in London, but was part of the labour movement politics of the era. In May 1934, two nights of street fighting erupted following Mosley's attempts to recruit in Newcastle and Gateshead.

Recruits came to the fascists from the labour movement as much as from the Conservatives, but it was from within the labour movement - and particularly the organised unemployed workers - that the strongest resistance came, in the form of the 'defence corps' and 'greyshirts' of the non-party political Anti-Fascist League. As soon as BUF rallies were announced, anti-fascist publicity was produced and crowds of thousands turned up to drown out the loudspeakers and run the fascists out of town. On one occasion at Town Moor, Newcastle, Mosley was severely heckled and met with "a volley of small stones and an old dinner fork".

As now, any defeat on the streets for the fascists was followed by splits and the formation of rival organisations. BUF members were arrested for drunkenness, house-breaking and theft.

The book chronicles the international dimension of the struggle, with practical support for the Spanish Civil War being organised among the ranks of the anti-fascists by, among others, future Labour MP Leah Manning. Merchant seamen took strike action against shipments to Franco and many volunteers from the area laid down their lives in the defence of the Spanish Government.

Language of oppression

Mike Phipps reviews
World Orders, *Old and New,*
Pluto Press, £12.95

How far can language and the meaning of words be distorted in the pursuit of political ends? Noam Chomsky, one of America's foremost radical writers, is also a Professor of Linguistics, and therefore well-qualified to judge. His answer, examining current US policy in World Orders Old and New, is "anything goes."

Thus the North American Free Trade Agreement is really aimed at protecting US markets. GATT too can be violated as long as it's to the US's advantage. In fact American interests are the only constant in the convoluted propaganda used by the Government and echoed in the mainstream media to justify its actions. Hence the 1989 re-election of Noriega in Panama became the pretext for the American invasion, despite the fact that Noriega stole this election with less violence than in 1984, when he received congratulations from no less than Reagan himself. By now Noriega had become a key enemy in the war on 'drugs and terrorism', while government and media passed over in silence the terrorism and drug racketeering run for years by the CIA.

The 1990 Nicaraguan elections, lost by the Sandinistas, were hailed as a "victory for US fair play", hardly an accurate description of the ten-year covert war of terror financed by Washington, including the internationally-condemned mining of Nicaragua's harbours. Colombia, now hailed for its "political stability" and the leading recipient of US military aid in Latin America, is also the continent's leading terrorist nation. Here the security forces, trained by US advisors in methods directly traceable to the Nazis, routinely murder oppositionists, human rights activists and just ordinary 'undesirables' - street children, prostitutes and homosexuals. The military enjoy the fruits of a growing trade by selling the body parts of their victims for organ transplants in the developed world.

The end of the Cold War found the US in search of new enemies. It remains, argues Chomsky, "a violent and lawless state". Its main target has become the Third World, or more specifically the Third World's poor. Chomsky's analysis is based on class, not on nations. Even in the USA, child poverty is up by 50% in twenty years, and Britain, Australia and New Zealand all show a widening gap between rich and poor. Only in countries such as Japan, where pure neo-liberal free-market ideas have been eschewed, is the trend being bucked. But for countries most exposed to the neo-liberal offensive, massive long-term destitution is becoming the norm.

How far can this go? In January 1994 global unemployment reached 30%. Yet in the same month the Mayan uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, showed the strength of popular resistance among the marginalised and the potential for a sustained struggle against exploitation.



Hoist on their own press release

Shortly after being appointed Shadow Education Minister **David Blunkett**, writing in one of Sheffield's local tabloids, attacked "left-talking parents who failed to back their own local school". Of course **Tony** and **Cherie** don't read that paper but they must be familiar with their own local *Islington Gazette* which reported back in September that the Blairs would be sending their children to local schools.

...the Man in the Moon... throughout the coun-

Blair's choice

LABOUR leader TONY BLAIR, who launched his party's education policy with a pledge that bad teachers would be sacked, has entrusted the schooling of his own children to an Islington school.

Mr Blair, aged 41, and his barrister wife Cherie have three children – Kathryn, six, Nicholas, eight, and Euan, 10 – who go to St Joan of Arc, a Catholic primary school, in Northolme Road, Highbury.

In a recent interview, Mr Blair said: "I don't want my children to be taught by bad teachers."

Islington Council welcomed the fact that Mr Blair regarded one of the borough's schools as good enough for his own children – and that he had not sent them outside the borough.

...is ... to ... r... bu... sin... ca... ti... t... t... co... to... cl... S... -A... Co... was... go...

***Islington Gazette*, September 15th**

Progressive taxation?

"A rise in VAT would have hit stately **home owners** harder than anyone else. You need more heating as you head up the kingdom away from Essex. Luckily, we have thick walls and our own wood."

*- **Sir Nicholas Fairbairn**, Tory MP, speaking from his Scottish home, Fordell Castle.*

Making of a Eurocrat

'**Kinnock** kills talk of Brussels job' - headline for a *Guardian* article by **Patrick Wintour**, 15th October 1992.

"**Neil Kinnock** yesterday acknowledged that he will not be made a European Community commissioner when he told a meeting in the Rhondda, South Wales, that he had never wanted the job."

Cliffite Hodge flips lid

Over 120 Labour Party members packed the Red Rose Club in north London to hear MPs **Jeremy Corbyn** and **Margaret Hodge** debate Clause IV.

Hodge claimed that the experience of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (whose economies she defined as "state capitalist" - prompting speculation that there was an SWP mole in the hall) showed that common ownership couldn't work. Citing her many years working in co-operatives (Price Waterhouse?) she claimed that they too couldn't work. Apparently all that can work is "regulation" - though **Hodge** had no answer to those speakers who cited its many failures in recent times.

Hodge did however declare that she wanted to see Labour's commitments to "full employment and a minimum wage" become "a central part of our constitution". You can bet she didn't consult Blair on that one.

Of the 14 speakers called from the floor, 12 spoke in favour of retaining Clause IV and only two against. One of these was **Stephen Twigg**, **Hodge**'s Personal Assistant.

Hodge has never been able to stomach being on the losing end of an argument and in her reply from the platform she flipped her lid, accusing all and sundry of not really wanting a Labour election victory. For most of those present (a fair cross-section of local Party members) this simply confirmed her intellectual bankruptcy.

Moral guardians

Who said the **Advertising Standards Authority** has no teeth?

To promote a forthcoming screening of the film *Indecent Proposal* **BSkyB** ran a series of posters around London. These featured a photograph of a woman's thighs covered only by a pair of flimsy briefs accompanied by the headline: "The price is right so come on down".

For this blatant piece of exploitation of women the ASA meted out stern punishment.

BSkyB have been told off!

Elder statesman

Murray Elder, former Scottish Labour Party apparatchik brought down to London to act as **John Smith**'s fixer in the Party, has been sent packing by **Tony Blair**. He now plans to make the usual failed Labour Party hack's career move - into lobbying.

Lobby firms are coming under increasing scrutiny especially over the cash-for-questions scandal but Murray is unperturbed. "There is a legitimate role for the kind of public affairs company I am joining," he explained. Well, he would, wouldn't he?

Harriet's choice

The Guardian asked a number of women in the public eye to name their heroines. Amid nominations including Lorena Bobbitt and Alexandra Kollontai, one name stood out, **Patricia Hewitt**, nominated by her old NCCL subordinate **Hariet Harman**.

Hewitt, having failed to secure the top job at the Institute for Public Policy Research (the Labour modernisers' think tank), has found refuge like so many erstwhile Kinnock acolytes as a paid Parliamentary lobbyist.

School's out

At December's Tory Women's Conference, **Laura Etheridge**, a 15-year-old pupil from Rochester Grammar School, spoke out boldly in favour of Government policy on testing and criticised the opposition from "teachers, their unions and politicians".

As the debate took place on Thursday, December 1st, you could be forgiven for thinking young Laura should have been in school.

Imagine the media outrage if a state school had given a pupil time off for political activity!

Sporting gent

Tom Pendry, MP for Stalybridge and Hyde - that well-known sailing and boating stronghold just outside Manchester - was seen a couple of weeks ago collecting brochures from the Boat Show.

Labour's shadow minister for ball games walked past the sporty £400 and £500 canoes straight to the £300,000 motor cruisers. Offensive suggestions that his expenses should be checked will be not be tolerated in this magazine!

Warning to MPs

"Labour is losing its values" is a cry often heard especially from anyone who has just read the latest front bench speech. Unsurprising, perhaps, when you consider that some Labour front-benchers employ **researchers** and PAs who are not even Labour Party members. Notice is hereby given - if you are one of those MPs - you will be found and named.

Diminishing returns

"While we have been recruiting **new members** at an increasing rate, our total membership has unfortunately not been growing at the same rate. 8,990 members left, were lapsed or for other reasons were removed from our records in the past two months."

- Membership update to Labour's November NEC.

Antidote to chauvinism

Headline in the *Sydney Morning Herald* after Australia's Second Test victory of the **Ashes** cricket tour: "Easy Boys - it was only the English you beat".

Gould-dust

The Belgian paper *De Morgan* has hailed PR guru **Philip Gould** as a "visionary".

Gould's track record is certainly extraordinary. The man helped lose Labour the last two general elections, helped the **Sandinistas** lose power in Nicaragua, and, working for the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, helped it to a net loss of seats despite the British Labour Party's success.

Surely it's time to consign this fraud (now working for Tony Blair) to the waste disposal unit of history.

New Labour, New Britain, New Editor!

1995 sees a new face at the *Briefing* office with the appointment of Martyn Fryer as our new editorial worker. Martyn has held positions with the FBU and the TGWU as well as working in Parliament for Labour MPs. Here he sets out his stall for *Briefing* in 1995.

BRIEFING HAS A vital role to play not only in its reportage of current events affecting socialists around the country, but also in shaping policy, unifying factions and giving hope to the members who are becoming increasingly disenchanted with the Blair-led gallop to the right.

We have a tremendous responsibility to show all those whom the modernisers are abandoning - the homeless, the single parents, the unemployed, the low waged, trade unionists, pensioners, et al. - that there is hope and that there are not just voices, but strong voices speaking up for the key ideas and ideologies for which so many of the oppressed and under-privileged have turned to Labour in the past.

In order to meet these challenges and continue to provide our readers with a top quality, incisive and independent journal we will be introducing new features in the coming year. There will be more hard news (not only from London but from all over Britain and the world at large), with photographic and written coverage of demonstrations, meetings and other events.

Class Traitor will be in with a vengeance - and so will investigations into the way our elected representatives conduct themselves. I have witnessed at first hand the way in which some MPs act - with misuse of public money, dereliction of duty and abuse of authority.

The same has been reported at local council level. We will not hesitate to expose these abuses - no matter to which party the guilty belong. It is downright hypocritical for the Labour Party to expel rank and file members while at the same time ignoring or even condoning gross misconduct in other parts of the Party.

Briefing relies on a hard core of volunteers to publish the journal every month, and an even smaller number to distribute the finished product. It would be very easy here to ask for a donation - certainly we wouldn't say no - but I would like to see a more constructive and long-term approach to the survival and growth of *Briefing*.

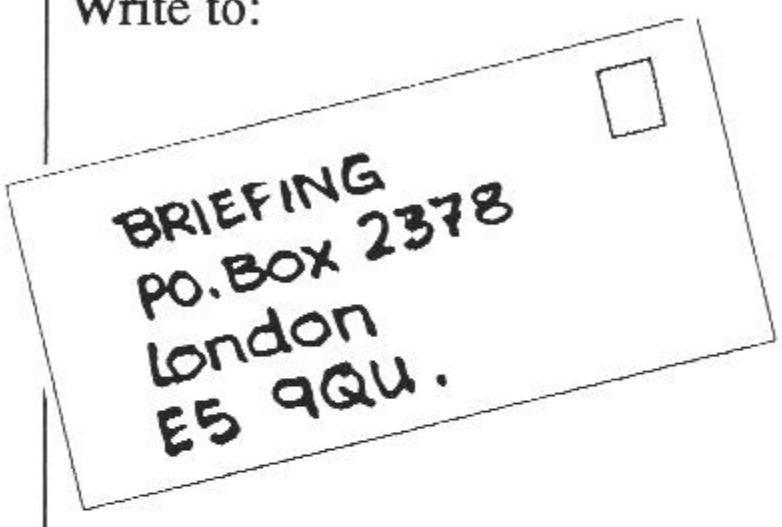
Wally Road's 'recruit a friend' idea, launched by John Prescott in Blackpool last year, is not a bad one. The only problem for us is that unfortunately those who are recruiting their friends belong mainly to the modernising wing. Nonetheless, the idea remains sound.

As a consequence I am asking you to 'Recruit a subscriber in 1995'. Yes, I know it sounds glib and a bit like the PR clap-trap we're all fed up with, but it will help. If each of you recruits just one more subscriber, or sells one issue a month, you will make a major contribution to helping this journal fulfil its vital role.

We also need help with coverage from the regions (most of the editorial board is based in London and the south east). We need reports, pictures, tip-offs, sleaze, rumours and anything else you might think useful. If I can get names and contacts around the country who believe in *Briefing* and its ideals then we will go from strength to strength.

I am interested to hear your views. Phone, fax or write. *Briefing* needs you.

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



As a member of the Labour Party for many years I am enraged by the appalling attack on Clause IV.

If one is to perceive the implications of the comments so far published by some of the revisionists the message activists in the constituencies are receiving is that all those who have joined the Party and fought for the principles of socialism from 1918 are no more than insignificant, hypocritical, reactionary Stalinists, unwilling to debate politics: courtesy of Neil Kinnock, Hilary Armstrong, Tony Blair, Pauline Green, Clare Short, and Robin Cook, in that order.

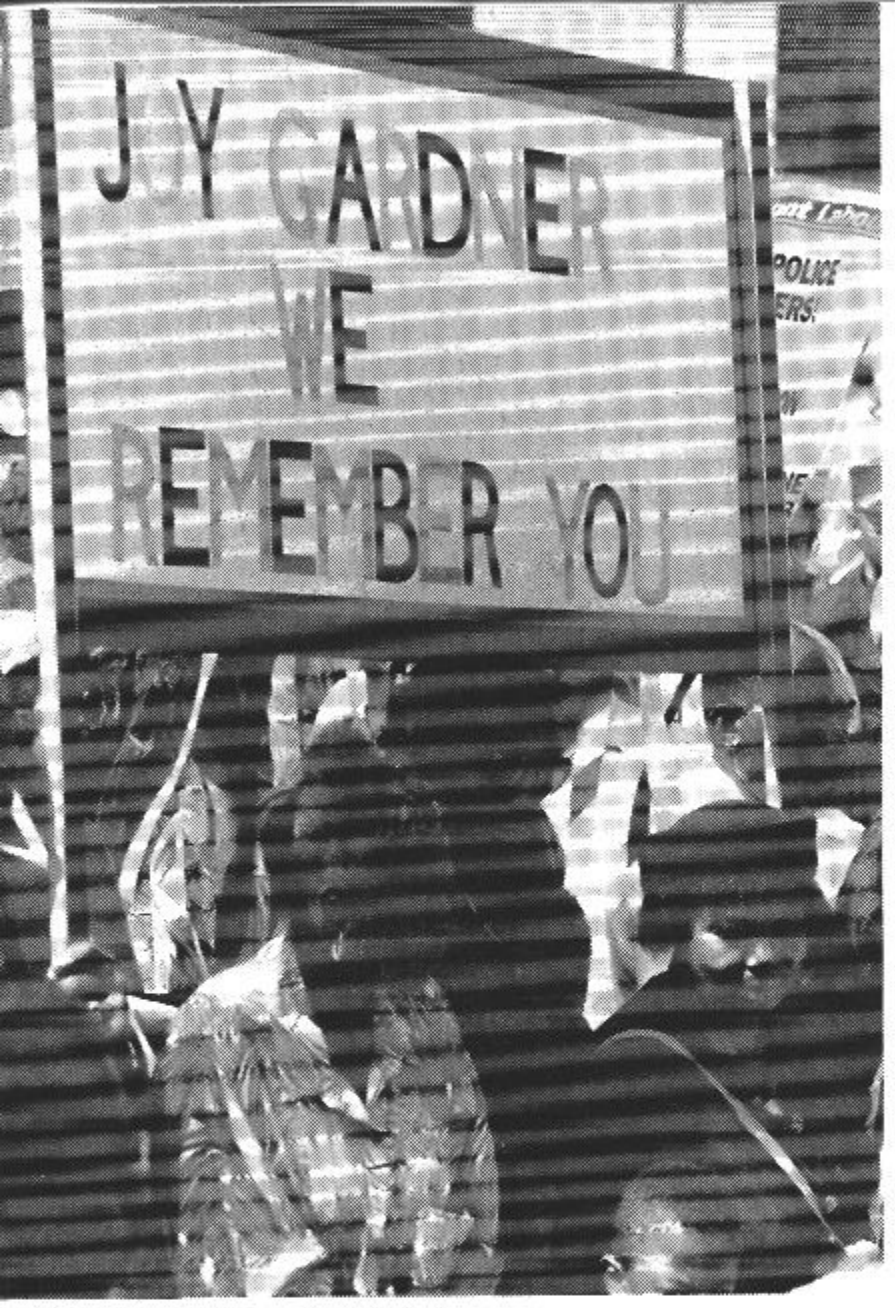
To add injury to insult, Mr Blair is angry that members of a so-called democratic party dare to voice their justifiable outrage at these vile allegations.

For a Party leader to take on its membership by condemning the principles on which the Party was founded is not just insulting to all those hard-working activists who win elections. It also raises the question: on what principles did the revisionists join the Party?

If any member of the Labour Party had shown the same level of vile contempt for an important constitutional clause before this debate was tactlessly initiated they would have been justifiably expelled from the Party!

My advice to the revisionists is: if you can no longer stomach your constitutional obligation to make policy according to the sovereignty of Conference based on the principles of the Party's constitution then get out! And take your filthy slander with you!

Yours,
Simon Walker,
Enfield North CLP



A trial date of 22nd May has been set for the three police officers accused of the manslaughter of Joy Gardner. Detective Inspector Linda Evans and Detective Constables Colin Whitby and John Burrell, all members of the deportation and extradition squad, are presently on bail. Joy Gardner died, after being bound and gagged in front of her four-year old son, during a raid by the squad at her North London home in July 1993.

PHOTO: Bryn Griffiths

No justice for Quddus

THE WRETCHED MISERY of Quddus Ali and his family continues. In September 1993 he was nearly killed in a horrifyingly brutal racist attack which left him disabled.

To date police have only managed to bring charges against one person. Now even that man, John Rutter, has walked free after the jury at Southwark Crown Court found him not guilty even though Rutter had allegedly admitted to taking part in the attack on young Quddus. The case was marked by a startling lack of evidence by the police, a situation which has brought severe criticism and resentment from the Asian community.

Nasser Uddin, a member of Youth Connections, said, "If this is the police and CPS attempting to stamp out racism then it is not good enough."

● The legacy of Malcolm X continues to haunt the American authorities. There is now little doubt that the FBI was implicated in his assassination. With the announcement that one of Malcolm's daughters, Quibilah Shabazz, has been indicted on charges of plotting to assassinate Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, it appears that the Feds' vendetta continues.

Ever since Malcolm's death in 1965 members of his family have repeatedly alleged that Farrakhan was involved in the murder. Farrakhan's denials have usually been received with scepticism by Malcolm's supporters especially when it came to light that he wrote in December 1964: "The die is set and Malcolm shall not escape .... such a man is worthy of death."

Quibilah is the second of Malcolm's six daughters and one of the least known to the public. It is alleged that she made a part payment to a long-standing friend to assassinate Farrakhan. Her defence claims that the unnamed friend was no more than an agent provocateur and that she was led on by an abuse of the friendship and trust that she placed in him.

The question has to be asked: who has the resources, the attitude and the vitriol to initiate this plot? Not a few Black Americans have already come up with the obvious answer: the FBI.

● The Royal Institute of International Affairs has invited Italian Fascist Gianfranco Fini to speak at a meeting in London. Fini leads the National Alliance, successor to the pre-war fascist movement of Benito Mussolini. Protests are planned.

Hounslow Trade Union Council Anti-racist march and rally

Saturday 11th February

Assemble 12:45 pm

Thornbury Playing Fields
London Road
(opposite Milford Arms Public House)
Isleworth

Second Annual Lecture to commemorate the Stoke-on-Trent International Brigade Volunteers
'Fascism - the continuing threat'

Speaker Tony Benn MP

7.30pm, Friday 10th February

City Museum Lecture Hall

This date marks the 58th anniversary of the Battle of Jarama which was crucial to the defence of Madrid and in which the British volunteers featured heroically.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AGAINST RACISM

Saturday 4th February 1995 10am-5pm

York Hall, Old Ford Road, London, E2 *(Bethnal Green tube)*

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