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BRIEFING

the voice of Labour's independent, unrepentant left

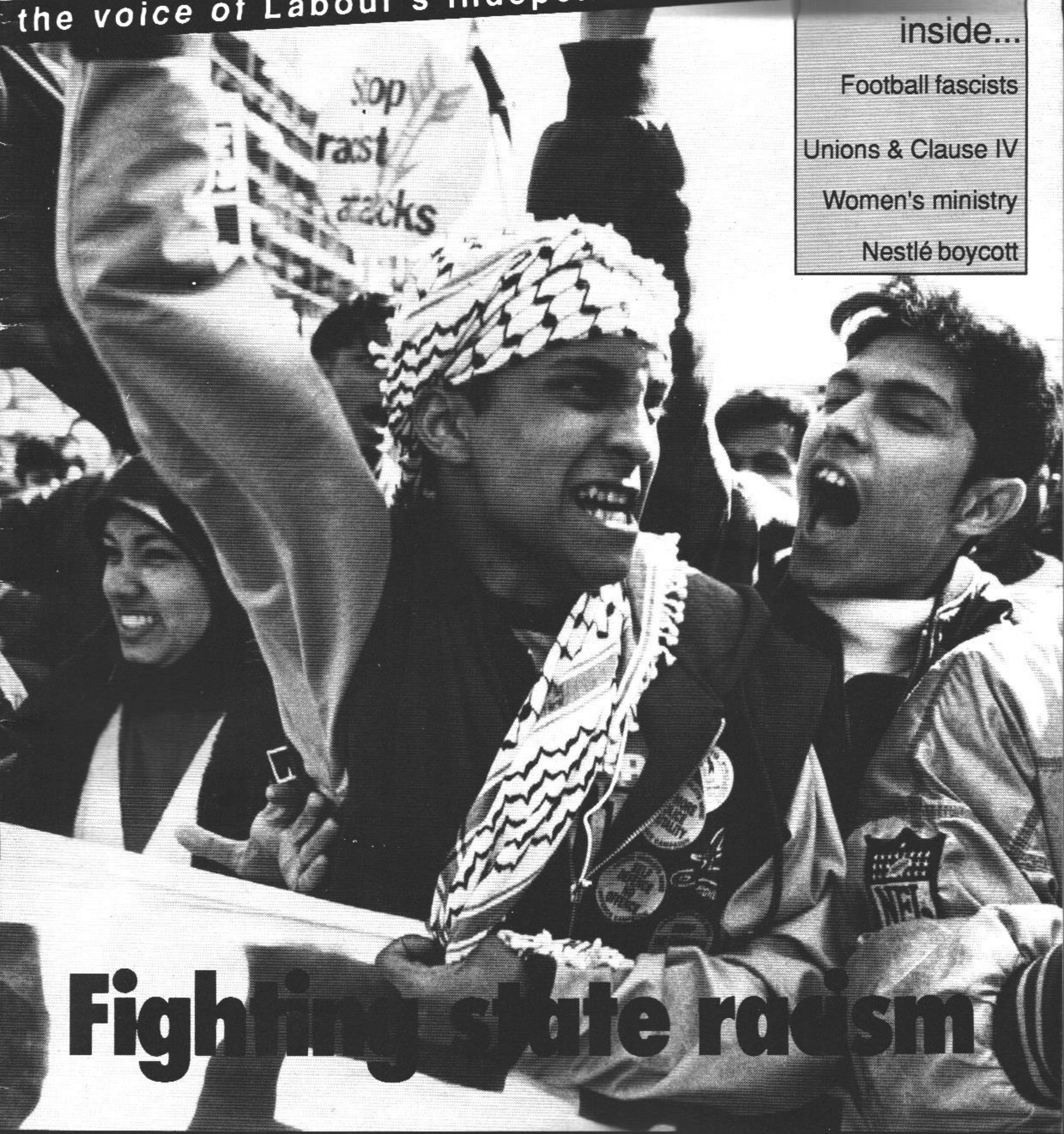
inside...

Football fascists

Unions & Clause IV

Women's ministry

Nestlé boycott



Fighting state racism

LABOUR - TAKE THE POWER!

Illegal Lottery?

Martyn Fryer writes: In this country, as in most others, it is illegal to place bets or gamble on credit. Legislation governing gaming and lotteries make it an offence to purchase or offer bets or chances on a lottery on credit. In other words you can't go into a bookmakers and bet on the 2.30 at Ascot with your Visa card. Why then am I able to walk into a petrol station and purchase a ticket for the National Lottery on my credit card? I asked the cashier. He replied that he had extensive training and had not received any instruction that such sales could not take place.

Next, the retailer, Shell. The spokesperson there told me, "This is the first time I've been asked this, I am sure that Shell carry out the instructions of Camelot to the letter." The Gaming Board, although responsible for regulating gaming and lotteries, do not have anything to do with the National Lottery. They were quite amazed that such a situation could arise given the restrictions on credit betting that they police. Indeed, the Gaming Board told me that there will be some liberalisation of the rules affecting gaming and lotteries later this year. However none of the regulations affecting the use of credit cards will change.

The pools companies are similarly restricted, although they do allow renewals of standing forecasts to be paid by credit card, but only if for more than ten weeks. Oflot, the Office of the National Lottery, is insisting that they are doing nothing wrong. Camelot had no comment.

The Department of National Heritage is pushing the ball firmly back into Camelot's court and denying that anything is the Departments' responsibility.

It is hard to imagine that such a high profile organisation could be acting illegally, even given this government's appalling lack of regulation of the rich and powerful.

That leaves just one conclusion.

The legislation surrounding the Lottery was drafted in such a way that the Government and the Camelot quango loaded the dice in their favour.

There's a surprise!

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Cover photograph by Paul Mattsson

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Thoroughly old-fashioned modernisers



RARELY HAS there appeared a finer specimen of Orwellian Newspeak than the term "moderniser", employed with an increasing disregard for reality by the media and the Labour leadership alike.

Let's look at the facts of modern life: the growing polarisation of rich and poor, the persistence of mass unemployment, the untrammelled rule of multinational corporations, unprecedented mass migrations, the decay of public services, the spread of information technology, the rise of racism, xenophobia and fundamentalism, multiplying environmental crises, and an increase in global levels of poverty, disease and homelessness.

How extraordinary that people who call themselves modernisers have so little to say about any of these contemporary realities. Could it be because none of them can be addressed within the framework of the free market?

Blair and his mouthpieces at the *Guardian* are engaged in a prolonged exercise in evasion. Their post-socialist posturing is merely an abject surrender to the powers-that-be. It will take us back to a pre-socialist era when the right of the private owners to exploit the rest of us was considered god-given.

In their stubborn failure to confront modern reality, the "modernisers" take refuge in intellectual sleight of hand. Clause IV is caricatured and distorted (nowhere does it mention "Morrissonian nationalism" or "Stalinist state ownership"). Worse yet, its socialist economic strategy is counterposed to the struggle for social equality, as if it were possible for women or black people to burst their chains while economic power lies in the hands of a tiny elite. Meanwhile, "regulation" is offered as an alternative to common ownership - at the very moment regulation has been widely discredited by the privatisation experience.

The explosive and mounting disparities in income and wealth revealed by the recent Rowntree study reflect a society in which ownership - of industry, commerce, finance - is concentrated in the hands of the few. The trend of "modernity" is to intensify that concentration (in Britain and globally), not dilute it. What do our modernisers have to say about that? How do they intend to realise their rhetorical devotion to "democracy" and "solidarity" while excluding these two principles from the realm of economic ownership?

Much has been made of the outdated language of Clause IV. Of course, all language shows its age, but it is a safe bet that Sydney Webb's concise and intelligible prose will still carry conviction when any "modernising" babble produced by Blair's office has long since passed its sell-by date. In any case this has never been a debate about language. This is another evasion. This is a struggle over the Party's core philosophy - and whether it will remain socialist in any meaningful sense. Until we hear otherwise from Blair, we must conclude that in the absence of a long-term goal of common ownership, "New Labour" will stand for the indefinite maintenance of an economy dominated by private owners.

"New Labour" is itself a classic example of the advertising device in which novel packaging is used to disguise an old, familiar product - in this case, the kind of tired, establishment-centred, do-nothing politics which have brought professional politicians into disrepute across the advanced capitalist world.

The true face of the modernisers has been exposed by recent pronouncements by Clare Short and Jack Straw. After all their bleating about the importance of women, the modernisers now wish to drop Labour's principle concrete commitment to women. Similarly, after all the Euro-friendly rhetoric, and the disparaging of left opponents of Maastricht as "little Englanders", we have Labour's Shadow Home Secretary "talking tough" over immigration, as if the answer to a globalising economy was bigger and better checkpoints at Dover and Southampton.

"Modern"? Give us a break. ❑

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 February 26th and March26th. 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 March 13th.

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

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Football's fascist connection

Dave Hammond explores the role of right-wing organisations behind recent football violence.

FOOTBALL VIOLENCE has hit the headlines in a big way this year but most commentators are either poorly informed or simply afraid to address some rather alarming facts. In their search for a sensational story they have also missed the long build-up which resulted in the Lansdowne Road riot. The whole story is one that may yet have several sequels.

Fascists have a long history of recruiting around football grounds, especially as much of the revolutionary left regards football fans as lumpen. For their part organisations such as the British Movement have seen football 'crews' as off-the-peg outfits to recruit for their political violence.

For those not interested in football and those not prepared to take the threat of fascism seriously there have been quiet times recently. Others know differently. Organised football violence has never gone away, it simply moved to the streets, railway stations and pubs. The only people taking any real interest were the fascists. They continued to see the young disillusioned protagonists as potential recruits. The approach has obviously been refined over the years, and it has not always met with total success, but the fascist presence has always been there.

In their moves towards electoral respectability various groups may, like the National Front, have distanced themselves from football violence, but the fascist link still remains.

Right wing groups that openly trade in violence have managed to quietly build up their strength unmolested. Combat 18 and the British Movement have had particular success at certain grounds.

The reason that the outburst at Lansdowne Road came as such a shock is that, coupled with the absence of any international matches, there was virtually no fascist-led violence in football last season. Recruiting, organising, planning and agitation were, however, going on. In London alone members of C18 and the BM were present at Crystal Palace, Charlton, Chelsea and probably elsewhere. They were not discussing the merits or otherwise of the Football in the Community scheme, for sure. Significantly, however, neither were they overt with their racism and politics. A waiting game was being played.



This season has been different. At Chelsea, members of C18 attacked sellers of the club's fanzine *The Chelsea Independent*. For reasons that are unclear C18 assumed that the magazine was linked to Anti-Fascist Action - it is not - and actually wrote to the organisation claiming responsibility. The claim was no doubt an attempt to chalk up their first victory against the AFA, an event that has been a long time coming, and is still not in sight.

Such an attack on a progressive group of fans came about clearly as a result of changes in tactics. Fanzines are generally anti-racist publications that have a real influence on football culture and could conceivably be seen as a threat to the hegemony of right-wing ideas at football grounds.

But the attack was also the result of C18's relationship with Chelsea's hooligan group, the Headhunters. This partnership also provides more sinister links.

C18's two notorious leaders are Charlie Sargent and Eddie Whicker. Both have links with the Chelsea group and both are supporters of the Irish loyalist cause.

The loyalist link to football firms is obviously something which has been worked on. In 1993 recruiting was carried out at football grounds for a mob to attack the annual Troops Out march. The turn-out was huge, with nearly 400 loyalist supporters picked up by police on the day. The significance of this was that, as with the Ireland football match, the fascists could, by linking up with loyalists and football casuals, put a force in the field far larger than was expected. Similarly the high level of planning at both events is important. Perhaps fascist intelligence is not the contradiction it appeared to be at Chelsea earlier this season.

Or perhaps it is. Crystal Palace is another ground where C18 have been active over the last few years, at times leaving their calling card on victims. It is not surprising therefore that when a brainless lout runs 20 steps down the stands to hurl abuse at Manchester United's Eric Cantona he not only bases his abuse on racism but has also been tainted by contact with fascist elements.

Whether Simmons is or is not a fascist is not really the point here. Fascists and racists are able to influence football fans because they speak the same language - unlike the revolutionary left who simply lecture working class people on abstract political theory.

The Cantona incident is not an indication of any tactical decision on the part of fascists but it is an indication of how their anti-working class views can prevail in a working class atmosphere when not challenged on the same level.

Another irony here is that the football authorities have taken, half-heartedly maybe, greater steps to challenge racism at their venues than have any left-wing organisation.

Chelsea's chairman Ken Bates is clearly unhappy that fascists are using Stamford Bridge as a battle zone and Millwall's Reg Burr, a veteran of the Battle of Cable Street, is certainly doing his best in keeping the fascist movement out of the Den. At Charlton, where British Movement, British National Party and C18 elements are present, the club is monitoring very closely their



activities in the two separate seating blocks they occupy.

What of the left? Nothing. The ANL? Nothing. YRE? Nothing. ARA? Nothing. The Labour Party? Kate Hoey!

As the poverty gap widens things will get worse. The contradictions within capitalism are there for all to see and while the left are debating about it, the right are recruiting our people. ❑

Alf Lomas MEP

Campaigning for peace and socialism in Europe

For a European wide campaign against unemployment based on the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange



GROUP
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news & views

We need a ministry

Do Clare's proposals leave Labour a ministry short? Loraine Monk reports.

THE TORY press had a field day as leaks of Labour's *Governing for Equality* paper gave them the excuse to trumpet that Labour had dropped its Ministry for Women. Even so, it didn't stop them rubbishing Labour as the party of the 'loony' women's units.

Governing for Equality was presented to the National Policy Forum on Saturday 18th February and is now out for consultation. Although it keeps the commitment to a Minister for Women, the Ministry itself is only examined in terms of the problems it might face, such as isolation or lack of money. The paper is clearly intended to lead the reader to the conclusion that it would be better left as at present under the Employment Department.

The proposal is that the new Minister would be the Minster of Women and Employment. There are two obvious problems with this. Many women are not in work, they are students or involved in care of children and family or are retired. Why should their needs be placed under Caxton House? Secondly given the importance of cutting employment and restoring decent terms and conditions to millions of workers a minister with both jobs will be under pressure to downplay the women's side of the job.

The Ministry for Women was an idea worked out with hundreds of individual women and groups before 1987 by Jo Richardson. The Labour Party carried that commitment when we improved the women's vote in 1987 and we had that commitment in 1992 when the gender gap widened. The fact that we didn't highlight the policy in either election makes it harder to gauge its support among voters.

The other parties and the press will rubbish any idea of tackling equality issues. The Labour Party has to stand firm on its principles. Watering down our proposals won't stop the criticism, but it will mean we won't be able to achieve the goals we set ourselves. The Ministry idea took a long time to work out. It would be a tragedy if it was dumped before it gets a chance to prove itself.

Labour Women's conference - the leader speaks

Leonora Lloyd reports: This year's Women's Conference will be different from previous women's conferences. For the first time, the Labour leader will be attending.

In past years party leaders have sent their profound apologies. For the women attending, this has been an indication of the low priority accorded by the Party hierarchy to their conference and the women's organisation in general. It would be good to think that Tony Blair's attendance is due to a reversal of this past policy. The reality is that the conference, to be held in Derby on 1st and 2nd April, is the last national event before the special conference on the 29th April at which Blair can strut his stuff.

There is only one conference motion on the agenda directly relating to Clause IV. As it comes from the AEEU, it is not surprising that it welcomes the re-drafting of Clause IV. However, many of the policy motions cover areas that implicitly refer to the values of the existing clause. There are motions calling for an end to privatisation of local authority services (common ownership) and for a national minimum wage (a small step towards giving workers the "full fruits of their labour").

The conference is traditionally to the left of the national conference, which is one reason why it is now only biennial. A number of motions call for a return to annual conferences including one which wants all the resolutions passed to be placed on the Annual Conference agenda (in the past we have asked more modestly for five resolutions to go by right to the main conference) and another calling for all women in the Party and affiliated organisation to be allowed to elect the five reserved NEC seats.

There has been a real improvement in representation of women at all levels of the Party thanks to quotas, but this has itself created new problems. CLPs must now elect women delegates to Annual Conference at least on alternate years and unions must send delegates in proportion to their female membership. This has created difficulties for some organisations who have been hard pressed to find delegates to fill the places. One resolution proposes allowing 'job-sharing' to overcome this. Another points out that most women will be first-timers at conference and suggests they should be put in touch with other women delegates beforehand, encouraged to travel and stay together and generally help each other out.

A whole raft of motions attack the proposals made by the Commission for Social Justice, particularly the "availability for work" rule which would force single parents of children aged over five into work. Although Borrie recommends that such a policy should only operate after a "comprehensive strategy is in place to offer parents the help they need in returning to employment" the motions show little trust in the next Labour Government delivering such a strategy before implementing draconian measures of "tough love". Other motions call for maintaining universal child benefit (also not ensured under Borrie), improving maternity and paternity leave, universal nursery education and financial security for children and their parents.

There is a clear message in these and other motions in the conference. Women in the Party desperately want a Labour Government. They know that they have suffered more than any other group in our society under the Tories - single mothers and their children are the biggest single group of the poor in this country regardless of whether the mother works or is on welfare. But we also know that if the Party cannot leap the "gender gap", if it cannot win women's votes then we cannot win the next election. And we also know that without clearly stated, women-friendly policies all the charm in the world oozing from our leader is no substitute.



Jack Straw and Mo Mowlem looking to the left for inspiration. PHOTO: Martyn Fryer

Clause IV in the unions

The race to save Clause IV gathers pace. Gerry Bates finds out whether the unions are keeping up.

THE RMT's decision to support the existing wording of Labour's constitution is a major boost to the campaign to defend Clause IV. The only addition they want to make would strengthen the Party's commitment to public ownership.

The unanimous executive vote sends a very clear message to all Labour Party members and trade unionists. We now know that the main trade union at the forefront of resisting rail privatisation is not prepared to go along with Blair's attempt to ditch common ownership.

Nor will the Labour leadership be happy to hear that the RMT executive has invited John Prescott, an RMT-sponsored MP and Labour Party deputy leader, to explain to them why he is so keen on ditching Clause IV and going against the wishes of his own union. The RMT's support for the "Defend Clause IV, Defend Socialism" campaign comes on top of backing that has already been received from the Fire Brigades Union, the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union, ASLEF, the train drivers union, and the National Union of Mineworkers. The printers' union GPMU and media technicians' union, BECTU, are both expected to back the existing Clause IV. Blair has not yet scored any significant victories in the unions and now faces a very close battle indeed in the giant public service union UNISON.

Rumours abound in UNISON that the union's political officer Maggie Jones and Tom Sawyer, Labour Party General Secretary and formerly a UNISON leader, have struck a back room deal which would deliver UNISON's 680,000 votes for Blair in return for a "secret pledge" from the leadership to bring in a minimum wage of £4.15 per hour.

Sawyer's problem is that he has tried this tack too many times before and delivered nothing. His ability to swing the union is also impaired by his own past as a fervent defender of Clause IV in NUPE.

'UNISON for Clause IV' campaigners have even drawn attention to a rather bold statement made by Sawyer to the last ever NUPE conference just before the creation of UNISON: "I say to all Labour politicians - Stop arguing about the union link! Attack the Tories! Don't give them an inch! Don't give them a moment. Tell the British people what it really means to live in Tory Britain and what Labour would do about it.

That doesn't mean saying some silly things. Doesn't mean going down diversions or blind alleys. And that doesn't mean changing Clause IV".

Apart from MSF - which is split down the middle - the other main union battlegrounds will be the shopworkers' union, USDAW, and the new Communication Workers' Union.

USDAW holds its conference just a few days before Labour's special conference on April 29th. The USDAW leadership have quite scandalously sent out to all branches a pro-abolition model reply to the so called "consultation" questionnaire - a sign that the battle is going to be very close indeed.

Meanwhile in the CWU, formed out of a merger of the old BT-based NCU and UCW postal union, a battle royal is developing.

The joint General Secretaries Tony Young and Alan Johnson both support abolition. Their problem is that many ordinary union activists do not. For instance at a recent CWU meeting on the issue where both Johnson and Young debated Jeremy Corbyn and Tom Rigby from the Defend Clause IV Campaign, no speeches from the floor backed the call for abolition.

In response both Young and Johnson intend to push for a postal ballot on this issue in April. CWU activists will have to work very hard to ensure that they are defeated and the new union is won to support for Clause IV.

Finally the giant TGWU is continuing its own consultation on Clause IV with major regions coming out for retention. General Secretary Bill Morris has already indicated that he is unlikely to back abolition. He told the union's automotive trade group: "So far in the debate I have heard nothing, read nothing, seen nothing which could remotely meet our minimum requirements. Above all, our bottom line has always been, and continues to be, a clear and unequivocal commitment to public ownership and social justice."

Keep Clause IV!

A RAIL union leader has defended Clause IV and said he would not trade off support for a new constitution in return for a Party pledge to renationalise British Rail.

Lew Adams, general secretary of Aslef, said the train drivers' union had a "constitutional bond" to the clause - which committed the Party to public ownership - and wanted it retained.

In the latest issue of his union journal Adams says: "My heart is with Clause IV. This is not the Militant Tendency or wild left-wing attitudes. It is what we sincerely believe the Labour Party should stand for".

The union could not support changing the wording or back any trade-offs with Labour over returning a privatised BR into public ownership, said Adams.

Blair Youth march on

Paul Field reports: Labour's Youth Conference in Brighton last month was expected to show how well the 'modern' Labour Party could appeal to younger people. In the end it did not even achieve that with press coverage concentrated on the vote by delegates in favour of changing Clause IV.

What was not reported was the intimidation, sleaze and bullying that took place in order to secure the vote for change. The RMT delegation was not admitted to the conference after its nomination papers arrived too late.

The RMT executive contacted the conference office to explain the situation and believed an agreement had been reached but was later " very dismayed" to find that its nomination had in fact been rejected.

Perhaps the fact that the RMT mandated its delegate to vote against changing Clause IV explains this heavy-handed decision. Other unions were represented at the conference and with the exception of the UCW delegate all abstained from the vote.

Other delegates reported disturbing tactics from the Blair Youth ranging from outright intimidation to plain infantile heckling. One delegate attending his first conference and who asked not to be identified said, "I felt quite threatened by the right-wingers. They all seemed to work at Walworth Road or in Parliament and told us that if we voted against changing Clause IV we would be up before the NEC and would not have any future in the Labour Party." Another delegate said, "The atmosphere on the floor was very intimidating.

All the Blair-supporting delegates were cheering and clapping when one of their number got up to speak, and on the rare occasion someone managed to oppose their proposals, they were branded 'Trots' and heckled and abused. "If this is the road that the Labour Party is going down I don't think I want to follow it", the delegate concluded.

Briefing has written to Tom Sawyer, the General Secretary of the Labour Party, asking him to comment on these events. To date he has not bothered to reply.

The rise of the Blair Youth is firmly linked to the rise of that of the modernisers in the shadow cabinet. Many of these callow would-be leaders actually worked for Brown, Mandelson and co. as researchers and secretaries often as volunteers. Many of these apparatchiks did not join the parliamentary trade union branch which represented MPs' staff and were actually not encouraged to do so.



"We must will the ends, we must also will the means", Diane Abbott.
PHOTO: Martyn Fryer

Defend Clause IV London Rally

Friday 24th February

Chair: **Jim Mortimer** Speakers include: **Doreen Cameron, Mildred Gordon MP, Arthur Scargill**

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square 7.30pm

Further details 0171 274 8962

CLP ballots

Many so-called "modernisers" have given up arguing the intellectual case for abolishing Clause IV. Admitting defeat they are now focusing on appeals for loyalty to Tony Blair and demanding a postal ballot of all members on the issue.

It is important for the left to respond properly to this clamour for a ballot. Two points should be made.

Firstly, individual members should be encouraged to attend their ward meetings and trade union branches so as to participate collectively in the Party's normal decision-making process. That way they would get an opportunity to hear all sides of the argument and raise any questions they have.

Secondly, if the right succeeds in pushing through a ballot in your CLP you should demand that a proper and balanced ballot paper and questions are produced.

That means not just saying yes or no to the NEC statement due out next month. Constituencies should ask their members:

- Do you wish to retain Clause IV as presently written as the basis of our Party objects?
- Do you wish to add anything to Clause IV?
- Do you wish to support the NEC statement as an addition to Clause IV?
- Are there any parts of the NEC statement that you wish to oppose?

The right cracks

DESPITE THE best efforts of the media and the Party establishment the mood in the constituencies remains firmly in support of Clause IV. Two recent meetings in Birmingham and Bradford show the extent of resistance.

"The biggest meeting in Birmingham for over a decade" was how local activists described the 500-strong pro-Clause IV rally addressed by Arthur Scargill.

Meanwhile in Bradford recently over 200 people heard Arthur Scargill, Halifax MP Alice Mahon, and York MP Hugh Bayley debate Clause IV. An indicative vote at the end of the meeting saw just two votes in favour of dropping the clause.

It is not just the left that is rallying to Clause IV. A recent Fabian Society debate in London featuring Jack Straw, Mo Mowlem, Alan Simpson and Diane Abbott saw the self-styled "modernisers" in difficulty. Apart from a small group of be-suited ex-student careerists, most of the audience were very receptive to the idea of adding to rather than demolishing Clause IV.

Diane Abbott dealt an incisive blow against Straw when she accused him of having a student politician's contempt for the labour movement's traditions of struggle. Alan Simpson brought the house down with his routine about the "under-pants of power" which Tony Blair seeks to win from John Major.

The Fabian debate also saw veteran right-winger Austin Mitchell MP denounce the undemocratic nature of the so called consultation process. He called for the special conference to be allowed a vote on retaining Clause IV and to amend the NEC statement.

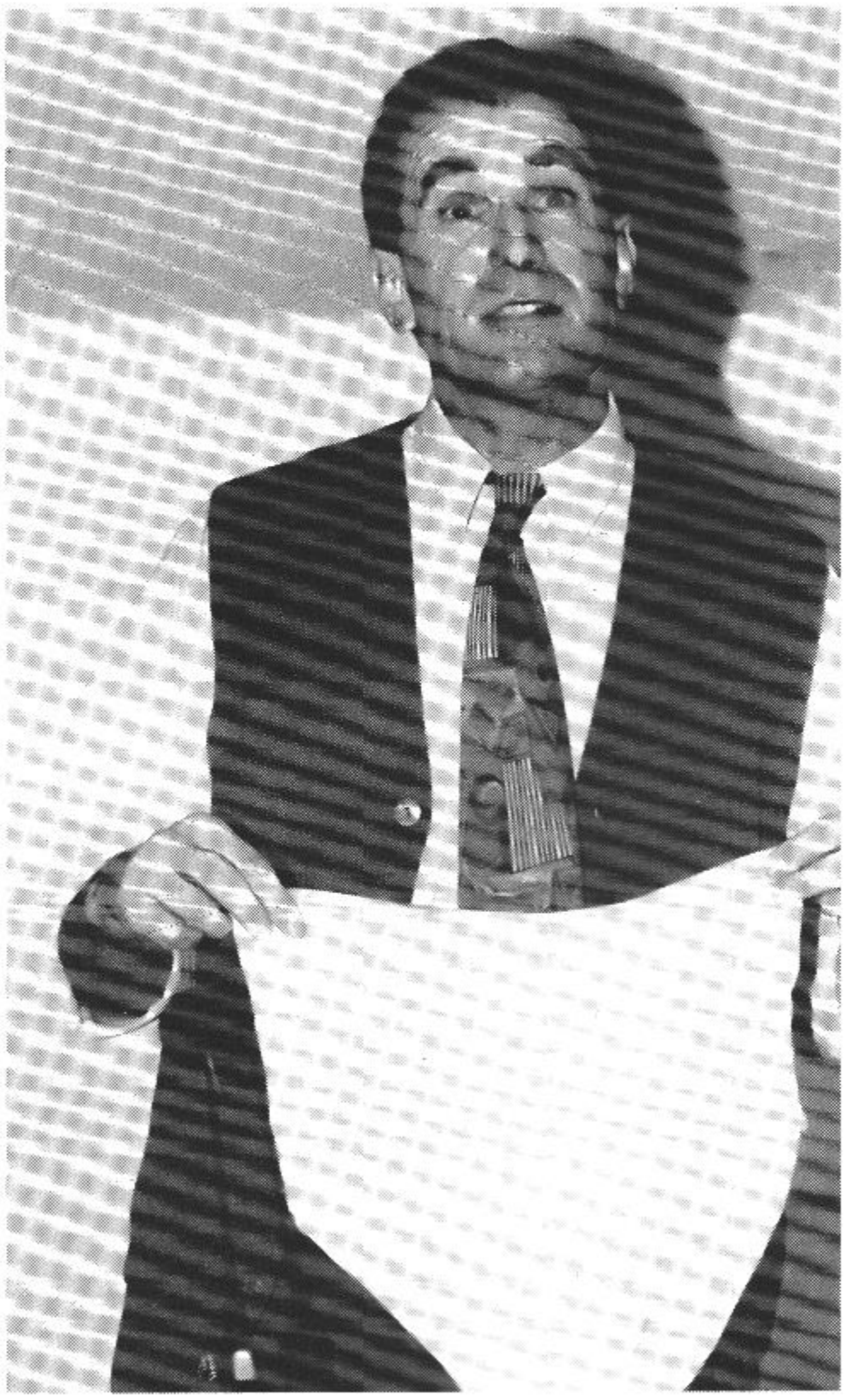
Elsewhere Mitchell's sentiments have been echoed even by backers of abolition such as Rosina Macrea who is a sponsor of the New Clause IV campaign and a member of the Scottish Labour Party executive: "I regard myself very much as a moderniser but I'm very concerned by the leadership's handling of this. There has been no debate and the leaders of the Party are trying to blackmail the membership into supporting them."

The leadership is in for a rough ride in Scotland. Alex Falconer, the MEP behind January's *Guardian* advert, is mobilising support for a new statement to coincide with the Scottish Labour Party Conference, where all 26 motions on the issue are in favour of keeping Clause IV.

The conclusion is that despite Blair's roadshow and video the defenders of Clause IV are standing firm while cracks are starting to appear in Blair's camp.

Do you support Clause IV? Then join the campaign by sending £10 to 'Defend Clause IV', 2 Huddersfield Road, Barnsley S70 2LS.

This campaign cannot be won without money! We have copies of Ken Loach's video in defence of Clause IV for £10 and badges too (£10 for 25, £15 for 50).



Alan Simpson MP gets his hands on the pants of power. PHOTO: Martyn Fryer.

Model resolution

"We regret that the NEC is seeking to confine the voting at Special Conference on 29th April solely to the wording proposed by the NEC to replace the present Clause IV. This is contrary to the procedure adopted by the 1981 Special Conference.

Many CLPs and affiliated organisations want the opportunity to vote not only on the new *Statement of Aims and Values* but also on Labour's long-term commitments, as set out in the existing Clause IV.

The last two Party Conferences have voted to retain Clause IV. We call upon the Conference Arrangements Committee and the NEC to allow the Special Conference to vote on the two texts. This would be a way of uniting the Party in the run up to the next election."

news & views

Waiting for equal pay

At the present rate it will be well into the next century before equal pay is achieved in Britain. Dave Statham probes the figures.

THE GAP between men's and women's earnings is gradually closing but the divide between people at the top and bottom of the earnings scale remains as wide as ever. These are two of the main conclusions to be drawn from the detailed official statistics on earnings, the *New Earnings Survey*, published late last year. The figures, which relate to April 1994 and are based on a 1% sample of the employed population, show that on average full-time employees on adult rates earned £325.70 a week, equivalent to £16,980 a year. However, as in every year since the survey first began in 1968 there is an enormous gap between men's and women's earnings. At present, men earn on average £100 more a week than women - £362.10 compared with £261.50. In percentage terms this means women's weekly earnings are 72.2% of men's.

These statistics indicate how far the UK is from earnings' equality between men and women. EOC chair Kamlesh Bahl said: "Facts belie the fiction in some circles that the struggle for sex equality is no longer needed. The statistics underline how much further there is to go."

However, Bahl has also pointed out that "certain progress has been made". There are positive signs that after the long period of stagnation in the late 1970s and early 1980s women's earnings are again now moving upwards relative to men's. After the immediate improvements following the implementation of equal pay legislation in 1975 a long period of stagnation set in. Only since 1987 has the trend again begun to move upwards. In the seven years since 1987 the gap between men's and women's earnings has closed by 6.1 percentage points. By contrast in the 11 years before 1987, there was an improvement of 1.8 percentage points.

As with the Equal Pay Act in the 1970s, legislative changes seem to have played a key role.

In 1983 the Government was obliged by European Court rulings to bring in amendments to the Equal Pay Act requiring women to receive equal pay for work of equal value. The law which incorporated these amendments has been criticised by many women as being cumbersome and difficult to implement, the first case taking four years to be decided. But its application and just as important the wave of equality bargaining which followed the law, has clearly given a new impetus to those seeking to bring women's pay up to that of men.

It has been the growth in earnings of non-manual women workers which has been the main motor for this change. Since 1987 they have gone up by 77% in money terms compared with a 61% increase in equivalent male earnings. The difference in earnings growth for manual workers has been much smaller - 58% for women and 51% for men.

However, despite these positive developments women have a long time to wait before they can celebrate real equality. At the present rate of progress it will still take another 33 years for the gap between men's and women's earnings to close completely.

The divide between the highest and lowest earners on the other hand has widened significantly in recent years. In 1979 the lowest 10% of male full-time employees in the earnings scale earned £61.90 a week or less. The top 10% earned £147.30 or more - 2.4 times as much. By 1994 the gap was markedly wider with the bottom 10% of men earning £179.90 or less and the top 10% earning £581.70 or more - 3.2 times as much.

For women the gap between the top and bottom of the earnings scale widened in almost the same way. In 1979 the bottom 10% were paid £40.60 or less a week and the top 10% £92.60 - 2.3 times as much. By 1994 the top 10% of women earners at £417.80 get three times as much as the 10% at the bottom who get paid £139.10 or less per week.

For men the position was broadly stable throughout the 1970s with a slight tendency to greater equality in incomes. However, from 1979 onwards following the first election of Thatcher there has been a marked growth in inequality.

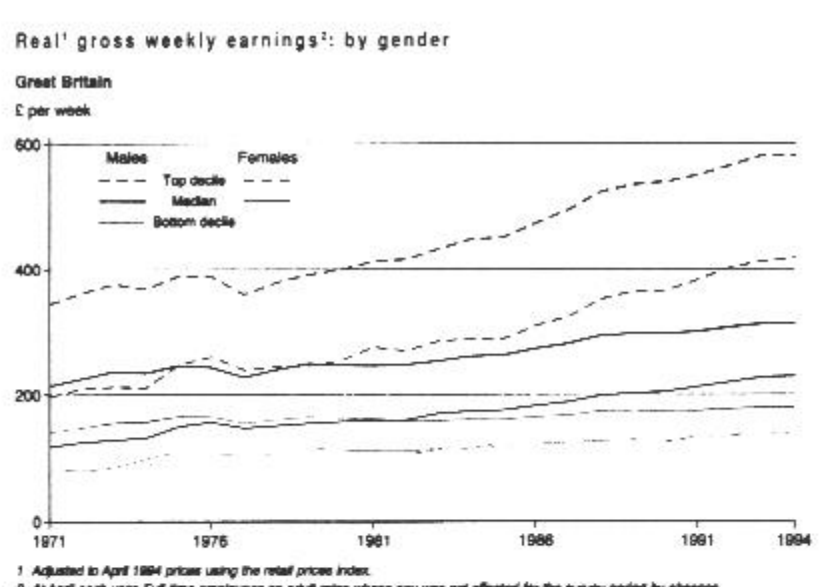
For women the pattern is similar although less even, particularly for the highest paid, who saw their relative position move sharply upwards between 1980 and 1981 and then decline slightly before picking up again in the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s.

The Tory Government's decision to abolish the Wages Councils from the end of August 1993 is likely to widen the earnings gap still further because it has removed protection from many of the very lowest paid among whom women form the majority. For the left the question of which route to take in reversing such moves must be addressed. The historical antipathy to legislation which might be seen as interfering in free collective bargaining needs to be reconsidered.

Whilst proper unionisation of such areas as retailing would make an enormous difference it remains the case that legislation does have a useful role to play - not least in permitting unionisation to occur by repealing all the Tories' anti-union legislation! ❑

Real[1] gross weekly earnings[2]: by gender

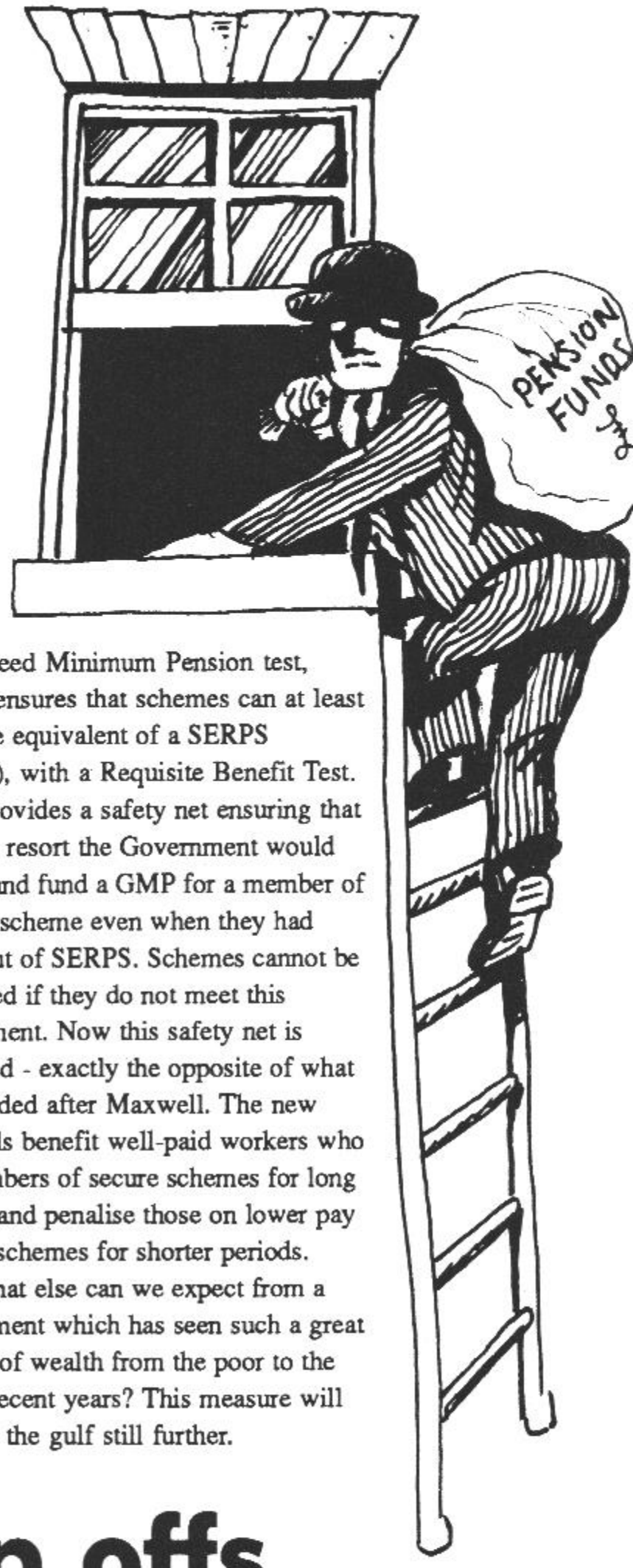
Great Britain



1 Adjusted to April 1994 prices using the retail prices index.
2 At April each year. Full-time employees on adult rates whose pay was not affected for the survey period by absence.
Source: Employment Department

The great Tory pension swindle

Leonora Lloyd explains how current legislation will make Maxwell-style scams easier.



THE MAXWELL scandal was only the most notorious of the pension scams that have taken place in recent years. The TUC recently issued a dossier of nearly 50 cases where funds have been manipulated or misused to the detriment of the employees who were supposed to benefit.

The Pensions Bill currently going through the House of Lords was supposedly designed to end such scandals. The reality is that it will do nothing of the sort. The entire Bill (which includes provision for equalising the state pension age) is part of the Tory plan to hand over pension provision for all but the most vulnerable to the private sector.

Occupational pensions are deferred wages and the employers' contributions to such schemes come out of profits, which in turn are earned from the labour of the workers. While both the CBI and the TUC agree that contributors should be represented on the trustees' boards, they disagree about the proportion. At the moment, the Bill allows for only one third of trustees to be elected by the members. There is no provision for members' trustees in public service schemes. It is important that current beneficiaries - the pensioners - are also represented. Such trustees would be less likely to feel pressure from the employers. All trustees need training in their duties and employee trustees need guarantees against victimisation to give them more freedom of action.

The Bill does not contain any of this. Workers will have only minority membership and the decisions will still be taken by those appointed by the employer. The measures in the Bill to limit employee control will not ensure protection of members' rights. The Bill is supposed to embody proposals from the Goode Committee, established after Maxwell. However, while Goode proposed a regulator with strong powers, the Bill merely sets up an authority with a more general monitoring role. Both the CBI and the TUC want a regulator with the power to investigate when malpractice is suspected, but the authority will only be able to act after breaches of the regulations have been brought to its attention.

One of the major ways in which pension funds have been misused in the past has been through the employer taking back money in various ways - through contribution holidays or refunds or when the funds have been wound up. The Bill has no provisions to prevent this happening in the future.

There are few protections in the Bill for employees in the event of compensation against losses. As the advisers and the majority of the trustees will be under the control of the employers the beneficiaries should not suffer if bad decisions are made or if the scheme is mismanaged. There are also penalties in the Bill which make it difficult for workers to accept appointment as trustees as they could become liable even though they are denied control.

The Bill also replaces the current Guaranteed Minimum Pension test, (which ensures that schemes can at least meet the equivalent of a SERPS pension), with a Requisite Benefit Test. GMP provides a safety net ensuring that as a last resort the Government would step in and fund a GMP for a member of a failed scheme even when they had opted out of SERPS. Schemes cannot be registered if they do not meet this requirement. Now this safety net is abolished - exactly the opposite of what was needed after Maxwell. The new proposals benefit well-paid workers who are members of secure schemes for long periods and penalise those on lower pay in poor schemes for shorter periods.

But what else can we expect from a Government which has seen such a great transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich in recent years? This measure will increase the gulf still further.

Recent rip offs

SOME SENIOR executives and trustees of **Aveling Barford** fraudulently disposed of the company's pension fund surplus, partly as a tax fiddle. Massive 'fees' and 'commissions' were shared by the company and insurers. In 1992 two of the fund's advisors and one of the trustees were sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

British Telecom suspended its contributions to the pension fund when it was massively in surplus whilst employees continued to make contributions of 6% of salaries. The union was able to secure benefits by taking legal action against this breach of the rules.

Burlington Pension Scheme was transferred from the British Shoe Corporation in 1989 with a surfeit of over £16m. In the same year funds from the scheme were used to purchase freehold factories from Burlington International Group and lease them back to the company for a rent deferred for 15 months. A year later more plant and machinery was purchased and leased back. When Burlington went into receivership after three years of trading the pension fund was left as a creditor for contributions, unpaid rents and outstanding loans.

At the end of the day, there was a shortfall on the fund of over 6m. Throughout this time the two employee trustees had been overruled by the three executive board members.

These examples come from a TUC dossier of over 50 cases.

8 ways to fight sleaze

Alan Simpson MP puts the Socialist Campaign Group's case to the Nolan Committee.



Dear Lord Nolan,

I am pleased that your Committee has decided to hold its deliberations in public. Ironically, Parliament's own watchdog, the Committee of Privileges, has decided to do exactly the opposite. My main purpose in writing is not to focus on the individual scapegoats thrown to quieten the public's demand that Parliament clean up its act. It is the relationship between Parliament (its MPs and their lobbyists) and the democratic process itself which concerns me.

Whilst the vast majority of MPs conduct themselves with scrupulous honesty I must say that I have never worked in a place which is so open to corruption. The absence of a clear framework of rules and constraints that MPs must adhere to leaves all of us in a vulnerable position. It is quite archaic that we should leave so many areas of financial conduct open to the discretion of individual MPs on the basis that we are all 'honourable' members.

If the rules which apply to local government were to apply to Parliament, a significant number of MPs might be disqualified or in jail. There are several proposals which your committee should consider:-

1. A code of Conduct. There is a compelling case for having a formal code of conduct which applies to all Members of Parliament.

2. Outside interests. The Committee must take a view on outside commercial interests. There are strong arguments for saying that MPs are elected to work full time in the public interest. Having a second job not only appears greedy but raises serious questions about how much of an MP's job you are actually doing. If your Committee cannot recommend that MPs have only one job then perhaps you would consider a rule that MPs could not have extra earnings of more than half their MP's salary. This would ensure that outside financial interests did not override the public interest responsibilities which MPs are elected to pursue.

3. Political consultancies. The Committee must also take a view on political consultancies, which detract from and undermine MPs' responsibility to their electorate. MPs should not be using Government time and parliamentary procedures to pursue issues on behalf of fee-paying consultancies. Our work should focus on the needs of constituents by whom we are elected and from whose taxes we are paid. Surely this is 'cash for questions' in another guise? Specifically the Committee should review the procedure whereby individual MPs are paid as political advisers. Funds from such groups could still be allocated to parties on a regional or a local basis or to support the work of 'all party' groups.

4. Open book accountability. The strongest guarantee of honesty in public life, will come from an open-book approach to members' interests and earnings. As long as the rules are clear, members should not have trouble complying with them.

5. Personnel and patronage. The system of financing for administrative support contains serious weaknesses which private lobby groups have been happy to exploit. Those MPs who try to run a constituency office which is properly staffed find that they cannot also pay for staff in the Commons. Lobby groups who offer seconded staff or administrative support have a powerful point of leverage. This could be controlled by requiring all support staff to register their own commercial interests (and making non-disclosure a fineable offence). Better still, a more

adequate base of staffing support could ensure that all MPs' staff with parliamentary passes were directly employed here rather than on secondment from somewhere else. You should also look at other forms of patronage including private dinners sponsored by MPs in Commons facilities.

6. A law on lobbying. 'Inducements' need to be made illegal. It should be an offence to pay an MP to use his or her influence to secure parliamentary advantage (in a commercial or financial sense). MPs accepting such inducements should be fined or disqualified.

7. Scrutiny. Parliament is no longer a credible body for policing itself. Even the title 'Committee of Privileges' suggests that we are more concerned with protecting our own perks rather than pressing home a clear set of duties. A Committee of Obligations would be more positive in setting standards. A new independent watchdog needs to be set up which could deal with the most serious allegations of parliamentary impropriety. Everyone should have the right to call on an Independent Panel on Standards in Public Life. This panel should be given full investigative powers in order to deal effectively with complaints about financial or commercial impropriety.

8. Recruitment and the afterlife. There is now a stream of ex-ministers into jobs in the City, industries they have helped sell off or onto the boards of commercial lobbying organisations. This creates an understandable public view that we are all simply feathering our own nests whilst being paid from the public purse. We ought to have hard and clear rules which protect the public from MPs who would use their public wage as a springboard into private affluence. At the heart of any stable system of parliamentary democracy has to be the belief that the system is honest and accountable.

After more than 15 years of 'look after Number One' economics the public has diminishing confidence in our system of self-regulation being 'legal, decent and honest'. There is an urgency about bringing forth new regulations - in which we must demonstrate that we can (and do) work to the highest standards of public probity. A failure to do so will not only hasten our own demise but would send all the wrong messages out to a society which is growing tired of sleaze and corruption as the bread and butter of public life. ❑

Animal rights - a different view

Eric Bright responds to last month's *Briefing* and argues that socialists should be wary of the idea of animal rights.

"IT'S JUST like the Nazis what you're doing to these calves". The atmosphere around protests against the animal export trade is nothing if not emotive. People crowd round the stalls of local campaigns for animal welfare. They look at horrific pictures of veal crates and distressed lambs. They sign petitions to halt sending livestock to continental abattoirs. Many participate in the demonstrations at Brightlingsea. Reports speak of a small seaport united against the exporters' lorries.

Should all socialists participate in this campaign? Chris Halls argues (*Briefing*, February) that capitalist agribusiness, which produces meat at the expense of vegetables is the root problem. Fighting it is a "challenge to the wealth and power of the capitalist structure. The socialist future has to be vegetarian". Halls' target is clear: the rearing of animals for human consumption.

But it is debatable that capitalist agriculture needs to be based on factory-farming, or that vegetarianism equals an end to the private ownership of land and large scale private farming. Soya, sugar beet, wheat, maize and rape-seed are all produced on a scale which helps to destroy the natural environment. The issue is: should we support the animal liberation movement? If so, how central is it to our socialist strategy?

The first basis for the present-day movement is Peter Singer's views on the nature of suffering. Singer adopts a version of Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian moral theory which stresses the fact that human beings and animals experience pleasure and pain. Both can, therefore, undergo suffering. But modern socialists have generally not admired Bentham's views on social morality. They are associated with individualism and the free market. Bentham's view holds that an animal's instinctive and visible reaction to pain is identical to a human being's. A utilitarian morality takes no account of self-consciousness - which is a source of 'invisible' distress and happiness. Marxists have always emphasised this difference between human beings and the natural world.

The second basis is a theory of animal 'rights'. While Singer, like Bentham, is suspicious of 'rights' he puts animal liberation in the same league as other movements such as women and anti-racism. This stand is convincingly demolished by P.T. Leahy and the French philosopher Luc Ferry. The problem about rights is even greater than suffering. Rights have to be reciprocal. If I have the right to write, someone has to give me the right to be published. Obviously animals cannot be obliged to each other. Indeed animals could be said to violate each others' rights (as carnivores eat, or domesticated animals push out, other species). Utilitarianism and rights theory do not convincingly make animals into moral agents.

Other arguments that make animals uniquely important rely on even more unsustainable claims about the planet being one whole, or Gaia. Morality in the socialist tradition is a social creation. Human beings' relationship with animals is an ethical question when unnecessary suffering leads to a brutalisation of humanity. Nobody would deny that there are grounds for improvement in this area. But there are so many other causes of suffering in the world that animal rights are not high on my list of priorities.

It's important to avoid the emotionalism of the debate. After the genocide in Rwanda I read some reports about acts of great human courage. At terrible cost, some individuals had protected the potential victims of these terrible crimes. These were people of a nobility socialist should try to emulate. Every time I hear animal rights activists comparing factory-farming and slaughterhouses to the Nazi genocide I think of what a real slaughter must be like. ❑

news & views

Join the Nestlé boycott!

According to UNICEF 4,000 babies are dying every day because they are not breast fed. Leonora Lloyd explains why breast is best.

THERE ARE clear advantages to breast feeding over bottle feeding, particular for poor women in countries without clean water supplies. However, the companies that produce baby milk substitutes are more concerned about the need to maintain profits than the health of women and their babies. Despite many attempts by the World Health Organisation to curb their activities, companies such as Nestlé continue to exploit women in developing countries. Although 81 governments have adopted official bans against free supplies, the milk companies continue to break the rules in at least 41 countries, including 28 of those with government bans.

Although no baby food company anywhere in the world complies with a WHO/UNICEF international code Nestlé is the worst offender with twice as many violations reported as any other company. Far from accepting the bans it is seeking to extend its sales. For example, Nestlé recently started industrial production in China where traditionally milk is not drunk.

In the United States companies are threatening to sue hospitals which promote breast feeding, citing breach of contract. Clearly the free market is much more important than the health of women and their babies.

Breast feeding is cheap, hygienic, passes natural immunities onto the baby and gives the mother a measure of natural contraception. According to UNICEF babies who are bottle fed "have higher rates of death, meningitis, childhood leukaemia and other cancers, diabetes, respiratory illnesses..." They may also be allergic to cows' milk or suffer from water-borne diseases.

A number of companies break the baby food code but the main boycott is against Nestlé, the largest. This code requires that they do not give gifts of baby food to new mothers or use pseudo-medical staff (sales staff dressed like doctors or nurses) to promote milk substitutes. Even when the mothers are literate the instructions are often not in the language of the country. In Sri Lanka Nestlé dumped radio active formula on the market.

The advertising they use is often misleading. For example, in South Africa Nestlé has used the slogan: "Breast is best, Formulas are fantastic", whilst Cow & Gate sponsored a Channel 4 advert by the charity Feed the Children in Scotland with a Bosnian mother breast feeding a perfectly healthy looking baby and the voiceover saying: "How must that mother feel knowing her baby is aching with hunger?" What does this do to the confidence of nursing mothers?

The International Baby Food Action Network wants to see an end to commercial promotion of milk substitutes and sponsorship of medical events by baby milk companies. It recognises that there will be a minority of women who for some reasons cannot breast feed. Most of those could be helped with the establishment of baby milk banks, but for a tiny number a substitute will be needed. This should be produced on a non-commercial basis and prescribed by doctors. This would be available for women who just do not want to breast feed as well, but with an end to advertising, changes in public attitudes and full support for all new mothers these numbers would be much smaller than now.

In Britain (where Nestlé does not sell baby milk) and Ireland, the milk companies continue to give gifts and provide training for health workers. The Health Visitors Association (part of the trade union MSF) has strongly condemned this practice.

The Government has agreed to support a campaign by the HVA and the Royal College of Midwives to promote breast feeding which the organisations call "a wasted health resource". 64% of new mothers want to breast feed but many need more support than are getting now and fail as a result. It is not just Nestlé that is at fault. Cow & Gate uses direct mail and sponsorship of Mother and Baby on GMTV to push their products in the name of pregnancy education. Baby Milk Action - the British-based campaign - wants to see an end to such linkages.

The Government speaks with two voices also. It advertises a free bounty pack to new mothers because it includes a child benefit claim pack. Also in the pack are samples of follow-on-milks, sweetened weaning foods and drinks and marmite (which is too salty for young babies). These sorts of packs also promote the more expensive types of nappy creams and lotions. Baby Milk Action wants to see child benefit claim forms distributed by health workers who could promote healthier life styles than it is in the interest of commercial companies to push.

Attitudes also need to change. This is already starting to happen - more

women are breast feeding, more places are being provided where they can do this and an opinion poll by the Royal College of Midwives found that nine out of ten men would find it acceptable to eat in a restaurant while a mother breast fed her baby. Four out of five restaurants allow "discreet" feeding at a table. 32% would move a complainant rather than the mother although over a third would ask the mother to leave. These changing attitudes are the result of women demonstrating and protesting when being asked to leave or told to feed their babies in the toilet.

It must become second nature for socialists to boycott Nestlé. Of all baby milk companies they have the widest non-baby food list, so it does need good observation to do it. They produce coffee (including Gold Blend), cereal products including Carnation, Nouvelle and Coffee-Mate, lots of your favourite chocolate bars and ice creams, including Rowntrees, Lyons Maid and Quality Street, Alcon contact lens solutions, Sarsons and Cook-in-the-Pot, Perrier, Buxton and other mineral waters, Milo and other drinks, Findus, Buitoni, Crosse and Blackwell, Waistline and other processed meals, Branston Pickle, Gales Honey, Sun-Pat and other spreads, lots of cereals (including Shredded Wheat, Force, Wheatflakes), cosmetics including Lancome, and Friskies, Go-Cat and Go-Dog. A full list and more about the campaign can be obtained from Baby Milk Action, 23 St Andrews Street, Cambridge CB2 3AX (0223 464 420). ❑

The sums that don't add up

Paul Foley writes: This year the cuts in education budgets seem to be universal with devastating consequences. Faced with what Tory cabinet ministers like to call "difficult decisions", school governors in Shropshire and Oxfordshire are in open revolt threatening to set deficit budgets - not at all what Tory senior management had in mind when they transferred local management of schools from the town halls to school governing bodies. The odds must be that school governors in other parts of the country will follow the lead of the Tory shires as school budgets are announced over the next few weeks.

Behind this current crisis 10,000 teachers may lose their jobs while school rolls are rising rapidly. Class sizes of over 40 are becoming a possibility, and not just in primary schools.

For teachers the simple message is if you want a wage rise then pay for it with your jobs. For parents and school students, the simple message is as the Government is strapped for cash you will pay for it with fewer teachers and larger class sizes.

The grassroots revolt gave Labour leaders a golden opportunity to join with parents, governors and teachers in fighting the current round of education cuts. Instead David Blunkett's response was to inform school governors that new Labour couldn't support the setting of illegal budgets.

Once again Labour has managed to marginalise itself in an anti-Tory campaign which has the capacity to mobilise millions in defence of local state schools.

Meanwhile Tony Blair's decision to send his son to a grant-maintained school is a kick in the teeth for thousands of Labour Party supporters who have led the fight against schools opting-out of local authority control, and against hundreds of thousands of teacher trade unionists who voted old Labour. Perhaps Blair doesn't think that teacher trade unions are very nice; that's certainly the opinion of the governors of Euan's new school who have recently banned them.

An end to fat profits?

A BACK-BENCH bid to clamp down on quick-fix dieting methods which falsely promise easy and dramatic weight loss has been made in the Commons. MPs cheered when Labour MP Alice Mahon presented The Regulation of Diet Industry Bill.

The measure would bring in new controls on the slimming industry, bringing all diet and weight loss pills, potions and patches under the scope of the Medicines Act making them available only on prescription. Diet products would have to display warnings signs about the dangers of rapid weight loss. The Bill stands little chance of becoming law owing to lack of parliamentary time.

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Socialism *is* feasible

In the third of our series on the problems of organising a socialist economy Jamie Gough and Dave Palmer wrestle with the mysteries of planning.

WHAT WOULD be planned in a democratically planned economy? For conscious collective control of production a minimum of three basic mechanisms are needed. First, that share of the economic product which is required for investment must be publicly appropriated. Secondly, the majority of that investment must also be publicly controlled. Thirdly, the remainder of the economic product must be used as revenue to fund activities which do not cover their costs. This must also be placed under public control.

It is not necessary to abolish money, nor wages, nor all markets. Public control of profits and investment would eliminate any substantial market in the means of production. There would be only a 'shadow market' here, in which profits and investment would be both produced and bought by enterprises ultimately under the common rule of public ownership, so that the 'sale' would be more of an internal transfer.

Wages would still be paid because they enable individuals directly to choose and pay for parts of the goods they consume. There would be markets in some consumer goods and services, while others would be provided free or at subsidised prices. On the whole, essential goods and services - those which nearly everyone would consume, e.g. education and health care and those with large external benefits, e.g. public transport - would be free.

A planned economy, then, need not imply the abolition of all market mechanisms. In particular, enterprises could use market-exchanges to respond to the pattern of demand from consumers. Planning need not mean a crippling uniformity. In fact, a planned economy should allow producers to take more risks than in capitalist economies and thus to develop greater genuine diversity in products and services. Because of a more egalitarian income distribution and because of workers' political power a planned economy should be much more responsive than a capitalist economy to the needs and desires of workers and poorer sections of the population.

A planned economy can use manipulation of prices as a policy instrument to an extent impossible in capitalist society. However, a policy of creating greater equality in incomes is best pursued directly through altering wages and other incomes rather than wholesale subsidy of consumer goods and services. In general, investment policy and wages and incomes policy are better mechanisms for planning than was the system of 'administered prices' in the old command economies.

Prices in a democratically planned economy should be established on the basis of costs of production plus an element for depreciation (see below).

Some sectors of the economy would not be in public ownership, at least initially, in particular those presently organised by small firms, especially ones needing little capital and in which there are decreasing economies of scale.

But this private sector remnant should not be regarded complacently. If it remains substantial it will weaken economic planning, provide a political base for pro-capitalist forces and sustain poor wages and conditions. A socialist state should therefore: regulate employment conditions in this sector rigorously; encourage socialisation through joint services to small firms; erode it by setting up socialised enterprises in competition with them.

It is a misconception that a planned economy means a central planning body deciding everything. This would not be necessary even supposing it were possible. Planning exists to provide particular economic mechanisms. The institutions of planning would need the powers to organise these mechanisms and not others. The two key tasks for the planning authority would be the maintenance of full employment and increasing labour productivity, i.e. economic growth. It would decide upon the allocation of investment between geographical areas and sectors, between paid and (previously) unpaid sectors and between infra-structure and other sectors.

These tasks require the central planning body to have certain powers and access to certain information but they do not require it to have excess powers or complete access to all information in the economy. There would be a need for democratic decision-making at a number of different levels, including industries, enterprises and workplaces and oppressed groups within the workforce.

Each planning body would be elected (directly or indirectly) by the people directly affected by its remit. The 'lower' level bodies would make demands on the higher level ones for resources, particularly investment resources. The higher level bodies would judge these claims on the basis of the information which the lower bodies provided to them and the priorities democratically determined by society as a whole.

Thus, although the higher bodies are the most powerful by virtue of commanding the greatest resources they constantly interact with planning bodies at lower levels.

'Market socialists' have argued that interest rates should be used to equalise supply and demand for investment funds. But reliance on interest rates would not allow investment to be planned in order to achieve both full employment and maximum growth.

How then would the planning system control investment? The main decision would be: what proportion of the social product should be devoted to investment? This would then establish the size of the consumption fund which, coupled with social consumption and net personal savings, would determine wage rates.

The majority of capital investment would be replacement for worn-out

capital, i.e. to cover depreciation. This could be handled internally by enterprises. Though enterprises would be free to vary output any extra working capital could be secured only by application to the relevant sectoral and other planning bodies. As a rule, prices would be set to cover the cost of production (i.e. no 'profit') plus an element to fund investment required to cover depreciation. Therefore any funds for other types of investment would have to come from the planning authority. The planning authority would raise its investment funds mainly through taxation, chiefly a value added tax, which could be varied according to the desired level of investment. To conserve and ration land and other naturally scarce resources rent would be charged.

In deciding where to allocate investment funds the planning authority should: first, rank investment in terms of return, taking into account the effect of different projects on others' rate of return; secondly, take into account priority social goals decided through elected planning bodies. Funds would be rationed and enterprise disciplined by direct allocation, not charging. Thus the investment sphere, unlike commodities and labour power, would not operate according to price.

In the kind of economy we have been discussing there would still be some penalties for lack of effort. There would still be some differences in wages, conditions and pleasantness of jobs. Within individual enterprises, the wage bill may be divided partly according to individual or small-group effort, usually measured by output.

Enterprises which are inefficient may feel the pinch through lack of revenue from sales. This would have some effect on their ability to invest to the extent (which is admittedly limited) to which they are self-financing. These pressures would probably be weak and tend to decrease as the economy became more fully socialised.

However, there would be distinctively socialist means of encouraging and ensuring effort. In a socialist economy all workers would have an interest in making the overall economy more efficient (more output and/or less labour time). The direct relation between individual or enterprise effort and aggregate output is, of course, very slight. But the common interest means that collective pressure on all to make an effort would exist, and could be



mobilised and organised in various ways. There is no reason why individuals or groups which have the ability but refuse to work at the average rate should not be penalised.

In developing a planning system we would not be starting from scratch. Increasing socialisation of production means capitalist society has itself developed a whole number of forms of planning and planning techniques. The internal operations of capitalist firms are planned; in the case of large firms this planning is highly elaborate. Capitalism has over its history become increasingly 'social', in the sense that different firms develop inter-dependencies which go well beyond short-term market exchanges.

For this reason, capital has itself instituted various forms of planning within and between firms and through capitalist states. Provided a democratic planning system contains appropriate levels of decentralisation and can deal flexibly with horizontal co-ordination, it should be able to function effectively.

The objective basis for planning rests on the tendency for the economy, for ultimately technical reasons, to become increasingly social. This should make a socialist economy more efficient than a capitalist one. Some of the techniques of a socialist economy have therefore been partly developed, albeit in distorted forms, within twentieth century capitalism.

Capitalism has also developed 'the forces of production' - labour power and physical means of production - in ways which can be adapted for the purposes of economic planning. Information technology, for example, provides a tremendous basis for democratising both the generation and the availability of the information needed for economic planning. In the advanced economies, workers already have the skills and knowledge necessary for economic management. A socialist society would have the crucial advantage that, having been established through workers taking things into their own hands, its founding principle would be that everyone is capable of running society. Its very structure would be empowering.

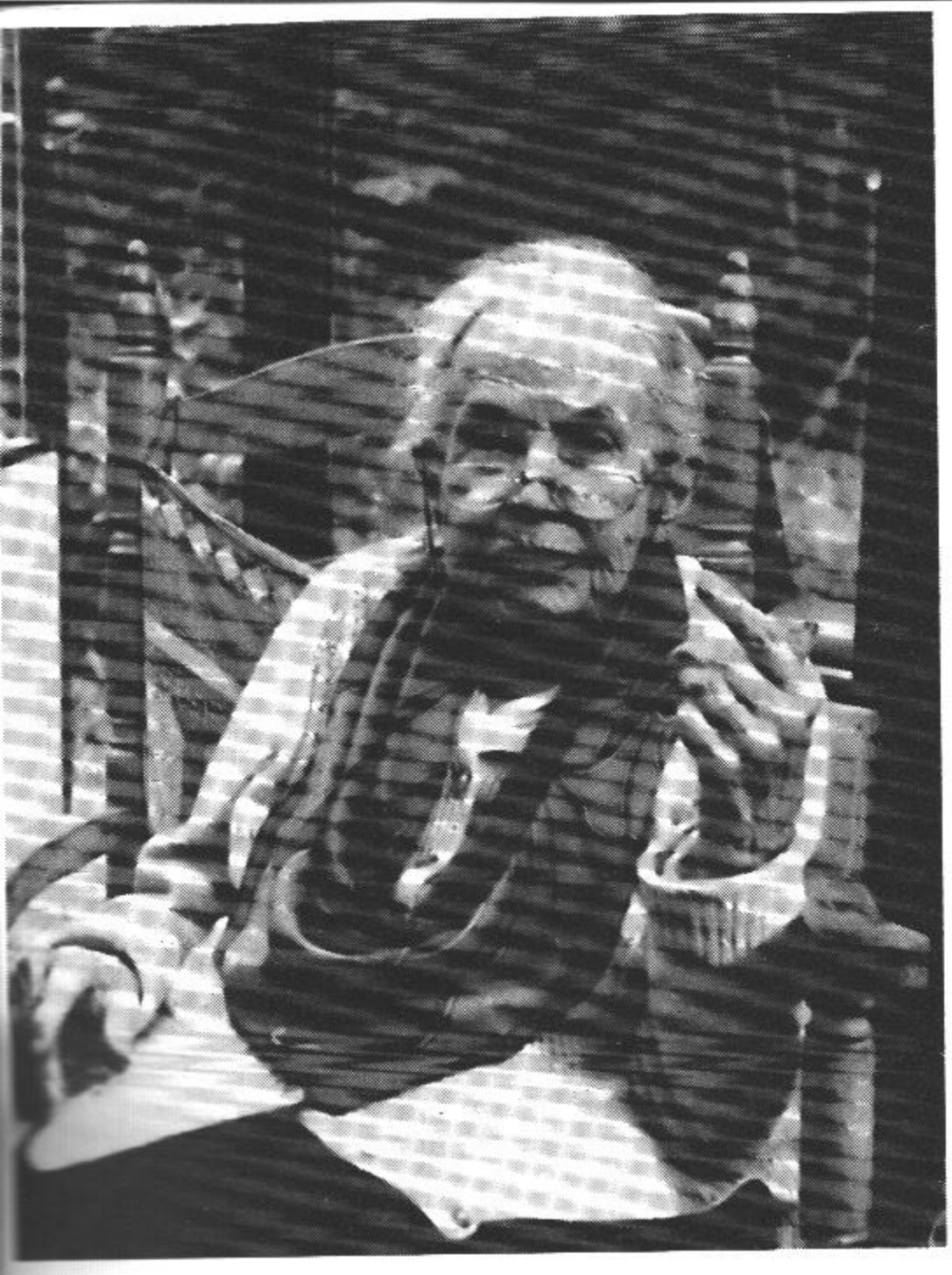
Many of the ideas in this article were inspired by Pat Devine's excellent book on the economics of socialism, *Democracy And Economic Planning*, Polity Press, 1988.

LATE NEWS

Tony Blair showed his personal commitment to the Baby Food campaign *(see page 14)* **when he visited Nestle's York factory and came away with a pack of sweeties on February 17th. Either he has bad advisers or he just doesn't give a damn about the abuse of power of multi-national companies. No doubt supporters of the Nestlé boycott will soon put him right.**

The quiet revolutionary

Richard Hanford salutes the life of Margaret Dewar who died last month at the age of 93.



Margaret Dewar

DIMINUTIVE IN stature yet determined in spirit, this exemplary activist described herself modestly as "an eye-witness to history".

The eldest of three children, Margarete Watz was born in Riga, Latvia, in 1901. Most of her childhood was spent in Russia, as her family moved first to St Petersburg and then to Moscow. She was a schoolgirl at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. They fled the famine which followed the civil war, settling in Berlin.

There she joined the Russian Famine Committee, working alongside fellow exiles including Nabokov who later wrote *Lolita*. Gaining diplomas in eurhythmics and physiotherapy, she worked as keep-fit instructor for International Workers Relief, but later took a job with the Soviet trade delegation in Berlin.

In 1930 she joined the German Communist Party. When Hitler took power and banned all parties except the Nazis, she sheltered Trotskyist organiser Walter Nettlbach, alias Jan Bur, and was impressed by his anti-Stalinist arguments. She joined Trotsky's Left Opposition in 1933, undertaking clandestine underground political work. They used cover names and codes but many comrades could not avoid arrest and the concentration camps.

Deprived of German citizenship, and with the Gestapo closing in, she fled first to Prague and then to Paris. There she met 'Balham Group' Trotskyist Hugo Dewar and they were married months later in England.

During the War Margaret worked as a radio monitor for the British United Press. After the war she worked at Chatham House writing *Foreign Trade with Eastern Europe 1945-1949* (published 1951), and *Soviet Labour Policy 1917-1928* (published 1956).

She and Hugo retired to a bungalow in Lindfield during the sixties. When Hugo died she stayed on.

Margaret also had a deep and wide-ranging love of literature and the arts. Revolutionary politics, however, was always her real passion. Rejecting any idea of a parliamentary road to socialism, she was a staunch supporter of the Socialist Workers Party. Entirely non-sectarian, courteous and considerate, yet razor-sharp in debate, she always enjoyed discussions with local Labour left-wingers. In 1989 she received a presentation from Mid-Sussex Labour Party in recognition of sixty years' service to socialism. Although nearing 90 she was active in many Mid-Sussex anti-Poll Tax Union demonstrations.

Her fierce independence was finally frustrated by increasing incapacity and immobility. Although old age had at last overtaken her vigour her revolutionary zeal remained undiminished and undimmed.

She concluded her autobiography, *The Quiet Revolutionary* (Bookmarks, 1989) with a quotation from one of her husband's poems:

"For he that his whole youth denies
is surely dead before he dies."

She added: "Hugo died in 1980, as convinced a Marxist and revolutionary socialist as he had been throughout his adult life - as, I hope, will I. Obviously I am disappointed that it is taking so long for the revolution to materialise. But come it must if exploitation of man by man is to end and mankind is to survive. It is now up to the younger generation to give a lead." ❑

10 years on . . .

A look at the March '85 issue of *Briefing* ...

Rate capping was once again in the headlines with Hilda Kean - the then Leader of Hackney Council - calling for support for a TUC National day of Action on March 6th. Her call was vigorously backed by the leader of Lambeth, Ted Knight.

The *Briefing* slate for the London Regional Executive elections included such luminaries as Mildred Gordon, Jeremy Corbyn and Joan Twelves and just to emphasise how people change - Keith Vaz!


LONDON LABOUR 40p
BRIEFING
No 47 MARCH 1985

OPENING UP THE SECOND FRONT—
STRIKE TOGETHER ON
MARCH 6th!

HILDA KEAN (Leader of Hackney Council)

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Disabled people picket Lilley

Kate Adams and Eddie Barns report from the siege of Chez Lilley.



PHOTO: Michael Stavari.

INCAPACITY ACTION, a group of disabled claimants and their allies, picketed social security minister Peter Lilley's home in Islington on February 9th. We were protesting against the new Incapacity Benefit and the Job Seekers Bill, currently going through Parliament. Campaigners against the Child Support Act and student cuts also gave their support.

Incapacity Benefit, due to be implemented this April, replaces Invalidity Benefit, the main income of thousands of long-term sick and disabled people unable to work. The benefit will be taxable and paid at drastically reduced rates. A farcical medical test has been designed by the Government which will result in the classification of a quarter of a million people as ineligible for benefit and fit for any kind of work. Many disabled people will not qualify for unemployment benefit either under the new rules of the proposed Job Seeker's Allowance. They will be forced to sign an agreement saying they are available 40 hours per week for any job. Those forced off Incapacity Benefit may not be well enough to sign on even if their local office is accessible in the first place.

Incapacity Action is demanding the repeal of the Incapacity For Work (Social Security Act) 1994. We have joined forces with the Welfare State Network (a parliamentary and grassroots campaign) to link this issue with all other health and benefit cuts. We took our protest into Peter Lilley's private life because this brutal legislation adversely affects our everyday lives and many of us will be without an income after April.

Sadly the Labour front bench has failed to commit itself to abolishing this vicious Act. Opposition spokesperson for social security Donald Dewar told us that although we are 'batting on the same side' the Labour Party would have to look at what resources were available when they come to office. We believe that proper resources for disabled and sick people are non-negotiable. They are a human right.

Incapacity Action is meeting with the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs to get it to back this demand and ensure that the issue gets a high profile in Parliament and in constituencies up and down the country.

We are asking activists to raise this model resolution in their Labour Party and trade union branches:

"This branch opposes the Incapacity for Work (Social Security) Act 1994 which will force 250,000 long-term sick and disabled people off Invalidity Benefit saving the Government £1.5 billion.

We condemn this vicious legislation which puts the health and welfare of disabled people at risk and will force them into deeper poverty.We recognise that this affects all workers currently paying National Insurance contributions who may become ill and find themselves ineligible for benefit under the new laws.This branch supports Incapacity Action's campaign for the total repeal of the Incapacity for Work Act. We agree to sponsor the campaign by offering political and financial support."

Further actions are planned for April 13th when Incapacity Benefit will be implemented. If you want to help us defeat the Incapacity Act phone 081-806 6455 or write to Incapacity Action, PO Box 9, 136-138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS.

The Welfare State Network can be contacted at Southwark Trade Union Support Unit, 42 Braganza Street, London SE17. Tel 071 639 5068.

Trade Unions

Gas workers call for demo

British Gas workers pledged at a meeting in London on February 17th to fight attempts to cut their pay and announced plans for a national demonstration to protest against the 75% rise paid to chief executive Cedric Brown.

A national conference of workers who belong to Unison also voted to submit pay claims aimed at keeping pace with inflation.

Delegates representing 30,000 British Gas workers said they would resist any compulsory redundancies among the 25,000 jobs being axed by the company. Brown's controversial pay rise, which increased his salary to £475,000, was strongly criticised at the London conference where delegates agreed to organise a demonstration at the British Gas annual meeting in April.

Delegates agreed a motion which read: "Unison pickets should concentrate on exposing the double standards and injustice of the huge board pay rises and the proposed salary and conditions cut for staff."

Dave Stirzaker, the union's National Officer for the Gas industry, said: "British Gas must be the only company in the world to increase the salary of their executives for turning a profit into a loss last year, demoralising their staff and seeing a doubling in the number of complaints from consumers.

"The Government and the industry's regulator must do something to stop this greed. The delegates have resisted the temptation to seek a 75% pay increase on the grounds that they are not prepared to be as obscenely greedy as executives.

"But delegates have made it plain they expect all members to receive a fair increase in pay which matches the best in the market."

Stirzaker said this meant a rise of at least the current rate of inflation and higher than the recent public sector pay awards which gave teachers 2.7%. The union will now submit pay claims to British Gas's various business sectors for rises in line with or above inflation.

Stirzaker said at the end of the conference that the mood of the delegates was one of extreme anger. "If you are a junior clerk on £13,000 and you are being told you cannot have a pay rise and may not even have a job and you see the boss taking a 75% pay increase, you are bound to be angry.

"The vast majority of delegates believe it will not take a lot to spark the keg which will lead to industrial action."

The union will submit its claims to British Gas's seven business units over the next few weeks ahead of an April settlement date.

TUC launches TV series

The TUC has appointed CTN, the corporate television arm of ITN, to make a ground-breaking series of news magazine programmes for broadcast on BBC2's open access slot, BBC Select. TUTV (Trade Union TV) will launch on 1st May.

The series will broadcast to a tightly targeted audience of 300,000 union workplace representatives and appeal also to the other seven million people who are members of unions in Britain. The programmers will provide up-to-date information on current issues in the world of work, with a focus on news, views and interviews from the workplace. CTN plan to take the series "Round Britain" with each broadcast coming from a different location and region.

John Healey, head of campaigns and communications at the TUC, said: "Trade unions find fair access to TV very difficult. But with more and more openings in the medium we have to turn TV to our own advantage. TUTV promises to be an innovative way of getting across issues and information on the world of work."

Pay awards

The Government has announced pay awards of between 1.5% and 3.2% for 1.4 million public sector workers.

School teachers are to get 2.7% across the board. Increases for the armed forces range from 2.5% to 2.9% averaging 2.6%. Dentists, hospital doctors and the judiciary will get 2.5%, GPs 3%. Senior ranks in the military will get 2.5% with between 3.2% and 3.8% for others. No standard increase for civil service grades 2 and 3 have been promised, but the amount set aside for increases in performance bonuses equals 2.5% of the pay bill.

The statement says: "The awards are fully consistent with the Government's policy that pay increases in the public sector must be paid by efficiency savings and other economies."

COSATU leader takes on international post

Zwelinzima Vavi, Assistant General Secretary of South Africa's leading trade union confederation, COSATU, has agreed to become President of the International Centre for Trade Union Rights (ICTUR), the international campaigning organisation which links trade unionists and lawyers in the struggle for workers' rights and freedoms.

Vavi succeeds the eminent British lawyer John Hendy QC who becomes an international Vice President of the organisation. Other Vice Presidents include Ron Todd, former leader of the TGWU, Farouk Abu-Eissa, General Secretary of the Arab Lawyers' Union, Indian QC Jitendra Sharma, Theophile Sony-Cole of the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity and prominent Australian labour lawyer Michael Walton.

Bank strike planned

Workers at the Scottish-based Clydesdale Bank are set to start a series of one-day strikes after voting by more than 2-1 in favour of action over pay.

Union members voted by 1,721 to 746 to back the planned walkouts in protest at an imposed 3% performance-related increase.

The Banking Insurance and Finance Union called for immediate talks with the conciliation service Acas to try to avert the first-ever strikes at Clydesdale.

The union was also seeking fresh talks with the Yorkshire Bank after workers there narrowly rejected industrial action. They voted by 2,101 to 1,958 - a majority of just 144 - against a series of one-day strikes. Both banks are owned by the National Australia Group which the union has accused of causing an industrial relations "crisis" in this country.

Bifu had earlier accused Clydesdale management of treating staff with "contempt" by imposing the 3% deal as members were being balloted. "The vote reflects the deep unrest among Clydesdale staff at the performance culture being forced upon them," said Keith Brookes, its assistant secretary.

The union fixed the first 24-hour strike for Friday February 17th.

No to 1%!

Midwives have joined health union protests over the Government's 1% pay award. The move, announced by the Royal College of Midwives, follows the decision by Unison representing 240,000 of Britain's 600,000 nurses to take the first step towards industrial action by agreeing to hold a ballot.

Royal College of Midwives General Secretary Julia Allison said: "Midwives are attempting to implement local and national requirements for the maternity services but at the same time many of them will be worse off financially. As a result, morale within the profession is at an all-time low."

Talks are going ahead with the RCM's 230 branches and 600 stewards as special workplace meetings are being called to find out the views of the College's 36,000 members. The RCM plannned a further meeting on 21st February to decide on any further action. The Royal College of Nursing, also angry over the 1% award, was to hold an emergency meeting at its London headquarters around the same time.

The Government wants nurses and midwives to negotiate up to 3% locally with the trusts, but this will lead to variations across the country. Hospital doctors and GPs were awarded 2.5% in the Pay Review Bodies deal with the chance to gain up to 5% locally. But GPs are unhappy with a Government proposal to change their out-of-hours payments from £47.85 to £9 plus a lump sum of £2,000 a year per doctor and decided to continue with plans for sanctions.

The Community and District Nursing Association met to discuss the 1% offer and decided unanimously to lobby Parliament and hold rallies in London and Scotland to press the Government for a national pay rise.

General secretary Ann Keen said the association, which has 5,500 members, wanted a national rise of at least 3%, in line with other health workers, "My members want to get on with delivering the service of care in the community — they can't be bargaining for their pay at the same time."

She added that members also hoped to vote to overturn their no-strike clause and take industrial action if necessary.

The politics of greed

The 77 top directors of privatised electricity companies have awarded themselves share options worth a total of £72 million according to Labour Party research which claimed that the figure amounted to a charge of just over £4 for every household in the country. 12 directors together with a small number of senior executives at the generating companies PowerGen and National Power, have options worth £22,901,856 between them. In the 12 regional electricity companies responsible for power distribution 65 directors have options to buy shares worth £49,714,879.

It is not just within the electricity industry that greed is felt to be justified. The chairman of telephone giant BT infuriated junior doctors by saying that it might be quite "relaxing" to do their job.

Sir Iain Vallance, who earns £663,000 a year, was justifying his salary to the Commons employment select committee investigating executive pay in the wake of a public outcry over "excessive" boardroom wages. His salary is just one of those in privatised industry under investigation.

Other top earners are:

• Cedric Brown, chief executive of British Gas who had a 75% rise from £270,000 to £475,000.

• The chief executive of National Power, John Baker, collected more than £1.1 million last year.

• Sir Desmond Pitcher, chair of North West Water, had a salary of £315,000 this year.

• James Smith, chair of Eastern Group - formerly Eastern Electricity - had his salary cut to £105,000 from more than £200,000 on becoming a part-time chair. But by going part-time he is eligible to claim a company pension which has been estimated at £145,000.

• Edmund Wallis, chief executive of Power Gen, received more than £1.2 million last year - £400,000 in pay and remuneration and an extra £876,000 from executive share options.

While a junior doctor could easily sack workers, destroy their trade unions and cut their pay with one hand while eating an executive lunch with the other, how would you feel about a chief executive operating on you after four days on duty with three hours sleep?

Sylvia Pye National Appeal and Fighting Fund (London)

Speakers:

Tony Benn MP
Sylvia Pye (WAPC)
Sue Wilson (WAPC)
Karina Wright (Defend Clause IV)

Monday 27th February 7.30pm

Red Rose Club,
129a Seven Sisters Road, London N7
(Finsbury Park Tube)

Sponsored by Islington UNISON A Branch
Further information: 081 520 5237
Access for people with disabilities

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING

Grassroots revival in Haiti

Despite continuing atrocities and little attempt to disarm or punish the paramilitaries there has been a flowering of grassroots activity in Haiti since the return to office of Father Aristide.

Human rights violations continue. Members of the US Special Forces are working in tandem with remnants of the Haitian military and FRAPH to harass democratic activists. There has been little purging of the army - only about 10% of officers have been weeded out as unsuitable - and the US-backed interim police force are largely the same thugs in a different uniform. At the political level, because of US pressure, Aristide's new cabinet includes people who supported the coup against him. The US Agency for International Development is allocating massive sums of money to buy off local democratic leaders, fund stooge organisations and US-favoured candidates and generally confuse the popular camp - what the CIA call 'democracy enhancement'.

Yet grassroots opposition is beginning to express itself. The Ti Legliz (Little Church) movement has demonstrated for the criminals of the coup to be tried and for prices to be lowered. Women's groups have marched for justice and reparations for victims of rape, routinely used as a means of repression by the military. Trade union members of Electricite d'Haiti occupied the director's office and overcame intervention from US troops to win their demand that he be replaced. Environmental groups have demanded that US troops take back to the US the toxic ash from Philadelphia that was dumped on their beaches in 1987, turning them into a no-go area.

● For more information, contact the Haiti Support Group, Trinity Church, Hodford Road, London NW11 8NG. Tel/fax: 081 201 9878.

Jorge Rosal visits Britain

The UK is about to host the first public visit of a representative of Latin America's longest running guerrilla movement.

For 33 years a war has been fought in the Central American republic of Guatemala. It was precipitated by the aftermath of the US inspired 1954 coup which replaced a democratic government with a military regime. The Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) was formed in 1982 to unify four guerrilla movements. It has fought against successive pariah military governments.

For example, the 1982 de facto government of General Rios Montt was responsible for 30,000 deaths and disappearances in only eighteen months. Most of the dead were indigenous peasants, descendants of the Mayan civilisation. Since the army 'restored' democracy in 1985 they have continued to rule the country through a succession of weak civilian presidents.

The war and human rights violations by the army against the civilian population have continued unabated. One illustration of the weakness of Guatemalan democracy is that General Rios Montt, now President of the Guatemalan Congress, is planning to stand for President in the elections scheduled for the end of this year despite constitutional provisions debarring coup leaders from standing.

Little is heard about Guatemala's civil war and the peace talks which began in earnest a year ago. Guatemala is the richest country in Central America; it is strategically on the southern border of Mexico and therefore of the North American Free Trade Association. That is why it is of crucial importance to the 'stability' of the region.

In addition, we have much to learn from the URNG's proposals on indigenous rights and the way they have handled the delicate relationship between issues of class and race in a country with an indigenous majority, historically excluded from power.

The peace talks are deadlocked at present and the role of the international community will be a crucial factor in whether a negotiated peace is possible.

At issue is whether a negotiated peace should be simply the laying down of arms or whether a settlement should address the causes of the conflict: land reform, Mayan rights, the role of the army and the one million internally displaced and refugee Guatemalans. If the present talks fail the conflict could degenerate into an ethnic war.

Marrack Goulding, the UN undersecretary-general, has just visited Guatemala in an attempt to break the deadlock. The UK visit of Jorge Rosal, the URNG representative in Europe, gives us an opportunity to understand its proposals and to play a role in finding a solution to the Guatemalan conflict that would create a lasting peace.

● Jorge Rosal is speaking at the SOAS Assembly Hall, Malet St., London WC1 at 6.30pm on March 20th in a meeting organised by Camden Nicaragua Association and SOAS Student Union. The meeting is titled 'Is there an alternative left in Central America?.

Also, anyone interested in joining the Guatemala Solidarity Network should contact Peter Frankental at 26 Upper Tollington Park, London N4.

Sandinista split widens

The split in the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, who lost power in 1990, continues to widen as the hardline leadership tightens its grip on the party's apparatus. Ex-Vice President Sergio Ramirez's resignation in January was followed by that of his daughter, Sandinista deputy Maria Ramirez after she was alleged on Sandinista radio to be having an affair with Sandinista parliamentary leader Dora Maria Tellez. Tellez has quit the party's National Directorate, to which she was elected last year, accusing it of a "defamation campaign" but she remains a party member stating: "I am a Sandinista and my militancy has been earned throughout the years".

As Chair of the National Assembly Economic Affairs Committee Tellez is pushing for major changes to the neoliberal government's budget including salary increases for teachers in schools which have achieved 'administrative autonomy', a form of privatisation.

In a further sign of rifts within the Sandinistas, the teachers' union ANDEN was strongly critical, arguing that these increases would amount to only about 6 dollars a month and in any case increased costs were likely to be passed onto students and their families in the form of school fees.

Together with energy and telecommunication workers, they are calling for a general strike for pay increases and an end to lay-offs and privatisation. Last year the average Nicaraguan's income was just £240.



Greenpeace Shell on Earth protest. PHOTO: David Hoffman.

Shell on Earth

MONDAY 16th January saw Greenpeace and other international groups demonstrate in front of the Shell International headquarters in London demanding that Shell use its influence to stop a Nigerian environmentalist from receiving the death penalty.

The demonstration was supported by Greenpeace, Nigeria's Ogoni peoples, MPs and others. Greenpeace released a secret document which links the UK-based oil multinational's operations in Nigeria to recent atrocities in Ogoniland in the Niger Delta.

A spokesperson for the Ogoni, Ken Saro-Wiwa, has gone on trial for his life in front of a military tribunal in Port Harcourt. The environment group has demanded that Shell use its influence to secure Saro-Wiwa's release.

An internal Nigerian Government memo - dated 12th May 1994 and marked "restricted" - suggests that atrocities and human rights violations of Shell's opponents in Ogoniland were carefully planned by the Nigerian military Government. It states: "Shell operations still impossible unless ruthless military operations are undertaken for smooth economic activities to commence."

Shell Oil deny any responsibility or involvement in the litany of human rights abuses and killing in Ogoniland where over the years 1800 people have died. However, this memo shows that the Nigerian authorities were willing to act to protect what they considered to be Shell's interest.

The document goes on to recommend that 400 soldiers undertake "wasting operations" and "wasting" Ogoni leaders who are "especially vocal individuals". The memo from Major P Okuntimo, chair of Rivers State internal security, based in Port Harcourt, Nigeria was issued nine days before the murder of four Ogoni leaders.

Ken Saro-Wiwa led the 30,000 strong opposition to Shell's Ogoni operations. He was imprisoned in May 1994, the day after the murder of the four Ogoni leaders. He is on trial for his life at a special military tribunal in Port Harcourt. Protests from Amnesty International, the British Bar Council, International PEN, the European Parliament and 70 British MPs have failed to stop what Greenpeace described as the "Show Trial of Ken Saro-Wiwa". According to Greenpeace only Shell Oil has sufficient influence with Nigeria's military rulers to stop the trial,

"This memo shows that the Nigerian military are willing to kill to protect what they consider to be Shell's interests. The regime has already shown that it takes no notice of the international community," said Paul Horsman of Greenpeace. "Ken's only crime is to campaign against Shell's destruction of the environment."

"Greenpeace will demonstrate outside Shell's head office. Inside that office sit the Shell executives who are the only people on earth who have the influence to save Ken's life and end the oppression of the Ogoni people".

Royal Dutch Shell has been drilling oil in the Ogoni region of Nigeria since 1958. Since then local people have suffered from spills, pipeline ruptures and fires. Shell derives 14% of all its oil from Nigeria. ❑

The bugging of Stormont

SINN FEIN called off talks with senior civil servants in Belfast last month because of bugging fears.

A scanning device used by party officials to check for listening devices picked up a signal from office equipment in one of the party's rooms at Parliament Buildings, Stormont, just before the two sides were due to sit down again.

The area was immediately sealed off and police called to begin a search after Martin McGuinness, leader of the Sinn Fein delegation, and Quinton Thomas, head of the government's team, agreed to postpone the session.

That night police said no device had been found, and it now seems almost certain the scanner will have to be examined for faults. At the same time it was confirmed the two sides had been in contact to try and agree a new date for re-arranged talks, but it is not clear if they will go ahead at the same venue.

The Northern Ireland Office said any implication that the Sinn Fein rooms were being monitored by or on behalf of the Government was without foundation.

Downing Street also gave a "categorical assurance" that no device has been planted in the room by anyone acting with the authority of the Government.

But Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams said: "This appears to me to be potentially a very serious matter but we are trying to resolve it."

The two sides had planned three hours of exploratory talks dealing chiefly with Sinn Fein demands for the early release of prisoners. But a routine sweep by a party official picked up a strong signal.

The Sinn Fein delegation had been using the scanner as part of their own security precautions since the first time the two sides met last November. They were given their own rooms for private discussions during breaks in talks with the civil servants.

Martin McGuinness said he had very little faith in the police investigation. He added: "When we go back into talks we have to satisfy ourselves in conjunction with our own security people that the environment is secure."

Mitchell McLaughlin, Sinn Fein's northern chair said: "We will have to make judgments on who was responsible based on further information. We have made a commitment to work through this preliminary phase. We have already been in touch to rearrange the postponed meeting and we want that done as soon as possible and move the situation forward."

PT leader in Britain

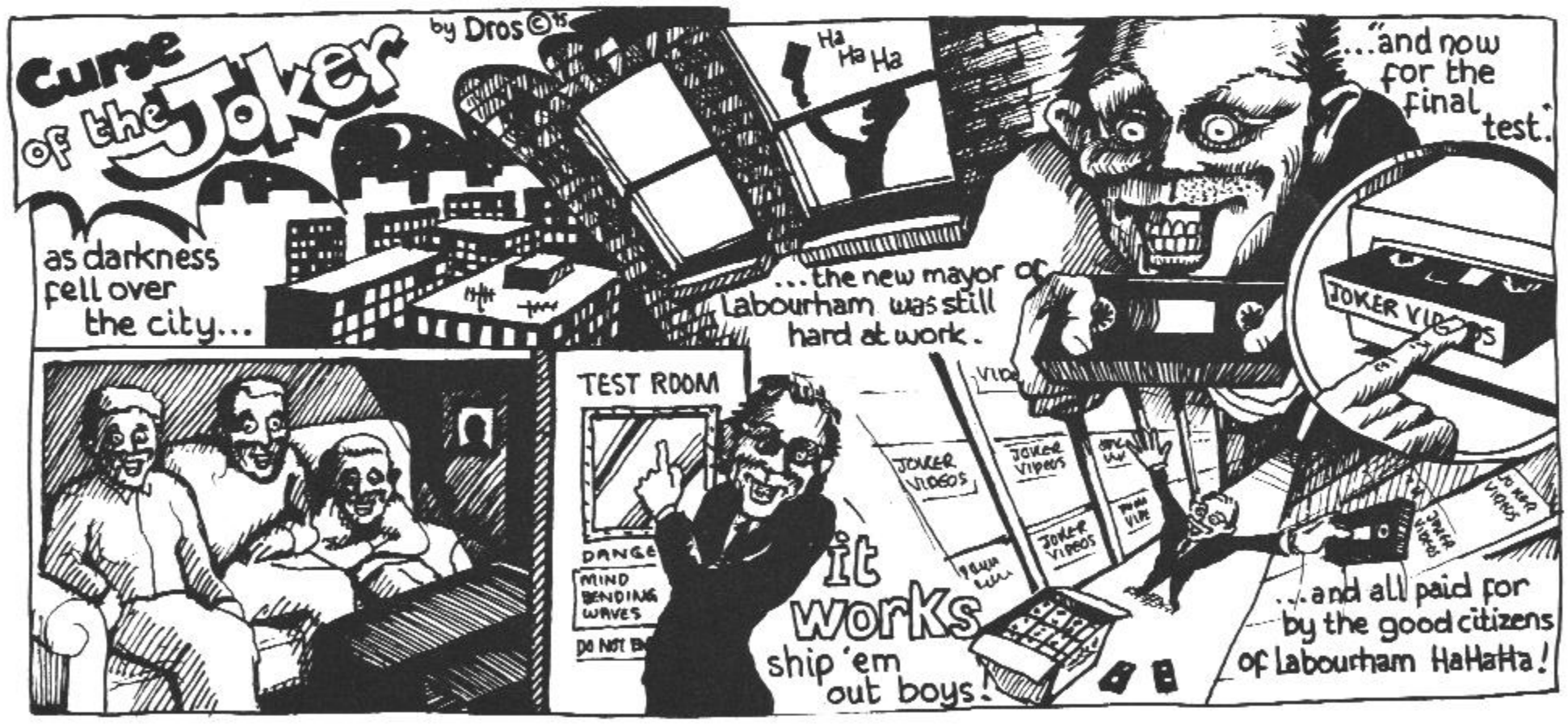
BENEDITA DA SILVA, a Brazilian Senator and leading member of the Workers Party (PT) is in Britain in late February and early March.

52-year old Benedita, Brazil's first black senator, was born into shanty-town poverty in Rio de Janeiro, the daughter of a washerwoman. She worked from the age of six, married at 15 and had five children by the time she was 22. A founder member of the Workers Party, she became first a councillor, then a federal deputy.

Benedita was particularly active in the Constituent Assembly which drew up Brazil's 1987 constitution. She presented 92 amendments, 25 of which were approved, including the controversial measure to make the job of a maid a proper, regulated profession. She still lives in Rio's shanty-town, staying in close contact with the daily oppression of her community.

While in Britain she will be speaking at:

- the launch of *Carnival of the Oppressed*, the Latin American Bureau's new book on the PT, at 6pm on **Saturday February 25th** at Brixton Recreation Centre.
- a panel discussion on 'New Forms of Democracy in Brazil for the Year 2000' at 6.30pm on **Tuesday February 28th** at Friends Meeting House, Euston.
- the 9th International Women's Festival in Birmingham on **March 2nd**.



Utopias past and future

Mike Phipps reviews
Utopia Unarmed: the Latin American left after the Cold War,
by Jorge Castaneda - Latin American Bureau, £12.99

FOR SOCIALISTS Latin America embodies a fundamental contradiction. From the Cuban Revolution in 1959 through the Chilean Popular Unity government 1970-3, the Nicaraguan Revolution of 1979 to the rise of the mass Workers Party in Brazil the region is widely acknowledged to have some of the most diverse, imaginative and popular radical left movements in the world. Yet its achievement has rarely lived up to its potential - a view underlined by all recent statistics for the region.

In 1980 136 million Latin Americans (41% of the population) lived in poverty. Ten years later the figure had doubled to 270 million (62%). Unemployment and underemployment had reached 80 million or 44% of the workforce. The real minimum wage fell 13% between 1980 and 1987. In Mexico, Brazil and Chile the drop was 43%.

The real conditions behind these figures have given the left in Latin America a tremendous vitality reflected in the prestige of its intellectuals, the development of homegrown 'roads to socialism' independent of Moscow and its ability to harness nationalist sentiment in a positive anti-imperialist way - especially in Central America.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the left in the region has been the growth of the grassroots movement. Much of it takes the form of ecclesial base committees, often linked to liberation theology activists in the Catholic Church, organising for housing, essential urban services and land in the countryside. In Brazil alone there are 80,000 such committees linked in with the self-organisation of squatters, women's groups, landless peasants, trade unions and Indian peoples. They played a key role in mobilising voters for the Workers Party in the late eighties in outlying areas where the party initially had few roots. In Mexico, Peru and elsewhere similar movements have sprung up in urban areas as millions of rural poor flock into the cities.

The social weight of the grassroots movement has presented big openings for the left as Brazil shows. But more often the political left has had a problematic relationship with this mass movement based around sectional demands. In the 1960s and 1970s such a development did not fit into the elitist guerrilla warfare schema and, even after this was modified or abandoned, the existence of the grassroots movement seemed to defy the orthodox line that popular democracy could be achieved only after the left took power. Castaneda certainly feels that the left has been lukewarm about democracy in general, particularly after - and because of - the brutal coup against the elected Popular Unity government in Chile. As evidence for this he controversially cites the readiness of the left to turn a blind eye to human rights abuses in Cuba, the absence of elections immediately after the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua and the murderous faction-fighting in the E1 Salvadorean FMLN. He argues that the left must take democracy more seriously both in its own parties and in fighting to democratise the state around issues like electoral corruption, control of the media, judicial independence and police reform.

Castaneda rightly identifies the relationship between the political left and the mass movements as a critical question in Latin America. Leading Sandinistas have written self-critically of how they unwittingly stifled the neighbourhood defence committees in Nicaragua by making them a top-down channel for government policy into the community. Castaneda wants the left parties to empower the grassroots movement as an autonomous and diverse expression of civil society.

So far so good. But Castaneda is less sure-footed in drafting a strategy for the left in the context of the new world order. Whilst conceding that it will be much more difficult for Latin American countries to pursue a policy of non-alignment in a unipolar US-led world, he nonetheless regards the collapse of the Soviet bloc as a liberating opportunity for the left to free itself from the stigma of Stalinism. And since he attributes American hostility towards the Latin American left largely to its pro-Soviet links, he rather naively expects improved relations between it and the US now the USSR is no more. Hence the left should, he believes, prioritise lobbying in America for changes to US policy - as over Haiti - as a key way of changing conditions in their own countries.

Dubious reasoning this. The example of Haiti is outweighed by a welter of contrary evidence from the 1989 invasion of Panama to other incursions in the region on drug law enforcement grounds. This shows that the US is more likely to pursue ruthless self-interest in its dealings with Latin America.

A similar unreality emerges in Castaneda's economic prescriptions. He rejects the Stalinist model and rightly observes that traditional reformism can have little basis in the region. Yet Allende's Popular Unity comes in for criticism for 'alienating the middle class'. Instead Castaneda wants a social market economy complete with welfare state, tax reform, debt relief, cuts in military spending and "export-led environmentally sustainable industrialising growth." With the left occupying such moral high ground how could anyone possibly object?

Castaneda can take this view - ultimately the most utopian of them all - because be believes that the only reason the left has a powerful imperialist enemy is on account of its mistakes, excesses and pro-Soviet leanings. He cannot grasp that the fundamental class antagonisms that have caused Latin America's pauperization will unleash the fury of the US elite which benefits from them if any attempt is made to resolve them - however rational and well-argued.

This is a major book on the Latin American left. But its prescriptions for the future need to be subjected to the same rigorous criticism as that meted out to the left's past record. ❑

Your letters are welcome, but please keep them short

Write to:

BRIEFING
PO BOX 2378
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He wants to make Britain safe for his own class. That is why he sends his son to a school where middle class values will be paramount. He wants to make sure that his son is educated to fit into the market-oriented middle class society. In this he shows absolute class loyalty not to the working class, with which he has nothing in common, but to his own class.

The deputy leader John Prescott, is surely a much more suitable candidate for the oppobrium of class traitor.

Comradely,
Charlie van Gelderen,

Labour Briefing's editorial on Clause IV in the February edition is commended by me.

As a retired worker I know how severe the difference between work in the private arena and the public sector can be.

First as a young farm worker and then as a flat roofer I learnt the hard way that productivity nearly all went to private employers.

Non-unionised, non-protected labour in farming meant the expectation of a hard day's manual work from a boy, in a high risk job of flat roofing, often climbing considerable heights with boiling bitumen. I quickly came to realise that a non-union protected firm was hazardous, especially when a good friend was killed by exploding hot bitumen paint.

Unlike today's young people I was fortunate that capitalism was booming at the time. Public sector work of nearly all kinds was available to relatively unskilled workers but often it did not pay so well. In fact the Metropolitan Police which I joined in 1962 was desperate for recruits. This is not the case now. Hundreds of young people are waiting to join.

Work in the police was restrictive, disciplined and often oppressive but it gave security and pension opportunity at a cost. However what raised my political consciousness early on was the role of the Police Federation in getting overtime paid to the minute and that most service conditions were fought over word for word. This I realised was a form of trade unionism. I felt that should it have a proper free status, linked with other unions and with a Labour Government we would have considerably improved our lot and that of others too. This to some extent I felt would have neutralised the use of the police in trade disputes.

From about 1967 onwards I raised this question within the Police Federation. That the Police Federation came very close to a free union status in 1976-77 during a pay struggle with a Labour Government justified to some extent my activities.

The return of a free National Union of Police and Prison Officers with our own representative government of Labour was always a driving force for me. To see that possibility undermined by our own side is a heavy blow. Clause IV(2) actually could offer that to us.

That our leader does not seem particularly inclined towards the trade union movement must seem as a contradiction in terms to many who have read Labour's history. However it does not altogether surprise me for at the mass Police Federation Meeting at Wembley in 1993 he addressed us more in a 'law and order' manner than as workers in our most important pay and conditions fight since 1919. The Liberal Democrat who addressed us was in fact more supportive.

That Tony Blair and his apologists see a mixed economy and a free market as sufficient to obtain a better life for the millions in misery may be influenced partly by their own backgrounds, experiences and expectations as mine are indelibly imprinted on me by mine.

Yours,
Philip Chambers,
Surrey.

I agree with every word you wrote about Tony Blair (Blundering Blair, February *Briefing*) but cannot understand why you cast him in the role of Class Traitor of the Month. Which class has he betrayed? Certainly not the middle class where he belongs.

After three years of conflict Viki Bakic's article on the former Yugoslavia just isn't good enough. I'm not the first observer to point out that this approach of 'We have to go deep into the history of the Balkans before we can get to grips with what is happening', far from helping one to understand the current conflict actually, contributes to its mystification.

The 'special history' of the region is trotted out time and again by the media to emphasise its alien nature, how rooted in time and place it is, how little it all has to do with 'our western values', and therefore how little outsiders can do to resolve the conflict. Exactly the same occurred in Rwanda: the murder of over a million people was explained away by reporters in terms of the complex history of tribal antagonisms. The purpose was to suggest there was nothing any outsider could do to stop this genocide. Imagine if such a specious argument were applied to the holocaust!

The fact is one does not need to be a specialist historian to take sides when what is euphemistically called ethnic cleansing is being committed. It ill becomes your writer to adopt this 'dispassionate observer' tone: "Slobodan Milosevic - mostly described as an artful and ruthless communist boss" - well, is he, or isn't he? ... Blamed for trying to manipulate the presidential elections" - well, did he, or didn't he?

This article reeked so much of the style of 'It's all so intractable it's difficult to know what can be done', that it might have been written in by Douglas Hurd himself.

Yours,
Mike Phipps,
Brent.

Viki Bakic's article "War, what war?" (February *Briefing*) is trumpeted as "a fresh view" on 'Yugoslavia'. It masquerades as 'neutral' (like the UN in Bosnia) but is just a recycling of Serbian propaganda. Her article, which purports to seek answers, incredibly makes no reference to Serbian nationalism.

Implicitly, she perpetuates the well-worn myth that for historical reasons Germany (presumably seeking to re-create the Third Reich in the Balkans) is responsible for the wars in the former Yugoslavia. We are told that the killing started when Tudjman (Germany's stooge) attacked the Krajina Serbs. But the outbreak of hostilities in Croatia - precipitated by Milosevic's cynical use of the Serbs of Croatia to further the aims of Serbian expansionism - took place after Serbia's invasion of Slovenia, which she conveniently forgets to mention.

The pity about the attack on Croatian nationalism is that it is simply an apology for the excesses of Serbian nationalism. Though Tudjman's nationalist and racist policies cannot be supported it is Serbian nationalism not Croatian nationalism that is responsible for the murderous mayhem enveloping the region. The tragedy is that Serbia's aggression allied to the west's appeasement of it has strengthened the hand of nationalism in Croatia and elsewhere.

Yours comradely,
John Turkie,
Charlton.

I am writing to appeal for your help in defending the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal, an African-American journalist, revolutionary and political prisoner. Mumia, a former Black Panther and supporter of the radical MOVE organisation, has been on death row since 1981 on charges that he killed a policeman. These charges are false, there was no forensic evidence linking Mumia to the murder. Witnesses saw another man run from the scene after shooting the policeman and the trial was a travesty of justice. Mumia has been imprisoned for his political beliefs.

The recent election of a right wing Republican governor in Philadelphia, committed to executing death row prisoners means that Mumia, a former black journalist of the year, could be killed at any time. Mumia is at the top of his list of 170 death row prisoners and only a massive show of international solidarity can save him.

1. Please publicise his case in your organisation.

2. Write in protest demanding a re-trial to Governor Tom Ridge, Main Capital Building, Room 225, Harisburg, Pennsylvania, USA and demanding that executions cease.

3. Please send donations to 'Mumia Abu-Jamal Legal Defence', Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, 163 Amsterdam Avenue, No.115, New York, NY 10023-5001.

4. Write directly to Jamal c/o Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Green, 1040 E.Roy Furman Hwy, Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, PA 15370.

5. Consider using articles from Mumia's weekly on death row column in your paper/review - these can be obtained from the above address.

Best Wishes,
Derek Wall,
On behalf of Green Revolution and MOVE supporters in the UK.

There's an easy way out of Mr Blair's latest domestic difficulty.

Why doesn't he commit Labour to repealing all the lingering poll tax legislation, i.e. an amnesty for non-payers, no further harassment of debtors, and the return to councils of money stolen by the Tory Government?

Then his close friends won't have to earn a living putting poll tax debtors in jail.

Yours,
John Nicholson,
Manchester.

Too many cooks?

The ***Independent on Sunday*** made an interesting contribution to the Clause IV debate when reporting **Robin Cook**'s about turn over support for the clause. It described it as "a blow to the left, who have traditionally viewed Mr Cook as their standard bearer." And how much are these journalists paid?

Euro Septics?

Hot on the heels of scandals throughout Labour's European sister parties with corruption and **sleaze** in France, Spain, Italy and Greece on a scale with the British Tories comes scandal in Austria. Peter Marizzi has been forced to quit as business manager of the **Austrian Social Democratic Party** after allegations of bribery.

A multi-million pound deal with British Aerospace features heavily in this. And Tony Blair holds these parties up as reasons for ditching Clause IV, Labour's links with the unions and other remnants of socialism.

Haywards Heath's debater-haters

The promised full, fair, free debate on Clause IV looked all set to take place in **Haywards Heath**, Sussex.

But with Alan Simpson's **Defend Clause IV Campaign** coming to town, and the prospect of political controversy looming, the local Party politburo could afford to take no chances. The right-wing branch officers organised a pre-emptive screening of the Blair anti-Clause IV video and anxious to avoid their members being presented with both sides of the argument refused to circulate notices of Alan's visit. At their branch AGM where only one of the forthcoming events was announced the chair, Gordon Ball, also avoided any election of officers by simply reading a list of those who had already agreed to take the posts.

Their tactics are typical of the so-called "modernisers" who are contemptuous of Clause IV, dismissive of democracy and scared shitless by socialism.



New magazine launched

Grass Roots has been launched by Party members in the South East to promote debate and discussion. A cheaply produced magazine, it came out of the highly successful Euro-election campaign in East Sussex and South Kent. Issues in the current edition include transport, Labour's aims, extradition, criminal justice, Europe, animal welfare and of course Clause IV.

It promotes debate at a rank-and-file level and appears (shock horror) to be free of charge. Definitely worth a read, I would recommend sending a stamped addressed envelope at least to *Grass Roots*, Nut Brown Cottage, Hove, Nr Battle, East Sussex TN33 9HD.

Lost for words

Marcia Falkander was once the power behind Harold Wilson and in gratitude he made her a life baroness as a leaving present. Life peers are supposed to be "working peers" and there to use their expertise and wisdom. Twenty years on Baroness Falkander has still to make her maiden speech. Some leaving present - peers get paid £60 a day just for attending.

Legalised racism

As Straw backs the Tories' closed door policy, Mike Phipps examines the issues

RECENT EVENTS have brought into sharp focus the link between anti-immigration outbursts by Tory MPs like Charles Wardle and Winston Churchill and the rise in the number of racist attacks. What gets less attention, however, is the way racism in society is continuously fed by institutionalised state discrimination.

The biggest culprit is the Home Office, now accused by the Refugee Council of spreading a "culture of disbelief" about 'bogus' asylum applicants. Since the introduction of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act in July 1993 the number of applications rejected rose from 16% to 74%. 98% of applicants from Pakistan were refused and 96% from Zaire - even though it is an offence to apply for asylum in Zaire and applicants deported back are routinely arrested as soon as they step off the plane.

Refugee Council Director Lord Dubs speaks of asylum seekers facing "an obstacle course of unreasonable requirements which are not always in line with international standards." For example, asylum seekers who enter Britain on a tourist or student visa in the hope that the situation in their country may improve by the time it expires, are then categorised as 'bogus' for failing to apply promptly.

Equally pernicious is the way recent changes in the law mean that the benefits system is increasingly being used to police immigration. Housing benefit applicants are subject to immigration checks with the Home Office and benefit is withdrawn from those whose immigration conditions require that they accommodate themselves. Under the sinister Tower Hamlets judgment of 1993 any immigrants seeking housing help from a local council are checked to see if they claimed they could accommodate themselves when they entered the country. This applies even though their circumstances may have changed, typically for women with children whose partner may have left them.

People are being denied help if they are deemed not to be "habitually resident" in the UK. There have been notorious cases where Bangladeshis who have lived here for years have been denied benefit after returning from an extended visit home.

Asylum seekers face blatant discrimination, getting less than the full level of income support in the form of emergency payments only. This may drag on for years while applications are processed. For those lucky enough to be allowed in, "emergency leave" to stay is usually all that is granted. This means that for the first four years you have no right to bring in your family. After four years, you may be admitted only by showing you can be accommodated without recourse to public funds.

For many refugees, arriving with no English and few qualifications the prospect of earning enough to be able to prove you can do this is bleak. In this way the immigration rules and benefits system conspire to freeze families out.

Sadly, Shadow Home Affairs spokesperson Jack Straw was quick to associate himself with Government immigration policy in the recent dispute over new Euro-proposals on border controls. Yet this is not an issue where we should simply wait for a national lead. Most inner-city local authorities are Labour-run. Rather than using these iniquitous rules to dodge their housing obligations, shouldn't Labour councillors be organising with Unison in every borough to stand up to this immoral and discriminatory treatment of immigrants?

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Tories ditch Immigrants

BRENT IMMIGRATION Advice Service in north London is to close following the Council's Grants sub-committee's decision to cut all funding to the service.

The service provides legal advice to people facing problems with the immigration authorities, particularly those who experience problems with family reunions and the deportation of relatives and spouses.

According to Brent's Labour Group, the Conservative decision to cut funding to the immigration service was postponed until after last May's elections to protect the Tories' Asian vote. Labour Leader Councillor Paul Daisley said, "The Tories have now come out in their true colours. This nasty, mean, divisive and racist decision will particularly affect the local Asian community - one of Britain's largest - who bear the brunt of unfair immigration rules and practices. The Tories were content to fund the service before the local elections. What has happened to change their minds?"

Councillor Lata Patel, former Deputy Mayor of Brent and a leading figure in the local Asian community, commenting on the outrage said, "This decision proves that the Tories are no friends of the Asian community. I know from my own experience that many people have been helped by the Immigration Advice Service. Who can such people turn to in the future?"

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