LABOUR LEFT BRIEFING

LLB

February 1997

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Attack the Tories - not the homeless!

inside...

- Korea exclusive
- Euro-supplement
- Hillingdon sell-out
- Liverpool dockers

Labour Left Briefing

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Begging the question

AS THE daily decomposition of the Conservative Government continues apace, Labour is heading for a general election victory. Heads are being kept down and lips buttoned up tight. But a host of dilemmas - for the Labour leadership and for rank and file Party and union members - loom ever larger on the horizon, and virtually every fresh declaration from the leader's clique gives greater cause for concern.

Tony Blair's New Year message to the victims of eighteen years of Tory rule was "Get out of my sight!". It was rich coming from this self-styled "Christian" who not so long ago lectured the Labour Party about not "passing by on the other side of the road". Party members who delude themselves that our leader was merely expressing a proper abhorrence of the phenomenon of homelessness should read the notorious *Big Issue* interview. The language and tone are frighteningly ominous.



Was it not striking that given the chance to speak at length about the question of homelessness, Blair said nothing about expanding or improving the housing stock, about restoring benefits to 16-17 year olds, about reforming the Jobseekers' Allowance or reversing the disaster that is "care in the community"? Party members will search the text in vain for any expression of compassion for the homeless or outrage at the policies that have put them on the street.

The frantic attempts to disclaim the harsh implications of the *Big Issue* interview suggest that the leadership clique is both less confident and less competent than the media mythology would have us believe.

At times it seems that the leader's pronouncements are calculated to dismay Labour Party members. In the current climate, many are willing to swallow hard and get on with winning the election. This is understandable, but there is more here than a crude attempt to appeal to Middle England's most heartless instincts. Blair is constructing an ideology that blames the poor for their own poverty, that victimises the victims, and thus justifies the abandonment of collective responsibility for social welfare, and the withdrawal of the state from the duty of economic intervention.

The desire to shift the burden of social failures on to the shoulders of individuals was also clear in the evangelical fervour for homework and the emphasis on parental responsibility. Homework may be a useful educational tool, and parents should be involved not only in their own children's education but in the life of the school as a whole. But in the absence of any plans to invest in schools or teachers, Blair's insistence that "education is our number one priority" is merely another soundbite and will be seen as such.

The press conference at which Blair declared his "commitment" to education saw the launch of "Leading Britain into the future", the Party's pre-general election campaign document. Almost unnoticed amid the verbose waffle about "the future not the past" (is there a choice?) and the pledge of "strong leadership" were assurances that Labour would promote a "flexible" labour market. "Our proposals for change will not import the over-rigidity of the European labour market." Worse yet: under Blair the labour market will be "less regulated than that of the United States."

As we noted in the last *LLB*, New Labour's economic policy is locked into the false logic of global competitiveness. Within that straitjacket, workers' concerns will always be sacrificed to the demands of the market.

Like George Bush, Blair may find that his pledge not to increase taxes will return to haunt him - probably as soon as Gordon Brown's first budget in November. Even leaving aside the demands of the Maastricht convergence criteria for a single currency, delivering on this pledge will mean severe cuts in public spending and further years of restraint on public sector pay. No wonder the Labour leader is so keen on establishing the get-out clause of "individual responsibility".

Meanwhile preparations continue behind the scenes for coalition with the Liberal Democrats and the grand divorce between the Parliamentary Labour Party and the rest of the labour movement, CLPs and trade unions alike. Moves are afoot to put sweeping constitutional changes to a ballot of members during the honeymoon period that will follow a Labour election victory. So even while we strive for that essential victory, we should be making our own preparations for the battles to come. ❑

Zero Tolerance - little justice

Alex Taylor runs out of tolerance with Mr Blair and his attacks on the homeless.

HARD THOUGH it is to blame him for leaving Jack Straw to count paper clips, Tony Blair's latest pronouncements on homelessness and 'zero tolerance' policing make you wonder why Michael Howard is so unpopular. Compared to Tony and Jack, Howard is in danger of finding himself as one of the great reforming Home Secretaries of our time.

Asked by the *Big Issue* about so-called 'zero tolerance' policing, Blair's support was unequivocal: 'Yes I do. It is important that you say we don't tolerate the small crimes'. In a peculiarly peevish *Guardian* article, he complained of 'misrepresentation', writing:



'My comments on crime and homelessness were firm, and consistent...That approach is not right wing, nor is it driven by what the Tories do. It is just right.'

Both pieces are vintage Blair. Take a muscular-sounding policy of dubious North American parentage, oversell it as the 'tough but tender' solution to an apparently intractable social problem, and wait for the votes to pile up. As the prophet says, 'Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime'.

The tortuous history of 'zero tolerance' policing dates back to two Reaganite American scholars, Wilson and Kelling. They argued that the police had a critical part to play in reinforcing public order in communities 'tipping' out of control. Relying on a single piece of 13-year-old experimental social psychology, they argued that, left unrepaired, 'broken windows' become potent symbols of communities where 'no one cares'. In allowing their 'natural' defences against 'incivility', vandalism and petty crime to fall, Wilson and Kelling believed such communities left themselves wide open to a 'criminal invasion.'

The 'broken windows' theorists were widely criticised for their cavalier attitude towards civil liberties, explicitly condoning 'informal' or 'extralegal' policing methods and failing to distinguish between the unambiguously criminal and the merely anti-social. Their confidence in the ability of the police to resist the temptation to 'become the agents of neighbourhood bigotry' seemed misplaced.

Their ideas were hauled out of the academic closet and put to work on the New York subway in 1990 by William J Bratton. In Bratton's tender grasp, 'broken windows' theory became 'zero tolerance' policing. After a blitz on fare dodgers and other underground miscreants, Bratton was made Commissioner of the New York Police Department by Republican mayor, Rudolph Giuliani.

Between 1994 and his much-publicised resignation in April 1996, the relentlessly egocentric Bratton claimed to have beaten New York's serious crime problem. The vertiginous homicide rate was halved while robberies fell by a third. By clamping down on beggars, street cyclists, small-time dope dealers and men who prefer a wall to a urinal, Bratton was credited with making the streets of the Big Apple safer.

But putting the sudden transformation of New York down solely to zero tolerance policing is a first class over-simplification. To begin with, zero tolerance was no more than one element in a package of reforms brought in by Bratton. Equally important were the impetus given to information technology in mapping crime and police activity, and accountability for precinct commanders. Many other US cities have seen similarly spectacular reductions in homicide rates, leading many to conclude that growing stability in the crack-cocaine market, and an end to the murderous 'turf wars' of the late 1980s, are more significant factors than the introduction of 'zero tolerance' policing.

More controversial still is the applicability of this to Britain, where London's murder rate remains eight times less than that of New York and firearms are relatively rare. Nor can 'zero tolerance' strategies based on cleansing public space of beggars and 'squeegee merchants' assuage the private fears of women returning home to violent partners, children struggling to survive in abusive families, or black people faced with daily harassment.

Zero tolerance policing strategies have been tried in Strathclyde, Hartlepool and King's Cross. The usual grandiose claims have been made for its success, but even its most ardent supporters admit that such high levels of activity cannot be maintained for long. Others fear the long-term impact of zero tolerance on police-public relations.

After a six-week operation in London's Notting Hill, the local police commander feared the public would end up having 'no tolerance with the police'. In September, *Police Review* had the usually bullish Chief Constable, Charles Pollard, warning against ill-considered clampdowns on minor offences and preferring a longer term view with more 'imaginative' ways of dealing with crime and offenders. Bratton himself has conceded that zero tolerance is no 'silver bullet' waiting to be fired through the heart of urban crime.

So, once again, we have the spectacle of the Labour leadership rushing to endorse a dangerously authoritarian brand of policing in the hope of a good headline. Where chief constables have feared to tread, Blair and Straw rush in. As the leader's speech writers might put it: 'New Labour. Zero tolerance. Little justice. No sense.'

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Brief honeymoon

It's one thing to lead the Opposition with public opinion on your side. It's quite another to run a government. Mike Marqusee looks forward to a Labour victory and catalogues the potential crises awaiting a Blair government.

AN INCOMING Labour Government will enjoy one priceless advantage: up to a year of Tory blood letting. Disappointments and frustrations will be attributed to the legacy of Tory mismanagement. The electorate and the labour movement will be inclined to accept this rationale. The big question is: for how long?

Another priceless advantage is a hefty majority. A Labour majority of 40 or less would pose a number of dilemmas very quickly, especially if the Lib-Dems take more seats than current polls indicate. Blair would take action against left dissidents at the first opportunity and enter into a coalition with the Lib-Dems.

The current talks with the Lib-Dems on constitutional reform are intended, at least in part, to lay the groundwork for a deal should the balance of Parliamentary forces require it. The Lib Dems will be more demanding than was David Steel during the 1977-1979 Lib-Lab pact. They will be aware that, for a variety of reasons, Blair would prefer doing business with them than with the left of his own party. However, any imaginable deal would run into resistance on several fronts. Certainly it will be difficult to get PR through the House of Commons. It's simply not in the interests of the majority of MPs.

We can expect a succession of commissions and inquiries into a host of long-standing quandaries: education, criminal justice, pensions and benefits. But in a number of critical areas, Blair will be compelled to come up with immediate answers.

In June, the EU Inter-Governmental Conference will assemble to take fateful decisions about Economic and Monetary Union. The referendum pledge now shared by all parties will keep discussion of EMU out of the general election. But a Blair Government must enter the IGC with a purpose and a plan.

Despite the muted scepticism of Robin Cook and the caution of Gordon Brown, Blair would prefer to push Britain into the centre of EMU as soon as possible. But how on earth could a Labour Government meet the Maastricht convergence criteria?

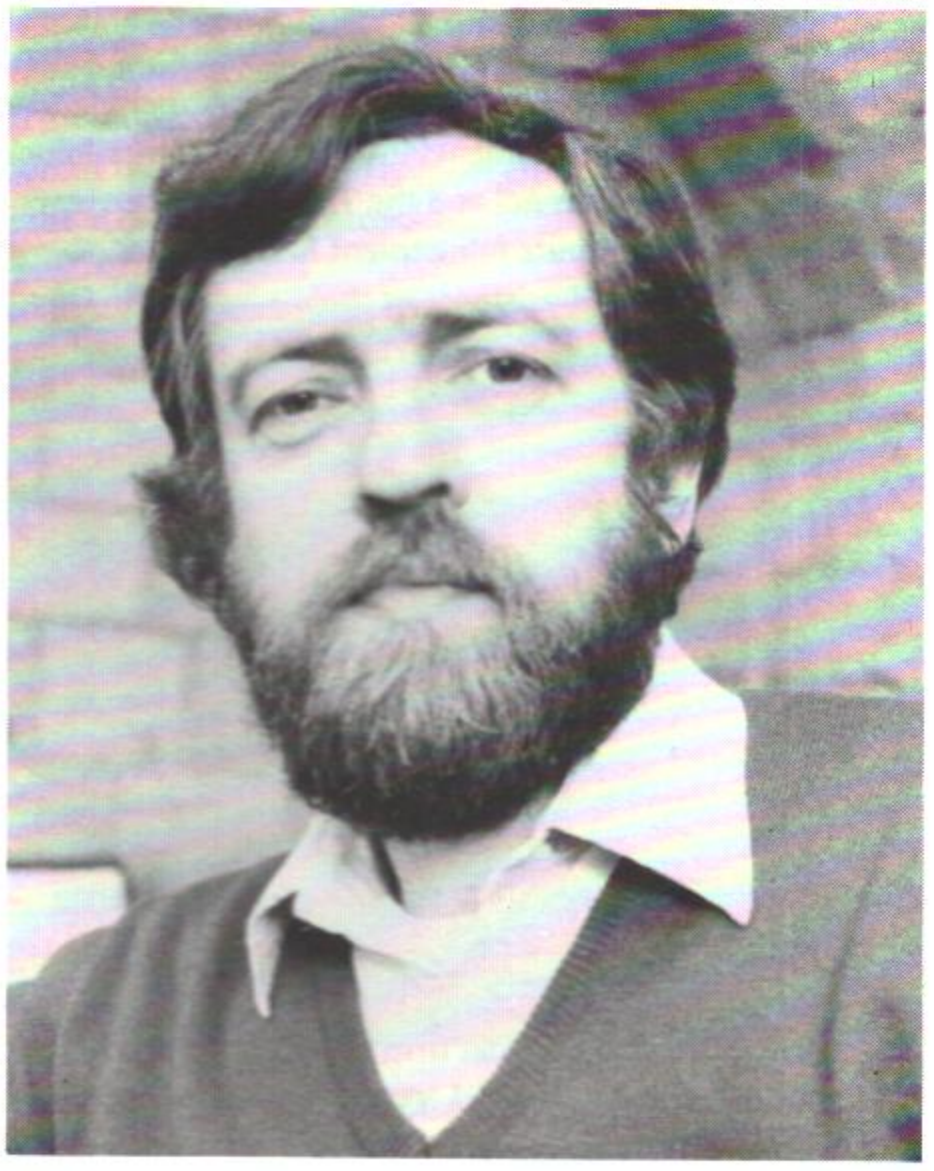
The Tories will leave Labour with a massive fiscal headache. If Blair's pledge not to increase taxes is to be honoured, and even more if Brown's dream of a new 10p starting rate is to become reality, then Labour's first budget will have to cut public spending. Brown will probably try to minimise this by accounting measures, including assumptions of higher tax revenue on the basis of revised projections for economic growth. The instinct will be to postpone crisis but the ability to do so will be determined by factors out of the Government's control.

At a recent PLP meeting Blair insisted: "This Labour Government will not have any trouble with the City". But his courtship of business interests means that they will expect more from him than from other Labour Prime Ministers. The pressure will be relentless and Blair will be vulnerable because he will be reluctant to turn elsewhere for support.

November will also see the annual uprating of benefits. Over the last five years the foundations for a Labour-led deconstruction of the welfare state have been laid. Universalism will be out, 'targeting' will be in. Pension rights will come under the hammer. Although Britain has been largely exempt from the upheavals that have greeted spending cuts on the continent, it seems unlikely such quiescence will last forever. Blair's response to resistance will probably determine the fate of his government and of the Labour Party.

Blair is aware of the challenge he could face on this front, which is why he is likely to move quickly to complete the New Labour 'project'. Proposals for changes in the Party constitution, including the dissolution of local democratic structures and a break with the trade unions, might well be put to a ballot of Party members in the autumn. Simultaneously, the Government will rush through state funding for political parties, with the enthusiastic backing of the Lib-Dems .

A Low Pay Commission will be set up immediately after the election in an attempt to placate the unions. A safe bet would be that the Commission will call for a minimum wage (hedged round with exemptions) slightly above the level of income support (say £3.50 an hour). This is unlikely to satisfy either business or the unions, who will then be told to accept below inflation pay rises.



"Many Labour Party members must be surprised that we go to the expense and trouble of having an annual Labour Conference and then find out that all our decisions are open to negotiation with a Party that commands less than 20% support in the opinion polls". - Jeremy Corbyn MP.

Crunch time could be April 1998, when the Labour Government will have its first round of pay deals without the outgoing Tory Government to blame.

Finally, Ireland: bi-partisan drift is sustainable in opposition but in government Labour will have to take the initiative or deal with the consequences when others take matters into their own hands. Does anyone have any idea how a Blair Government would respond to another Drumcree?

What all this means for Labour activists is that the period of rest following general election exertions will be brief. The summer will be demanding: organising to defeat moves to break up the Party and to resist attacks on the welfare state. ❑

Korean workers

Fighting anti-union laws

Paul Field, Dartford CLP, analyses the shackles that are facing the South Korean trade union movement.

ACCORDING TO the BBC's Asia correspondent Matt Frei, Kim Yong Sam's new laws simply extend to Korean employers powers to dismiss workers which exist in every other country. In fact the amendments introduced to the Labour Standards Act and the Trade Union and Labour Dispute Adjustment Acts threaten the continued existence of the entire Korean labour movement. Taken next to the reinstatement of the state's authority to 'investigate, arrest and interrogate' political dissidents also adopted by Kim's ruling party at the secret predawn session of the national assembly on December 26th, they would extinguish even the limited degree of democracy won through popular struggle in 1987.

The newly amended law:

- expands massively the scope for an employer to use scab labour during a dispute to the point where a parent company can send in 'replacement labour' to a subcontracting firm if a strike in that firm affects its economic performance.
- denies collective action and imposes compulsory arbitration on a new category of "essential public enterprises", including water, electricity, gas, oil, railways, "urban transportation business", medical services, banking and communication business.
- introduces a penalty of three years imprisonment and/or 30 million won fine for striking workers who are deemed to have used "violence, threats and other forcible action as a means to appeal or persuade" non-strikers. This clause was ruled out by the Presidential Commission on Industrial Relations set up to review the labour laws precisely because of the dangers of abuse by employers. The Korean Trade Union Confederation predicts that this provision will lead to a drastic increase in imprisonment of unionists for basic union activities and exercise of the right to strike.
- bans strikes that may "cause damage to production facilities or the deformation or corruption of raw material". As the PCIR earlier acknowledged, such a "restriction" is unacceptable because in industries such as chemicals it would outlaw any industrial action.
- extends the prohibition on violence to include "the occupation of production and other important facilities" punishable by three years in prison or a 30 million won fine.
- stipulates that "an employer is not allowed to provide wage payment for the period of industrial action". The KTUC has pointed out that the attempt to legislate such a ban is unprecedented. It is a commonplace of industrial relations worldwide that such matters are decided on the basis of collective bargaining between the parties concerned.
- outlaws all "unofficial" or "wildcat" strikes. As the KTUC has argued "it is not difficult to envisage the breakout of a strike in a no-union workplace or where there is a so called 'yellow union' which lacks legitimacy or is deemed not to be representative". Indeed anyone familiar with the history of the democratic unions in Korea will know that it was precisely on the basis of such unofficial strike action by 3 million workers that the "minju" unions were originally formed during the social upheaval of 1987.
- institutes a moratorium of five years which states "it is disallowed until December 31st, 2001 to form a new trade union whose membership is the same as the existing one". Once again this is directed at the democratic unions whose strength has been built by challenging the legitimacy of old style "yellow" unionism compromised by years of class collaboration.
- reinstates the ban on political activities by trade unions.
- continues to prohibit the formation of a genuine trade union among teachers and denies recognition to the Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union.
- denies recognition to a trade union if it "allows a person who is not a worker to be a member". Workers are defined as anyone who lives on a wage, salary or any other income. The KTUC points out this will create enormous problems over the status of "dismissed workers". By not allowing the issue of membership to be decided by the union itself, the law undermines the very principle of freedom of association.
- maintains the strict definition for a federation of trade unions designed to outlaw those democratic union federations that stretch across the giant Chaebol conglomerates and unite workers in such diverse commercial activities as shipbuilding, automobiles, banking and petrochemicals. Groups like the militant Hyundai Group Trade Federation have proved adept at simultaneously mobilising Hyundai workers in hospitals, insurance companies, shipyards and car factories to defend their fellow workers under attack in another subsidiary. It is through the structures provided by these union federations that the KTUC has so skilfully co-ordinated the general strike.
- defines the practice of employers providing wages to a full time union officer as "unfair" and pledges to stop it by 2001.

By freeing employers of the responsibility of providing wages, allowance and leave to workers' representatives at company level, the law introduces a legislative regulation not found in any other country. The KTUC argues that it exploits ruthlessly the current enterprise union system. This enforced system prevents the labour movement from securing a sound financial base by requiring each enterprise union to operate integrally with its own full time officers and all its activities financed through membership dues. The new requirement that they should also pay the wages of officers will have a devastating effect; unions in companies with less than 100 employers and under 1 million won per month in dues make up 63% of all unions in Korea. The KTUC concludes that it "can only be perceived as an attempt to emasculate the trade union movement before it transforms itself into a powerful industrial structure".

Finally the new security law, which was totally overlooked in Frei's wretched dispatches, extends to the notorious Agency for National Security Planning extensive power to spy on Korean citizens.

The law restores the agency's authority to arrest and interrogate people making favourable comments about or belonging to

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show the way

Exclusive interview:

"Strengthening our forces"

Paul Field spoke to Kwang Ho Lee, chief editor of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions' weekly newspaper at its offices in Seoul. Since the General Strike called by the KCTU began three weeks ago, the paper has appeared daily as a strike bulletin. Myoung Joon Kim acted as translator.

Q: How is the strike organised at a local level?
A: The KCTU has both regional and industrial level structures. In Seoul the strike is organised around a regional centre of the different industrial unions. The opinion from the different regional committee leaderships, especially those from Kwanju and Pulsan, is that the relationship between the workers' organisations and the people is stronger than during the 1987 uprising that brought down Chun Doo Whan's military dictatorship.

Q: You have succeeded in mobilising diverse groups of workers such as nurses, bank and insurance personnel, auto workers, shipbuilders and transport workers. How did you achieve such class unity?
A: The Government made it possible. Of course this kind of mass action is based on our organising ability but the Government inadvertently strengthened our forces with such a widesweeping attack. There is scarcely an industry whose workers are not affected by at least one article in the new law. For example, the inclusion of hospitals in the category of "essential services" subject to intervention and compulsory arbitration was an eleventh hour decision by the Government that ran against the recommendations of the Presidential Commission set up to advise on revision of the laws. Each industry sees this new law as very much its own problem.

Q: The strikers have already cost Korean industry $2.9 billion. Still, Kim Yong Sam has not backed down. How do you intend to maintain and intensify the pressure on the Government?
A: There are several reasons why the Government is being so stubborn. The first is the strength of the capitalist lobby. The worst articles of the law were introduced by the Government after the Presidential Commission as a result of pressure from the Chaebol. Samsung played the leading role in pushing for the revisions, which angered Hyundai and Daewoo. For example, even though there are no democratic unions at Samsung they were responsible for reinstating the ban on multiunionism which outlaws KCTU affiliates. Samsung forced this change but Hyundai and Daewoo have suffered most from the strikes this has provoked.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON.

London picket of Korean Air, January 1997.

Second is Kim Yong San's personality. He said he regards the secret introduction of the laws as the first victory in the long battle that will occur between majority and minority partners in the national assembly in the run up to the Presidential elections. There is no clear or simple route to victory for us. Our major concern at this point is to maintain the level of unity that has already been achieved. One problem we face in this is the absence of any strike fund of the kind that exists in unions of other countries. All our energies are devoted to maintaining the struggle front and drawing in new groups of unorganised workers in the struggle.

We are also seeking to intensify public pressure on the Government. Two thousand religious, women's, students' and civic groups have put their names to a statement opposing the labour laws and supporting the strikes. When the KCTU placed an advert in one of the most conservative newspapers in Korea, we were inundated with calls from people asking why we didn't print our bank details for them to make donations.

Q: As a journalist, how do you react to the BBC's description of the strikers as "a privileged group" reacting against Kim Yong Sam's reasonable labour reforms?
A: In that case, these reports are the most humiliating case of journalistic bias in the BBC's history! ❑

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groups sympathetic to North Korea. Kim Yong Sam's rationale for such measures is that some 40,000 'hard core leftists' have now become a serious national security threat.

However, even that bastion of cold war reaction *The New York Times* has described the move as "a damaging blow" to Korean democracy aimed more at "university students and other government critics" than "dangerous spies and infiltrators". It accuses the Korean Government of introducing the new security provisions in an attempt to stifle critics of the Government's record and influence the forthcoming election in favour of an ally of Mr Kun, an act reminiscent of "the authoritarian patterns of Korea's past".

A sign of grace

Retired Leeds teacher Bob Spooner examines the real efforts being made to improve school performance sadly neglected by Labour's policy makers.

DAVID BLUNKETT has 'hinted' that Labour may scrap proposed primary school tables based on the eleven-plus SATs. For this furtive sign of grace we must be profoundly thankful. Perhaps he has understood the inequity of league tables all along, though giving saving money as his motive.

In a primary school I know, more than six weeks of the last term were spent rehearsing past papers and tests. Additionally, in the hour before each test (and in the time between them), "useful" definitions were learned by heart and 'helpful' processes revised, which by chance came up in the test. The pupils probably did marginally better, but at the price of abandoning the timetable and losing interest. The governors saw it as a necessary evil if it increased the school roll. In most eleven-plus tests in the age of selection there was an age-weighting, but not now despite some eleven-month age gaps. The motive is not to give parents information about their children's progress, but to reflect social intake and invite the sort of social selection that has bedeviled secondary education.

The media recently focused on a five-year-old scheme at the multi-ethnic Grange secondary school in Bradford, where pupils attend voluntary Sunday sessions. Grange is meant to be a 'failing school' as only about 10% of pupils have been getting five A-Cs at GCSE. In all probability it is one of Bradford's most successful schools.

Conscious of the difficulties many of its pupils have with a low reading age on entry; with English as a second language and with the bias of GCSE against those who don't have a middle-class, white background, the school geared its policy to pupils getting five A-Cs in year twelve, rather than year eleven. Now an astonishing 37% get five A-C's.

None of this is very new. I was head of a secondary modern in 1963 which ran a voluntary school three evenings a week. The staff were paid further education rates and the courses were designed for pupils having difficulty with academic work. We also ran two-year 'O' level courses for thirty pupils and all obtained at least five passes (CSE had not then been invented!). Success in academic work depends greatly on pupils' maturity, emotional state, family encouragement, and the pacing of the course. They need to retain a sense of success and desire to learn. Our national curriculum takes no account of these elements, and the constant pressure it engenders is harmful for many pupils.



PHOTO: DAVID HOFFMAN.

Tony Blair will make sure that every pupil has access to a computer.

Thanks to social selection, those with the greatest difficulties agglomerate in inner city schools. In every city a number of 'Ridings' equivalents are ready to burst into the media.

Ignorant of their triumphs and disasters, Blair offers them 'successful' heads. There are no such creatures. All heads do some things well and other things badly; they are all dependent on the varied skills of their staff. One hopes that the adulation Blair has received in the Tory press has not blinded him to this fact. Had he heeded the collective wisdom of Party members, we would be going into the next election committed to abolishing tests and tables and with a realistic programme designed to end social selection and serve the interest of all our pupils.

Had Blair done his homework he would have a reasonable contract to offer voters instead of the mish-mash of trivia that will stir no one's passion but his own.

Abortion at the election

How likely is abortion to become an issue at the next General Election? 50 anti-choice candidates may stand and the Catholic Church has also declared its position - what influence will this have? Leonora Lloyd reports.

THE MAIN political parties have not surprisingly declared they do not want abortion to become an election issue. A big majority of voters for all the main parties are pro-choice, and when Parliament last had the chance to vote in Government time, it too supported liberalisation rather than further restrictions.

A recent poll commissioned by the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) showed that over half want abortion to be available on request in the first three months of pregnancy and a further third were in favour of current legislation, requiring two doctors' permission. 70% said their voting intentions would not be determined by their chosen candidate's view on abortion.

Harrod's owner, Mohamed Al Fayed, is bank-rolling 50 candidates for the new Pro-Life Alliance party. If 50 anti-choice candidates (the number needed to qualify for an election broadcast) stand, abortion will become an election issue. NAC is producing postcards to send to candidates reminding them that those who are pro-choice also have votes and is planning action to let Harrod's customers know of Al Fayed's stance. NAC last year launched a campaign which, among other aims, seeks to ensure that everyone is aware of the current limitations - a very necessary campaign, as the poll showed that nearly 60% did not know that two doctors are needed.

- Support NAC by joining and getting your organisation to affiliate. Phone 0171-923-4976 for details.

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Labour's health policy unveiled

Smith buys a turkey

by Harry Sloan

WE'VE BECOME used to Labour's figureheads evading hard questions about whether a Blair Government will spend more than the Tories on the welfare state. We recognise the issues can only be resolved through a battle within the labour movement after the election. But when Chris Smith spelled out the Party's latest health policy in December he did even more damage to Labour's electoral platform. New Labour seems to have swallowed virtually all the Tory market-style reforms!

Smith's new policy falls awkwardly between two stools, seeking to placate the vocal lobby of fundholding GPs who have profited lavishly from the Tory market system, while at the same time curbing their worst excesses.

The result is a mish-mash. The policy will create a health service, if anything, that is less accountable and more undemocratic. But it will antagonise the 'fundamentalist' fund-holding GPs, perpetuating an expensive and redundant bureaucratic structure.

Smith proposes:

1) A more equitable formula for allocating NHS funding between districts. Unfortunately, in the absence of additional cash, this is certain to lead to acrimonious battles with 'losing' health authorities, while offering little improvement to the 'winners'.

2) Improved quality of care. Who could be against? But since most issues of quality also involve adequately trained staff, how will this be paid for?

3) Cutting the cost of administration and management. Smith's proposals would, in theory, reduce the frequency of contract negotiations between purchasers and providers to every three or even five years. But he cannot escape the annual budget pressures on public expenditure.

It is hard to see how Smith's plans would make any serious inroads into NHS bureaucracy. Indeed Labour has stressed that few top managers will lose their jobs.

4) NHS-funded health services should continue to be provided by the NHS. But in the same paragraph, Smith goes on to embrace the Tories' Private Finance Initiative, under which NHS hospitals and their support services will be built, owned and run for profit by private consortia.

5) A clearer national framework for service priorities. This sounds horribly like a system of rationing, or excluding certain forms of treatment, along the lines already being introduced by cash-strapped health authorities.

6) The purchaser-provider split. A toned-down version of the internal market that could more accurately be called a distinction between those who order health treatment on behalf of a patient and those who carry it out. The separation of purchasing from the provision of care necessarily increases bureaucracy. There is no evidence that the purchaser-provider split has in any way improved patient care.



PHOTO: DAVID HOFFMAN.

"Tony Blair will make sure that every patient has access to a computer."

7) Locality-based commissioning of services by GPs. In this watered-down version of fund-holding, Smith has swallowed the view that all GPs are patient-centred, dynamic and selfless, ignoring the fact that many fundholders have been encouraged to become money-grabbing small business-people, ignoring the desperate problems in many inner city districts with single-handed, elderly GPs delivering poor and failing care from sub-standard premises.

To make matters worse, Smith offers hard-line fundholders the possibility that they might continue as individual practice fundholders - if they can persuade their colleagues to agree.

8) Greater accountability of the network of NHS quangos, notably Trust boards and health authorities. But whatever happened to Labour's pledge to scrap the Trusts and integrate them back into the NHS, and the idea of elected health authorities?

Smith proposes to replace the existing structure of commissioning health authorities - quango bodies with laid down procedures for public consultation and publication of information - with an even more complex and ramshackle system of Local Commissioning Groups (LCGs) dominated by GPs.

It means that Trusts will for the foreseeable future have to retain the bureaucratic structures to negotiate terms with a potentially massive number of individual LCGs, as well as dealing with what remains of the health authorities, which Smith envisages might be merged into even larger, less accountable units.

Smith has deprived Labour of any policies to grab the enthusiasm of health workers or the wider public and left Labour with policies that few will understand, and fewer will welcome, embracing all the problems of the Tory reforms, and offering nothing in return.

Labour is reduced to semantic arguments with Stephen Dorrell as they attempt to explain the difference between the Tory market and Labour's purchase-provider split. Fund-holders have been appeased but not placated. More retreats on this front are likely. Even the clear pledge to save £100m by cutting bureaucracy has been thrown into doubt. As front-line hospitals face yet another winter crisis, with patients stacked on trolleys, Labour cannot offer any clear promise to halt the closures, open more beds or spend more money.

So bad is Labour's new policy that those of us who remember the fiasco of the last election, when Kinnock's leadership abjectly failed to exploit public anger over opting out hospitals and the market reforms, culminating in the embarrassing irrelevance of the 'Jennifer's Ear' political broadcast, may yet look back on that period as the good old days. ❑

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MP wanted: only Blairites need apply

Mike Davies, Leeds North East CLP, attacks further plans to vet Parliamentary candidates.

TONY BLAIR is to propose establishing a pre-vetted list from which Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) must choose their Parliamentary candidate. This is a necessary and major plank in Blair's continued attack on democracy in the Party.

The project of the British establishment, fronted by Tony Blair, is to destroy the Labour Party as a force in British politics, replacing it with a right-wing social democratic party, leaving ordinary working (or unemployed) people with no political voice. Rather than rely on the Tories beating Labour, they are subverting the Labour Party by destroying its democratic structures.

Three changes are required: state funding of political parties to destroy financial dependence on members and trade unions; destruction of the democratic power of Party Conference and local parties; and a Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) under Blair's total control. This is the origin of the approved list of candidates.

The Liz Davies affair demonstrated Blair's fear of any able and honest MPs who might exercise their own judgement, or even worse, consult their local Party. There is a "common sense" argument for Blair's proposal. Surely it would avoid the disappointment and acrimony of a National Executive failure to endorse a selected candidate? Surely it would be fairer on those seeking selection to avoid this? But if you were a possible candidate, which would you prefer personally and politically? Rejection in advance behind closed doors; or the chance to receive a local Party's support for you and your politics? For a CLP is it better to be told your candidate must be Blairite; or express your politics by choosing a candidate reflecting your views, even if they are later vetoed?

The second argument is that a pre-approved list would only adopt existing local government practice, where Council candidates have to be on the "panel" to be eligible for selection. Apart from the huge difference in power, influence and pressure, the process is quite different. Candidates are interviewed and approved by local elected officers - not Head Office.

At last year's Conference a blueprint for Blair's "reforms" was floated by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, a leadership kite-flying organisation with a laughably small membership. Distributed, in contravention of the rules, by non-delegates wearing media accreditation, the proposals will be accepted by Head Office's "Party into Power" working group.

Coming soon after an expected Labour (at least in name) victory, Blair will attempt to push through the LLC/Party-into-Power proposals at the 1997 Conference. Still in his honeymoon period, with members and CLPs expected to be drunk on General Election victory, he will try to bounce through the rule changes needed to prevent any challenges to his power.

Ensure you have a good, honest, competent delegate(s) to Conference, mandated to vote against state funding for political parties; for Conference keeping its policy and rule-making powers, and against any central panel of Parliamentary Candidates.



After dumping Liz Davies, the NEC want even more controls over Parliamentary selections.

PHOTO: DAVID POPE.

Labour shuts down

Leonora Lloyd, Ealing Acton CLP, asks how long does it take to organise and run an AGM? Anything up to five or six months!

ONCE AN election is announced, CLPs are temporarily dissolved for the period of the campaign. But this time around, they have been dissolved in all but name until after the election, which may not be until May.

It is not just at the local level but also at regional and national level that the internal organisation of the Party has been put into cold storage.

Local parties have been told they must not start to organise, never mind hold, Annual General Meetings until after the election, at either branch or constituency level. Regions too have been told not to organise or hold AGMs (which in practice are now bi-annual, so this could mean a three-year gap until they are eventually held).

At national level, June's Women's Conference has been cancelled because of a May election! It cannot be because the problems of organising it are too much to take on when the whole machinery is devoted to the election, because there is to be a mid-year Young Labour Conference and also what has been called a national rally for the women's organisation. This is due to take place at about the time we would have had a conference. Why should local parties bother to pay to send women to Blackpool for a one day rally - in practice it would cost nearly as much as a two day conference as many would have to stay overnight because of transport problems.

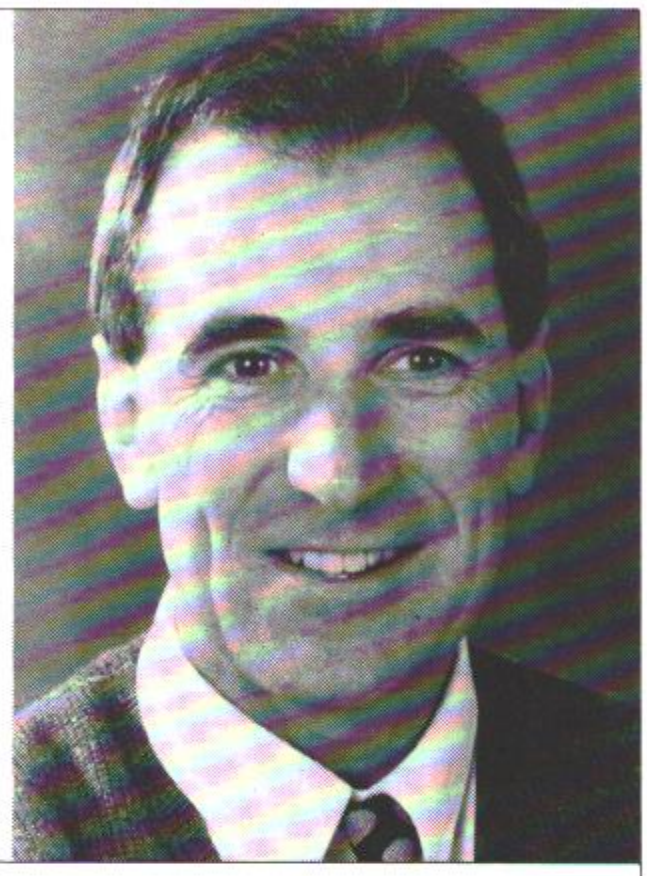
In addition, parties at regional and local level have been instructed not to produce policy statements until after the election. How parties outside London, who have local elections this spring, are supposed to organise these without producing policy statements is a mystery. In London, selection of panels for the next round of council elections is also being put on ice.

Obviously the main reason for all this is to reduce the possibility of dissent from the ranks being given voice, but in addition one cannot avoid the suspicion that with a hoped-for victory under its belt, a confident Labour leadership will impose new rules to restrict local democracy.

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the Alan Simpson column

The Secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs.



Three pillars of a people's Europe

THE ARGUMENT over Europe is not between internationalists and narrow nationalists. The issue is whether Europe is to be sacrificed on the altar of monetarist economics, and whether undermining democracy is the price demanded by today's free trade regime.

There is no example anywhere of a stable single currency zone in which political union has not preceded monetary union. To avoid dragging the whole of Europe into a catastrophic deflationary spiral, a single currency would have to be underpinned by massive structural funds to move money between European regions in the same way that a national exchequer collects tax revenues from more prosperous parts of the economy and uses them to support investment or benefit costs in other areas.

Post-unification Germany is the best example of how this works in practice. A 'solidarity tax' of about 8p in the pound was levied on West Germans to pay for rebuilding of the East. It has provided the basis of tax transfers from West to East of some £550 billion over the last six years and will have to continue for a further decade.

In this case, political and economic union was driven by an overwhelming desire by Germans 'to become whole'. Yet even here the strains are beginning to appear. Chancellor Kohl is under pressure from his right-wing coalition to cut the solidarity tax by at least 2%. If the political will is disappearing in a country which longed for union, where will you find it in a Europe of 15 countries with no such political longings?

In 1974 the European Parliament considered the MacDougal Report on European integration. MacDougal calculated that to have "stability funds" of sufficient size, direct European taxation would have to be five times greater than it is today. There is not a single European country which would support this, nor a single European politician who would get elected on such a platform. So we're back to wage cuts, job cuts and emigration as the stabilisation policies for Europe in the 21st century!

EMU requires each country to hand monetary policy over to its Central Bank which will then be part of the European Central Bank (ECB) whose remit will be to pursue solely monetarist policies. Maastricht makes it clear that it will be illegal for a government to seek to influence banking or interest rate policy.

The ECB will be able to fine governments whose economic policies it disagrees with, and all gold and foreign currency reserves ($45 billion in the UK) will automatically become the property of the ECB rather than the national government.

The European Commission will acquire a 'policy initiating' role which will be beyond the control of the European Parliament or individual member states. National governments will become Europe's local authorities - and the ECB will rate-cap them.

For socialists, saying *No* to the single currency is not to turn our backs on Europe, but to define another framework within which a people's Europe might be built. Its structure may be closer to that of a European Commonwealth than a European superstate, but that should not obscure the three key pillars which would need to replace Maastricht.

The first pillar would be the internationalising of the welfare state. This is much more than signing up to the Social Chapter. It implies a commitment to extend the welfare state rather than contract it, to return to principles of universality rather than means-testing and selectivity, and to pool the best entitlements and defend their existence against exploitative markets either within Europe or beyond.

The second pillar is the need to put sustainable environmental policies at the centre of economic decisions. Within Europe it would recognise the common threat posed by the string of ageing nuclear power stations along the EU's eastern border and pursue a common decommissioning policy. It would recognise the health threats from the over-use of pesticides, herbicides, anti-biotics and growth hormones and construct common policies to reduce food miles, reward traditional farming systems, and insist that ecological auditing intruded upon the rawness of the price mechanism.

The third pillar is an internationalism for the 21st century. Organised capital has foist on the world a belief that "progress" can only come through deregulated markets and increased international trade. This is bunkum. The "tiger" economies have often been savagely protective of their home markets - resulting in unprecedented economic growth accompanied by social repression. Weaker countries, driven from production for domestic needs to production for export, have done so at huge cost, with export earnings being less than debt charges.

The one form of protectionism enshrined in GATT is that of patents. Intellectual property rights on a huge tranche of leading edge technologies are in the hands of western corporations or governments. Some of these cover seed varieties, gene lines and plants or trees. This is the shape of the new imperialism. Developing nations will only be able to contribute both to self development and sustainable economics if they are endowed with the clean technologies of tomorrow, rather than palmed off with the polluting ones of yesterday.

None of this is to be found within the parameters of today's debate about the Euro and the Maastricht Treaty. The real challenge is to define the terms of a different Europe and then set off to construct it. Only the "bogeyman" factor - that the world will fall apart if we don't accept the single currency - prevents us from seeing that there are far greater dangers which follow if we do.

Gay Palestinians face loss of rights

Peter Tatchell warns that Palestinian self-rule may lead to a fundamentalist-inspired crackdown on lesbians and gay men.

THE RIGHTS of lesbians and gay men are threatened in Gaza and the West Bank. Relatively liberal Israeli laws on homosexuality are being dumped by the new Palestinian administration. There are fears that new legislation will reflect hardline Islamic attitudes. Already there is evidence that activists from the PLO and Hamas have been involved in terrorising people accused of homosexuality.

The PLO is drafting a new constitution and penal code for Gaza and the West Bank. Officials refuse to discuss the content of the proposed future laws governing homosexuality. PLO representatives will only concede that "the Palestinian legal system is likely to be influenced by Islamic teaching", directly contradicting the PLO's long-standing commitment to creating a "democratic secular state".



Outrage protest against Islamic fundamentalists, Wembley Arena 1994.

Aljamal Basam, the PLO London delegation's deputy head, says: "Gays are not part of our culture. Homosexuality is considered something awful...You can't apply the secular values of the West. Religion controls every aspect of life. Nobody in Arab politics would have the courage to support the rights of gays".

Asked if the PLO agreed with anti-gay policies of Islamic states such as Iran, where homosexuals are executed, Basam replied: "I'm not surprised to hear about these killings. It's justified morally to do the same thing in all Arab countries".

Nevertheless, it is reported that some PLO leaders oppose homophobic discrimination. None, however, is prepared to alienate grassroots pro-Islamic supporters.

A senior PLO official agreed to speak to me if our conversation was off the record. He agreed personally with "legal equality" "However," he added, "since the PLO has no official policy, I cannot comment publicly as a PLO official".

The PLO's generally unsympathetic attitude contrasts with the comparative enlightenment of Israeli law.

Israel legalised male homosexuality in 1988. The age of consent is 18 for gays, 16 for heterosexuals. Lesbianism isn't mentioned in law. Laws passed in 1992 prohibit discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation. In the same year restrictions were lifted on gay people serving in the forces. In 1994, the Supreme Court ordered the national airline, El Al, to give gay employees' partners the same perks heterosexuals get for theirs.

The PLO has traditionally advocated the creation of a secular state. But recently its dominance as the voice of the Palestinian people has been challenged by the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas. Consequently the PLO has adopted elements of Hamas' Islamic agenda.

Yasser Arafat, for example, told a group of Israeli and Palestine feminists that he would only support women's rights as long as they didn't contradict Islamic law. Under that law, a male child has more rights than an adult woman and homosexuality is punishable by death.

In the run-up to the UN Beijing Women's Conference, PLO representatives told Palestinian delegates to stay away from discussions on lesbian rights, because Islam bans homosexuality.

B'Tselem is an internationally respected human rights watchdog, based in Jerusalem. Its objectivity has long been praised by the Palestinians for frequently condemning Israeli torture, assassination and detention without trial. Now, however, B'Tselem is reproaching the PLO and Hamas with allegations of thuggery and murder. Its 1994 report, *Collaborators in the Occupied Territories: Human Rights Abuses and Violations*, says that Palestinians accused of homosexuality have been subject to brutal summary punishments by PLO and Hamas' shock squads:

"In the Nusseirat refugee camp, many of the punishments meted out to persons defined as suspected collaborators were actually related to social or criminal matters, such as drug abuse or trafficking, homosexuality, family feuds, and other causes not related to directly abetting the authorities. Many suspected collaborators were killed without any prior interrogation or judicial proceedings to clarify the accusations and without being given an opportunity to defend themselves.... In addition to killing, the Palestinian organisations have employed other types of punishment, including shooting in the legs or breaking bones"

Confronted with allegations that lesbians and gay men have been victimised by the PLO, the PNA Justice Minister, Freih Abud Medein, refused to comment. Yasser Arafat's office also evaded all enquiries.

The PLO's silence fuels suspicions that it harbours an anti-gay agenda. The only response from the PLO came from Aljamal Basam: "I've never come across a case where gays were punished by our organisation," he said. "If it has happened, it's very rare."

Israeli lesbians and gay men have a well-organised, highly successful movement to advocate their interests - the Society for the Protection of Personal Rights. Palestinian homosexuals do not have an equal.

Without an organisation to defend them against the growing influence of the Islamic fundamentalists, the future of lesbians and gay men in the new Palestinian state looks bleak.

- Peter Tatchell's book, *We don't want to march straight - masculinity, queers and the military*, is published by Cassell (£4.99).

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Hebron: the illusion of peace

Tony Greenstein argues that despite recent concessions in Hebron, little has changed for the Palestinian people.

HEBRON IS the last of the seven cities on the West Bank to be handed back to the Palestinian authorities. An American brokered agreement leaves the 400 plus Zionist settlers in place with the Israeli army. What is at stake, for Arafat in particular, is the use of Hebron as leverage to prise open an agreement on the 'final settlement', which should have been agreed already and implemented within six months. A settlement would pave the way for handing back the majority of the land of the West Bank. Hebron is a symbol of the refusal to allow the Oslo Accords of 1992 to provide anything but a limited autonomy for the Palestinian enclaves.

It is essential to understand the background to the 'historic agreement' between the Israeli Labour Government and the PLO under Arafat. Netanyahu and Likud do not differ in principle from their predecessors. Their disagreements are tactical and cosmetic. Of course Likud wouldn't have had the political will or inclination to reach a negotiated accord with the Palestinians, which is why the US pulled the rug from under the Shamir Government.

Four years ago I wrote a discussion document for the minority in the Palestine Solidarity Campaign entitled *Arafat's Autonomy - Israeli Victory* which explained why we rejected the Oslo Accords. This was a time of optimism. Some on the left believed that a genuine Palestinian state was in the making. The points I made were:

"There will be no return of the refugees". There has been no return of the refugees. Even Arafat's plane needs clearance from Israel.

"Israel will retain control of security. In practice it will seek to rely on the Palestinian police force to do its dirty work". This has happened also. The incidence of torture and murder in Arafat's jails has been worse than under the Israelis. When an Israeli soldier shot civilians indiscriminately in Hebron recently, the Israelis sought the assistance of Palestinian police rather than deal with the population themselves.

"No settlement will be dismantled, nor any land returned". None has been dismantled, nor has confiscated land been returned. On the contrary, confiscations - especially around Jerusalem - have continued.

"Water resources will remain the Israelis' preserve". They have.

"Arab, US and other capital will be invested in the Occupied Territories, to provide Israel with a larger market, coupled with a more compliant labour force". In practice very little capital has been invested though this is clearly the long-term goal. At the moment investment is in Arafat's corrupt para-state infrastructure.

"There will be no change whatsoever in the Zionist nature of the Israeli state". There hasn't been any.

I wrote then that the Oslo Accords **"promise nothing more than the right to collect refuse and police other Palestinians. In essence the guards at the Palestinian jail have been transferred from inside to outside the walls".** The jail walls have become stronger. Israel has replaced Palestinian labour with those from southern Europe and Asia.

I wrote that **"...in two years, negotiations will proceed towards a final agreement. We should bear in mind that the present Labour Government in Israel, however appalling it is, is likely to be superseded by a Likud-Religious coalition which will treat the present agreement as final".** This is what has happened. It is what the present dispute regarding Hebron is about.

I went on to argue that **"without dismantling the settlements what remains is a sovereignty over people not land".** This was always the intention of the Zionist parties - Labour and Likud - to transfer repression from the Israelis to Palestinians, while the Israeli state retained control over land and other resources. An effective economic blockade has hit Palestinian exports and without growth in the Palestinian economy, statehood is meaningless.

I also noted that **"compared to Arafat's masterpiece, the Partition of Ireland in 1921 was a model of generosity on the part of Britain".** Partition can take different forms. Whereas the Free State comprised the bulk of Ireland. Arafat's 'state' is towns and villages, criss-crossed by expanding settlements and new roads.

I wrote that **"maybe the worst aspect of the agreement is that it gives the green light to Assad and Hussein to conclude their own agreements with Israel".** King Hussein of Jordan has concluded an agreement with Israel and Assad has tried his best to reach an agreement over the Golan Heights.



Palestinian protest over Occupied Territories.

The partial withdrawal of Israeli troops from Hebron and the present stalemate represent nothing other than Arafat's attempt to salvage something from the very limited concessions at Oslo, which Netanyahu is intent on blocking. Aware that the final settlement is likely to be the present status quo, Arafat is attempting to enlist the aid of the Americans. But today the Arab regimes are far weaker and not able to exert pressure on the Americans to cajole their Zionist partners.

There will be no solution to the present impasses without the overthrow of the American's Arab protegees. Until the situation in Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states and above all Egypt changes, the Palestinians will be left with the crumbs from Oslo. ❑

Milosevic under siege

The end game is now well advanced for Serbia, one of Europe's last dictatorships. Mike Phipps, Brent South CLP, reports.

FOR OVER two months Belgrade has seen daily demonstrations, some of 250,000, all despite a media blackout. They express the mounting opposition to the Milosevic regime in Serbia, following its decision to annul the results of



local elections it lost.

With the army effectively announcing its neutrality, many commentators believe the Government cannot survive without making major democratic concessions.

The movement against Milosevic is interesting for both its form and content. Representing a broad coalition of Serbian society, it has deliberately adopted an approach that emphasises civil liberties and cuts across the dictatorship's militarism. Traditional marching tactics have been combined with more innovative forms of protest, including road blocking with cars and non-violent stand-offs with the police, organised by Belgrade students. These developments are acutely embarrassing to the western appeasers of Serbia, not least the British Government. Throughout the conflict in former Yugoslavia their strategy was to entrench the Milosevic regime as the precondition for a stable peace settlement. Now a year after the Dayton Accord that regime is under attack from its own citizens. As the Foreign Office maintains a deafening silence, cynics might make the connection with recent allegations that Serbian donors gave nearly £100,000 to the Tory Party at the height of the conflict.

The Dayton Accord itself is not being seriously implemented. While the carve-up of Bosnia into two entities has been accomplished, much of the agreement remains a dead letter.

The right of return for two million Bosnian refugees, for example, has not been established. Many thousands are still in camps and only a handful have dared go back. Although the NATO led Implementation Force has a mandate to protect them, it has not done so in practice, preferring to accuse returnees of a provocation for bypassing official procedures. These procedures are a joke. One group of 97 Muslim families from Serb-controlled Prijedor correctly supplied the international officials with a list of their houses. This was then passed to the Serb police in Prijedor. Within 48 hours all the houses had been mysteriously destroyed.

Four indicted war criminals still hold prominent positions in the Prijedor police force - a fairly typical case. But no serious attempt has been made to arrest even the most publicly traceable figures accused of war crimes. Without this elementary satisfaction of justice there can be little hope of lasting peace in the region. Despite these key aspects of Dayton being flouted, the west is still planning to hand over £1 billion to the Bosnian Serbs as part of a reconstruction package for the region.

Meanwhile new evidence is emerging about the barbarous tactics used during the conflict by the Bosnian Serb forces, who may have been responsible for the rape of at least 50,000 women and children. While Serb apologists may argue that atrocities were committed on both sides, it seems that for the Bosnian Serbs rape was a military policy sanctioned at the highest level as the most effective means of creating terror and causing civilian flight in areas not yet directly involved in the fighting. New data is available too on the cultural legacy of the conflict. Hostility to Islam has long been a factor in the British Government's attitude to Bosnia and has even been used by some on the left as a pretext for abstention. In fact most of the fundamentalist bigotry in the conflict has been against the Muslims. Of the hundreds of mosques destroyed in Bosnia, most were not casualties of war but were deliberately and systematically razed in areas already controlled by Serb or Croat extremists.

The oldest and culturally most valuable buildings were prime targets. Dozens of 15th, 16th and 17th century edifices have been completely flattened, including 15 in Banja Luka alone.

- For more information, contact the Alliance to Defend Bosnia-Herzegovina, 39-41 North Road, London N7 8DP. Phone and fax: 0171 700 8471.

CUBA CABARET

Valentine's Night

Friday 14th February
Camden Centre
(opp Kings Cross station)
8pm-2am £12/£9
doors: 7pm, bar to 1.30 am.

John Hegley, Kevin Day and Arthur Smith

Special guest appearances from Margi Clark and Maggie Steed. Plus accomplished mimic Junior Simpson, humour from Ivor Dembina and live action from the Doris Day of 90's glam, Lorraine Bowen. Dazzling dance from Salsa Rosada, stunning flamenco from Flamenco Express and hot Salsa rhythms from Salsa y Ache.

Advance bookings (advised) call The Cuba Solidarity Campaign on 0171-263 6452.

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LABOUR LEFT BRIEFING

LLB

EURO SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Economic and Monetary Union:

Dire consequences for a Labour Government

In this special report, Brian Burkitt, Mark Baimbridge and Philip Whyman examine the economic impact of plans for a single European currency. They conclude that it would not deliver the benefits promised, and would prevent a Labour Government from achieving any of its objectives.

SHOULD Labour win the next general election, it is likely to enter office during the lengthy negotiations launched at the European Union's (EU) Inter-Governmental Conference in March 1996. These negotiations will be wide-ranging, carrying implications for Labour's future foreign, economic, social and environmental policies. One of the most critical decisions facing all EU member states is whether to continue the process for achieving economic and monetary union (EMU) laid down by the Maastricht Treaty. The choice to participate or to opt-out will crucially affect Labour's economic prospects.

A number of influential figures have argued that the consequences of EMU are potentially beneficial and should therefore be embraced by Labour. The arguments deployed to support this position vary; John Monks stresses "the vigour and discipline" required by a single currency. Dan Corry sees EMU as a protection against international currency markets. Mandelson and Liddle emphasise the gains to be derived from a co-ordinated EU monetary policy, while Robin Cook claims that progress towards EMU could significantly improve the international economic performance of the EU. As entry into a single currency is likely to prove practically and legally (Article 109 of the Maastricht Treaty) irreversible, it is essential that its benefits are established beyond reasonable doubt prior to entry. Second thoughts could prove futile and costly.

The debates about the Maastricht criteria and the establishment of EMU may seem arcane, but they lie at the heart of the macroeconomic policy which will set the framework for most of Labour's ambitions. It is alarming that none of the Maastricht advocates listed above appreciates the scale of the costs already placed upon Britain by EU integration, the burden of meeting the Maastricht fiscal convergence criteria for entering a single currency and the impact of EMU once it is operational. Detailed analysis demonstrates that EMU makes a mockery of Labour's commitment to full employment or indeed its claim to possess any distinct economic strategy.



French unions demonstrate against Maastricht cuts.

It is important to emphasise the large costs which EU membership has already imposed on the UK. Over the last decade, the UK has: suffered an overall £89 billion trade deficit with other EU members; made a net contribution of £16 billion to the EU budget; lost an estimated £60 billion as a result of its ERM membership between October 1990 and September 1992 (which arose from a 4% rise in unemployment, a 3% increase in real interest rates, a fall in output below its trend growth rate and the sterling expended in the doomed bid to defend the exchange rate); found its business facing a bill amounting to 8% of GDP to meet EU directives emanating from the Commission in Brussels. Additionally, the National Consumer Council estimated that the Common Agricultural Policy adds £20 per week to the food bill for a family of two adults and two children.

In the future, the burden imposed by EMU

People's Europe vs. single currency

Geoff Martin, UNISON London Convenor, writes:

The recent announcement by Gordon Brown that a Labour Government would hold a referendum before taking us into a single currency represents a major victory for those of us opposed to the Maastricht criteria.

Those inside the labour movement who support early entry into the Euro currency do so out of a mixture of desperation and lack of imagination. Desperation to have 'a seat at the table' (any seat, any table), and lack of imagination in dealing with the economy - it's so much easier to transfer responsibility (and blame) to a bunch of Euro-bankers. This mixture of defeatism and desperation has led the TUC into the ludicrous position of supporting early entry into the single currency regardless of the consequences.

Thus the TUC has signed up to an economic policy which would slash £18 billion from public spending, destroy the welfare state and throw millions out of work. This nonsense has got to be reversed and quickly. The vast majority of trade unions have not had a proper debate about Maastricht and the single currency - we need to kickstart it urgently.

Our starting point should be the lessons we can learn from our brothers and sisters in other parts of Europe who have already been through the Maastricht cuts machine. To this end the People's Europe Campaign is organising a major international conference on Maastricht and the single currency on Saturday 1st February at Westminster Central Hall starting at 11am.

The conference will bring together trade unionists and campaigners from across Europe. The aim is to start an international campaign against Maastricht and in favour of a genuine people's Europe. At a recent international trade union meeting in Paris, delegate after delegate outlined the carnage that had been unleashed by Maastricht inspired austerity measures. In France the Government has gone one step further by effectively hijacking the pension fund of France Telecom in order to massage its balance sheet to meet the single currency criteria.

Instead of blowing in the ear of the Governor of the Bank of England about the need for early entry into the EMU, John Monks and the rest of the Maastricht groupies would be better off talking to European trade unionists about what it really means for working people. Perhaps he'll come along on 1st February to find out some of the hard facts of life.

- **Details of the People's Europe Conference (and donations towards the costs): Alan Simpson MP, House of Commons, SW1A 0AA.**

is likely to be far higher. To achieve the fiscal convergence criteria laid down by the Maastricht Treaty, member states must reduce their current budget deficit to 3% of GDP and their gross debt to 60% of GDP. However, to cut current deficits at the national level will restrain growth, income, tax revenue and job creation. Reducing the excess in the stock of debt would throw the economies of the member states from recession to slump. In Britain, it would involve minimum cuts in public spending and/or increases in taxation to the magnitude of £13.5 billion.

The EU-wide deflationary effects of fulfilling the financial convergence criteria for EMU are draconian. If the twelve member states before the 1995 enlargement each met the 60% debt target by the end of 1999, GDP would be reduced by 2.6% each year.

The implications for unemployment are substantial. Today there are 17.5 million people out of work in the EU, of whom more than 5 million are under the age of 25. However, fulfilling the Maastricht criteria will render this already grave situation far worse. Every 10% of debt reduction will reduce employment in the EU by approximately 1.5 million. Meeting the 60% debt stock requirement in full would cut jobs by over 10 million, while even achieving the 3% annual deficit target would increase unemployment by around one million. Even for those who support EMU on political grounds, the Maastricht process must constitute the most disastrous possible route of achieving it. In these conditions, higher unemployment breeds nationalism and racism, as the electoral fortunes of extreme right parties in European Parliamentary elections demonstrate. The restoration of full employment, obstructed by the Maastricht Treaty, thus becomes even more crucial.

Labour's 1994 document, *Economic renewal in the European Union: the UK Labour Party and the Delors White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment*, said: "Labour supports progress towards economic and monetary union and believes that it could significantly improve the economic performance of the entire European community. However, we strongly believe that convergence of the real economic performance of member states is a vital precondition of any moves towards economic and monetary union." Such statements indicate that New Labour has learnt the message of economic theory; 'Optimum Currency Area' analysis, which addresses the question of when a geographical area should proceed with monetary union, demonstrates that a single currency between nation states can yield benefits if they possess very similar economic structures, but will be detrimental if these structures are different.

However, one is entitled to ask if the Labour leadership has seriously considered just how long-term and far-reaching the "further steps" necessary for convergence of the "real economies" must be. The momentous task of achieving such convergence between, say, Germany and Greece or France and Portugal or Sweden and Spain has not even been contemplated. Should the EU admit new members from Eastern Europe, the task will grow in magnitude. What policy measures would be required? What size of EU budget is involved? How much centralisation of power to the EU and away from its constituent national members is necessary? These complex questions require detailed answers if EMU is ever to prove efficient and long lasting.

Corry argues that EMU will deter speculators from 'picking-off' individual currencies, as in the exchange rate mechanism crises of 1992 and 1993, by replacing them with a single EU-wide money backed by the combined reserves of participating central banks. Thus governments would possess greater scope to pursue policies at variance with the interests of currency dealers. In an international economy where around £190 billion currently flows daily across the London Forex market, 90% of which is speculative and unrelated to trade, such an argument has appeal. However, the EU is not global; it is regional. Corry ignores the crucial facts that most speculation originates outside the EU, that a single currency could become the focus of speculation against the dollar or yen and that other measures such as a transactions tax can curb speculation.

Most important of all, the UK's economic structure is sufficiently different from those of most other EU members that a single currency is unlikely to generate economic benefits.

The UK's trading structure is less integrated with other EU countries than most of its members. 57% of UK visible exports go to the EU, but only 36% of its invisible exports (invisible receipts now account for half of Britain's overseas earnings) have the same destination. As the UK is relatively more efficient at producing services, which are growing faster, the distinction is crucial. If Germany, France, Benelux and Austria proceed with EMU and form a 'core EU', only 30% of UK exports (visible and invisible) will flow there. British overseas investment follows a similar pattern; only 30% goes to the EU 'core' and 39% to the EU in total, while 16% of inward investment to Britain originates from the 'core' EU and 18% from the EU overall.

Within the EU, the UK and the Nether-

lands are the only significant producers of oil and gas. An oil price shock would therefore exert a different effect on these nations than on other EU members and would require a different policy response. The relative size of the manufacturing and service sectors varies substantially between the UK and the German economies. Manufacturing is more important in the latter, accounting for 30% of GDP compared to 23% in Britain, but the relative size of the finance and media sectors is much greater in the UK than in Germany, or indeed most other EU members. The UK, Spain and Italy rely least on other EU countries for external trade. Consequently movements in the dollar (or yen) Euro exchange rate will impact more substantially on these countries. Thus a depreciation of a single EU currency amounts to a greater relaxation of monetary policy in Britain than, say, in Belgium.

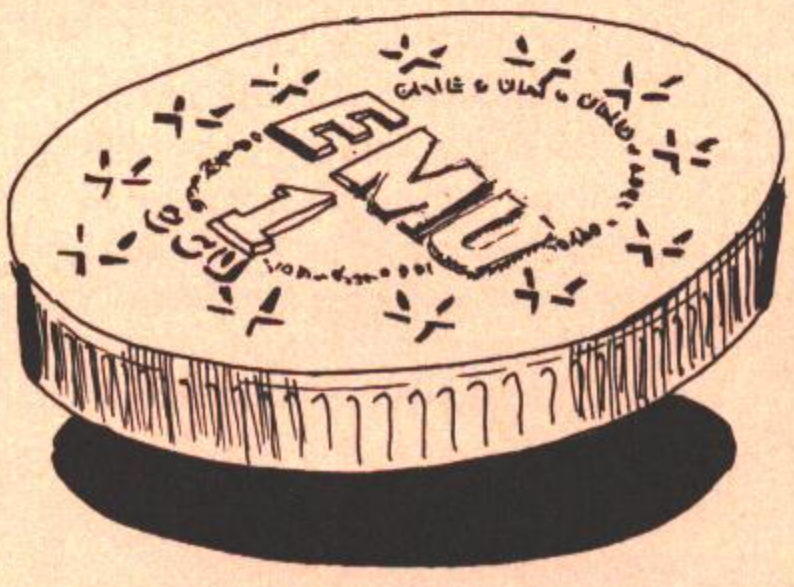
Both in the household and corporate sectors, the UK holds a much higher proportion of debt paid at variable interest rates than does the rest of the EU. Moreover, household debt is more significant as a proportion of GDP in the UK, reflecting the different nature of the housing market in which variable interest mortgage debt is equivalent to around two-thirds of UK household disposable income compared to under half in Germany and less than a quarter in France.

These structural differences give rise to asymmetric shocks, that lead to changes in member states' relative competitiveness. However, if any country becomes less competitive, as is frequently inevitable in a dynamic world, it could not restore balance of payments equilibrium under EMU by altering its exchange rate. If exchange rate flexibility is removed, a lack of competitiveness becomes difficult to remedy. Within a single currency area, such problems no longer lead to a balance of payments deficit, but take a different form. Unless relative costs can be reduced or productivity increased, output and employment will fall; high unemployment and a depressed level of income might become chronic.

An analogy can be drawn between the UK's position under a single currency and that of Scotland and Wales within the UK. Throughout most of the twentieth century, Scotland and Wales experienced greater unemployment and lower levels of per capita income than the south of England, but their competitive disadvantages could not be ameliorated by devaluation because they share a common currency with England. The same difficulties would confront Britain, located on the geographical periphery of the EU and with a history of productivity rising more slowly than in some of its neighbours.

The problem of persistent unemployment looms large over the EU, which lacks the equalisation mechanisms that exist within nation states. One of these is the mobility of labour. A common culture and language make migration from high to low unemployment regions, at least across generations, a relatively easy procedure. Moving from the UK to other EU member states in search of work is a more formidable undertaking. The EU Commission found that regional migration between member states in the first half of the 1980s was just 29% of migration across USA states in the same period. Consequently labour mobility is unlikely to equalise unemployment across an EU-wide single currency area.

Even more important is the role of government. In a unitary state like Britain,



and to a lesser but still significant extent in a federal nation like the USA, the activities of central government exert a major impact on the regional pattern of output, income and employment. These government equalisation activities are possible only because of the size of government budgets (typically 40-45% of GDP in unitary advanced industrial economies and 20-25% in federations). By contrast, the EU budget is currently 1.2% of its GDP. The 1992 Edinburgh Summit agreed an EU budgetary increase to no more than 1.7% of GDP by the year 2000. It is hard to envisage the existence of the political will to raise this figure in the foreseeable future. Therefore, after the implementation of a single currency, increased unemployment is the only way a national economy could adjust to a fall in competitiveness, given the absence of a large growth in labour mobility and/or in the scope of the EU budget.

Consequently it is almost impossible to imagine the circumstances under which Labour's nirvana of 'real economic convergence' could ever occur. Even if by some miracle it proved attainable, different national trends in productivity and technical progress (inevitable without Stalinist central planning) would undermine it immediately. So too would the imposition of an EU-wide monetary policy.

Should an EU central bank impose a uniform change in interest rates across all member states, the immediate expansionary or deflationary impact will be greater in the UK than in Germany, France or Italy, for two reasons: the nature of the housing market, with a preponderance of variable rate mortgages, implies a greater change in household incomes in the UK than elsewhere in the EU; households in Britain hold a larger proportion of their wealth in the form of bonds and equity, with less in the form of interest bearing assets, compared to other EU members. Hence in the UK the impact of changes in interest rates on bond and equity prices has a greater effect on wealth and consequently upon spending decisions.

Therefore (and to the total confusion of New Labour strategy), even if 'real economic convergence' was achieved by some unknown process before a common monetary policy was established, it would not exist after, since uniform interest and exchange rate changes inevitably exert a differential impact on economic variables across national economies. Policy shocks would increase after EMU. While it is theoretically possible that over many years a single currency and the strengthening of the Single Market might reduce national variations in corporate and household behaviour, they are likely to persist for the foreseeable future.

A newly elected Labour Government would be perverse to generate needless deflation by pursuing the fiscal criteria set by the Maastricht Treaty, which will cause economic growth to slow and destroy jobs. Given the significant structural differences that exist between the UK economy and those of most EU member states, the cost to the UK of operating a single currency, in terms of lost output and employment, will be significant and will grow over time. Grandiose but totally unspecified dreams of achieving 'real economic convergence' among fifteen (or more) member countries do not evade harsh reality. The social and economic objectives of the Labour movement (full employment, improvement of the welfare state, etc.) cannot be reconciled with EMU on any version yet proposed by the EU.

●Brian Burkitt, Mark Baimbridge and Philip Whyman are in the Department of Social and Economic Studies and members of the European Economies Research Unit at the University of Bradford. They have recently published *There is an alternative: Britain and its relationship with the EU* (Campaign for an Independent Britain, 1996).

Alternative Europe on the march

Ken Coates MEP sees the beginnings of a new European social movement for jobs and justice.

Periodic waves of youthful radicalism have swept Europe since the end of the Second World War. First there was the great disillusionment of 1956 after the ill-fated Suez war and the Hungarian uprising. A decade later, there was the Europe-wide mobilisation of young people against the Vietnam War, finally exploding in Paris in 1968. In the late 70s and early 80s there was an upsurge of anti-nuclear pacifism, culminating in the movement for European Nuclear Disarmament.

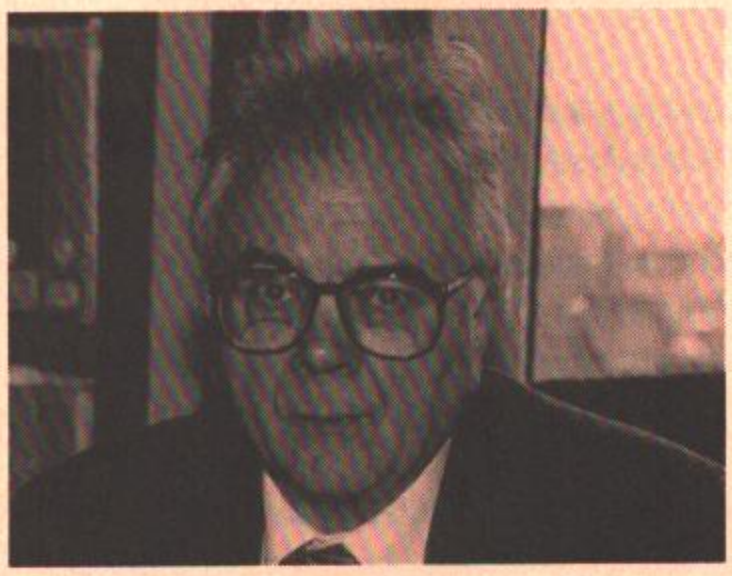
Such widespread movements nurtured high idealism and pointed the way to an alternative Europe in which no citizen would be excluded from economic or social life.

In retrospect, we can see that the close of the cold war ended this age of idealism. Far from dissolving all nuclear alliances, the cold war victors now move their frontiers steadily eastwards, while the power of their adversaries disintegrates and their dreadful arsenals begin to leak and rust. Old fears are put to rest, new resentments take root and flourish.

Between eighteen and twenty million Europeans are officially without work. Unofficially far more are locked outside the labour market. Some fifty million subsist in poverty. The approach to monetary union, presented as a bold and visionary movement towards European integration, now requires economic constraint on a huge scale, aggravating the already intolerable unemployment problem. In response, a Europe-wide social movement is arising in defence of jobs and welfare expenditure, against cuts in long-standing public commitments and for the maintenance of the economic rights of pensioners and students.

Once again people are marching and lobbying in Naples and Bonn, Brussels and Athens. But the restrictions on public spending have all been agreed separately, by separate national governments, even though many of these abrasive new constraints originate in the criteria of the Maastricht Treaty for monetary union. As there is a 'European' cause for much of the discontent there must be European cures. Separate action by nation states can have only limited impact. Of course, national, regional and local governments can all act to reduce unemployment and should do so. But such action is limited by the extent of economic globalisation and restrictions placed on national government spending long before the ill-famed decisions at Maastricht. Action against unemployment is more effective if it unites the efforts of national and regional governments with a common programme organised at the European level.

Could monetary union proceed uninterrupted if all Europe was up in arms opposing increased unemployment and poverty? To cure unemployment, we need more Europe, not less: a Europe closer to the ideals of those who called yesterday for an alternative Europe, a Europe which puts jobs first in any economic calculations. While a single currency can help to establish effective democratic control over an alternative European economy, such control will depend on the social priorities underpinning it. The right to work, enshrined in the UN Declaration of Universal Human Rights at the end of the last world war, and other economic rights, are threatened in the blueprint for a monetarist Europe.



Ken Coates MEP.

The striking feature is that plans for an alternative Europe have already been drawn up and the framework for it has already been established. The Delors White Paper set a target of fifteen million new jobs. The European Investment Fund - set up to offset the deflationary effects of the debt and deficit conditions of a single currency - would issue Union Bonds. The Fund's statutes provide that it can borrow and invest enough to finance a host of projects.

A few years ago the debate on reducing working time was taken up by only a few people, such as Frank Cousins in England, Andre Gorze in France and Peter Glotz in Germany. It is now on the mainstream agenda both in agreements between management and labour in leading German companies and in debates, including a recent resolution of the European Parliament. Even small reductions in working time could create several million jobs, especially if demand is increased by combining reduced hours with sustained or increased pay related to productivity increases. Companies could be encouraged to co-operate in this process by transferring part of their indirect labour costs to new green taxes. In the context of increasing the non-profit making and co-operative sector, other job creating initiatives already in the European framework could be reinforced.

The deficit reductions required by the convergence criteria will not stand up to the criticism of informed economists; neither can they resist the criticism of the victims who suffer the pain of unemployment, insecurity and poverty. If all this pain could find an effective political programme, the alternative Europe would begin to make itself visible.

The first step has already been taken with the development of an ambitious project of European demonstrations against unemployment and social exclusion, leading up to the Intergovernmental Conference, which will meet in Amsterdam in June 1997. Growing numbers of organisations representing unemployed people have agreed to take to the streets and begin the walk, which will lead them to a major European rally on 14th-15th June. Preliminary meetings to co-ordinate these challenging arrangements have been held in Turin, Florence, Paris and Ennis in Ireland. The European Trade Union Confederation is also planning actions.

The Appeal for Full Employment should lead to a European Assembly for Jobs. We all know that full employment in the future will mean new forms of public and private action to ensure that no one is excluded from our society. Within this framework, all the arguments about job creation, public spending and the necessary revolution in working lifetimes will begin to come together.

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Globalisation: no room for manoeuvre?

Dave Palmer, Hornsey and Wood Green CLP, ferrets out the reality behind the hype of economic 'globalisation'.

GLOBALISATION (along with the death of socialism) has become an ideological mantra, chanted in unison by business gurus, journalists, politicians, academics, media pundits, trade union officials, and even some Marxists. Enthusiasts celebrate globalisation for instituting a rational world order in which the free market operates without fetter. Critics emphasise its social costs, while still acknowledging its sway.

According to the globalisation thesis, uncontrollable market forces and vagabond 'transnational' corporations have burst asunder the restraining boundaries of the nation-state, and now dominate governments. Globally mobile capital will favour locations with the most 'flexible' labour forces and the lowest social overheads.

But to what extent does the hype reflect reality? Has the world economy become integrated in a fundamentally new way? A recent book by Paul Hirst and Graham Thompson, *Globalisation in Question*, challenges the consensus. They argue that although the world economy may be becoming more internationalised, globalisation is largely a dangerous myth - deriving its power from the way it disseminates the supposed verities of free market liberalism.

The implications of the globalisation thesis for socialists are stark in the extreme. Organised labour loses political influence and economic bargaining power. States are unable to impose high taxes or costly regulation on business lest they make the country less attractive as a location for investment. Governmental economic strategies can only succeed if they ensure the competitiveness of the workforce, do not constrain management prerogatives and do not raise overall tax rates above the global average. Differences in mainstream politics become largely symbolic. Economic liberalism triumphs, 'reformist' parties of the left become indistinguishable from the right and socialism seems increasingly utopian.

Hirst and Thompson show that an examination of actual events in the world economy undermines the globalisation hype, and that none of this is inevitable.

The period of the Gold Standard regime from 1870-1914 was one of free trade and no exchange controls. Declining transport costs made goods cheaper to transport across oceans. Intercontinental telegraph systems linked financial markets. Migrants poured from Europe to the Americas and Australia. Investment flooded from the Old to the New World.



Under the Gold Standard (beloved by Friedman and Hayek) the business cycle was largely 'self-regulating'. An outflow of gold from a country 'automatically' caused a fall in the money supply, a rise in interest rates and a fall in domestic demand, employment, prices and wages. Governments had much less autonomy in economic policy than they do today.

Trade was a higher proportion of the gross domestic product of the advanced economies prior to 1914 than now - and capital was more mobile. UK capital flows were 6.5% of national income between 1905-1914, larger than for any advanced country in the 1980s and 1990s. The degree of convergence in real interest rates was greater in long-term capital markets under the Gold Standard. Fluctuations in asset prices in the main financial centres were more closely co-related and trans-national securities trading and ownership was probably greater. In sum, the 'golden age' of laissez faire capitalism was one in which the major economies were more open, interdependent and closely linked than today.

It is in world financial markets that integration has proceeded furthest in recent years, but there is ample evidence to suggest that capital markets were more internationalised under the Gold Standard. If we were approaching a state in which there was effectively one global capital market, then real interest rates, financial asset prices and returns on assets would all be approaching equality.

Probably the most internationalised capital market is the $23,000 billion per annum Eurobond market - utilised as a source of long-term capital (denominated in foreign currencies) by corporations and governments. Yet there is still no parity of real interest rates among the nations participating in the Eurobond market.

If the world capital market were fundamentally integrated, national savings rates would diverge from national investment rates as investment capital freely roamed the world seeking the best return. Yet the co-relation between national savings and investment rates has actually increased in recent years.

International lending has grown prodigiously since 1980. It was estimated in 1994 at $1,000 billion - ten times the level of the late 1970s. But although bond ownership has become much more internationalised, it is still far from being globalised. For example, foreign ownership of the Government bonds of the main advanced economies rose from an average of 10% in 1983 to 15% in 1989. The acquisition of foreign assets by major institutional investors (ie. pension funds and life assurance companies) in developing countries varies enormously from only 5% for the USA to 34.2% for the UK.

In addition, the huge and growing foreign exchange markets, with a daily turnover of around $1 trillion, actually fragment the

Continued on page 20

global market - because it is driven by the desire to exploit the differentials among national currencies, not to harmonise them.

The main agent of globalisation is supposed to be the rootless transnational corporation, able to relocate anywhere in the world and indifferent to national identities and cultures. Although there are now 40,000 multinational corporations worldwide with 270,000 overseas affiliates, four times the number in the late 1960s, genuine transnational corporations are rare beasts. Most multinationals remain firmly rooted in the economy of their parent nation.

About 70-75% of the value added by multinational corporations is still produced in their home countries. In 1987, 69% of US profits and 67% of UK profits were domestically generated. Of the top 50 publicly quoted companies in nine European Union countries, 55-75% have no foreign nationals on their boards. The headquarters of multinationals remain in their parent country. Their strategic activities (key investment, production and financial decisions, control of proprietary technologies, product research and development) are overwhelmingly located on home turf. For all their investment abroad General Motors remains rooted in the USA, BMW in Germany and Toyota in Japan. Foreign subsidiaries of multinationals remain 'tentacles of the octopus'. Multinationals are investing in increasingly far flung production networks, but transnationals - companies for whom all nations really are the same - do not exist.

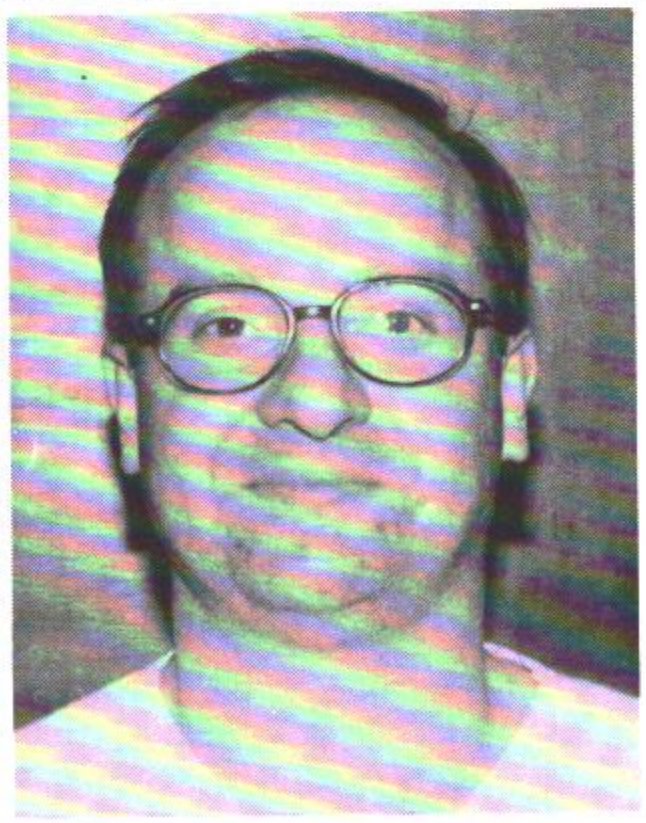


PHOTO: DAVID POPE

Dave Palmer

The huge growth of foreign direct investment (FDI) by multinationals in recent years is cited as key evidence that globalisation is upon us. FDI flows have grown very rapidly in the late 1980s and 1990s and the growth of FDI now substantially exceeds growth in international trade. FDI is now generally regarded as having superseded trade as the main 'motor force' of the world economy.

However, patterns of world FDI are highly uneven and regionalised. For example, two-thirds of FDI flows occur within the 'advanced Triad' of the USA-Europe-Japan. FDI 'regional clusters' have appeared around the Triad countries. For example, the European Union, especially Germany, is predominant in Eastern Europe FDI stocks and inflows, the USA in much of Latin America and Japan in East Asia.

Flows of FDI to the developing world have increased hugely (from $18.3 billion for 1983-1987 to $99.7 billion in 1995) but more than one-third of FDI to the developing world in 1995 was invested in a single country - China. In the period 1981-1991 ten developing countries (China, Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and Egypt) received 66% of all 'non-Triad' FDI. India's liberalisation programme - whose primary goal is attracting FDI - has resulted in the country attracting record FDI flows of no more than $2 billion in 1994. Between 57%-62% of the world population lives in countries which receive only 8.5% of global FDI. Effectively the bulk of the globe is written off.

On the left, many have argued that increased capital mobility and openness to international trade have shifted manufacturing capacity to developing countries with lower wages, thus impoverishing workers in rich countries. These low-wage economies then export manufactured goods to the domestic markets of the developed world causing de-industrialisation, increased wage inequality and rising unemployment. Marxists who accept this Armageddon-type version of globalisation proceed to argue that reformist and intermediate socialist goals have lost all validity. They offer, instead, a propagandistic millenarian utopianism in which 'simultaneous world revolution' becomes the only alternative to a descent into barbarism.

Much of this 'doomsday scenario' (incidentally shared by right-wing protectionist populists like Pat Buchanan and James Goldsmith) is based on bad economics. This is not a 'zero-sum' situation. Growth and rising incomes in developing countries creates increased demand for goods and services produced by the advanced economies, meaning a 'win-win' situation is possible for all parties.

Under certain conditions, increased international specialisation and trade will increase overall economic output, however the gains and losses in economic welfare may be distributed.

It is true that the decline in relative incomes and employment of unskilled manufacturing workers in the advanced economies has occurred during a period of unprecedented growth in exports of labour-intensive products from low-income to high-income countries. However, higher labour costs in the developed world only have a decisive adverse competitive effect on one particular sector of the market - for internationally traded, lower-skill input, labour-intensive manufactured goods. Many other sectors remain and must remain locked into particular national and regional markets. The debate among economists about the influence of the 'trade effect' on income inequality and unemployment in the advanced economies remains inconclusive. According to an article in the *Financial Times*, the trade effect has not been "found to be large enough to explain more than between 10 and 30 per cent of the fall in demand for unskilled labour" in the developed world.

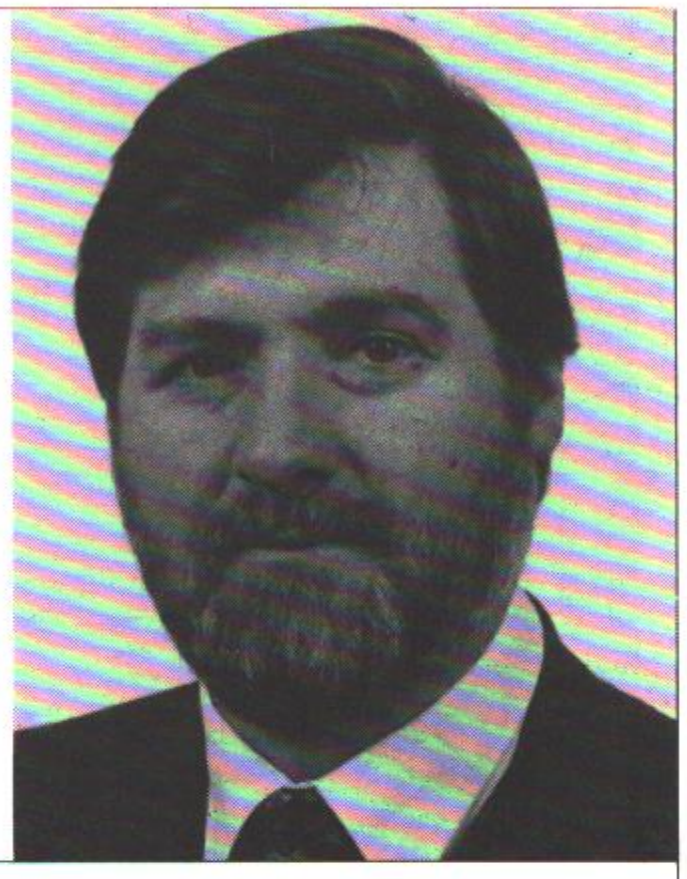
In its 1996 annual report, the ILO concluded: "It is not true globalisation is an uncontrollable supranational force that has largely usurped national policy autonomy.....the national state.....is still the dominant influence on economic and labour market outcomes."

The ability of states to follow radical economic programmes does indeed face major international constraints, notably the effective veto on policy exercised by international financial markets. Any government attempting to pursue expansionary, redistributive or socialist policies would be quickly subject to capital flight. Bond prices would collapse, forcing up long term interest rates. Confidence in the currency would also fall, causing intense inflationary pressure and a rapid rise in short-term interest rates. Multinationals would review the viability of their investments. A condition of severe economic instability would ensue.

However, this does not mean there is no room for manoeuvre. National economies have become more vulnerable to international pressures precisely because governments have chosen to lower trade barriers, eliminate foreign exchange controls and liberalise internal markets. What has been created by policy can be changed by policy. Global economic integration is neither complete nor irresistible. Socialists should not exaggerate its extent nor underestimate the potential for independent national policies. The globalisation hype is being used to justify a refusal to countenance and develop such policies - and to browbeat workers into accepting low wages and poor conditions. The first step in breaking this stranglehold is to disentangle simplistic hype from complex reality.

- *Globalisation in Question*, by Paul Hirst and Graham Thompson, is published by Polity Press.

the Michael Hindley column



Labour's MEP for Lancashire South gives a global perspective.

THE YEAR ended on a depressing note for the European Union (EU) when the Irish Presidency's six months spell ended with a low-key summit. The Maastricht process, once hailed as a great breakthrough in European integration, is grinding slowly to a halt.

One of the more penetrating comments on the Dublin Summit came from the former German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, who lamented in the prestigious weekly *Die Zeit* that "we are as far from a Bonn-Paris axis as we have been in decades".

Indeed, the old adage that the EU is simply a construction whereby the French political elite tries to gain control of the German economy has seldom been so clearly demonstrated as at the EU Summit meeting in Dublin, and the attempts to reconcile the irreconcilables in Dublin have left the EU with much hard work and a soft Euro.

The notes for the Single Currency have already been put on display and received a lukewarm reception. They have already fallen prey to a disabling political correctness. Apparently Shakespeare has been rejected as a suitable figurehead because his characterisation of Shylock might be construed as anti-Semitic. However, the compromises made in pursuit of the Single Currency are so messy that there are growing doubts that the Euro will be viable as a currency even if it is politically correct in design.

The essential problem is that the Germans do not quite trust their partners' financial rectitude and so they wanted a 'stability pact' - an agreement that not only would tight monetary discipline be the order before Single Currency, but also after. They also wanted a system of fines in place to ensure compliance. This was clearly too much for the politicians of other countries to swallow, particularly the French . The criteria laid down in Maastricht are essentially a monetarist plan for curbing public expenditure and squeezing inflation. The latter is a German obsession ever since the collapse of the Mark in the Weimar Republic undermined democracy and eventually brought the Nazis to power. Memory is an awfully strong motivator in politics.

However, a series of French industrial disputes, culminating in the lorry drivers' blockades of border crossings in their pursuit of better working conditions, have convinced the arch-opportunist Chirac that he needs more room for manoeuvre in his economic calculations than the 'stability pact' would allow.

For the Germans, the problem is simple and therefore immensely difficult: how to have a Single European Currency as stable as the Deutschmark. Of course, you cannot. Fifteen countries with regions ranging from the richest and most productive in the world to areas as poor as some Third World countries, with fifteen different economic histories, can never be channelled into a Single Currency in some people's view, and certainly not within the two years as set by EU leaders themselves.

So, the Germans are quite right in terms of stability of currency, but that would have unacceptable consequences for political sovereignty; and the French are quite right in terms of political sovereignty but that has unworkable consequences for the Single Currency. The EU has once more decided to postpone difficult decisions until the next Summit in the Netherlands in June 1997. In the meantime they live in the old hope that something will turn up.

If half the EU countries are in a position to enter the Single Currency in 1999 it will only be because a political deal has been done under which the expressed intention to comply with the criteria is accepted as a basis for entry. Actually having to meet the criteria will disqualify some of those who want to be in, while some who could qualify, such as the UK and Denmark, may not wish to join. Moreover, the one thing that a few people still hope will 'turn up', that is a change of government in the UK, is losing some of its gloss. It looks likely that Blair will play the same 'wait and see' game as Major.

The UK is still the most notable exception - and potentially the most persuasive and influential - to what could be a lemming rush to a Single Currency. At the Maastricht Summit, Major took the prudent yet reviled step of negotiating an opt-out. It could be the UK's , and the EU's , sad fate that the one country with the political and economic clout to steer the EU through to a workable pragmatic compromise has so alienated the rest of the EU that it has ruled itself out of a leading role.

Fate of the Euro in doubt

International rally in support of a People's Europe

Saturday 1st February 1997, Westminster Central Hall, London SW1

11am - Conference with campaigners from across Europe; 1pm - Lunch
2.15pm - Rally with:
● Tony Benn MP ● Jeremy Corbyn MP ●
● Denzil Davies MP ● Diane Abbott MP ●
● Alan Simpson MP ● Daniel Gluckstein - PT France ●
Chair Geoff Martin - UNISON London

NO TO MAASTRICHT! - NO TO THE SINGLE CURRENCY!

Sponsored by UNISON London Region
Send donations towards the cost of the rally payable to People's Europe Campaign to Alan Simpson MP, House of Commons, London SW1.



Global solidarity sustains dockers

A special report from the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards.

WHAT BEGAN as a speck on the horizon turned into "Typhoon Liverpool" on 20th January: a day of world-wide solidarity action in support of the Merseyside dockers. Unions spanning the Pacific and Atlantic trade routes took part in an immense demonstration of revulsion against privatisation and casualisation targeted on the Mersey Docks and Harbour company.

As *LLB* goes to press, details are still coming in. So far ports in Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the US West Coast, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Ireland, Cyprus and Germany are known to have taken part, and news is expected from France, Belgium, Portugal and the US East Coast.

The tide was already running strongly when, on 10th January, the dockers' weekly mass meeting received a fax from the International Transport Workers Federation. General Secretary David Cockroft and Dockers' Section Secretary Kees Marges had just written requesting all ITF dockworkers' affiliates:

"To take whatever steps are open to you, including public demonstrations and, if possible, direct action aimed at ships currently using the port facilities in Liverpool affected by the dispute during the week commencing 20 January.

"To send further messages to the management and to the shop stewards indicating that the action is taken in support of the successful conclusion of the negotiating process already under way."

The day before the ITF move, the TGWU Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GP) decided not to impose the secret ballot demanded by Mersey Docks as a condition of their "ultimate offer". The ballot idea was widely canvassed in the media by Bill Morris and Peter Kilfoyle, the Labour MP for Bootle (adjoining the north docks' area), ever since the employer's offer officially expired on New Year's Eve. Without reference to Liverpool the *Financial Times* reported on 7th January that the Labour leadership, despite dissension within the Shadow Cabinet, favours compulsory reballoting in long running industrial disputes.

In the end the F&GP evidently accepted that it would not be in the Union's best interest to force a secret ballot at this point, given its overwhelming rejection by the dockers themselves.

Whatever manoeuvres lie ahead for the TGWU and ITF, the coming storm and its far reaching consequences cannot now be averted. As of 10th January, the stewards had received firm commitments from:

Japan: The 40,000 strong National Council of Dockworkers Unions (Zenkoku Kowan) will stand "in solidarity with Liverpool while fighting deregulation in Japan" and will hold workshop meetings on 20th January at all 50 ports it organises, release a press statement and write to Mersey Docks and assorted shipping companies.

Australia: While the national position is yet to be decided, in Sydney the Maritime Union of Australia plans a "big hit" on a ship with Liverpool connections.

New Zealand: NZ Seafarers Union plan action around 20th January.

US West Coast: all 18 International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) ports have been contacted directly by Liverpool stewards and are indicating support. A mass meeting in Los Angeles, the world's third largest port, has voted for a 24 hour stoppage; their position will be put to the longshoremen. Portland will hold their monthly stop work meeting for 24 hours on 20th January. Seattle, awaiting decisions in the other ports, is now expected to follow suit.

Sweden: The Hammarbetarforbundet has given notice to the employers in Gothenburg, Stockholm, Malmo, and Helsinburg of their intention to boycott all ACL and CAST cargo on 21st January.

Denmark: Mass meetings will be held on 20th January in Arhus, Copenhagen, and Odense. Last September, similar mass meetings decided to go home for the day.

GMB Holborn Branch

Dear Brother Morris,

I am instructed by my Branch to write to you concerning the Liverpool dockers.

We have, over the last year, supported your sacked members both financially (to the tune of over £1,200) and physically, including attendance by members of my branch at the first anniversary picket of the docks. My members were therefore most concerned to see your remarks (reported in the *Financial Times*) calling on your sacked members to 'disassociate themselves from those who have become involved in the dispute'.

We believe that instead of rejecting the support of others (support welcomed by your sacked members) your union should be throwing its full weight behind the Liverpool dockers. The international solidarity shown towards your members is in marked contrast to the failure of your union to call for any such solidarity action in this country.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours in struggle, Dave Statham,
Branch President

From: T&G CENTRAL OFFICE
To: GMB Holborn Branch
Dear Brother Statham

DISPUTE AT MERSEYSIDE

I am grateful to you for your advice on how to run my Union. In this regard, I wish you to know that I stand by every word of my reported comments in the *Financial Times*.

My remarks were not directed to those unionists who are providing fraternal support and solidarity to the dockers, for which we remain very grateful.

Rather I was referring to the involvement of a number of political groups whose actions on Monday, 30th September, were totally unacceptable and which will not be tolerated by this Union in this or any other dispute.

Yours sincerely,
Bill Morris,
General Secretary

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Holland: message of support has been received from the OVB and the FNV has asked Liverpool for a list of ships and shipping companies due in Rotterdam the week of 20th January.

Germany: Unconfirmed reports that the rank and file in Bremerhaven and Hamburg intend a day's stoppage. A number of other unions were meeting in mid-January to discuss possible action around 20th January.

Canada: 1,000 Montreal longshoremen organised by the Syndicate des Debardeurs were meeting to discuss supportive action.

Italy: A mass meeting on 13th January of all dockers in Genoa organised by the FILT and CGIL.

Spain: The Co-ordinator Executive met on 15th January, with a view to action probably after the 20th January.

Portugal: Lisbon shop stewards were to meet the General Secretary of the National Federation of Portworkers Unions.

Cyprus: Stewards awaiting a decision.

Beyond this ever-growing list of unions known to be contemplating action, the Liverpool stewards are hopeful of support from the CGT in Le Havre in the wake of their previous solidarity. They have also written to Bob Baete, National Secretary of the BIB Port Section, requesting industrial action against ACL in Antwerp and CAST in Zeebrugge in the week of 20th January.

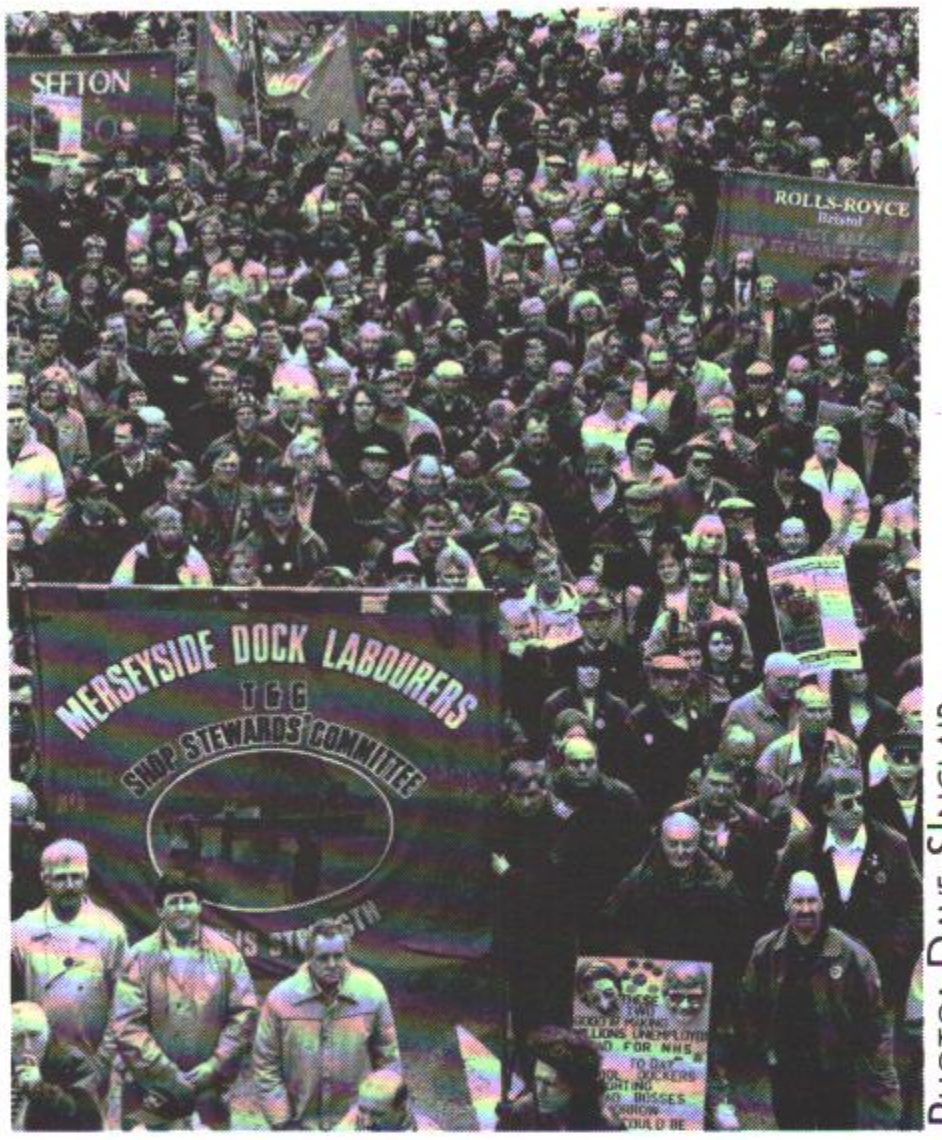


PHOTO: DAVE SINCLAIR.

May Day dockers' demo.

The stewards ask that ILA members on the US East Coast might choose 20th January, celebrated as Martin Luther King's birthday, as a fitting moment to join dockers around the world in their common fight against injustice.

Port in a storm

THE SECOND production from Video News, covering the Liverpool dockers' strike, helps in a small way to counter the paucity of media coverage. After all, if you are not a labour movement activist, you are unlikely to know much about the strike or even that it is still going on.

The video is divided into four segments, any one of which would provide a good starting point for a discussion at a union or Labour Party meeting. If members are unaware of the reasons for or origins of the strike, the first segment, *Snow on the Waterfront* (also the best produced) makes a good introduction. Set mainly on the picket line during last winter, most of the talking is done by the Women on the Waterfront.

The second section, *The Tide is High*, graphically illustrates the international nature of this strike. Dockers from all over the world meet at the dock gates and in conference. For those who took part in the miners' strike support groups back in the 80s, the third segment, *A Night to Remember*, will bring back vivid memories of fund-raising evenings and trips to miners' clubs. It shows dockers and their international supporters at their heart-warming best - and sometimes slightly the worse for wear! There are songs and speeches in many languages to move and inspire you - not quite as political as the rest of the video but a tonic if you feel jaded or cynical about the struggle.

The last section brings us up to date, with the Reclaim the Future demonstration which bought together young activists from around Britain to Liverpool. For the first time the dockers got substantial support from the rest of the country to add to their considerable international support. There is no substitute for having a docker or member of Women on the Waterfront at your meeting, but this video, full of music and colour, comes close. It is touching, sad, funny but above all inspiring.

- Video News, PO Box 10395, London N7 9DN (0171 700 7660).

"Social Justice"

Demonstration in support of the Liverpool Dockers

Saturday 12th April
Assemble 12 noon at Speakers' Corner
March to Trafalgar Square

Sacked for organising

Rob Rooney reports on his recent victimisation by the *Hull Daily Mail*.

WHAT DO YOU do if your employer creates a climate of fear so it can pursue profits ever more ruthlessly?

If, like me, you are a socialist and a committed trade unionist, you fight back. For leading that fightback, I have been sacked by the management at the *Hull Daily Mail*.

As father of the National Union of Journalists chapel at the Mail, I was involved in the production of a newsletter, *The Spoon*, which was distributed throughout the company. *The Spoon* highlighted how the company treated its workers and how the directors awarded themselves bigger pay rises than the workforce.

It had an immediate effect. Workers who had been downtrodden for years were suddenly gathering together in groups to discuss *The Spoon*, while directors were seen snatching copies out of people's hands and tearing them down from noticeboards.

A week after the second issue appeared, was hauled before the editor, accused of being the author and suspended. The subsequent disciplinary and appeal hearings were mere formalities. I was sacked for gross misconduct.

The labour movement in Hull has not taken this lying down. A boycott campaign is under way and a petition demanding my re-instatement has collected over 2,000 signatures. The management is on the run and terrified of *The Spoon*. When the fourth issue appeared, the directors of both the Hull and Grimsby papers held an emergency meeting. They then issued a statement trying to justify my treatment.

- The campaign needs moral, financial and practical support. Donations should be made payable to Humberside NUJ branch and sent to R Dean (treasurer) 11 Clough Garth, Hedon, East Yorkshire.

Trade Union Notebook

Reformer Ron Carey has defeated Jimmy Hoffa Jnr. to retain the presidency of the giant US Teamsters union.

Hoffa enjoyed heavy financial and media support, not to mention name-identification with the most famous union leader in modern US history, but Teamsters for a Democratic Union mobilised at the grass-roots to ensure the gains of recent years would not be wiped out by a return to autocracy and mob-control. Carey secured 280,000 votes to Hoffa's 220,000. The victory also ensures that the balance on the AFL-CIO will remain with the "progressive" wing of the movement.

Datta Samant, who led the epic eight-month Bombay textile strike of 1982, was gunned down in the streets in Bombay on 16th January.

The assassination of the 82-year old Indian trade union legend is thought to have been the work of gangland hitmen acting on behalf of unknown parties. Inter-union rivalry has been indicated as a possible motive for the killing.

On January 17th, more than 100,000 workers went on strike in Bombay to protest against the shooting.

Members of the Civil and Public Services Association and the Public Services, Tax and Commerce Union at London Airports staged industrial action over Christmas in protest at the imposition of new shift rosters. Management's move arose after eleven months of negotiations, in which the two sides appeared to be inching towards agreement. The Union believe that 108 attendances over a 24 week period will provide sufficient flexibility and cover.

Customs and Excise (C & E) have demanded 112 attendances, including shorter night shifts. After C & E's imposition, union members walked out for 24 hours on Christmas Eve and on 2nd and 3rd January. Branch officers described support as overwhelming: with nearly 100% membership, just two of 80 members worked normally on 24th December.

The unprecedented action on 19th November by eight higher education unions brought management back to the negotiating table. Following the rejection of two previous offers, management made an offer of 3.9% for manal grades and 2.9% for the rest for 1996; the higher of 3.4% or the March 1997 Retail Price Index increases plus 0.5% for manual grades and the higher of 2.9% or the RPI increase for others. All strings were dropped except for an agreement to make a submission on pay to the Dearing Commission reviewing Higher Education with future re-opening of negotiations being dependent on its recommendation.

The offer is now being discussed by branches. The AUT nationally want a pay review to avoid future industrial action. However, some members believe that sticking to free collective bargaining will give them greater power in the future.

The left in UNISON should argue for acceptance of the deal. Rejection would peter out into defeat and demoralisation laying the way open for management to impose conditions and strings previously resisted. Acceptance would be seen as a victory, boost members' morale and recruitment and build a stronger union able to fight new attacks on the horizon. While a two-year deal is an unwelcome condition, the level of increases are reasonable and there may be two further opportunities to revisit the matter during this time: the first would come if the Pay Commission recommended higher increases to Dearing and the second would come with a Labour Government in the fight to implement the statutory minimum wage, a campaign that can unite the whole public sector.

Last September MSF General Secretary Roger Lyons suspended the committee of Birmingham ID (craft) branch. Although an investigative committee (to which ex-branch secretary, John Marshall and another member of the committee have been summonsed) meets at the end of January, the committee members have not been informed of any reasons for their suspension. The branch until recently had as its full-time officer left-winger Dave Peters, himself suspended after an election in which the branch registered a 67% return - something the union leadership said was impossible. When the election was rerun, the new officer registered a 66% return.

The investigation committee included United Craft President Jim Sims, who in November 1995 told Marshall "We're going to get you and Peters". The two Birmingham ID members have refused to attend if Sims is on the committee and demanded that MSF supply them with a solicitor.

Meanwhile, the branch members elected a new committee. A Regional officer gave only 36 hours notice for a meeting at 10.30 am on a Sunday to allow the branch to nominate for the General Secretary election. Activists did a ring round and the meeting was quorate - only half those attending had received the official notice! The members present made their nomination - which head office has acknowledged as valid - and confirmed the election of the new committee.

Despite media hype that rank and file Labour Party members are not interested in trade unions and the Party leadership's determination to weaken the link, in fact most members eligible to be trade union members are. Over 32% are members of affiliated trade unions, a further 12.5% are in non-affiliated unions and nearly 50% are retired, students or unemployed. That leaves just 5.5% of whom there is 'no information available' - and that presumably includes some self-employed members. Many of the unemployed and retired would also have been in unions, so there is a sizeable body of people who are a living part of the trade union link.

UNISON NEC walks away: Hillingdon strikers fight on

Jon Rogers Deputy Regional Convenor, London UNISON (personal capacity)

UNISON members are learning with shock and dismay that a sub committee of the Union's National Executive has pulled the plug on official backing for the fifteen month long strike against private contractor Pall Mall at Hillingdon hospital. The strike - by 53 low paid Asian women cleaners against a 20% pay cut - had received the full support of UNISON's Conference, which had instructed the NEC to give full backing, including strike pay, until the strikers secured reinstatement.

Under UNISON rules, the NEC is not

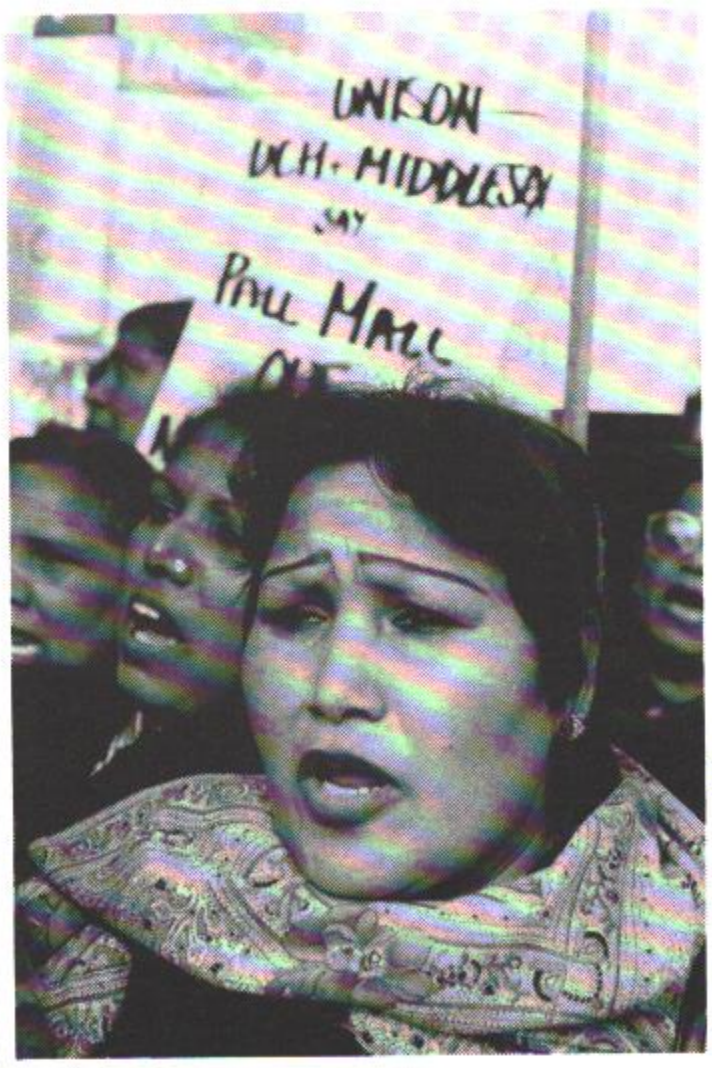


PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON.

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supposed to be able to act against the agreed policy of the Union as laid down at Conference, but a narrow majority of the Union's Industrial Action Committee has thrown away the rule book, the policy of the Union and the principles of trade union democracy in order to try to kill off a strike which has been a beacon of inspiration throughout the labour movement.

Following talks at ACAS on 6th January, the Industrial Action Committee of UNISON's National Executive met on 8th January and agreed, without a ballot of the Hillingdon Hospital strikers, to accept an offer from the employers of £250,000 to be shared between the 53 strikers. UNISON's acceptance included the decision to withdraw official backing from the dispute with effect from 16th January.

The strikers are not willing to accept this offer. At a meeting on 12th January, attended by a clear majority of the strikers, those strikers present voted unanimously not to accept this offer, and to continue with their dispute. Again on 14th January the strikers met with UNISON officials and told them quite clearly that the strike was not at an end. The strikers are calling on all UNISON members and trade unionists to back them, and have called for a conference of supporters to take place at Hillingdon Civic Centre in Uxbridge on 9th February.

Supporters of the strike within UNISON will be pressing for General Secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe to intervene to uphold the agreed policy of the Union and restore official backing to the strikers, and will be lobbying UNISON's NEC on 14th February. We fully expect the weight of the Union's right-wing to be mobilised against us in a way in which it has never mobilised to support the strikers.

If the strikers are to sustain and develop their just fight for reinstatement they need a massive response from the rank and file of the trade union movement.

Everyone can:

1. Send donations to the Hillingdon Strikers Support Campaign c/o Cllr Wally Kennedy, Hillingdon Civic Centre, Uxbridge, Middlesex;

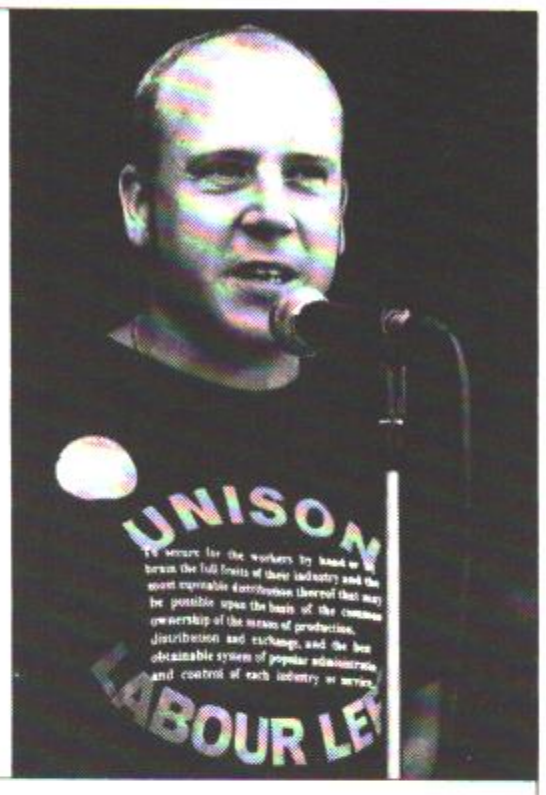
2. Support a protest at UNISON HQ, 1 Mabledon Place, London WC1 (Kings Cross tube) on 14th February;

3. Support the picket line at Hillingdon hospital, Pield Heath Road, Uxbridge (bus U2 from Uxbridge tube station);

UNISON members should support the following resolution to this year's Annual Conference: *"This Conference censures the National Executive Council for permitting official backing and strike pay to be withdrawn from the Hillingdon Hospital strikers in breach of the policy agreed at Conference 1996 and of Rule D2.1."*

the Geoff Martin column

UNISON's London Region convenor takes a lefty look at life.



● Apart from the onward march of Ruud's mighty Blues, Christmas was the usual mixture of booze and boredom this year and I for one am glad it's all over. But don't call me Scrooge. Like the majority of the population I managed to pick up some nasty flu-type bug which knocked me flying just before Christmas Eve and which lingered around right up until the spectacular 1-0 victory over Liverpool on New Year's Day.

● As I'm writing this column there's a panic over tickets for the FA cup game against the scousers, which involves charging around and frantic phone calls, which of course is all part of the big match build up.

● On a final football reference this month I was looking out for *LLB* supremo and Hammers fan Graham Bash at the Chelsea - West Ham match but I couldn't see him anywhere. I suspect that he had been detained by urgent negotiations with USDAW chief Garfield Davies over minimum wage motions to the 1997 Party Conference.

● Just before Christmas I was dragged in by the BBC to do a piece for the *World Tonight* on the prospect of public sector pay restraint under a Labour Government. The reporter called while I was unavoidably holed up in the boozer and I foolishly ignored the instructions to stop drinking while I waited for the cab. The result was an even more over the top on-air than normal as the Guiness kicked in. Some New Labour hack called Neil Lawson was in a radio car somewhere in town to join in the debate. I was so pissed I thought it was NIGEL Lawson and from the rubbish he was spouting it might as well have been. All I'm saying is that it was a damn good job he wasn't in the studio with me if you get my drift.

● So who was the joker on the *LLB* production team who not only used the banned 'squinty mug shot' in the last issue but also captioned it 'Geoff Martin - Leading the left'. Could it be that the Hampshire Popular Front (Campaigning, Fighting, Democractic) have infiltrated the *LLB* Central Committee? I think I'll have to ask that Jon Rogers.

● I was invited down to Bermondsey recently to speak at a Labour Party meeting on behalf of the Keep The Link campaign. I was looking forward to it no end as they'd promised me a head to head with someone from the LCC. Well what a surprise when the LCC'er failed to show up! If anyone out there has managed to pin down an LLC'er to a debate on the future of the link for god's sake let me know. I'm prepared to debate with them anywhere at anytime. Top of the Millbank tower at 3.30 in the morning - I don't care, I'll be there.

● I was planning to have a tilt at the Spice Girls in this month's column until I realised that there wasn't a cat in hell's chance of my views getting past the *LLB* editorial board. I'll restrict my comments to Blair's response after they'd announced that they loved Thatch and would be voting Tory. What was the Labour leader's reaction? Tony announced that despite their politics he "still liked their music". "Still liked the Spice Girls music" - and we're supposed to respect the bloke's views? Give me strength.

LEADING WITH THE LEFT

Are you involved in a dispute? Do you want to spread news of meetings or picket lines to the left? Why not send your articles or press releases to:

Labour Left Briefing, PO Box 2378, London E5 9QU.

Anti-deportation news

Grass-roots resistance can work, reports John Stewart, treasurer of the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns.

MORE THAN 60 local anti-deportation campaigns around Britain are now affiliated to the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC), launched in May 1995. The idea is to bring together different campaigns, lend mutual support and share information and experiences.

Grants from church groups and charities have enabled us to employ a full-time worker, based in Birmingham, and a part-time worker in London.

In 1995 nearly 4,900 people, overwhelmingly black and Asian, were made to leave the UK as a result of enforcement action under Immigration Act powers either under the deportation process or as 'illegal entrants' (more than 90 every week). Enforcement action, with a view to deportation or removal, was initiated against 16,000 people in 1995 (more than 300 every week). 1,033 people are being held in detention centres or prisons facing deportation.

A notorious case is that of Joyce Onibiyo and her family. The Onibiyos came to the UK in 1964 and lived here happily until the Government passed deportation orders against them thirty years later. Joyce's husband, Abdul, was deported to Nigeria in October 1995 and has not been heard of since. Her son, 20 year-old Ade, was held in a detention centre for over a year before being deported. Now Joyce and two of her daughters also face deportation.

Not content with tearing this family apart, Government officials have enforced petty indignities on them as well. Every December 25th for the past four years Joyce has had to walk (no public transport on Christmas Day) the three miles between her home in South London and the Immigration Office at London Bridge to register with the authorities. Thankfully this year she was spared that journey and was able to spend Christmas Day with what remains of her family.

Section 8 of the Government's new Asylum and Immigration Act comes into force on January 27th. Employers will now face fines of up to £5,000 for employing 'illegal workers'. The new law was opposed by many employers' organisations and even Jack Straw has said a Labour Government will not operate it.

Finally, a campaign success. The Government has accepted that the marriage of Mike and Gemma Harries, from Cardiff, is genuine. Trinidad born Gemma came to the UK in 1988, met Mike in 1993 and subsequently married. However, the Government said their marriage was 'contrived' to allow Gemma to remain in the country and she was forced to return to Trinidad. Now Mike and Gemma can be re-united. Their victory would not have been possible without the support of the local labour movement, including UNISON and unions throughout Wales, and from their employer, Cardiff County Council. Once again it shows that campaigning against injustice can be successful.

- For more information, contact NCADC, 22 Berners Street, Lozells, Birmingham B19 2DR, phone 0121 554 6947, fax 0121 507 1567.

BNP's East London Campaign

THE BRITISH NATIONAL PARTY has confirmed that John Tyndall will stand for Parliament in Bethnal Green & Bow, with Dave King in Poplar & Canning Town, where Derek Beackon was briefly a councillor and the BNP came second to Labour in two other wards in 1994.

Labour Party activists in the area are divided between those who belatedly want to turn fully towards fighting the fascists and those who deride the former as not being serious about winning a Labour Government.

Targeting Party activity is important, but so is maintaining the effort to obliterate the BNP as an electoral player. The size of their vote will influence the confidence with which they campaign in the run-up to future council elections; complacency could yet see them snatch a rogue victory again.

Labour Council cuts NMP

ANTI-RACISTS HAVE been shocked by Newham Council's decision to withdraw its £102,000 grant to Newham Monitoring Project after ten years of funding.

The decision followed a division among former NMP supporters, and a series of articles in the local press making a variety of allegations against NMP.

The Council claims it has cut the funding because of "continued management failings, lack of proper financial controls and possible misuse of Council funds." It also complained that NMP had failed to separate campaigning work from "Council permitted activities".

NMP responded: "Before we even had the opportunity to defend ourselves the Council rushed through a biased 'review' of our work, handed to us just before Christmas. They made the decision to axe us on 8th January. It is clear that many in the Council would prefer a tame black voluntary sector. Many councillors saw the 'review', which was triggered by articles in the *Newham Recorder*, a paper that has attacked us for years, as a handy excuse to rid themselves of a troublesome critic."

Observers note that the Council failed to give NMP any real chance either to respond to the allegations or to remedy alleged defects in structure and practice.

Anti-racists and Labour activists must also be concerned about the dangerous precedent being set. Local monitoring groups like NMP need and deserve local authority funding - but to do their job they must remain politically independent of that authority. It is clear that for some Newham Labour councillors the real objection to NMP was its autonomy.

Two weeks after the Council decision, and following another hostile article in the local press (this time alleging NMP links with Sinn Fein) a fire wrecked NMP's office in east London.

- Contact: NMP Defence Campaign, PO Box 273, London E7. Tel. 0181-555 8151.

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Mass protest by UK immigration detainees

Bill MacKeith, Close Campsfield Campaign, reports on the growing fightback of those incarcerated in British Detention Centres for the crime of wanting to live here and the links that are being made across Europe in defence of asylum rights.

ON JANUARY 6th 1997, seventy refugees in Rochester jail went on indefinite hunger strike demanding that their requests for political asylum be heard by 'an independent body and judicial committee'.

All have been detained without charge or time limit, or proper legal or medical provision, some over two years. Some 45% have been diagnosed as suffering from mental or physical disorders and trauma, but they are all treated as 'trouble makers and lunatics'. There was a demonstration supporting them outside the prison on 13th January.

Rochester is a centre of opposition for the hundreds of immigration detainees - a protest last May was broken up by riot police.

There are regular demonstrations in support of prominent political figures detained at Rochester. Last May 2,500 marched in London to support Kurdish nationalist leader Kani Yilmaz. In June 200 demonstrated outside Winson Green, Birmingham, for Raghbir Singh, a Sikh newspaper editor.

In July, a march in London opposed the deportation of Angolan Natasha Metambele and in November there was a big anti-deportation demo in Manchester. In the same month a demonstration at Campsfield detention centre marked the three years since it opened and a conference on detention was organised by the Asylum Rights Campaign. In December, campaigners demonstrated outside Harmondsworth centre, Heathrow, demanding its closure.

There have been victories. As a result of a European Court of Human Rights decision, Karamjit Singh Chahal, a Sikh separatist, was released after over six years without charge in Bedford Jail, leading to two others being released, with more expected.

But generally, the situation refugees face is worsening. Under the new Asylum and Immigration Act social security and housing benefits are denied to most asylum seekers, leaving cash-strapped local authorities to deal with the resulting destitution. From March, the Government plans to reduce grants to refugee organisations from £3.4m to £1.5m a year. The number of political asylum seekers being detained is rising - by last October there were 864, including 81 women, three times the numbers detained in the early 90s.

They are also being held twice as long as two years ago, for an average of three months. Of the 864, 466 had been held for over six months, 158 for over a year. 343 were held in prisons, contrary to a UN Refugee Convention that asylum seekers should not be held with those charged with or convicted of crime. 33 were held in police cells and 490 in detention centres.

The countries that asylum seekers come from are those where human rights are denied. 60% come from ten countries: Nigeria, India, Algeria, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Zaire, China, Turkey and Pakistan - all on the so-called 'white list' of 'safe' countries. The reality is that most of these countries have undemocratic, corrupt, dictatorial or military regimes, but they are vital for UK trade, particularly in arms.

Refugees are in a 'no-win' situation: if they don't apply for asylum at the port of entry, they lose any entitlement to benefit, if they do they may get jailed - 63% of those detained sought asylum immediately on arrival.

The campaigning priorities are clear: to set up and strengthen closure campaigns at the detention centres and prisons holding detainees that work closely with the refugees' and migrant groups' own organisations. Visiting detainees is a key element in building the anti-detention movement.

Only three unions have called for an end to immigration detentions - the NUJ, TGWU and MSF - and it is important to win more unions to this position; this will help to undermine the political parties' bipartisan policy on detentions. The demand has been raised at the last two Labour Party Conferences. More motions should be sent to this year's Conference and a strong intervention planned well ahead.

90% of those detained are black. The imprisonment of innocent people, especially when selected on the basis of country of origin and skin colour, is an act of state racism, an incitement to further racist thinking and acts, and an attack on all our basic democratic rights. There must be no holding back on pointing this out to political 'leaders' and demanding an end to it.

With the Schengen agreement, and Britain's prominent role in population movement and immigration policy, harsh treatment of refugees and all migrants is growing across 'fortress Europe'. But opposition will also grow, especially if the French example is followed. In August, when police evicted 300 *sans papiers* migrants and refugees from St Bernard's church in north Paris, 20,000 marched the same evening to demand their release.

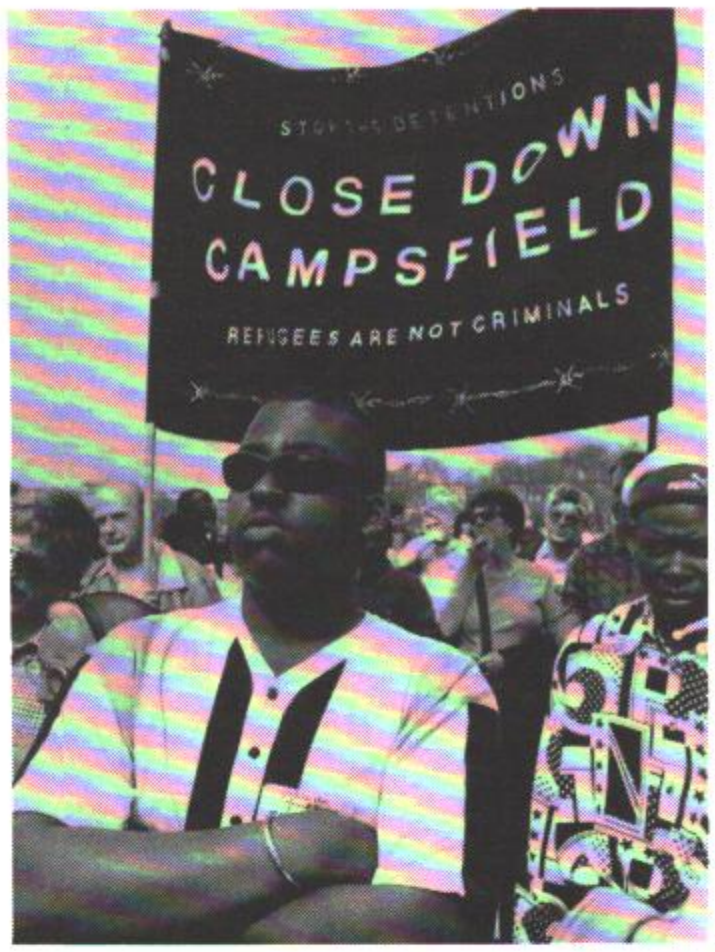


PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON.

Asylum Bill demo 1996.

A widely-backed conference on detentions in Europe, initially called by FASTI (*Federation des Associations en Solidarite avec les Travailleurs Immigrants*) will take place in Lille, northern France, on 15th-16th April. This can be used to build European opposition to the detention of refugees and other migrants, particularly between local and grass roots organisations.

- Contacts and further information: European conference: J-P Perrin-Martin, la rue du Terrail, 45000 Orleans, France or (UK) Anti-Detentions Network: 01865 558145 (also for rebuilding closure campaign). National Coalition of Anti Deportation Campaigns: 0121 554 6947.

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Global Warning by Martin Cock and Bill Hopwood, Militant Publications, £6.95.

Did you know that average life expectancy in Swansea in 1883 was only 24 years? Or that 30% of the rice grown in Taiwan is contaminated by heavy metals? Or that the cost of packaging accounts for one-seventh of the average supermarket shopping bill? I didn't.

Nor did I think, when I first picked it up, that I would comment favourably on a book on the environment by two supporters of *Militant Labour*. Yet the authors have written an excellent introduction, not just to environmental issues but different strategies for tackling them.

The false attractions of a rural ecotopia are dealt with firmly without being sectarian. The limitations of attempting rationally to persuade governments and of consumer boycotts are discussed sensitively. Throughout there is a class perspective - very refreshing, since a lot of green literature tends to lay so much blame on the activities of humanity generally. "To be a friend of the earth," the authors conclude, "you don't have to be an enemy of the people."

There is a good chapter on the multinational agri-business and fascinating sections on more arcane issues, such as the effects of "just-in-time" delivery on road transport costs. Unfortunately, there is not much on the empowerment of women, which many environmentalists reckon to be the most important step globally towards solving a range of environmental problems. But the book does take an internationalist approach and is highly accessible with nearly 100 illustrations. Ideal for beginners.

Don Rocinante

Carla's Song

Ken Loach's new film is a simple story, told with some suspense. It begins in Glasgow in 1987, when a young bus driver falls in love with a Nicaraguan dancer suffering from the traumatic after-effects of a violent experience in her home country. At his suggestion, they return to Nicaragua to exorcise her demons and search for the loved ones she left behind.

The film is beautifully shot with the authentic feel for dialogue we expect from Loach. Paul Laverty, who wrote the screenplay, lived in Nicaragua for many years. The film uniquely catches the voices of the campesinos, many playing themselves.

When interviewed recently, Laverty pointed out that the country's debt burden meant that every Nicaraguan owed the international banks the equivalent of $2,600.

"If that was owed to local moneylenders by people earning $250 a year, you would say it was absolute barbarism. But it is all done with antiseptic phrases like 'extended structural adjustment facility'. It's still a war, but without bullets."



Bradley says goodbye to Carla before returning to his village in the north of Nicaragua.

The film has a few twists and turns in the story line that require suspension of belief at times, but overall this is a moving, finely acted film, recommended especially to those who have no prior knowledge of its subject.

Mike Phipps

The Price of a Cigar

In December, *LLB* printed a generous review by Ted Johns of my book *The Price of a Cigar*, a recreation of the 1889 London Dock Strike.

Not wishing to needlessly swell the coffers of W.H. Smith, Dillions, etc, I intend to forward the profit from all books sold as a result of your review to the fund for the families of the Liverpool Dockers.

The price of the book is £9.95. Anyone requiring a copy should send two cheques, one for £5.55 in the name of Anchor Books to cover the cost of the book plus packing and delivery, and one for £4.40 in the name of Merseyside Dockers Family Hardship Fund. Post both cheques to: Anchor Books, Anchor House, 54 Whiteadder Way, London E14 9UR.

Peter Wood

Local Initiatives

Issue No 3 of Mid-Kent and the Weald's *What's Left* magazine is now available from Maidstone's Left Unity Group, 146 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent for £1. As well as local Labour news and views from a left perspective, it includes a historical article on the revolt in 1830 by Kent agricultural labourers.

More ambitious is Tom Stott's pamphlet *Solidarity*, with over 70 pages about Rochdale Solidarity Committee. The pamphlet covers solidarity activity with, among others, the miners, printers, ambulance workers and most recently with sacked Liverpool dockers. Tony Benn MP wrote the foreword. Available from Tom Stott, 35 Blackthorn Close, Shawclough, Rochdale, Lancs OL12 6XU at £3.50.

Mike Phipps

Nils Kaare Dahl, 1909-1996

Nils Kaare Dahl, life long socialist and husband of Labour MP Mildred Gordon, died on New Year's Eve in his native Norway, aged 87.

From a political family, Nils became involved in left-wing politics in the late 20s as a member of an organisation called Mot-Dag. This was co-opted into the Communist Party in 1929; Nils was almost immediately expelled as an oppositionist! Continuing his studies in Berlin, he again became involved with Mot-Dag, now part of the Communist Opposition, and helped Jews leave Germany. Eventually he worked full-time for the organisation.

Because of illness Nils returned to Norway just before Hitler took power. There he worked for Oslo's biggest trade union, organising building workers. He became friendly with Walter Held, Trotsky's representative in Norway, and first met Trotsky when he visited Norway in 1935. Trotsky fell ill and, after a brief stay in hospital, needed somewhere quiet to stay. Nils and his new wife accomanied Trotsky for a week's convalesence in the countryside. Over the next period, he met Trotsky many times, acting as his bodyguard while in Norway, and had many discussions with him.

Mot-Dag was involved with political migrants arriving from Germany before the war and through his trade union work Nils was able to help many of them obtain jobs. Mot-Dag became a rallying point for Trotskyists and the organisation went into the Norwegian Labour Party. Nils also formed a close friendship with Willy Brandt, the future German Chancellor, who had taken refuge in Norway.

Nils joined up when the Germans invaded Norway and eventually escaped to Sweden, before returning with a small group to continue opposing the Nazi occupation. He also helped build up an escape route to Sweden which was used to supply the Swedish High Command with intelligence about the Nazis.

Nils wrote two books about the war in which he was highly critical of the Norwegian military establishment.



When he returned to Norway after the war he found that most of his old comrades were no longer fit for political work; their spirits were broken after long years in the underground opposition to the Nazi terror. He, however, remained an activist for many years, working with the trade unions, and defending the rights of the Samish people (Lapps).

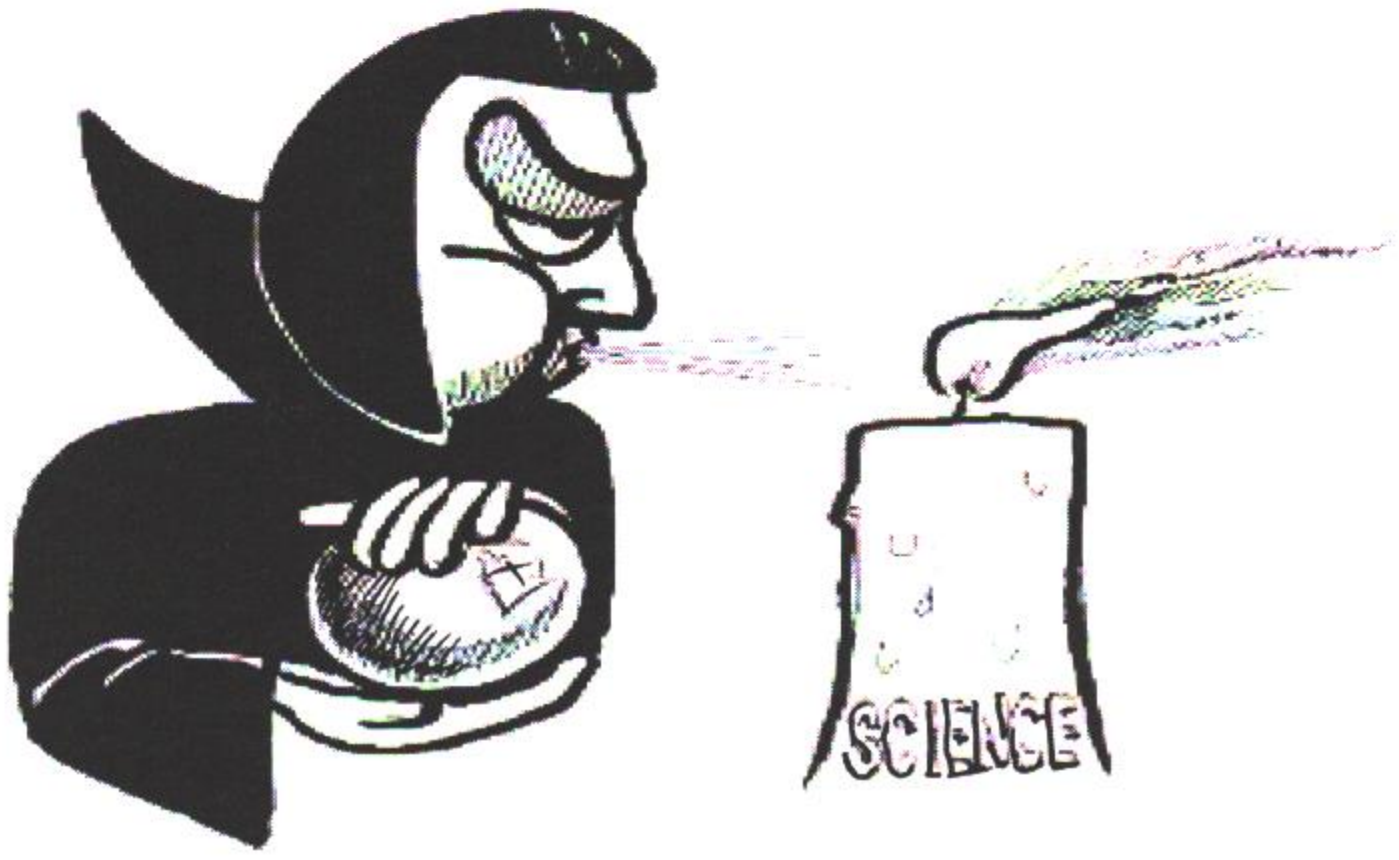
In his old age, Nils was very proud of the fact that he was one of the longest card-carrying members of the Norwegian Labour Party.

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science

Science: a candle in the dark

In this month's column Keith Veness, Islington North CLP, reviews *The Demon-haunted World* by Carl Sagan, published in paperback by Headline Publications at £7.99.



THE RECENT death of astronomer Carl Sagan after a battle with cancer is a sad loss to science, rationalism and the cause of social progress. A personal hero of mine, he stood for understanding against superstition while believing that science is the property of the masses, not a small elite of self-selecting 'specialists'.

His last book, subtitled *Science as a candle in the dark*, is a suitable epitaph and also probably his finest popular work. Richard Dawkins, reviewing it for the *Times*, simply said, "I wish I had written this book." It's a sentiment *LLB* readers should all share.

Sagan was genuinely concerned over the rise of both religious fundamentalism and the whole slew of 'new-age' superstitions that have grown in recent years. However, unlike many on the left, he felt strongly that nonsense needs to be challenged. It is unwise to ignore widely held superstitions, even if it's obvious that they are wrong with even the smallest investigation.

The recent 'cults' of UFOs, crop circles, scientology and other areas of weirdness need to be critically examined and exposed where they are palpably wrong.

One person Sagan admired was James Randi, the American magician and debunker of fakes and mystics. Randi has effortlessly duplicated all the feats of Uri Geller without claiming anything supernatural about them. In fact, magicians and conjurers are better at exposing these things than scientists generally are. The escapologist Harry Houdini devoted his last years to exposing 'mediums' and fake miracle workers, a lot of them supported by Arthur Conan Doyle's literary fortune. He offered the then enormous sum of £10,000 to any medium or thought-reader who could produce results he could not duplicate. Houdini, needless to say, never had to shell out any of his cash!

Even today, astrology - rubbish based on an initial misunderstanding of the cosmos - has many millions of adherents. Ronald Reagan and Boris Yeltsin both consulted astrologers and governments in India, Sri Lanka and Malaysia all apparently have their 'Mystic Megs' on the payroll. We live in a society where barely a couple of hundred university places are available to study the science of astronomy but millions are spent on the total garbage purveyed by the newspaper columns.

Even worse, however, is the wholesale return to religious obscurantism. When US Christians fund whole institutions to prove evolution wrong and seek to outlaw its teachings because it contradicts the Bible, we are truly sinking into a new age of barbarism. The failure of science to grip the attention of people and a relapse into religious 'non-thought' is nowhere more starkly shown than in the growth of Islamic reaction - culminating in the Taliban.This Pakistani-funded army has seized large parts of Afghanistan and outlawed television, women at work, pictures in books and all science as being anti-God and against the Koran.

Sagan was clear that the scientific method was the only one that can create progress, not because it is infallible but just the reverse. Science has no absolutes and all its findings can be disproved by test or experience. The earth is roughly spherical because we can test this - even if the Bible and the Koran say it is flat. Rockets get to the moon and Mars because of the testable theories of Kepler, Newton, Einstein - and Sagan. No amount of faith or prayer produces equivalent, or any, results. There can be no compromise with the basic methods that require debate and experiment. Attempts to explain the world by gods or demons lead nowhere.

Sagan also reveals in his book a number of new facts not known to his wider public. Apparently he used to smuggle copies of Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* to friends in Moscow during the last days of the USSR when it was still technically a banned book! He also had the misfortune of being invited onto a US chat show to explain why he had been abducted by aliens - only for the horrified host to realize his article in *Parade* magazine was actually a spoof.

Sagan was a great scientist, an excellent populariser of new discoveries and a person who never ceased in his awe and wonder of the natural universe. Why invent the supernatural when the real world is so full of interest and change?

Sagan's message is that if we are to avoid a new "dark age", science is the beacon we need to illuminate things. We will miss his brilliant and incisive insights, and even more his willingness to speak in a way non-scientists can understand. This book is a fitting memorial to him.



Orange orders

More proof of the fact that the **modernisers** hate the left more than the Tories comes from the **European Parliamentary Labour Party**. In a Stalin-style attempt to impose disciplinary action for a supposed heckling of Tony Blair three months earlier, the EPLP leadership stripped left-wing MEP **Hugh Kerr** of his chairmanship of the Parliamentary delegation to Australia. As it failed to put up an alternative candidate, the Labour Group allowed the position to go to Ulster Unionist MEP **James Nicholson**, whose Party in Westminster is keeping the Tories in power, and who has just joined **James Goldsmith**'s group in the European Parliament. Malicious incompetence or a shoddy deal with the loyalists? Students of European Labour politics will presume the former.

Some carrot, some stick

Severn Trent Water was proudly handing out glossy brochures at the last Labour Party Conference, lauding its post-privatisation successes on water quality and improving the 55,000 acres of land under their control. Not, presumably, the same Severn Trent fined £175,000 for a chemical leak which killed 33,000 salmon in the River Wye last year. Indeed, Severn Trent has been successfully prosecuted 40 times since 1989. That fine wouldn't, however, be enough to pay Managing Director **Brian Duckworth** (£312,243 p.a.) or Finance Director **Alan Costin** (£320,130) and certainly not enough to pay their Chief Executive, **Victor Cocker** (£464,943). Some carrot on the end of the stick, Vic.

Sheppard flocked

So **Tommy Sheppard**, the man who shut Hackney's libraries, has been sacked from the **Labour Party's Scottish HQ**. Why? Well it couldn't be because of the leaking of an opinion poll which revealed Blair's unpopularity in Scotland - he was cleared of this crime after an internal inquiry. Comrades in Scotland believe that the apparatus is unhappy that Tommy has been seen to be keeping 'bad company' ie. **George Galloway**. *Periscope* however believes that it was because Tommy brought the Party into disrepute after his early exit from the BBC's *Masterchef* competition.

Stuff the politics, pass the crème brûlée

Nice to see the latest issue of ***New Labour New Britain*** is doing its bit to overcome gender stereotyping by carrying an interview with **Brenda Dean**, Britain's first woman trade union leader, a key player in the 1980s Wapping print dispute and now a Labour whip in the House of Lords. Unfortunately the interview is exclusively about Brenda's cooking.

Not speaking out of his Beetlebum

Blur's Damon Albarn has followed **Noel Gallagher's** confession that he was in tears hearing **Blair's** Party Conference speech (weren't we all?). Interviewed by *Q* Magazine, he said, "Blair has a worrying conservative streak and he's taken his own personality so far into the arena of appeasement he's no longer a valid leader of a socialist party. But I will be voting for him, and Labour will get in. Just don't expect any changes, that's all...."

Ask not for whom the poll is tolled

Congratulations to whoever sent out the memo urging Party members to nominate **Tony Blair** for Radio 4's 'Personality of the Year'. If there was one thing more stunning than not realising it would be leaked, it is the thought that anyone would think of our leader as a personality. The *Telegraph*, ever concerned with journalistic integrity, was not slow to use the opportunity to run the headline "Labour in poll rigging row" under a picture of the victorious Labour candidate in the Barnsley by-election.

Football finance f***- up finds forlorn fans frustrated

Commercialisation has hit soccer in the **Czech Republic** even worse than in Britain. Plans for pay-to-view league matches were pre-empted by financial rows that prevented their World Cup qualifier with Yugoslavia from being shown live on TV. The supporters' reaction? "This would never have happened under communism".

Nice work if you can get it

As Londoners contemplate yet another hike in fares, they can take comfort in knowing it is all going to good causes. Where once there was one director of buses in **London Transport**, since the breakup into companies began there are now around 30 - good to know where those increases in the employment figures are coming from - all of whom command director-size salaries, of course. Now the Tories plan the same transformation to the tube system - something to keep travellers happy as they sit in darkened tunnels wondering if their train is going to move or burst into flames. Clearly a vote winner.

The people's Tony

When **Tony Blair** announced a visit to a London College, some staff took the opportunity to phone Blair's office to point out the cuts being implemented by the controlling Labour Council. Blair's office, keen to assist in every way possible, supplied their names to the college management forthwith.

Colemanballs

LP Director of Organisation, **Peter Coleman**, has had to eat a little humble pie over the Leeds North East bust up. Coleman fell over backwards to take up the complaints of one or two people, mostly in Islington, to **Liz Davies**' selection. Blair's officials then bent the new selection process so that **Fabian Hamilton** just scraped in as PPC. **Mike Eslea**, a disgusted ward officer, wrote to all members laying out the facts of Hamilton's company bankruptcies, court judgements for debt and irregularities in his selection. First thing this year Coleman sent a whining letter to all Leeds NE Party members to denounce unnamed members for these accusations, especially the one that Hamilton had deliberately set up companies to make a personal profit for the liquidation of his other companies. Now Coleman has had to write again to all Leeds NE members again to apologise to Mike Eslea and making clear that Mike had not made such an allegation, and those accusations he had made had not misled members!

Meanwhile, as we go to press, Hamilton faces criminal proceedings for 17 offences under the Companies and Insolvency Act. Best wishes to Fabian. We are sure that he is innocent.

Be a winner with the *Briefing* Club in 1997!

Every month someone must win £15, £10 or £5.

Forget that one in fourteen million chance of winning a lottery prize. By joining the *Briefing* Club for as little as £1 a month, you will have a good chance of winning monthly prizes and 100 per cent chance to ensure *LLB* can thrive. Pay by cheque (made out to *Labour Left Briefing*), standing order or direct debit. Return to: *LLB*, PO Box 2378, London E5 9QU.

Winners so far include: Shelagh Dale, Colin Ellison, Peter Hain, Dorothy Macedo, Geoff Mann. Next month it could be you!



CORRESPONDENCE

Your letters are welcome but please keep them under 250 words. Please send a PC floppy if possible.

Write to:

Labour Left Briefing
PO Box 2378
London E5 9QU



There are some points to add to the article on Labour's moralisers (November *LLB*). The news from France confirms the analysis about class struggle in Europe. At UNIONS 96 the TUC leadership, Robin Cook and various half-hearted modernisers made the case for social partnership and stakeholding. David Lea (TUC Assistant General Secretary) debating with John Blevin (*Tribune* deputy editor) on the Single Currency claimed that monetary union was the TUC's only realistic option if it was to be part of the 'European social-democratic and labour movement'.

In a Commission on Social Partnership and Constitutional Change, Mary Southgate of the Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform claimed a new constitutional settlement was essential for society to work in harmony. This means constitutional reform would legislate for people to be nicer to one another. Seamus Milne, *Guardian* labour editor, said Labour would definitely break with the unions, but the constitutional and stakeholding schemes of the modernisers were under strain in the rest of Europe and were an embarrassment because the business 'partners' weren't interested.

Milne illustrates a growing awareness that the modernising project plus economic liberalism is a contradiction in terms, and is now breaking down. In the process social-democratic parties continue to move left; Jospin recently committed the French PS to the 35 hour week and made reservations about Maastricht, but there are of course very clear limits to this move. Henri Emmanuelli of the Parti Socialiste denounced economic liberalism in terms that make Alan Simpson seem weak. The SPD in Germany and the PSOE in Spain have also taken radical stands.

Andrew Coates,
Ipswich

The inclusion of a science column in a magazine of the left is a welcome change from the usual silence on the subject. Yet Chris Knight's recent column is disappointingly orthodox. Given the current 'science wars' as they have come to be known, *LLB* readers deserve a more nuanced account of the way in which scientific knowledge reflects the society in which we live. Chris Knight's allusion to strikes and females "bonding to bleed" is particularly ironic, given the sorry history of sexist ideology in human biology. In addition his argument that it is testability which distinguishes science from political ideology is the old cry of scientists seeking to reassert their authority in their own interests. Instead we need to challenge the myth of objectivity behind which so many scientists hide, and to think more openly about the political factors which shape science.

Despite their rarefied existence, academics in the field broadly known as Science and Technology Studies (STS), are currently engaged in a bitter battle with more powerful right-wing academics, notably in the USA. STS scholars' work, based on careful socio-historical examinations of scientific knowledge and technology, is being vilified as dangerously Marxist. In fact most STS writers are less than revolutionary and have often been criticised by the left for sitting on the fence.

Ruth Hubbard is one of the 'grandes dames' of the feminist critics of science - she coined the telling phrase that "science is politics by other means". Donna Haraway is another and Emily Martin's work directly contradicts Chris Knight when he says that politics cannot explain success in science. Politics invariably can explain the successes and failures of scientific theories. Show me a socially, politically and culturally detached scientist and I will show you a deluded individual (usually male) with a God complex.

We need to stop putting scientists on a pedestal as hyper-intelligent super beings, and instead make a critical analysis of the latest scientific and technological developments. What do you say, comrades?

Anne Kerr,
Dept of Public Health Sciences,
University of Edinburgh

There is a simpler version of the origins of Christmas and Christianity than that of Keith Veness's in the December *LLB*.

In Rome's market economy in the first century AD, a petit-bourgeois class amassed great wealth speculating in foodstuffs, buying up supplies and selling at inflated prices and dumping 'surpluses' to keep prices high.

Knowing this would cause resentment at times of shortages, these Roman capitalists realised that they needed moral justification and invented 'Jesus' using existing Roman, Greek, Egyptian and Persian legends. Romans were familiar with a semi-divine mortal (Hercules) born as a result of a coupling between a human woman and a God (Leda), and reincarnated after death in a divine form (Osiris) and ascending bodily to heaven (Ganymede). Early Christians also claimed to be more abstemious than the mass of Romans, who believed life was for living to the full.

When public resentment at these speculative activities threatened serious disorder the Roman governor would seize the greatest offender and throw him to the lions. By 187 AD speculators were powerful enough virtually to appoint the Emperor himself; in 313 AD one - Constantine - made himself Emperor.

Pronouncements by Blair, Straw, Blunkett, that it is no sin to amass wealth, and Straw's pledge to sweep the streets clean of the poor and homeless, show that fundamentally Christians have not changed since Roman times. For a realistic moral framework read Percy Bysshe Shelley's *The Necessity of Atheism* or Bertrand Russell's *Why I am not a Christian!*.

Keith Ackerman,
Tilbury

There were inaccuracies in your report (November *LLB*) of Queen Mary and Westfield Students' Union's involvement in the 19th November strike. While correctly stating the union organised a tea run along the Mile End Road, the statement that we instructed our staff they could work because we were a different employer was not an accurate reflection of what occurred and does not reveal the lack of organisation on UNISON's part.

The Students' Union supported the action taken by college staff by the tea runs, carrying out an information campaign and urging students not to attend classes on the day - which most did not.

On the 18th October, the Union asked UNISON to consider a second ballot, but the local branch did not act on this, so we decided to consult our staff ourselves as UNISON had abdicated this responsibility. Union officers decided to point out the clause which UNISON had failed to follow up via a memo to staff, stressing that if UNISON members wanted to join the strike then the Students' Union would not enforce any punitive measures other than the mandatory loss of a day's pay. This resulted in some members of staff deciding there was no point in going on strike if your employer gives you permission.

While remaining supportive of the industrial action, that support must be reciprocated. Your article was extremely unhelpful in aiding cross-campus union unity.

Matt Hyde,
President, QMW SU

The Sans Papiers success

Sharon DuBois (Black Women for Wages for Housework) and Benoit Martin (Payday Men's Network) report.



Madjiguène Cissé, spokeswoman for the St-Bernard San Papierès.

THE Sans Papiers (literally 'without papers') - undocumented immigrant and refugees campaigning to gain legal status in Paris - gained international attention last August, when 300 Africans were violently expelled by the police from the St Bernard church they had occupied for two months.

Their success has inspired others: 24 Sans Papiers collectives have formed across France including the "Third Collective" - 1,200 people of 30 nationalities including many Chinese. A European-wide meeting is planned for June.

While bringing together an impressive range of support - trade unions, celebrities, religious, women's, community and cultural groups - the Sans Papiers set the agenda. St Bernard spokeswoman Madjiguène Cissé told us "there were many organisations telling us we could not win." One of them, SOS Racisme, suggested they take up "forty of the strongest compassionate cases", and drop the rest. The Sans Papiers rejected this, calling for "papers for all" and making connections with other working class struggles. They helped to occupy a building and set up an advice centre for all the "Sans" - "have-nots" without homes, jobs, etc.

The support is impressive. In January five ex-hunger strikers were arrested, tied up, chloroformed and forced on a plane - two were able to resist and were eventually released. Within hours 300 people gathered for an emergency protest. Every week there is a demonstration outside the Elysée Palace.

Many women now meet independently as women, calling themselves Sans Papierès. About 100 from all collectives meet monthly. It has been crucial for women to have a voice, particularly since single men are the majority in many of the collectives. They spoke about their disagreements with the men: for example, when the men's actions endanger safety - their own or that of others - or when they dominate at women's demonstrations.

It was women who decided to occupy the St Bernard church and who called for a weekly demonstration outside the Elysée. Last December, after tougher immigration laws came in, Sans-Papierès mothers from Colombes started a three-week hunger strike. Three won temporary papers and a child got a full-time nursery place. "Every time the battle lost momentum, women met and found initiatives to restart the struggle," said Ms Cissé.

The Sans Papiers' bold, inventive campaigning is an example to anti-racist, anti-deportation movements, including those of us opposing the Asylum Bill in Britain. In Italy undocumented immigrants have also occupied a church, and in December the Government announced a amnesty for 250,000 immigrants.

- For more information: Crossroads Women's Centre, 230a Kentish Town Rd, NW5. Tel 0171-482 2496 Fax 0171-209 4761.

Old ghosts rise to haunt Peru

Rob Angrove, Peru Support Group, explains the background to Tupac Amaru's embassy seizure.

THE REBELS who seized the Japanese embassy in Lima may not be representative of the majority of Peruvians but their condemnation of poverty suffered by nearly half the population strikes a chord.

The Marxist Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) hase tried to take the high ground with appeals for economic justice for the country's poor. Although its past influence has been small compared to the uncompromising violence of the Maoist inspired Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso), it has certainly grabbed the attention of the world's media. Fujimori's Government has been flung into the international limelight and the resulting coverage of Peruvian issues has revealed the conditions behind the mid-90s 'success story'.

An informal sector has mushroomed as the privatised national industries rationalise their workforce. Economic growth has plummeted after reaching a continental high in 1995. Growth in 1996 is only expected to be 2.3%, and will fail to cover the increase in population or raise per capita income.

Wages are often far too low to feed a family, so it's not unusual to see children of five or six selling sweets on the streets. Drivers of informal taxis plying their trade are likely to be recently unemployed bank officials or policemen topping up earnings. Thousands more sell their wares at street corners.

Travelling into the highland regions of Peru reveals reminders of the divisions between the state and its people, which gave rise to the conflicts of the 1980s. Where the state had failed Sendero terrorists tried to fill the gap; where no gap existed they killed to take control. Now the highlanders who fought off Sendero with their own public defence patrols (Rondas) appear to have been left to fend for themselves. Rural Huancavelica has an infant mortality rate on a par with sub-Saharan Africa.

Displaced refugees from the highlands receive no government aid. Those who return to their destroyed villages find government help is highly erratic, selected on unsound priorities and often misdirected.

Now investers will surely be questioning their enthusiasm for Peru. The ghost of the billions of dollars lost in fifteen years' conflict has risen again. It is no coincidence that the target embassy's country is one of the largest investors in Peru. The MRTA are appealing to nationalist feeling against foreign companies who have aided the free market economic programme. This is especially relevant to Britain whose purchases and investments have made it the second biggest investor in Peru today.

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