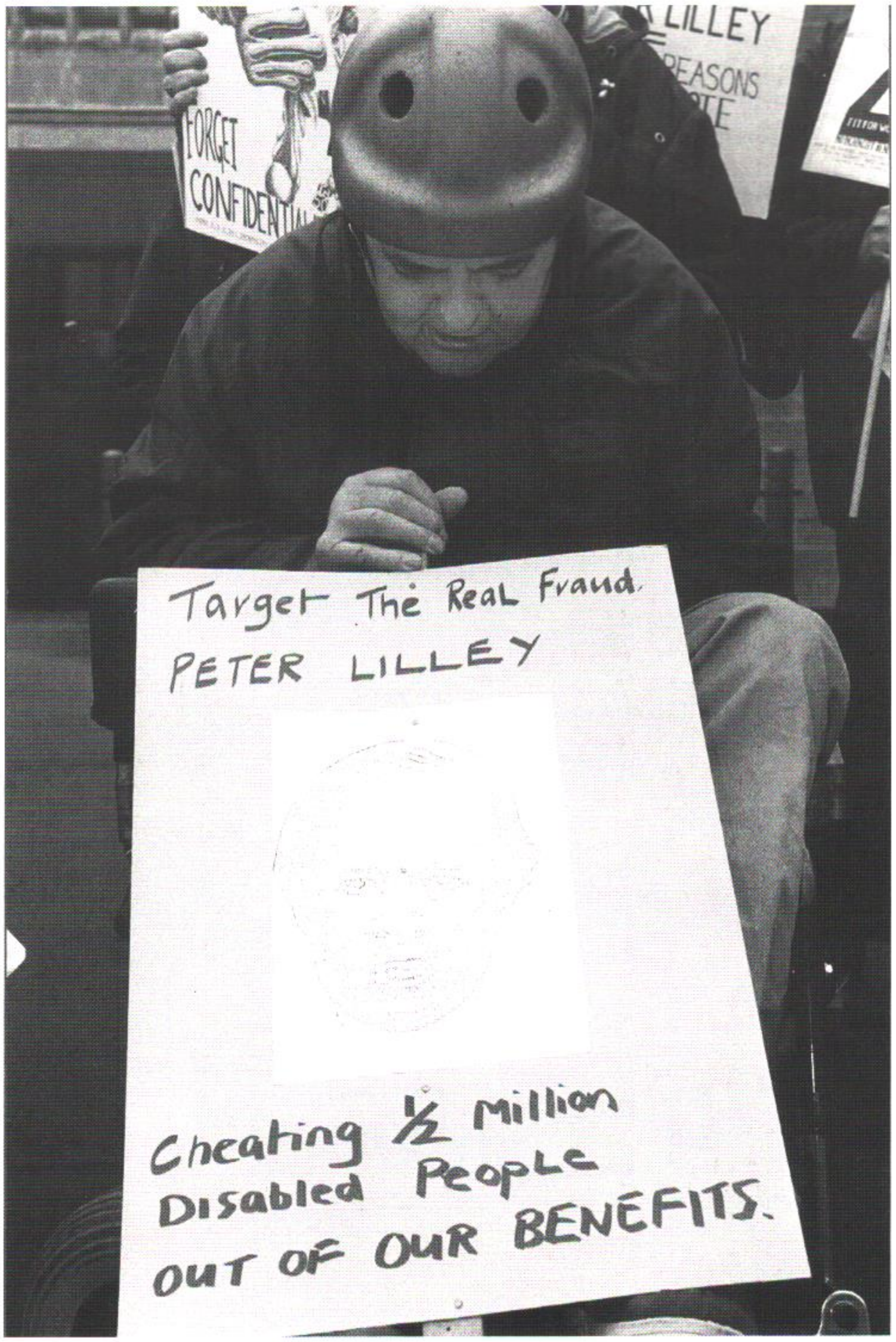
LABOUR LEFT BRIEFING

June 1996 price £1 conc. 50p

inside...

- Indian elections
- "scientific racism"
- Liverpool dockers
- SLP conference



will it change under Labour?

Labour Left Briefing

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Front cover photo: Paul Freeley.

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The end of the welfare state?

CHRIS SMITH, Labour's social security spokesperson, admonishes us not to "throw money at poverty". Even by New Labour's standards, this specimen of Orwellian Newspeak will take some beating.

Poverty is not a cultural or psychological syndrome. It is about lack of material resources due to insufficient power in the marketplace. It is, as millions in this country are perfectly well aware, about not having enough money and the quickest and most effective remedy for poverty does indeed remain "throwing money" at it. Smith's doubletalk is part of the wider attempt to 'blame the victim', to place responsibility for the endurance of poverty on the poor themselves.

For all Thatcher's many triumphs over the working class, her greatest frustration was her inability to kill off the welfare state and rein in public expenditure. Now, across the advanced capitalist world, welfare spending has become a central issue as governments seek to cut the social wage to make their countries "more competitive" in the global economy. For a Labour leadership committed to the Maastricht treaty and the convergence criteria for a single European currency, the welfare state is shaping up as its greatest challenge - not to save or rebuild it, but to strip it to the bone.

There is an old political adage that goes "only Nixon could go to China". By the same token, it may well prove that only a Labour Government can finish off the welfare state.

In the run-up to the general election, Labour's approach to the young and the poor appears increasingly punitive. Cuts in child benefit, the end of free higher education, forcing unemployed youth to take up training schemes ... is this an agenda that can mobilise the millions hungry for a new direction in this country? Instead of offering hope and the prospect of concrete improvements in the lives of those who have suffered most under Thatcherism, it offers the same kind of penny-pinching, 'bottom line' accountant's morality that has turned the Tory Party into a by-word for callousness and selfishness.

Of course, Smith's manoeuvres on child benefit and Blair's clear intention to prune the welfare state will be presented to Party members as "political realism". We will be told that Labour cannot afford to be associated with anything that smacks of tax increases.

But this "realism" rests on some highly unrealistic assumptions. First, universal benefits, especially child benefit, and universal provision, like the NHS, bind together the majority of society. They make it possible for Labour to appeal to the working class as a whole and harder for Tories to play off one section against another. The plans advanced by Smith, Blair, Brown - and the more extreme schemes canvassed by Frank Field and the Institute for Public Policy Research - would detach the bottom third, the misnamed "underclass", from the rest of the working class. State provision would become a stigma in itself, something reserved only for chronic failures and misfits. Labour will have succeeded only in fracturing its own base, in making it harder to win and retain majority support. Far from helping people "out of dependency" the plans to cut child benefit and narrow the remit of state responsibility (notably for pensions) will create the sort of 'no-go areas', the ghettos of hopelessness and alienation that can be found now in every American city.



Secondly, resources to fund an expansion of welfare provision - the crying need of any society dealing with an ageing population and rapid technological change - need not come only from "middle income" people. Indeed, Labour's paranoia about tax increases has simply reinforced the myth that working people in employment bear the burden of paying the bills for working people out of employment. While the media highlight a few personality clashes between the key players in the shadow cabinet, the fact is all of these characters are united in the central aim of following through the logic of the Commission for Social Justice. That means ending universal benefits and dismantling the welfare state in preference to raising taxes for the better off. If Labour was prepared merely to raise corporation tax and income tax for the wealthiest ten per cent to the levels currently applying in the rest of Europe it would have no difficulty funding substantial increases in pensions and benefits. But of course to do that would require getting "tough on capital" when posturing about "individual responsibility" is so much easier. ❑

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British Aerospace forced to abandon AGM

Ryan Cole reports: On May Day Campaign Against Arms Trade token shareholders ran the BAe AGM from the floor for over three and a half hours. The AGM broke up in uproar as the board fled after being assailed by a separate group of activists who hurled eggs and tomatoes whilst accusing the board of participating in genocide by supplying arms to regimes such as Indonesia.

Naturally enough the press reported the eggs and tomatoes before the shareholder action - the *Daily Express* leading with the headline "Peace mob pelt eggs at BAe chiefs". Yet the day put the issue of the arms trade onto the top of the news agenda.

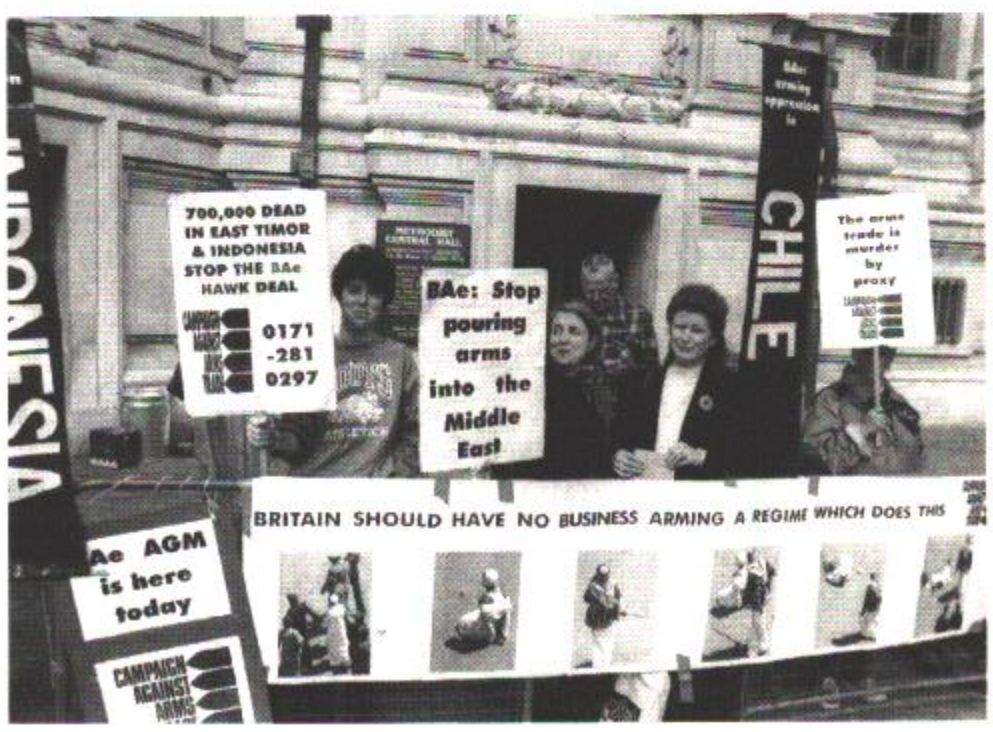
In particular, George Galloway MP pressed the board about allegations that BAe and Vickers Defence Systems had been pressurising the Government to deport the Saudi dissident and asylum seeker Mohammed Al Masari.

CAAT activist also staged a die-in outside the AGM so that as shareholders entered the AGM they were confronted with bodies across the road covered in "blood" representing the victims of BAe's arms trade policy.

Throughout the duration of the AGM activists gathered outside the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre to protest against BAe's arms sales. One group carried a banner displaying the beheading of a Saudi citizen with the slogan "Britain should not supply a regime which does this".

BAe was the first Tory privatisation and is now in the process of transforming itself into a global company. It arms the most repressive regimes in the world. Indonesia is now well known; less discussed is the case of Saudi Arabia which has a £20 billion "crown to crown" arms deal with HMG known as "Al Yamamah" (The dove).

The National Audit Office report into the deal, which was forced by newspaper revelations of dubious financing, has been effectively suppressed by the Government. Yet the regime is now in deep crisis and, as far as western strategists are concerned, threatens to be another Iran - a well armed client state that is careering out of control.



Campaign Against the Arms Trade picket the BAe AGM on May Day. Photo: Patrick Delaney.

COPEX sues CAAT

Eric Ferguson reports: A number of workers and supporters of Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) are being sued for libel by COPEX International Limited which organises the "Covert Operational Procurement Exhibition" at Sandown Racecourse in Esher, Surrey.

CAAT carried an article in its newsletter and CAAT supporters wrote to Sandown racecourse questioning whether the exhibition should be held there. Since the letters were sent to Sandown rather than COPEX direct they constitute a public document.

Because of the libel laws your correspondent is neither allowed to tell you what CAAT and the letter writers wrote and whether or not CAAT is likely to win the case. According to CAAT it is "determined to vigorously defend the action" and the pensioners, teenagers and other letter writers who have received writs.

The exhibitors at COPEX include companies supplying riot control, counter insurgency equipment and public order weapons. Specialist law enforcement and intelligence agencies are among the groups targeted for attendance at COPEX. At COPEX 1994 countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Israel and Algeria, all known human rights abusers, were in attendance.

The exhibition is held every November. In 1995 it was blockaded by CAAT supporters. The 1996 protest will take place on 5th November and CAAT wants as many activists as possible to go to Sandown and show that libel writs or no libel writs the COPEX arms fair is not welcome in Britain.

Whilst CAAT intends to continue campaigning against the COPEX Arms Fair it is critical that it has the financial support of the labour movement so that it can fight its case through the court if necessary. Please send any donations, payable to CAAT, at 11 Goodwin Street London N4 3HQ. One practical way of supporting CAAT is for Labour Party members to write to Walworth Road to ask if an incoming Labour Government will allow the COPEX arms fair to continue being staged in Britain. Please send any replies to CAAT.

Labour CND model resolutions for Labour Party Conference

Trident

Conference regrets that there has been little progress towards the global elimination of nuclear weapons and that Britain - with its Trident missile system - remains one of the world's foremost nuclear proliferators.

Conference deplores that the first Trident has become operational and expresses concern that the new sub-strategic rule is directed against Third World countries.

Conference demands that the next Labour Government should decommission the Trident missile system and stop all nuclear weapons testing.

● Note: This is a corrected version. A gremlin crept into the one mailed out to LCND supporters.

Arms spending

Conference reaffirms the overwhelming commitment of six previous Labour Party Conferences to reduce defence spending to the average level of other west European countries, allied to plans for defence diversification and arms conversion and the transfer of the savings made to economic and social priorities and job creation. Within this context the setting up of a Defence Diversification Agency is vital and urgent.

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Reclaiming our land

On May 4th activists from The Land Is Ours campaign occupied a derelict site by the Thames in Wandsworth. Sue Jones went along to find out why.

A LARGE SIGN saying 'Visitors Welcome' stands at the gate of the site, once occupied by a Guinness distillery but now empty for several years. The amount of work done in the first 24 hours was immediately apparent: the installation of toilets, the building of a bandstand, an outdoor kitchen, the laying-out of gardens and paths. The idea is to build a sustainable village and put on entertainment and educational events - but above all to involve the local community in decisions.

The takeover was extremely well organised but once the occupation began, regular site meetings were held to determine what happens democratically. The takeover coincided with the 50th anniversary of the biggest squat in British history. On 8th May, 1946, in over 1,000 places around the country people occupied derelict army camps, bombsites and empty buildings and began to rebuild their communities.

Today 5% of urban land in Britain is derelict. London alone has an area of vacant land the size of the Borough of Westminster. These are ideal sites for affordable housing, community facilities and green spaces but most housebuilding is today concentrated in the countryside.

The attitude of local people has been enthusiastic. There is a sense of betrayal by the local council and planners and one of satisfaction that direct action is putting the land to good use.



Activists from The Land Is Ours, today's Diggers. Photo: Paul Freeley.

STOP PRESS: On 15th May Guinness's eviction order was thrown out of court on technical grounds and the occupation goes on. It will take Guinness several days to prepare a new summons and campaigners in the meantime hope to use this breathing space to reach a settlement with the company which allows the land to be used in the interests of the community.

● For more information, contact The Land Is Ours, East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street, Oxford OX4 1DD. Tel. 01865 722016.

LLB *spoke to George Monbiot, one of the organisers of the land-grab. An environmental campaigner, Monbiot has written about the issue of land on four continents. He is persona non grata in seven countries, had a sentence of death passed against him in his absence in Indonesia, received death threats in Brazil and sustained injuries opposing road-building schemes in Britain. Currently Visiting Fellow of Green College, Oxford, his latest book* **No Man's Land,** *about the dying way of life of East African tribespeople, is published by Picador.*

Q: What is going to happen next?

A: We're going to court to contest the attempt by Guinness to get possession of the land. We hope that we can get their consent to stay if we fight them off for a bit. They may give in. We are building more structures, gardens, riverside walks and community facilities. It all depends on what local people want. They are happy with what is happening so far.

Q: What would you say to the labour movement?

A: Please make an example of this and make sure it works. Until we crack the problem of land use, we cannot deal with the other iniquities. No social justice programme is complete without a positive land use programme, aimed at solving the problems that result from dispossession and homelessness.

Q: When we visited it looked like a shantytown. Have you been influenced by the movements in the third world to take over land for the homeless?

A: Yes, I've learned so much from time spent in Brazil, Indonesia and Africa. People set up shantytowns by taking the land and building with the materials to hand. Then they improve and build up on it later. Homeless people have turned up and are living here. More may join us.We will be campaigning for water, gas and electric supplies soon.

Q: Are you going to take any more land?

A: This is enough to be going on with but people should follow our example. Look at the land in your area, take it over and use it.

Q: So it's not just a way for people to follow a lifestyle?

A: No, it's now being co-ordinated by local people. They want facilities, housing for the homeless, access to the river, a place for children to play and green space. The question of land use is crucial. It determines whether people are housed, it defines the quality of their lives, it determines the course of development. Those who most need development are least served by the development of land at the moment.

Q: Have you had much support from politicians?

A: Tony Benn visited us last week and was very supportive. He spoke about us in the Commons. The leader of the Labour Group on Wandsworth Council has visited as well. We're still waiting for Tony Blair.

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Platform for power?

Colin Hall (Leicester East CLP) analyses the recent local election results.

FOR THE fourth year running, voters in the local elections strengthened Labour's position as the predominant voice of local government. The Tories suffered the loss of nearly 600 seats, many of which they had themselves captured in 1992 after their general election win. Three-quarters of these seats were gained by Labour, and the rest fell mainly to the Liberal Democrats. Even in recent strongholds such as Derby and Basildon, the Tories were only able to cling on to a tiny handful of seats. In many large cities such as Manchester, Newcastle and Stoke, they were wiped out.

Two areas did not follow the national trend of Labour advances. In Sheffield, a traditional Labour fiefdom, the Party faced a continued strong challenge from the Liberal Democrats who it only narrowly outpolled and was forced to concede several seats.

In Leicester a combination of internal unrest and superior opposition organisation in key wards led to a loss of four seats. Although Labour's power base in the city remains secure with 41 seats out of 56, the role of the regional office, which produced the local manifesto, needs looking at.

Furthermore, the turnout was so low (in one ward as low as 16%) as to make predictions of future voting patterns virtually impossible.

Such widespread non-participation reveals the extent to which local government as a whole, regardless of control, is viewed as being irrelevant to people's lives. The effects of two decades of unremitting hostility to local authorities from Tory and Labour governments alike have clearly taken their toll.

Sadly there seems little likelihood that a Blair Government will do anything to reverse such attitudes. Only recently the front bench environment spokesperson issued an edict to Labour-controlled councils to keep Council Tax rises for 1997 below the rate of inflation. With support grants likely to be cut still further as the Tories seek a pre-election tax bribe, the effect of compliance with such advice will be further savage cuts in council services and jobs, which will lead to increased alienation from the political process.

Although Labour currently has more elected councillors than at any previous time in its history, the idea of them using their collective strength to influence a change in policy appears remote. Even if Labour takes national office, the concept of local authorities working in harmony with central government to effect real and lasting benefits to the quality of people's lives is enticing, but unlikely to be realised. ❑

Volatile Brent

Dave Statham, Brent East CLP, reports on the latest comings and goings.

BRENT COUNCIL continued its record of volatile politics with the recent death of a Tory councillor resulting in a change in political control, once again without any involvement of the electorate! .Since the Tories held control on the Mayor's casting vote the loss of one member enabled Labour to take control with Lib Dem support.

This was especially timely as Brent had become only the second council in Britain (after the Isle of Arran) to try to derecognise a union - in this case UNISON, the main union within the council. The reason given was also a little unusual; the council insisted that UNISON replace the full-time official responsible for Brent, or they would derecognise the union.

Fortunately UNISON refused to give in to this blatant interference in their affairs and when the matter reached a full council meeting it coincided with the change in control. The UNISON branch had been mobilising support from as far afield as Newcastle and the sacked Merseyside dockers were also present at the lobby of the council meeting.

The Tories attempted to have the meeting adjourned and when this failed they walked out. Since then they have demanded a series of special council meetings in the hope of achieving a majority: after two failed attempts in the run-up to the annual meeting on 15th May they lost the mayoralty. The new Mayor is Labour councillor Lata Patel, with Liberal Democrat Mark Cummings as Deputy Mayor.

The last gasp of the rabid right in Brent was outgoing Tory Mayor Gwen Tookey (a person so deranged she makes Thatcher look sane) calling yet another special council meeting for 31st May. Labour is looking into the question of getting Tory councillors surcharged for the costs of meetings called on spurious grounds - not quite a Westminster but nevertheless worth a try.

While the Tories continued their antics the developments inside the Labour Party were also interesting: since control rested on an "arrangement" with the LibDems there were those in the local Party who seemed only too keen to accommodate them. Perhaps LINC have more supporters in Brent than we knew! ❑

● Tony Blair visited the conference of the Federation of Small Businesses in Maidstone recently; our *LLB* mole reports.

In the style of royalty, Blair arrived by helicopter and inspected the conference stalls before addressing the delegates.

After the usual attacks on the competence of the Government he used the familiar buzz-phrases: he wants quality education, quality infrastructure, to regenerate the regions, and (ominously) to reduce the welfare burden.

Only a few questions were allowed, but our intrepid reporter managed to ask why he refused to set a figure for the minimum wage before the election. The answer was that it needed to be discussed with employers. Cowboy employers present at the conference were suitably reassured!

Not the way, comrades



Photo: Paul Mattsson.

Alistair Ward and Graham Bash

SEVERAL HUNDRED committed socialists attended the founding conference of the Socialist Labour Party on 4th May at Camden Town Hall, representing the declared membership of 1,152. Those present were ex-Communist Party members and supporters, a minority of ex-Labour Party members and a few from the hard left although the new SLP leadership appears to have done an effective job in keeping out most of the latter category. Representatives of the Spanish Communist Party, the Refounded Communists of Italy and the Cuban embassy gave greetings speeches. One of the biggest ovations occurred when Rick Simon condemned those who had characterised Cuba as Stalinist.

The entire day's discussion centred on a programme of a future SLP Government. Arthur described it, as a programme for "when we form a government ... and we will". A trifle premature perhaps?

Left-wing amendments were dismissed as 'showing a lack of faith in the working class': Arthur said that it is no use lecturing dockers in struggle about the 1917 Bolshevik revolution.

However, compared to a Labour Party Conference the programme was, overall, a welcome restatement of socialist principles aimed unequivocally at the abolition of capitalism.

The main area of contention was the SLP's policy for "humane and non-racist immigration controls". South London's motion against all immigration controls was dismissed as "libertarian nonsense" and was defeated 182 to 114.

In Arthur's closing speech on the way forward he claimed that, "If you really believe in socialism there is no principled way you can remain in a Party that is opposed to socialism."

The Conference and the SLP itself appeared to be, at best, an irrelevance and at worst a diversion from the main problem facing the entire left of the labour movement - which is how we prepare for a Blair Government. At present SLP has a membership which is a fraction of even the Socialist Workers' Party, let alone the Labour Party. Where was the strategy for displacing the Labour Party as the political expression of the working class and the main governmental alternative to the Tories? Where was the discussion on how we prepare left unity in the face of a Blair government?

Whatever the fantasies and delusions these were at least the honest mistakes of committed comrades, socialists and class fighters - which is more than we can say for the usual garbage we get every year at Labour Party Conference from the self-serving spineless class traitors that lead the Labour Party. ❑

New Labour, New Britain, *New Statesman*?

***LLB*'s insider reports on the goings-on at *NSS*.**

THE BLAIRITE drive to silence criticism from the left notched up another success last month with the sacking of five left journalists on the *New Statesman* by new editor Ian Hargreaves.

In his first week in post, Hargreaves fired deputy editor Paul Anderson, assistant editor Nyta Mann, contributing editor Ian Aitken and columnists Colin Ward and Mat Coward. Among his new appointments is ultra-Blairite former *Statesman* editor John Lloyd who is now associate editor. The new regime has shifted the editorial line sharply to the right.

Former *Independent* editor Hargreaves was head-hunted as a successor to soft-leftist Steve Platt by the *Statesman*'s new millionaire owner, Labour MP Geoffrey Robinson, on the recommendation of Tony Blair's chief-of-staff Jonathan Powell. Hargreaves is reliably reported to be on a salary of £130,000 a year with £50,000 worth of perks thrown in - more in total than the old regime's annual budget for columnists and freelance contributions.

Robinson's takeover came after a six month battle for control of the *Statesman* in which fellow right-wing Labour MP Margaret Hodge played a big part. She was one of five "editorial directors" appointed in the late 1980s who each had the power of veto over any changes in the magazine's ownership or editorship. The idea was that they would act as guarantors of editorial independence.

Instead, on her insistence, at the end of last year they blocked a reader share-issue plan, underwritten by the *Statesman*'s then majority shareholder, Philip Jeffrey, which would have ensured editorial independence by diversifying ownership. Jeffrey, she believed, had proved in two years as de facto proprietor that he would not "deliver" the *Statesman* to Blair.

Jeffrey responded by putting the magazine into administration, with the intention of buying the title and reviving the share- issue plan. But this was scuppered by three "title option holders" (former board members Philip Whitehead MEP, Christopher Hird and Ursula Owen) who in the late 1980s had been given the right to buy the magazine if it came up for sale, as long as they matched any rival bid, in return for getting off the then editor Stuart Weir's back. They said they'd back Robinson but not Jeffrey - and Jeffrey backed down rather than face protracted litigation. Robinson, promising a livelier, lighter magazine, took over. But so far, the "new" magazine is much less interesting than the behind the scenes machinations that have shifted it so far to the right. ❑

Who's to blame?

John Kimberely, Sheffield Attercliffe CLP, considers the issues raised by the recent spate of expulsions of children from schools.

WHEN Richard Wilding was put out of Glaisdale School in Nottingham recently it was done under the new Tory exclusions rules. Issued in 1994, these regulations say that a student with unacceptable behaviour can be permanently excluded by a head teacher who must then have his or her action confirmed by the school governors. School governors are set up as the so-called managers of little competing businesses. Although they have little real power in these days of shrinking budgets, governors are likely to uphold a head's decision because the education market makes them want to sell their school as having as few problems and as many high-achieving students as possible so that parents choose to send their children there.

The local education authority is then in direct conflict with the school if it believes a student should not have been excluded, and in conflict with another school if it feels it must send the student there instead. The teachers are expected to handle very difficult and sometimes violent students, the helping agencies like educational psychologists usually have no time to help, and a bureaucratic web is tying everyone up.

What's worse is that the students will often find themselves out on the street, attracted by a possibly criminal and drug-based sub-culture of other excluded or truanting students. No wonder the most principled heads like Chris Searle from Sheffield do their best not to exclude anybody.

Unfortunately, a no-exclusion policy in times of rocketing class sizes and teacher redundancies is unlikely to please teachers. One union general secretary, Nigel de Gruchy of the NAS/UWT has commented that thousands more disruptive students should be removed. In Nottingham, there was almost strike action against the LEA's wish to return Richard Wilding to school.

Behind the spiralling number of disputes lie poor employment and life prospects and increasingly under-resourced education. The answer is not to pin the blame on 'mad bad' kids, bad parenting, ineffective teachers or irresponsible LEAs. None of these groups can solve these problems on their own. What is needed is a society of opportunity and a sensitive integrated education system that attempts to solve problems rather than pass the buck.



Bob Johnson (NAS / UWT) puts a teacher's point of view.

THE PROBLEM of dealing with disruptive pupils is thrown into sharp focus by the industrial action threatened at Glaisdale School in Nottingham. NAS/UWT is supporting teachers faced with the imposed reinstatement of a pupil permanently excluded by the school's governing body but returned by an LEA appeal committee.

Some argue that pupils should never be excluded and that every pupil's needs be met through systems of support within their school. In truth this is unrealistic.

Before the Government's reforming legislation, schools were able to provide an environment in which all but the most aggressive and difficult children could be accommodated. Neither schools or teachers rushed to offload their difficulties. Before the mid-eighties, teachers made strenuous efforts to provide a relevant curriculum for such pupils. Now, things are very different.

The National Curriculum has removed the flexibility. Disruption grows therefore as pupils reject the irrelevance of a rigid centrally generated curriculum, which has more to do with the perceived needs of the nation than the needs of developing children. The destruction wrought by persistently aggressive and disruptive pupils turns a happy and stimulating experience into a daily battle for survival.

There is acute underfunding of the education service: teachers are being made redundant on purely financial grounds. There is a growth in aggressive behaviour and assault. At the same time schools and teachers have come under an unprecedented level of scrutiny: league tables, OFSTED inspection, teacher appraisal, Local Management of Schools and parental choice of school.

In spite of these pressures, the vast majority of teachers try very hard to provide opportunities for a youngster behaving in an inappropriate manner to change his or her behaviour. Meetings with parents, referrals to educational psychologists, systems logging a child's behaviour (often for years), reward systems and agreed contracts of behaviour are all commonly used.

The decision to exclude is the end of a very long road. It allows the majority of pupils who want to work to do so without distraction. It liberates the teacher from the disproportionate amount of time attached to dealing with the disruptive pupil and the attendant paperwork. It means that teachers and pupils are freed from the threat of assault. Many teachers will have applauded the stance taken by NAS/UWT members at Glaisdale.

Enthusiasts for the retention of disruptive pupils in schools tend to be enthusiastic at a distance from the classroom. Society needs to value its teachers, and support them in their efforts to provide the best education for all children. The aggression of a minority should not be allowed to jeopardize that task.

Thatcher not welcome

● Brunel University Labour Students has launched a campaign against the award of an honorary degree to Margaret Thatcher by the University. Union president Steven Lewis has failed to act.

Alistair Dorans, chair of Brunel Labour Students, said "students are very unhappy with this award. Opposition is not confined to the left." Simon Hewitt, secretary, added "The behaviour of Steven Lewis has been appalling. He has failed to follow the clear mandate of the Student Representative Council."

Further information from: Brunel Labour Students, Students Union, Cleveland Road, Uxbridge, UB8 3PH Tel: 01895 239125/Fax: 01895 810477 Email: bb95ssh@brunel.ac.uk.

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The price of disability

Kate Adams and Eddie Barns of Incapacity Action review the first year of the Incapacity Benefit.



Demonstrators on the 24th April picket in Whitehall.

ON 23RD April over 60 disabled people assembled outside Richmond House, the Department of Health HQ in Whitehall, to demonstrate against the Incapacity For Work Act, on the first and we hope last anniversary of its implementation. The event was organised by Incapacity Action, the national campaign to repeal the Act.

Incapacity Benefit (which replaced Invalidity Benefit) and the qualifying All Work Test are now one year old. The DSS's own figures show that 8,500 people have lost their benefit. Over 50,000 are receiving minimum levels of income support and in some cases no income at all. Only 289 have found any work. Implementation costs have been £55 million against a mere saving of £5 million. This shows that even in accordance with the Government's stated goal of saving on social security spending, the legislation isn't working. Meanwhile disabled people pay the price, forced into destitution.

Demonstrators came from as far as the north of England and south Wales, from numerous organisations including pensioners' groups, people with learning difficulties and survivors of the mental health system. There was one arrest when a protester hurled blood-red paint at Richmond House, symbolising the violence perpetrated against disabled claimants by the new benefit laws.

MPs Diane Abbott and Daffyd Wigley of Plaid Cymru met the demonstrators and promised to ask Parliamentary questions and voice the issue with the press. Frank Dobson, Labour front bench spokesperson for Environment, happened to be passing. He hurried away when asked to talk with the demonstrators, clearly terrified he would be called upon to show support.

Incapacity Action's recent meeting with Shadow spokesperson for Social Security Chris Smith was disappointing. He advised us that the Labour Party, if elected, would have to look to the private sector for extra resources for disabled people. We continue to demand that if Labour takes office, the repeal of the Incapacity For Work Act must be a priority.

Anti-abortion bigots step up activity

Leonora Lloyd reports on recent developments in the abortion debate.

ANTI-ABORTIONISTS have announced a new national campaign. They claim that they will be putting one of their gory leaflets into every household in the country. In some areas, this is starting to happen. But if their past campaigns are anything to go by, a few areas where they have lots of supporters will be leafleted while the rest of the country is left alone. The announcement is more of a publicity stunt than a reality.

As well as the leafleting campaign, anti-abortionists have been seeking to make gains in the debate around whether or not the foetus feels pain. Unfortunately for them, current research shows that during the period when the vast majority of abortions are done - up to 12/13 weeks - the nervous system is not developed to the point where pain can be felt. Those doing the research - as part of the ongoing development of prenatal surgery - have emphasised that they do not want to restrict women's right to abortion and it is a fact that any potential for pain can be reduced by using a method of termination which ensures that the foetus is quickly killed at the start of the abortion.

An important aim of the pro-choice movement - to ensure that the public supports a woman's right to choose whether or not to terminate a pregnancy - has long been secured. Anti-abortion campaigns usually increase pro-choice support by putting people off by their extremist views while keeping the issue in the public eye.

Even in the United States, home to the most strident and violent anti-abortion movement anywhere in the world, the Republicans are still split and seeking to find a formula which satisfies fundamentalist anti-abortionists whilst mollifying a basically pro-choice electorate.

The National Abortion Campaign (NAC) needs to convince Labour Party activists of the need to maintain and implement Party policy on abortion. As policy has been firmed up by successive conferences, the front bench has retreated. Since the death of Jo Richardson no one on the front bench has been strongly associated with the pro-choice movement. Their position is that abortion is a matter purely for MPs' conscience.

It is important that pro-choice supporters join NAC, advance its support in the unions and the Labour Party. The anti-abortionists have not gone away. They always become more active around election time. NAC must start mining the rich seams of support built in past years within the labour movement.

● To affiliate to NAC: Tel 0171-923 4976/ Fax 0171-923 4979.

A manifesto for real life

Labour Party members are gearing up for a major discussion on the contents of our election manifesto. But outside our ranks, what do people on the ground hope for from a change of government? *LLB* asked campaigning organisations for their thoughts.

An end to pensioners' poverty

1. An immediate substantial increase in the state pension, with the aim of eventually making the pension equal to one-third of average male earnings. The bulk of the increased resources to pay for this should come from increases in employers' contributions to National Insurance, which is abnormally low compared to the rest of Europe.

2. The abandonment of means-testing of community and long-term care which should be provided free at the time of use according to NHS principles. The resources to pay for this should primarily come from an increase of taxes on high incomes, an increased inheritance tax, and increased corporation tax, currently the lowest in the industrialised world.

3. A guarantee that the London Travel Pass should be continued as at present to cover bus, underground and rail, with similar facilities in other parts of the country.

- Hugh Lowe, Acton Pensioners' Group

A new deal for private tenants

Much privately rented housing can be characterised by high rent levels, poor property conditions and few rights for tenants.

Although private landlords receive billions of pounds of public subsidy through Housing Benefit payments, it is not the experience of private tenants that this money has gone into improving standards of accommodation. Housing policy should therefore be underpinned by a financing system which results in subsidies going into 'bricks and mortar' and not into people's pockets.

Some form of rent control needs to be introduced in order to prevent profiteering on the part of unscrupulous landlords and reduce overall expenditure on Housing Benefit.

Rent Officers should be able to set market rents which are legally binding on both landlord and tenant and which are 'affordable' - defined by the Labour Housing Group as being not more than 25% of average net income.

The simplest way of improving property conditions and management standards would be to introduce a national mandatory licensing scheme which would ensure basic minimum standards. This would reward good landlords, and encourage professional management and long term investment.

The Labour Party is committed to such a scheme for multi-occupied houses but there seems no reason why, in this age of Citizens' Charters, it could not be extended to the whole of the private sector.

Finally, tenants need the stability of long term security of tenure. Current 'shorthold' tenancies work directly against the development of stable communities with tenants being unwilling to invest any commitment to an area if there is a likelihood of them having to move on in six months time. Tenancies should be for a minimum of a year and they should be automatically renewed for a similar period unless the landlord commences proceedings.

- David Godfrey, Secretary of the Association of Tenancy Relations Officers.



Rights and resources for disabled people

What we would like from an incoming Labour Government:

- Adequate funding provided to local authorities so that disabled people are no longer forced to pay charges for essential community care services like home helps, personal care, bathing, dressing, etc.
- Extensions to existing disability benefits to cover additional costs incurred by disabled people, including extra heating or hot water, special diets, extra laundry, communication support.
- The introduction of a partial capacity benefit to help disabled people who are able to work but whose earnings capacity is reduced. The current system divides disabled people rigidly into those who can't work at all and those who have to take any job available.
- Legislation which would ensure full civil rights for disabled people - unlike the inadequate Disability Discrimination Act passed by the current Government.

- Disability Alliance

Action for sustainability and justice

- A £1 billion annual programme of public investment in local, community and voluntary enterprises, to create work and meet social needs
- A bill of rights establishing individual rights of citizenship
- An 'ecological' restructuring of the tax system through a phased replacement of employers' National Insurance contributions by taxes on pollution
- A programme for reducing CO2 emissions by 20% over ten years
- An integrated strategy to promote nutritious food
- International aid to reach 0.7% of national income within ten years
- 100,000 affordable homes in the social housing sector within ten years
- An integrated transport programme to reduce road traffic by 10% by 2010
- An enforceable code of conduct on international arms transfers
- Regulation of international trade to safeguard environmental and social standards

- Real World, a broad coalition of over 30 voluntary and campaigning organisations, including Friends of the Earth, Oxfam, Charter 88, Christian Aid and Transport 2000.

Affordable homes

Shelter believes Labour's top priority should be the repeal of the allocations and homelessness provisions as drafted in the Housing Bill 1996 and the Asylum and Immigration Bill 1996.

These provisions not only weaken the duty towards homeless households by providing temporary accommodation only, but also exclude from access to housing (both via the waiting list and as homeless) persons from abroad, including the majority of asylum seekers and people who fail a habitual residence test.

The main issue is the lack of supply of decent affordable homes. An incoming Labour Government should set a realistic target to boost the provision of affordable homes over a period of at least ten years. Shelter believes that there is currently a shortfall of at least 100,000 affordable homes to rent every year.

Finally, an incoming Labour Government needs to review the benefits system, and in doing so, tackle the problem of the poverty trap, of 16-17 year olds who are not entitled to benefits, of homelessness caused by benefits cuts and of owner occupiers who are struggling to keep their homes.

- Shelter

A green government

The Labour Party should extend social ownership in the economy, not just renewed state ownership of certain industries but also encouragement of employee self-management and co-operatives. A Labour Government should take immediate and effective action to combat all types of pollution, whether atmospheric from fumes, food pollution from additives or pollution from oil and radiation.

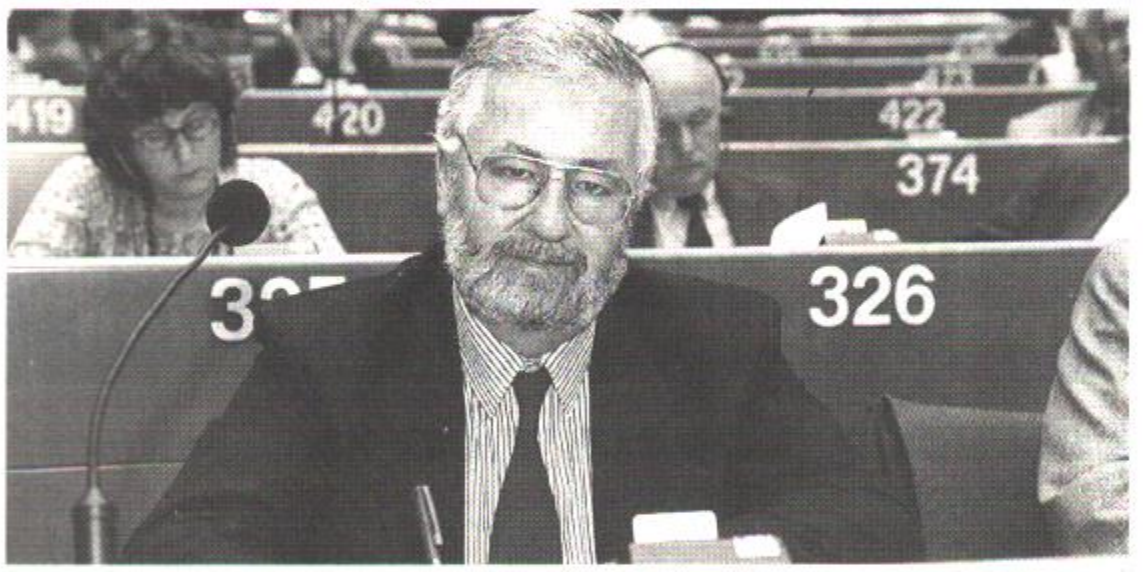
- Graham Taylor, Red-Green Network

New Labour double standards

Hugh Kerr MEP attacks the NEC decision to change the selection rules to favour ex-Tory Alan Howarth MP.

THE LABOUR NEC excelled itself in hypocrisy at the last NEC when it voted to relax the rule requiring PPC candidates to be members for at least two years. It was specially relaxed only for Alan Howarth, the Tory MP who defected to Labour just before last year's Tory Party Conference (no doubt orchestrated by Mandelson and Campbell).

The decision was strongly supported by the ex-left winger Clare Short after acting as the witch-finder general last October against Liz Davies whose crime was to be a socialist and therefore clearly unsuitable for our new centre party! But comrade Short's conscience was deeply moved by "the bravery of Alan Howarth to leave the Tory Party and join Labour". Some might find these contrasts a little disturbing. Even more disturbing is the story that Alan Howarth has been promised a safe Labour seat. Since no CLP in its right mind would select an ex-Tory who spent fifteen years supporting and being a member of the Tory Government, the NEC will impose him on a constituency. The favourite candidate is Wentworth CLP in Yorkshire where the selection process has been deliberately delayed until the autumn when it will be deemed to be too near the election and the NEC can then impose him.



Hugh Kerr, MEP.

Wentworth CLP is livid at this proposal but under the new centralist Labour Party this won't cut any ice.

The story is that Howarth was offered this as part of a deal to come over to New Labour by Mandelson and Campbell. However the rule was relaxed only for Howarth. In Gravesham, where Chris Pond was recently selected, a local Party member who missed the beginning of the selection process by three days was denied the right to stand and is now threatening to stand as an independent. In one of my constituencies in Broxbourne in Hertfordshire, I have members just short of the two year rule who have been denied the right to stand.

So the message is in the New Centralist Centre Party (New Labour): there is one law for ex-Tories like Alan Howarth and another for socialists like Liz Davies. Mind you, I hear that Alan Howarth has been making some distinctly left wing noises on the Social Security Select Committee. Maybe by the time his selection comes up he will be judged too left wing!

Socialism on summer Sundays!

There is much discussion inside and outside the Labour Party on the future of socialism.

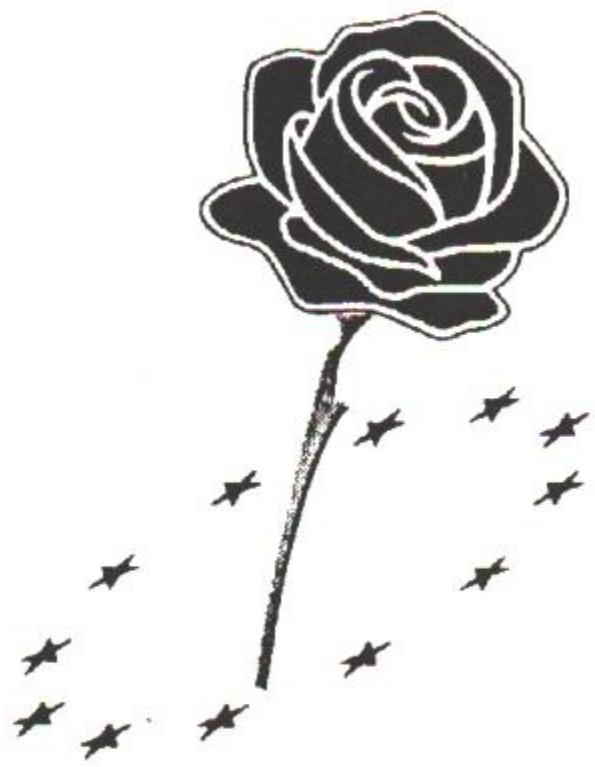
- Has it been buried by the rise of New Labour?
- Can we build socialism in one country?
- What are the prospects for socialism on a European level?
- What economic strategy can solve the crisis of capitalism in Europe?

These are some of the questions we will be addressing in a series of meetings in June, organised by Hugh Kerr, Labour MEP for Essex West & Hertfordshire East and held at his office at the Latton Bush Centre, Southern Way, Harlow.

2nd June 2-4 pm: 'The End of the Nation State? - Socialism in Europe' with John Palmer, European editor of *The Guardian*.

23rd June 2.30-5 pm: 'Prospects for the left in Britain' - with Hilary Wainwright, *Red Pepper*.

30th June 2.30-5 pm: 'A socialist economic strategy for Europe' - with Ken Coates MEP.



Group of the Party of European Socialists

Alternatives to Maastricht

Roger Berry, Ken Livingstone, Anni Marjoram and Mark Seddon have written to every Constituency Labour Party and affiliated trade union urging support for a statement opposing the Maastricht Treaty's monetarist framework for European Union.

The letter urges CLPs and unions to submit resolutions on this subject to this year's annual Party Conference (see model resolution).

The letter states: "The labour movement cannot accept the artificial Hobson's choice between, on the one hand, Maastricht's monetarist framework and, on the other, the little Englandism of the Tory right."

Mark Seddon commented, "Public opinion in Britain and the rest of Europe is rapidly moving against monetary union as more and more people begin to understand its implications for jobs and welfare."

● The Alternatives to Maastricht Conference will be held on Saturday, 6th July, 12:30-4:30pm at Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1. For more information contact Ken Livingstone MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

Labour Party Conference resolution

European Monetary Union

Conference notes that the plan for European Monetary Union under the terms of the Maastricht Treaty will not bring together the people of Europe, but will, on the contrary:

a) worsen the European Union's already unacceptable levels of unemployment; b) continue the pressure on governments to undermine welfare provision to meet Maastricht's convergence criteria imposed through sanctions including a system of fines;

c) transfer key areas of economic decision-making from elected parliaments to unelected central banks within each member state and, at the level of the European Union, to the European Central Bank; d) deepen the European Union's international system of discrimination against migrants and asylum seekers.

Conference further notes that the events in France at the end of 1995, as well as the prior inability of member states to maintain unrealistic exchange rates against the German D-mark in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism, show that the peoples of Europe will not accept a framework for European integration which puts price stability before economic growth, employment and decent levels of welfare provision.

Conference therefore believes that the Maastricht Treaty's terms and timetable for European Monetary Union must be rejected in favour of alternative policies which put economic growth, full employment, civilised levels of welfare provision and real economic convergence in terms of investment and productivity and relations of solidarity with the peoples of the developing world, at the centre of national and European economic policy.

Europe isn't working

Twenty million people in Europe are out of work. A single currency, introduced today, would require a £12,000 million cut in jobs and services in Britain. A Labour Chancellor would have to make these cuts just to comply with the Maastricht Treaty and the 'terms' for a single currency.

This is equivalent to the budgets for over half of all NHS trusts, all secondary schools and two thirds of primaries, or the entire cost of fire service and all law and order provision in Britain.

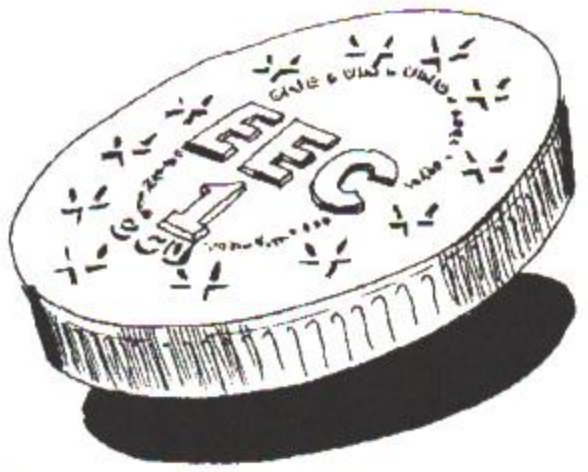
It would also cost Britain huge job losses.

No less damaging would be the loss of democratic rights. Unelected bankers will rule Europe's economies without any public right to remove them, reverse their policies or even 'influence' their decisions.

Stuck with mass unemployment and deflationary economics, the 'Euro' would be the breaking of Europe, not its binding. This is why we want Labour to say 'No' to a single currency.

What we need instead is a "People's Europe" based on full employment, a safe and sustainable environment and democratic control of its institutions.

● If you want to back this campaign, sponsored so far by more than 50 Labour MPs, send donations and support to: "A People's Europe" c/o Alan Simpson MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.



In place of Maastricht

Chris Williams, Sheffield Central CLP, believes the Alternatives to Maastricht Campaign is misconceived.

THE MAASTRICHT Treaty represents a pan-European strategy for cutting the welfare state and boosting the competitiveness of Europe in the global economy. Clearly its effects must be resisted. But the campaign launched by Roger Berry MP, Ken Livingstone MP, Anni Marjoram (Labour Women's Action Committee) and *Tribune* Editor Mark Seddon risks mistaking the symptom for the cause. The labour movement would do better to see the 'convergence criteria' as just one manifestation of capital's worldwide counter-attack.

If we oppose Maastricht as such, our voices will be drowned by those of the nationalist Tory right.

We should be opposing deflation, attacks on public services and the undemocratic control of the economy by central banks. Philip Snowden didn't need Maastricht to attack workers, neither did Denis Healey. Maastricht is an excuse for what the bosses were doing anyway: cutting workers' social gains to bolster their profits. When French workers struck last year, they did not chant against the Treaty, but against the Juppe Plan.

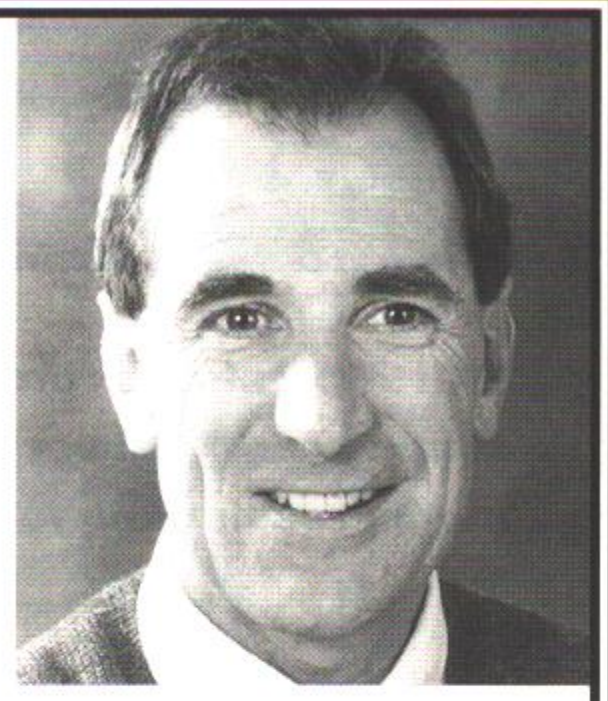
Maastricht is not something that a Labour Government would have to implement. There is no European super-state which is able arbitrarily to impose its will on the nations of Europe. The individual national governments in Europe have chosen to impose the logic of Maastricht. Where there has been large-scale resistance to it, as in France last year, they have been forced to amend their plans.

I believe the real agenda for the Alternative to Maastricht campaign is for the UK to leave Europe - which makes as much sense as wanting Britain to leave the planet. To oppose the EU just because it is capitalist does not make sense - the British state is capitalist but we don't call for South Yorkshire to leave the UK.

We should be fighting for the democratisation of the EU, for workers' rights across the EU and international links. Maastricht cannot be stopped on a national basis - it is an international treaty and we need a European labour movement to fight for alternatives to Maastricht across the EU.

Ready for the knacker's yard?

by Alan Simpson, MP.



DO YOU want to know what state the Tories are in at the moment? Try this for a description.

One day a consortium of race horse owners realised that their star horse was past it. She had bred a number of successors and they decided to buy into a young colt which showed promise. The colt went out and won its first race in unexpected style. The owners sank their faith (and wealth) in turning him into a thoroughbred.

But after this first flourish everything was downhill. No amount of training could put him back on a winning streak. He simply sank further and further down the field. Finally, in exasperation, the owners gave him an ultimatum: "Either win this race or you're out on a milkround!"

The horse, jockey and backroom team went into a desperate training regime. By the day of the race he was back in peak condition and raring to go. There was a new buzz about the stables and backers began surreptitiously putting money on the long-odds outsider.

It was a terrific race. The colt got off to a great start. But half way he began to flag. By three quarters he was the back marker, a long way behind the rest. His jockey was as desperate as his backers were distraught. In one last ditch effort the jockey rose from the saddle and whipped furiously at the horse's flank.

No burst of speed followed. Instead the horse turned its head to look up at the jockey and said, with a forlorn look on its face, "Ease up, fella, I'm up early in the morning."

I hope that Major is an early riser, for his party seems able only to lurch from cock-up to corruption. Westminster merely adds 32 million more reasons for recognising that the Tories are a party of shysters.

The transition from a 'job for life' culture to a 'job for today' one has only added personal insecurity to a wider sense of misgiving. The gang culture has always been around in one form or another, but the culture of the gun hasn't. Today, a sense of worthlessness walks with increasing numbers as they trudge through the wreckage of Thatcher's economic revolution.

Because of that, Tony Blair is absolutely right to say that Labour must occupy the moral high ground. The challenge, however, is to do so on terms which are radically different from the Tories. Better people running with the same economic and social presumptions is not the moral high ground. It may be slick. It may be successful. But it is no more sustainable than what the electorate will be voting to get rid of.

There is a longing in the land for something better: a reclamation of justice, fairness ... and a recommitment to equality, stability and sustainability. But none are compatible with a market culture, driven by the assumptions of competition and globalisation. The moral high ground is where it has always been: in a willingness to stand up against the power of capital, to challenge the exploitation of people and the planet.

Labour can still occupy their ground, but not by cutting a deal with the free market. And not by cutting the welfare state. The urgent need is to define a programme which will deliver jobs. It isn't hard to do. You could begin with housing and the problems faced by 2.5 million households living in cold, pitifully insulated homes. Huge numbers of people could be employed on energy efficiency programmes while longer term building and improvement programmes were pulled through the pipeline. The same beginnings could be made on the backlog of disrepair in school buildings and the restoration of NHS and local authority budgets on the basis of a genuine commitment to community care.

In engineering terms the most obvious programmes relate to the renewal of investment in public transport infrastructures (both road and rail) along with the new vehicles to use them. And anyone who could not devise a huge jobs programme in the water industry doesn't live in the same leak-ridden, drought-threatened Britain that the rest of us do.

I have set out before where the finances for this can come from. But the essential source is clear. Britain is not a poor country. It is simply that the ownership of capital has become massively concentrated and entirely unaccountable. Even the £730 billion in our own pension and insurance funds is removed from any effective democratic control by those whose wages go into the funds.

The real challenge is to define a practical programme to inspire and a political determination to deliver. If we did that, Major would be left delivering only the milk. ❑

LabourNet launched

LabourNet is a new internet service provider that is being launched in Britain. Part of the global communications network, the Association of Progressive Communications, and linked with LaborNet in the USA, LabourNet is going to provide a great boost for labour movement communications both nationally and internationally.

LabourNet has all the services that a commercial internet provider has, e-mail, web access etc, plus a large range of labour movement specific newsgroups.

Since LLB has been hosted on LabourNet it has been read by hundreds of people around the world. LabourNet has made a great difference to the international solidarity that the Liverpool Dockers have won. Don't sign up with a commercial internet service provider, sign up with LabourNet!

● *Contact Paul Thomas at LabourNet c/o GreenNet, 0171-713 1941. Email: paulthomas@gn.apc.org.*

Labour Conference 1996

Will McMahon from the Socialist Campaign Group (Supporters' Network) gives an overview of the SCGN's model resolutions for this year's Conference.

THE SENSE of deep unease among Labour Party members over the political direction of the Party leadership is growing. Hugh MacPherson summed up the reason for it in a recent *Tribune* article: "The usual early leaks of Labour's plans for the young include a tax on graduates, redistributing money from Tory youth training schemes to a Labour one, and transferring more from the enterprise councils. This is the language of Margaret Thatcher." Is there any policy statement from the leadership that is immune from such criticism?

It is now self-evident, if it were not before, that Blair and friends intend to build on the structure they will inherit from the Conservatives rather than to dismantle and replace it.

The problem with this scheme is that it runs counter to the deep seated attachment there exists in the Labour Party for the gains of 1945 and all that. Activists who regularly attend ward and GC meetings across the country knows that this is the case.

Yet few are prepared to carry out a wide-ranging campaign against Blair in the run up to the election. Aware of this, Blair has launched the Road to the Manifesto in an attempt to create a fake majority for the essentially liberal programme that he intends to implement if he wins the election.

To defeat such a strategy the left has to create its own majorities. It is with this in mind that the Socialist Campaign Group at its last meeting decided to call for support for the six model resolutions outlined here.

Four of the resolutions, pensions, health, education and trade union laws and the minimum wage, are hardly revolutionary in content yet they would require a massive reorientation of the British economy for them to be implemented. At the same time there is no doubt that the majority of Party members would support such a minimum programme.

The Asylum and Immigration model resolution speaks for itself but no one should imagine that Jack Straw will speak for it from the platform.

Again it has been shaped to maximise the vote whilst retaining the core principle that it should be opposed practically now and repealed lock stock and barrel once Labour is in government.

With such commitments in place following the last Conference before the election the left would be in a much stronger position to express the majority position it holds in the Party and present a counterweight to the policy drift to the right in the Party - whatever the result of the General Election.

Education

The principle of well funded, free and equal comprehensive education is fundamental to socialism. Under the Tory Government competition, division and privilege have been extended to all sectors of education. Decisive policies are required from the next Labour Government to undo this damage.

1. Schools and colleges should be brought within the framework of LEAs with an end to Grant Maintained Status and City Technical Colleges. The tax privileges of private education should be abolished.

2. All children should have the right to the best possible education, regardless of finance, ability, or social class. All selection procedures should be abolished.

3. A substantial increase in education funding. All class sizes in schools should be brought down below 30. All children should have the right to nursery education. The education benefits of new technology should be available to all.

4. Funding should be allocated, via democratically accountable LEAs, to cater for all needs, particularly in areas of social deprivation, and to address the inequalities between primary and secondary education.

5. Equality should prevail at all levels of education.

The increasing financial difficulties should be addressed by the abolition of student loans and the restoration of a comprehensive framework of student grants.

Rights at work

This Conference calls on the next Labour Government to restore to working class people the civil and trade union rights taken away by the Tories since 1979. Building on a clear manifesto commitment to the re-introduction of free trade unions and the removal of the legal shackles on our movement, the Party will seek to mobilise the majority support that exists for trade unions. This will involve the next Labour Government making a fresh start in the field of employment law, repealing the anti-trade union laws and introducing a set of positive individual and collective legal rights for trade unionists. Legislative protection for workers should include the following:

1. A statutory minimum wage set at half male median earnings.

2. The right to belong to a trade union and to recruit fellow workers into unions and have the union recognised by the employer for the purposes of collective bargaining.

3. The right to strike and take industrial action without fear of dismissal and victimisation, including the right to take action in support of other groups of workers.

4. The right of union members to determine their own rule books in accordance with the views of the majority.

In order to build trust and support for this programme it is vital that the Party as a whole pledges its full support to all workers in engaged in disputes with employers.

Immigration and Asylum Bill

Conference notes that the Immigration and Asylum Bill, in conjunction with changes in social security provisions for asylum seekers, represents a wide-ranging attack on all black people in Britain.

The main components of the legislation are:

a) Denying asylum seekers welfare benefits;

b) Denying asylum automatically to applicants from certain countries, chosen arbitrarily by the Home Secretary;

c) Requiring the immigration status of service users, job applicants and employees to be checked.

Conference welcomes the opposition expressed by the Party to these proposals and calls on the NEC to:

i) give full support to campaigns and demonstration with trade unions and anti-racist organisations against the legislation and in support of its victims.

ii) affiliate the Labour Party to the Campaign against the Immigration and Asylum Bill.

(iii) encourage Labour councils to frustrate the racist ramifications of this legislation and its regulations.

Conference further commits a future Labour Government to the repeal of this legislation and regulations in their entirety.

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model resolutions

Health

Conference notes the problems created for an incoming Labour Government by the combined Tory policies of closing NHS beds and the wholesale privatisation of care of the elderly.

Whilst welcoming the commitment of the Labour front bench to "renationalising the NHS" and ending the "creeping privatisation" of the service, Conference recognises that this can only be achieved through the adoption of an explicit programme of policies to reverse the decline, dismantle the Tory market system, and rid the NHS of parasitic, profiteering private contractors.

These policies should include:

1. An immediate £9 billion cash injection to halt further closures of acute, psychiatric and elderly care beds, and to resource the development of additional beds and community based services where necessary.

2. Scrapping the wasteful and bureaucratic internal market system, abolishing GP fundholding and bringing NHS trusts back under direct NHS control.

3. Establishing a framework for democratic control of health care services based on direct accountability to health service users and providers at both local and regional level.

4. An end to low pay within the NHS through the abolition of competitive tendering, a return of privatised services to direct labour, a return to national pay bargaining and the aim of a minimum earnings guarantee throughout the NHS set at two thirds of median male earnings.

5. Abolition of pay beds within the NHS and the phased integration of private hospitals into the NHS. Continuing care services to be brought back under NHS control in co-operation with local authority social services and the voluntary sector on a strict "not for profit" basis.

6. Repeal of the Community Care reforms and the means tested system which is robbing tens of thousands of pensioners of their homes and savings.

7. Abolition of all prescription, dental and optical charges.

8. Public ownership of the drugs and pharmaceutical industries.



Rail

Conference believes that the failure of Labour spokespeople to make a clear commitment to renationalise the whole of the railways is a big set back, not just for rail workers but also to all rail users.

A policy of some form of "public control" allied to vague commitments to reintegration of some parts of the railway sometime in the next century are no substitute for previous policy commitments of a "publicly owned, publicly accountable railway".

Conference believes that an integrated transport policy is vital for our future and that such a policy requires the urgent taking back into public hands of the whole of the rail industry.

Conference therefore calls for a public commitment that the whole of the railways will be renationalised within the life of the next Labour Government, as the only way to safeguard the interests of rail users.

Pensions

This Conference condemns the Tory Government for breaking the linkage of the state pension to average earnings in 1980 and recognises that this has cost every pensioner over £90 per week in lost income.

Conference believes that the basic state pension is a vital source of income for most pensioners and calls upon an incoming Labour Government to immediately restore the link with earnings and ensure that the state pension becomes one third of average earnings in line with the demands of the National Pensioners Convention.

Conference further believes that security in old age is best provided by state pensions and not by subsidising the private pensions industry.

Campaign for Labour Party Democracy model resolution

Conference sovereignty

This Conference reaffirms that in line with Clause V of the Party constitution it is "Party conference which shall decide what specific proposals of legislative, financial and administrative reform shall be included in the Party programme". Conference is concerned that its role as supreme policy-making body is being eroded and the balance of power tipped towards the Parliamentary leadership. It regrets the tendency in recent years to downgrade Conference into an event geared less to policy-making than to media presentation.

Several factors diminish democratic debate, such as NEC proposals for rule changes arriving too late for delegates to be mandated and the practice of unamendable NEC policy statements taking precedence over resolutions which Conference carried. Also in 1995 the NEC acquired "the power to require constituency parties to hold ballots of individual members on such matters as they [the NEC] deem to be appropriate..." This provision is now being used to seek 'endorsement' of an unamendable manifesto, acceptance of which will be turned into a virtual vote of confidence, making members feel that its rejection would damage Labour's electorial prospects.

Conference therefore instructs the NEC to ensure that in future:

(a) NEC proposed rule changes and statements, other than emergency ones, are included in, or circulated with, the preliminary resolutions booklet.

(b) NEC statements will be subject to amendment. Alternatively CLPs and affiliated organisations should have the option to submit resolutions in relation to these statements instead of submitting their usual amendment.

Such resolutions, if carried, shall take precedence over NEC statements, and the NEC to reword its statements accordingly;

(c) delegates' obligation to vote as expected by their own organisation is not called into question by national or regional party officials.

Conference further instructs the Conference Arrangements Committee to ensure that:

(1) at least 75% of Conference time is reserved for contributions from delegates representing CLPs and affiliated organisations;

(2) the compositing of resolutions shall be determined by delegates of the organisation concerned, not prejudiced by pre-circulated Head Office drafts; similarly, organisations taking part in postal compositing shall not be asked to adopt a Walworth Road draft which drops the central demand of their resolution;

(3) composite resolutions on the same subject shall be taken separately and not lumped together with completely different subjects in omnibus Conference debates.

Conference believes that if these proposals were adopted this would halt the drift towards a party in which the role of the rank and file is reduced merely to being the PLP's workforce. Above all it would ensure that the sovereignty of Conference is upheld.

Self determination for

Belfast City Councillor Alex Maskey, a member of Sinn Fein's National Executive spoke recently at Queen's University, Belfast to visiting British undergraduates. Here is an edited version of what he said.

"MY TRADITION is working class republican: a constantly evolving ideology whose goal is a 32 county socialist country.

Sinn Fein (SF) and today's IRA evolved from the 1916 independence struggles, and particularly the tradition of James Connolly. The northern statelet has never had a decade free from armed resistance, or a convulsion of some sort. Resistance since 1921 has alternated between militant republicanism and constitutional nationalism.

The last phase of resistance began in 1969 when the civil rights movement was halted by the full-scale attack of the unionist community and the RUC. The civil rights movement was perceived by unionists in two ways: firstly as a republican inspired attack on the Northern Ireland state and secondly as a direct threat to their rights.

Successive campaigns to outlaw discrimination in employment have all been opposed by the unionist parties. To unionist politicians fair jobs opportunities for everybody mean less jobs for their constituency. When the unionists lost control of housing they saw a house awarded to nationalists as one less for unionists. This is unfortunate. Working class unionists have also suffered discrimination. They have had marginal privileges in relation to nationalists, but nothing like those obtained by middle and upper-class unionists.

When the civil rights movement was battoned off the streets there was certainly no plan to move from civil to armed struggle. But we had all moved beyond the demands of the civil rights movement. We now say that British tenure in Ireland is over. The SDLP acknowledges this, demanding an Irish dimension in the administration of the Northern Ireland state.

Where are we now? Both the British and republicans came to the realisation that neither could defeat the other. Recognising the stalemate in the mid-eighties SF began to develop a peace strategy. In 1987 we published *Towards a Lasting Peace*. We argued that London and Dublin should lead a peace process which should strive for a settlement by all inclusive negotiations. This strategy involved us in discussions with the British Government which culminated in the peace process.

Where all party talks will take us is a huge debate in the republican movement. It is a huge risk. You can say that all you have to do is not to lose. Our attitude is that not losing is not enough.

Nothing can be achieved unless representatives from all sections of our society sit around the conference table.

The period following the IRA ceasefire was characterised by the creation of one obstacle after another from the British Government. Dick Spring said that the British are up to their old colonialist tricks of attempting to divide the forces of Irish nationalism.

The replacement of Albert Reynolds by the pro-unionist John Bruton has helped Britain weaken what we would call the Irish national consensus - the cornerstone of an unarmed political struggle. Without that Irish national consensus the age old Irish conflict cannot be resolved peacefully.

The Irish people cannot achieve peace on their own. The British Government holds the reins of power in the North and has a responsibility to bring all elements, including Dublin, around the table. Today it is the British Government and unionist parties which are refusing to participate in any meaningful way in a peace process.

The May elections for a "peace forum" create a unionist veto on what should be all party talks on 10th June.

We recognise that unionism is not a single block, and conflicting views exist. SF has been talking to unionists at all levels over the last few years. There are those who call themselves British, others who call themselves Northern Irish, those who say they fear going into a united Ireland. There are working class unionists who say that they have suffered as much over the years in terms of quality of life and political power. That may be true. If unionism has to go to the table there will certainly be a reorientation, and we like to hope, a normalisation of politics. The border and constitutional issues here have poisoned political life. The trade union movement is rife with sectarianism and has always been pro-unionist.

However the struggle for peace is not without risks for the republican movement. We are accused of selling out, while John Hume has been vilified for working with republicans. Some in our own movement have been less than welcoming to the current strategy. No problem, as long as those views are heard and fully expressed. My reply to those in our movement who are critical of our strategy is to say: "Well find another one ... give me a better one". I have shared platforms with Bernadette (McAlisky) to debate the issue. I would prefer not to work with people like John Bruton. I would prefer to have a huge anti-imperialist uprising but I'm not prepared to wait. I'm trying to live with the reality of today, seeking to progress the politics of Irish nationalism and republicanism towards the goal of an independent Ireland. I have a political agenda that I want to see implemented but I recognise it can't be until we have a independent Ireland. ❑

Sinn Fein speaks

A week of public meetings with Sinn Fein councillors will highlight the obstruction by the British Government to the process of seeking a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Timed to take place as 'all party talks' are due to begin, the meetings are organised by *The Irish Campaigns Network*. All start at 7.30pm:

Monday 10th June: Halkevi Centre 91-100 Stoke Newington Road, London N16. Kurdish, South African and Palestinian speakers invited.

Wednesday 12th June: London Irish Centre, 52 Camden Square, London NW1. Birmingham 6, prisoners campaign speakers invited.

Thursday 13th June: Bristol, Easton Community Centre, Kilburn St.

Friday 14th June: South London meeting and social, Battersea Arts Centre.

● For further information: contact Irish Campaigns Network PO Box 10132, SW2 2Z8; Tel: 0171-609 1743.

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the Irish people

An alternative Irishman?

LLB interviewed David Ervine, a self-professed socialist and member of the Popular Unionist Party. Whilst the _LLB_ editorial board in no way supports the standpoint of an organisation which is linked to the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force, we include these views as a contribution to developing a greater understanding of some of the issues raised in the search for a settlement to the conflict.

Q: How do you react to the lack of political legitimacy of the Northern Ireland state?

A: First, sectarianism beset us long before 1921. It was not the invention of the working class but was beneficial to a ruling elite. You create a pool of Catholic unemployed which ensures the prods will behave themselves (or we'll give the taigs your jobs). The bubble was always going to burst. Endemic discrimination, the patronisation of prods and the subjugation of taigs was essentially how our society worked. It's immoral, it's wrong and it was done in my name.

Q: Where are you at now?

A: In a divided society where there is no rapprochement, where there is no capacity to understand. We live 50 yards apart from each other. If our trajectory is good we can hit each other, if we shout loudly enough we can hear each other but essentially we do not know each other. We are born in different hospitals, go to separate schools, sign on at different unemployment exchanges and are buried in different graveyards.

Division will cease when you create the commonality that allows people to accept what they have in common, to understand that which is held deeply by some people, their aspiration, their identity.

My own party, the PUP, was formed in 1976 out of the Volunteer Political Party which was indeed the political wing of the Ulster Volunteer Force. It found itself running too fast, being accused of being communist and socialist and went into demise. It was recognised before I joined the PUP that it was futile to be associated with paramilitaries and expect the unionist community to vote for you - they will not. I hope many people vote for us because unlike many other unionist parties the PUP believes that change is our friend rather than our enemy.

I feel that the working class, the cannon-



fodder in any society, not just in Northern Ireland, the alienated, the abused, the foot-soldiers, the people of the graveyards and the prisons must begin to recognise that which is common to all of us: the conditions of life, the day to day issues.

You have a luxury, it may not please you that it is New Labour or the Tory Government, but you do have politics of left, right and centre. We don't. And we need to create that plurality in our society to ensure there is a realignment in our society. Then the green and orange Tories will vote together and the working class of both communities will vote together - with that begins the demise of sectarianism that allows us to move into a modern, wholesome society.

The politics of exclusion do not work as the last 25 years show. Mechanisms have to be found to ensure the politics of maximum inclusion, which includes Sinn Fein, it includes all, because historical perspective suggests that unless we have that inclusive politics, it will not work.

We are at a crossroads, where we decide if we want war or peace. Recognising war is futile will surely help us decide on a road to peace.

The unionist community, many of whom have been killed in this war has a right to ask if the leopard has changed its spots. But similarly the nationalist community has a right to turn to people like me and say, "Well, let's see if you're prepared to do what democracy is supposed to do and defend the minority interest."

My community is a diverse community and not the bowler-hatted, orange-shirted fascisti. In that diversity is the true definition of unionism, which is not necessarily anti-Catholic or anti-Irish, stuck in a bunker.

Once we have ills we can't cope with, we look for escapes and the working class's escapes have consistently been the escape of alcohol and drugs, but also of tribalism, the escape of belonging.

Q: What role if any has the British labour movement?

A: I would strongly advise those in the British labour movement to avoid dogma, and especially dogma that might cost people their lives. There is too simplistic an identification with one aspect of being Irish. I am perhaps an alternative Irishman.

Model resolution to Labour Party Conference

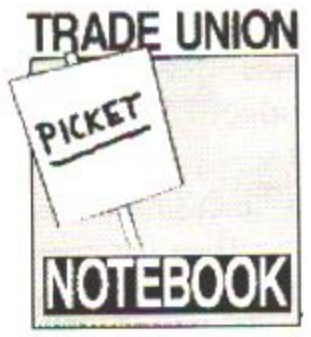
Conference agrees that the pursuit of peace in Ireland must be a major policy objective of both the Labour Opposition and an incoming Labour Government.

Conference believes that to pursue our objective of peace we must end the bipartisan approach to Irish policy. John Major's equivocation and errors of judgement during the IRA ceasefire undermined the pursuit of peace. Conference notes that the placing of obstacles in the way of all party talks contributed to the tragic breakdown of the IRA ceasefire.

Conference believes that Labour should declare its support for all party peace talks including Sinn Fein. Whilst a Labour Government must remain flexible and responsive to proposals made at the talks and by international initiatives such as the Mitchell Commission, our objective should be to gain the consent of all parties to the unification of Ireland.

Conference further believes that Labour should work to gain the confidence of the Irish community in Britain by making a policy commitment to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

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Bus drivers in south east London have put massive pressure on their bosses at Stagecoach with a one day stoppage and the possibility of more to come. Because of the franchising agreement, each day's lost service costs Stagecoach an estimated £350,000 to London Transport. Having guaranteed shareholders 50% of the profit, Stagecoach is trying to cut corners and staff are being hit badly. Further one day strikes are now suspended pending talks.

The Communications Workers Union is recommending Royal Mail members to vote for industrial action over the union's claim for a shorter working week and a commitment to job security.

Since 1993 CWU has sought a reduction in the working week. Royal Mail has offered a reduction to 40 hours but the union believes this will be offset by management's proposals for "teamworking". These include an insistence that delivery staff be prepared to work an extra 15 minutes daily unpaid - equivalent to the reduction offered !

CWU has negotiated on teamworking for eleven months but is unable to agree to Royal Mail's proposals. These involve teams with no individual duty schedule and a host of added responsibilities, to be completed while working at 100% and "continuously improving" (which CWU described as "a race without a finishing time").

Teamworking will allow attendances to be varied on a daily basis. Royal Mail claims the concept is commonplace in other businesses. CWU says no other postal administration in the world has adopted it.

Royal Mail has offered no compulsory redundancies until 2000 but CWU want a more long term commitment. It is also unhappy with Royal Mail's proposals on pay restructuring, productivity and delivery standards.

160 UNISON members in Cardiff's Housing Department are continuing a campaign of strike action following two one day stoppages in opposition to attempts by management to impose a restructuring plan which would affect jobs and services. The dispute was due to escalate to indefinite strike action as *LLB* went to press.

Labour-controlled Camden Council has now sacked and re-employed 1,500 staff on inferior contracts, as anticipated in previous *LLB*s. Camden UNISON is asking the union's national leadership to consider taking the cases to industrial tribunals. "It would clearly cost the Council a lot of money to defend these actions, even if they won every one" said Dave Eggmore, Camden UNISON branch secretary.

Tory Environment Minister Paul Beresford (of former Wandsworth Council fame) thought he'd killed Haringey's in-house refuse collection service when he ordered retendering without an in-house bid. But he was wrong!

Using the Government's own relaxed guidelines on cross-boundary tendering, Hackney Council came to the rescue. Hackney fought off private sector competition and won the work. What's more, under European legislation the Haringey staff will now transfer to Hackney with protected terms and conditions.

Wouldn't it have been great to be a fly on the wall when some hapless civil servant gave bully Beresford the bad news!

Coastguards in the Public Services, Tax and Commerce Union (PTC) may be forced to take industrial action to defend staffing levels and safety standards. The Coastguards Agency management is seeking 80 redundancies (from a total of 470 full-time staff) and proposing to replace 350 part-time auxiliary coastguards with 180 posts in a new, low- paid, grade.

In an indicative ballot, 89% of PTC members (coastguard grade) signified their willingness to take industrial action if negotiations did not produce a satisfactory resolution.

Dutchy Holland, a coastguard on the PTC NEC said "We are seriously concerned that the loss of experienced staff will affect our coverage and the safety of mariners and holiday-makers."

The dispute in the Immigration Service is at a critical stage. Members of PTC voted by a two to one majority for industrial action, including a national one day strike, against management's attempts to impose an early shift starting at 5am.

The ballot result brought management to the negotiating table and on 1st May they met PTC full-time officers at ACAS.

Management offered to reinstate the seven members suspended at Portsmouth for refusing to attend at 5am. In return, PTC agreed tthat staff could be obliged to start at 5am if there were insufficient volunteers.

Members were being balloted on the offer from 13th May. PTC officials are recommending acceptance.

Immigration Service branch secretary John Oliver described the deal indignantly as a sell-out. "After a vote for industrial action, full-time officers have conceded what we have been resisting for eighteen months."

He stated that the seven suspended members at Portsmouth are also opposed to the deal.

Hillingdon update

The 54 striking cleaners at Hillingdon hospital are carrying on their eight month struggle against wage cuts and privatisation in the face of intimidation from management and local thugs. Several strikers had to visit the hospital after a recent attack on the picket line. The picket line itself has twice been burnt out in overnight arson attacks.

The strikers are now preparing for the lobby of the AGM of the multinational parent company of their employer Pall Mall. This will take place at the Glazier's Hall near London Bridge station on the morning of Friday 7th June 1996 and the strikers are appealing to all trade unionists and socialists to support the lobby.



Milkiat Bilku, shop steward

● Donations to the hardship fund - which are urgently needed - should be sent to UNISON, Civic House, 8 Aberdeen Terrace, London SE3.

Liverpool dockers: "Your family is my family"

Tony Nolan reports from Liverpool: May Day saw 2,500 workers march through Liverpool in solidarity with the dockers. Liverpool UNISON supported the strike call but Rodney Bickerstaffe's disgraceful repudiation of this and poor branch organisation meant a low response, many employees taking the day off to support the march instead of striking.

Given that it was a weekday the march was probably the best yet. The mood was one of confidence and solidarity. To take the march into the heartland of the banking community was a refreshing change and could only remind big business that workers are still prepared to fight and celebrate their tradition.

The dockers feel increasingly confident. They recognise the enormity of their struggle and its historical importance. One senior steward told me that despite the failure of the trade union bureaucracy and the refusal of the Labour leadership to even recognise their existence this has given them a sense of freedom. They are free to shape their own destiny without the fear of sellout or betrayal.

This has been shown by their tremendous international work. On 15th April the Federation of Portuguese Stevedores implemented a total blockade of the ports of Lisbon and Leixos. The employers have responded by using Spanish ports and ferrying goods overland.

In Bilbao the Basque dockers are occupying the Liverpool ship Churruca. The captain was told that this will happen each time the ship carries scab goods. The biggest catch is yet to come through the solidarity action of the US Longshoremen. ACL, the docks' biggest customer, is still considering pulling out. On May 21st the dockers lobbied the International Transport Federation/ILO Conference in Geneva.

I was lucky enough to attend the final rally of the Dockers International Conference recently. I heard speaker after speaker from Spain to Australia pledge their support. One Portuguese docker told 500 Liverpool dockers "now your family is my family."



Tony Benn and Jimmy Nolan address a rally in support of the Liverpool dockers. Photo: Dave Sinclair/ Chris Bailey.

Not one Labour or trade union leader has openly supported the dockers. One can understand the TGWU's legal dilemma, but for others to remain silent is treachery.

The importance of the strike cannot be lost. This dispute was a pre-planned offensive by the employers against the last unionised port.

The response from the dockers has been heroic and proud. They have rebuilt their own organisational links by bypassing traditional structures.

The recent national support group meeting attracted over 200 support groups. If the dockers can win without the support of the bureaucracy, the impact will be enormous.

Liz Knight writes: **The 27th April Liverpool dockers national solidarity conference resolved to establish a national support committee, not only to plan further action on behalf of the 500 sacked dockers, but also to organise solidarity with other workers in dispute. Internationally they plan to establish a date for a one day strike of all longshoremen.**

The latest news is that a total blockade on ACL vessels is in force at Swedish as well as Portuguese ports. The two Liverpool dockers who put a picket on Los Angeles port - the largest in the world - succeeded in gaining the support not only of the LA dockers, but also of Mexican and Puerto Rican truck drivers. These drivers - themselves working under terrible conditions - first stopped their trucks at the Liverpool dockers' picket, then put their own picket alongside. Many drivers were then recruited to the truckers' union by the joint picket. Boycotts and solidarity action continue throughout the world.

The action is biting. Pre-strike, 650 container trucks went into the Liverpool port every Wednesday. This Wednesday only 260 entered. ACAS is now trying to involve itself in the dispute. Also a Select Committee of the House of Commons will start hearings on the dispute on 21st May. The shop stewards have only one message for all parties. They demand reinstatement and accuse the port employers, Government and State of conspiracy against the dockers and the organised working class.

The news black-out on the dispute continues. The dockers are appealing to workers and trade unionists everywhere to get news out about the dispute. The solidarity conference called on the TUC to organise a one day national strike in the dockers support and against the anti-union laws. It also called for a national demonstration of support to be held in London and the stepping up of solidarity action and financial support.

The strike is at a crucial juncture. The Conference decisions will be implemented not by the TUC but by the dockers and their supporters. A first meeting of the national support committee will be called shortly by the shop stewards and needs the active participation of every union and labour movement body.

Docks Solidarity

- Picket of Drake International - scab providing 'employment agency'. Every Tuesday 3.30pm to 5.00pm, 96 High Holborn, WC1. Contact: Liz 0181-367 0021.
- The London Support Group meets 1st and 3rd Thursday, Lucas Arms, Grays Inn Road, WC1. Contact: Dot 0171-627 8666.
- Proposed conference of supporters: Saturday, 29th June, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. Contact: Kim 0171-226 9754.
- For speakers ring: Dot 0171-627 8666.
- Donations to: J. Davies, Merseyside Shop Stewards, 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool, L6 4AS. Tel: 0151-207 3388.

Cheques payable to: 'Merseyside Dockers Shop Steward Appeal'.



Stop the cuts in Sheffield

Chris Croome, Sheffield Local Government UNISON No.2 branch, reports.

SHEFFIELD IS ONE of the few places where Labour actually lost seats in the council elections on 2nd May. Prestigious projects such as sporting facilities built for the world student games and a new tram system combined with the cumulative effect of a steady erosion of basic services have resulted in a decline in Labour's popularity.

The Labour leadership in Sheffield correctly blame the Tories for the bulk of Sheffield's problems. However in the face of a total lack of campaigning for more money from the Government and the continual passing-on of the Tory cuts this argument fails to cut any ice with the electorate.

Sheffield is also cutting jobs and conditions of the workforce. From an opening gambit of 1,700 compulsory redundancies this has been whittled down to less than 50 and the council unions are balloting the affected departments. The first in the firing line, the department of Design and Building Services, has returned a strike ballot result of 74% by UNISON members and the APEX result is due on 22nd May. On hearing the ballot outcome the management reported that they would "postpone" the redundancies until July and in light of this UNISON are to re-ballot in order that the result does not become invalid.

Treasury are also balloting as we go to press and Leisure Services are due to start a ballot if the redundancies are not withdrawn at a Labour Group Meeting on 20th May. In addition to driving staff out of jobs through threatening compulsory redundancies the Council is proposing unilaterally to scrap the existing grievance, dispute and reorganisation procedures.

Sheffield Labour Group's growing willingness to cut services for the most vulnerable sections of society and to attack its own workforce is not going to stem the Labour Party's haemorrhaging of support - quite the reverse.

Key issues for UNISON

UNISON delegates gather in June for their final conference before a General Election. Fiona Monkman, Barnsley Local Government UNISON, previews the event.

With Blair's latest threat to attack public spending still ringing in their ears, branches across the country have responded by submitting a large number of motions proposing defence of the welfare state. This debate will include policy on longer term issues such as the minimum wage, full employment, workers' rights and the anti-union laws. It will essentially be a debate about policies for the next Labour Government. Last year's revolt by UNISON to defend Clause IV was not simply a rebellion by those at the top of the union but reflected then, as it does now, a mood from below which says the unions and Labour should be defending public services and committing themselves to rolling back years of Tory victories over the welfare state.

On the question of public ownership, with Blair's commitment to publicly provided services slipping away it is vital that UNISON Conference is clear. We must be for the re-nationalisation of all the privatised utilities and the scrapping of competitive tendering and the private funding services. The rebuilding of public services should be achieved through public money and employing public sector workers. Proposals for the private financing of public services and any form of competitive tendering must be opposed by UNISON.

Asylum Bill confusion

Jon Rogers, UNISON Conference delegate from Lambeth, reports: the debate on the Asylum Bill will be one of the major debates of this year's Conference. More motions were submitted from branches on this than on any other subject - and almost all made a clear call for the union to advocate non-compliance with the legislation if it were to become law.

It was not until Conference amendments were published in May that the NEC position seemed to become clear. The NEC opposed the call for non-co-operation with the law. Instead, it appeared to want branches to negotiate with employers to indemnify workers in respect of liability from the consequences of carrying out any act which may be discriminatory .

This position - appearing to amount to unlawful pressure to discriminate - has provoked widespread anger in the union. However, by the end of the UNISON Conference on the Asylum Bill on 15th May it was being suggested that the NEC had been misunderstood owing to a typographical error - the word "not" had been omitted from their amendment.

No doubt all will become clear in Bournemouth...

Liverpool - Stalinist show trials?

This year's UNISON Conference will see renewed attempts by delegates to uncover the truth about disciplinary action initiated against four Liverpool UNISON shop stewards who are accused of "bringing the union into disrepute" because they supported members who took unofficial action against racism.

Attempts to hold the NEC accountable for its actions at Conference have been frustrated for several years in a row by the contentions - upheld by the Standing Orders Committee - that the matter is either sub judice or that it is not the place of Conference to ask about disciplinary hearings.

Since the Standing Orders Committee has once again ruled out discussion of this case at Conference this year, the Greater London Regional Committee has agreed to sponsor a fringe meeting at Annual Conference, at which the case for the four will be put, and delegates will be able to find out what is being done in their name. Next month *LLB* will carry a full report on this case.

Chance to regroup

Hugh MacGrillen previews the forthcoming MSF Annual Conference

THE MSF Annual Conference in June will reveal the balance of forces in the union after the setbacks of the last 18 months. Faced with an erosion of membership, and under severe financial pressure, the leadership implemented a cuts programme resulting in the disappearance of 25% of the union's employees, and stepped up the drive to centralise control of the union, victimising a number of people along the way.

Despite sporadic resistance, the mainstream left was not able to fight back in any co-ordinated way and paid for this with a poor result in recent NEC elections.

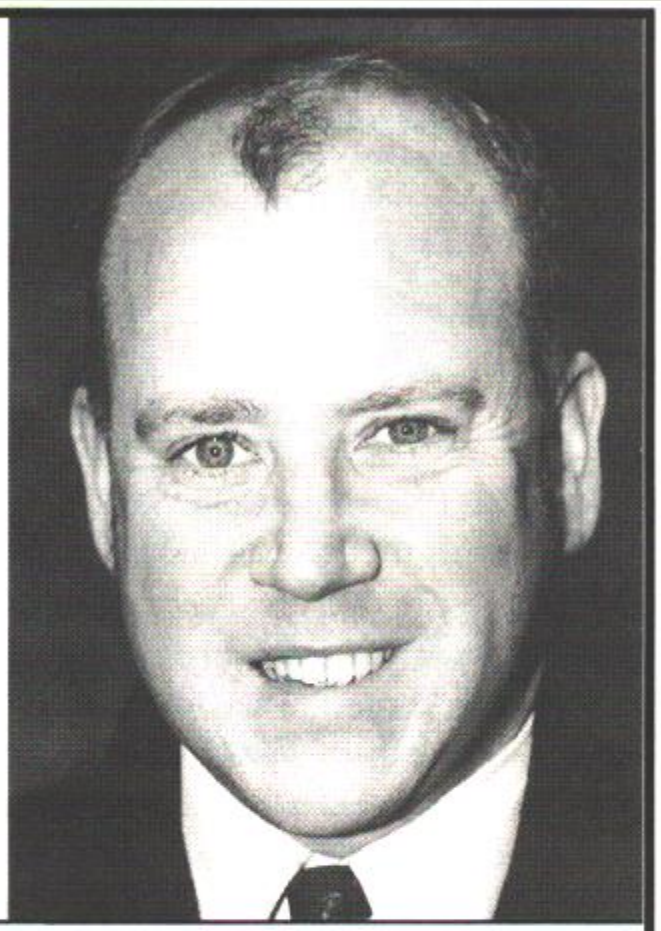
However, it would be wrong to conclude that the leadership will be able to dominate the forthcoming Conference. Very few members believe that the cuts will ultimately benefit the union. A key indicator will be the election for union President, to be contested by Gary Fabian, a long-time union activist for the left and Bob Ainsworth, a Blairite MP brought in by the leadership.

Despite the efforts to line the union up behind Tony Blair in recent years, the Conference agenda shows that there is still only a weak political base for this among activists. Resolutions on economic policy, employment rights, and several other issues show that MSF activists are still well to the left of the Party leadership.

The Conference will be the springboard for campaigning in the General Secretary election, which will formally begin in the autumn. The left candidate is Joe Bowers, a full time official from Belfast. The right appear to have settled for the lightweight incumbent Roger Lyons.

Anyone who sees the candidates together will have no doubt how to vote, but Bowers will have problems in getting enough publicity. The election offers a crucial chance for the left to regroup organisationally, develop our programme and rebuild a popular base.

Leading with the left



Geoff Martin, UNISON London Region Convenor, takes a lefty look at life.

● The big news this month is that I've been invited by Arthur Smith to have a trial for his all-star comedy cricket team. This sensational offer was based on the "raffle polemic" that I delivered at a recent comedy benefit for the St George's Hospital Campaign. My apologies to anyone in the front row who ended up splattered with Guinness. The other good news is that the raffle itself raised getting on for five hundred quid for the Hillingdon strikers. Details of the most important sporting comeback since Mike Tyson got out of the slammer will be available on Teletext.

● I hot-footed it back from the UNISON health group conference in Bournemouth just in time for the May Day rally in Lewisham - the first time I'd set foot in the Lewisham Labour Club for years. Being the final speaker it meant that most of the audience had already had a chance to have a drink which gave me ample opportunity to expand on my theory about a merger between New Labour and the Royal Family.

Just think about it. It started off with rumours that Princess Di might become a New Labour MP. Then we had Prince Edward backing the Mandleson theme that class is no longer an issue. Things have taken a turn for the worse with the news that the Princess Royal is going to address the TUC this year. What next? Long range photographs of Tony Blair sucking Fergie's toes?

● So what does an old punk do about this Sex Pistols reunion gig in Finsbury Park? I'm being deadly serious now - my heart says it's a load of bollocks but my head says why miss out on one last chance to try and get into the old bondage trousers.

I'm never too sure how many *LLB* readers have got a clue what I'm going on about but this is a serious dilemma. Any advice should be passed on to the *LLB* office pronto and next month I will relay my final decision to you.

● Sticking on the music theme, the debate I chaired on the subject of "Can Rock and Roll change the world" at this year's London May Day festival was cracking good fun.

Amazingly there was even a delegation from the *LLB* editorial board present - presumably on a fact finding mission to find out what "the kids" are into these days.

Billy Bragg was on the panel and managed to get attacked by both the ultra left for not being revolutionary enough and the Blairites for being Old Labour. This, of course, is a position that I am only too familiar with myself.

At one point I thought that the Hampshire Popular Front (Fighting Democratic) had shown up when a small section of the audience broke into a chant of "You're just a bunch of wankers". It turned out that it was a group of anarchists who'd come along to practice their swearing.

● If anyone thinks there is too much name dropping in this months column I apologise. But as I was saying to Ruud Gullit and Paul Weller in the pub last night....

See you at the Fleadh on 8th June.

War in our time

Patrick Costello of the Haiti Support Group gives an overview of the causes of current global conflicts.

THE END of the Cold War created new hopes for the reduction of worldwide military tensions. Peace processes in Central America, Southern Africa and the Middle East seemed to herald a new era. Five years on, the expected peace dividend lies in tatters and the arms industry is one of the few that has avoided a drastic downsizing.

In the first five years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, 82 new armed conflicts broke out. Even where peace agreements have been signed, they have proved unstable, as recent events in Southern Lebanon and Liberia have brutally demonstrated. The development of these wars has left policymakers and peace activists in confusion, as the war in former Yugoslavia showed.

The media too presents conflicts as ethnic or religious with few attempts to analyse their roots beyond the actions of 'warlords' (Somalia, Liberia) or organised criminals (Colombia).

In this way, the great powers of Europe and North America are presented as spectators of disintegration, wise parents shaking their heads over their children's misdemeanours. When they intervene, either on their own (eg France in Rwanda) or as the United Nations, this is presented as humanitarianism with the purest of motives.

The temptation to fall into this lack of an analytic framework should be resisted. An alternative view of today's conflicts emerges from looking at the guiding principle of international relations since the end of the Cold War, namely free trade. Western foreign policy has been devoted to opening up markets, using the leverage of foreign debt to force states to drop their tariffs, privatise state industries and stabilise inflation through major cutbacks in social expenditure. Much has been written about the social and economic effects of these Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) but less has been made of the connection between these policies and the emergence of conflict.

The state has been irrevocably weakened worldwide by free trade policies. Decisions about levels of taxation and expenditure are no longer in the hands of government ministers. In democracies, little difference exists between the practices of political parties in power because policies are set by international financial institutions and investors who threaten to pull out of a country if, for example, taxation is raised. Mass poverty, unemployment and the collapse of state infrastructure are the result. In such circumstances, political leaders are tempted to preach populist solutions, drawing on incipient nationalisms or religious affinities to gather support. Polarisation and violence may follow.



Once war has begun, its logic is also often driven by economic considerations. Hot spots are often sites of economic resources, such as the diamond mines of Sierra Leone or the oil in the Colombian jungles. Civilians face the choice of joining up, which provides the protection of the gun and the chance of a share of the cake, or being caught in the crossfire, facing extortion from different armed groups. The logic for fighting is obvious. As for the great powers, an agenda starts to become clear. The protection of key resources and markets (the Gulf War), the fear of a hostile power on the border of the metropolis (Algeria), great power rivalry (former Yugoslavia) and fears of a flood of refugees (Haiti) are among the factors which determine whether intervention takes place. Where none of these apply, the international community turns its back, as it did in the case of Liberia where the UN refused a request to mediate in 1993.

The very scale of the crisis demands a more effective response. There are over 45 million refugees and internally displaced people in the world and the figure is rising. Policies for the resolution and prevention of conflicts are urgently required. However, these policies must be based on the recognition that the roots of conflicts go beyond local ethnic and religious differences and reach to the heart of the economic and political principles on which the international system is built. ❑

Turkey on the brink

Liz Knight reports: Across Turkey hundreds of thousands marched on May Day: 200,000 in Istanbul alone where three demonstrators were killed and dozens injured when police fired indiscriminately into the march. Since then hundreds of workers and students have been arrested, including sixty attacked and arrested whilst attending the funeral of one of the marchers.

A British teacher and a human rights delegation were arrested in Istanbul on 18th May along with 30 other Turkish workers for being in possession of 'terrorist literature', ie. human rights leaflets.

A wave of working class militancy is surging across Turkey. Workers are fighting cuts, privatisation and wage freezes implemented in conditions of high inflation. 1995 saw the largest strikes for 15 years including miners, engineers, dockers and rail workers.

On the back of this strike wave the Emek Partisi (Labour Party) has been launched - which is linked with one of Turkey's major union federations.

Liverpool dockers spoke at its launch rally in Izmir. 12,000 people, mainly Turkish workers, attended a launch in Cologne. 18th/19th May saw the London launch which over 2,000 attended.

Publication of the left-wing daily *Evrensel* has been suspended by the Turkish Government for 65 days for "promoting one class over another". The paper has been prominent in supporting the Liverpool dockers' cause.

● A defence campaign has been launched - Contact: 0171-729 8972.

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Review

Free Kurdistan!

Heather Clarke, who has been on two human rights delegations to the Kurdish regions of Turkey and Iraq, looks at
Martyrs, Traitors & Patriots - Kurdistan After the Gulf War
by Sheri Laizer, Zed books, £12.95.



Mothers of the disappeared: Emine Ocak, mother of Hasan Ocak, demonstrating in Istanbul in March. Photo: S.J. Laizer.

THIS BOOK is a compelling account of the momentous events since the Kurdish uprising of March 1991. Sheri Laizer has been close to the Kurdish struggle for many years and has travelled to the region many times.

Following the failure of the uprising she was an angry witness to the wretched exodus of Kurds from Saddam's bombs across the border into the pitiless arms of the Turks. This is one of the few times the agony of the Kurds has attracted press attention, leading to the setting up of the ill-named safe havens.

She writes about the complex politics of the region and interviews the key Kurdish figures - Barzani, Talabani and Ocalan. She details the self interest of the west, the failings of the UN and the deadly divisions between the different Kurdish organisations.

She is passionate about the failure of the international community to protect the Kurds, particularly of the west selling arms knowing they are being used against Kurdish civilians. Even after being forced by public opinion to establish the 'safe haven' the west did not protect its residents and refugees from Turkish or Iraqi bombs. Nor did it lift UN sactions to enable the enclave to thrive economically.

The PKK is the first Kurdish party to attract large numbers of poorly educated women. Sheri Laizer spent time with women guerillas who had broken out of their traditional role. She interviews a fighter from Syria and describes her as proud and content, living her struggle with passion.

She portrays three other women in depth - she has access that would not be available to male writers - and these narratives provide a vivid insight into a patriacal society, itself at the mercy of three brutal regimes.

● The history of the Kurds, the largest ethnic group in the world without a country, has been poorly documented. This year sees the publication of two other books. *A Modern History of the Kurds* by David McDowall (£24.50 I.B. Tauris) and *Attaturk's Children* by *Observer* correspondent Jonathan Rugman (£19.99 Cassel).

Foreign policy in the new South Africa

Professor Peter Vale reports of legacies from the apartheid era which continue to influence South African policy.

SOUTH AFRICA'S return to the international community has not been a smooth one. Within hours of his inauguration as South Africa's president, Nelson Mandela came close to being bludgeoned by the U.S. into sending into Rwanda the very soldiers who had served apartheid.

Ostensibly to signal concern for Africa, Mandela appointed as his Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo, who as the exiled ANC Secretary General had served as a roving ambassador in Africa. But the country's real energy was directed towards the western countries. In early conferences with their Southern African neighbours, South Africa's old diplomatic corps showed little interest in helping a region to whose devastation they had contributed. African issues were really secondary to the country's newly defined national interest - the search for markets.

Despite all this, early signals were that South Africa would take Nigeria seriously as a political partner and encourage its regime to manage a three-year transition towards democracy.

A visit by Nelson Mandela was followed by one by Desmond Tutu and later by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki. During one of Mbeki's visits, the Nigerian dictatorship executed a number of common criminals, hardly a promising sign. It is probably true that the series of South African interventions saved the life of Ogulsen Obasango, the former Nigerian President who remains in detention. But they and others failed to save Ken Saro-Wiwa who perished on the day the Commonwealth Conference opened in Auckland. Mandela, it seems, had been advised to seek an accord with his fellow heads of state when they met in their weekend retreat. The news from Africa destroyed all this and left South Africa's Nigerian initiative in tatters and its not-so-new foreign policy exposed.

Subsequent efforts to turn all this around have added to the confusion. Mandela called for an immediate boycott of Nigeria, a policy which was reluctantly supported by John Major and Bill Clinton but rejected across Africa. A call by the South Africans to Nigeria's opposition to unite and fight for democracy in their country was quickly accepted, but efforts to hold a meeting of these same groups was thwarted by South African migration authorities. A month later, South Africa's High Commissioner to Nigeria returned to his post in Abuja and, of course, the dictatorship in Africa's largest country continues.

● Peter Vale is Professor of Southern African Studies, University of the Western Cape, South Africa and currently occupies the UNESCO African Chair at the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands.

Forging a Third Force

In Delhi at the close of the recent general election campaign, Mike Marqusee spoke to Praful Bidwai, one of India's leading independent left-wing journalists.

Q: Most commentators described this as a low-key campaign. Why was that?
A: Candidates held themselves back partly because of the spending ceilings imposed by the election commission. But the lack of vigour was related to the issues and how clearly or not they were posed. In nineteen of the major states you now have two strong parties confronting each other - but the pairings differ from state to state. The nature of political contests has become localised and that's why you don't have whirlwind national campaigns by national leaders.

Q: The newspapers claimed that the corruption issue meant little to ordinary voters, especially in rural areas. Is that true?
A: No. For ordinary people corruption isn't only a moral issue -it's something they face every day. It has evolved into a system of political rent extraction through which those in authority plunder those who have no access to political power - and ordinary people hate it. They do not accept the idea that rulers will always be corrupt - but they don't have the levers to challenge it. The idea that corruption is a way of life in the Third World and is therefore not an issue is nonsense.

Q: The Congress seems to have struggled to find any direction in this election.
A: Rao has been a terrible campaigner, a complete disaster. His rallies have been flops. Organisationally, the Congress is finished in at least half the states. Its traditional social base has broken apart. The neo-liberal economic policy has deprived the Party of any effective mobilising planks. It has led to higher unemployment, intensification of poverty and huge dole-outs to certain business sectors and multi-national capital. It is deeply unpopular.

Q: Along with economic liberalisation, the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya was the key political issue since the last general election. What has been its impact on this campaign?
A: The BJP (the right-wing Hindu nationalist party) chose not to make it a major issue. Nonetheless many voters will have cast their votes to ensure the BJP does not come to power. I would say that the basic issue of secular versus communal politics has been central to the election. Muslims and lower castes who have a stake in secular politics have mobilised against the BJP. At the other social pole, parts of the elite believe that the BJP is their best bet. There's tremendous support for the BJP among sections of Indian business.

"The problem is that the Third Force has failed to offer a programmatic basis with which to align over the long term. There has been a failure to generalise concerns of social justice, instead of just speaking on behalf of a particular caste group."

The Party's purely religious or communal appeal is very limited. It reached a plateau in 1992 (when the mosque was destroyed) but since then militant religious fervour has abated. They've tried several times to revive the issue and launched campaigns to replace mosques with temples in Varanasi and Mathura, but none of these took off. The BJP's vote has remained relatively stable and grown in some areas for reasons other than the inherent appeal of the communal platform. Faced with the collapse of Congress they have been seen as an over-arching party which claims to represent national interests. But it is a party full of contradictions, not least the tension between the kinds of things it needs to do to mobilise its cadre and the image it needs to present to win over larger sections of voters. Its core base remains upper caste - so it cannot even unify those whom it considers to be Hindus. Finally, it is torn between its rhetoric of swadeshi (national self-sufficiency) and its solid commitment to liberalisation.

Q: How effective has the "Third Force" (the loose amalgam of left and other anti-Congress/anti-BJP parties, many of them with strong bases among the rural lower castes) been in this campaign?
A: The Third Force has not been able to project a clear national alternative with new policies and programmes. Part of the problem is leadership. This is an amorphous, heterogeneous combination of parties and factions. Yet if you look at the factions that comprise the Third Force in Uttar Pradesh their vote adds up to 48% - the BJP gets 35%.

There are different interests within the social base of the Third Force. There is conflict between parties representing Dalits (formerly referred to as 'Untouchables') and those representing Other Backward Castes. The problem is that the Third Force has failed to offer a programmatic basis with which to align over the long term. There has been a failure to generalise concerns of social justice, instead of just speaking on behalf of a particular caste group. The agenda has to be more than just reservation of jobs and educational places for lower castes. Unless you move on to other issues, especially economic policy, you're not going to be able either to broaden your voter appeal or create a stable, politically educated cadre.

We need a formation that mobilises large numbers of people not only to vote but to take action towards their own self-empowerment. That is the basic weakness of all the Third Force parties. They don't give people anything to do.

No one talks about it and you won't read about it in the press, but something quite significant is happening in India. As both the state and the market fail, people have to do things on their own; they have to organise their own collective provision. You can see it happening in housing or irrigation or slum improvement schemes, in thrift schemes for the development of village infrastructure, in resistance to multi-national corporations and in a wide variety of environmental campaigns. The process is uneven and regionalised but there is no doubt we are now seeing the emergence, for example, of a genuine rural women's movement focused on anti-liquor and literacy campaigns. These are non-party initiatives that do not find a reflection in party politics. The Third Force has to be more than just an assembly of politicians. It must reflect what I call the social left, which is huge. Above all, it is not demoralised and thinks of the future in positive terms.

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The Third Force made a much stronger showing in the Indian elections than anyone predicted. The Congress was wiped out in most states and the BJP has emerged as the largest single party, though it has little chance of finding sufficient outside support to form a government. As we go to press, it seems probable that Deve Gowda, Chief Minister of the southern state of Karnataka, will be asked to try to cobble together a majority from the Third Force parties with the support of Congress. The Indian people have voted for change, in particular they have rejected the policies of economic liberalisation, but in the short-term, at least, they are likely to get more of the same.

Olive tree today, Labour tomorrow?



Michael Hindley MEP analyses the outcome of the Italian general election.

WHEN YOU SEE headlines saying "Stock exchange surge of confidence after left victory" you are entitled to shake your head and wonder where you are. The answer is Italy now - and perhaps Britain after a Blair victory at the next election.

Italy is still not settled after the collapse of its political system two years ago. It has yet to fully adjust to the switch from a straight proportional representation (PR) system, to the present mixture of 75% of seats being elected by first-past-the-post and 25% by PR.

Moving to PR was meant to bring an end to a situation where Italy had seen some 50-odd nominal changes in government since the end of the war, but all had left the same ruling elite in charge. It was hoped that as in Germany (which also elects on a mixed system) and in the UK with our first past the post system, the voting system itself would deliver stability of government. This now seems likely, as the "Olive Tree" alliance led by the centrist economics professor Prodi, but dominated by the reformed Communist Party (PDS), has emerged as a clear winner. The PDS emerged as the largest single party with 21.1% of the popular vote and Prodi's new Government has the chance of serving out a five year period provided it can keep the support of the Refounded Communists and the Northern League, whose vote went up from 6% to 8.6% and from 8.4% to 10.1% respectively.

Hence the support of the money markets - they're confident that the economists led by Prodi and former Prime Minister Dini can persuade the rest of the Government to accept an austerity programme to get Italy back on track for the Single European Currency (EMU) by 1999. Prodi has already warned Italy to expect "18 months of pain" to achieve this.

Italy still has a massive state involvement in industry. The Thatcherite reforms sweeping Europe have yet to make a significant impact. Prodi's promised pain means further welfare cuts and privatisation which will set the Olive Tree Government on collision course with its own supporters and with the Refounded Communists who polled over 3 million votes and who campaigned against the Maastricht-ordered cuts in the public purse, stressing instead the need to combat unemployment across Europe.

The view that the election was a defeat for the right does not stand up to analysis. What happened is that the tiny parties of 1994 either joined the larger coalitions or were squeezed. This is why all the major parties, PDS, Forza, Alliance, and Refounded Communists held up, or showed an increase.

Despite the debacle of the collapse of the Berlusconi Government his party, Forza Italia, still polled 20.6%, down only 0.4% since 1994. The fascist National Alliance vote actually went up from 13.5% to 15.7%, a disturbing figure even if some prominent fascists did lose their seats.

The question for the right is what kind of coalition do they want in future? A coalition with fascists, even if they rather ludicrously title themselves "post-fascists" seems unable to deliver a working majority. As one Alliance MP said: "We have to decide if we are Le Pen or Chirac." As long as that ambiguity remains, the right will struggle.

However, it is the actions of the Olive Tree coalition which will be decisive. Prodi and Dini want to re-enter the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), though dropping out has brought about a boost in Italian exports and a mini-revival just like in the UK. Going back in and setting a course for the Single Currency will cause disruptions not only between the PDS and the Refounded Communists but also within the PDS itself.

It will only take a couple of the inevitable strikes and demonstrations against spending cuts and privatisation and many in the PDS will find themselves faced with going along with cuts ordered by the "responsible" elements in their own party and their technocratic allies, or siding with their own natural supporters and left allies.

The reforming of the Italian political scene is not yet over. Two years ago, Luciana Castellina, Refounded Communist MEP and I speculated in *LLB* that "events in Italy often presage events in wider Europe...where similar scenarios may well materialise".

Italy with its new coalition government of technocrats and a party still carrying the emotional and political goodwill of the workers, yet set on a course of monetary conservatism, is a foretaste of post-Tory Britain. Fortunately, it will all happen there a year in advance. There is time to watch and learn.

Bosnia - a post-emotional war?

How was it possible for western governments to view with indifference the worst atrocities in Europe since the Second World War? Mike Phipps reviews
Genocide After Emotion,
edited by Stjepan G. Mestrovic, published by Routledge books.

CERTAIN COMMON threads emerge from the many analyses that have appeared about the conflict in former Yugoslavia. For the west to pursue its policy, it was necessary first to undercut the legitimacy of Bosnia as an internationally recognised state and present the conflict as a civil war. Secondly, the war had to be portrayed as one in which all sides were guilty and in which no principles or ideals were worth defending. From this came the thesis of 'ancient hatreds' and the elevated importance of who did what in World War II. Thus US Secretary of State Warren Christopher could characterise the conflict as a "problem from hell". The US Government throughout took the attitude that all sides shared responsibility for the conflict despite its own internal reports to the contrary.

In this book, Rabia Ali and Laurence Lipschultz unmask the falsehoods supporting this approach. They remind us of the referendum in Bosnia in 1991 - in which 68% of voters supported a multi-ethnic state. The subsequent recognition of Bosnia by the EU led the Serbian war criminal Karadzic to announce that Sarajevo's streets would "run with blood", a prophecy he immediately sought to fulfil by shelling the city.

Ali and Lipschultz document the collaboration of the Yugoslavian army with Serb paramilitaries in dismembering Bosnia. Above all, they nail the pernicious myth that the conflict was about rival nationalisms. Eighty thousand Serbs shared the siege of Sarajevo in defence of a multi-cultural and pluralistic society. One third of the Bosnian army are Serbs - a fact always overlooked in contemporary news reports of the war.

The alleged 'insolubility' of the conflict provided critical under pinning for the west's policy of Serbian appeasement. Thus the US could open an entirely false and narcissistic debate over the dangers of massive material aid to Bosnia - which Bosnia had not sought. Instead the UN arms embargo was imposed, at the request of Serbia, which monopolised the heavy weaponry of the Yugoslav army, and despite the UN General Assembly's overwhelming vote against this in December 1992.

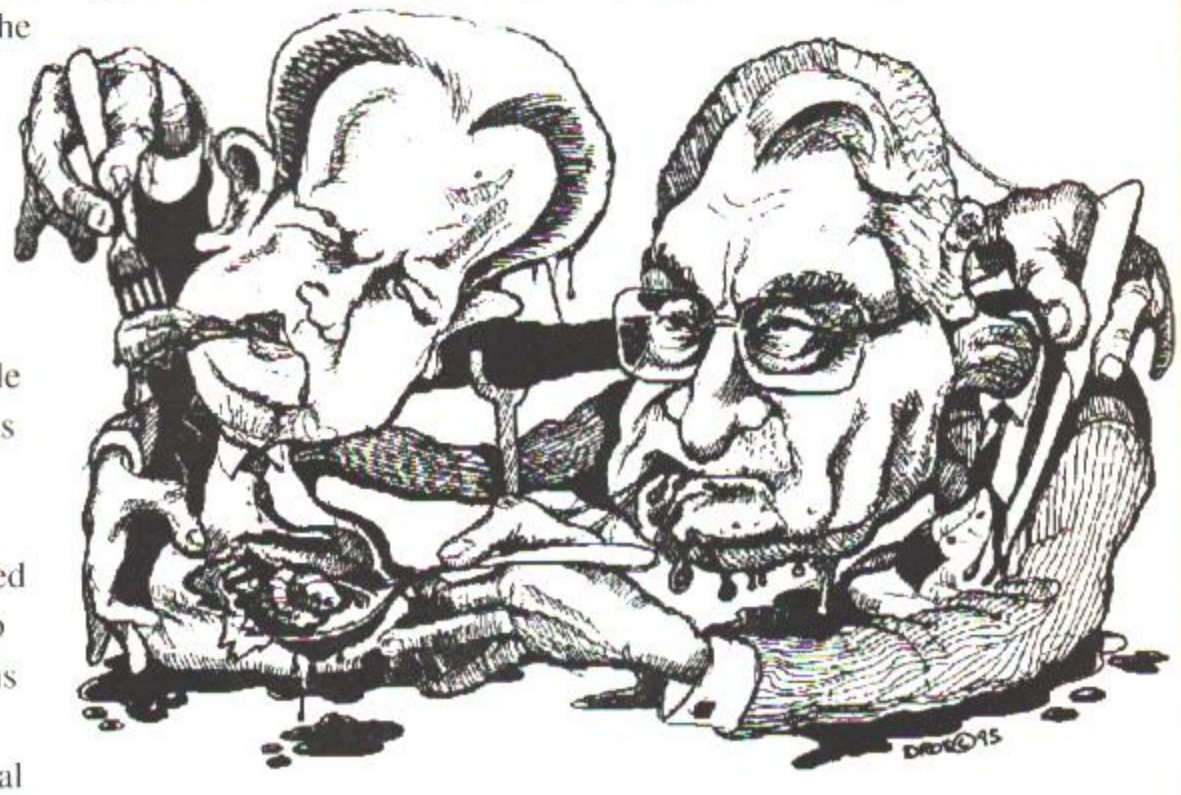
As peace initiatives began in Geneva, it was clear the west's policy was no longer based on the August 1992 London Conference position of a UN-supervised ceasefire. Instead Vance-Owen moved to partition Bosnia, the principle of whose independence had been replaced by the notion of 'three warring factions'. An equidistance had been established between pluralism and expansionist nationalism, victim and aggressor. The biggest group affected by the war - non-nationalists of mixed ethnic identities - were wholly disenfranchised.

Vance-Owen sought neither a ceasefire nor an end to the herding of people into concentration camps as a basis for negotiations. Bosnia's President Isetbegovic was arm-twisted into accepting the carve-up of his country as its citizens were driven from their houses and the international arms embargo was maintained.

The role of Britain was perfidious. As the US vacillated on the embargo, Clinton apparently told the Bosnian Government that Major had informed him that the Conservative Government would fall if it were lifted. The personal cynicism of Owen was highlighted when he told reporters in March 1993 that lifting the embargo would be a "disincentive to the Muslims" to negotiate seriously. The choice of language speaks volumes: Britain's total hostility to Muslims extended even to the appointment of Bassiouni as chief prosecutor to the Yugoslavia War Crimes Tribunal on the grounds that he is an Egyptian Muslim.

Genocide After Emotion sees such policy contortions as crucial to the ability of western governments to massage public opinion into accepting their inactivity and appeasement in the face of irrefutable evidence of genocide against the Bosnians. The authors introduce the new theoretical concept 'post-emotionalism' - "a mechanism in which the culture industry markets and manipulates dead emotions from history that are selectively attached to current events" - to explain the lack of response to the genocide in former Yugoslavia from the most enlightened democracies in the world.

Critics will differ on the usefulness of this concept. Its striking advantage is that it was developed explicitly as part of a critique of



the inadequacy of post-modernism as a way of interpreting events. Its big flaw is that it is still too closely tied to just such a framework. For example, Mestrovic's central conclusion is that events in former Yugoslavia could take place with such little protest from the west because of the lack of assimilation of the Holocaust into the European conscience. But what exactly is the 'European conscience'? Critics might argue that the high level of tolerance developed towards the war and people's apparent readiness to accept simplistic media explanations and governmental deceit might just be due to plain old-fashioned racism. After all, the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, conveniently labelled 'tribalism' in the mainstream media, and therefore beyond 'western experience' equally provoked little visible outrage from the "enlightened, informed, democratic nation states."

Despite the restrictive theoretical framework, this book contains interesting and unusual material. ❑

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With Murdoch or against him?

Sports Briefing

Dave Farrar examines the revolution in Rugby League.

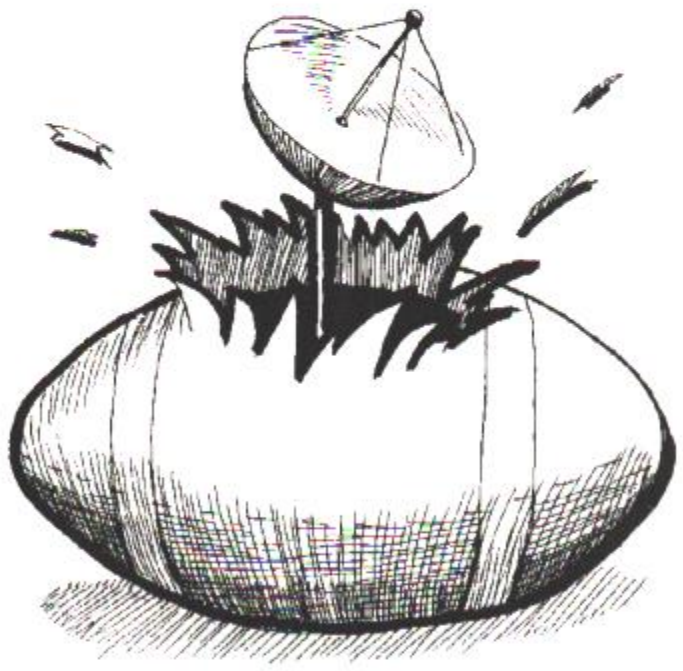
THE SETTING up of Rupert Murdoch's £87 million Super League has been greeted by predictable calls of sell-out from all points north.

Rugby League has now moved from being in the hands of parochial northern small businessmen into the hands of a multi-millionaire media tycoon. Is this an improvement? That something had to be done is without question. Two thirds of the clubs were technically bankrupt. Even the mighty Wigan has debts of £4 million. Since the fateful capitulation to the Murdoch millions, the successful and much lauded Keighley club has had to go cap in hand to the RL HQ for £50,000 to stave off the debtors, Dewsbury have had to call in the administrator and even Super League Workington have had to halve the wage bill.

The myth that Rugby League is a community game has deep roots but only the amateur game is run by and for the community. The professional clubs are run by committees of directors to whom the community is an afterthought.

In some of the towns, the directors employ a large number of the spectators in their businesses. Yet Rugby League administrators have been notoriously bad at the business of running Rugby League, with few exceptions. How the game will manage to deal with Murdoch and £87 million beggars belief. The idea that somehow League was a pure community game is laughable when one looks at the decrepit grounds and lack of facilities for fans. The notable exceptions are Sheffield's Don Valley, Huddersfield's Big Mac and London Broncos' Valley, home of Charlton Athletic FC. The proposed mergers that caused such a furore never happened and the clubs that live cheek by jowl still scrap over limited populations and finances, attempting to attract new fans to grounds built largely at the turn of the century.

A game that is largely based along the M62 corridor has to spread to survive. It has only had a slim foothold in London for the last 15 years. With the increasing competition for spectators and the increasing influence of TV and sponsorship the iron logic of big business has to take its toll.



In Australia the battle between the governing Australian Rugby League and the Super League was really a contest between Kerry Packer and Rupert Murdoch, in which first blood has gone to Packer.

Apparently, Murdoch got the idea of a global Super League (involving Australia, Britain, France and New Zealand) when he attended the Brisbane versus Wigan World Championship match.

So far the Super League (played in the summer) has been a success. Gates are up 25% and both the London Broncos and the new Paris St Germain club have made strong showings. It will be interesting to see how well the game does in competition with Euro 96, Test match cricket, Wimbledon and the Olympics. One thing is sure: Rugby League will never be the same again.

● Dave Farrar is co-author of *Touch and Go*, a history of Rugby League in London, and *I Would not Start from Here*, a travelling supporters' guide to Rugby League Grounds. He is also a member of the editorial board of *London Calling!* the London Broncos' fanzine.

Do the riot thing

Jason Goodchild, Brighton Independent Supporters Association, reports from the Goldstone.

"Soccer thugs riot in Brighton" ran the headlines. "Implications for Euro 96," they warned. The football hooligan was back.
Or so it must have seemed to people unfamiliar with the background to the incident.

It was an odd riot, with fans young and old sunbathing and picnicking on the pitch, close to the shattered crossbars. But a riot it was - not in the sense of mindless violence and vandalism, but in the ancient and honourable tradition of desperate and disaffected ordinary people protesting against exploitation in the only way they know ... a part of British history rarely taught in schools.

Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club had large debts. It also owned the Goldstone Ground in the centre of Hove. Having manoeuvred complete control of the club for a princely £56.25, absentee chairman Bill Archer, along with his Chief Executive, former Lib Dem MP David Bellotti, arranged to sell the ground to pay off the debts, moving the club fifty miles away to Portsmouth until a new ground could be built in the Brighton area. The plan was leaked. The fans were outraged. Few believed in the new ground, especially when Bellotti was caught out in a string of evasions, inconsistencies and outright lies. There was widespread concern about the prospect of asset-stripping, especially as the 'no-profit' clause, preventing directors and shareholders from profiting from the closure of a club (an FA requirement), had been left out of the club's Articles of Association. "An oversight", assured Bellotti, unconvincingly.

The clause was eventually reinstated under pressure from fans, the FA, the local press and Hove Council (won by Labour in 1995, and under the leadership of loyal Albion fan Ivor Caplin). But worries remained.

On April 27th bulldozers hovered around the Goldstone. Portsmouth still threatened, despite a certain mass boycott. Cue riot, aimed at gaining national publicity and derailing Archer and Bellotti, who within three days signed a contract to lease back the Goldstone for a year.

The Lib Dems failed to win a single seat last month on the new Brighton and Hove unitary authority. Could this be because Bellotti is the most unpopular man in the area? Where nine months of peaceful persuasion were ignored, the riot succeeded. There's a lesson in that somewhere.

Bayern wield the axe

William West reports: If you were in charge of a football club, and your trainer had taken the club to its first European final since 1987 and to the brink of the league championship, what would you do? Beg him to sign a new ten-year contract? Or fire him just three days before the first leg of that European final, and with just four league games to go? Incredibly, this is precisely what Uli Hoeness and Franz Beckenbauer, manager and president at Bayern Munich, have done to their trainer, Otto Rehhagel.

When Rehhagel became Bayern's sixth trainer in four years at the beginning of the 1995-96 season, it seemed a marriage made in heaven between the most successful manager and club in Germany. So why the sacking?

Like so much else at Bayern, it's got very little to do with football and lots to do with power and money. According to the official version, Rehhagel lacked the support and respect of his players. That is plausible. Bayern is full of over-paid "stars" and Rehhagel's no-nonsense approach was known to have ruffled feathers. More likely, though, is that Rehhagel was the victim of a power struggle in the Bayern boardroom. The undisputed kings at Bayern are the two ex-players, Beckenbauer and Hoeness. Wealthy, arrogant and right-wing, the pair regard the club as their own private fiefdom.

So where does the club go from here? At the end of the season, the Italian Giovanni Trapattoni, the man whom Rehhagel replaced in 1995, will take over as trainer. Trapattoni has not been chosen for football reasons: he led Bayern to a disappointing sixth place in his only season at the club. Still, his German is bad enough for him not to be able to argue with the Big Two - and he does wear expensive suits.

Not to be missed!

A special Radio Five Live feature on racism and cricket will be broadcast on Thursday, June 6, 8pm, on David Gower's Cricket Weekly, followed by a phone-in. Hit Racism for Six supporters should keep the lines buzzing.

Love Fields

Leonora Lloyd reviews
Love Fields, *out on video.*

FOR SOME reason, this film was never released in UK cinemas, but for Michelle Pfeifer fans, in particular, it is worth searching for on video.

She plays a bored young southern housewife totally obsessed with the Kennedys - she dresses like Jackie, copies her hairstyle, keeps a scrapbook about them, to the annoyance of her blue collar husband. When John Kennedy is assassinated, she is determined to go to the funeral. On the coach trip, she becomes friendly with a little black girl, and becomes convinced that the man with the child is not her father, as he claims, but is kidnapping her. By the time she changes her mind, the FBI are after them. The man, who is from the north where he works as a dentist, has to contend with her, the FBI and southern racism.

This is a Hollywood film which explores racism in a serious way, but is also funny, touching and exciting.

Hijacking the genre

Jonathan Ebbs reviews Terry Gilliam's new film,
Twelve Monkeys.

TWELVE MONKEYS is a winning combination of intelligent premise, smart performing and imaginative staging.

The film opens in a post-apocalyptic near-future where survivors of a plague have been driven underground. Bruce Willis plays Cole, a convict used by the authorities to travel back in time in a desperate bid to discover the source of the virus, and thereby change the future. His only lead is a group of animal-rights activists the authorities believe to be responsible for the disease: the Army of the Twelve Monkeys.

Hijacking the familiar sci-fi-eco-thriller genre, director Terry Gilliam sails into darker territory. The real core of the story unfolds into a study of the characters' mental states, flirting with questions of madness and sanity, reality and illusion, until Cole declares himself insane and we're not sure whether to believe him. Is he here to save the world or have we been taken in by his fantasies? It's an engaging exercise for anyone with the slightest interest in pseudo-psycho-babble, or just wanting a second chance in life.

As usual Gilliam's quirky visual trademark is firmly stamped on the project, his night-marish images of the future being a progression of scenes from *Brazil*.

Willis is convincingly vulnerable as the hero struggling to come to terms with his situation, and surprisingly sensitive to the bleakness of the material. If you're looking for a futuristic-save-the-world-action thriller you'll be disappointed. *Twelve Monkeys* will make you think - and best of all it doesn't cop out with a happy ending. Like its hero it's not without its flaws, but it does contain a sense of frailty, failure and aspiration rare in a mainstream release.

Russia's presidential election campaign

Hear Ken Livingstone's eye witness report: Wednesday 5th June, 7-30pm, House of Commons, Committee room 10. Meeting organised by the Committee for Democracy and Civil Liberties in Russia.

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science

Scientific racism — a corpse which won't lie down

Graham Richards, Principal Lecturer in Psychology at Staffordshire University, discusses "IQ and race" - the long-dead controversy which, thanks to Nazi funding, just won't lie down.

CHRISTOPHER BRAND of Edinburgh University is an unabashed 'scientific racist'. People of African descent, he says, are genetically less intelligent than whites. His publishers' recent withdrawal of his book, *The 'g' Factor*, has resurrected once again the whole issue of 'race and intelligence'. The general public may be forgiven for assuming this to be a genuine scientific controversy. It isn't.

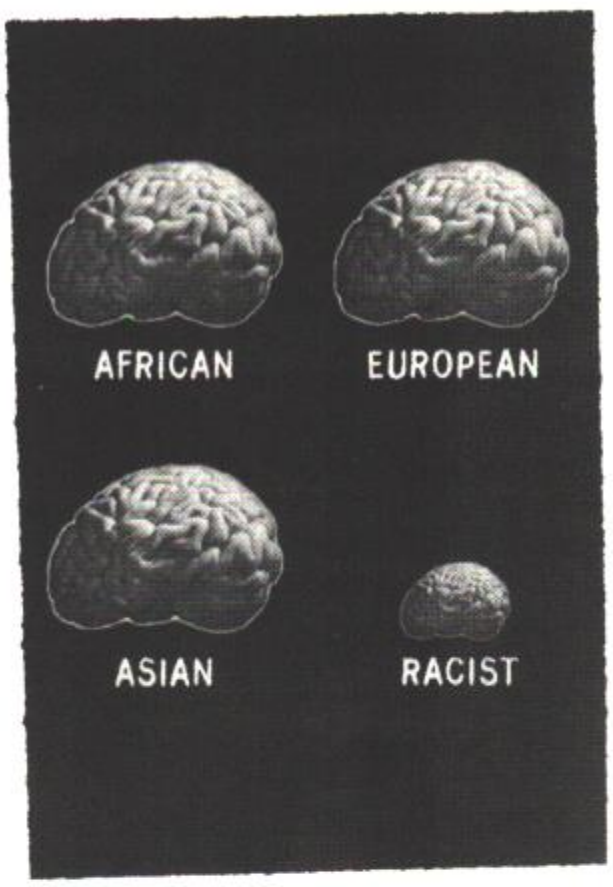
Since Arthur Jensen resuscitated the claim linking race with intelligence in 1969, it has been subjected to intense critical scrutiny. By the early 1980s, it had become clear that virtually every concept central to such arguments was being used in a hopelessly incoherent fashion. The term 'race', for example, may have cultural or political meaning, but is no longer usable within genetics at all. The notion of 'general intelligence' is now clung to by only a minority of psychologists. IQ tests are products of western psychology; it is deeply unsurprising that those from cultures and subcultures fostering different 'psychologies' suffer discrimination in tests of this kind. The IQ scores of all groups have risen significantly since the 1920s and 1930s, undermining the notion that group performance is genetically fixed.

By around 1980, therefore, the overwhelming consensus among psychologists and geneticists was that the claims of the 'scientific racists' were incoherent and scientifically dead. Still, the corpse would not lie down. In 1994 it revived in the United States following Murray and Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve* -which merely repackaged the same old story. The attendant publicity owed nothing to scientific merit and everything to the fact that the book's message was congenial to the anti-welfare climate of US politics. If African Americans still had not achieved social equality with whites - so it could be claimed - this was not because investment in ghetto areas had been 'ring-fenced' by the great financial institutions, not because manufacturing industries had crumbled, leaving big northern cities with massive unemployment and not because social racism persisted regardless of the legal situation. No, it was because African Americans were simply not up to it. The system was absolved and white guilt alleviated.

Political climate alone, however, is insufficient to explain the persistence of 'scientific racism' within psychology. Research needs funding. And here the major holder of the purse-strings is the 'Pioneer Fund' - established in 1937 by US Nazi textile millionaire Wickliffe Draper. This institution, ever since, has unfailingly funded race-differences research. Leading figures such as Jensen, J. P. Rushton, H. J. Eysenck and Richard Lynn have all benefitted substantially from its largesse. Other extreme right wing organisations additionally support and publicise the work of racist 'scientists', not only in the US but also, if less visibly, in Europe. The beneficiaries have said nothing to dissociate themselves from this Nazi camp. Their typical protestations of political innocence and poses of scientific martyrdom are a hollow pretence. They are in it up to their necks.

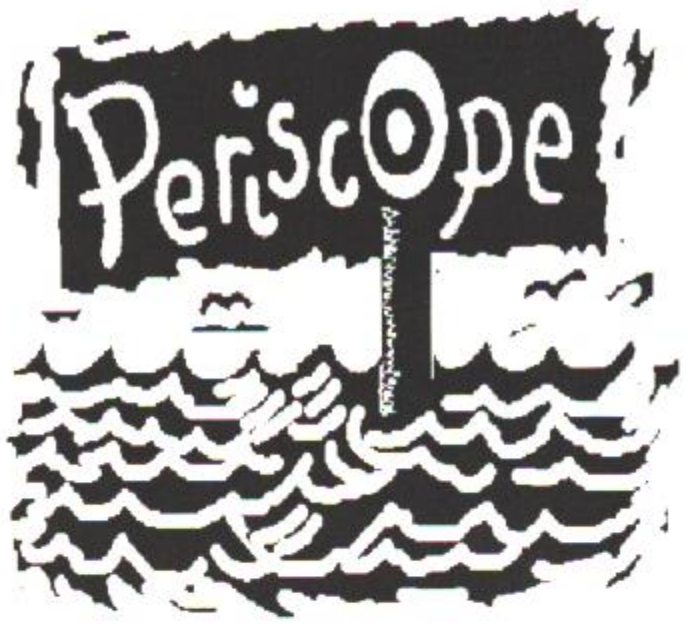
Labour supporters may feel wary at times about tangling with "science". But on this issue, they can rest assured that their beliefs are sound: the claims of these particular 'scientists' indeed lack any scientific status and are racist in motivation. All this raises serious and urgent ethical issues. At present, parents have no veto to prevent 'race scientists' from misusing data on their young children's performance in school. Why should Black British subjects be expected to co-operate in so-called 'race-differences research'? Why should Black or Jewish academics or students have to work with or study under avowed 'scientific racists'? Such topics, which cannot be dismissed under the simple rubric of 'academic freedom', now need to be debated and clarified. ❑

● Graham Richards is past Chair of the British Psychological Society History and Philosophy Section. His latest book, *Putting Psychology in its Place: A Critical Historical Overview*, has just been published by Routledge and costs £11.99. He is also nearing completion of a full-length book on 'scientific racism' — *'Race' and Racism in Psychology: An Historical Enquiry*, also for Routledge.



Nick Small, Edinburgh Central CLP, reports:
Following the publication of *The 'g' Factor*, 90% of the students lectured by Chris Brand voted to request that the university remove him from teaching duties. Students are boycotting his lectures until this is granted. *The 'g' factor* and Brand's subsequent comments in the media outlining his pride in being 'a scientific racist' are only the last in a long list of racist and misogynistic behaviour. Since the issue has gained prominence several women students and former students have claimed that he has sexually harassed them. Nor is Brand an eccentric and harmless academic. He has links with far right groups advocating eugenics in the third world. Caroline Rettie, the newly elected Students' Welfare Convenor, said, "Students have a right to learn in a non-intimidatory atmosphere. That's why Brand must go."

● Please send messages of support to: EUSA, 5-2 Bristo Square, Edinburgh.



Too kind

The *New Statesman*'s lurch to the right, complete with free offer of Mandelson's book, has begun with a purge of nearly all its decent journalists. Following editor Steve Platt and deputy editor Paul Anderson into the real world are, among others, Nyta Mann and Mat Coward.

Victor of too many *Briefing* quizzes to mention, Nyta recently gave *Tribune* her opinion of Blair's babies: "They are shiny suited whipper-snappers who, on the strength of a few years in the wide world of student politics and a spaniel-like loyalty to the Labour leader, have managed to insinuate themselves into employment all over Westminster. The younger ones work as gofers for Labour MPs, the older ones as public relations advisers, lobbyists, and yes, journalists. Yet all of them are the political equivalent of a nodding-dog and just as interesting."

We wouldn't have been so kind about them, Nyta!

And another thing...

Mat Coward used his last column in *NSS* to make a fascinating confession: "I have tried to dissuade that useless breed 'the left' from the view that the current Labour leadership is nothing more unusual than another bunch of rightwards-drifting careerists when in fact, as has become hideously obvious, the Blairites from Blairyland have nothing in common with our traditional 'left in opposition, right in power' leaders.

Quite simply, they were never Labour. They don't come from Labour families, they don't share Labour values. On the contrary, they represent a group of people who, witnessing the failure of deregulated Thatcherism, rightly feared that this would lead to a marked realignment of the consensus in a socialist direction. Because this would be inimical to their self-perceived class interest, they set out to abolish the Labour Party and replace it with an updated version of the Tory Party."

We couldn't have put it better ourselves...

Photo opportunism

How are **New Labour's press team** getting on in their shiny new offices at Millbank? They could hardly be doing worse than they did stuck in grotty old Wally Road.

Shortly before the recent move the press office organised a photocall at the Commons. **Harriet Harman** - just emerging from the doghouse after her disastrous choice of school - was to meet an eight year old girl from Kent. Hayley Silvester, said the press release, had written to Harman "asking to discuss children's policy".

Even cynical hacks were outraged at this transparent stunt. More worrying for the "colleagues" was the possibility that the right wing press might "Jennifer's Ear" the story; uncovering some Tory relative to slag off the whole thing as an opportunistic publicity ploy.

Within two hours the press team were frantically faxing a cancellation notice calling off the photocall "owing to an unfortunate clash of diary commitments". The event was not rescheduled.

New Labour critiqued

Trenchant criticism of **New Labour** from London University academic **Arthur Lipow**'s new book *Political Parties and Democracy* (Pluto Press, £14.99 paperback): "The Labour Party is moving towards a less democratic, top-down form of organisation using devices, such as membership referendums, which appear democratic but which are instruments of executive manipulation."

Lipow goes on: "Their function is to confer democratic legitimacy on the actions of the leadership; the results could lead to the destruction of the Party Conference and the representative, democratic structure of the Party which ties it to the trade union movement and to ordinary rank-and-file members. Taking control out of the hands of the 'activists', who are assumed not to be accountable or representative of the membership, and subjecting decisions to a leadership poll of the membership is an attack on democracy, as Sidney and Beatrice Webb explained so many years ago, in *Industrial Democracy*. But, of course, everyone knows now that the Webbs were only 'middle-class socialists' - an epithet which seems particularly ironic when mouthed in hearty populist style by other middle-class socialists."

This won't get you invited to dinner parties in Islington, Arthur!

Toilet tissue

Periscope has already charted the machinations behind the launch of New Labour's unofficial in-flight journal, ***Progress***. The first issue has been despatched to tens of thousands of unwitting Labour Party members, many of whom have reported narcoleptic attacks while perusing its drearily designed pages. The mix of unabashed Blair-licking with reprints from such hard-to-find specialist organs as the *Observer* and the *Sunday Times* has been turning stomachs across the movement. Relief will not be found in the pages of *Renewal*, which temptingly describes itself as "the only journal to champion the transformation towards new Labour". Do the national dailies no longer count as "journals"?

Renewal will be familiar to *LLB* readers as the brainchild of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. Thanks to an unholy partnership, the mind-bendingly dull quarterly has been "relaunched" with an editorial board including the Leader Himself and the even more important David Miliband as well as the totally unimportant Clare Short. The rag is published from the impeccably Thatcherite premises of lobbyists Lowe Bell, under the aegis of former Gordon Brown adviser Neal Lawson.

Less than stiff competition for the new Blairier-than-Blair *New Statesman*, perhaps, but *LLB* will offer a complimentary copy of our rather livelier magazine to the person who sends in a copy of either *Progress* or *Renewal* and best completes, in no more than fifteen words, a tiebreak sentence which begins "I think that Tony Blair is a socialist because..."

Roll of dishonour

Eight Labour MPs opposed lifting the **ban on lesbians and gay men serving in the military**: **Don Dixon** (Jarrow), **Bruce George** (Walsall S), **Terry Lewis** (Worsley), **John Morris** (Aberavon), **Dr John Reid** (Motherwell N - a junior defence spokesperson), **Peter Snape** (West Bromwich E), **John Spellar** (Warley W), **Dennis Turner** (Wolverhampton SE).

Obituary: Albert Meltzer

On May 7th, Albert Meltzer died, aged 76. Albert was renowned as a class fighter and last year published his autobiography, *I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels* (see *LLB* March '96). He challenged Emma Goldman on the issue of boxing at the age of 15; fought the fascists at Cable Street, and gave practical support by shipping arms to the anarchists in the Spanish Revolution. He became the inspiration for a younger generation of anarchists drawn into revolutionary politics during the Thatcher era.

As an anarcho-syndicalist he had many disagreements with the *LLB* supporters he met in the last years of his life (it could hardly be called a 'retirement') in Lewisham. But he was always keen to debate with us in Lewisham Labour Club, and listened to our arguments before finding very good historical reasons why our work in the Labour Party could be mocked! He always respected our work on campaigns such as the Poll Tax and during industrial disputes and was a constant source of good humour during the bleak times. Above all, we learnt much from him about how to conduct debates between different political organisations, how to value your comrades, and how to laugh at yourself as well as with others. Our sympathies are extended to his comrades in the Solidarity Federation and Black Flag: he will be sorely missed.

● **Dave Whitton**: sadly our Motamole, Dave Whitton has died. Next month we will give an appreciation of Dave's life and his work in the disability movement.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Your letters are welcome but please keep them under 300 words. Please send a PC floppy if possible.

Write to:

Labour Left Briefing
PO Box 2378
London E5 9QU



I am writing to clarify the content of my article 'ILP, SLP: not the same', which appeared in the May issue of *LLB*.

First, I support the view that a new socialist party is needed in Britain. Hanging on to the left of the Labour Party has been tried by socialists for 96 years now, has failed and should be abandoned.

However, I do not believe that the SLP, with its 'top-down' structure and obsession with a class analysis of capitalist societies, is the type of party that is needed. Instead the party should grow from the 'bottom-up' and should be equipped with an ideology that is not class-based.

Thus my disagreements with Tony Dale are much more fundamental than my edited article suggests. I feel that the SLP will fail, but for completely different reasons than the failure of the ILP after it left the Labour Party. Tony, by comparing the two events, is able to suggest that the Labour left now needs to unite and create something similar to the Socialist League of the 1930s.

In complete contrast, I believe that what is needed in Britain, and has been needed for a number of years, is the creation of a party that is explicitly committed to socialism, which is equipped with an ideology that reflects the true nature of advanced capitalist societies and which takes Parliament and local government as seriously as it does all the other forms of political expression.

Hence, my contribution was not a minor quibble with a comrade from Labour's left. Instead, it was based upon a much more fundamental disagreement on the way forward for socialists in Britain.

Paul Allender
Willesden

Paul Allender in May's *LLB* criticised my recent article on the 1932 ILP split from Labour: "To compare the momentous occasion of the ILP leaving the Labour Party with Arthur Scargill setting up the Socialist Labour Party is absurd."

I agree with him that the SLP pales into insignificance compared to the 1930s split by the ILP. The conclusion therefore is that if the mighty split by the ILP failed then what future for the SLP?

As I wrote in April's *LLB*: "If you had to bet on a left split succeeding in creating a mass socialist party, the money would have been on the ILP." The ILP failed in this project and should act as a warning to the SLP or others.

The British far left has continually underestimated the allegiance of workers to Labour. Rumours of the death of the Labour Party have been greatly exaggerated ever since its birth. Any mass movement for socialism will come out of the labour movement and not from the growth of a fringe socialist party such as the 1990s SLP or the 1930s ILP.

Many on the left who may have been attracted to the idea of the SLP have been repelled by its bureaucratic structure and lack of democracy. Paul, in a letter in February's *LLB*, wrote: "Despite these serious reservations, Scargill is to be congratulated." Now he sees the SLP as doomed. But what attitude would Paul take if the SLP's constitution was more democratic or the timing was better? Even in that scenario the project of a split to form a socialist party is fatally flawed.

It would be foolish to say that the Labour Party will remain as one party indefinitely but it is equally foolish for socialists to premise their activity on the belief that the left cannot win the battle to reform Labour into a socialist party. The battle for the Labour Party might lead to a split in the future but any split which does not create a mass socialist party with a real base in the trade unions is doomed to failure.

The ILP and other left splits from Labour have been sectarian in the sense that Karl Marx defined sectarianism: socialists counterposing the interests of their group to the interests of the workers' movement as a whole.

Tony Dale
Manchester

Chris Knight's review of Robin Dunbar's *Grooming, Gossip and the Evolution of Language* misses the point that, on Dunbar's analysis, New Labour should be set to abandon spoken language in favour of symbolic communication - more easily manipulated than language. This would also please the many post-modernists in New Labour's ranks.

This aside, however, I think we should be wary of theories of language based on gossip. The analysis of James C. Scott which underlines the subversive uses of rumour is nearer to the mark from a socialist standpoint.

Keith Flett
London

Dan Carter's article on BSE raises a number of points, but comes to some dubious conclusions.

First, calling for the whole British herd to be slaughtered is wasteful and ignores the real cause of BSE - greed from major farmers and the feed industry. There is no point whatsoever in destroying organic herds, nor for that matter certain certified herds, such as Aberdeen Angus, which have a wholly vegetarian diet. I don't eat meat but I think it's unrealistic to expect the majority of Britons to suddenly change to what would amount to a vegan diet (no cows means no milk, cheese or butter as well as no beef).

Of course, the immediate blame for this lies with the Government for not reacting sooner to all the warning signals, and for countenancing bovine cannibalism in the first place.

Improved inspections won't solve the problem any more than mass slaughter will. When I worked in a meat factory, there were plenty of corners cut. For instance, when burgers had too high a bacteria count for the Co-op, they were simply repacked as Bejams. If CJD does develop into an epidemic, we can be clear about who will be suffering - those who are too poor to buy decent cuts of meat who make up their protein intake with burgers, sausages and other forms of crap food. They might not be the best food for them, but when you're broke, they taste a lot better to most people than lettuce leaves on Ryvita.

Sadly, the effect of the beef scare will just make more people eat chickens - another case of cannibalism waiting to rebound more seriously on the flesh-eating public.

The only safe solution is to have food production in the control of the workers involved, and farming responsive to the real needs of society rather than the whims of big business. The UK has the smallest percentage of organic farms in Europe. While the EU may push Britain more in this direction as a result of the BSE crisis, it will never be far enough, because of land use issues, entrenched business interests, etc. Perhaps a revolution is what's needed?

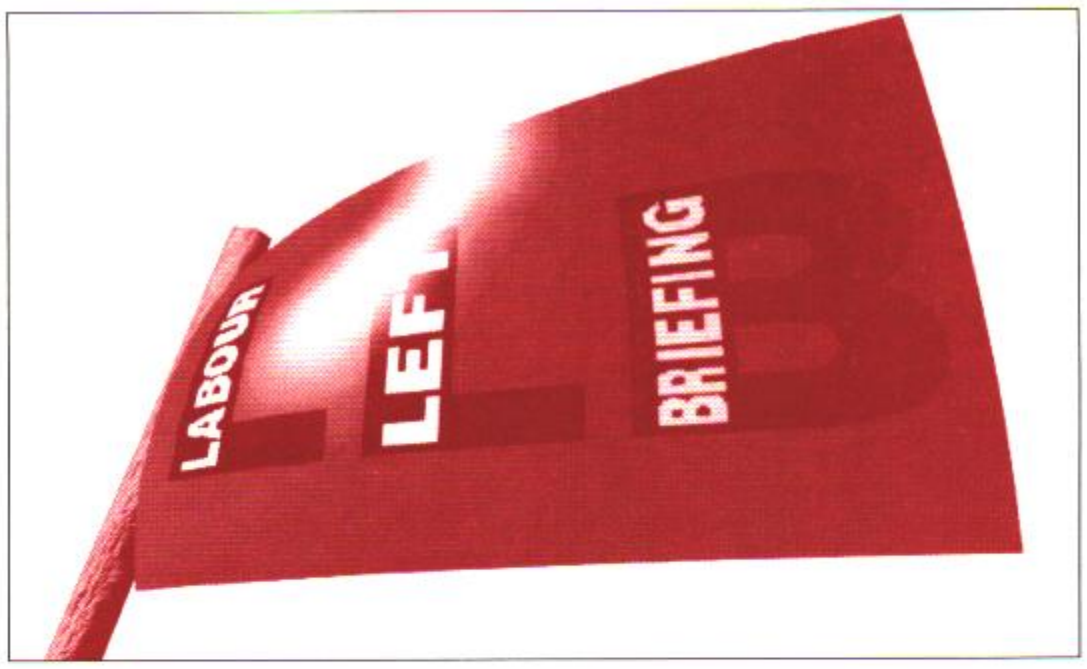
Mike Ward,
London

A.O.B.

"Tony Blair does some amazingly good Tory things ... We might be forced to say that he's doing the Tory job better than the Tories and therefore you have to vote for him." - **Richard Addis, Editor, *Daily Express*.**

"If you let attractive women into the workforce, they'll be wooed. They're fair game for anybody to have a go at them, because they're mobile and they dress to kill." - **Dr Adrian Rogers, Tory PPC for Exeter.**

"You join me at the ballot box and I'll join you on the streets when the time comes." - **Billy Bragg, debating the need to register to vote, May Day Festival, Clapham Common.**



Fight the Asylum Bill

Neil Gerrard MP gives a progress report on one of the Tories' most evil pieces of racist legislation.

THE ASYLUM and Immigration Bill is still grinding its way through the House of Lords, and looks likely to be back for its final stages in the Commons in a few weeks. Of course at that point all the Commons can consider are any Lords amendments, so it's quite likely there will be little opportunity for further Parliamentary challenge to some of the most obnoxious parts of one of the nastiest bills of recent years.

As well as the Bill, there are the benefit cuts, which are already happening. Advice and aid agencies are reporting growing numbers of asylum seekers who have been left penniless through loss of benefits and are depending on charity hand-outs and begging to survive.

Most of the Labour MPs who served on the Commons Committee for the Bill represent constituencies with many refugees and black and Asian residents. We know from the cases we deal with daily what the effects will be, and we argued against every single clause of the Bill.

The 'white list', the loss of appeal rights, and the proposals to remove asylum seekers to so called safe third countries have been widely reported, and the arguments against these proposals are well known.

But equally important parts of the Bill have had less media attention. The clause making it a criminal offence to employ an illegal immigrant will turn every person from an ethnic minority into an object of suspicion as far as some employers are concerned. Not enough has yet been done to highlight the pernicious effects on race relations and the discrimination which will be generated.

The increased powers of entry and search given to the police will mean more 'fishing' raids, more innocent people having their houses broken into, more threats of deportations by force.

In the coming months we have to do what we can to support individual asylum seekers, and keep the political campaign going.

We must highlight cases of people affected. We must offer practical support to refugees who are losing rights and ensure that those who lose benefits do not become destitute. Local support groups, working with refugee communities, trade unions and voluntary sector organisations are going to be vital to help the victims of the Bill.

Labour councils must be encouraged to make a positive response, and to use the powers they have under other legislation such as the Children Act to keep refugee families together and off the streets.

It is also vital that political campaigning against this evil Bill doesn't stop when it does become law. There has been a lot of success in building up opposition, and that opposition needs to remain mobilised.

Above all we need to keep the campaign going to make sure that the commitments given to repeal this Bill are turned into action in the early days of a Labour Government, and that asylum seekers do not become forgotten people, and get the justice they deserve. ❑

Onibiyo campaign

THE THREATENED deportation of 20 year old Ade Onibiyo, reported in previous issues of *LLB*, was carried out on Saturday 4th May. Thankfully, Ade - thought to be the youngest person ever to have been detained without trial for more than a year in this country whilst awaiting deportation - was not sent back to Nigeria. Ade's father, UNISON member Abdul Onibiyo, was deported to Nigeria in October and has not been heard from since.

Ade was saved from sharing his father s fate through an offer of temporary asylum from the Government of Guyana. In a letter of thanks to supporters in this country, Ade urges the continuation of the campaign to reunite his family in the United Kingdom, where his mother, Joyce and sisters, Toro and Yemi, still face deportation. The campaign has incurred considerable expense and donations are desperately needed - to Onibiyo Family Campaign c/o Lambeth UNISON, 6a Acre Lane, London SW2.

No justice for the Lawrence family

THE TUC Black Workers Conference in Cardiff in May heard TUC deputy general secretary, Brendan Barber pay tribute to the courage and dignity of Neville and Doreen Lawrence, parents of murdered architecture student Stephen Lawrence, in the aftermath of the withdrawal of their private prosecution of the alleged killers of their son.

Azim Hagee, addressing the Conference on behalf of the Lawrence family, explained how police delays in arresting those identified to them as responsible for the killing had led to a situation in which the identification evidence of Stephen's friend Duwayne, who was with him when he was stabbed to death by a gang of racist thugs, was ruled inadmissible.

This meant that the jury never got to hear about the evidence linking the alleged killers, Neil Acourt, Gary Dobson and Luke Knight, to the murder. Nor did they see the video surveillance of the three which had been described by Magistrate David Cooper as showing "deeply held emphatic and sadistic loathing of all black people."

Azim asked delegates to remember Stephen in the words of his mother, "his spirit burns bright, burns torrid orange in our hearts."