LABOUR LEFT BRIEFING

December 1998 £1 waged/50p un



Grass roots defiance:

Control freaks beware

Inside... ● Canavan carved out ● Wales mugged ● NEC exposed ● Pinochet ● France

Labour Left Briefing

PO Box 2378, London, E5 9QU
Telephone: 0181-985 6597
Fax: 0181-985 6785
Email: llb@labournet.org.uk
Web: http://www.llb.labournet.org.uk/

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Web site editor: Chris Croome (chris@atomism.demon.co.uk).

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AGENDA

Ken for Mayor, tax capital flows, schools privatisation, UK and US homophobia 4-9

Dennis Canavan, Leeds North East, Welsh Labour Party, Network of Socialist Campaign Groups, Grassroots Alliance, the Alan Simpson column. 10-13

Civil Service unions, the Geoff Martin column... 14-15

Pinochet, France, South Africa, Palestine, MAI, Ireland, the Michael Hindley column 16-23

Suresh Grover, Monitoring Group cut 24-25

Independent Labour Network, local government white paper, *LLB* AGM 26-27

Periscope, Correspondence, AOB

Front cover design: Dros

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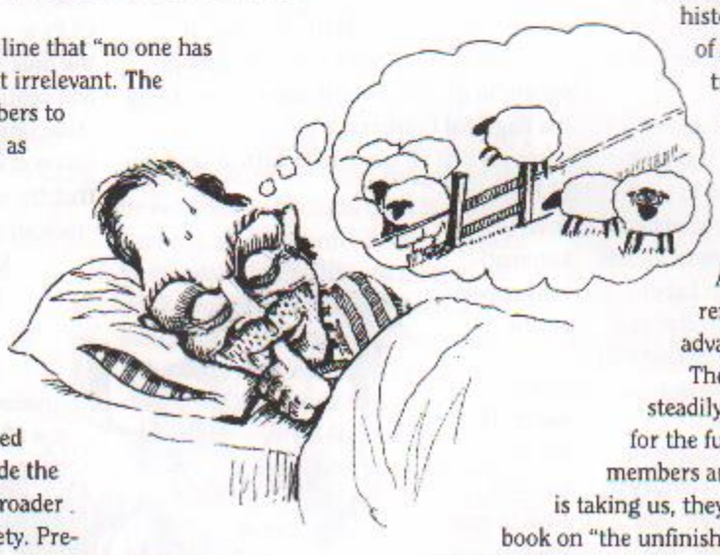
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Blair strategy ups the anti

TONY BLAIR has made clear his intention to exclude Ken Livingstone from Labour's one member one vote ballot for London Mayor. At *LLB*'s AGM Ken declared he would fight this battle "to the wire". His determination was warmly welcomed, as it will be among tens of thousands of Labour activists and millions of London voters.

Using screening panels for the Mayor of London, the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly, European Parliament and local government is indefensible. The panels are wrong in principle, produce arbitrary results, restrict members' choice, function in secret, their members are unaccountable and their criteria subjective.

Blair and his followers peddle the line that "no one has the right to a seat", which is true but irrelevant. The issue here is the right of Party members to put themselves forward for selection as candidates for public office and choose freely from a wide range of candidates. It's not just Ken Livingstone's rights being infringed, but those of of every Party member in London.



The importance of this issue extends far beyond the confines of the Labour Party. *LLB* has often noted that the struggle for democracy inside the Labour Party is a key aspect of the broader struggle for a more democratic society. Pre-screening panels reach back into the womb of political choice, fundamentally skewing that choice in favour of the prevailing elites.

The Lords' resistance to the closed list system proves the old adage that even a stopped clock is right once every twelve hours. It is a measure of just how obnoxiously undemocratic the closed list system is that it allowed hereditary peers to pose as champions of the people. Closed lists expand the managerial regime imposed by the party onto the electorate as a whole, circumscribing choice, shepherding voters into carefully constructed corrals.

"Control freakery" is not just a bad habit of over-zealous Party apparatchiks. It is an intrinsic part of the Blairite strategy for managing a democratic society in conditions of economic instability. With the aid of the private sector, a top-down managerialism is being introduced into nearly every social institution, from education to welfare to criminal justice to sport. In power, New Labour is introducing curfews for youth and has restricted jury trials, but the Freedom of Information Act remains on hold. A tougher stance on film censorship goes hand in hand with carte blanche for Rupert Murdoch.

Blair's spokespersons argue that all they are doing is bringing the capital into line with Scotland, Wales, etc. The next step – screening out dissident MPs for the next general election – is obvious, and is currently being talked up by the usual "sources". If that happens, Blair will have succeeded in creating a closed, self-perpetuating system, which, in conjunction with a Lib-Lab agreement and a tightly managed form of proportional representation, would lay the basis for a permanent dictatorship of political professionals sponsored by big business. Already, this Government has stuffed a wide range of public and policy-making bodies with business appointees. Blair has made clear his own preference for a businessman ("someone used to running things") as Mayor of London. The fact that the Blairites' favoured model for the governance of a mass political party is the job interview tells us a great deal about their vision of social control, and its profound divergence from classical democratic norms.

The Blairites are fond of arguing that Labour's split from the Liberals a hundred years ago was an historic mistake. In fact the existence of a mass political party tied to the trade unions and, at least organisationally, independent of capital, was an essential precondition for a wide range of social and democratic advances (including the NHS). And its continuing existence remains a precondition for future advances.

There can be no doubt that Blair is steadily raising the stakes in the struggle for the future of the Labour Party. If Party members are still in doubt about where Blair is taking us, they should glance at Philip Gould's book on "the unfinished revolution", where a merger with the Liberal Democrats and the final jettisoning of anything even pretending to be a democratic internal party life are spelled out in gory detail. In the past, the leadership has been able to rely on the forbearance – rather than the enthusiastic assent – of the membership. But as New Labour reveals itself in all its arrogance, forbearance is wearing thin.

Punishing the Iraqi people

THE US-BRITISH policy of punishing the people of Iraq for the crimes and provocations of Saddam Hussein is illogical and inhumane. If it is to be brought to a stop, opposition – both inside and outside the Labour Party – must become more vocal and visible.

New Labour's bellicose, self-righteous, "last chance" rhetoric on Iraq hardly mentions the question of civilian casualties in the event of an air strike of the type threatened by Clinton. Of course, if people knew the true scale of likely civilian casualties, they would be even less convinced than they are now of the rationale of the Clinton-Blair strategy.

The devastating impact of sanctions on the health and welfare of the majority of Iraqi people has been well documented and is attested to by every independent observer. Meanwhile, as Blair himself has noted, Saddam's clique has largely escaped the pain of sanctions, and his grip on power has not been loosened. The only argument left for sanctions seems to be the fear of being seen to "make concessions" to Saddam. So we have the age-old spectacle of the slaughter of the innocent to preserve the dignity of politicians, and it's as nauseating as ever. ❑

Right down to the wire

Ken Livingstone MP pledges to fight by (almost) any means necessary to become Labour's candidate for London's Mayor.

ROWS OVER the selection of Labour candidates for the Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament, London Mayor and European Parliament came in the same week that the Government announced more co-operation with the Liberal Democrats. It was also just after the announcement of Roy Jenkins' second attempt to destroy the Labour Party. These unfortunate coincidences at least clarify to the vast majority of the membership the disastrous road the Millbank Tendency would like to take the Party down.

The Government has a massive majority in Parliament and is quite capable of legislating by itself. Consequently the decision to work more closely with the Liberal Democrats is based on political considerations, most clearly expressed by those who believe that Labour and the Lib Dems should merge. Whilst that may be an extreme opinion, many believe that the division between the two parties is a tragedy of twentieth century politics.

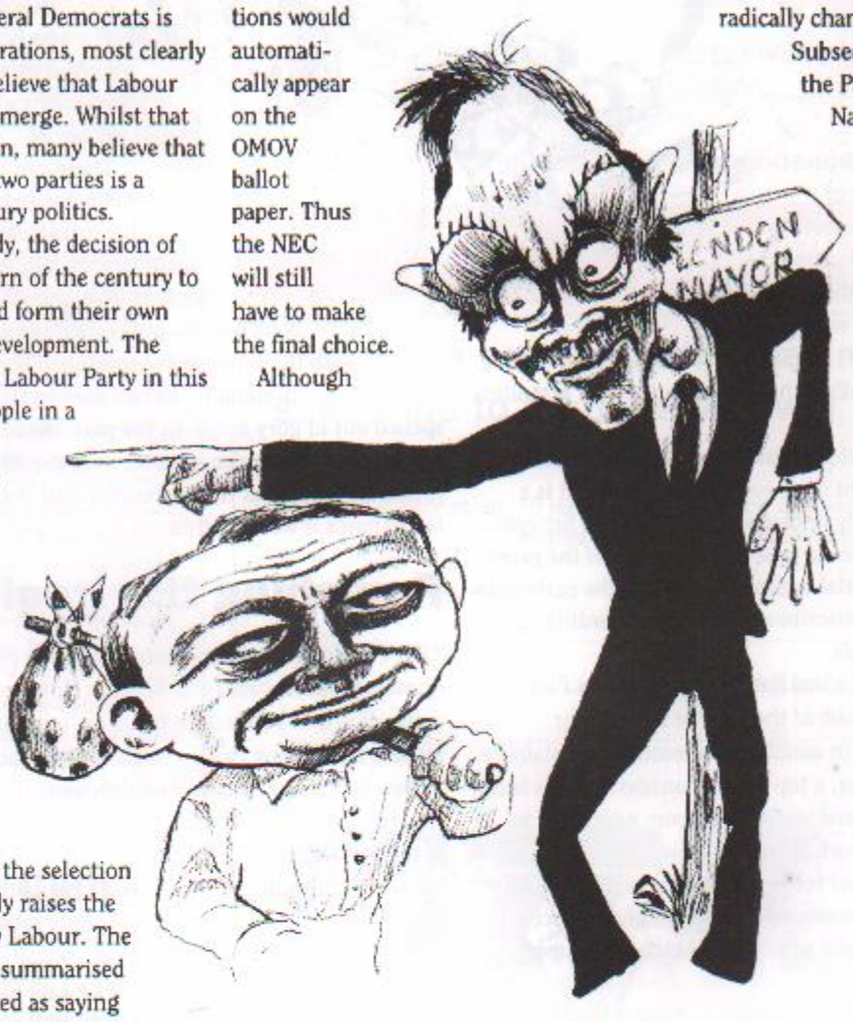
Far from being a tragedy, the decision of the trade unions at the turn of the century to break from Liberalism and form their own party was a progressive development. The independent status of the Labour Party in this country puts working people in a much stronger position than in the United States, which is dominated by parties of big business.

Roy Jenkins' strategy is honestly spelt out in his report. He hopes it will lead to Labour candidates adapting their policies to appeal to Lib Dem voters in the hope that eventually the two parties fuse.

The current crisis over the selection of candidates consequently raises the issue of keeping the Party Labour. The most hardline position is summarised by Fraser Kemp MP, quoted as saying about the vetting system: "If we are to be consistent, it has to apply to Westminster MPs". If the Millbank Tendency pursues this line it will lead to further clashes with the membership.

The Greater London Labour Party Regional Board's recommendation to the NEC for a selection board to vet candidates for London Mayor would ensure that members' views are not brought to bear until the last possible stage of the selection. However, the spin that was put on the Regional Board's vote was not accurate.

The Board faced at least two ways. It agreed to recommend a self-nomination system to the NEC whilst also re-forwarding the Regional Conference policy, which proposes that all candidates with at least ten CLP nominations would automatically appear on the OMOV ballot paper. Thus the NEC will still have to make the final choice.



Although the Board is packed with Lords, Government ministers and hacks, the leadership couldn't persuade delegates from the TGWU, GPMU and UNISON to overturn the London Labour Party policy. Other union delegates would have been unlikely to have voted for the recommendations if they had not also included the re-forwarding of the conference policy. UNISON, the T&G and left constituency delegates put amendments to the proposals, at one stage convincing eight Board members to vote to defend the right of CLPs to nominate candidates. Consequently, the final position was a fudge. Until the left and centre of the Party can persuade more trade unionists to back the members in these issues of democracy, it is probably unlikely that the overall situation in the Party will radically change.

Subsequently, Margaret Prosser – the Party Treasurer and the National Organiser of the TGWU – announced her support for the London Region of the TGWU. It proposes a twin track nomination system, combining the Regional Conference policy with self-nomination for those candidates not securing 10 nominations. Margaret Prosser said: "I believe that the twin track approach is a very workable compromise that meets all sides' expectations" and concluded by "calling on the Party to unite around an open, fair and democratic process."

This is the only way to ensure that Constituency Labour Parties in London will be able to nominate the candidate of their choice. Any system abolishing nominations exposes the Labour Party's shortlisting system to ridicule by the Tories and a real danger of Labour losing the London Assembly elections.

- Ken Livingstone MP will be addressing a public meeting of London Labour Left on the subject of a Government for London in the House of Commons, Committee Room 5, at 7pm on Tuesday 1st December.

London Labour "Board" bumps Ken

London Region officers are just as determined as the national Labour leadership to stop Ken Livingstone becoming London's Mayor. Christine Shawcroft, a member of the London Regional Board, reports.

THE LONDON Regional Board (that's the Executive to you Old Labour types out there) has just made a much-written about decision to recommend to the NEC that a joint committee be set up to interview self-nominated candidates for the Mayor and set up a panel. Actually, this was practically presented to us as a recommendation from the NEC. Terry Ashton, the Director of the Board (Regional Secretary, O.L.) constantly tells the Board and the working parties that the NEC will decide this and the NEC will decide that, when the NEC hasn't even discussed it. Clearly a rival for Mystic Meg.

The London Region's AGM overwhelmingly agreed a composite that anyone who received nominations from ten London CLPs should automatically be on the shortlist for Labour's candidate for mayor. At the time of the Board meeting, this had not been discussed by the new NEC.

A working party met twice before the Board meeting. At the second, Barry Camfield moved that candidates should not have to be on a panel to be nominated, but that there should be a twin track approach to nominations: either you could be nominated from the panel, or nominated by CLPs and affiliates. This is what is in the new rules on Westminster selections, passed at this year's Annual Conference. If someone is selected who wasn't on the panel, they have to be endorsed by the NEC (as in Leeds North East), but they don't have to be on the panel.

When recommendations from the working party were handed round on Tuesday 10th, this one was missing. I asked the mover, working party chair Kathryn Smith, why this was. To my amazement I was told that no such thing had been agreed by the working party. In fact, they denied it had been moved! So, despite the fact that myself, Barry Camfield and Loraine Monk all insisted it had been agreed, it was not added to the recommendations. I moved an amendment to put it back in. I was supported by Paul Tyler, Barry Camfield, Martha Osamor and Loraine Monk and opposed by everyone else.

Barry then moved an amendment to prioritise point two – on forwarding the Regional Conference motion to the NEC – to say we actually support it, and add the twin track approach to nominations. He gained the votes of the two UNISON representatives, Chris Robbins and Julie Reay, and Mickey Britton from the GPMU. But the vast majority of the Board, including constituency delegates whose constituencies voted for the policy, and unions such as the GMB who actually moved the composite, voted against.

The composite as agreed is actually rather a fudge, despite the spin. Sending it to the NEC has allowed many Board members to say they're in support, at the same time agreeing to the setting up of a panel – from which Ken Livingstone will be excluded – although, until it actually happens, we can't prove it. We now need to inundate the Board with resolutions on the subject, and also circulate a petition. My own Executive passed an emergency resolution that Livingstone should not be barred from a candidates' panel two days after the Board meeting.

Board members don't seem to want anyone to know about their deliberations. They seem to have forgotten they are representatives of the Party in London, elected to carry out its wishes. I was attacked for speaking to the media, and told that meetings are secret! Clearly, they feel they have to support NEC action – before the NEC even agrees it. The NEC should not conclude from the supine behaviour of the Board that the rest of the London Party will be so craven.



PHOTO: DAVE STATHAM

Ken Livingstone

Support Party members' right to decide their candidates

WITH THE suspicion that the Party leadership is trying to keep London Party members from adopting Ken Livingstone MP as Labour's candidate for Mayor of London, *LLB* urges its readers to move the following motion supporting the policy agreed by GLLP conference.

"We note the meeting of the Greater London Labour Party Regional Board on 10th November which agreed a system of self-nomination by potential candidates for Mayor and assembly, that a selection board is established to consider candidates and that this decision has been passed as a recommendation to the National Executive Committee.

We note that the system recommended by the Board removes any right of CLPs to nominate their candidate of choice, and contradicts the decision of the Greater London Labour Party regional conference on 13th June which agreed that any member of the Greater London Labour Party could seek nomination and that all candidates who are nominated by a minimum of 12.5 per cent of London CLPs (that is ten CLPs) will automatically be shortlisted so that their names will appear on the ballot papers to select Labour's candidate.

We resolve therefore to write to the NEC asking them to support and implement decisions of the Greater London Labour Party conference on the method of selecting Labour's candidate for London Mayor." ❑

Trim those hedge fund speculators

Sean Fitzpatrick continues our debate on alternative economic policy by looking at a taxing question being considered by some of Labour's sister parties.

NOT MANY people would look to the world of foreign exchange transactions for knockabout laugh-a-minute fun. Nor, you can safely say, did many Labour Party members decide to get involved in politics because they wanted to discuss exchange transactions. However, as it becomes clearer that unregulated speculation poses a serious threat to progressive politics, people are starting to demand action.

Some were particularly shocked by the scandalous two billion pound bail out of the hedge fund Long-Term Capital Management, well chronicled by Larry Elliott in the *Guardian*, the *Financial Times*, and, er, the Two Johns on the *Rory Bremner Show*. Anyone who watched the first of the mimic master's new series would have got a good education on just how the short-termist sharks who operate hedge funds work – and probably had a chuckle or two into the bargain.

However, one major point the two comedians did miss out (you can hardly blame them, they were only doing it for laughs) was how to curb the international super-spivs to aid democratic control.

Now that is where Brian Birkett's article in last month's *LLB* was an excellent starting point. He argued that there should be a tax on capital flows. Perhaps this is something the Grassroots Alliance could take up.

Indeed, what Tony Blair and Gordon Brown don't want you to know is that such a tax, the Tobin tax, named after the Nobel prize-winning economist who came up with the idea in 1978, is already being taken up by some of Labour's sister parties in the rest of Europe. The Chair of the Norwegian Labour Party argued, at a meeting hosted by his party and attended by Peter Mandelson, for the tax to be adopted by all the sister parties of the Socialist International. The most recent German SPD conference supported the tax, if somewhat ambiguously. I have even been told by one MEP that there could be majority support for it in the European Parliament, although the MEPs themselves would not have the power to implement it.

Brian's piece rightly emphasised that behind the idea of what is called globalisation are not just objective facts, but, primarily, political decisions to let the market decide, rather than to intervene to control it. A most notable example of that was the worldwide pressure to "liberalise" exchange controls, with Thatcher at the head of the queue. Britain was among the first to "liberalise" not merely because of Thatcher's zealous championing of neo-liberalism, but because of the domination of the City and financial capital, which has long been a theme of the left.

There are two reasons why Labour Party demands should concentrate on linking up with calls for a tax on speculation to be introduced collectively the world over, rather than putting great emphasis on Britain taking a unilateral lead, as Brian implies. Because of the City's domination, and the Blair Government's slavish attachment to neo-liberalism, it is likely that our Government will be among those most determined to resist international pressure for a tax – which, as we have seen, is already coming from elsewhere. But by concentrating on the demand that the Labour Party is a central part of an internationalist campaign, we would gain strength to challenge the power of the City and bring the greatest weight to bear on Tony Blair.

If a transactions tax were, amazingly, to be implemented unilaterally by Britain, speculators would switch to other major financial centres to avoid even a low tax. This is not to embrace the "full monty" view of globalisation, that manufacturing is mobile at the touch of a switch, but to accept that speculators are particularly unattached to specific locations. And, more importantly, this would be used as an excuse by a Labour Government not to bring in the tax at all – an argument which could not be made if the demand is posed solely in an internationalist way. It is likely that this is a sort of tax which, as James Tobin says, would have to be implemented worldwide to be effective.

Finally, a Tobin tax need not be a way of solely controlling speculation, or even just funding the British welfare state, as Brian says. According to Ignacio Ramonet, writing in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, even imposing a tax at 0.1% would bring in about $166 billion a year, which, he calculates (I do not know by what method), to be twice the annual amount needed to abolish the worst of world poverty in two years. Now there is something worth thinking about.



Students continue to campaign against New Labour's fees and marched on 18/11/98.

- *Student Unions Against The Act can be contacted via Sophie Bolt, General Secretary, Goldsmiths College SU (0181-692 1406). Photo: Hana Al Bayaty and Agathe Dalisson.*

Lesson is: schools are not for sale

Glyn Rowlands, Haringey UNISON and Tottenham CLP, reports on the battle against privatisation in the London Borough of Haringey.

"THE PFI is a battering ram introduced by the Tories in order to privatise the state. In public finance terms it is irrational, extravagant and almost improper." So said Haringey parent and *Observer* editor, Will Hutton, speaking at a UNISON fringe meeting at this year's Labour Party Conference.

Will Hutton, along with many other Haringey parents, now has real cause for concern about his children's education as the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) hits Haringeys schools in a big way.

Haringey Council is planning an £87 million PFI project for Haringey schools. It plans to hand over the running of our secondary schools for a period of between 20 and 30 years to a private contractor. This contractor will also provide a new school, refurbish the existing schools, and repair and maintain them for the lifetime of the contract.

A reluctant Labour Group belatedly endorsed the go ahead for the project in September long after the planning for the scheme was well under way. Only a couple of councillors have enthusiastically endorsed the plan. These include Council Leader Toby Harris and erstwhile left-winger Narendra Makanji.

The project is already running into practical problems. It has emerged that the timetable has slipped so badly it will not be possible to complete and sign a contract in time for the new school to open. The Council seems incapable of learning from its past mistakes. Haringey's services are still suffering from the debt repayments on Alexandra Palace. The PFI project could see the Council sinking deeper into debt.

Both CLPs in Haringey have opposed the scheme, but with party accountability now turned on its head, it is being rumoured that Labour nominated school governors will be removed if they do not support the PFI project.

An active campaign to stop the project has been initiated by public service union UNISON. If the project proceeds many school support staff will be transferred to a private employer. Other Council employees are likely to be made redundant.

With help from Haringey Trades Council, Haringey Solidarity Group and other local activists a public campaign has been launched to stop the PFI project. Haringey Against Privatisation is now campaigning actively among parents and governors, as well as trades unionists. We know the project cannot proceed in its current form if school governing bodies refuse to agree to participate. Therefore the campaign is concentrating on explaining to governors and parents the pitfalls of PFI.



PHOTO: DENISE BELL

Lobby of Haringey Council, 19/10/98.

We were initially quite pessimistic of the possibilities of stopping the bid. However despite the huge bribe being offered of large investments in school refurbishment, we have been surprised to find how receptive people are to our arguments against PFI. A campaign of leafleting schools and lobbying governors has seen the campaign gain great momentum. A successful public meeting was held on 6th November. It was attended by nearly 100 people and heard speeches from every sector of the alliance we are trying to build. Melian Mansfield, a representative of Haringey Parent Teacher Association, Tony Brockman, Vice President of the NUT, Keith Sonnet, Head of Local Government for UNISON, Jenny Sutton, a local school governor, and Paul Foot spoke at the meeting.

We are now planning a public demonstration and a mass lobby of the next Council meeting, encouraged by our success so far. Support from *LLB* readers at both events would be much appreciated. The odds must still be in favour of the Council getting away with this major attack on public education but we increasingly sense the possibility of defeating the plan. Events in the next few months are likely to determine whether or not our campaign succeeds. So if you can, please come and support our campaign. You will make a difference.

- Haringey demonstration against PFI, Saturday 5th December, 1.00pm, Ducketts Common, Turnpike Lane, N8.
- Lobby Haringey Council, Monday 14th December, 6.30pm, Haringey Civic Centre, Wood Green.
- Haringey Against Privatisation meets fortnightly and can contacted c/o Haringey UNISON on 0181-211 0558 or write to PO BOX 8446, N17 6NZ.

Surrey moves to privatise school

The first privately run comprehensive school in Britain moved a step nearer after Conservative-run Surrey County Council Education Sub-committee decided by one vote to allow private firms to put in bids to run what Ofsted have labelled a "failing" school, Kings Manor in Guildford.

Private companies who are currently bidding include Nord Anglia who already run private schools in Britain and abroad, the Edison Project which runs 50 schools in the US and the Centre for British Teachers which provides school inspection teams for Ofsted. Whether the CBT can be allowed to inspect and run schools without any conflict of interests may well be up for debate.

The headteacher of Kings Manor, Greg Gardener, is backing the school governors in opposing any attempts to bring in a private company. The US experience of mass redundancies, higher class sizes and the tendering out of all school services would seem to back up the opposition to privatisation.

The Labour Group on Surrey County Council is also very sceptical of the proposal. A decision from Education Secretary David Blunkett is now awaited. ❑

Gay days here for New Labour

Peter Purton, a national officer of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, sees recent events as further evidence that the Government can and should bring in an anti-discrimination law.

LABOUR MPs have been popping out of the closet like there was no tomorrow. As in times past, the media has been having a field day. Lurid headlines in the *Sun* suggested a "gay mafia" in the cabinet. Not so long ago, such revelations would have been accompanied by resignations, enquiries and shocked statements from the Prime Minister.

This time, though, there has been a change in the climate – one which (unusually) seems to have passed by the editorial staff of the tabloids, and (less unusually), has yet to register in the actions of a "reforming" government.

Most public opinion seems as little concerned by the sex lives of its MPs as US opinion was by the revelations about their President's delectation for oral sex. Whereas on previous occasions when law reform was in the offing, the media was able to whip up homophobia, this time the reaction of the person on the Clapham omnibus to nocturnal adventures on Clapham Common has been much less responsive.

Recent events have provided powerful evidence of our claim that ending discrimination (apart from being morally necessary) could also be politically painless. We argued all along that the way to beat homophobia was to face it, honestly. The argument was proved at the last election. Stephen Twigg, openly gay, unseated Michael Portillo. In Exeter, Ben Bradshaw captured the seat despite his Tory opponent explicitly campaigning around Bradshaw's homosexuality. Angela Eagle, David Borrow and Gordon Marsden all came out without a whimper of excitement.

William Hague voted for an equal age of consent and wants to recruit "homosexuals" (most Tories would refuse to say "gay" let alone "lesbian") to his Party. (Someone should tell him that he's got plenty already – but he might have to silence Norman Tebbit if he really wants to help them to come out.)

New Labour, then, has provided an environment in which social democrats of all sexualities can develop a career, just so long as they are not too keen on the "s" word. This has created a bit of a conundrum for the media which spent its time since the 1980s rejoicing over every chance to "out" Labour's pro-gay policies, but which is now New Labour's friend. Thus the *Sun*, while serving up front pages on gay Mafiosi, denies it has ever "outed" anyone. It merely argues that the public has the right to know. It doesn't seem to know why and the public doesn't seem bothered.

The hypocrisy of the *Sun*'s position is that, of course, lesbians and gay men are massively disadvantaged in all areas of life (except perhaps Parliament) and enjoy none of the legal protection which others have from discrimination. Homophobia may be less widespread, but it remains – virulent, violent, vigorous and vocal. That is why we need reform and that is why coming out has to be an individual choice, freely made. The public has no more right to know about cabinet ministers' sex lives than it does about newspaper editors'.

The Government has the opportunity, of course, to end the legal discrimination, but, apart from the age of consent, which will be equalised shortly, the other central demands of the lesbian and gay movement remain on the back burner. The simplest measure – the repeal of the odious Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, repeatedly pledged by Labour in opposition, looks certain to fall off the next raft of laws, we are told. This is because the Clapham Common escapade means there would be resistance in the House of Lords, undermining all the legislation. So we have to wait for the reform of the Lords before we can get anywhere.

The big issue is securing an anti-discrimination law. Everyone is expecting such a law, from High Court judges, to the Equal Opportunities Commission (which retreated on its own proposal to add sexuality to the Sex Discrimination laws, but called for separate legislation), to the TUC. But this move is trapped on the sharp end of Blair and Straw's fixation with married bliss.

When the Government opposed Baroness Muriel Turner's Sexual Orientation Discrimination bill in the Lords last summer, it was because the bill implied treating lesbian and gay relationships equally with families. Government ministers defending their current consultation paper have been more subtle, but the underlying dilemma and contradiction is there. They are now trying to say homosexual relationships (as well as single parents and everyone else who doesn't fit) are not inferior, but marriage is superior. Of course you can't logically say both things.

The solution is simple. Explained properly and led by the Government, it would even be acceptable, now, to public opinion. It is to make the law say that lesbians and gay men will be treated the same as heterosexuals. The world will not end as a result – people will still pair off, have children, live together or split up, even get married. But millions of people's lives will be transformed for the better, and the editors of the *Sun* will be deprived of their favourite and most vulnerable victims. Now that is something worth campaigning for.

- Contact LCLGR, P0 Box 306, London N5.

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The murder of Matthew Shepard and fighting the politics of hate

Jaime R. Balboa, Event Co-ordinator, International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), draws an "unforgettable lesson" from the latest homophobic atrocity.

IN THE evening of October 15th, 1998, a group of about 350 people gathered at the intersection of 17th and Castro in San Francisco. It was just eleven days after Matthew Shepard, a 21 year old college student, had been abducted and tortured, and three days after he died from the injuries he sustained – injuries he sustained, reportedly, because he was gay.

We gathered to voice our collective outrage at the alleged perpetrators for their cold and calculated crimes and at the world which generally sits silently by, allowing hate and intolerance to be taught in our schools, in our families, in our government institutions, in our religious movements. Community United Against Violence was the co-ordinating co-sponsor and IGLHRC was a co-sponsor of the event.

I spoke at the event because I needed to channel my anger and resentment at this heinous hate-crime. It was, in effect, a political assassination: the brutal assassination of a person who openly defied compulsory heterosexuality.

I spoke to articulate a vision. The crisis of hate is global and systemic. In Romania one day after Matthew Shepard's murder, Stefan Itoafa, a human rights activist, was murdered and authorities were dismissive of it, calling it just another "homosexual murder". In Zimbabwe, President Robert Mugabe said that homosexuals are "worse than dogs and pigs" declaring that we "have absolutely no rights". In Brazil, in August of this year, activists report that a group of military police forced two transvestite sex workers to throw themselves into the sea after torturing and humiliating them. One of the victims drowned. In the US, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott likened homosexuality to alcoholism and kleptomania.

I spoke to make transparent what is often obscured: hate is interconnected. The alleged perpetrators of the crimes against Matthew Shepard reportedly continued their violent course that night, attacking two Latino men, Emilio Morales (19) and Jeremy Herrera (18). Their work did not end with Matthew Shepard.

The work of hatred is an on-going task, bubbling to the surface in many and diverse ways. It surfaces in jokes and comments, in violence and crimes, in public policies and public proclamations, in theological doctrines, and in institutional exclusions.

After listening to the various speakers – professional activists, queer youth, a friend of Matthew Shepard's – we marched to a place in San Francisco where, just this past summer, another man died of injuries he sustained at the hands of a stranger who reportedly verbalised his hate for "fags" as he attacked. Like Matthew Shepard's assailants, this perpetrator also attacked others – in his case, a homeless man. As I walked, a police officer remarked, "Don't let anyone straggle. We've received threats of retaliation."

The threat of retaliation was against our being, our existence, driving home the unforgettable lesson: it is dangerous to be transgendered, to be bisexual, to be lesbian, to be gay.

Matthew Shepard died on October 12th, 1998 of the wounds he sustained in an anti-gay hate-crime. So many groups have issued clarion calls to organise a fight back to create and defend spaces for sexual minorities. Let's make alliances along the way. How can liberation and emancipation movements in G7 countries aid and support our sibling movements in other parts of the world? How can they aid and support us? How does our work impact on theirs? How does theirs impact on our own?

The alleged perpetrators of Matthew Shepard's murder did not stop with him. The hate that motivated them surely won't be curtailed if and when they receive their sentences. The stakes are high indeed.

- For more information about the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission visit their web page: www.iglhrc.org or write to IGLHRC, 1360 Mission Street, Suite 200, San Francisco, CA 94103 USA.



Left at Number Ten

TRIBUNE

Every week, TRIBUNE carries all the news and views from Labour and the Left. TRIBUNE is essential reading for all those keen to keep up with events inside the Labour Party and the New Labour Government and in touch with campaigns on key issues such as the Welfare State.

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Canavan takes UDI road?

Members and activists in Falkirk West were considering their position in the Labour Party this week, following the decision of Dennis Canavan MP to stand as an Independent at next year's Scottish Parliament elections. Our Scottish correspondent reports.

CANAVAN'S drastic move comes after months of pressure on the Party establishment in Scotland to reconsider its decision to keep him off the list of approved candidates for the Scottish Parliament. Members in Falkirk West had hoped that the Party would at least agree to meet with them to discuss the matter further, but when this last ditch plea was turned down a number of Constituency Officers resigned their positions.

Commenting on events this week, local activists were reluctant to be seen to be taking rash action, and wanted time to consider all possible options before arriving at decisions. "People have to understand that we are not saying Dennis should automatically be chosen," said one local member. "What we are saying is that we want the option to choose him. It should be down to local members to decide who they want."

"Dennis has done a great job for this constituency," said another. "He has fought so hard for the Scottish Parliament for years. It's a total insult to say that he's not good enough. He has fought for what we wanted!"

Others were outraged that the flames were further fuelled by Secretary of State Donald Dewar's reported remarks at Labour's gala dinner in Glasgow, when he emphasised that anyone who hadn't got onto the list "simply wasn't good enough". The audience contained a number of Party members, including at least one other MP who didn't make it onto the list. The remarks were deemed to be inappropriate for the occasion and in poor taste, even by those who would not normally be counted as members of the Canavan fan club.



Denis Canavan

An emergency meeting of the Constituency Party was called. Many of those who resigned their posts in protest were at pains to point out that they had not left the Labour Party, and indeed many were actively involved in making sure that the interview process to choose local council candidates went ahead without disruption.

As one longstanding member put it "I've always been loyal to the Labour Party and to the MP. I'm really angry at being forced to make a choice about what I do now. This could all have been avoided if the system hadn't been so unfair. I don't know what I'm going to do at the election yet. I'm still hoping that it can be sorted out and that we can have Dennis continue as our Labour MP."

Others were less sure that a resolution of the situation was possible, especially as plans to begin to select a Scottish Parliament candidate are already under way. Whether there will be a queue of aspirant MSPs ready to take on Dennis in May remains to be seen.

What does now look possible is that Dennis will stand against the Labour Party both in the Constituency and the additional member list, which will allow him to maximise support not just from within Falkirk West, but right across the larger, Central Scotland additional member seat where he is immensely popular.

Leeds North East left fight back

Councillor Garth Frankland reports:

On 10th November, Councillor Norma Hutchinson was reselected by 45 votes to 33 as the Labour candidate for Chapel Allerton Ward. Norma Hutchinson a councillor for the last eight years and Chair of the Leeds City Council's Race Relations Committee, had come under intense political pressure from the Blairite supporters of Leeds North East's controversially selected MP Fabian Hamilton.

Norma Hutchinson (centre)



These supporters linked up with those of a local resident called Sharma Omprakash. Sharma had led a number of highly disruptive campaigns against a local school and the City Council. He is one of only two people banned from the local police forum because of disruptive behaviour going back many years. This unprincipled alliance came close to removing Norma at the first selection conference which had to be rerun because of voting irregularities.

In both the reselection battles in Chapel Allerton Ward and in the neighbouring University Ward telephone calls were received by Labour Party members from the campaign co-ordinator for Leeds North East who is not a member of either ward. These activities are now being investigated.

The campaign against Norma Hutchinson displayed a complete lack of understanding of the political dynamics of Leeds and Chapel Allerton and came from an attempt to install a London Blair/Eddie George agenda on our wonderful city through an unprincipled alliance.

Norma, true to the spirit of reconciliation that we have both fought for, at the meeting thanked the other two candidates and asked everyone to stand and hold hands and pledge to work together. Unfortunately a small sectarian minority refused to do this. Norma will pray and forgive them and I will try to follow her forgiveness.

I am willing to take bets that Chapel Allerton will have a swing to Labour and a turn out increase equal to any in Leeds.

Wales is mugged by Millbank

Our Cardiff correspondent reports on the angry reaction to attempts to foist Alun Michael on Wales.

RON DAVIES may or may not have been mugged on Clapham Common – and the CPS decision not to prosecute his alleged attacker means that we will probably never know the truth. What is clear, though, is that Mr Davies was mugged when he went to Downing Street on the morning after the night before.

Ron Davies left Clapham Common minus his wallet. He left Downing Street minus his job as Welsh Secretary and with his political reputation in tatters. As far as Labour's control freaks were concerned, that was meant to be that. Blair's trusted valet from his days as opposition spokesman on Home Affairs Alun Michael was appointed to the Welsh Office, even before Davies' forced resignation.

That though, was not the end of the story. What Millbank apparently overlooked was that whereas Davies was appointed by the Prime Minister to his job at the Welsh Office, Ron Davies' putative role in the Welsh Assembly was by virtue of his election by Labour members in Wales. Blair could not sack him. In fact, there was no such procedure in place.

Crude attempts to foist Alun Michael on the Wales Labour Party provoked a fierce reaction. People formed the view that Rhodri Morgan, runner-up to Ron Davies in the original election for the leadership, should be given the chance to lead Labour in the Assembly.

The Wales Labour Party Executive recently decided to postpone an election until next February. The longer the delay, the greater the opportunity for Michael to establish himself and greater the chances for the Party apparatchiks to scupper Rhodri Morgan's chances.

Morgan has been portrayed and certainly likes to portray himself, as the firebrand outsider – listening to ordinary Party members and speaking up for Wales. Morgan has even been characterised as Wales' own Ken Livingstone.

Unlike Livingstone, Morgan is actually the consummate insider. He was the Harvard-educated EU man in Wales. His 'Kia-rdiff boot boy' image is a cultivated affectation. It is one, though, that will serve him well.



Rhodri Morgan

People in Wales actually believed Tony Blair when he said that devolution of power would mean something, that it would give the people the opportunity to challenge the debilitating social problems which have gripped Wales for generations. They believed it would have given people the chance to attack poverty, unemployment caused by industrial illness and the lack of educational opportunity for children from working-class backgrounds.

How, people say, can Blair and his acolytes talk up devolution, when Blair can't even trust the Wales Labour Party to pick its own leader? There is a sense of betrayal – an uneasy feeling that, yet again, Wales is the victim of other people's decisions.

Labour's socialists meeting opportunity of Alliance

Dorothy Macedo previews the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups' AGM.

FOLLOWING THE success of the Grassroots Alliance (GA) in getting four of its candidates elected to the Labour Party National Executive, many Party members who voted for GA candidates have been asking where we go from here. A major opportunity to discuss the way forward and to hear some of the new NEC representatives is the AGM of the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups on 5th December. As the Network is one of the organisations that makes up the GA, this will be an excellent opportunity for people to have their say about what they want the GA and our NEC representatives to do over the coming months.

I believe that it is vital that the GA listens to the voices of the ordinary Party members who worked so hard to secure this victory. They are the ones who know what is actually happening in CLPs around the country and what will help the left locally.

At its October meeting, the Network's Forum (steering group) passed a resolution calling on the GA to organise a conference to capitalise on the success of the NEC elections. This suggestion has not found much favour with some of the other organisations that comprise the GA; at the GA meeting on 11th November, a representative of Labour Reform described the proposal as "premature". So the question of how to reach out to this untapped support remains to be answered.

As a result of the new Party rules resulting from the adoption of the ludicrously-named *Partnership in Power* the NEC now has much reduced powers and meets less frequently than before. This means our representatives could easily be sidelined and the wonderful achievement in getting them elected could become a symbolic but empty victory.

NEC members are ex-officio members of the National Policy Forum (NPF) and that is where much of the policy debates will now take place. In addition there are already over 20 GA supporters who have been elected to the NPF from the regions so there needs to be co-ordination among them.

The Network AGM will have workshops on the current NPF topics of welfare, health and crime; it is hoped that this will lead to model submissions for people to use at local policy forums. Any successes should be notified to our NPF and NEC representatives, so they can try to get the NPF to take notice. Other workshops at the AGM will cover Europe, the economy and Ireland.

Network of Socialist Campaign Groups AGM

11am-5pm, Saturday 5th December
University of North London,
40 Holloway Road, London, N7
(Highbury or Holloway Road tubes)

- Speakers include Tony Benn MP, Ken Livingstone MP, Liz Davies and Christine Shawcroft
- Registration £10 (£2 unwaged)
- Further details: NSCG, 3 Blades House, London, SE11 5TW.

Playing the percentages game

More than 50,000 Party members voted for Christine Shawcroft in the recent NEC elections. Here she looks at the future of the Grassroots Alliance.

THE VOTING figures for the Grassroots Alliance victory in the NEC elections have recently been subject to an analysis that amounts to what I call "doing a Peter Kellner". Somehow the narrow margin between the slates has been turned into a majority for the right wing.

The sleight of hand goes like this. The Grassroots Alliance received 46.4% of the total vote, Members First received 42.5%. But if you add the votes of Adrian Bailey, who stood against Members First, and refused to stand down under Millbank pressure, then Members First gets a total of 48.8%.

Clever, isn't it? Using Sooty's magic wand in this way, I could easily make a case that the Co-operative activists – myself, Adrian Bailey, Cathy Jamieson and Pete Willsman got 299,922 votes, so therefore a Co-operative slate of six could get over 40% of the vote and win all six seats on the NEC. Or, as it clearly helps to be at the top of the ballot paper, six candidates named Aardvark should make a clean sweep.

It is argued that since the anti-Grassroots Alliance candidates received a majority of the votes, we are in danger of losing all four seats next year unless we appeal to that majority. It is assumed that there are no more votes on the left, so a successful pitch needs to be made to the right. But if this logic had been applied after the 1996 NEC elections, we would have concluded that Ken Livingstone's repeated failures to get elected to the NEC meant that we should have switched our support to a candidate who could appeal to the right – and had we done that, we would have thrown away what proved, in fact, our best chance and best candidate to beat Mandelson.

Are we really going to lose ground by continuing our present appeal on the basis of Party democracy and core political demands? I would have thought this message would become more, not less relevant as the facts about the closed lists for Euro candidates, the undemocratic manoeuvrings on the London Mayor, and the prospect of panels screening candidates for Westminster elections sink in with Party members. As the economic situation worsens, our political message will also strike a chord with more people. In this context, to move to the right, in a cynical vote-chasing gesture, would actually lose votes.

We won in 1997 with a strong, well known left candidate by stressing issues of Party democracy and members' rights. This is the best furrow for the Grassroots Alliance to plough; this will broaden and deepen our appeal, and increase and consolidate our vote next year.

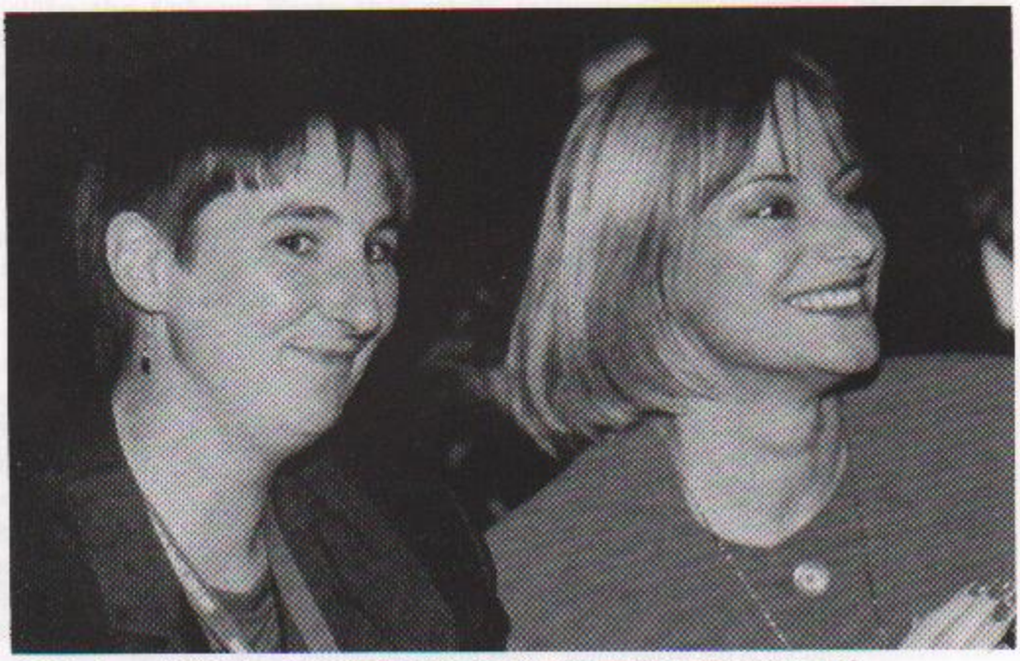


PHOTO: ANDREW WIARD

Liz Davies and Christine Shawcroft as this year's NEC results were announced.

You ask a silly question...

IF YOU DIDN'T (or did) laugh, you'd write a resolution.

Both the *Guardian* Diary and *Private Eye*'s HP Sauce page have commented on the Annual Survey of Supporters' Opinions, a questionnaire sent to Labour Party members following conference.

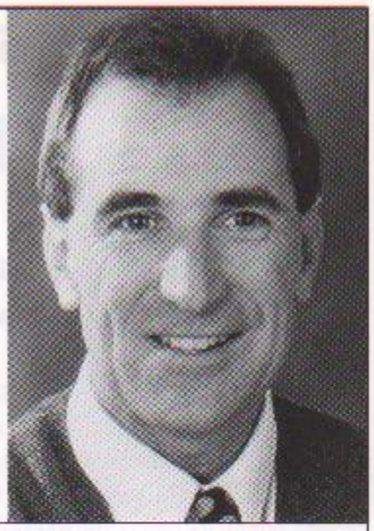
The Diary wrote: "Thank heaven New Labour is ... committed to encouraging freedom of expression, as illustrated by the fearless questions in the ... survey, or as the journalist Richard Heller prefers to describe them in a letter to Margaret McDonagh: "Questions written in anodyne, infantile and sycophantic language, and loaded with propaganda and special pleading...". What can he mean?

Question one, concerning the NHS, lists savings from cutting red tape and new investment before enquiring: "Do you agree that these steps will help deliver a modern and dependable NHS?" Similar enquiries concern justice, welfare, transport and so on. "It really would have been more convenient," writes Richard "to collapse all the questions into one ... Do you think that the government is wonderful; absolutely fabulous; just too marvellous for words?'" *Private Eye* notes that most questionnaires have made the short journey from letterbox to bin.

Commentators have failed to realise the questionnaire is in fact based on a US fundraising ploy – you ask people questions in a fake consultation, they are impressed at being asked their opinions and therefore more willing to fill in the last section – invariably a demand for money. The RSPCA issued a similar "consultation" the following week with questions like "are you opposed to cruelty to animals?" Labour Party members are not easily duped. This questionnaire brings the Labour Party into disrepute.

the Alan Simpson column

The Secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs.



Coalition politics out of the closet

THIS HAS been a big month for coming out. But the statement on 11th November caught everyone on the hop. Having taken their relationship to new depths, Paddy Ashdown and Tony Blair announced to an unsuspecting public that they intended:

"To work together in building a modern Britain. To create a new, more constructive and rational culture for our national politics. To ensure the ascendancy of progressive politics in Britain, against a Conservative Party which seems determined to travel further and further to the right. And to continue the re-shaping of British politics for the next century."

Given that most of New Labour's announcements are now written in Newspeak, this probably means that Tony and Paddy have agreed to run a joint candidate for Mayor of London (to stop the Tories), nominate celebrity mayors to take over from elected local councils (building a modern Britain), form a coalition in the Scottish Parliament (stuff the Nats) and hand the second chamber over to business nominees (re-shaping British politics for the next century). They may also have concluded that centralised vetting processes are such an effective way of weeding out unreliable candidates (who breathe unassisted) that they may as well extend the model and vet the electorate as well.

Unfortunately, a few minor obstacles need to be removed first. One impediment is that neither leader's party seems to have fallen in love in the same way. Most seem reluctant to embrace each other as consenting adults rather than as competing parties. Tribal or not, there are few in the Labour Party who view the Lib Dems as other than opportunistic chancers, with a record of being at least as horrible to Labour as to the Tories. The Lib Dems return the compliment. No doubt we are both right.

The really tough question is: what if both leaders know this ... and don't give a toss?

Third way politics have always relied on fierce control from the centre. If leaders have wearied of the parties who promoted them, the answer is simple ... change the parties. Not consulting the PLP, the NEC or the Party in the country is then not an oversight, or an aberration. It is simply an indication that the Party has passed its "sell by" date. The modernising bandwagon has already rolled on elsewhere.

If the Lib Dems don't like the union link? No problem. There's a lot in New Labour who don't either. Let it wither. You want PR? Certainly, sirs, but only on the basis of central vetting and closed lists. The Single Currency? We've been waiting for an excuse to cut and run with it for ages. Forget the auditors' report on Eurofraud and the fact that every country is fighting to get more out of EU budgets and put less in – this could be the fudge Gordon has been dreaming of.

THE GREAT triumph of coalition politics is that it makes democracy redundant or fraudulent. Manifestos don't matter. You just trade away all the bits you never really wanted. It is a post-election carve up of control. You can even say your new partners forced the sacrifice on you. The voters don't matter much either (especially in multi-member constituencies). You can always play pass-the-parcel with them, confident in the knowledge that voters can never pin you down.

None of this is about bringing government closer to the people, making MPs more accountable to their electorates, or opening the books to effective public scrutiny. The only relationship that gets strengthened is the one we never seem to discuss, that between big business and benign government.

Britain is being pushed inexorably down the path of US politics, dominated by the two parties of big business. A "new politics of the centre" always trades off civic democracy for corporate democracy. We already have a situation where it is easier to gain promotion in New Labour if you were an opponent of the Labour Party (and preferably never in it). Having been stuffed by the old electorate, Ken Clarke, David Mellor, Michael Heseltine, Chris Patten and Paddy have all been rewarded by the new selectorate. Along with them have come the unsung lists of corporate secondees who now run the Government's policy units and wield the greatest influence on behalf of unelected corporate interests.

A great deal of fuss is being made about the unelected and anti-democratic influence of the House of Lords. It is about time we created a better second chamber; but on the basis of a system of direct democratic accountability, not a more compliant form of patronage.

History cautions those whose obsession for control drives them into every cavity of human life. At the height of their control you will also find the seeds of the internal revolt which will ultimately destroy their control completely. This could turn out to be Ken Livingstone and the elections for London's Mayor. But whatever triggers the revolt, a love tryst with Paddy will prove insufficient to withstand it.

TRADE UNION NEWS

First union conference: don't let it be a servant of the right

Mike Loates, Lord Chancellor's Department (PRFD) branch secretary and delegate to the PCS national conference, reports.

THE NEW Civil Service Union, PCS (Public and Commercial Services), was formed from a merger of CPSA (the administrative grade union) and PTC (the executive and support grades union, including the multi-grade Inland Revenue Union) in March this year and claims a membership of around 250,000 making it one of the largest trade unions in Britain. It is having its first national conference, preceded by various departmental and agency group conferences, in Brighton on 25th-27th November.

The whole process of the merger was carefully controlled by the two NECs of the previous unions, both controlled by the right, ie. the Moderate Group in CPSA, and Membership First in PTC. A further ballot followed an "indicative" membership postal ballot, with the questions in both loaded for a "Yes" vote. The NECs used the merger to bring in a constitution which centralises power while claiming to want to involve the widest possible number of members.

An example of this is the introduction of biennial national conferences, along with biennial elections of the NEC. Changes to the principal rules, agreed by conference, will have to be ratified by a members' ballot. The NEC also has the power to secure changes to fundamental policies via ballots without the sanction of conference.

The new NEC was voted in earlier this year, and confirmed the right's continuing control. This victory, however, was assisted by a membership turnout on the postal ballot of just 10%, and an insert included in ballot packs to ex-CPSA grades, listing candidates and their slates, to the detriment of the left.

Left delegates at the conference must ensure full support for constitutional amendments which return power to the membership and conference, not the NEC and the full time officials.

Delegates should also support motions urging a return to national pay bargaining across the Civil Service. Pay deals have been devolved down to individual departments and agencies. This has negated the opportunity for pay campaigns outside of pay bargaining units, and has thus severely weakened the bargaining position of the union.

Most PCS members welcomed the Labour Government but we await any any major improvements in pay or conditions of service. Privatisation, low pay, low morale, understaffing and lack of promotion prospects, like our colleagues elsewhere in the public sector, are the lot of civil servants. This first PCS conference must show that members are growing tired of waiting for this Government to act on our behalf.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

Islington residents face the council cutting £51 million pounds from its budget (25%) over the next three years. Front line services will be devastated, the voluntary sector will be all but wiped out. Playgrounds, youth services and old people's homes face closure. School meals are to be replaced with sandwiches.
On 3rd November, UNISON, other town hall unions and community groups demonstrated outside the town hall. They were addressed by Liz Davies and Jean Geldhart from the UNISON national executive.

Going Underground

Watching the media, you would think the electricians on the Jubilee Line would be standing outside the site entrances waving wads of money. Instead they're waving placards, being forced into an unofficial strike over safety in a notoriously dangerous industry. Constant management harassment and speed-up as the millennium approaches led among other things to the moving of a key AEEU safety rep, who had exposed problems with alarms, and the workers took appropriate action.

Management have made much of sabotage, a £100,000 wire-cutting exercise which could add four weeks delay to the project. But the damage took place inside a locked area that requires a signing in and out of keys – hardly accessible to an anonymous union militant. Blair has threatened to "knock heads together" to get the line finished on time and avoid yet another embarrassing episode in the Millennium Dome saga.

the Geoff Martin column

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



● You will probably have noticed that, in the teeth of relentless campaigning by this column, the Government has decided to refer the Murdoch bid for Man Utd to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

In case anyone thinks I might be going a bit soft, my views about Man Utd as a club still hold. It's well known that Man Utd fans from Manchester are about as rare as socialists on an NEC approved list of Labour Party candidates.

My crusade against the Murdoch takeover is purely on behalf of the wider interests of football. I'd even do the same thing for Arsenal. I hope this clears things up.

● While we're on the subject of News International I like the gag about how if Tony Blair ever went missing the search party wouldn't need to look much further than Rupert Murdoch's colon.

● I see that Mr Tony is planning to "trawl the business community" for what he considers to be a suitable candidate for London Mayor. So who will be expected to bankroll the campaign of such a figure running under the Labour banner?

The trade unions of course. And will we do it? Not if I have my way. I'm sick and tired of UNISON members' money being used to promote the careers of New Labour politicians who couldn't give a toss about issues like low pay and privatisation.

Before my friends in the SLP get too excited this is not a call for disaffiliation. All I'm saying is that we should be a bit more careful where we invest our political funds. The days when the unions operated a one-way cash point for money-grabbing New Labour careerists must end. It's time we changed the PIN number.

● Disloyal Mr Tony joke Number Two:

A dumped Labour Candidate accuses Blair of being a dictator. Blair says: "Hey, listen, not so much of the tator, OK?"

● Everyone I know thought it was a hoot when Thatch was dragged out of the attic to say what a great guy that bastard Pinochet is. But we need to remind ourselves that there is at least one person who still takes Thatcher seriously – our glorious leader, Mr Tony.

● How scary is that? Vaguely sticking to the subject of scary I see that the one time Ginger Spice (ret) has been appointed as a UN ambassador and general all-round role model for teenage girls.

Presumably this is all based on her track record of pinching Prince Charles' arse, offering Nelson Mandela a grope and flashing off her drawers at every opportunity. Is this all a bit weird or am I just getting old?

LEADING WITH THE LEFT

National Minimum Wage demo

UNISON has called a national demonstration in support of the National Minimum Wage for next April. *LLB* urges readers to move the following motion in their union or Labour Party branch meeting.

"We note the decision of the NEC of UNISON to organise a national demonstration in support of UNISON policy on the National Minimum Wage, in Newcastle on Saturday 10th April 1999. We believe that the low paid deserve a minimum wage set at half male median earnings, that it is in the interests of all trade unionists to eliminate low pay and that a massive attendance at this demonstration is both possible and necessary.

We therefore resolve:

1. To circulate publicity about the demonstration to the local media and to write to all members of the branch, urging every member to attend.

2. To organise transport to Newcastle for the demonstration, providing this transport free of charge to UNISON members, unemployed people and low paid workers who are members of other trade unions.

3. To invite local MPs to attend the demonstration to show support.

4. To organise a regional event early in 1999 to promote the National Minimum Wage, set at half male median earnings, and other measures to eradicate low pay.

5. To send a copy of this resolution to NEC members elected to represent our Region, Service Group, or CLP with a request that they notify the branch of the action they are taking to help build support for the demonstration and asking if they have any suggestions for further action."

MSF witch-hunt

The enquiry into London Region MSF's position on the London Mayor continues as members are called to a panel to give evidence against President Sue Michie and Secretary Hugh McGrillen. Most have refused because the Region's conditions are not being met. They want the proceedings recorded, the two accused to be present when witnesses are interviewed and the right for them to ask questions of the witnesses. MSF's leadership, which has been gunning for the left-wing London Region for some years now, refuses to meet these conditions.

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LLB Trade Union News, PO Box 2378, London E5 9QU or email llb@gn.apc.org

No hiding place

SERGIO Requeña-Rueda fought against the Pinochet military junta and was arrested and tortured in 1976. Recently he travelled to Madrid to make a statement before the judges seeking to extradite Pinochet concerning two Spanish "disappeared" whom he saw at the notorious Villa Grimaldi. Here he looks at the implications of Pinochet's arrest for Chilean democracy.

IT HAS become clear that the detention of Pinochet is not an accident. The right wing in Chile is claiming that there is a socialist conspiracy, but if that is true it has some unlikely allies. For instance, the Archbishop of Santiago, who has stated that "the armed forces and business circles should be ashamed that they supported Pinochet" and that Spain shouldn't be seeking to bring him to justice because "it should have happened in Chile".

The Socialist-led government in coalition with the Christian Democrats has argued for Pinochet to be returned to Chile, reflecting the extent to which by their compromise with the 1980 Constitution they have lost both the will and the courage to see Pinochet brought to account for his crimes.

The circumstances leading to Pinochet's arrest do however indicate that some trap had been laid for him. His advisers must have been aware of the risks given that he had been refused a visa by France and other European countries. Pinochet's former Minister of (in)Justice has accused his advisers of using him as bait to test the water given the increasing calls for the establishment of an International Court of Human Rights. This would make it impossible for his accomplices to leave Chile for fear of being apprehended. There never was a case for his needing medical treatment in Britain as adequate facilities together with competent doctors exist in the military hospitals in Chile. It must also have been known that the diplomatic passports, issued quite freely to members of the armed forces and civil servants, could not be guaranteed to provide immunity against charges of torture, genocide and flagrant abuse of human rights.

So what is the source of Pinochet's unpopularity among his former associates? In essence, Pinochet has been attempting to distance himself from the events of his dictatorship and to claim superhero status as the man who saved the Chilean nation, the patriarch of the transition to democracy. He has, for instance, pledged his support to the CD presidential candidate, Andres Zaldivar, in next year's elections. This has caused outrage in the far right RN&UDI party, whose candidate he might have been expected to endorse.

Earlier this year Pinochet attempted to blame his Chief of Intelligence, Contreras, for the appalling crimes of his regime. This was the man who boasted to Pinochet at breakfast each morning of how many people he had tortured, killed and detained while Pinochet slept. Pinochet for his part claimed that "not a leaf could turn in Chile without him being aware of it". While Pinochet withdrew his accusation, his two sons have continued efforts to distance their father from the horrors of his regime.

The effect of all this has been to unite the right in Chile, led by the hardliners in the army and the intelligence service. The vast majority of Chileans, notwithstanding over two hundred death threats, are delighted that Pinochet may at last be brought to justice, reflecting the frustrations they have experienced over twenty-five years. They hope that the Spanish judges will be successful and highlight to the world that Chile is still a place where there is no justice.

A loose coalition of left and progressive forces including left wing Socialist Party members, Greens and some trade unions are calling for a revision of the 1980 Constitution by which Pinochet gave himself and his associates immunity, along with sinecures as senators for life. They are seeking to recall the Constituent Assembly in order to abolish these privileges, as well as the National Security Council appointed by Pinochet, which has the power to take over the country in any crisis. The 1980 Constitution has been a disaster because it has left the army indirectly in control of the country and intimidated the government into refusing to challenge the legacy of Pinochet's vicious regime.

Nothing will ever bring back my "disappeared" comrades, but the events of recent weeks provide a real opportunity for justice to be done as partial recompense for their suffering. In the end, we must show that Pinochet and his kind have no place to hide.

Protesters picket Pinochet's clinic, 19/10/98.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

for Chilean dictator

More than just tea with Thatcher

Sue Lukes reports: Pinochet did not come to London because he was sick, but because he had business here. Multimillion pound business, involving arms deals, the Chilean military, and Buckingham Palace. Reports in the Latin American press have exposed a tangle of business relationships, and more reason to be here than just tea time with Thatcher.

Pinochet had a hernia for some time, but he came to England to open a cycle of negotiations for the purchase of three British warships for the Chilean Navy at a price of $277 million, with a further option on two frigates for $166 million. The ships are currently in the British Royal Navy under the names of Brave, London and Coventry. The destroyer Cardiff was also part of the package.

This was, however, an unusual arms sale, because the Chilean military high command chooses what arms to buy, independently of the government, and also negotiates the price and the conditions of sale, including commissions. This is because all defence funds in Chile are guaranteed by law as a proportion of copper export profits.

The sale of used warships is a huge business, especially for the middlemen who arrange it, and commissions for these sales were paid to military personnel via secret accounts. Experts in arms trafficking in Latin America reckon that the sale that Pinochet was negotiating would attract a commission of 1% of the price: a cool $4.4 million dollars for the General.



PHOTO:PAUL MATTSSON.

Pinochet demo, Trafalger Square, 7/11/98.

Pinochet's role was essential because he had the backing of the Chilean forces chiefs and also chairs the Defence Commission in the Senate, which gives final approval. His arrest stopped the sale, but he will not be poor: he has already organised the transfer of 16 British Aerospace combat planes for $600 million.

It was BAe, whose largest shareholder is the British Royal Family, which invited Pinochet to London, allowed him to land in their reserved section at Heathrow, and is funding the hospital and legal charges. It is also paying for the relevant percentages on their various deals. He has already acted as adviser for them in the part-purchase of a Swedish competitor.

BAe is not his only paymaster: he also promoted the formation of Famae-Ordnance, a joint venture between the Chilean state owned army company and the British Royal Ordnance to sell missiles and other arms worldwide.

US Labor Party draws up first constitution

David Walters, delegate from San Francisco Golden Gate Chapter, reports on the First Constitutional Convention of the US Labor Party.

ON THURSDAY 12th November, there was a "pre-convention" of the Labor Party's chapters, equivalent to Britain's Constituency Labour Parties.

While representing only about 20% of the LP overall membership, most of the LP activists reside and function within these chapters, which are based on geographic location rather than union or workplace organisation. It's chapter members who distribute the Labor Party press, talk in union locals and otherwise give a public face to this relatively new organisation. There has been some friction between the national leadership of the Party and the chapters, due in large part to the National Office not encouraging individual members of the LP to join chapters. The "pre-convention" elected five representatives to the incoming Labor Party National Council.

The First Constitutional Convention met on Friday, 13th November, with over 1200 delegates from unions and chapters officially registered, a drop of a few hundred from the Founding Convention held two and a half years ago. Some chapters were unable to send delegates and some had gone out of existence. The actual membership of the party has risen to well over 10,000, mostly growth through individual membership from the unions.

The most important issue facing this Convention was the proposal on electoral work that had been under discussion for the last six months. Previously the Labor Party was officially "non-electoral", meaning that it would grow through mass actions and organisation. This was seen by many activists as a reflection of the unions' continuing reluctance to take on the Democratic Party. This convention, however, adopted the proposal that the LP could run candidates in elections, but only by meeting stringent conditions: strong labor union support, a financial plan that would pay for a campaign, strong community support, etc. and, preferably, the existence of a "state organisation" (currently there are no "state organisations" – 1,000 members or more in a given state).

While many activists thought this too stringent, the proposal was overwhelmingly accepted. Local party organisations will now work to meet the conditions for an acceptable election campaign.

Lastly, unions represented on the Interim National Council tried to eliminate the constitutional requirement to hold conventions every two years. After some debate within the resolutions committee it was proposed to have conventions every five years, like some AFL-CIO unions. This was changed through amendments to every three years.

- The Labor Party web site can be found at www.labornet.org/lpa/ ❑

The French lessons on the third way

Andrew Coates, Ipswich CLP, writes about opposition in France to neo-liberalism as preached by Tony Blair.

"A YELLOW Brick Road, leading to the Wizard of Oz". That was the reaction of a French commentator in *Le Monde* to the Third Way as promoted by Tony Blair and Anthony Giddens.

French scepticism is well-founded. In France attempts to create a 'partnership' between the state and the market and to train a workforce for the globalised economy has already run into difficulties. Education Minister Claude Allegre tried to "modernise" the school system, weakening the teachers' unions, employing a flexible workforce, strengthening links with industry, and shifting payment to parents. He glossed over the profound crisis in finance and the growing gap between prosperous and impoverished schools. Under the banner of republican equality hundreds of thousands of school pupils went on strike and paraded throughout France during October.

Enthusiasm for free education, and revulsion at factory-schools producing flexible labour, marked the protests. "We don't want manpower, we want real jobs," one student stated. Disturbances on the early marches were followed by more organised action. Two 'co-ordinations' (ad-hoc coalitions) have clashed, the one led by the FIDEL, close to the Gauche Socialiste (Socialist Party left, which does not participate in the government), and the other close to the League Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR), the Communist Party and others on the left. With such divisions many students have preferred to operate independently. The movement was backed by members of Allegre's own Socialist Party and others on the Gauche Plurielle (a left split from the PS). Despite concessions offering cash and employing more teachers – the pupils demonstrated on 5th November, under the slogan of "vigilance".

France's Prime Minister Lionel Jospin has a delicate task. The Socialist leader declares he is a "reformist socialist". His government is implementing a 35 hour week. Introduced sector by sector this has helped the pro-Communist union federation, the CGT, to take the initiative. The plan to legitimise all forms of people living together, the PACS, met virulent hostility on the Catholic right and will be brought in slowly.

Nearly all the French left is hostile to globalisation and liberal economics. Jospin supports bold European employment plans and was instrumental in blocking US and British free-trade agreements.

By contrast a section of the republican left toys with the moral authoritarianism of the Third Way – with curfews, tough immigration controls and citizen duties. The government is continuing with partial privatisation of France-Telecom, financial institutions such as the bank, Credit Lyonnais, and public insurance companies. Selling off the second television channel, Antenne 2, is now being debated. With the creation of pension funds and new capital markets many believe France is developing towards an Anglo-Saxon economic model. In *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Baudru and Maris describe an economy taken over by financial markets, the stock exchange, with labour flexibility and outsourcing. Despite a small economic upturn poverty is growing, and estimates of homelessness reach the figure of 400,000.

On the left the Gauche Socialiste (many of whom are former Trotskyists) and the Communists oppose privatisation. The ecological party, the Verts, have criticised authoritarianism. A broad section supports the continuing fight of the "sans papiers". Next year each main party will offer their own lists for the Euro-Elections – the Greens headed by the pro-Maastricht Daniel Cohn-Bendit (creating divisions with their own socialist wing). On the far left, the LCR has built campaigns among the unemployed, immigrants, and marginalised workers. It is negotiating with Lutte Ouvriere (Workers' Struggle) for a united slate in the Euro-Elections, although a minority in the League is less favourable, preferring wider social movements. Lutte Ouvriere has problems with the charge that its leader, "Mr Hardy" is a ruthless pharmaceutical businessman, Dr Barcia.

In elections the French left has benefited from opposition to globalisation. In government it is in a position to halt Peter Mandelson's plans for a liberalised European Union and a common currency based purely on financial criteria. With the continent now dominated by Social Democracy perhaps it may play a part in making sure that the Third Way is a road never taken.

Iran Aid victimised

AFTER 15 years as a charity helping victims of repression in Iran, Iran Aid unexpectedly found itself under investigation by the Charity Commission earlier this year.

A Receiver was appointed following allegations that the charity's funds were used for political activities. The Receiver is from Price Waterhouse which has an associate firm in Iran whose senior partner is a former government minister with alleged intelligence links – a major concern for Iran Aid supporters.

On October 27th, the Receiver decided to shut the charity's office and transfer some of its records to his office. Concerned that details of beneficiaries and intermediaries in Iran could fall in to the hands of the Iranian regime thus endangering lives, Iran Aid supporters began a sit-in from October 28th. Why is Iran Aid being investigated at this time? Britain has long been keen to improve relations with Iran, but the regime has made any such improvement conditional on the suspension of Iran Aid's activities. On July 21st, in the first interview by a British minister to the Iranian news agency, Derek Fatchett, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, welcomed more constructive bilateral ties with Iran. Two days later Iran Aid's activities were suspended – after 15 years of operating!

The Iranian government welcomed the move. The "coincidence" has not been lost on many observers and has prompted an angry reaction from lawyers. Despite all the evidence of a politically motivated move, Iran Aid co-operated with the Commission which could provide no evidence for its allegations. Iran Aid is now challenging the freezing of its assets and activities in court.

- Contact: BM Iran Aid Sit-in Support Committee, London WC1N 3XX. Tel 0171-419 5074

South Africa: part of the truth is out there, but where is the justice?

Andy George, writing from Cape Town, calls for not just words, but action, after some of crimes of apartheid are exposed.

THE FINAL report of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission runs to more than half a million words. As a record of the banal horrors and high crimes of apartheid, it will probably never be supplanted. With lengthy extracts appearing in the South African and international press, the brutality, depravity and inhumanity of the white regime, its functionaries, its collaborators and, on occasions, its opponents, have become a matter of historical record.

Yet that historical record remains tantalisingly incomplete. The report tells us little about the so-called "third force" killings that left thousands dead in the early 1990s. The role of the military and the intelligence services remains shrouded in mystery, and what of the slow-burning civil war in KwaZulu-Natal that smoulders to this day?

Nor, critically, does the commission's report point a clear way forward. Having documented the horrors of the past, the commission is distinctly equivocal about how South Africa should go about coming to terms with that past and dealing with the perpetrators of the crimes it records. In the fifth volume of its report the commission recommends that: "Where amnesty has not been sought or has been denied, prosecution should be considered where evidence exists that an individual has committed a gross human rights violation."

Several opposition parties representing those most deeply implicated in human rights violations have already called for a general amnesty to be declared – in the interests of national reconciliation, of course. Former President F W de Klerk's successful attempt to have a passage in the report declaring him to be "an accessory to gross human rights violations" removed was not intended to preserve his reputation as a Nobel Peace Prize winner – this is an indictment in itself with Kissinger, Begin and now Trimble for company. Instead, it was to protect himself against the possibility of legal action either in South Africa or abroad.

The ANC's response to the report will be critical. Early indications are not good. Apart from being startlingly inept, the ANC leadership's eleventh-hour decision to take legal aetion to prevent publication of the report forced it off the moral high ground thrown up by de Klerk's resort to the courts. It also casts serious doubt over how the government intends to deal with individuals who did not apply to the commission for an amnesty or have been found culpable in its report.

This is a painful dilemma for the ANC government. For among those criticised by the commission are Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) leader and Minister of Home Affairs Mangosuthu Buthelezi and the former head of the National Intelligence Service, Niel Barnard, who now directs the provincial government service in the Western Cape. On the list too are President of the ANC Women's League, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, and the former commandant of the ANC's Quatro camp in Angola, Gabriel Mthembu.

The temptation to grant some kind of amnesty to forestall a series of high profile and potentially damaging prosecutions is going to prove hard to resist. The government is hard at work wooing Buthelezi as a strategic ally with a bright future back inside the ANC. It is also fearful of the havoc that the IFP might wreak if its leaders were ever brought to book. In these circumstances, there are already calls for a line to be drawn under the long drawn out conflict between the ANC and the IFP in KwaZulu-Natal.

Less appetising still must be the prospect of the ANC's internal disciplinary system coming under close scrutiny. The party has already made something of a fool of itself by accusing the commission of equating the liberation struggle with the crime against humanity that apartheid represented. What the ANC and its allies in the South African Communist Party seem unwilling to face up to is their own neo-Stalinist (or simply Stalinist) past. It seems as if political dissent – not to mention bad driving, if some reports are to be believed – was treated as tantamount to mutiny. Such a movement has little to gain from seeing its many Stasi-trained enforcers hauled before the courts of a state that it now controls.

There is, of course, no moral equivalence between the apartheid state and those who fought against it. But this is not to say that any act committed in the prosecution of a just war can be justified. Nor can the configuration of contemporary South African politics stand in the way of justice for the thousands of people murdered by the IFP. Neither can the generals and politicians of the regime continue to pretend that they didn't know what was going on. They cannot suggest that they didn't know that when they talked of "eliminating" their political opponents that someone was going to die.

Four and a half years after the country's first democratic elections, it is almost impossible to find a South African who supported apartheid. Yet, the majority of white people did – and voted for it at successive elections for over 40 years. Neither the commission, nor the government, can force those people to face that reality. Until it is faced, or the generations that lived through it are long gone, reconciliation will be elusive. What the government can do is to uphold the integrity of the process embodied in the commission. They can do this by demonstrating to those too arrogant, too complacent or too convinced of the overwhelming correctness of their demand to seek amnesty, that some day soon they will be called to account for their actions.

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Palestine: understanding Wye

Bob Deed, member of the Executive of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign 1995-98 (personal capacity) explains that the new agreement means more of the same.

TO UNDERSTAND the meaning of the Wye Agreement signed by the Israeli government, the Palestinian Authority and President Clinton, it is necessary to put it in the context of the fragmentation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories as part of the Oslo "peace process". Wye involved re-parcelling the West Bank with its patchwork of zones: A is policed and controlled by the Palestinian Authority; B is jointly patrolled by Palestinian and Israeli soldiers, with the Palestinian Authority having civilian control and the Israeli army possessing overall "security" control; C is completely Israeli. Before Wye, Zone A amounted to 3%, Zone B 24% and Zone C 72%, after Wye A will grow to 18% and B go down to 22%.

While Wye clearly promised the Palestinian Authority new segments of the West Bank, even after the redeployments the Israelis will continue to control most of the West Bank and one-third of the Gaza Strip. At the start of the Oslo peace process, the Palestinians expected to receive 90% of the Occupied Palestinian Territories during the "interim" phase – with the remaining 10% being subject to negotiation when the issues of Jerusalem and the settlements were discussed in the "final status" talks. The Palestinian Authority's expansion amounts to crumbs – the enclaves of the Authority will be surrounded by Israeli checkpoints able to strangle the economic, social and cultural life of the West Bank.

Zone A's consolidation means that the Palestinian Authority areas will be less fractured geographically. Optimistic Palestinians hope the West Bank will "breathe more easily": the enclaves will expand; a safe passage will open between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; an airport will operate, and a port will open. In reality the Israelis will not easily relinquish their ability to choke the West Bank and Gaza Strip's population. The safe passage promised for years has never materialised.

Wye has been described as a "land-for-security" deal – the Palestinian Authority expected to heighten its repression of its own population. The Agreement requires that the Palestinian Authority pursues a policy of "zero tolerance for terror and violence" and both sides "take all measures necessary in order to prevent acts of terrorism, crime and hostilities". Human rights and the rule of law get a passing reference, dubbed by the Human Rights Watch, "ambiguous and incomplete". Actually the Agreement licenses and mandates human rights abuses. While 750 of over 3,000 Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli prisons will be released, the Palestinian prisons will be filling up. The clampdown on the Palestinian opposition – both Islamist and secular – has already begun. It will be overseen by the CIA which has a role in scrutinising the Palestinian Authority's performance and adjudicating disputes.

The Wye Agreement will continue the withering of Palestinian social and political life. While Palestinian society flourished under the yoke of Israeli occupation, the years of the Palestinian Authority have suffocated and deformed Palestinian civil society with bureaucracy, corruption and fear. The Palestinian left, struggling to offer any alternative and not showing up in opinion polls, will face an even more difficult environment.

While Wye promises no real change in the lives of the Palestinians on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the impact on Israel is less clear and certain. Arafat describing Netanyahu as his "partner" may contribute to the realignment of Israeli politics. The Agreement is likely to further fracture the Israeli right. The far right played a key role for Netanyahu in his electoral and governmental coalition. The settlers and their supporters, both secular and religious, hate the "peace process" although it has not altered the status of a single settlement or settler. They will not forgive Netanyahu for continuing the process started by Rabin and Peres – he is already branded a traitor.

Splits on the Israeli right may result in the emergence of a national-unity government. Such a Labour-Likud coalition is not likely to benefit the Palestinians. It may further strengthen the Israeli government in negotiations. The likelihood of a national-unity government is likely to hinge on the calculations of the Labour leadership.

The protracted negotiations leading to Wye have led to stress in the US-Israeli alliance. The US were frustrated by the Israelis' willingness to argue for months over fractions of the West Bank. Moreover, Israeli intransigence upset the US's other client regimes in the region: it disrupted their campaign against Iraq as well as further discrediting the US's regional hegemony, creating disharmony between the Israeli government and the most pro-Israeli US President in decades. The long-term implications are unclear although those Palestinians who are placing all their hopes in Clinton are likely to be disappointed. If the Palestinian Authority declares "independence" in May 1999, when the "interim" phase comes to an end, the US won't grant the truncated statelet any favours, let alone recognition.

Overall the Wye Agreement means more of the same – its purpose was to sustain the stalled "peace process" which ultimately will fail to meet the most minimal demands of the Palestinians even if it has so far successfully bought off most of their leadership. The question remains what happens when it is no longer possible to breathe any life into the process started by Oslo.

- Contact the Palestine Solidarity Campaign at BM PSA, London WC1N 3XX.

Bloody Sunday March
Saturday 30th January 1999, 12 noon
London

Victoria Embankment (Embankment/Charing Cross tube) Rally in Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, (Euston tube) at approximately 3pm.

- **Invited speakers at the rally will include relatives of those killed on Bloody Sunday, Sinn Fein, Stephen Lawrence Campaign, a Labour MP and the Robert Hamill Campaign.**
- **Sponsor the 1999 Bloody Sunday march (£5 individuals, £20 Local groups, £100 National Groups)**
- **Cheques and postal orders payable to BSMOC to: Bloody Sunday March Organising Committee, PO Box 10132, London, SW2 2BZ. Tel/Fax: 0181-442 8778, email: bsmoc@brosna.demon.co.uk**

Fighting a duel with the free marketeers

Caroline Dumonteil reports on the actions in Paris against the MAI and warns that global deregulators will now seek to push through their agenda on the sly.

THE OECD was due to re-open discussions on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) on the 20th October. The preceding weekend, an International Citizens Summit was organised by the Observatoire de la Mondialisation in the Bois de Vincennes, Paris. It was attended by people from 23 different countries and many key campaigners against the MAI. It was agreed that the French decision to withdraw from the MAI negotiations meant that there will be an attempt to move them to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The Monday following the summit, about two hundred people occupied the offices of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) in Paris. Having verified that the Directrice was there, we demanded to speak to her. Officials denied she was present and blocked access to the main building. An impromptu meeting was held in the entrance hall where speakers from several different countries addressed the ICC on the adverse impact of their policies. Some of these, such as the one from the Philippines, explained the devastation caused to their economies and their peoples by speculative raids on national financial reserves. The employees of the ICC, many of whom seemed to be British, said that we sounded like a religious group. A bit rich, given their fanatical belief in the benefits of the so-called free market, regardless of the evidence.

The crowd then grew impatient and surged forward and we managed to occupy a conference room. We remained there for three hours waiting to speak to the Directrice, but to no avail. An orderly retreat was organised. The whole event was recorded by the FR3 television channel who subsequently gave it good coverage.

After the French government's withdrawal from the MAI, the US reacted by saying the French do not count – only the Germans do. It seems only the US insists on the MAI negotiations continuing in the OECD – everyone else agrees this forum is finished. Both the UK Government and the European Parliament have come out in favour of the negotiations moving to the WTO.

This move must be stopped, especially given the lack of openness and democratic accountability of the organisation. Dates to bear in mind are the 25th and 26th November when the WTO Trade and Investment Working Group meets.

It was the refusal of developing countries to accept the MAI that pushed it into secrecy at the OECD. Now this has been blown, it is clear that this is the last time that the driving forces behind it will expose themselves by setting up such a clear target. Instead, we should watch out for piecemeal legislation aimed to achieve the same ends. Also, one of the lessons officially learned from the failure of the MAI is the need to "consult civil society". Watch out for controlled forms of consultation with "soft" groups who pose no real threat to the whole agenda. Unfortunately most of the British-based NGOs involved in the debate seem to fall into this category, arguing that we should "appeal to the good consciences of the multinationals".

People should be aware of one piece of legislation that the Secretariat of the IMF and some G7 countries are trying to get through. They want to amend the IMF Articles of Association to effectively allow the IMF to pressure countries to deregulate financial flows and open their doors to investments just as the MAI did.

Indonesia ignites

Max Lane and Don Rocinante report: 15 people were killed and more than 300 seriously injured after attacks by the Indonesian military on last month's popular demonstrations. The protests were against the so-called People's Consultative Assembly, which rubber-stamped decrees confirming the continuation of the Habibie regime and the ongoing domination of the military over politics.

The Assembly, mostly comprising government appointees, approved the appointment of 55 military officers to the Indonesian parliament and a continuation of Habibie's presidency until at least December 1999. The army's structure, reaching into every village, remained untouched.

An appeal from moderate opposition leaders for an independent election committee was ignored: elections will be organised by the present military-backed regime.

This body of Suharto-Habibie placemen was able to meet only because of the presence of 30,000 troops mobilised to prevent the parliament building from being occupied by more than 500,000 protesters. Such mobilisations show a new level of unity based on a new alliance (AKRAB), which brought together all the major groups of students, workers, urban poor and democratic activists.

Unlike the May mobilisations, this time students moved through workers' neighbourhoods and encouraged people to join the demonstrations. Residents along the routes offered drinks, food and donations. As numbers grew to 500,000, marshals were assigned to protect shops owned by Indonesian-Chinese, as well as banks. One lane was kept open so traffic could pass. During the huge mobilisations, there was almost no damage to property – so much for press reports about anarchy.

It was in fact the army that sent several thousand paid thugs, armed with sharpened bamboo sticks, into action against the demonstrators. Pitched battles ensued culminating in the army's indiscriminate firing and killing. The true colours of Indonesia's "transitional" regime were revealed to the world. ❑

An armed wing of unionism

Brian Campbell, editor of Sinn Fein's *An Phoblacht/Republican News* reports from Patten's Policing Commission meeting in South Armagh.

AS SO often with public meetings, the front seats were only half-filled, but fifty people stood along the walls at the back. 250 people were in the Gaelic Athletics Association hall in Crossmaglen to give their views on the RUC to two members of the Policing Commission.

"My father was dying of bone cancer and twenty RUC men raided our house. They forced him to rise from his bed and searched his mattress. I'll never forget it and I'll never forgive them," said Francis Waters.

Peter John Carragher told how 55 years ago he and his father were halted in their horse and cart when an RUC man fired shots at them. "The gun barrel was red hot when he came out from the hedge. 'You could have killed us!', my father shouted. 'Shut up or I will kill you and my word will be taken,' he said."

Imelda McDonald broke down in tears. "The RUC has brought nothing but pain, anger and heartache to my family," she said after describing seventeen years of harassment and house raids.

The two members of the Commission listened intently. They were Sir John Smith, former Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police (and currently drawing salaries and expenses from IBM, the Football Association and the AA among others) and Peter Smyth QC, former Honorary Secretary of the Ulster Unionist Party, two men unlikely to have been exposed to such views before. They made no comment on what they heard, but some day it will be fascinating to hear what these two pillars of the establishment made of it.

This area may well have the lowest level of crime in the Six Counties, but it highlights their dilemma in trying to recommend a new policing service. "How can you have proper policing here when an RUC man can't step into [Crossmaglen] Square without a gun in his hand?" one speaker asked. "They must be disbanded," he said, echoing virtually everyone who spoke.

The Commission will hold thirty two public meetings like this before Christmas, and aims to report by May. This report will be crucial to the peace process.

No society can hope to function properly without some form of legitimate policing and the RUC has never had legitimacy in nationalist areas. As a local solicitor said at the meeting, "South Armagh has a deeply embedded respect for the rule of law". The problem is the people have no respect for those who enforce it. Any new policing service must be legitimate in the eyes of that community and other nationalist communities like it, as well, of course, as in the eyes of unionists and others in the Six Counties.

That legitimacy can only come about if the legacy of a police force as "the armed wing of unionism" is wiped clean. There must be a fresh start, a fresh policing culture and democratic accountability. How else is a 94% Protestant force going to be transformed? And how else is it going to police areas like South Armagh?

Perhaps the main reason why the Patten Commission report will be crucial to the peace process is that it has the potential to show that the Good Friday Agreement can produce real changes in people's everyday lives. Can that chance be seized and structures put in place to move away from sectarian policing and a failed past? Or will we see what British Government Commissions are renowned for – minimal, tinkering changes doing nothing to upset the status quo?

It's over to Smith, Smyth, Patten and Co. The people of South Armagh know what they want.

Nicaragua relief effort hampered

Hurricane Mitch killed nearly 4,000 people in Nicaragua and caused $1 billion in damage. Now the Government is playing political games with the relief effort. Mike Phipps reports.

THE EXCLUSION of key organisations of civil society from Nicaragua's National Emergency Committee is causing problems in distributing aid to hurricane victims. The Emergency Committee's work is incoherent, inexperienced and disorderly, causing delays and more suffering for victims. The problem is compounded by the Government's initial refusal to call a state of emergency because this would give too much control of the situation to the army.

Meanwhile religious groups have denounced the Government for placing obstacles to donations entering Nicaragua from evangelical churches abroad. They also attacked the exclusive use of Catholic bishops and priests to direct relief aid and criticised the 15% rake-off from all donations taken by the state. On the Atlantic Coast too, the Government's scant regard for some 45,000 coastal people affected by the hurricane has been attacked as racist.

President Aleman, in his trips to affected communities, has been met by a wave of hostility due to his inaction and politicisation of the relief effort. In Dario, one of the towns hardest hit by the hurricane, Aleman was visibly shaken by the insults hurled at him. Similar occurrences took place in Leon and Chinandega. Anger mounted following his refusal to accept an offer of help from Cuban doctors.

Meanwhile the United States and the European Union have reportedly suspended shrimp imports from Nicaragua, due to the fear of water contamination. This could result in a net loss of earnings of $100 million annually – shrimp is the second biggest export after coffee.

Hurricane Mitch's impact on El Salvador has also gone largely unreported. Several hundred were killed, 45,000 people made homeless and 100,000 families affected by mudslides and flooding – all this in a country the size of Wales. Here too the Government has been criticised for centralising the aid, stamping it with the ruling party's logo and distributing it only through party channels. Badly affected areas that sympathise with the opposition FMLN have been deprioritised.

- The El Salvador Network can supply details on how to get aid to these areas directly; contact 11 Devonshire Road, Liverpool L8 3TX, tel 0151-728 7118.

the Michael Hindley column



Michael Hindley MEP gives a global perspective.

LAST MONTH I took part in a stimulating two day seminar on this year's hottest topic, "globalisation". The speakers included Alan Simpson and myself from the Labour Party (both of us, to use Rhodri Morgan's wonderful coinage, "Vintage Labour"). The attraction and interest came from the range of speakers. Chaired by members from the Nordic Green/ Left, the panel included Jan Marijnissen, Leader of the Dutch Socialist Party, which is on course for winning a seat in the Euro-elections next summer. Other excellent contributions came from the German Greens, understandably elated by their place in the new German government.

The simple point I want to make is that proportional representation (PR) has allowed a range of radical and progressive views to be elected, to be on the inside, and once there they get prominence, access and confidence and provide a healthy cross-fertilisation of ideas.

An attempt has been made inside the mainstream centre-left to get a debate going on "globalisation". When the European Parliament agreed to ratify the final GATT round, the Socialist Group only gave qualified support, saying their affirmation of the GATT treaty depended on the continuation and development of a Social Agenda. The Group then agreed "in principle" to draw up a report on winners and losers in the new world trading order.

The development of what is now called the global economy is at best uneven and the variations between regions and sectors of the economy will be enormous. The suspicion is that those regions and sectors of the economy which suffer most will be those areas which traditionally support left of centre politics. If this is so, then we need to developed a strategy for the global economy more in keeping with the needs and desires of our core supporters than persist in the oft-disproven theory of trickle down wealth. Faced with such a radical demand the Socialist Group dithered in bureaucratic delay, changed the original idea into a more general study of globalisation and finally, last week, produced an anodyne report which came to no conclusion. The ruling left parties are going to do nothing unless pushed; I think they will eventually be pushed by the pressure of events as the global economy continues to unravel and millions of ordinary people pay with jobs and cuts in welfare, as the western states reduce themselves to organising bail outs for the very mad-cap speculators and carpet-bagger capitalists whom they once championed.

THE PROSPECT for the Labour left inside New Labour offers little other than a sustained war of attrition to defend the Grassroots gains in the NEC votes this year. The prospects for Blair's cabinet listening to a voice on global economics to the left of the *Economist* are nil. It will take the inevitable further collapse after the Euro is introduced to get even the Keynesians at the New Labour high table.

But in Germany, Schroeder actually must listen to more radical voices. He dearly wanted a hung Parliament and a Grand Coalition. The right of the SPD in Strasbourg in the run-up to the election were openly advocating a Grand Coalition as the necessary stable base for "reform" of Germany's generous welfare system, paid for by high taxes. But these centrist desires (covered by Schroeder's call for a New Middle) have been frustrated by the electorate, or more precisely, the electoral system. What is more, leftists inside the SPD like Oskar Lafontaine are also strengthened in their struggle with the trimmers by the existence inside Parliament of the Greens and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS).

Blair clearly wants a coalition government which excludes his own left; we already have one in all but name with the announcement of an extension of co-operation with the Lib-Dems and the granting of key jobs in trade strategy to Ken Clarke on Mexico and Heseltine on China. Blair could still well go for a New Party, though consideration of who gets the residual monies is one of the few things holding him back.

Under our present system the PLP is reduced to impotent grumbling. The left would never vote down a Labour government – on the notion, ill-founded in history, that any Labour government is better than any Tory government. I have just finished Ted Heath's autobiography, essential reading for anyone still blind enough to believe that old chestnut. What matters is the political climate of the times that defines what any government can do. The task of the left is to create that climate, not grimly hang on the illusion of power through Blair plc.

The left inside the PLP is being played for suckers. The existence of elected forces to the left of Labour would at last put spice into the debate and some spine into the PLP.

Left MPs are being played for suckers

FIGHT RACISM

No justice, no peace

Calling for a new civil rights movement, Suresh Grover, co-ordinator of the Stephen Lawrence Campaign, urges Labour Party activists to see their struggles in a wider context.

OVER THE last 20 years we have been badly wounded – both in the labour movement and in our communities. We have been badly wounded and we have to recover from it, and I think that we now have two opportunities to begin that recovery. The first is a consequence of the Stephen Lawrence campaign, and the second arises because of the assembly in London, and devolution in Scotland and Wales. If we can begin to unite these two we will create a force in this country that finally shifts the mainstream agenda away from the Thatcherite consensus.

I know I say this in a dramatic fashion but I think it is absolutely clear. I am not a member of the Labour Party but I can tell you I will give not only my support but I will make every effort to galvanise the leaderships of the current anti-racism campaigns behind Ken Livingstone's campaign for Mayor, even if the Labour leadership bars him from standing. Black people will mobilise for Ken, not least because of their memory of the great injustice done to the GLC.

That is where the issue of racism comes in. When I look back at the last 20 years of the struggle against racism in this country – from the murder of Blair Peach by Metropolitan Police officers to the killing of Stephen Lawrence, not to mention the thousands of families who have suffered so-called "low level" racial harassment (at The Monitoring Group we are currently dealing with more than 300 cases in West London alone) – and the responses from the Labour Party and local authorities, I remember the words of Martin Luther King as he was marching against American apartheid in Selma, Alabama. King insisted that "peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of justice."



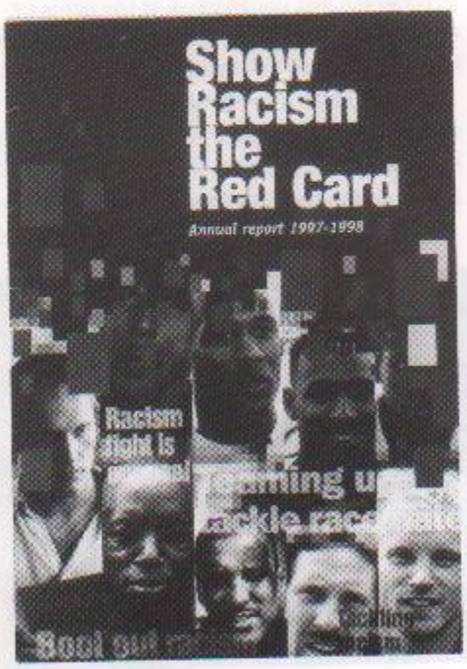
PHOTO: DAVID POPE.

Suresh Grover

That's where the issues of democracy in the Labour Party and resistance to racism can be welded together to develop some momentum within our communities – whether we are members of the Labour Party or not.

In 1993 Doreen and Neville Lawrence went to the Notting Hill Carnival to garner support for their campaign, but were able to secure only three signatures on their petition. Five years later they have mobilised such massive support, both within and beyond the black communities, that the Government has been compelled to set up an inquiry and the media has been compelled to report the truth about Stephen's death.

They were able to turn the tables for a



Show racism the red card

Eddie Tucker examines a working class report against racism in football: Official club and FA anti-racist schemes have been a welcome recent development in football, but are often primarily token statements. Youth Against Racism in Europe, the Independent Newcastle United Supporters Association and the local Race Equality Councils (CREs) in the North East have produced a fans' statement of intent and action which is rooted much deeper in the real world of the football supporter.

Backed by international footballers and UNISON it is a working class response to racism still endemic in the now fully-seated stadiums. In its second year, its annual report boasts an endorsement by Tony Blair, obviously oblivious of the YRE's lefty roots.

Credit where it's due, the YRE saw a problem here and confronted it in an effective way – through videos, the media, in schools and club-based initiatives – and on a European-wide scale. Perhaps the most telling evidence of success is the death threats aimed at Show Racism The Red Card's organisers.

● Copies of the report and further details: Send a large sae to SRTRC, 1 Drury Lane, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 1EA. Please mention *LLB* when writing.

number of reasons. First, because of their own integrity and determination they were able to give a human face to the horrific statistics of racist violence in this country (330,000 attacks over the last year, a dramatic increase compared to 1990). Second, the magnificence of the legal team, which was heavily criticised by some on the black left who claimed outrageously that "Mike Mansfield was only interested in lining his pockets". The legal team developed an innovative challenge to the criminal justice system, pursuing the unprecedented private prosecution, the first ever for a racist murder, and securing the judgement from the inquest jury which said that Stephen's murder was motivated by racism.

In the end Jack Straw agreed to hold the inquiry because he was under tremendous pressure from the family, the community, the public. Within the labour movement, we had support from a handful of left MPs, like John McDonnell, and enormous goodwill from the trade union rank and file, but initially nobody in the trade union hierarchy would touch the case.

We've seen the problem again with the Hillingdon strikers, who were strongly supported in the community and by rank and file trade unionists, but who were let down by UNISON, which even deprived the workers of strike pay. But the important point is that in the end, trade unionists in Hillingdon stuck it out and won their battle. If we are to develop an effective movement for a society that is equal and just, we must draw on the lessons of Hillingdon and the Lawrences.

In Southall, we have a Member of Parliament whose only contribution has been presenting a motion on euthanasia – when we have 40% unemployment among young Asians in our locality . The joke in Southall is that Piara Khabra confused "euthanasia" with "youth and Asians".

When has he spoken in Parliament on racism? Never. To whom is he accountable? Certainly not to anyone in Southall. For us, New Labour's lack of democracy is not merely an internal party question. It's about our basic rights to political representation and participation.

I'm sorry that New Labour is pushing Trevor Philips as a token black alternative to Ken Livingstone. But it won't work. We in the black community are not idiots. We are people who have fought for 25 years for our right to live here as equals and we will not throw away all that experience just to support a television celebrity.

Yes, our democratic institutions and our communities have been wounded, and we will be wounded again. But our future lies in trying to develop a movement of unity, a movement which links Labour, trade union and progressive people with the anti-racist campaigns led by the families who have suffered. The Lawrences have shown what can be achieved if we unite, if we are brave and bold, if we articulate a vision of equality and justice and are uncompromising in pursuing it.

That is most likely to happen not by starting a different political party, as Arthur Scargill did, but by coalescing into a broad civil rights movement. That is how we will bring young people to the fore. It is not true that youth today are apolitical and apathetic; they are highly political but they find no space for themselves in any of the existing political structures.

Unity in action around a vision of democracy, justice and equality is the key to rejuvenating both the labour movement and the black communities. The campaign for the Mayor of London provides one vital opportunity to articulate that vision and forge that unity. We can't fight racism unless we do that and if we can do that we are on our way towards better things.

- This is an edited version of a speech given by Suresh Grover at the *LLB* AGM held in London on 14th November.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

Brainy cop Paul Condon struggles with the concept of institutional racism on arriving at the Lawrence enquiry.

Labour halts funds to anti-racist Monitoring Group

THE MONITORING GROUP, the leading anti-racist community-based organisation in West London, has now been stripped of funding by Labour councils in Ealing, Hillingdon and Hounslow.

During the summer, the decision by Hounslow Council to terminate the grant to TMG, which had been operating in the borough since 1986, provoked strong protests, not least from Neville Lawrence and Sukhdev Reel. TMG has been a mainstay of the Stephen Lawrence, Ricky Reel. and Michael Menson campaigns, and is currently handling hundreds of cases of racial harassment.

Hounslow Council insisted it was merely reviewing its expenditure and seeking "best value", but TMG workers are in no doubt that the real cause of complaint was their insistence on maintaining their independence from the Council and a critical approach to the police.

Suspicions were confirmed when the secretary of Pitshanger Labour Party branch in Ealing wrote to the local newspaper, accusing TMG of organising "a campaign of hatred against the police" in league with the Nation of Islam. "What happened to Stephen Lawrence was a tragedy and there were serious mistakes made in the police investigation. Such mistakes are extremely rare...There is absolutely no evidence of any sort of institutional racism in the Metropolitan Police. The allegations are pure filth ..."

The cuts to The Monitoring Group are part of a wave of attacks on independent black and Asian voluntary groups by New Labour local authorities. It seems the aim of many councillors who were once committed to the fight against racism is that the community must be managed, but definitely not empowered.

- **The Monitoring Group continues its work. Contact them at 14 Featherstone Road, Southall, Middlesex UB2 5AA: email: TMGroup@aol.com**

New network debates Euro-seats

A new network of socialists may take advantage of the regional list system (if it goes ahead) in next year's Euro-elections, with success in some areas a distinct possibility. Mike Phipps reports.

THE INDEPENDENT Labour Network grew out of the debate opened by last year's expulsion of MEPs Ken Coates and Hugh Kerr from the Labour Party. Recently it began discussions with the Network of Socialist Alliances and green socialists about the feasibility of running candidates in the European Parliament elections next spring. Those questions of feasibility are now further open to doubt following the House of Lords' rejection of closed lists.

The 2.5% threshold to keep one's deposit is easily achievable and under the new list system, a 10% vote for a regional slate of ten candidates would see the top candidate elected.

On this basis Hugh Kerr might stand a better chance of winning at the top of a Scottish slate than many sitting Labour MEPs – like Michael Elliott, placed tenth on Labour's London list. Others on the left, including John Palmer and Harold Pinter have also expressed an interest in running.

Many problems will need ironing out before the 'independent' slates are a reality, however. Arguments have already broken out about the political platform of the campaign, and the Green Party's decision to contest all nine regions in England and Wales will weaken the ILN's ability to put in place a genuine red-green alliance.

Leeds comrades say 'enough is enough'

Celia Foote tells *LLB* of the origins of the Leeds Independent Labour Network.

IN THE run-up to the General Election it became apparent to a number of Labour Party members that all was not as it should be in the Party. In the main these were members on the receiving end of the internal oppression exercised by Party officials and a select coterie of "insider" members.

In Leeds North East Constituency this took the form of paid Party officials fiddling the postal vote in favour of the Blairite candidate (who is no stranger to the courts) in the Parliamentary selection procedure, and attempting to hijack the AGM. When this failed they suspended the Constituency and six leading members. Following the allegations being demonstrated as untrue, national officials put together a new "case" of false allegations. Hearings were held in secret, at which all were found guilty, four expelled, one suspended and one given the task of healing the rift.

Celia Foote



Political activists, fuelled by a sense of injustice and a fair degree of bloody mindedness, never die, they re-form. European MPs had refused to sign up to New Labour's loyalty oath. Ken Coates and Hugh Kerr were given the Millbank treatment until one wondered how such men had ever been tolerated by what passes for civilised society. The two MEPs established the Independent Labour Network, expressing regret at being unable to work within the Labour Party and making clear it was not a Party but rather a forum whereby members of several parties could discuss and promote socialist politics.

Activists in Leeds saw the similarities with their experiences. One year on from the General Election their concerns have been more than confirmed and indeed exceeded. It would be easy to dismiss these criticisms as the resentful whingeing of losers and "Trotskyists", but one need only examine the results from the first year of New Labour government to find the evidence. The 1998 Party Conference saw New Labour in all its glory with Party members being used as human advertising hoardings for supermarkets and ministers and MPs encouraged to sell their bodies to wealthy winers and diners.

In the realisation that the Labour Party no longer held out any hope to the unemployed, low-paid and believers in accountable and democratic government, socialists in Leeds North East contacted Coates and Kerr, holding a Leeds Independent Labour Network inaugural meeting with over 50 people. Ken Coates spoke of his belief in a just and equal society based on socialist principles and how the Labour Party was threatened by the forces of the right-wing in the interests of the rich and powerful. A Leeds group of the ILN was established to hold regular campaign and planning meetings, public meetings, social events, produce a regular newsletter, set up a website and begin a supporters drive. Other groups have been established in Hull and Doncaster; regional and national meetings are planned.

Many members of the Labour Party identify with socialist aims. As the leaders of New Labour continue to rebuild the Party to serve capitalist interests there is inevitably going to be internal conflict. The Party machinery has developed to deny socialists influence. Some will leave, others will be removed, but this will not prevent those who believe in socialism from being politically active. The aims of the ILN are to battle on all fronts in the cause of establishing a just and fair society based on the principles of socialism. There is a lively debate as to whether the Labour Party can ever be reclaimed. What is needed at this time is a "politics of inclusiveness" to enable all socialists inside and outside the Labour Party to make a difference. Leeds ILN is committed to help bring this about.

Council plans: all mod cons?

Christine Shawcroft examines the effects of the new White Paper *Modernising Local Government.*

THE TERM "modernising" will soon have the same connotations as "reform" under Thatcher. The health service hasn't recovered from her reforms, while local government reform entailed the abolition of the GLC and Metropolitan counties. Now the Blatcherite Government can finish off local government by modernising it – out of existence.

The White Paper *Modernising Local Government* proposes optional changes for councils to consider – so optional that, if councils ignore them and do nothing, they lose government grants. Suggestions include having a directly elected executive mayor with a cabinet appointed by the mayor from councillors; a leader elected by the council, who could appoint the cabinet, or the council could elect them; or a directly elected mayor with a council manager appointed by the council.

All "options" concentrate power in the hands of a few full-timers, with part time councillors with real jobs left to a scrutinising role and surgery work. This is part of the trend started by the plan for a London Mayor. Millbank wants to see small numbers of individuals with effective power and control. The selection and election of these individuals can be controlled by the Party machine far more easily than hundreds of councillors being selected by wards.

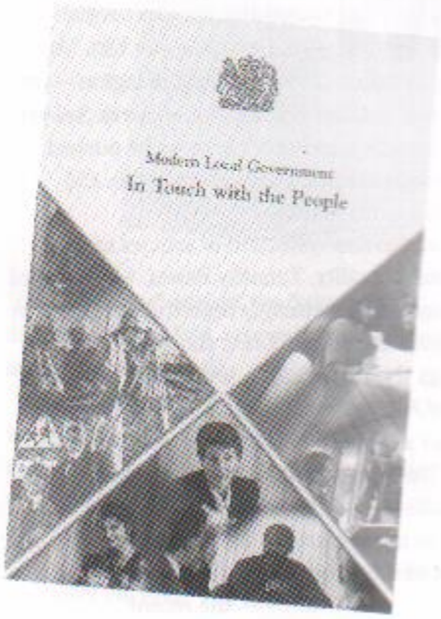
A ward councillor's role will be radically reduced to attending surgeries and tenants' meetings, and scrutinising decisions. The link between the decision makers and the local communities will be severed. When I was judged still fit to be a councillor (or maybe I was unfit for twelve years but nobody noticed) I spent most of my time in surgeries explaining that the Council wasn't able to rehouse people because we were not permitted to build housing and we had lost our best properties under "Right to Buy"; that we couldn't put a new roof on their children's school to stop rainwater pouring down the walls because we weren't allowed the capital borrowing to invest; and we couldn't put a senile grandma into a home because places were being bought in private provision at vast cost to make a profit for the owners, and we couldn't afford any more places. Who needs to spend more time in surgeries like that?

Separating executive power from community representation is unworkable in practice. Who would be prepared to justify policies they had no hand in to a meeting of angry victims of those policies?

Local councillors responding to these options must point out that the problems of local government are largely financial, not structural. If the Government prefers to hand out huge sums in subsidy to private rail companies rather than fund local services, the least they could do is to redefine the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement so that councils are able to borrow money for capital investment in the same way as a private company. They should say they are not prepared to hand over power to individuals but prefer to organise committees so they deal with policies, not administrative details, and that there should be less departmentalism and more joint working.

No mayor or leader should be given powers of patronage to appoint cronies. All policy decisions should be taken by democratically elected Labour Groups, which should meet more often, then carried out strategically by less frequent committees. Councillors need to be supported in their role – this would reduce turnover. Lots of new councillors learning together how the council works is a recipe for disaster.

A Labour government elected on a platform of decentralisation and devolution cannot insist that all locally devolved power has to be in the hands of individuals controlled from Westminster. Local communities already feel there is no point turning out to vote because their council has no discretion to carry out local priorities. The White Paper's proposals will only make this worse, not better.



Some *Brief* words of wisdom

The *LLB* AGM was the start of a serious discussion among activists on the challenges facing the Labour left. Here are highlights of two of the speeches.

Ken Livingstone MP

- It is vital we consolidate our opening out to the mainstream of the Party ... that has given us the four seats. We must run the same slate year after year ... it's about name recognition – they gave Liz free publicity.
- I think there is a valid point that Labour Reform is under-represented on the slate, but the best way to tackle that is when a vacancy arises, not now by going into a damaging internal row.
- I'm told Millbank has commissioned a £15,000 opinion poll to find out what would happen if I ran as an independent (for London Mayor)... I may have revealed too much too soon about the write-in campaign, I bet some toerag in Millbank Tower is working on a scratch card scheme that you can't write on.

Christine Shawcroft

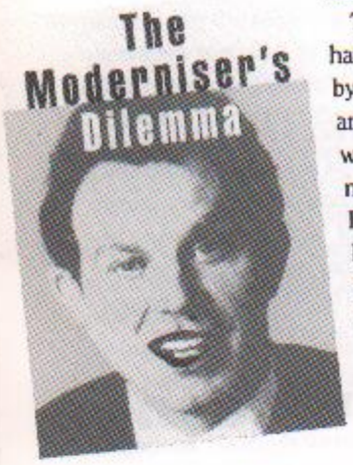
- I've been told "We make policy behind closed doors". Where are these closed doors? I've never been able to find them! Subvert the policy forums from the inside.
- I'm often accused of being a Trotskyist. I'm not, I'm a Confucian. My favourite bit of Confucius I find so inspiring. Confucius says: "If you sit by the river long enough, eventually you will see the body of your enemy go floating by" ... the whole lot will go floating by. ❑

This is the modern world!

Mike Phipps reviews
The Moderniser's Dilemma,
edited by Anne Coddington and Mark Perryman, published by Lawrence & Wishart.

MODERNISATION – now there's something you can't argue with. Or maybe you can. "Are you in favour of modernising Islington – yes or no?", Labour council leader Derek Sawyer apparently asked opponents, as he pushed through the first phase of a possible £50 million cuts package.

In this new collection of articles of very variable quality, Timothy Bewes, who savaged Tony Blair's seemingly depoliticised common sense standpoint ("Grass should be green. Dogs should bark.") in last year's *Cynicism and Postmodernity*, returns to his theme. Blair's claim to modernity is as uncontested as Thatcher's rhetoric of "choice", he argues – although in this case modernisation is more about catching up than going forward, not so much building a future as accepting the recent Thatcherite past.



Thus left and right have been replaced by old and new – and surely we all want to be new, modern. But while Blair may claim to have transcended ideology, in fact his project is highly ideological: the capitulation of the country to the principles of market economics. A further ideological objective is lowering people's expectations in a new Labour Government: hence the great interest of politicians in the idea of globalisation.

This concept is constantly dredged up to demonstrate the seeming impossibility of national state action, such as progressive taxation. Bewes decodes Blair's repeated attacks on "cynics" who complain that New Labour is backtracking on its promises. Cynics seem to be anyone opposed to the modernisation project. But given that Blair's modernisation is conservative and anti-modern, it might be quite progressive to be cynical. Such a response, concludes Bewes, "will provide the impetus for a progressive political intervention prepared to annihilate the present on the grounds, merely, that the present is not good enough." Well, let's hope so.

But cynicism can also be a negative expression of the futility of fighting for political change, besides also being personally corrosive. Bewes' critique should be a spur to militant opposition rather than passive disengagement. At least Bewes has a critique – much of the rest of this collection simply slurps along with praise for the "new" politics. Thus the editors in their introduction assert that what is valuable about the Blair project is that it "enables freedom of thought to flourish." Tell that to the 20 MEPs effectively deselected by Millbank for being "off-message"!

There's some post-Diana psychobabble from Wendy Wheeler. But maddest of the lot is Fabian executive member Paul Richards' gushing vision of Labour in the new millennium. Gone will be the Party's GC democracy "based on the Soviet system" and favouring eccentrics and Trotskyists. In ten years' time benefits will be targeted with "laser-like accuracy" and people will remember the day they spent in the Millennium Dome – that "testament to political courage" – for the rest of their lives. And the grass will be green!

Burchill cashes in

Paul Wellings, Romford CLP, reviews Julie Burchill's Diana, *published by Weidenfeld, £20.*

THE THEMES of this book are quite simple: death, lack of a free press, bulimia, sexual politics and aristocratic depravities! Julie Burchill explores all these angles and deduces that the monarchy and aristocracy have no place in a civilised society. Where she goes wrong is idolising Diana.

Opting for glossy song titles for chapter headings like the *Power of Love* and *Uptown Girl*, Burchill has clearly rushed this book as a cash-in. Although Burchill never met Diana, there is still a creepy idolatry that pervades the book. If she felt so strongly about the hypocrisy and callousness of the Royal Family and upper class towards Diana then why didn't she write something before her car crash? More importantly, if Diana was such a compassionate humanitarian why did she not give more of her millions away to the poor and needy?

Burchill crystallises her affection for Diana in the marvellous paragraph, "I am the cynic of the word. The cynic's cynic. A class warrior whose personal flame for the unknown soldier never fades. But in this aristocratic young woman, two years younger than me, I saw something I could not sneer at."

Julie Burchill, former Communist Party member and *Guardian* columnist, is incapable of writing a book without any merit – but this is not the book she could have written.

Red South West

Eddie Tucker reviews the new magazine available from, among others, Exeter Left Group, Flying Post, PO Box 185, Exeter, EX4 4EW, £5 for four issues.

The South West has a history of radical publications, including the *Somerset Clarion* and *Exeter Labour Briefing*. *Red*, now in its second issue, brings together groups and individuals involved in the Bristol Marxist Forum, Anti-Fascist Action, and many others grouped around the Revolutionary Socialist Network. The magazine covers a diverse range of issues from genetically modified crops to the Liverpool docks, from CLR James to EMU.

Perhaps the most interesting article features the Alternative World Cup, organised by a village team from Dorset, featuring teams from all over Europe, South Africa and even Bradford's anarcho-syndicalist 1 in 12 Club. Relying on fundraising for teams from poorer countries, the organisers did a magnificent job to bring 500 people to the small village of Thorncombe. In a portent for 2002, South Africa ran out winners.

Interesting though the national and international articles are, it is the local reports and interviews that stand out – combined with the unifying nature of the magazine and its radical cutting edge, it's worth a read wherever you live. Well read and well red!

Blood, sweat and cheers



Mike Phipps reviews
Crossing Borders *by Rigoberta Menchu, published by Verso, £17.00;* Women and Social Movements in Latin America *by Lynn Stephen, published by Latin American Books, £12.99 and* Red Hot *by Hall Greenland, published by Wellington Lane Press, £10.00.*

THE FIRST volume of Rigoberta Menchu's autobiography has for many years been Verso's best-selling title. *Crossing Borders* resumes the story following the burning alive of her father and the rape, torture and murder of her mother at the hands of the Guatemalan military. The title summarises the next twelve years of exile, when she was never in one country for more than one month at a time. But it also refers to her political and personal journey to a life of activism on behalf of the Mayan people which won her the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992.

Crossing Borders describes the difficulties of lobbying the labyrinthine bureaucracy of the United Nations and the contrast between affluent, indifferent Switzerland and her rare returns to Guatemala. Rigoberta pays tribute to the native peoples of North America and identifies with the discrimination they suffer. No wonder she is seen as the most important living figure to have publicised the plight of indigenous peoples worldwide.

In Central America alone there are tens of thousands of similar life stories of immense suffering and courage. Lynn Stephen's book contains a powerful interview with Morena Herrera, a founding member of Dignas (Women for Dignity and Life), an autonomous women's organisation in El Salvador. Morena, a leading commander in the FMLN's "final offensive" against the Salvadorean dictatorship in 1989, recounts her early years in the armed struggle.

Between 1979 and 1989 she gave birth to three children in clandestine conditions, each of whose fathers were killed in battles with the military. When her long-standing partner was killed in 1989, she had no chance to mourn, but was told: "Companera, you can't cry now. The fucking army is getting really close and you have to take over." Morena's experiences led her to create a new non-party organisation championing the particular struggles of women. Stephen's book contains interviews with other women activists in Mexico, Brazil and Chile.

Also in the field of political biography is Hall Greenland's *Red Hot*, about the life of Australian union activist Nick Origlass. Offensive, quarrelsome, bad-tempered, intolerant, authoritarian and unbearable are just some of the author's descriptions of Origlass – and he was one of his closest friends. Origlass was one of the most expelled men in Australian politics – from the Communists in 1931, the State Council of the Unemployed (1939), his union (1946 and 1955) the Labor Party (1955 and 1968), the Fourth International (1965) and his local council (1969). But he was also a tenacious fighter, leading a successful six-week strike of 3,000 metalworkers in Sydney's shipyards in 1945 and in the 1960s reinventing himself as a community and environmental campaigner.

Red Hot is a fine social history, especially on the 1932 "dole riots" and the physical confrontations between the Stalinists and their opponents, but with perhaps a bit too much on the arcane internal politics of the Australian Trotskyist movement.

• *Red Hot* is available from 11 Temple Fortune Lane, London NW11 7UB, price £10. Make cheques out to W. Greenland.

Labour's first black MP

Eddie Tucker reviews Comrade Sak *by Marc Wadsworth, Peepal Tree Press, £9.99.*

Sharpurji Saklatvala was the first black Labour MP – and also a member of the Communist Party, when joint membership was allowed for a short period in the 1920s. Marc Wadsworth's political biography is written from the angle of a black activist in today's labour movement. And its sharpness and clear parallels with present times comes in large part from Wadsworth's role as a key player in the formation of Labour Party Black Sections in the early 1980s.



Saklatvala's role as an MP is almost unrecognisable today, mixing agitation among the working class of his Battersea constituency with an active role in the Indian independence movement and as a champion of African and Asian unity. The Communists, in general, and Saklatvala, in particular, became a thorn in the side of the Labour leadership and the 1924 General Election was to be Sak's last as a Labour candidate. He subsequently lost his seat when standing as a Communist in 1929 but remained active in the movement in Britain and internationally.

Authoritative books on the history of black people in the British labour movement are few and far between; ones written from a political rather than academic angle even rarer. And if little is known about Sak, what is known about one of his right-hand men, John Archer, elected in 1913 as Britain's first black mayor? Wadsworth's book is inspiring in bringing to life not just the actions of Comrade Sak – in a critical way when necessary – but in tracing the radical history of the left and the unions in early twentieth century Battersea. Socialists in the Labour Party can learn much from it.

Obituary:
Kwame Ture, freedom fighter

Mike Marqusee writes: In the summer of 1966, Stokely Carmichael was marching through Mississippi with Martin Luther King and other civil rights activists when he was arrested and held for six hours in the Greenwood jail. On his release he declared: "This is the twenty-seventh time I have been arrested. I ain't going to jail no more. What we got to start saying now is 'Black Power!'"



The slogan was taken up by young militants on the march and became the subject of national and international controversy.

Born in Trinidad, Carmichael moved to Harlem in New York City at the age of eleven. As a student at Howard University in Washington DC, he took part in the sit-in movement of 1960 and became a leading activist in the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC). Over the next few years, Carmichael immersed himself in anti-segregation and voter registration work in the deep south, proving himself a gifted, brave and dedicated organiser. He was one of the heroic vanguard of young black Americans who in confronting racism ignited a student movement which was to swell to global proportions over the next decade.

By 1966, the civil rights movement had achieved enormous success – legal segregation was on the way out, and the right to vote was becoming a reality. But a terrible price had been paid – scores of murders, tens of thousands of beatings and arrests. Throughout, the federal government and the white establishment had stood aloof, and were now catering to a "white backlash" against even the nominal gains of the movement.

Real equality seemed as distant as ever. It became commonplace to ask what was the point of getting a black person the right to eat a hamburger in an integrated restaurant if he didn't have the money to afford it? The Black Power slogan emerged from this crisis. It rested on a belief that the black masses, and only the black masses, had the power (or the inclination) to liberate themselves, and that they had to act and think independently of all white power structures.

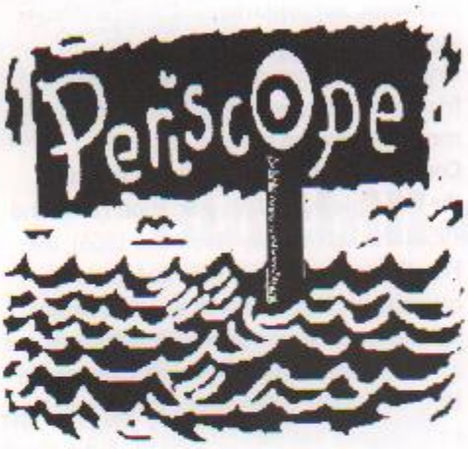
Carmichael became one of its major exponents, and as a result one of the most vilified and persecuted figures of the second half of the sixties. In the coming years he was denounced by the media and politicians, harassed by the FBI, indicted on a variety of conspiracy charges and repeatedly threatened with extended jail sentences.

He was one of the first African-American opponents of the war in Vietnam and described the draft as "white people sending black people to fight yellow people to defend the land that they stole from red people".

Within two years of its turn to Black Power, SNCC had withered on the ground and Carmichael found himself, like other radical leaders, black and white, a media figure without an organised base. In 1968, Carmichael joined the Black Panthers, but fell out with them the following year and moved to Guinea in West Africa. There he changed his name to Kwame Ture, inspired by the anti-colonial leaders Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Ture.

Ture's journey through civil rights to Black Power to Pan-Africanism and his own version of socialism illustrated the frustrations and the ever-expanding horizons of his generation of African-American activists.

In recent years, he revisited the United States, where a new generation are reconsidering the lessons of the 1960s. He was active in the campaigns against the economic embargoes of Cuba and Libya. He died in Guinea, aged 57, on 16th November 1998.



It's all White for the right

Following the first meeting of Labour's new NEC, *Guardian* political editor **Michael White** reported that **Mark Seddon**, *Tribune* editor and Grassroots Alliance member, had collaborated with Millbank in the drafting of the new Code of Conduct. As Seddon made clear in a letter to the *Guardian*, there was no truth in the story, which was a transparent effort by the Party leadership to obscure the issues.

White published the story – which came straight from Margaret McDonagh, the Party's new General Secretary – without putting the allegation to Seddon or indeed making any effort to contact any of the four Grassroots Alliance NEC members. He was guilty of similar misbehaviour in the autumn, when he did not let **Liz Davies** respond when he wrote up Neil Kinnock's frenzied attack on Davies and *LLB*.

With the departure of Patrick Wintour to the *Observer*, and Martin Kettle to the USA, White is now the Blairites' key man at the *Guardian*. But his habit of regurgitating Millbank spin and calling it news reporting (as in his recent sanitised account of Millbank's Euro-list stitch-up) is galling many of his colleagues.

Craven adulation

In the wake of the Neill enquiry, who should pop up as Labour's stand-in chief media adviser? Step forward top lobbyist **Mike Craven**, recently of Market Access, and well-known as the craven pro-market Kinnockite former head of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. Mike was one of those linked to GPC (who bought out his firm), Prima Europe and the whole Drapergate affair. Nice choice, Sawyer!

Playing on both sides?

If you ran a TV company bidding for a sports franchise that was politically sensitive who would you employ? How about the Special Adviser to **Chris Smith**, Secretary of State for the department which covers both media and sport. On a separate matter, Rupert Murdoch has just appointed **Julian Eccles**, Special Adviser to Chris Smith, to his media corporation.

Wood you believe it?

Who says demonstrations aren't as exciting under a Labour Government? On 25th November, **Hedgeline**, campaigning against Hedge Abuse (no, seriously) are demonstrating in Parliament Square at 1.00pm. Against the threat of the triffid-like leylandii, no-one can accuse this group of hedging their bets. Whether they have twigged the idea that they should branch out into a united front on all threatening shrubbery is not certain.

CORRESPONDENCE

We welcome feedback, however letters over 250 words will not be considered. Those via email (or PC disk) are particularly welcome.

PO Box 2378, London, E5 9QU. llb@labournet.org.uk



Alexandra Schulte and William West were wrong about the far-right vote in Germany (*LLB*, November). While openly fascist parties "only" got 1.6 million votes (3.3%), other far-right groups brought the total up to 2.2 million (4.4%) – more than double the 1994 vote. The fascist right are talking about uniting. Fascism poses a serious threat across Germany, not just the east.

I had to laugh at the idea that the PDS should "soon be making significant gains in the west"! Opinion polls suggest the opposite.

When the PDS has gone into coalitions, they have lost credibility as the "consistent opposition" they claim to be after helping make cuts. This has helped the rise in support for the far right.

In the election PDS leaders were falling over each other to prove how "respectable" they are, claiming loyalty to the capitalist order, announcing a Clause IV-style re-writing of the party's constitution and even giving convicted fascist terrorists space in their paper.

They are sidelining their anarchist and communist youth section by cutting off funds and setting up a new one. The only organised opposition to the leadership are the tiny and heavily Stalinist "Communist Platform", largely made up of pensioners who have failed to realise that their politics have been well and truly discredited.

The PDS will provide some opposition to Schroder, but little, finding it nearly impossible to square the circle of crying "betrayal" while voting through the SPD's dirty work at regional level. The PDS play left and right as it suits them.

Matthew Heaney, Dagenham

It is part of Australian history that Captain Cook passed this way over 200 years ago. The area he named Trinity Inlet is richer than a rain forest in biological diversity and a breeding ground for myriad life forms. Now it appears that distant children of our ancestors (namely shareholders associated with the uncaring and grasping octopus that is National Westminster Bank) want to place a dark and alien shadow on this area in attempts to recover their failed business speculation. This would destroy a large area of Trinity Inlet.

We ask that you take our plea of preservation to your financial masters. I extend an invitation to all of you in the UK, especially those with invested interests here, to come and visit our reef and rainforest – you will be most welcome; and to press NatWest to cut their losses and go home.

Brian K Williams, Queensland, Australia

As a life-long Labour voter I write in dismay. How could New Labour do what they've done to Ken? I might not agree with everything he says, but at least he is true to his politics. How could New Labour go down the same road as Thatcher in refusing to listen to the people?

I and many of my Labour friends will not vote for a New Labour puppet. If they continue with this mad policy I will not vote for them again. What's wrong in someone who might not keep the party line – after all we would not have had a labour movement without rebels.

What are New Labour scared of?

Linda Leonard, Leyton

AOB

"Unfortunately Peter could not be with us because he is at a meeting of the SWP" – *Tony Blair* at the PLP, responding to congratulations on Mandleson's quotes on Pinochet.

"'Leaves on the line' have long been a source of amusement to industry observers" – an increasingly desperate *Railtrack*, explaining its new initiatives, letter 21st October. Apparently its new multi-purpose vehicle is designed to ... pick up leaves.

"Whatever else British socialists may be doing, whatever experiments they feel it meet to conduct, either in community action or trade union agitation, the one thing they should not do is turn their backs on the official labour movement." – *Ken Coates*, now an Independent MEP, *Socialists and the Labour Party*, 1973.

"Only 8% of people believe ministers can be trusted to talk a lot of sense on the family" – Opinion poll on the Government's pro-nuclear family document in the *Observer*, before the recent media frenzy.

"Ask everyone who doesn't pay by direct debit to stand up" – Millbank's surefire way for you to spot poor people at your Party meeting, so you can throw them out. Believe it or not, this is a "top tip" for keeping members.

"CLPs have been able to appoint a trade union liaison officer since a 1996 rule change" – Millbank mailing to local parties. As anyone who has ever attended a Labour Party meeting knows, TU liaison officers have been with us since the ark. Presumably, it was written by the same gormless youth who claimed that this year's Party Conference was "meeting on a Sunday for the first time".

"My commitment is to the Labour Party and the democratic socialist principles of its majority, and not to what increasingly gives an appearance of being a narrow Christian Stalinist cult" – *Mark Seddon*, NEC member, *Independent*.

"If Nick Brown had confessed to being a Sunderland supporter, that would really have been it" – *Billy Anderson*, member of Newcastle Labour Club, on the "outed" minister.

"There is more likelihood of Ian Paisley being the next Pope than of me agreeing to a fix or a stitch-up" – *Rhodri Morgan*, on the Welsh leadership race.

the Liz Davies column



NEC member Liz Davies provides a viewpoint from the grass roots.

THE starting point is members' right to know. It was sad but predictable that most of our first NEC meeting was spent discussing how much we would be permitted to tell the Labour Party members who elected us.

In the end, the draft Code of Conduct leaked to the press was renamed "Guidance Notes" and its language amended to make somewhat clearer which matters are to be considered confidential. Despite the name change, the final paragraph still left open the possibility that alleged breaches of the "guidance notes" could be used in formal disciplinary proceedings against Party members.

Undoubtedly, the watering down came as a direct result of the negative media reaction to the draft code. Contrary to a report in the *Guardian*, it is absolutely not true that Mark Seddon was involved in drafting the Code of Conduct. The *Guardian* report was entirely Millbank spin designed to embarrass Mark and split the Grassroots Alliance.

In the end I voted against the Guidance Notes for several reasons.

First, because no good case was made to restrict NEC members' rights and abilities to communicate with Party members.

Second, because the Guidance Notes included ambiguous language that could be used to silence dissidents.

Third, because the General Secretary appeared to state that something about "collective responsibility" would be added to the document in the future, despite a number of NEC members warning that this was a complex concept and would need more debate.

Finally, I voted against the Guidance Notes because they were entirely the wrong way to launch the real discussion we need to have. Our starting point ought to be the members' right to know – and how the Party can facilitate that.

In reality, of course, Millbank does not mind NEC members speaking to the media if they are "on-message". The *Times*, for example, suggested that I was in trouble for speaking against NEC policy on the BBC's *On the Record*, where I had argued for a one member one vote ballot without prior screening for the Mayor for London. In fact, the NEC has no policy on the selection procedure for Mayor for London; it has not yet been discussed. When I recorded the interview, the only Labour Party body to have formulated policy was the Greater London Labour Party conference, whose policy I was speaking in support of.

The logic at the NEC seemed to be that it was all right for Hilary Armstrong or Michael Cashman or Diana Jeuda to have spoken to the media on the proposed Code of Conduct, but not for the Grassroots Alliance members to have done the same.

We were elected on a clear commitment to report the votes and debates at the NEC to Party members. All of us are determined to put that commitment into practice. Our first bulletin is already available (contact 0181-985 6597), and our website should be up and running soon.

In his Leader's Report to the NEC, Tony Blair spoke at length about Iraq, largely repeating the arguments he had made in the Commons the day before. This was Saddam Hussein's last chance and next time there would be military action. Grassroots Alliance members challenged Blair, raised the basic moral question of civilian casualties, and spoke against bombing Iraq, assassinating foreign leaders and against the continuation of sanctions.

In making our protest direct to the Prime Minister, I was very much aware that the four of us are not even specks on the horizon when it comes to Government strategy on Iraq. On this life and death issue, we have to do better. We need to do more to mobilise the public opposition to bombing and sanctions that does exist, not least in the Labour Party.

AN NEC "Away Day" at Congress House was intended to give us an informal introduction to the work of the NEC. It was made clear to us by Millbank officials that the role of the NEC is to communicate the Government's message to the Party. The difficulties the Government faced over the summer were dismissed as due to hostile media or disgruntled Party members. The discontent voiced by Party members over the Euro-elections was brushed aside as a fuss made by a few individuals resentful at having been placed too low down the lists. The NEC elections generated bad publicity, it seems, because Ken Livingstone had dared to debate Tom Sawyer on the *Today* show.

At times, the logic was hard to follow. Criticism of the Government by Party members is, apparently, all down to the fact that Party members got so used to attacking the Government when Labour was in opposition, and old habits die hard. It was even suggested by one NEC member that in each GC, there should be a Party member whose role was to defend the Government.

The arrows in the model of Party democracy we were offered by Millbank are all pointing the wrong way – top-down. The four Grassroots Alliance members will do their best to reverse them.

OFF MESSAGE

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