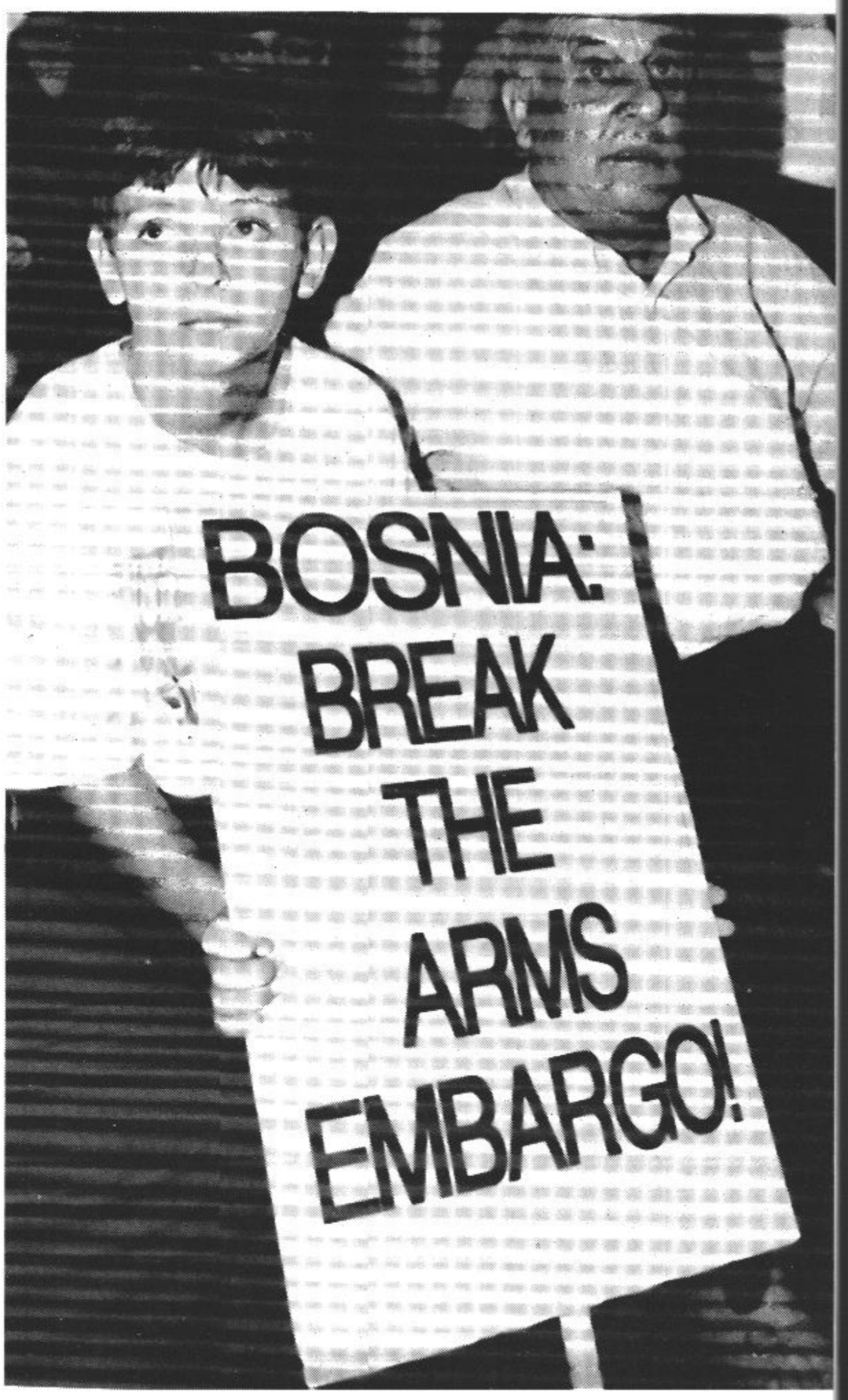
SEPTEMBER 1995 £1.00

BRIEFING

the voice of Labour's independent, unrepentant left

Take sides: support Bosnia!



Inside...

- Defend free education
- Racist justice - Britain and the USA
- New Labour's summer madness
- State of the unions

LABOUR - TAKE THE POWER!

So farewell then, *Labour Briefing?*

After long discussion, and in keeping with the decision of the *Briefing* AGM, the Editorial Board is proposing that this becomes the final issue of *Labour Briefing*.

Next month, the EB plans to relaunch the magazine as *Socialist Briefing*, retaining the present magazine's focus on the labour movement and commitment to the struggle for socialism within the Labour Party.

At the AGM, there was wide agreement that the Labour left needs a high quality magazine with a broad, pluralistic political base. The launch of *Socialist Briefing*, with broadened editorial participation, including the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network and *New Left*, and with improved finances, will be a step towards that goal. The EB will take the final decision on this proposal at its next meeting. If you have any objections or alternative proposals, please let us know.

Forward to *Socialist Briefing*

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Editorial

The Bosnian cause

IN THE MAELSTROM of the Balkans Bosnia has stood for the possibility of a multi-ethnic secular democracy against aggressive and reactionary nationalism.

It has suited the media, much of the British intelligentsia and alas, some on the left, to portray the Balkan conflict as an intractable ethnic rivalry. For the left, this version of events should be treated no more seriously than the notion that the struggle in South Africa was between "Zulus", "Xhosas", "Coloureds" and "Afrikaaners".

Four years ago, the people of Bosnia voted to be part of a sovereign, non-ethnic state. Since then, despite horror after horror, they have shown time and again that they wish to live in peace as a single community predicated on mutual respect and guaranteed civil rights. They have the right to defend their territory and their state. The arms embargo serves only to sustain the gross imbalance between Bosnia and its adversaries. It must be lifted and the Bosnians must be allowed to seek and secure the aid they need. The elements of multi-ethnic democracy remaining in Sarajevo and Tuzla are precious to socialists; but even if the war should reduce the Bosnian government's domain to a Muslim-dominated rump, the Bosnian Muslim nation would still deserve our support against the threat of destruction it faces today from Serbia and tomorrow, maybe, from Croatia too.

The big powers would probably prefer to allow Serbia and Croatia to carve up Bosnia. What would be left would be the kind of "stability" that always appeals to them. For socialists, this balance of terror would be an unacceptable solution to the Balkan tragedy. Indeed it would be no solution at all. If there is no justice there will be no peace.

Far from being an irrational outbreak of "ancient hatreds" the crisis in former Yugoslavia has been brought about by specific political events and decisions (detailed in Geoff Ryan's article on page 4). It is a symptom of the global malaise created by the collapse of Stalinism and the apparent triumph of capitalism. In the absence of credible and powerful socialist alternatives, ethnic nationalism, racism, communalism and fundamentalism have grown in power not only across Europe, but in south Asia, Africa and North America. If Bosnia falls, these forces will have been strengthened immeasurably.

Blair's non-Labour Party

NO ONE should be in any doubt about the "radicalism" of Tony Blair's plans for New Labour. Recent events - the visit to Murdoch and homage to Thatcher, the shameful campaign in Littleborough and Saddleworth, the jettisoning of all-women shortlists, the attack on Liz Davies' selection in Leeds North East, the suspension of the Walsall Party and, perhaps most significantly, the effective abandonment of the ideal of comprehensive education - make it clear that the leader believes that he and he alone will determine the Party's policies, rules and candidates. His long-term aim is nothing less than the construction of a new non-Labour Party - a presidential party that will ensure that in Britain it's business as usual no matter who wins the election.

But Blair's latest antics have set off alarm bells in sections of the Party that have hitherto acquiesced in Labour's rightward evolution. Evidence of a backlash is mounting even as we go to press. The left must join with all those Party members - stretching from the "soft left" to the traditional right - who want to be part of a movement dedicated to the eradication of poverty, to economic and social equality and to improved public services, and who are appalled at Blair's neo-Thatcherite direction.

However, the current stirrings in the Parliamentary Labour Party will not deter Blair unless they are bolstered by a more coherent and determined stance by the trade unions. For constituency activists, the key task is to keep up the pressure on the leadership in the run-up to Conference and to build the broad alliance for socialist policies which will become crucial after the general election.

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

Labour Briefing **is the monthly voice of Labour's independent left. It is managed by an elected National Editorial Board whose meetings are open to all supporters. The next EB will meet on September 3rd. We are happy to offer a right to reply on the usual basis to all members of the labour movement.**

All articles published in *Labour Briefing* reflect the opinions of the authors alone unless otherwise indicated. *Briefing* welcomes criticisms and contributions.

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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The socialist case for Bosnia

Geoff Ryan, Brent East CLP, exposes the myths surrounding the Balkan wars and calls for support for multi-ethnic Bosnia.

THE MEDIA like to portray the war in Bosnia as caused by ancient hatreds or German plots, as a civil war or a war between three warring factions. This picture is totally false.

Unfortunately some in the labour movement, including Tony Benn and the Committee for Peace in the Balkans, seem to share these ill-informed premises, which provide a justification of their refusal to support Bosnia-Hercegovina against aggression.

The only previous occasion on which Bosnia was torn by ethnic hatred was during the Second World War. For hundreds of years before and for over 40 years afterwards the peoples of Bosnia-Hercegovina lived harmoniously with one another - frequently defining themselves as Bosnians rather than Serbs, Muslims or Croats.

The idea that the wars in the Balkans have been caused by German recognition of Croatia requires a considerable rewriting of history. Germany was one of the strongest supporters of Ante Markovic, the last Prime Minister of federal Yugoslavia and a Croat, and of his attempt to keep Yugoslavia together. It was only when such a project became patently impossible that Germany began to change tack.

Germany only recognised Croatia six months after the war had begun, after the destruction of Vukovar and the bombardment of Dubrovnik.

The decisive political events leading to the break-up of Yugoslavia were:

- the suppression of the Albanian population of Kosovo in 1981 and throughout the decade;
- adoption by Milosevic in 1987 of the racist Serbian nationalist arguments put forward in the 1986 Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences;
- Milosevic's replacement of the Montenegrin party leadership with his own supporters in 1987;
- the trial of Slovene journalists in 1988 - conducted in Serbo-Croat rather than Slovene (a flagrant breach of the Constitution);
- replacement by Milosevic of party leaders in Vojvodina and Kosovo in 1989;
- unilateral incorporation of Kosovo and Vojvodina into Serbia by Milosevic in 1989, a further breach of the Constitution (despite this incorporation, Kosovo and Vojvodina retained their right to a member in the eight person Presidency, thereby assuring Milosevic at least half the votes).

The carving up of Bosnia-Hercegovina was agreed by Milosevic and Croatian President Tudjman. Bosnia was invaded by troops of the so-called Yugoslav National Army, along with the fascistic militias of Seselj, Arkan and others. Weapons were supplied to Radovan Karadzic's supporters long before war ever broke out (as was done in the Croatian Krajina before the war there). Croatian forces also supplied weapons to the Croat 'leader' Mate Boban and, at times, have invaded Bosnia.

Despite denials from Belgrade, tens of thousands of soldiers from the 'Yugoslav' army remain in Bosnia. The weapons of the self-styled Army of the Serbian Republic all come from Serbia. This is not a war between Muslims, Croats and Serbs. On one side are all those - Serbs, Croats and Muslims - who refuse to use ethnic definitions and who want to preserve a multi-ethnic Bosnia. They remain loyal to (though not necessarily uncritical of) the elected government of Izetbegovic, which contains Serbs, Croats and Muslims. The Second in Command of the Bosnian government army is a Serb. The deputy editor of the Sarajevo daily paper *Oslobodenje* is a Serb.

There is an active Serb Civic Council which unites Serbs living in those areas controlled by the Bosnian government and a similar Croat organisation. The trades unions remain ethnically mixed and committed to a multi-ethnic Bosnia, as does the nearly one million strong confederation of Autonomous Unions of Croatia.

On the other side are those who want to create ethnically pure states, notably the Serbian nationalist forces of Radovan Karadzic. To claim that Karadzic represents all Serbs is a monstrous insult to the hundreds of thousands of Serbs who want to be able to live in a multi-ethnic Bosnia.

For the forces of Karadzic, 'ethnic cleansing' is an ideological and political necessity. The more Greater Serbia expands the lower the proportion of Serbs within it. To create a purely Serb state, people of different ethnic origins have to be forced out.

It is true that Bosnian government forces have committed atrocities - as has every liberation movement in the world. Leaving aside the massive difference in scale, there is another vital distinction: the Bosnian government has frequently condemned such acts and continues to argue for a state in which all Bosnians, whatever their ethnicity, can live together.

The multi-ethnic Bosnian army does not lack willing fighters; it is two and a half times the size of Karadzic's army. However, it does lack the weapons needed to defend the right of all Bosnians to live together. Socialists should call for the lifting of the arms embargo, the only effect of which is to weaken the fight against racism.

Socialists cannot remain neutral between forces who want to preserve a multi-ethnic Bosnia and those who want a purely Serb state. We should stand on the side of all those struggling to preserve a multi-ethnic Bosnia against the advocates of Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia. We should stand with the workers' movement of Bosnia and Croatia (and opposition unions in Serbia) against the forces of 'ethnic cleansing'. ❑

Bosnian trade unionists appeal for solidarity -

Stop aiding the aggressor

We reproduce here a letter from the Trade Union Council of Tuzla to the Labour MPs who supported the "Committee for Peace in the Balkans".

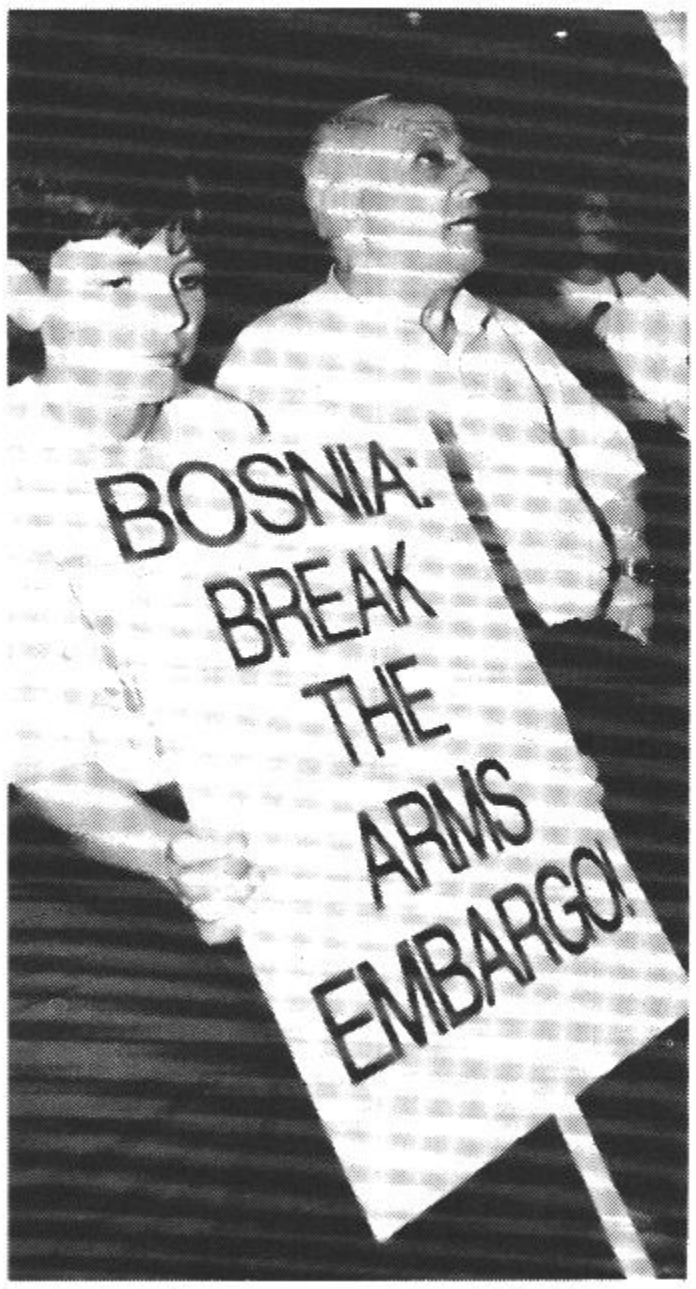
"HELP IS not necessary from those who do not know or do not wish to know that the sovereign state of Bosnia-Hercegovina has suffered aggression from Serb extremists who have grabbed all the arms from former Yugoslavia.

The Serbian aggressor, aided by Serb extremists from Bosnia-Hercegovina under the motto "all Serbs in one state", are killing all the people who do not belong to the Serb nation - especially Bosnians and Croats - and are destroying the material, spiritual and cultural heritage which has been created by the people through the centuries.

In those territories where there are Karadzic's Serbs, Catholic churches have been destroyed, as well as 800 mosques, in addition to many cemeteries. They have been bombarding the civilian population for four years now, in the cities and villages, killing adults and children. They cut off our energy supplies, gas, water and food.

And you, for the "Committee for Peace in the Balkans", call this a civil war.

There is no civil war here. What we have here is fascist aggression using the most monstrous methods, enacted by the Serbian aggressor. And we are the victims with limited scope to defend ourselves because, of all the resolutions, the only one that is upheld in full is the one relating to the arms embargo on the Bosnians. And the Serbian aggressor has sufficient armaments to go on killing us for a further ten years.



We do not look to you to fight for us. Nor do we wish anybody to be killed to save our lives. We seek either the lifting of the arms embargo, or that the world community disarm the Serbian aggressor in Bosnia-Hercegovina, and ban traffic of all types from Serbia, except for humanitarian aid. If this is done the war will stop at once. Alternatively, the UNPROFOR mandate should be changed, for if you are not able to defend yourselves, you should leave.

The action of the "Committee for Peace in the Balkans", under the title of "No Military Intervention in Bosnia", is an action to aid the aggressor. Evidence of this is that your Committee did nothing to act against taking as hostages UN soldiers who were in the most humiliating manner chained for days by Karadzic's soldiers in Pale.

As a result of that shameful act many Western statesmen called Karadzic a terrorist and nothing more. Why does your Committee not call on the Serb aggressor to stop bombarding civilians, which is happening every day, as in Tuzla when 71 young people died, and over 200 were wounded from one shell that fell in the town centre. Among the victims there were all nationalities, because here live Bosnians, Croats and Serbs.

You from the Committee are supporting humanitarian aid, but you are not asking the Serb aggressor to stop killing civilians. You would wish to send us humanitarian aid so that we may be able to eat and thereafter to be killed by the aggressor's shell. Such aid we do not need.

You offer negotiations but we have accepted all propositions for a peaceful solution in Bosnia-Hercegovina. The Serb side refused to accept any of our proposals.

Why do you not lead an action to open Sarajevo, where Bosnians, Croats, Serbs and Jews live together without food, medicine, water, electricity or gas? I do not recall how many times we have stressed that:

- we demand a state with democratic and human rights.
- we demand a just and lasting peace.
- we demand the right to work, and live with dignity from our work.
- we will live and work with people from all nations but criminals have to answer to the Court in the Hague.

The territories of Bosnia-Hercegovina are open to all peoples regardless of nationality, religion, race or party affiliation.

Sijercic Fikreta, President
22nd June."

The battle for Krajina

Martin Thomas argues that Croatian action in Krajina cannot be supported and that Croatia is no friend of Bosnia.

TO THEIR complicity with Serb ethnic cleansing of Croats and Bosnian Muslims, the big powers have now added complicity with Croatian ethnic cleansing of Serbs in the Krajina.

Croatia's army invaded the Krajina with US backing. The region has been patrolled by UN troops since 1992. The UN and the US did nothing to protect the tens of thousands of Serbs who fled to Bosnia and Serbia.

The Croatian government said blandly that the Krajina Serbs could stay or go as they wished. In other words, they were content to encourage the Serbs' instinctive fear when Croats came back into this area, where they, the Serbs, had razed Croatian villages and Catholic churches in 1991.

Croatian president Tudjman's talk of securing the stability of the Croatian state "for centuries" reveals his objectives: a Croatia exclusively for Croats.

Croatian president Tudjman's talk of securing the stability of the Croatian state "for centuries" reveals his objectives: a Croatia exclusively for Croats. Many of the Serbs living in Zagreb and other cities have already left; now most of the rest may flee.

The prime driving force behind the wars in ex-Yugoslavia is Serb imperialism. From summer 1989, nearly a year before Tudjman took power, and two years before Croatia declared independence, the Serbian government of Slobodan Milosevic manipulated and armed the Krajina as a base first for trying to reconstruct Yugoslavia as a Serb-dominated state, then for trying to carve a Greater Serbia from the wreckage. In 1991 Milosevic's forces seized and drove Croats out of 30% of Croatia, mostly areas where Serbs had been a minority.

Croatia's Serb minority was 12% - 600,000 people - before the war. Most of them lived in the cities. The Krajina, a wild, mountainous region round Knin, where Serbs fleeing the Ottoman Empire were settled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a military buffer, was the only area with a Serb majority (about 140,000 of the 200,000 inhabitants).

The Krajina is barren but pivotal to Croatia's road and rail links between Zagreb and the coast. An independent Krajina is improbable: its sudden collapse when Belgrade abandoned it confirms that. The Krajina could either be part of a Greater Serbia - which, to reach to Knin, would have to stretch right through Bosnia and chop Croatia in two - or part of Croatia, within which it could and should have ample regional autonomy.

But for socialists, support for nationalist causes can only ever be conditional and subsidiary, a means to the end of workers' unity and consistent democracy. The horrors of the way Croatia reconquered Krajina outweigh all the Croatian-nationalist arguments. It is another push towards a partition of ex-Yugoslavia into hate-poisoned, "ethnically pure" states.

Croatia and Serbia are now threatening war over Eastern Slavonia - an area with a pre-war Croat majority, but bordering on Serbia. Abstractly Croatia has right on its side. Whether this justifies war - and war as in Krajina - is quite another matter.

In Bosnia, Karadzic's Bosnian Serb "Republic" will be reinforced by the influx from Krajina. Tudjman may try again for a deal with Milosevic at the expense of Bosnia. Socialists should solidarise with Bosnia's hard-pressed Muslims and the multi-ethnic cities against the Serb chauvinists, while alsc emphasising that Karadzic and Milosevic cannot be beaten unless the Bosniacs can assure Serb workers and peasants that the defeat of Karadzic goes with a drive for reconciliation, not an attempt to repeat what Croatia has done in the Krajina.

John Strawson offers a controversial view that the west should go to war for Bosnia.

Television has turned us all into witnesses of war crimes in Bosnia. We cannot just sit passively in armchairs watching images of Mladic carrying out more "ethnic cleansing" in full view of the cameras. The Appeal by the Tuzla trade unionists should shake us out of our voyeuristic role.

We should not only call for the lifting of the arms embargo but for the supplying of arms to the Bosnian government on generous credit terms. We should be pressing the western governments in both the European Union and Nato that a neutral response is collusion with the war crimes.

The British and French Rapid Reaction Force is on the ground and should be converted into a military assistance force under a treaty of alliance with the Bosnia government. The primary purpose of the development of international force in Bosnia should be to defeat Serbian aggression against Bosnia-Hercegovina.

We should also be campaigning for the United Nations to return its principles. Despite the fiftieth anniversary celebrations these years, we should remind ourselves and UN members that it was really founded three years before as an anti-fascist military alliance ("Declaration of the United Nations," dated January 1st 1942).

The inability of the UN to distinguish between aggressor and victim in Bosnia is a betrayal of its own principles.

Leeds wants Liz!

Tony Blair is reported to have gone "ballistic" when he heard of Liz Davies' selection in Leeds North East. Alex Fineman reports on what happens when OMOV produces the "wrong" result.

THE PROCESS of selecting Labour's prospective parliamentary candidate in the key marginal of Leeds North East was a model of one member one vote democracy. The constituency had volunteered for an all-women shortlist. Labour Party officials even invited a Yorkshire TV crew to film the whole process - from nominating meetings to the final ballot.

But when the winner of that final ballot proved to be Liz Davies, a left-wing councillor from Islington, the Party hierarchy began looking for ways to overturn the result. Within days, a campaign of hostile publicity was launched with the aid of three disgruntled Leeds North East members who made complaints to the NEC.

Following a piece in the *Daily Mail* which detailed Davies' record on Islington council, the *Yorkshire Evening Post* began to feed readers with a daily diet of "leftie Liz from London" stories. She was always referred to as a "gay rights campaigner" and "supporter of Winston Silcott". The old "lesbian gym mats" tale was recycled along with every other anti-Islington cliche. Then the allegation that she had hidden her record on the poll tax hit the front page but Davies and the local Party had been gagged by the Regional Office and could not respond.

When it was reported that Blair's office had said her selection would not be endorsed, Leeds North East CLP insisted on speaking out. Since then corrections of inaccurate stories have been printed in five newspapers.

Gradually the specific allegations emerged: that Davies had not disclosed her poll tax sentence and that she had said she would not abide by the Labour Whip in Parliament. It became apparent, however, that the simple fact was that Blair considers Davies too left wing to be a Labour candidate (Roy Hattersley probably falls into that category now too). All the rest was a fig leaf.

Leeds North East lobbied NEC members and support came in from across the country. An impressive dossier provided documentary evidence of the meticulous conduct of the selection and refuted the allegations. On the poll tax, Party officials stated: "Liz Davies made her political record - including her stand on the poll tax - unequivocally clear in her speeches, in her written material and at Party meetings."

"In my initial written statement to Party members I spelled out my political record as an Islington councillor, including my refusal to pay the poll tax in 1990," Davies stated. "At the nominating meetings I was questioned about this record in detail." Yorkshire TV's feature on the selection also makes clear that it was known that Davies had taken her poll tax resistance to the courts.

Davies signed and posted the pledge to abide by PLP standing orders the day it was sent to her (and two weeks before the allegation that she had said she would not abide by the whip first surfaced).

Nonetheless, the NEC decided by 17-6 (a smaller majority than usual for the leader) that her candidature should be referred to the Disputes Committee, expected to meet in September. Davies and Leeds North East are confident they can refute the allegations and that there is no way her endorsement can be blocked - within the Party rules and the conventions of natural justice.

On the streets of Chapeltown, not paying the poll tax and supporting Winston Silcott seemed to have done Davies no harm at all. Reporters who have dug into Davies' record in Islington have discovered and reported that she enjoys an exceptional reputation for hard work and political integrity among both councillors and constituents.

When some press coverage of the NEC decision treated the claims about Davies with scepticism, there was a quick riposte from the leader's camp. The *Guardian* ran letters from two Blairite Islington councillors condemning Davies' alleged "disloyalty" to the Party - particularly her refusal to support cuts in adventure playgrounds (see February *Briefing*).

Patrick Wintour, known as "Mandelson's mouthpiece", used the letters as the sole basis for an article attacking Davies, whom he did not bother to contact before going into print. Thus a fresh set of distortions entered circulation (appearing instantly in the *Yorkshire Evening Post*) which Davies answered in full a letter to the *Guardian*. Despite Wintour's attempt to paint Davies as a renegade on Islington Council, calls for her endorsement by the NEC have been issued by the leader and deputy leader of the Council, the Agent, Treasurer and MP for Islington North (Davies' CLP), the MEP for London Central, a former leader and former Mayor of the council. Islington North GC passed a motion (with no votes against) noting her contribution to the Labour Party and calling for her endorsement by the NEC.



Liz Davies at the launch of the Zero Tolerance Campaign in London.

In Leeds North East, Party officers and members have remained solid in her support throughout. Many members who voted for other candidates are outraged at the attempt to overturn a democratic decision by a campaign of dirty tricks. The Leeds North GC passed a motion of confidence in Davies and called for her speedy endorsement - by 33 votes to 0.

"I've received warm letters and messages of support from across the country and only two hate letters, despite a stream of hostile coverage in Leeds and in some national papers," said Davies. "One hate letter was from a fascist in Manchester and the other was a picture of me with 'The people of Leeds don't want you' scrawled on it - the postmark was London N1."

Which just happens to be where Islington Town Hall is located. ❑

news & views

Littleborough and Saddleworth — a canvasser's view

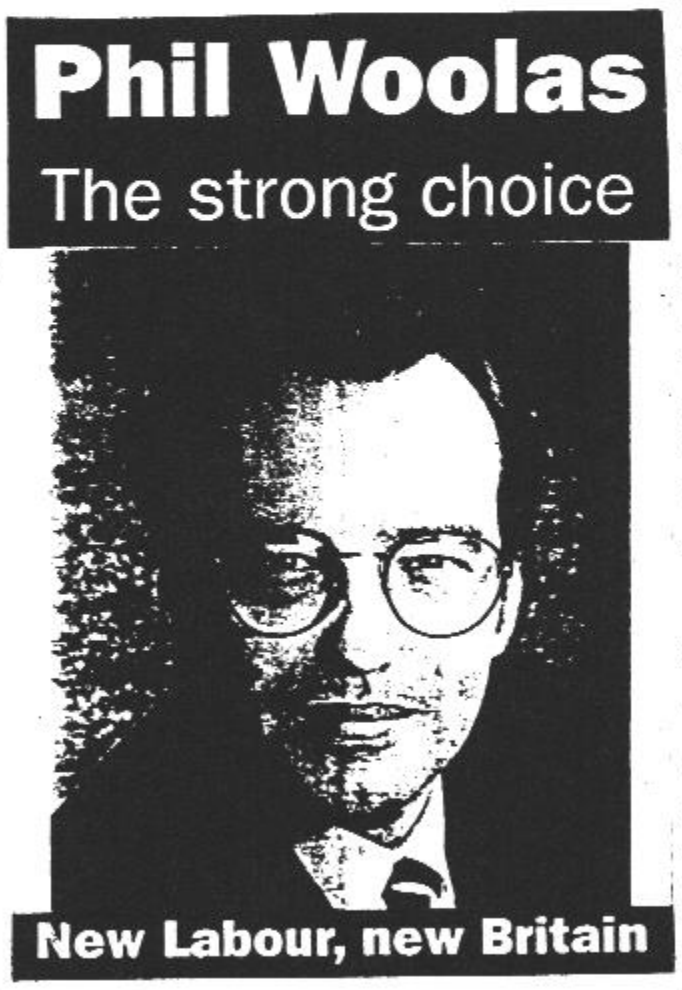
"THIS IS rubbish", a local Party member said to me, as we delivered leaflets around Delph, "the analysis on drugs is worse than *The Sun*. There are plenty of issues we should campaign on around here, like education or the environment, but Labour hasn't got any policies - that's why there's all this negative stuff about Chris Davies."

There was the same view in the back room of the campaign HQ in Delph where six of us sat stuffing envelopes with letters aimed at switching Liberal voters to Labour. Key sections of the letter focused on the two issues that preocuppied Labour's campaign: drugs and tax. "This is terrible," I said. "It says Chris Davies supports higher taxation and legalisation and decriminalisation of cannabis," said the woman next to me, "I agree with both of those." The others nodded. We carried on stuffing.

What local Party members thought made no difference. The local Party had no role in the campaign. The ward organisers were full-time Party employees from outside. There was no lack of commitment from local members even though a majority of wards had nominated David Chater, a councillor from a neighbouring constituency. Chater won most votes of those at the selection but the result was swung by postal votes, particularly those from the GMB. Nevertheless Party members turned out to support Phil Woolas, but were excluded from decision making: locals would not have stood for the tactics employed.

With a 14% swing to Labour the Party's 'modernisers' will present Littleborough and Saddleworth as a model campaign. But when you think about the political situation nationally and the fact that some wards achieved 17% swings in the May council elections, then you realise that the swing was perhaps not won by Mandelson's US-style smear campaigning.

It was dirty. "Does Chris Davies take drugs, then?" asked the young daughter of one Party member reading a Labour leaflet. Maybe the very young are easily misled but Labour's intent was to mislead. "He wants banned drugs to be legalised," said the leaflet. In fact Davies' policy of decriminalisation of soft drugs and the treatment of hard drug addiction as a medical rather than criminal matter is one most Labour Party members would probably sympathise with. While Labour was opposing decriminalisation Labour MP Paul Flynn was supporting it with his ten minute rule bill in Parliament. My MP, Tony Lloyd, whose constituency includes Moss Side, has supported the need to look at decriminalisation to undercut the role of drug gangs. Janet Anderson, the Rossendale and Darwen Labour MP, attacked Chris Davies' views in Parliament, but had signed a Parliamentary motion calling for the very same thing as Davies. Labour's abuse of the issue has damaged the prospects for a serious debate.



"Chris Davies wants to legalise banned drugs, says he is in favour of hefty tax increases and wants an independent state for the North West."
"Phil is tough on crime. He has demanded a crack down on youth crime and drug-related crime."
"Chris Davies - high on tax and soft on drugs ..... there's only one way to stop Chris Davies - vote Labour."

The issue of taxation was handled no better. Chris Davies was condemned for advocating tax increases to fund public services such as education, whilst Tony Blair was quoted as saying "low taxation is at the heart of Labour policies." Not a word about where the burden of taxation falls, or how the Tories have shifted towards regressive taxation.

One of the worst examples of Mandelson's gutter politics was on what appears to be Labour's new policy on youth. The only mention of young people was a leaflet associating youth with crime. "Phil is tough on crime. He has demanded a crackdown on youth crime." Just what constitutes a "crack-down on youth crime" you can only guess, but would it attract young people in Littleborough and Saddleworth to join Young Labour?

No doubt the Mandelson clique was desperate to chase the yuppie vote in the affluent areas around Delph and Uppermill. One committee room organiser in Milnrow (at the Rochdale end of the constituency) was complaining about the lack of central support. There were council estates that did not have a full canvass. Woolas's campaign put more effort into sucking up to the yuppies in Oldham's commuter belt than into turning out voters in the working class areas. One Labour election leaflet even tried to present Phil Woolas as the natural successor to the deceased Tory Geoffrey Dickens.

Administratively the campaign was reasonably slick. But the full-time organisers have packed up and gone, leaving seriously alienated local parties. Volunteer workers from other areas have gone back to their CLPs sickened by the campaign - from the presentation of Woolas as the arch opponent of the block vote to the way in which the campaign contributed to a general decline in political standards which can only do us harm in the future.

Littleborough and Saddleworth has shown that Labour can win the General Election. But it has also shown very clearly how not to do it. ❑

How far will he go?

Mike Marqusee reports on a summer of mixed fortunes for the Labour leadership.

HAS BLAIR gone too far too fast? His meeting with Murdoch would have been offensive to most Labour supporters even if he hadn't chosen the occasion to celebrate the "achievements" of Thatcher and lay claim to her mantle of "radicalism".

Blair told the News Corp bosses that Labour "is literally a new party ... a party of Europe and free trade" based on a "communitarian philosophy". Thatcher "got certain things right. A greater emphasis on enterprise. Rewarding not penalising success. Breaking up some vested interests." The last sentence was a clear reference to the trade unions, and doubtless appreciated by the Labour leader's host.

At the same time, it was reported in the British press that Blair was planning a complete overhaul of the Party structures. Former SDP members Roger Liddle and Derek Scott were said to be helping Mandelson draw up proposals for a new Party constitution. Scott is a City economist and Liddle a former Lambeth Lib Dem councillor and long time Mandelson crony. The *Guardian* reported that Scott and Liddle were members of a "secret committee" to oversee Labour policy in the run up to the general election, along with Mandelson, Geoff Mulgan and Patricia Hewitt. *The Observer* quoted a "leading Blair ally" threatening the NEC: "if the NEC is not representative of the Party it has no role. The message is modernise or die." So Tom Sawyer is dragging off the sitting NEC members to a weekend training conclave where they will be taught how to be "supportive" of the leadership.

Meanwhile Blair bought Derek Foster out of the Chief Whip's post with a widely reported promise of a £50,000 plus Cabinet post in the next Labour Government. This from a man who has vetoed nearly every other specific commitment to any form of action by that Government.

The stream of monetarist drivel emanating from the leader's office, coupled with Blair's unilateral jettisoning of all-women shortlists, the nauseating Littleborough and Saddleworth campaign, and the panic suspension of Walsall have alarmed MPs, councillors and activists across the Party's political spectrum. The disquiet voiced by Richard Burden in the *New Statesman* is part of a broader backlash against Blair.



In a hard hitting editorial, *Tribune* argued: "Labour's new members have joined because they want to see action over jobs, homes and schools. They are not likely to stick around if nothing happens... Blair seems to want to create a new party from within. Bizarrely, this new party appears to be a *laissez faire* one, which preaches 'tough love' to the poor and the unemployed."

Veteran *Tribune* columnist Hugh Macpherson was even more forthright: "There is now no doubt whatsoever that a new party is being constructed within the Labour Party that has no connection with the old, save that it provided a structures that could be used to create the new party. ... I believe we should become accustomed to using the capital letter when referring to the Leader, for the last man to establish the New Party was Oswald Moseley. He too grew tired of the democratic restrictions of the Labour Party and its slow pace ...."

Roy Hattersley has attacked Blair's two-track education policy.

"It is unusual for a Party that is preparing for office to cannibalise one of the most discredited policies of the Government which it expects to sweep aside. Yet that is what Labour is doing. The grant maintained idea is one of the Government's major policy failures. Despite escalating bribes, less than one school in twenty has chosen to leave the maintained system. Yet Labour has chosen to breathe life into the corpse."

Even the *Guardian* shows signs of shaking off the Blair spell, with policy editor Martin Kettle, previously Blair's biggest fan in the media, warning the leader that he was losing touch with his own party.

Disquiet now spreads well beyond the left. In the future, the main dividing line in the Party will be between those who want a party of labour, committed to ending poverty, moving towards economic equality and improving public services, and the clique attached to Blair, whose neo-Thatcherite, authoritarian trajectory is becoming ever more apparent. Blair's is a recipe for business as usual in Britain. Increasingly, he rejects out of hand even the most modest proposals for social reform.

On the minimum wage, taking utilities back into public ownership, improving benefits and pensions, investing in the public services, Blair is out of step with the Party members, both old and new, active and passive. Can these members organise to stop Blair's coup? Will incipient rebellion collapse before leadership diktat and fear of rocking the boat before a general election? The answers to those questions are in our own hands. ❑

SOCIALIST
Campaign Group
NETWORK

Socialist policies, socialist candidates for Labour's NEC

The Network is supporting the following candidates in the NEC elections:

Constituency Section:

Diane Abbott MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Ken Livingstone MP, Alice Mahon MP, Dawn Primarolo MP, Dennis Skinner MP, Alan Simpson MP

Women's Section:

Margaret Beckett, Christine Shawcroft

Conference Arrangements Committee (CLP Section):

Des Kirkland (Deptford), Doreen Cameron (Bexleyheath and Crayford)

General Section:

Des Kirkland, Doreen Cameron, Angela Cornforth, David Hadfield, Margaret Prosser

National Constitutional Committee (CLP Section):

Pete Willsman (Erith and Thamesmead)

The policies SCG candidates for the NEC will be arguing for:

● placing full employment at the centre of Labour's economic strategy.

● defending the welfare state and maintaining universal benefits.

(i) a return to universal pension rights at a living level.

(ii) increase in child benefit and its maintenance as a universal benefit.

(iii) increased investment in the health service and a reversal of the Tories' introduction of competition and the market into the NHS.

(iv) funding for councils to engage in a systematic increase in public housing.

These can only be achieved on the basis of a strategy to increase funds for Government spending and investment in the economy, which requires:

(i) a progressive taxation policy, including a major increase in taxation on salaries over £50,000.

(ii) a reduction in the share of dividend payments in the economy.

(iii) a cut in military spending to no more than the EU average percentage of GDP.

● attacking poverty pay through setting a national minimum wage based on the formula of half male median wages.

● taking the utilities, rail and coal back into public ownership.

● extending trade union rights and repealing Tory anti-trade union laws.

● maintaining the link between the Labour Party and the trade unions.

● a clear stand against racism, including racist immigration laws.

● the defence of civil liberties.

● positive action for women.

● equalisation of the age of consent for gay men.

● the introduction of a law guaranteeing civil rights for disabled people and a comprehensive disability income.

● a single system of state comprehensive education and a reversal of the Tories' failed grant-maintained schools system.

● no pacts or deals with the Liberal Democrats.

● pursuit of the peace process in Ireland through all-party talks and the repeal of the PTA and all emergency legislation.

Link up with the Network

Make sure that your local left caucus affiliates to the Network. Send £10 to "SCG Network", 3 Blades House, Kennington, London SE11 5TW.

● Under a little-noticed rule change from 1992, you can be expelled from the Labour Party for not paying the poll tax. You can be ruled out of Party membership if your name is missing from the electoral register - as are the names of about one million people who gave up their right to vote rather than be fined or jailed for not paying the notorious Tory tax.

Now, according to *The Independent on Sunday* on 13th August, the Labour leadership is planning to expel 400 members in three Birmingham constituencies for not being on electoral registers. The three CLPs, Ladywood, Perry Barr, and Sparkbrook/Small Heath, have already been suspended amid rows about parliamentary selections. It is clear that this is a new excuse to justify the suspensions which have been opposed by the majority of the Party in Birmingham.

Right's revenge on Mildred Gordon

Mildred Gordon has been an effective constituency MP with socialist principles. Christine Shawcroft offers a personal appreciation following Mildred's deselection.



YOU HAD to be there to appreciate it when Mildred Gordon was first selected. Her courage and fighting spirit took the meeting by storm. She was amusing and passionate by turns, and she certainly never said she would only stand for one term. The very idea that she had to wheedle her way round that meeting and got selected by subterfuge would be laughable if it wasn't such an insult. When she finished her speech there wasn't a dry seat in the house.

It was 1985. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. We had just lost the miners' strike and the GLC budget, but the Party was still thriving. I was CLP secretary and organised all the meetings.

There were over a hundred delegates to the GMC, twice as many as now. There were many union affiliates; most have now fallen away. There were three flourishing women's sections, and a Women's Council. Now Poplar and Canning Town has one, limping along after the Women's Officer got it closed down as part of a political vendetta she was waging.

Mildred was always ahead of a very strong field. I still have the ballot papers, they practically crackle with the excitement. She fought an excellent election campaign, and went on to be a popular and effective constituency MP, campaigning with voluntary groups, reporting back to the Party, and tirelessly raising women's issues.

But as far as the Party hierarchy was concerned, she had a fatal flaw. She couldn't be bought. She wasn't motivated by careerism. As the left were booted out of the Party, the right grew in strength. For her first reselection, under OMOV, they stood an LCC activist. Mildred won two-thirds of the vote.

But after recent boundary changes, half the new constituency had no loyalty to her, and actively wanted someone, anyone new. The right had grown in strength, and Charles Square threw its full weight behind its favourite son, Jim Fitzpatrick, rewriting the rules on canvassing for him and circulating the membership with letters on his behalf.

But what's done is done, the CLP may now repent at leisure. The *East London Advertiser* reported Mildred's first selection under the banner headline "Labour picks a fighter!" Not a phrase one could ever imagine being used in connection with her successor.

Women only shortlists: an arbitrary process

You thought it was Party policy. You thought it was a Party rule - stupid, stupid. This is New Labour and it was only an experiment. Maria Exall reports on Blair's attempts to dump women only shortlists.

A LEADERSHIP obsessed with the thoughts of the *Daily Mail*'s editor is unlikely to be a robust defender of progressive policies. The policy on quotas, despite being a compromise, has the support of the majority of Party and trade union activists.

To publicly backtrack on quotas means you think it is wrong, or too dangerous to continue. By dumping women only shortlists, Blair has sent out both signals. To the public it confirms that Labour's pro-women stance is too 'loony'. To Party members it proves that quotas are not a priority in the face of a mild attack from the press. This can only heighten the contentiousness of women only shortlists. Male candidates under threat will dig in, safe in the knowledge that the 'experiment' is ending. The real destructiveness of Blair's undermining of quotas though is in the message received outside the Party. Blair's proclamation can only be perceived as a backtracking on women's equality. It exposes a vacuum on social policy. Instead of serious discussion of the discrimination women face, we will get tabloidese on harpy feminists and loony lesbians.

Blair's retreat jeopardises our rules on quotas on policy making bodies and in CLPs. It is possible that there will be strong resistance within the Party. This would be good both on the issue itself and because of the principle that rules cannot be changed at whim by the leader. However this raises a wider question for women in the Party.

The defence of quotas should not be isolated from the issues advanced by left women and accepted by the majority in the Party. The fightback against Blair's dismissal of women only shortlists can take different paths. It can be merely on the form of women's involvement in the Party, or include the substance of women's demands; a fundamental and irreversible shift of power to working class women under a Labour Government. It was our failure in 1992 to attract votes of working class women in the same proportion as working class men that lost us the election.

Hands off Walsall Labour Party! No redundancies!

LABOUR HAVE SUSPENDED the Walsall District Labour Party (DLP). The move follows an attempt by Tory Party Chairman Brian Mawhinney to revive a witch-hunt against "loony left" Labour councils. The suspension, which has been justified on the usual vague grounds of "intimidation", seems to be a panic-stricken response from Blair's bunker which has merely served to assist the Tories charges and has clearly strengthened Mawhinney's hand.

Even the usually subservient Blairite house journal, the *Guardian*, was forced to admit that the Tories seem to have succeeded in piercing Blair's armour on the issue.

The suspension has been followed by a series of articles attacking Walsall's Labour Council and council leader Dave Church in particular.

Whilst the Council's controversial decentralisation proposals have received most of the flak from the press and the Tories, Labour's leadership have decided not to take action against the Labour Group or particular councillors - but the Walsall Party itself. Local right-wingers hope the suspension will be followed by expulsions of left councillors paving the way for their takeover of the Labour Group.

According to Walworth Road, the problem in Walsall is not underfunding from central government, but the fact that the DLP discusses council business.

Many Labour supporters and union activists in Walsall are worried about the Council's plans to cut jobs and decentralise. The local Unison branch is already involved in a strike over 36 compulsory redundancies amongst community service workers and is balloting the whole workforce for action to defend jobs.

Nevertheless, it is vital to oppose Blair's witch-hunt which is designed to attack Labour Party democracy.

New Labour - New NHS

John Nicholson reviews
Renewing the NHS -
Labour's new policy document.

LIKE ALL THE other New Labour wheezes, this is just another uncommitted, uncommitting piece of Old Tory apologism.

The key dilemma which runs through all New Labour thinking appears right from the start. Paragraph one of the "Executive Summary" ends: "Labour will restore the traditional values of the NHS." But the very next paragraph starts: "We have consulted widely and it is clear that it is neither possible nor desirable to turn the clock back."

This is the crucial problem. The NHS is Labour's greatest achievement. New Labour wants the glory/credit for it, but can't face the thought of having to take the action needed to restore it. "There will be no ... (new) upheaval".

Again and again the document looks two ways.

• A Minister for Public Health will be appointed to co-ordinate widely - but repeatedly "health" is equated with "hospitals" alone.

• Assets will be taken back into the NHS - but not into the District Health Authorities which formerly controlled them.

• "Comprehensive health agreements" will be made - though how these will be different from contracts or whom they will be agreed with is not clear.

• New Labour is calculating the cost of patient care to take into account when drawing up budgets. Budgets will be adjusted on an annual basis, and "benchmarked" unit costs will be used to make comparisons in costs between hospitals. But somehow this will be done with "less bureaucracy".

• GPs will be able to refer patients where they want to - but "what we propose involves GPs and the health authority teaming up to commission healthcare".

• There will be a Royal Commission on Community Care (another quango - perhaps a supermarket supremo could be found to head it up?); and there will be a Charter for Patients ("Labour proposed a charter for patients long before the Tories" ...)

The document registers the link between poverty and ill health, while the new Tory Secretary of State, Stephen - "I'm not Virginia Bottomley" - Dorrell, has declared that there is "clearly" no link between the two. However, its response to poverty is straight New Clause IV. New Labour will "develop a long-term strategy to lift people out of poverty and secure opportunities for employment for all". A consultant is quoted to back this up; but in poignant contrast the consultant calls for "full employment".

The document reveals the same uneasy tension throughout. People want the NHS, want it under public control, want it properly publicly resourced. New Labour wants people to want Labour - because it formed the NHS - but then not to want Labour to do anything to run the NHS differently to the Tories. According to the last line of the document: "This report is about looking forward not back, but is also about restoring the trust of the British public in a prized institution, a pillar of security in a changing world."

It could be the epitaph for the Labour Party itself.

COMMON OWNERSHIP AFTER CLAUSE IV

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Sale of the century?

What's that then? BR privatisation? No, the deal the ASLEF leaders have signed to end the train drivers' pay dispute. A Scot Rail driver takes a look at the worst sell out in years.

THE BR drivers' pay fight is over. Betrayed by the ASLEF general secretary Lew Adams and a 4-3 majority on the union's executive.

After two successful strikes on the 14th and 18th of July the action was suspended on the 20th in order for a referendum ballot to be held on BR's "offer".

Though it was presented in the media as a two hour cut in the working week, the "deal" negotiated between Adams and BR managers was nothing of the kind. It amounts to an agreement to continue negotiations on restructuring the drivers grade. BR head of personnel Watkinson put it like this:"There's nothing new here. This has been in discussion for the past two years". Quite so, all BR have committed themselves to is restarting the stalled negotiations with the aim of attaching strings to the 37 hour week which they say must be "self-financing" and "dependent on productivity gains". The "deal" also involves a pay cut. Three per cent is less than the official inflation rate of three and a half, never mind the real figure which is closer to six. So much for the ASLEF Annual Assembly of Delegates (AAD) decision to fight for a substantial pay rise above inflation. The move to hold a referendum ballot on this insult meant that Adams and his EC - now nick-named the Adams Family in the depots - had turned an AAD decision to put offers back to the membership on it's head. The fact that Arkwright Road thought the offer even worthy of consideration only gave the impression that the EC could not be trusted to lead a fight and in fact had no intention of doing so.

The final insult came on Thursday 10th August. First there was relief at the prospect of the strikes being resumed because of the referendum vote to reject, then disbelief, then anger.

Immediately the result was announced Adams went running to BR. Senior management, knowing that he would jump for anything they offered took their opportunity. They offered nothing in the here and now, just a two hour reduction in the working week next year rather than in 1997 with the same productivity strings as in the original offer. In fact all that BR have actually agreed to is to restart negotiations on driver restructuring sometime before the end of the year. The question everyone is asking is why did Adams roll over like a puppy? First, because the check-off was threatened. But getting ASLEF's 12,000 members onto direct debit will be far easier for us than for RMT. But our pay, and conditions are more important than an easy life for Adams (£48,000 a year) and other union officers? The second reason is because of Adams' plans for ASLEF post privatisation and ASLEF plc, Employment Agency, Managing Director, Lew "I'm Alright Jack" Adams. Drivers need is a fighting union, not another would-be boss and another would-be private company. What promises were made to Adams behind closed doors? One explanation that should be rejected is the idea that Adams was blackmailed into selling out because the tabloids were about to launch a very nasty witch hunt against him based on allegations about his personal life. That theory lets the rest of the ASLEF leadership off the hook and diverts attention away from their collective responsibility for developing a post-privatisation survival strategy that is dependent on transforming the union into an employment agency with all the class collaborationist consequences.

It is difficult to find words to describe the feelings of rank and file ASLEF members about what their "leadership" have done. People can't believe absolutely solid industrial action , costing the employers £10 million per day and was completely shutting down the network, has been called off. And all in return for nothing.

The real question is whether or not ASLEF is still reformable given the extremely short timescale left in the race against privatisation. This seems to me to be extremely doubtful. But on the other hand, the fact that three out of seven ASLEF executive members voted to reject does suggest that Adams' grip on the union is not quite as firm as it may at first appear. The urgency of the situation suggests that there is even less time for the alternative strategy of winning ASLEF activists to the RMT, which at present organises a mere two percent of BR drivers, than there is for a battle to transform Adams' union.

What's needed is a meeting of all the ASLEF branches and activists who opposed the deal with the aim of hammering out a strategy to reclaim the union and develop a united approach with the left in the RMT. ❑



The Blair effect in the unions

John McIlroy takes an overview of who is and who is not fighting in the trade unions.

FOR EIGHT weeks this summer, 350 library workers in Sheffield confronted the Labour City Council in a strike over pay for weekend working. The result: a complete backdown by the employer, and a new enthusiasm for collective action among Unison members

In Birmingham, at the end of July, 800 housing workers defied the anti-union laws and walked out without a ballot. Within hours the employers had withdrawn their proposals to reorganise work and cut sick pay. The result: a new understanding that in the right circumstances, strong organisation can beat Tory union laws.

Trade unions are still alive and kicking. Strikes can still win. Birmingham and Sheffield are examples for all other workers. But, as another TUC approaches, such battles are the exception in a gloomy industrial landscape. The membership of TUC-affiliated unions has continued its steep decline, from 7.3 million to 6.8 million over the last twelve months.

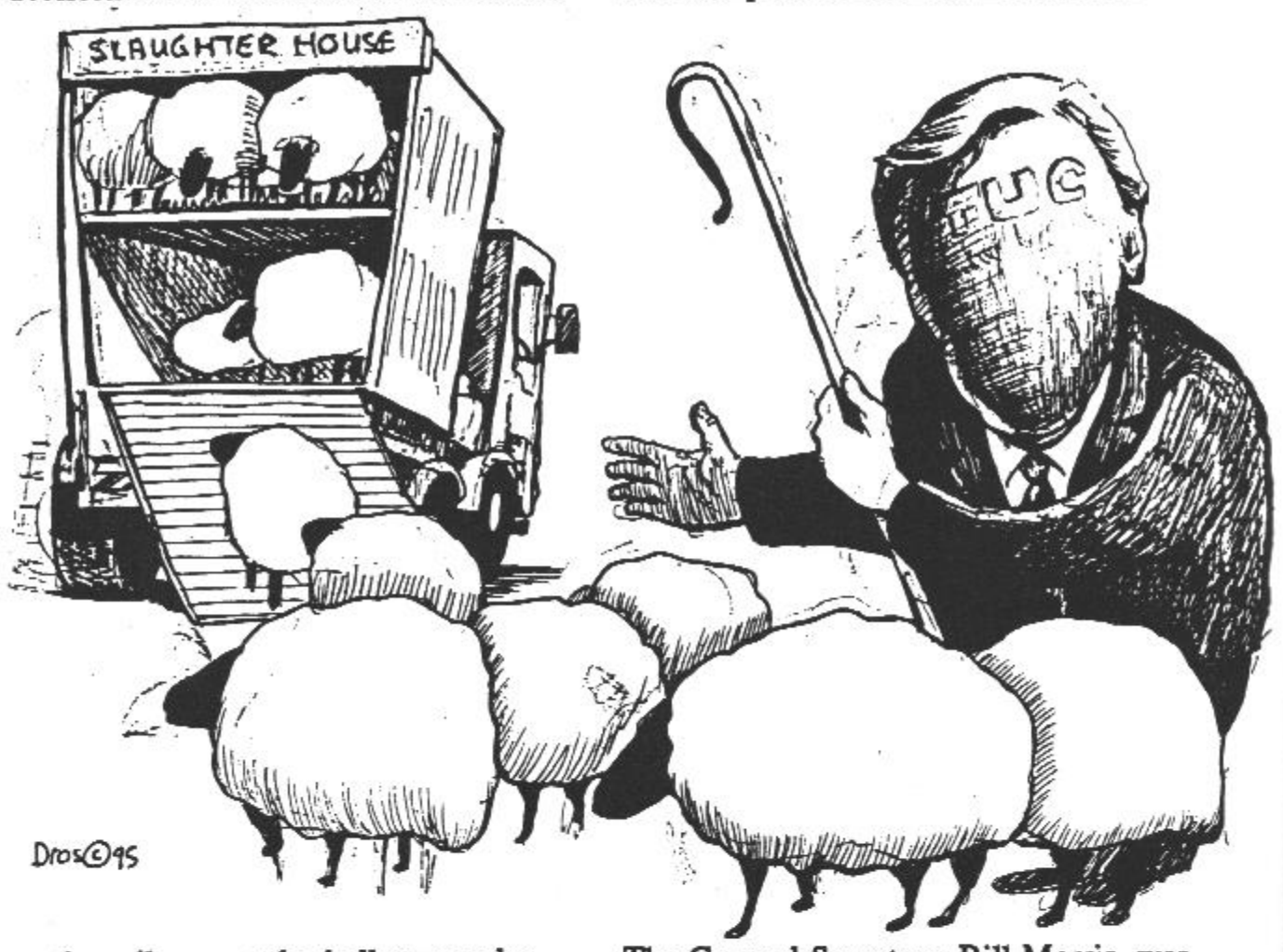
Less than a third of the labour force are now members of TUC-affiliated unions, compared to over 50% in 1979. Membership has declined for an unprecedented 16th consecutive year. Even in the dark days of the depression, there were years in which membership increased.

In the whole of 1994 there were only 278,000 strike days, less than half the 1993 figure of 649,000, the lowest figure recorded since statistics were first published in 1891. For over 10 years wage increases have kept pace with prices or outstripped them, but now inflation is running at 3.5% while pay settlements average under 3%.

In March 1994, the lecturers' union NATFHE had industrial action ruled unlawful on the grounds that it did not provide employers with the correct information about members being balloted. A series of one day strikes by the NUM was stopped by the judges on the grounds that the four week period in which unions have to initiate action after a successful ballot expired at midnight, and a strike beginning at midnight was not protected!

ASLEF was ordered to call off tube strikes and reballot its members because the London Underground had increased its offer by 0.25%, around 50p a week. Our difficulties are compounded by the timorous response of union leaders.

In the Underground dispute, the court order applied only to ASLEF, not to the RMT. Nonetheless the RMT instructed their members to work. Some say the RMT squandered a golden opportunity to highlight the iniquity of the union laws; but the main blame lies with ASLEF leaders, who should have tested the mettle of the Tories and the judges, and pressed ahead in defiance. ASLEF's decision to call off its industrial action on the railways and reballot was also questionable.



The ASLEF Executive was armed with a very reasonable 60/40 vote for action in what would be the last national negotiations before privatisation and the fragmentation of the network, and the last chance to show the bosses the unity of the drivers. When the drivers rejected a derisory offer by 54% to 46%, quite a reasonable margin in the circumstances, the Executive quickly accepted a new offer. They refused to put it to the members for approval. Perhaps this was because any improvement was, as the *Financial Times* put it, "marginal". Negotiations over reduced hours would take place in 1996, not 1997, but BR is still giving no firm guarantees.

Perhaps Lew Adams and his Executive had other things on their minds. With opinion polls showing large majorities opposed to BR privatisation, and a campaign needed to pledge Blair's Blue Labour to reversing the selloff, the bold Lew was turning blue himself. The ASLEF leaders were reported to be "closeted" with hippy tycoon Richard Branson and the multinational bus company Stagecoach, putting together a consortium to bid for a private regional network.

The problem across the unions is one of leaderships who, willingly or unwillingly, and despite ritual grunts from congress platforms, have subordinated themselves to Tony Blair, and of left oppositions which are divided, weak and almost completely lacking in convincing alternative politics.

The TGWU is a prime example. It is leaking members like a sieve. Its leadership is, to be kind, incoherent. The General Secretary, Bill Morris, was never on the left and is clearly moving to the right. Some of the best industrial militants in the TGWU Broad Left, at least in the north-west, showed their limitations and somersaulted to support Jack Dromey! Anyone who believes in open, democratic left organisation in the unions must have strong reservations about the present TGWU Broad Left.

In Unison, Rodney Bickerstaffe deserves praise for carrying out his Clause IV mandate at the Labour Special Conference. But he will require continuing pressure from the left in Unison.

The recent squabbles around the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union and Unison Fightback which have resulted in both Militant Labour and the SWP standing candidates against Bickerstaffe in the coming election for general secretary distract from this.

There are even deeper problems in MSF. Cherie Blair calls General Secretary Roger Lyons "a pussycat". The left is still split between the Stalinoid Unity Left (the old TASS Broad Left) and Network 90 (ex-ASTMS), although they have managed to agree a joint candidate, Joe Bower, to stand against Lyons in 1997. The leadership maintained broad control of the recent conference, narrowly escaping censure after its vote for the abolition of Clause IV in violation of union policy.

No such problems exist in the GMB, where John Edmonds, the archetypal union leader, maintains almost effortless control. Like Morris and Bickerstaffe, Edmonds would like both a halt to the restructuring of Labour/union relationships and concessions on the minimum wage and full employment. In the absence of an organised GMB left, getting Edmonds to fight for these things is quite another matter.

Despite the recent encouraging vote to maintain election of officers in the engineering section, the resignation of General Secretary Paul Gallagher, and the divisions within the right over whom they should support to replace him, the AEEU remains a bastion of the right wing.

We have to build on the potential in today's situation:

- the continued militancy of groups like the Birmingham council strikers and the 54% of ASLEF members who turned down BR's offer;
- the desire of a section of the union leadership for more than New Labour is willing to concede;
- the fact that attitude surveys show substantial numbers of voters moving left as New Labour moves right;
- the increasing impatience of a minority of MPs with Blair.

Overall, the situation is dominated by the continuing weakness of the industrial struggle, the ascendancy of Blairism, and the feebleness of the left. The Blair faction, utilising workers' desire for a Labour Government, building on the belief that the electorate is inherently Thatcherite, and hammering the complacency argument ("we are not home and hosed yet remember 1992"), has secured an apparently never ending domino effect.

Blair states: "The essential elements of the trade union legislation of the 1980s will remain" and the issue vanishes from the union leaders' agenda. Blair insists that no figure will be set for a minimum wage before the election, and the employers will have a vote on its level after the election and the union leaders retreat, shepherded by the TUC's John Monks, who says that a dispute with Blair is the greatest danger for the unions since 1979!

The news that Blair wants immediate action on reducing the union share of Labour Conference votes to 50% is quickly followed by proposals to scrap union sponsorship of MPs. The union leaders quickly swallow both. Their underlying attitude is summed up by John Sheldon, General Secretary of the civil service union NUCPS, who implored Blair at his union's conference: "Just say you'll give us something... anything".

Of course, it would be wrong to attribute the politics of "wait for a Labour Government" just to the union leaders - we have to win the arguments with ordinary workers.

We have to work at stemming membership loss, rebuilding workplace organisation, encouraging industrial action, and arguing for political solutions centred on a Labour Government. Against Blair's current agenda, we should fight for:

- a minimum wage of £4.15 an hour;
- a programme of union rights to replace the Tory laws, including rights to take solidarity action and to picket effectively;
- moves towards full employment, through rebuilding the Health Service, education, and other public services;
- specific policies to take the privatised industries and services back into public ownership.

But we will only make real progress if we can convince trade unionists of what Blair's politics really mean. They are not just a slick trick to win the next election. There is no more room for strong trade unions in Blair's world than there is in John Major's. Blairism is based on three main ideas.

- Given the weakness of Britain in the savagely competitive global economy, there is little room for concessions to trade unions;
- The core of New Right policies, the centrality of the market, low inflation, low taxes, tough social policy must be maintained;
- Such policies must be supplemented by "supply side" tinkering, more training and more state support for investment to improve the quality of labour and lubricate the market.

Conflicts are inevitable between workers and a Blair Government. The best way to prepare is to build opposition in today's struggles, in both the unions and the Labour Party.

Minimum wage: the facts

Even Bill Morris says that the TGWU would "not have any choice" but to accept a minimum wage well below £4.15 an hour, so it is worth spelling out why that figure is non-negotiable.

- At least 4.5 million people would be better off if a national minimum wage was introduced at £4.15 per hour.
- Reducing that figure to £3.50 would halve the numbers who benefit and the losers would be overwhelmingly women. Cutting the minimum to £2.50 would halve the numbers again, leaving only a million people to benefit.
- The taxpayer spends £2.5 billion in social security payments to the low paid to subsidise employers who pay below £4.15 per hour. A minimum wage would free that money for investment in public services, creating 300,000 new jobs.
- Women, part-timers, young people and black workers would be the major beneficiaries of a £4.15 minimum:
  - 60% of those earning low wages are women.
  - 40% of women work part time.
  - 25% of black workers would gain.
- A decent national minimum wage is a vote winner. A recent MORI poll found that 57% of the population think it should be set at £4.15 per hour. 26% think it should be higher at £5.50. 68% said they would vote for Labour if the NMW was set at £4.15 per hour compared to 60% if it was less.

(Source: National Union of Civil and Public Servants / Low Pay Unit).

Trade Unions

Victory in Sheffield

350 striking Unison members brought Sheffield libraries to a standstill for over two months. The strike, to stop scrapping enhanced pay for weekend working, was settled when the council backed down. This came on the eve of Unison members in sports centres and swimming pools taking strike action. Caroline Henry, Sheffield Unison spoke to Ken Pickering, a Unison library shop steward and Labour Party member.

CH: What was the dispute about?

KP: It was an attempt by a Labour council to break away from national pay agreements for weekend work. Workers who do more than 37 hours should get time and a half for working weekends. The council wanted to 'reinterpret' agreements to cut 7% of members pay.

CH: How could the council have claimed to be operating within national agreements?

KP: They have been economical with the truth. They used a clause which applies to those who work irregular hours. In libraries Saturday work is routine. In the ballot 78% voted "yes" on a very high turnout. Over one third of the members were active in the strike. This activity won the dispute.

CH: What support was there from the rest of the labour movement?

KP: Eventually one third of the Sheffield wards supported the strike. We toured nation-wide and raised £60,000. Sheffield Unison is still organised along COHSE/NALGO/NUPE lines. The two ballots were across three Unison Branches. This shows the way forward. At one meeting a regional official intended to argue for a return to work. During the debate he actually changed his position. The SWP were active in getting people to lobby Labour Party meetings. They seem to have recognised that socialists had a role to play there. If there were more socialists in the Party the strike would have been won sooner.

CH: During the dispute the council announced that they intended to close seven libraries. How did the strikers react?

KP: There was a lot of discussion whether we should have stayed out until they backed down on these closures, but this wasn't the final position adopted by the strikers. However members pledged to take action should closures occur.

CH: This dispute has been the longest Unison strike and the most major dispute with a Labour council. What significance do you think is has nationally?

KP: It will be a milestone. The council talked of "flexibility" and "co-operation", but the reality is they were attempting to reduce public sector pay to private sector levels. Expectations will be turned into frustration and anger if a future Labour Government doesn't respond to the situation in the public sector in a socialist way.



Newcastle Unison fights cuts

Jennifer Davies
Newcastle Unison

79% of over 1,000 Unison members balloted in the social services department of Newcastle City Council have voted not to co-operate with the implementation of cuts. Unison is demanding that £1m of reserves are used to bolster the social services budget in order to prevent the cuts. The action has been approved by Unison nationally. It will involve members refusing to assess care needs for residents in council homes to prevent the council from moving them into private care.

Detailed guidelines about exactly how the union will prevent cuts actually taking place are currently being worked on. Activity being planned to put pressure on the council includes petitioning and giving out postcards to send to councillors on two Thursdays in the city centre. A major lobby of the Labour Group meeting is to be held on September 4th with national and local speakers.

Unison take action over pay

Trade Unions

Unison health staff are being asked whether or not to take industrial action on pay. Health staff have been offered 1% nationally and have been told to bargain locally for anything more. Pat McManus reports on this dispute.

UNISON ARE balloting following the breakdown of discussions with the NHS executive in June. Unison is asking for a massive "yes" vote to the two questions on the ballot paper ("Are you prepared to take part in industrial action short of strike action?" and "Are you prepared to take strike action?").

The "yes" vote is vital if national pay bargaining is to remain within the NHS. Some unions are engaged in talks with the NHS executive. One, the Royal College of Midwives, has already accepted a deal on local pay. Unison members can only lose out if local bargaining is accepted.

Since the introduction of trusts and the internal market in 1991, we have witnessed the fragmentation of the NHS into little empires governed by chief executives, an ever growing army of bureaucrats, and closures of hospitals, beds and accident and emergency units. Local pay bargaining will only enhance this position as the internal market sets trust against trust, and health care worker against health care worker. An example of this could be seen in a local NHS Trust Hospital which may have decided to increase pay to a specific group of employees by an extra 1% per year above the agreed local and national pay structure. In doing this there could be a mass exodus of staff from surrounding hospitals - putting these other hospitals under the threat of closure.

I will be voting "yes" for strike action and action short of a strike. An insistence on acceptance of local pay bargaining to NHS staff will eventually lead to the break up of the NHS and help drive down wages. If health care staff are forced into taking industrial action they will not put patients at risk, by ensuring that emergency cover is maintained.

Unison has launched a campaign called 'public service not private sleeze' which will hold a national demonstration in London on 21st October. It is intended to highlight the grave consequences of the attacks on the welfare state. This will be Unison's first national demonstration - it deserves to be a major success.

Why I'm backing 'Bick'

Geoff Martin, chair of the London Unison Affiliated Political Fund reports: The first ever General Secretary (GS) election in Unison has posed a massive challenge for the left. Sadly, but predictably, it has sparked off the kind of adventurism from some of the left which is about as much use to us as an umbrella in a submarine.

Recently the main broad left organisations, the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Unison (CFDU), met to discuss the election. The scene was pure Monty Python. No membership check was held so the SWP, who run the rival "Fightback" organisation, piled in. Even more bizarre was the presence of the convenor of the ex-NUPE right wing caucus who spoke several times.

So a decision was bounced through to run *Militant*'s Roger Bannister against Bickerstaffe. To keep the spirit of student politics alive the SWP then announced that they would be running - despite having taken part in the decision. I was waiting for someone to suggest occupying the refectory.

For those of us on the left in the section of Unison affiliated to the Labour Party, ex-COHSE and NUPE,



this whole playground exercise smacks of ex-NALGO and has been a major distraction. Through the formation of alliances with activists who the ultra left would probably describe as right-wing (presumably because they are manual workers) and some key full timers we've chalked up victories.

Take your pick. Clause IV, public ownership, minimum wage, full employment, the welfare state: Unison APF has adopted solid policies. So now we're being asked to vote for a candidate who supports standing *Militant* candidates against the Labour Party. Yeah, course we will mate, and while you're at it why don't you ask that group of Millwall fans to support Chelsea.

Luckily, there are enough people playing with a full deck in the London CFDU. They have passed a motion slagging off Bannister - leaving *Militant* and their cheerleaders, *Socialist Outlook*, looking gormless.

So what of Bickerstaffe himself? Anyone who saw his performance over Clause IV in the teeth of vicious Mandelson-inspired attacks will know that he's not the kind of bloke who hides when there's a sniff of a ruck.

The same kind of defence for other Unison policies like the minimum wage, abolition of CCT and public ownership of the utilities will do for me. If there is any sign of backing down, which I don't expect, I'll be the first one shouting "Oi! Bickerstaffe - No!" Let's line up alongside the geezer.

Trade Unions

A question of sponsorship

Tony Blair has proposed an end to individual MPs being sponsored by trade unions. Leonora Lloyd poses an alternative.

SPONSORING MPs, as it stands, is not the best way to promote the interests of trade unions. However, he suggests that TU money should instead be donated centrally to the Party. Historically individual sponsorship of MPs was a way for unions to ensure that MPs who would represent their members' interests could get elected when MPs were not paid enough. Most such MPs represented industrial areas far from London and could not have maintained two homes or travel costs. In theory, it aided an influx of working class MPs.

A lot has changed. For example, Tony Blair is sponsored by the TGWU. He does not represent them in terms of his background or politics. We even have an ex-actress sponsored by the raildrivers' union. The system is open to great abuse. It goes against equal opportunities and real accountability, as CLPs are reluctant to deselect sitting MPs whose sponsorship brings in money. At times, the relationship is turned upside-down with the MP promoting the interests of the Party leadership within the union. John Smith used Hilary Armstrong MP to argue for OMOV within MSF.

However, central funding will not increase the influence of unions in Parliament (the reason the unions set up the Labour Parliamentary Committee in the first place).

Trade unions should instead find ways to target their money to help prospective MPs who are genuinely members of that particular union and support its policies. This money could be in the form of bursaries targeted at under-represented groups with the intention of increasing their representation. During elections, trade unions locally and nationally should also be able to assist target seats, particularly those where the candidate was a union member or whose political positions were in line with union policy.

Finally, unions should step up their own political campaigning, both jointly supporting the Party at election time in particular, and independently campaigning for their priorities. This will become increasingly important after the election of a Labour Government when trade unions will find the interests of their members increasingly in conflict with a Blair-led New Labour Government.

TGWU Conference defies Blair

Terry Dunn reports: Tony Blair told delegates that "any attempt to win the Party for a figure of £4 an hour on the national minimum wage will be resisted". Conference ignored his demand that "unions should not involve themselves in the policies of a Labour Government". Speaker after speaker supported the motion for a £4.15p minimum wage. Only one delegate voted against.

Tony Blair told conference: "The people of Britain want healthy, free and independent trade unions". This means acting on the conference decision to repeal all the anti trade union legislation. However, the motion called for the establishment of impartial courts with judges who are 'sensitive' to industrial relations.

The recent ruling outlawing the NUM strike shows that this is unrealistic. Whilst BDC demanded repeal, calls for non-compliance were rejected. Motions on gay and lesbian rights were passed with the platform at last supporting the movers rather that the few homophobes who spoke against.

Motions were passed supporting amalgamation with the GMB but based on lay member control. Tom Glennon (region five) called for swift progress on merger with the NUM. Bill Morris said that amalgamation with the GMB was only a question of time but the main obstacle was the issue of lay democracy. On the NUM, he said that the certification officer states that the "transfer of engagements" could not take place due to the federal structure of the NUM. It was a case of the NUM having to merge itself before being able to merge with the T&G.

The question Bill should address is Arthur Scargill's complaint that three letters sent by the NUM on this issue have not been replied to.

T&G BDC passed some positive motions. It is now up to the members to ensure they are pursued with vigour, both at the TUC and the Labour Party conferences.

Tube fight continues

An underground driver reports: Calling off last month's strike was a terrible blow to tubeworkers and BR drivers as well. Thursday 27th July was to have been the first time when ASLEF on BR and ASLEF/RMT on London Underground Ltd (LUL) were to take action together. This would have been the first time since 1989 that the tube would have been completely shut, and the strike would have been much more effective if combined with a BR strike. That opportunity was casually thrown away by Adams' betrayal. As it happened the injunction by LUL halted the ASLEF Tube strike as well.

Following consultation between the two executives, ASLEF and RMT have now presented a united front (for now) to Tube bosses. Both are to reballot and, as long as no-one rests on the laurels of both unions' previous 3:1 votes for action, we should see tube action reinstated. Over the past few years there have been many productivity increases on the underground. We're working harder and longer than ever. There's a feeling that now is the time to take action for a real increase in pay and conditions which we don't pay for ourselves with strings.

The Tory Party is drifting from disaster to disaster. Privatisation is deeply unpopular. A determined fight for a real pay rise and an immediate cut in the working week would see us all winners and would also derail privatisation.

Labour and the privatisation of education

The core of the Tories' education policy over the last 16 years has been the use of market forces. But what is Labour's answer? Dave Walter reviews Labour's policies and the prospect of a rebellion at this year's Party Conference.



FAR FROM increasing local democracy, the introduction of 'Local Management of Schools'(LMS) established the structure for a new two-tier state education system: some schools hopelessly underfunded whilst others gained.

League tables (and the SATs and National Curriculum needed to construct them) were meant to fill in the other half of the equation. 'Successful' (mostly middle-class) schools high up in league tables would attract pupils and therefore extra cash, while 'failing' (working-class) schools would sink further.

Labour's failure has been to argue around the edges of this Tory strategy, accepting rather than opposing the logic at its core.

Resolutions submitted by Constituency Labour Parties and trade unions to this year's Labour Party Conference show an almost unanimous opposition to the acceptance of Tory logic and determination to fight for good, fully comprehensive, public-sector education.

Labour's new report, *Diversity and Excellence*, proposes three new types of schools (community, aided and foundation) to replace the existing structure. All three types would have a minimum of 90% of their budget managed by their governors, even more than the present 85%.

The two-tier drift would remain. League tables, too, it seems, though the issue is hardly touched on. Foundation schools would remain grant-maintained schools in all but name. They would be the employers of their staff, rather than the local council, and they would have foundation governors enjoying greater security of position than other governors.

Thirty-two resolutions submitted to this year's annual Labour Conference resolutions call, in one way or another, for the ending of grant-maintained status and an integrated, comprehensive education system. Some directly reject the idea of different categories of school by referring to 'a common form of local control' (Derby South), 'a universal system of state education' (Don Valley) or 'a single tier' of education (Newport West).

According to *Diversity and Excellence*, Tory boroughs such as Trafford (where the local Labour Party was rapped over the knuckles for campaigning against selection in the May election) would be able to keep their grammar schools unless faced by a 'clear demonstration of support from the parents affected' for change. What happens if the parents with children at the secondary modern are for ending selection and those at the grammar school are not? Labour says, 'change can only come through local agreement'.

Coventry North-East calls for 'the Labour Party at all levels to reject the comparison of schools on the basis of any form of comparative league tables' and Poole for the return of 'administrative power and responsibility to local education authorities'. Others condemn LMS as 'divisive, inefficient and essentially undemocratic' and call for the abandonment of league tables.

The crisis in education came to a head earlier this year when parent governors in many areas refused to implement the cuts which central government policy demanded from their schools. Despite Blair's best attempts to undermine voters' expectations, much will be expected from an incoming Labour Government on education.

Comprehensive state education has long been a core Labour ideal. There are quite enough school governors, parents, councillors, teachers and others working in education in the Labour Party to form the basis of a campaign to defend local education authorities, public sector education, and comprehensive schooling. And it can and should link up with the left in the National Union of Teachers.

The NUT has been very weak on these issues. NUT general secretary Doug McAvoy obviously wants to appear to be leading Labour's education thinking by advocating today what he has been tipped off Labour will announce next week. And the NUT leadership have long wanted to restructure their union to reduce the role of NUT divisions and local associations (local branches). The NUT left's influence at branch level has led to serious threats to McAvoy's control nationally.

If local education authorities are further whittled away and NUT local associations cease to be negotiating bodies, this will fit very neatly with McAvoy's desire to transfer power to unelected regional officials.

The increasing desire for unity on the NUT left must be accompanied by an equal concern to link with the left inside the Labour Party. ❑

Labour should fight for....

Free education for all

This year the national leadership of Labour Students has tried to abandon the policy of free education, and to get the National Union of Students to drop it also. Kate Buckell reports.

STUDENTS KNOW the reality of financial hardship. As socialists we believe in an education system that meets the need of all people, not one based on ability to pay. Labour must champion the cause of free education - of full non means tested grants for all in post-16 education.

At the end of 1994, the Commission on Social Justice recommended that a Labour Government abolish grants, introduce full loans, and charge students 20% of their tuition fees.

In the NUS, Labour Students 'representatives' have been responsible for carrying out a shoddy 'consultation', trying to dump NUS's free education policy at a hastily-convened Extraordinary Conference during students' exams. NUS President (Labour) Jim Murphy spoke in favour of an amendment advocating MICL (Maintenance Income Contingent Loans), and against the substantive motion for a free education campaign.

But Murphy lost. The Conference voted to reaffirm NUS's commitment to free education and to step up the campaign for decent grants. Many Labour Students found themselves opposing the leadership 'line'. They did not join the Labour Party to help it sell out students. We want a Labour Government, but not one that attacks working class people's right to education.

Labour student activists do the ground work to build student membership of the Labour Party. In September, a new intake of students will arrive in our colleges. We will not recruit them to Labour saying 'Join us, we think you should have to get into debt in order to go to college'. We will attract them by saying 'We think the way the Tories treat students is disgusting, and we are the Party who will fight for you to have a decent grant'.

As Labour Students, we are working together for free education. We think it is a disgrace that our 'leaders' are undermining this fight and we are not prepared to follow them sheepishly and abandon our principles. Many Labour Clubs with Labour Student activists are working together on this issue and we welcome support for our campaign from all sections of the labour movement.

- We will be producing recruitment leaflets for Labour Clubs advocating free education.
- The issue will be coming up at Party Conference - get your constituency to mandate its delegate to vote for free education; and join us at 8:30am on Monday 2nd October in Brighton to leaflet delegates;
- Students will be building support for an NUS national demonstration and demonstrating at the Tory Party Conference (Friday 13th October in Blackpool);
- Raise the issue in your Labour Party and with local trade unionists.

For more information, please contact Kate Buckell at Cumbria and Lancashire Area NUS, c/o Lancaster University Students'Union, Bowland Annexe, Lancaster University, Bailrigg, Lancaster LA1 4YT: 01524-65201 ext.2210.

Marching to defend the Welfare State

Alec McFadden reports: This year's five day People's March to Defend the Welfare State seeks to offer a national focus to campaigns in defence of the welfare state. The 1995 march is organised jointly by the four North West County Associations of Trade Union Councils, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire, plus the Welfare State Network.

Starting in Bury near Manchester the five day march will snake through the towns of Burnley, Accrington, Blackburn, Leyland, Preston, Lytham and Blackpool. Every evening a marcher will address a public meeting together with trade unionists and members of the Socialist Campaign Group including Alan Simpson MP.

The march will be fifty strong and made up of teachers, nurses, social security staff, social workers, pensioners and unemployed workers all united in their aim to defend the welfare state and demand the incoming Labour Government creates full employment and provides and develops the welfare state.

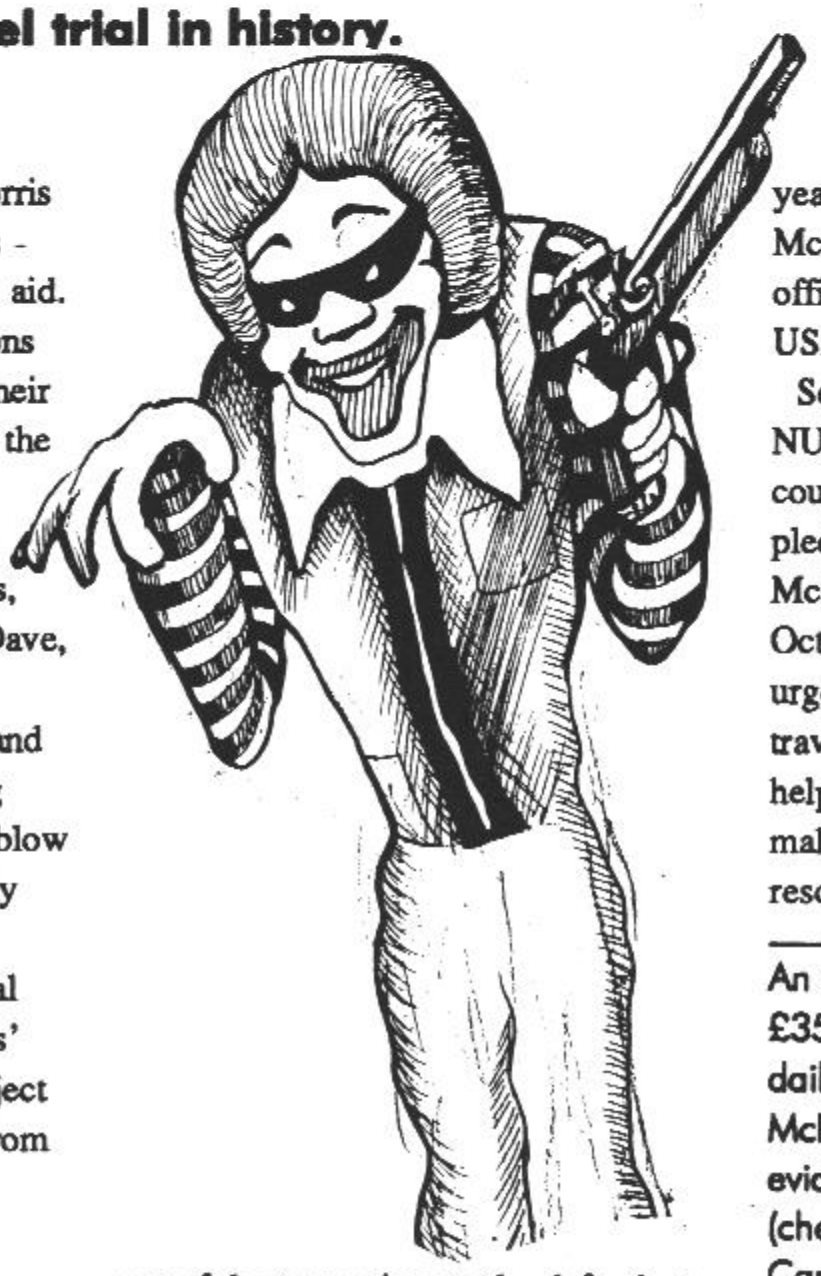
We will be linking with local protest groups en route such as the Campaign to save Florence Nightgale Hospital, Bury, holding ad hoc meetings outside social security offices and maybe taking some direct action - but that's a secret.

We call on trade unionists, pensioners organisations, students, unemployed workers and socialists to support the march in any way possible. Make donations, sponsor a marcher, support us in your town and join us when we reach Blackpool on Friday 13 October, when we will join the traditional annual Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions' anti-Tory demonstration. We call on the movement to unite to defend our welfare state.

For further information contact: Alec McFadden, 2a Price Street, Birkenhead - Tel: 0831 627531 or 0151 666 1999.

Making McDonald's eat their words

The libel action brought by the $26 billion a year McDonald's Corporation against two unwaged London Greenpeace activists which began in June 1994 is now expected to last until well into 1996. Dave Palmer reports on the longest libel trial in history.



HELEN STEEL and Dave Morris have represented themselves - libel defendants cannot obtain legal aid. McDonalds has spent several millions on the case - making a big dent in their UK profits - and are represented by the UK's leading libel lawyer Richard Rampton QC (£2,000 per day) supported by a massive team of lawyers, clerks and others. Yet despite this Dave, Helen and the McLibel Support Campaign have, by their tenacious and intelligent defence and campaigning activity, struck the most significant blow yet against the power of the viciously exploitative fast-food empire.

The employment section of the trial began in April, enabling McDonalds' notorious labour practices to be subject to public scrutiny. Trade unionists from across the world are soon to give evidence against the union-busting burger bandits.

McDonald's realised that their attempt to suppress criticism had finally rebounded when met by the immovable object of the 'McLibel Two'. As a result McDonald's is attempting to make case preparation impossible for the defendants, by denying access to trial transcripts. These transcripts are essential to ensure media access to the evidence given. Before the trial McDonald's made an agreement to provide photocopies of their paid-for transcripts to the defendants throughout the trial.

McDonald's recently initiated 'settlement' meetings with the defendants. Dave and Helen rejected what they saw as unacceptable conditions McDonald's proposed for ending the action.

Following worldwide publicity about the case marking the trial's first anniversary Ronald the Bully retaliated by breaking McDonald's initial agreement on provision of the transcripts. The cost of the transcripts to the defendants is £350 per day. Explaining the aim of this action Rampton said in court:

"What it would prevent, and this is what this is all about, is their disseminating [any transcript extract] to journalists and the McLibel Support Campaign and similar like-minded [people]...".

To ensure their workforce is cheap and pliant McDonald's have developed techniques to bust any attempts by their workers to organise or improve their terms and conditions. In October trade union officials, union activists and forty ex-workers from around the world will begin to testify about McDonalds' pay levels, inhuman conditions, and virulent hostility to trade unions. These witnesses will include: union officials from Lyons, France, who will testify how five McDonalds' managers were arrested last year for trying to rig union elections; a 17 year old Canadian worker who last year organised a union branch in McDonald's Ontario; and a TGWU official and trade unionists from Ireland, USA and Australia.

So far the national executive of the NUJ and CWU, and over eighty trades councils and trade union branches have pledged support. A solidarity day with McDonalds' workers has been called for October 12th. Financial assistance is urgently required to help pay the travelling expenses of witnesses and help buy the trial transcripts. Please make a donation and pass the model resolution.

An appeal has been launched to raise £35,000 to pay for the remaining daily transcripts. Help stop McDonalds' attempts to bury the evidence and send a donation now (cheques to the McLibel Support Campaign, c/o London Greenpeace, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1. Tel/Fax 0171 837 7557.

Model resolution

We recognise the poor working conditions at McDonald's and their hostility to trade unionism. We support the right of their staff to organise and take industrial action and protest against the company's attempts to suppress criticism, in particular the use of libel laws as censorship. We resolve to: (1) back the McLibel Support Campaign (2) make a donation to them to towards the cost of the trial transcript.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING

Stay of execution for Abu-Jamal

Adam Brown reports: An indefinite stay of execution has been issued in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the black journalist on Pennsylvania's death row. Governor Ridge had ordered his execution for August 17th but Judge Sabo stayed his death indefinitely to allow Jamal to take the case back through the courts without a date looming.

Yet Sabo continues to quash subpoenas for the defence witnesses, and even ordered one of Jamal's defence attorneys, Rachel Wolkenstein, to be thrown into jail when she attempted to give the defence response to the quashing of subpoenas. Sabo refuses to allow the defence to admit over 700 pages of FBI files which documented surveillance of Jamal, targeting him for being an activist.



Jesse Jackson commented: "There have been a number of celebrity cases over the years where you had people who were political activists, and there was a feeling that there may have been some political motive driving the state to a quick conviction".

This was echoed at rallies across the US. Larry Wright, co-chair of the stewards council of a west coast branch of dockers said: "The longshoremen understand this is a politically motivated execution and it's racist".

The campaign to free Jamal has been taken up worldwide. French President Chirac wrote that the French ambassador in Washington is "authorised to take, respecting American law, any step that might help to save the life of Mr Mumia Abu-Jamal." The foreign minister of Belgium sent a letter to Governor Ridge asking that the death sentence be lifted. The Italian parliament passed a resolution urging a stay of execution.

Christian Salmon, the Secretary General of the International Parliament of Writers, condemned "the judicial error, not accidental, but construed" by which Jamal was framed up. Joining journalists' unions in Berlin and South Africa, the National Union of Journalists recently made Jamal an honorary union member. A letter to Ridge from the Spanish CNT labour federation demanded Jamal's immediate release from prison.

Follow the lead of the Scottish Region of the Fire Brigades Union which recently donated £1,000 to Jamal's legal defence. Send a contribution today to: Bill of Rights Foundation (earmarked "Mumia Abu-Jamal Legal Defence") and mail it to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, 163 Amsterdam Avenue, No. 115, New York, NY 100235001.

JUST BEFORE 4am on December 9th 1981, in a rough downtown area of Philadelphia, Police Officer Daniel Faulkner stopped a Volkswagen Beetle and arrested its driver, William Cook, for driving the wrong way down a oneway street. The officer was later found lying in the street, shot in the back and the face. A few feet away, slumped in his own pool of blood, was Mr Cook's brother, Mumia Abu-Jamal. Mr Jamal later said he had been driving by and, seeing a police officer hitting his brother, stopped his car and rushed to his defence. Officer Faulkner died in hospital an hour after the shooting. Mr Jamal underwent surgery there, a bullet from the officer's revolver having struck his chest and lodged near his spine.

Because he could not afford a lawyer, Mumia chose to represent himself. The presiding judge, Albert Sabo, complained that Mumia was taking too long interviewing the jurors and replaced him with a court appointed lawyer, who by his own statement was reluctant to take the case.

On July 2nd 1982 Mumia Abu-Jamal was convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to death. Judge Sabo has handed down more than twice as many death sentences as any judge in the country.

Of the two eyewitnesses who positively identified Mumia as the gunman, one was a woman with several charges pending against her and the other was a cab driver on probation for an arson conviction.

The cab driver's testimony corroborated the woman's, but in a deposition taken on the night of the crime he said he saw a heavyset man fleeing the scene. Four other witnesses who were never put on the stand, including one woman whose apartment overlooked the intersection, also reported seeing a man running away.

No effort was made by the police to determine if Mumia's pistol had been fired that night. The police department's own medical examiner concluded that the officer's fatal head wound was made by a .44 calibre bullet. Mr Jamal's pistol was a .38 calibre.

Ernest Mandel (1923-1995)

THE DEATH of Ernest Mandel on July 20th removed from the international socialist movement one of its most formidable intellects. But, unlike many of his contemporary intellectuals, Ernest never allowed what he regarded as temporary setbacks or retreats to dampen his revolutionary ardour or quench his enthusiasm.

Charlie van Gelderen
Cambridge CLP

The events of May 1968, and the anti-Vietnam War campaign brought many intellectuals under the banner of the Fourth International. Che Guevara became their hero. His portrait probably still adorns some of their walls. Some of them marched behind the banner of the International Marxist Group (IMG) in Fidel Castro battle dress. They enthused about the successes of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and the rise of the New Jewel Movement under Maurice Bishop in Grenada. But, as the revolutionary wave receded, they returned to their word processors and video cameras.

Not Ernest Mandel. He continued to take the wide historic view that has inspired all the great Marxist leaders, from Marx and Engels, to Lenin, Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky, and continued the active revolutionary life which he began in 1940, when he joined the tiny Belgian Trotskyist movement.

He was active in the resistance movement, was arrested three times and was once consigned to Auschwitz. He escaped with the help of a former socialist among the guards. He helped to re-launch the Fourth International at a clandestine meeting in France in 1944. That is when I first heard of him.

Under the name of Germain, he seemed to turn out endless theses and resolutions, analyzing the then current situation. I first met him when he came to London to try and reconcile the Militant group with The Week group to which I then belonged.

Other obituaries have listed his major contributions to Marxism. He was the educator and inspiration for two generations of revolutionary socialists.

In his obituary in *The Guardian*, Tariq Ali pours scorn on Mandel's optimism. This was, he claims, a pretence because he was "fearful of 'demoralising the cadre'". This shows how little Tariq knew the real Mandel whom he maligned so viciously in his tasteless satire Redemption, and for which Ernest never really forgave him. In private conversation, he displayed the same unquenchable belief in the future of humanity. If one gave vent to one's depression about the present state of the movement, he would come back with 'In February 1917, Lenin thought he would not live to see the revolution'. Out of his encyclopedic knowledge of what was happening in the world, he would say 'Look at South Africa, who would have expected what has happened there?' Or he would tell you about the revival of the Fourth International in Sri Lanka and what was happening in Brazil.

Like Trotsky, Mandel believed that people only had to recognise the cage around them to find the means of making their escape. ❑

Opposition mounts on nuke tests

Paul Field reports: Since Jacques Chirac announced the resumption of nuclear testing in the Pacific, a tidal wave of opposition has swept the world. On June 29th in Papeete Tahiti, over 15,000 demonstrated outside the French High Commission and met Rainbow Warrior II, which was prevented from entering port. Greenpeace's flagship was later raided by over 200 French commandos using teargas as it entered the exclusion zone of Mururoa Atoll.

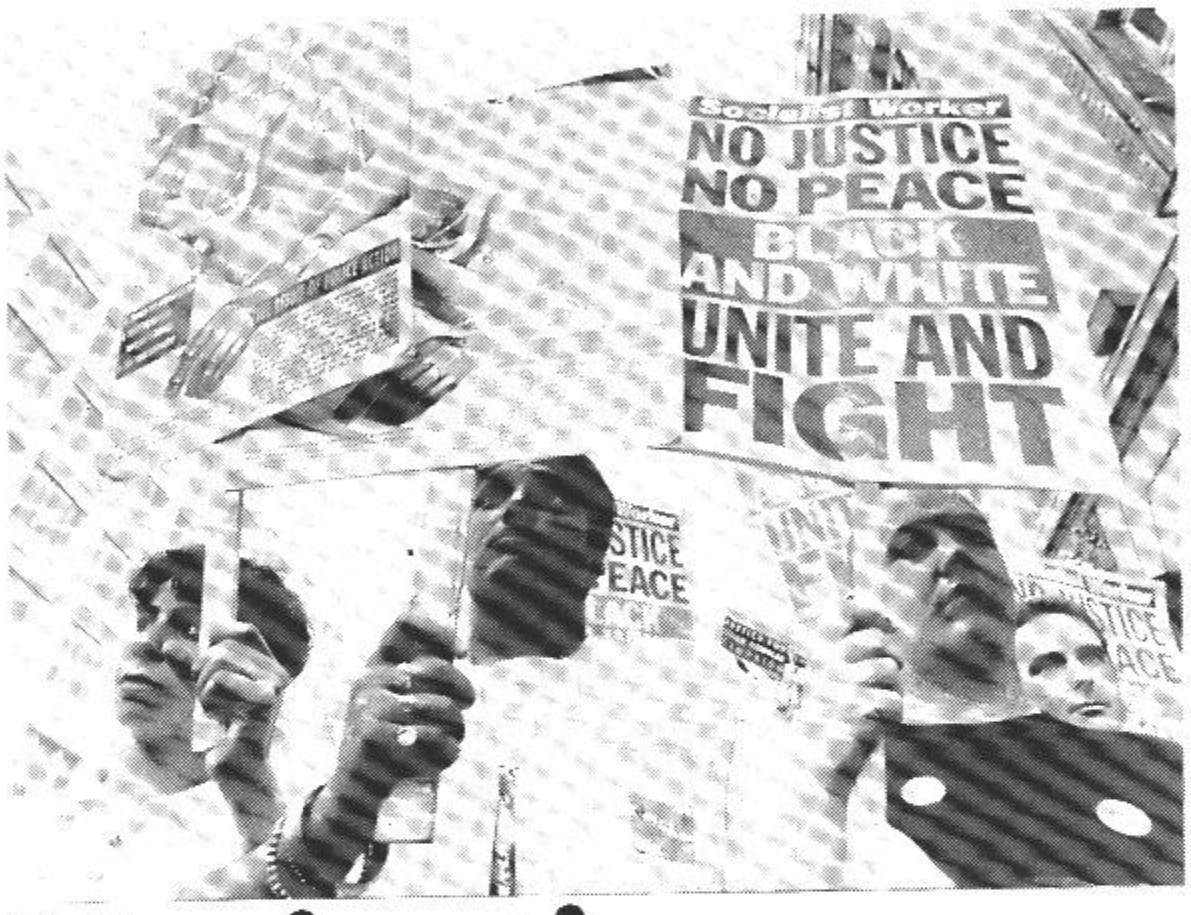
In New Zealand, black armbands were distributed outside the France-New Zealand rugby league match. Tahitian leader Gabriel Tehiarahi led 70 participants at an NGO conference in Wellington to a lobby at the French embassy.

A few days after Chirac's announcement, a French consulate was burned down in Australia. On Bastille Day over 15,000 people marched through Sydney, the biggest demo since the Vietnam War. The trade union movement lent support to dockers who are refusing to refuel French transports en route to the Pacific. Bastille Day also marked the start of a consumer boycott of French goods.

In Japan, Hong Kong and Thailand the boycott was taken up by restaurants, while protests were held in support of the Pacific people. In Fiji a 5,000-strong march to the French embassy in Suva handed over a petition signed by over 50,000 Fijians urging the French to "reconsider its decison to resume nuclear testing." The island of Mururoa is already no more than an unregulated nuclear waste dump. It has suffered over 200 underground tests so far. Each one involves drilling deep into the coral. Already the island is so cracked after previous tests that locals describe it as a "Swiss Cheese". If Mururoa were to fracture or break up, long-lasting, high-level radioactivity from over 120 nuclear tests could leak into the Pacific ocean. The atoll already contains more radiation than would result from several Chernobyl accidents. Chirac's Government has refused an independent investigation of the environmental effects and the health impact on the people of French Polynesia. The inhabitants of nearby islands already talk of health problems including increased cancers, thyroid problems and birth deformities.

Opposition to the tests intensified on the 50th annivesary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Oscar Temaru of the French Polynesian independence movement led a deputation to welcome a flotilla of protest vessels from Australia and New Zealand. Plans are being made for a protest ship of MPs to join the 17-vessel flotilla. So far 60 Australian MPs have booked places aboard the ship, as well as Masayoshi Takemura, Japan's finance minister and politicians from Italy, Austria and Germany.

For more information contact: Stop Nuclear testing, Greenpeace, Canonbury Villas, London, N1 2PN.



The Justice for Joy Gardner demo in London last month. Photo: Paul Mattsson.

No justice, no peace

WHEN SIR Paul Condon made his claim that most muggings in London's inner-city areas were carried out by young black men, he was well aware that anger over policing had reached boiling point in London and that it was likely to spill over, as it had done elsewhere. In June, there was widespread shock and disbelief as the three Met officers involved in Joy Gardner's arrest were acquitted of any responsibility of her death and there were a series of angry demonstrations - the most militant seen in south London for years - following the police killing of Brian Douglas. Condon's claim ensured that black crime hit the headlines and that, if there was to be trouble in London, it would be seen as a criminal response to the necessary policing of street crime, and not a legitimate response to heavy handed and racist street policing.

The message that black street crime and lawlessness are behind the 'riots' is familiar from 1981 and 1985. But at least on those occasions police did not have the gall to set up the theory in advance of the trouble as a pre-emptive strike.

The way Condon released the statistics was also revealing. He invited 'community leaders' and MPs to a 'private' meeting to discuss the problem of black youth criminality. To fix the meeting for the second anniversary of the violent arrest of Joy Gardner was to strike a particularly crass note. To the extent that 'community leaders' were prepared to play ball, they would have provided Condon with legitimacy for his claims as well as respectable cover for future stop and search operations.

Fortunately, the leaders were not, on this occasion, prepared to play. The tactic has backfired. The timing was wrong, the community too angry and Condon succeeded in provoking a boycott. Our message to Condon is that targeting black areas for high-profile operations is no Operation Bumblebee. This time, Commissioner, it's you who've been stung.

Editorial, *Campaign Against Racism and Fascism*, August-September 1995 (available from CARF, BM Box 8784 London WC1N 3XX).

● The tenth annual report of the Police Complaints Authority reveals that a record number of complaints were made during 1994: deaths in police custody, allegations of heavy handed policing of demonstrations and a growing number of stop and searches. Black people, 5% of the population, constituted 25% of those stopped. Out of 19,103 complaints made, only 288 resulted in disciplinary action, and of the 362 allegations of 'racially discriminatory behaviour' there was just one charge brought. 73 police officers were disciplined for assault.

● Inane liberal twaddle of the summer: "The Commissioner was right to tackle this issue. Mugging is a frightening crime ... The response from ethnic community leaders was disappointing. Paul Boateng sounded more like old Labour than New Labour, equivocating and talking irrelevantly of the disproportionate number of white males involved in fraud." - *Guardian* editorial

● Rugby League star Jason Robinson ended up in police cells after he defended his family from a gang of racist louts.

Drunks subjected his mother and sister to a verbal and physical attack in a Humberside hotel. Robinson intervened and the ensuing brawl left his mother needing a plate in her cheek and one of the louts with a broken nose.

The Wigan player said, "I was defending myself and my family. I have never had to fight for my life before this."

Hotel staff insist that Robinson was only trying to protect his family from overt racial abuse. As we go to press, police have not yet decided whether to press charges.

Next target: Asian youth

WITHIN WEEKS of Paul Condon's comments on mugging and black youth, a Home Office report predicted booming crime levels among Asian youth.

The report cited the increasing numbers of youth of the Asian population and claimed that "larger numbers of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are hitting the peak period of offending. Inevitably we are facing a likely upsurge in criminal involvement among these groups".

The *Independent* ran this story under the headline "Research Warns of Asian Crime 'Timebomb'".

Suresh Grover of the Southall Monitoring Group commented: "This report is not issued innocently. There is a clear agenda here. The report does not mention two reasons why figures might show a rise in Asian crime.

First, the police operations carried out in our communities, which draw our young people in and increase the chances of them being charged.

Secondly, young black people, especially Asians, have been targeted by racists and far right groups. Because they have defended themselves they have been criminalised by the police."

Asian youth, many facing the double whammy of racism and Islamophobia, now look set to be demonised the way Afro-Caribbean youth were in the past.

Hit racism for six

Mike Marqusee reports on a new campaign against racism in cricket.

ROBERT HENDERSON'S call in July's *Wisden Cricket Monthly* for a Test XI made up of "unequivocal Englishmen" was denounced by everyone from the *Times* to the *Voice*, Lord Tebbit to Mike Atherton.

But the unanswered question remains: how did a racist rant straight out of a fascist rag find its way into the country's biggest selling cricket magazine? "My particular hope in respect of this article," *Wisden*'s editor, David Frith, explained, "was that the plight of the foreign born cricketers in this country and those with immigrant parents... might be better understood."

Those who have followed Frith's writing over the years will remain sceptical. For a decade, *WCM*'s pages seethed with rage against the sport's boycott of apartheid. In 1989, Frith wrote a glowing first-hand report of centenary celebrations staged by the white-dominated South African Cricket Union. His fellow guests at this sanctions-busting jamboree included the cream of the English cricket establishment - Bailey, Trueman, May, Compton, Fletcher, Martin-Jenkins, Tony Lewis, among others - all toasting a hundred years of white South African cricket in defiance of the International Cricket Council and the Gleneagles Agreement.

Henderson claims that two-thirds of national cricket writers have responded to his letters and indicated some agreement with his views. That may be an exaggeration but no one can deny that racial and national stereotyping are commonplace in cricket. A few years ago, England cricket supremo Ray Illingworth claimed that West Indians needed less training than English players because they were "bigger" and had "looser shoulders". It is often asserted that West Indian excellence is "natural" whereas English excellence is cultivated. West Indian fast bowlers Walsh and Ambrose have been denounced by the *Sun* as "savages". All Indian spin bowlers are said to be "wily", one of the oldest imperial myths about the denizens of the sub-continent, and all Indian umpires are said to be "biased". When the Pakistan side were last here, during the fraught "ball-tampering" series of 1992, it was rare to see the word Pakistani without the prefix "volatile" or "excitable" attached to it. The *Mirror* played straight to the BNP gallery with its "PAK OFF YOU CHEATS" headline.

At times, racism in cricket is astonishingly flagrant. During this year's Headingly Test, BBC commentator Henry Blofeld referred to a section of cheaper seats as "the Jewish stand". He later apologised for "giving offence". Yorkshire County Cricket Club refuse to play any Yorkshire-born or bred black cricketers in their first XI - despite the fact that West Riding has the greatest cricket-playing density in the country.



The context of the Henderson furore is the long-running, often anguished debate over just what's wrong with English cricket. England's decline as a cricket power provides an uncomfortable parallel to what is widely perceived as its economic and political decline. As the England Test side has been outplayed by one former colony after another, the search for scapegoats has intensified. In a climate of escalating racism and xenophobia, that search has not surprisingly lighted upon those who fail to measure up to Robert Henderson's idea of an "unequivocal Englishman".

The *Independent*'s account of England's victory over the West Indies in this year's Lord's Test is revealing. "What made it additionally pleasing was that England's attack did not for once look like a United Nations strike force. Not since the Old Trafford Test of 1989 ... have England fielded five bowlers (or any amount come to that) with undiluted allegiance to the country they were representing." Among those who had bowled for England in the interval were not only the "Australian" Martin McCague and the "New Zealander" Andrew Caddick, but also Devon Malcolm, Phil DeFreitas and Chris Lewis, who are black.

In response to the Henderson affair, cricket fans and anti-racist organisations (and there is an impressive overlap between the two) have launched a broad-based, long-term campaign against racism in cricket.

Hit Racism for Six is now circulating the *Declaration Against Racism in Cricket* and seeking support from fans, players, administrators, commentators and journalists. Campaigners believe they will attract strong support from cricket-lovers but anticipate resistance from the elite who rule the game. "In football, the Nazis are on the terraces. They're organised and visible and you have to confront them directly," said one of the campaign's initiators. "In cricket, it's more polite and middle class. The racists here are in the pavilions and the press boxes."

Contact Hit Racism for Six , c/o Centre for Sport Development Research, Dept. of Sport Studies, Roehampton Institute, London SW15 3SN; tel. 0171 561 1606.

Declaration Against Racism in Cricket:

- Racism has no place in cricket.
- We reject any suggestion that cricketers may lack commitment to their team because of their race or country of origin.
- We condemn slurs or insults aimed at cricketers or cricket fans because of their race or country of origin.
- We commit ourselves to opposing all forms of racism in cricket at all levels.

The Declaration is supported by Peter Hain MP, Michael Parkinson, Bill Morris, Mark Steel, John Edmonds, Stan Orme MP, Ron Headley, Paul Foot, Neville Lawrence, Garth Crooks, Arthur Smith, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Alan Simpson MP, A. Sivanandan, Suresh Grover, Chris Searle, Mike Marqusee, Johnny Miller 96, the Southall Monitoring Group, the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, the Anti-Nazi League and the Anti-Racist Alliance.

reviews

The Russian catastrophe

***Mike Phipps** reviews*
Restoration:- Russia *by Boris Kagarlitsky published by Verso, £11.95 paperback.*

THE FATE of the democratic oppositions that led the anti-bureaucratic revolutions in eastern Europe after 1989 has not been a happy one. Many former dissidents turned against their old principles and comrades, for example ex-solidarity advisor Jacek Kuron now crushing strikes in Poland, or Czech President Vaclav Havel who supported Yeltsin's 1993 shelling of the Russian parliament.

Russian oppositionists, on the other hand, were marginalised by their own caution, reluctant to criticise the neo-liberal offensive frontally, many even dropping the description 'socialist' for fear of being bracketed with the old regime. Small wonder, Kagarlitsky observes, that it is the left that has been most ready to believe the myth of the collapse of socialist ideas.

Russia's vulgar new elite has little connection with the traditional opposition and cares less for civil liberties. It is bent on suppressing an independent-minded media. It is no accident that there were more casualties among journalists in the two days of the attack on the Russian parliament than during the whole of the war in Afghanistan.

Kagarlitsky is scathing about Yeltsin - "the most perfect incarnation of the most repellent traits of the Russian psyche" - whose biggest supporters are his victims, the low-paid, the unskilled and the unemployed. The President's zigzags in policy - his request to join Nato had to be explained away later as a typing error in Yeltsin's speech - symbolise the chronic instability of a system where mass psychology substitutes for collapsing social structures.

Overarching everything is the economic catastrophe: enterprises sold off for one-tenth of their value, savings wiped out, capital flight abroad to the tune of $30 billion year. In social consequences, "Russia was thrust back decades" with key services linked to production ended and once-eradicated diseases like diphtheria now rampant.

With opposition politics in total disarray, the most stable focus of resistance to the new economics has been the trade unions. But this too has been based on upheaval: between 1990 and 1992 the old and new unions virtually swapped roles, with 'alternative' structures becoming part of the state and traditional unions becoming independent and oppositionist.

A new period has opened up since the 1993 elections (which incidentally were so fraudulent that one of the heads of the district electoral commissions in Moscow hanged himself confessing his deceit!). As the era of seizing property gives way to a period of consolidation, liberal slogans are replaced by conservative ones. The racist war against the Chechens, on which Zhirinovsky supports Yeltsin as he did in the 1993 assault on parliament, fits into this perspective.

Kagarlitsky's fast-flowing account is indispensable for those who want to understand what is really happening in Russia today.

Chomsky's politics

***Mike Phipps** reviews*
Chomsky's Politics
by Milan Rai, published by Verso, £10.95 paperback.

IT'S OVER 25 years since America's foremost radical wrote: "The level of culture that can be achieved in the United States is a life and death matter for large masses of suffering humanity." Culture is meant here in its fullest sense: the intellectual and moral climate of society.

The importance that Noam Chomsky attaches to the work of intellectuals does not derive from the idea that they are somehow 'smarter' than other people. Nor does it stem from the view, arrogantly asserted by some social scientists, that they are more likely to propagate the truth in some even-handed way, free from social pressures. In fact, as Chomsky acidly observes, the history of most intellectuals is one of tailoring the truth and paring information to suit the agenda of those in power.

Intellectuals are important, rather, because of their unique position and the responsibilities this imposes - or ought to. "For a privileged minority, western democracy provides the leisure, the facilities and the training to seek the truth lying hidden behind the veil of distortion and misrepresentation, ideology, and class interest through which the events of current history are presented to us."

What are these distortions? Since America's invasion of Vietnam over 30 years ago, Chomsky has been concerned with how the American media's coverage of international affairs is a propaganda tool serving the interests of the US State Department. One telling illustration involves America's regional ally Indonesia's genocidal annexation of East Timor in the 1970s. *New York Times* coverage of East Timor from 1975 to 1979 amounted to just 70 column inches of index entries, whereas Cambodia accounted for over 97 feet!

Yet when Chomsky exposed this and tried to explain why it might be so, he was widely accused of being a virtual apologist for Cambodia's former dictator Pol Pot. Indeed it is astonishing, given the respect Chomsky enjoys abroad, to note the hostility he provokes in the US, where his exclusion from the mainstream media extends even to his books not being reviewed.

This book examines Chomsky's ideas. It also looks at his political activity, in the anti-war movement and beyond, his aversion to rhetoric and his preference for giving people the elements with which they can discover the truth for themselves. It emphasises Chomsky's flexibility and his impatience for complacency and sloppy thinking, including those found on the left.

If Milan Rai's book brings Chomsky's politics to a wider audience then he has performed a useful service. In fact, Chomsky's ideas are pretty accessible anyway and for sheer bite new readers might prefer any of the thirty or so books on politics written by the man himself.

Your letters are welcome, but please keep them short

Write to:

BRIEFING
PO BOX 2378
LONDON E5 9QU

At last *Briefing* is giving Bosnia the serious attention it deserves and is finally supporting the Bosnian Government. But *Briefing*'s support for the status quo up until now has been a disgrace.

Uncomfortable with the overtly pro-Serb position of many on the left, *Briefing* nevertheless found itself incapable of taking a position against Serbian aggression. Blinded by history and dogma, *Briefing* proved incapable of independent and strategic thought.

In over four years of wars in the former Yugoslavia, *Briefing* has managed just one editorial. This called for a 'socialist internationalism', and argued against lifting the arms embargo on Bosnia and against supporting the UN forcefully carrying out its mandate and defending Sarajevo and other towns and cities. Why? Because "the result would certainly be to escalate [the violence] further, compound the tragedy and place yet more obstacles on the path to a political solution". This is exactly the line of the British Government, a line which has consistently appeased fascist aggression.

I am puzzled as to why *Briefing* has only come round to supporting the Bosnian Government at the eleventh hour. The only conclusion is that the sheer brutality of Serb aggression over the years culminating in the genocidal attack on the Muslims of Srebrenica has broken the camel's back. But this begs more questions than it answers. For example, what was going on in the collective mind of *Briefing* during the horrors of Bosnia in the summer of 1992, which were far worse than anything subsequently witnessed? At that time I argued that the left should support the multi-ethnic Bosnian Government. What has changed to make it 'right' to support the Bosnian Government now?

Yours comradely
John Turkie, Charlton, S.E.London

You will have heard of the Labour pro-hunting faction calling itself Leave Country Sports Alone (LCSA). I thought it may be of interest that LCSA is less than truthful. Its leaflet alleges that "the first political party in the U.K. to propose abolition (of fox hunting) was the National Front in the 1970s".

This is untrue. The Fellowship Party have promised to abolish fox hunting since their foundation in 1955. So they got there well before the NF. LCSA ignores letters on this topic!

I hope you can use this information to help discredit LCSA as they deserve to be discredited.

Yours faithfully
Kathleen A Gilchrist, Canterbury

I have discovered that there is an unconstitutional nomination for the constituency section of Labour's NEC. Harriet Harman has not been nominated at any meeting of her CLP, Camberwell and Peckham. So who did nominate her? Shadow Cabinet CLP?

In the early 1980s Judith Hart was removed from the National Executive because she had not been nominated by her CLP. These plans are unconstitutional!

Yours
Nancy C. Udell, Camberwell



Political education Blair style

Labour's recent **Political Education Conference** marked a new phase in the drive to transform Labour into a US style Democratic Party containing neither politics or education. The event was nonetheless instructive in giving a glimpse of what the Blairites intend to do next. **Political Education Officers** are to function as Blair's shock troops in the CLPs, justifying whatever the leadership do, and spearheading HQ's drive to set up parallel structures to sideline or abolish GCs. Full-time Party hacks said that GCs were "boring", "intimidating" and "confrontational". Instead, we needed to look at "new ways of organising". A taste of those "new ways" was given by the chair of a workshop on education policy, who said that there could be no debate. "We're here to do what we're told", she said.

Blunkett thanks SWP

Talking about Labour's education policy brings us to **David Blunkett,** that nice man who won the nation's sympathy when he and his guide dog were cornered and screamed at by a mob of ultra-lefts at this year's conference of the National Union of Teachers. It can't be the same **David Blunkett** who boasted to the **Political Education Conference** that he was "aided and abetted excellently by the SWP" in his attempt to present himself as tough on the unions.

Appa-rats threaten GCs

While the press focuses on the relationship between 'New Labour' and the unions, the Party's apparatchiks are preparing for an assault on the basic principles of collective and participatory **democracy.** A 'discussion' article in the latest ***Labour Organiser*** - the house journal of Party full-timers - gives it to you straight. "Abolish the General Committee" is the headline, and an editorial note says: 'Is it time to get this **reform** on the formal agenda of the Party?' You have been warned.

Monday October 16th
7.30pm
Launch of
Socialist Briefing
in Lewisham!

Lewisham Labour Club
Limes Groves, London, SE13



Over 1000 anti-racist demonstrators marched through the streets of central London on 5th August.

Speak out against racism

The youth are living in fear. As in 1985, their backs are up against the wall. They are being attacked - with rhetoric, which is making ordinary white people cross the road to get away from them. They are condemned before they speak a word. All we're trying to do is survive in a society gripped by a recession which we did not create.

The bondage used on Joy Gardner is witness to the continuing existence of the ideas of slavery in our society. Everyone knows that there is something fundamentally wrong about what happened to Joy Gardner, that this shouldn't happen in a civilised society. Her mother, Mrs Simpson, a grandmother, has to travel the length and breadth of this country to appeal for the justice that everyone knows she deserves.

- Derek Hinds, Joy Gardner Campaign

A real and very successful attack is being carried out on equal opportunities policies. The gains of the early eighties are now derided as 'politically correct'. The idea that the workforce of the local authority should reflect the composition of the community it serves is now being portrayed as an extreme political ideology, rather than as an essential part of the provision of decent public services. What's perturbed me as much as anything else is Paul Condon's remarks and the reaction of senior politicians. What did Michael Howard do? He came in right behind Condon and backed the tenor and force of the Commissioner's remarks. When the proposals on asylum and immigration came out, what was the reaction of the Labour front bench? It wasn't to say that asylum seekers and refugees are treated appallingly, it wasn't to say that people are being killed in the process of being deported, it was to say that we do have a problem with illegal immigrants and we do need to do something about it. The two major political parties are both preparing to play the race card in the forthcoming general election. We are very concerned that we're going to see race emerge as one of the driving factors of British politics in the next 18 months.

- Andrew Puddephatt, Liberty

● Newham Unity Festival, Sunday 3rd September,Canning Town Recreation Ground. Music, food, activities.1pm to dusk. Free. Organised by Newham Monitoring Project

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