LABOUR LEFT BRIEFING

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inside...

- Sierra Leone
- John Palmer on EMU
- India's bomb
- Pilger defended
- NEC elections



Mr Blair, recognise our rights

Labour Left Briefing

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Recognition and reality

IT WAS Tony Blair himself who put his finger on the fundamental inadequacy of the Government's White Paper on workplace rights. "Even after the changes we propose, Britain will still have the most lightly regulated labour market of any leading economy in the world." In other words, it will continue to have the most heavily regulated trade unions.

Of course, there are welcome measures in the new package. Individual workers will have the right to be represented by a trade union at disciplinary or grievance procedures. Where unions can demonstrate that they have more than 50% membership, employers will be compelled to recognise them. Three months parental leave will be guaranteed and maternity leave will be extended to 18 weeks. Workers sacked for taking part in lawful industrial action will have the right to claim unfair dismissal (but this does not mean that sacking such workers is illegal or that they will be able to gain reinstatement or are guaranteed any compensation).

Seven million workers will acquire legal protection from unfair dismissal as a result of the reduction in the qualifying period from two years to one. However, it must be noted that workers will still pay tax and National Insurance and be subject to management diktat from day one of their employment.



What credible argument can there be to deny workers basic human rights just because they have worked for a particular employer for less than 365 days in succession?

It was only five years ago that John Smith promised the TUC that the next Labour Government would guarantee workers' rights from "day one" on the job. That pledge evaporated, along with many others, as Blair and Mandelson set about reconstructing Labour as the preferred party of big business. The extent to which they have succeeded has been confirmed by the contents of this White Paper, which deals with matters cutting to the very heart of the labour movement.

Don't take *LLB*'s word for it. Listen to what the *Financial Times* says: "the compromise over trade union recognition ... is far closer to the [employers'] desired threshold of 50 per cent than the unions wished. And crucially the Government has underlined their existing right to offer individual contracts, so recognition will not bind individuals to collective agreements... such a high threshold means unionisation is unlikely to recover much, particularly since smaller companies are exempt." Above all, the White Paper "does nothing to tamper with the key reforms of the Thatcher years: ballots and notice before strikes, the abolition of the closed shop, secondary action and mass picketing."

In assessing the White Paper it is necessary to extricate reality from spin. Of course, the CBI, Institute of Directors, etc. have muttered disapprovingly about alleged concessions to the unions. They would, wouldn't they? They know — as does Blair — that their apparent discomfort will help convince trades unionists and Labour voters that the package is more substantial than it is.

The exemption of companies with fewer than 20 employees will leave a minimum of five million workers with no statutory rights to collective bargaining. The media, fast food and other retail industries will be delighted.

The 40% threshold is nothing less than a cynical insult to trades unions. No other democratic exercise in the world posits such a hurdle. The TUC's recent proposal for a 30% threshold was a major tactical blunder for which John Monks must be held to account. It enabled Blair and Beckett to present their formula as a "compromise" when it is nothing of the sort. If in a "bargaining unit" of 500 workers, 199 vote for recognition and one against, the employer will be legally absolved of any obligation to recognise the union — and the union will not be allowed even to apply for another ballot for a minimum of three years.

Unions will not even be able to proceed to the ballot unless the Central Arbitration Committee is convinced that "there is prima facie evidence that the union enjoys a reasonable level of support such as to make it likely that there could be a majority in favour of union recognition in the bargaining unit." In doing so it must consider evidence from employers, who will also have the right to institute ballots for derecognition (as yet, no threshold is specified for these).



The White Paper proposes that the CAC will determine the boundaries of the "relevant bargaining unit" (i.e. the electorate for the recognition ballot), taking into account "the need for effective management". Employers "must and will be free to organise their business in the way they choose."

Clearly, this is not a White Paper to give Britain's bosses sleepless nights. It comes nowhere near rectifying the massive imbalance in British employment legislation, which remains overwhelmingly unfavourable to individual workers and their unions. Under its provisions, employers will still be able to do what they did to the Liverpool dockers and the Magnet, Critchley and Hillingdon strikers.

"Fairness at work"? We think not.

This White Paper seeks to neuter Labour's clear manifesto promises on union recognition and rights at work. In any case, it must be remembered that these promises represented a bare minimum; there had already been massive concessions from the unions. Now Blair is demanding yet more concessions. Trade unionists and Party members should tell him: enough is enough. The International Labour Organisation, part of the United Nations, stipulates a basic package of trade union rights. Why should we settle for anything less? ❑



Trade union recognition: break the threshold

Jim Mortimer
former General Secretary of the Labour Party

WHEN THE TUC published its proposals for trade union rights in the workplace it called for all workers to have the right of representation in discussion with their employers on matters concerning their employment. It was a simple principle and in my view its implementation would have done more to encourage trade union recognition than all the proposals now being discussed for ballots and for threshold figures for a minimum level of support for recognition to be given statutory backing.

The plain and central fact is that New Labour rejected this key request for a universal right of representation to be contained in contracts of employment for all workers. In an article that Tony Blair wrote for *The Times* shortly before the last General Election he said: "As for union recognition, we have rejected the TUC proposals which were for wider rights of representation." To reassure readers of *The Times* of the full significance of New Labour's proposals on trade union legislation, he went on to say: "Let me state the position clearly so that no one is in any doubt. The essential elements of the trade union legislation of the 1980s will remain."

Thus the essential elements of the anti-union legislative heritage left by Mrs Thatcher became the orthodoxy of New Labour. Tony Blair added: "The changes that we do propose would leave British law the most restrictive on trade unions in the western world." The case for a universal right of representation in the workplace rests on the need to do what is possible to redress the gross imbalance of power in the employment relationship between employers and the overwhelming majority of employees. It is a glaring inconsistency that within the British legal system everyone has the right of representation if they do so choose, but in a dispute in the workplace a hostile employer can veto a worker's right of representation by refusing to talk to a trade union representative.

It is a measure of the backwardness of industrial relations in Britain under both the Tories and New Labour that in all the public discussion about trade union recognition the right of workers' representation has been dropped from the agenda. Instead all the debate has been about what is meant by a "majority of the relevant workforce" in a ballot on recognition and what should be the required level of minimum support before statutory recognition is granted.

There is no other country in Europe where workers have to ballot for trade union recognition. Where ballots take place — as, for example, in France, Germany, Italy and Spain — it is for the purpose of choosing the workers' representatives. It is not to determine whether the workers should have the right to be represented in discussion with their employer.

Balloting for trade union recognition is an American practice. President Roosevelt introduced it more than 60 years ago when industrial unions in the USA were seeking recognition in face of bitter hostility — and often violent repression — from employers in the mass production industries. At the time it was a step forward.

Since then changes in legislation and court judgements have created a succession of hurdles concerning, for example, the proposed bargaining unit, employers' intervention to influence opinion and derecognition procedure. For many years the proportion of US workers covered by collective bargaining has been declining.

The rights of trade union organisation, representation and collective bargaining should be seen as basic social rights. For a

Self-organisation is the key

The legal right to a union and the Government's White Paper are important, but rank and file organisation is the priority for John Perry, TGWU Organiser, South London.

IN SOUTH LONDON, like other urban areas, growth is not in traditional manufacturing but in service and retail. 80% of employers here employ less than 25 staff and tend to recruit part-time women and young workers.

Unions must adapt their structures and methods to organise in non-traditional industries. In the United States union recognition is a time-consuming legal process (like the British proposals) that activists are increasingly bypassing in favour of traditional organising tactics. "Name and shame" campaigns, consumer pickets, boycotts and good community links are making headway in promoting union membership.

Our T&G branch recently initiated a "Bad Bosses Hotline" with Battersea and Wandsworth TUC. Innovative posters are circulated to community centres, launderettes, pubs, cafes, doctors' surgeries and newsagents. With our community allies we are promoting "Respect at Work" zones where bad employers are publicly exposed.

Such initiatives do not bring in hundreds of members overnight, but the steady flow of applications in non-traditional areas create a union-friendly environment.

Those who promote legislation, while allowing internal structures to remain unchanged, often want power to remain centralised and the young and uppity kept in their place.

Union recognition will not be won in partnership with the CBI and New Labour Law Lords. Recognition and respect at work will be a hard struggle with employers by a motivated and self-organised rank and file. Perhaps it is this that frightens some within our movement the most?

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government to uphold these rights is not a favour to trade unions. It is the practice of democracy. Trade union rights are human rights.

A requirement for a vote of 50% plus one for trade union recognition of those who vote, together with an additional hurdle of a minimum threshold of affirmative votes, is no substitute for a universal right of representation. Moreover, even if observed, it would contradict normal democratic practice.

No Labour government in Britain has ever been elected with a supporting vote of 50% of those who voted. In 1997, for example, Labour's landslide victory — in terms of parliamentary seats — was achieved with the support of about 43% of those who voted and about one-third of all who were eligible to vote. In other words, for every elector who voted Labour there were another two who either voted for other candidates or did not vote.

In the recent London referendum just over one-third of the electorate voted. With a 72% Yes vote this meant that only one in four gave their support to the Government's proposals. Tony Blair proclaimed this outcome as a victory.

By the standards that may be imposed for trade union recognition ballots, both the General Election victory in 1997 and, even more, the recent London referendum result, would be regarded as defeats. To impose such standards for trade union ballots would be neither a 'favour' nor 'fairness' for the working people of Britain.

No one in the labour movement would wish to discourage every kind of discussion at all levels to persuade the Government to change its attitude. But in the ultimate the most effective lever for change will be pressure from below. Labour MPs deserve to be judged by their actions.

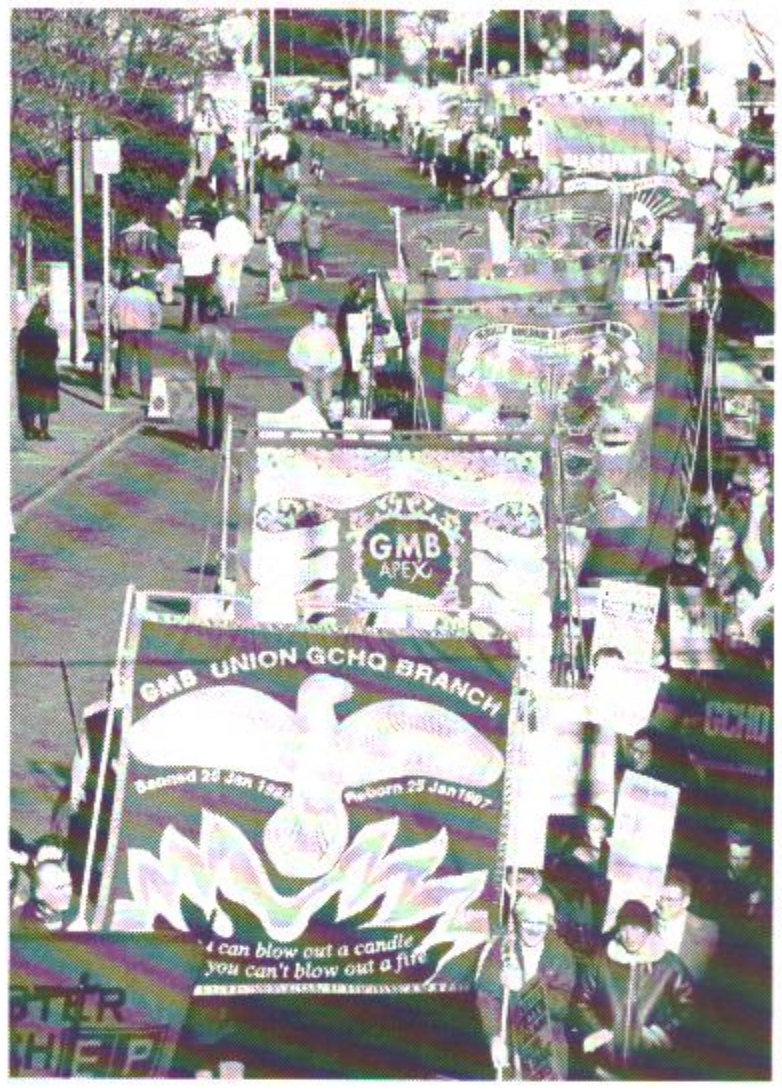


PHOTO: ANDREW WIARD

"Recognise this, Tony?"

Exit the carpark negotiator

A Brighton ASLEF member explains how Lew Adams' leadership hit the buffers.

MANY PEOPLE will have heard that ASLEF has a new hard-left General Secretary. Most ASLEF members, however, will take this with a pinch of salt, since every General Secretary since Buckton (as far as my memory goes) has been labelled "hard left" or "communist" by the press, and turned out to be as right-wing as the rest. What gives us some hope, though, is that most of these earned their reputations in the 1970s by following their members, while Mick Rix has a solid record of organising against the right.

This does not represent a victory for his small group of SLP supporters (Rix was an SLP candidate in the general election) but a case of "anyone but Adams". Of the five candidates in the first round, Adams received 45% of the vote, Rix 24%, Clive Jones (a former president hated by Adams) 20% and two unknowns 11% between them. In the run-off, Adams got 42.5%, an increase of 43 votes, and Rix 57.5%, an increase of 2,827. In other words, all the challengers' votes transferred to him.

For many members, the rot started with the 1995 pay deal. A series of one-day strikes for a "substantial pay increase", the last chance nationally before privatisation, were called off after two days for...a rise below inflation and a promise of restructuring.

In some areas, specific reasons could be given for opposing Adams. On Connex South Central (London suburban and Sussex coast), he called off a rest day ban last summer, despite an overwhelming majority, on flimsy promises from Connex management. As this was during ASLEF conference he needed their agreement to do this. He told them that Connex had "totally surrendered", that their negotiating team had been replaced and their proposals for restructuring torn up and begun afresh. The representatives for the negotiations were not even consulted. The next week, when they went back, they found business as usual.

The perception that Adams does his deals in car parks, away from any democratic control, is a widespread one. His sole priority has been to win large pay increases on paper through Driver Restructuring. Under BR, basic pay was a little over £12,000 a year, but shift allowances, bonuses and overtime brought this to an average of £22,000. Salaries now vary between £20,000 and £25,000 with Sundays worth £2,000 added to the lower ones. His price for this was days varying between 6 and 11 hours, extended driving times and having drivers lodge overnight.

In many areas, inexperienced local negotiating teams found they had agreed to much worse conditions. Even in the better ones, many jobs have been lost. On Connex, a moderated package went through on the third attempt (all three recommended by Adams) and Scotrail are still resisting.

Adams' closeness to the Labour leadership did not help him either. Despite widespread anger at Labour's plans for privatising London Underground, he has equivocated. He also ditched ASLEF's demands for renationalisation of BR, at Blair's request, and sat on disputes in the run-up to the general election.

Indeed, in those disputes that have taken place, he sought to direct anger away from management on to the RMT. At times this was just ignored, but at others he has created an atmosphere of bitterness over recruitment that promised to lead to all-out war, with ASLEF taking a right-wing company union role.

Mick Rix, to his credit, has opposed this sectarianism, and will hopefully capitalise on the anger at privatisation, restructuring and Labour's record. His SLP membership will not harm him but he will have to convince a more right-wing EC if he is not to resort to Adams' underhand methods.

Adams' pet hate was the distribution of unofficial circulars, banned under ASLEF rules — everything had to be approved by the General Secretary. The main culprits in this were the ASLEF Campaign Group, which everyone knew was Mick Rix and a few friends. His first test will be his attitude to democracy in the union.

As for Lew Adams, expect to see him in the House of Lords next year. ❑

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Virtual politics, virtual turnout

Christine Shawcroft, Poplar and Canning Town CLP, reflects on the big abstention.

MAY'S LOCAL elections were a massive yawn in the face of Blairism. Always ahead, non-voters won by a landslide. Apparently this is because everyone is so happy with the Labour Government they don't see the need to vote. Try telling them that in Liverpool, Sheffield, or even Islington. If the threshold of voters demanded for trade union recognition ballots were applied to the vote for the London Assembly and Mayor, it would not be going through.

Although we won councils in better off areas, the poorest areas were lost to the Liberals. Not the woolly Liberals, but a sophisticated political machine now positioned to the left of the Labour Party. Tower Hamlets was lost for eight years to the Liberals as they marketed themselves as the radical alternative to a moribund Labour council which didn't even have a Housing Committee. This time in the East End, the British National Party put out leaflets saying "New Labour = Old Tories". When the fascists are moving into a space to the left of the Labour Party, it's time to be worried.

The Tories lost votes in the General Election because they were seen as sleazy, incompetent and out of touch, making them unable to exploit Labour weaknesses, including shady deals and voting in some Labour local authorities. Socialists were excluded from panels of candidates for the elections, most notably in London, leading Labour councils into exactly the cronyism and corruption that could explode by the next General Election. Democratic accountability is the only way to prevent councils, governments and parties going the way the Tories went.

● *LLB* supports Christine for the NEC Constituency Section.

Mike Phipps adds: Low turnout was a hallmark of May's local elections, despite gimmicks such as polling stations in supermarkets. This may be partly because, after twenty years of relentless Tory centralisation, local government controls far less than it did — and voters know it. But poor turnout was particularly noticeable in Labour strongholds, suggesting considerable disillusionment with New Labour's first year in office — especially apparent among activists. The Government has been far less radical than many members wanted, and the draining from grassroots Party structures of their decision-making powers has demobilised many who campaigned a year ago.

Voter apathy is a natural consequence of the Blair project's emphasis on "common sense" and "big tent" politics. If the Government is committed to taking the ideology out of politics and doing only what is "sensible" — which recently has meant shamelessly tailending the tabloid press's populist agenda — what role does that leave ordinary working class voters? Such sectional interests have no place in the Blair schema.

Likewise New Labour's sham inclusivity of the "big tent" — which is big enough to involve Tory rejects (Heseltine, Mellor and Patten) — is also profoundly demobilising. If the people thrown out by voters so decisively a year ago reappear on the Government's payroll, what's the point of voting at all? You can never get rid of them!

Blair styles himself very much on his friend President Clinton. But despite the hundreds of millions of dollars spent in his 1996 election campaign, Clinton won just 49% of the vote on a 49% turnout; the lowest for 70 years. The shape of things to come?

Hackney Labour counts the cost

IN HACKNEY, Labour is the largest party in a hung council with 29 councillors — up from 24 before the election but down from 44 in 1994 before the split in the Labour Group when 17 Labour councillors left the Party. The Tories held their seats around Stamford Hill; the Liberals held their traditional seats around Shoreditch, making gains in Dalston and Northwold.

The main surprise was the defeat of veteran Labour leader John McCafferty by the Green Party in North Defoe ward. His supporters viewed McCafferty's defeat, celebrated by his opponents inside and outside the Party, as "an absolute disaster". It opened the way for a leadership contest between three right-wingers (the left were too weak to put up a candidate) united only by their vision of Hackney as a stepping stone to even greater heights in their careers. The winner: David Manion, former candidate for the national Labour Party deputy general secretary's job, and a man described, even by his friends, as "lacking personal skills".

There was a low turnout — below 30% across the borough, below 20% in some wards (what about a 40% recognition threshold for local authorities?). The Green Party is represented on a London council for the first time, holding the balance of power. Tentative discussions between Labour and the Greens are already taking place — what about a Red (pink really!) / Green coalition?

An alliance of Tories and Liberals ensured that a Tory mayor was elected — with the Greens abstaining.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

Hackney count

Sheffield shattered

In Sheffield Labour only held on to the far east of the City. David Blunkett's constituency failed to elect a single Labour councillor. Five Labour seats fell to the Liberals, including that of Council leader Mike Bower.

This result was no surprise: for some years Liberals have made ground due to opposition to local Labour policies — this is not a pro-Liberal vote but rather an anti-Labour vote after unpopular schemes like the World Student Games and Supertram, combined with a relentless cutback in basic services. The prospect of a Liberal takeover next year or the one after is increasing. Cuts in services are set to continue but the old excuse — it's a result of central government cuts — is no longer used.

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Islington hung, drawn and quartered

After six recounts, Islington council, for thirty years a Labour stronghold, has been left with a hung council. Millbank tried to blame the left, but Mike Marqusee, Islington North CLP, sees the results as a warning to New Labour.

IN ITS editorial comment on the local elections, the *Guardian* claimed that "New Labour candidates fared better than Old", a comment that owed more to spin-doctors' wishful thinking than scrutiny of the results. In Islington, at least, the opposite was the case. The Lib-Dem tide swept away a host of New Labour standard bearers (including deputy leader Phil Kelly and chair of finance Paul Convery) in the south of the borough (Chris Smith's constituency), where Labour retained only two seats (both in the CLP's only left-wing ward). In contrast, in the left-dominated north of the borough (Jeremy Corbyn's constituency), Labour held all its seats and regained one from the Lib-Dems.

There was a swing against Labour across the borough, attributable in part to the same factors that created anti-Labour swings in other inner city areas (Camden, Sheffield, Bristol). But there were also specific factors at work in Islington.

In recent years, the Council has made strenuous efforts to squeeze itself into the Blairite mould. Services have been cut and privatised, rents and charges have been increased, schools have been closed and teachers attacked, hordes of consultants have been imported at high prices, and the whole package has been wrapped in the New Labour rhetoric of "efficiency" and "empowerment".

In the months running up to the election, the Council spent a lot of time promoting the transfer of estates to new housing companies. The message was: we can't (or won't) do anything to improve our housing service, nor will the Government, so you're better off without us. Tenants seem to have taken the hint. Councillors acquired the worst habits of Blairite misgovernance, sloughing off responsibility for problematic services on to a demoralised workforce and arrogantly dismissing any expression of popular discontent — from tenants, pensioners, parents, voluntary groups — as "special pleading".

In the context of steadily declining services, the Council's mixture of scapegoating, soundbites, and endless managerial re-structuring only succeeded in fostering cynicism about the Labour Party and local democracy in general. Blair's apologists wrote off Labour's setback in Wandsworth because of the low Council Tax there, the product of years of Tory manipulation of local government finance. The high Council Tax in Islington is the result of the exact same factors, which Blair has yet to redress.

Jeremy Corbyn had been warning of the dangers of a Lib-Dem assault on Labour's strongholds since last year's general election, but Council leader Derek Sawyer and the bulk of the outgoing Labour Group remained complacent. The campaign was lacklustre, canvassing was limited, and fewer members were active than in any election in recent memory.

In contrast, the Lib-Dems assiduously cultivated their vote and their public profile. They were aided by a spectacular collapse in Tory support, down to under 10% across the borough. Indeed, the Tories were beaten into fourth place in most wards by the Greens, who averaged more than 15% of the vote and finished second to Labour in two wards. The SLP stood in one ward and polled 150 votes, ahead of both Green and Tory candidates. Defeat ought to have sobered up the local champions of New Labour but within a week Phil Kelly was writing to the local press calling for a Labour-Lib-Dem coalition. Kelly argued that voters had demonstrated a desire for the two parties to work together (a rather tortured interpretation of an evenly split result on an embarrassingly low turn out) and pointed out (correctly) that New Labour and the Lib-Dems share policies on housing and education.

That consensus is, of course, the core of the problem, and institutionalising it in a coalition will only exacerbate it. Islington's working class voters have not been offered a meaningful or intelligible choice. For the moment, it looks like the Labour Group will resist the siren song of coalitionism, but they must also resist the temptation to rely solely on the Mayor's casting vote, and hang on like grim death to every committee chair and vice-chair. If the Council continues to pursue Blairite policies — policies which have already driven thousands of Islington voters from the Labour fold — then there is little point in governing alone. Clinging to power while conducting business as usual will be the worst of both worlds, and could lead to a rout at the next council elections.

Fortress Barnet

Barnet was top of the Tories' hit-list, needing a 1% swing to regain a council they ran for nearly 30 years. They lost overall control in 1994; despite being the largest group with 29 seats they were ousted by an informal "administrative arrangement" between Labour with 25 seats and the Lib-Dems with six.

Labour aimed to win overall control of Barnet. Regional officials said it couldn't be done. We had three target wards. In the event we won two seats from the Tories in split wards but lost one in a ward where one of the three sitting Labour councillors walked out six months ago. This net gain of one seat means Labour retains control of the administration, a real blow to the Tories' revival plans.

The received wisdom is that local elections are fought on national issues and you can't buck the trend. The results across London disproved that. Of course there are national factors; but we won East Finchley with an increased share of the vote, up from 58% to 62% despite a strong campaign by the Greens. Yet a mile down the road in Muswell Hill ward in Haringey, Labour lost to the Lib-Dems.

Barnet has won back services that the Tories privatised, notably refuse collection, and Labour improved its position. In Camden the New Labour administration attacked staff conditions, provoking the recent library strike; the swing against Labour cost them seats. There's a lesson somewhere!

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A mayor for

Let the London Party decide!

Simon Fletcher, London Labour Left, reports on the campaign to stop New Labour stitching up the selection of Labour's candidate for London mayor.

THE CAMPAIGN to defend members' participation in the selection of Labour Party candidates and Party officers has become a key priority of the left and centre left coalition. In London it has taken on additional significance because of press reports indicating that Labour's candidate for the mayor will not be selected by one member, one vote (OMOV).

Basing its report on unnamed Labour Party sources, *The Guardian* reported on 16th April that "the likeliest system will be for the ruling national executive to draw up a short-list, interview the candidates and make the final choice."

The intention of the Millbank Tendency to keep Ken Livingstone off the shortlist could leave Labour's members without the right to select our candidate for the first mayoral elections in under a year's time.

As Andy Howell of Labour Reform points out "OMOV itself was hailed as the new foundation on which Labour was to become the 'most democratic party in Britain'".

Despite this, the principle of OMOV has already been breached in the selection process for MEPs, with Party members having no right to rank the candidates for the final list — the crucial decision which will determine who ends up being elected to the European Parliament under the new closed list system. The suggestion that at no point whatsoever will London Labour Party members be involved in the selection of the candidate for mayor is a serious escalation of the attack on OMOV. Even the Tories are proposing to select their candidate democratically in a US-style "primary". Opinion polls suggest that Labour would be making a serious mistake if it went ahead with its plan. The *Evening Standard* reported on its front page on 27th April that Ken Livingstone leads the field of politicians who have so far been named as potential candidates for mayor, with 55% expressing support for the former GLC leader. Interviewing 1,000 Londoners for the *Standard*, NOP found that 74% of voters thought it would be "wrong" for the Labour leadership to prevent Livingstone from standing. That figure rose to 78% amongst Labour voters.

The following day, a Carlton TV opinion poll of over 500 Labour Party members in London found that exactly 50% preferred Livingstone as Labour's candidate. Unsurprisingly, with this weight of popular opinion bearing down on the process, concern that Party members could be deprived of their right to select from a representative list of candidates has stretched across the political spectrum.

We should demand an OMOV ballot to select the Labour candidate with a shortlist that includes all candidates who have been nominated by ten or more CLPs. Ten CLPs is equivalent to 12.5 per cent of London's CLPs — the same percentage of PLP nominations required by candidates to be automatically shortlisted in the OMOV ballot for the leadership of the Labour Party.

Following the 7th May referendum, John Prescott suggested that the NEC would begin drawing up the details of Labour's selection process for the mayor at its next meeting. It is therefore vital that London Labour Party members are urgently made aware of a serious threat to democratic selection which — if accepted — would be an encroachment not only on their rights but on those of the Party's members nationally.



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Labour Left Briefing

London?



London mayor doesn't set London alight

Leonora Lloyd, Treasurer of the Campaign for a People's London, examines the result of May's vote.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT is in the doldrums. In many areas, only one in three bothers to vote. But the Labour leadership knows how to change things for the better: make local authorities more like large firms with 'boards' of councillors and things like 'mission statements'. Most important, get people excited with separately elected mayors, with huge popular mandates.

London is taking the lead in this wonderful new project.

On 7th May around 65-70% of Londoners who voted in the referendum voted 'yes' — hardly surprising as the alternative was to oppose a new all-London body, something we have wanted every year since Thatcher shut down the GLC. But overall, the vote in London was down.

In two parts of London where they voted just on the referendum, it was clear it did not bring out the voters. In the City of London 4,000 or so were getting their first chance ever to participate in some form of vote concerning local government via the referendum. Only 30% bothered. 19% of this electorate voted 'yes', 11% voted 'no'. In Springfield ward of Ealing Acton no council election took place and only 22% voted in the referendum.

Little has been said about the general question of referendums. They are used a lot in the US, where citizens get the chance to vote on bylaws as well as electing officials. Less than 15 % vote in local elections in most parts of the US. Referendums offer very crude choices: 'yes/no' answers with no room for 'maybes' or amendments.

We are promised more referendums by this Government. The London referendum shows that they will not be used for genuine consultation, but as a device to get approval for what New Labour wants. The London proposals were outlined in brief in a glossy leaflet. How many people knew the details of what they were voting for?

The labour movement in London must campaign for changes to the Bill. The Assembly must get more powers (and the mayor less). London Labour Party members must be allowed to select Labour's choice for mayor and Assembly members.

Nationally, we need to campaign to ensure that there are no more executive mayors until the London experience is evaluated in practice and that we do not see a move towards rule by referendum, nationally or locally.

- Contact the Campaign for a People's London on 0181-932 8636.

Labour's candidate for the mayor of London

Model motion:

We welcome the reintroduction of a strategic authority to govern London. However, we are concerned by media reports based on unnamed Labour Party sources that London Labour Party members may not be allowed to select Labour's candidate for mayor. *The Guardian* reported on 16th April 1998 that "the likeliest system will be for the ruling national executive to draw up a short-list, interview the candidates and make the final choice".

We believe that Labour's candidate must be selected democratically on the basis of a one-member one-vote ballot of the Labour Party membership in London. We believe that any member of the Greater London Labour Party should be entitled to seek nomination, and we support the following simple and democratic system for selection:

- Labour's selection should be made by eligible Labour Party members in London through an OMOV ballot;
- All the candidates who are nominated by a minimum of 12.5% of London Constituency Labour Parties (that is ten CLPs) will automatically be shortlisted so that their names will appear on the ballot paper to select Labour's candidate.

"There would be massive opposition to any attempt by Tony Blair to nobble him." — *Evening Standard*, 27th April.

"Voters would be outraged at such a move...they should not even consider interfering to select Labour's candidate." — Polly Toynbee, *The Guardian*, 29th April.

"Labour Party members in London, given a choice, would probably vote for Mr Livingstone. And they are entitled to a meaningful choice." — *Tribune*, 24th April.

"Blair must be shamed into making the vote truly democratic" — *Time Out* editor Dominic Wells, 6th May.

"We need a clear, unambiguous and public assurance from the NEC that the London Labour Party will be allowed to select the Labour candidate in the forthcoming election for Mayor of London." — Tony Benn.

EMU: very good indeed?

John Palmer, the *Guardian*'s Europe correspondent, replies to recent *LLB* criticisms of EMU.

IT WOULD be a serious error for the left to follow Bernie Moss and his nostalgic strategy for a British state sponsored so-called "Keynesian" alternative to European economic and monetary union (April *LLB*). Bernie is simply wrong when he says membership of EMU necessarily means deflation, public spending cuts and unemployment. Indeed as the countries entering the Single Currency show, preparation for the Single Currency stimulates faster growth and (too slow) reductions in unemployment.

EMU does not require lower public spending but a lower budget deficit. Right wing governments will try to achieve this by spending cuts, progressive governments will achieve it by taxing capital, the rich and the use of scarce ecological resources. Public spending in Ireland, Portugal and Spain is at record levels. New Labour refuses to join the Single Currency in part because it is morally in hock to Murdoch's media empire but mainly because entry would require lower British interest rates and (almost certainly) some increases in taxation. But this conflicts with Blair's "second term" strategy for tax cuts.

The left has every interest in backing EMU precisely to achieve a fairer and more economically effective mix between tax and monetary policy. This may explain why the German Greens, the Italian Communists, the Spanish far left, the Dutch left/greens (as well as our own Hugh Kerr and Ken Coates) back economic and monetary union — as a part of a Europe wide strategy for employment, social justice and a social and ecologically sustainable economy. EMU will give the governments which share key decision making powers the capacity — for the first time in history — to challenge the priorities of global capital and the global markets in a way none could do on their own.

Whether they do so or not will depend on the left. It has every reason to strengthen what Bernie Moss calls the "institutions for social and economic governance." That is why to be a socialist today logically requires one to be a European (and national federalist). Tomorrow we will have to build a democratic global federalism (our forbears called it "international socialism"). Unfortunately the English left is still in the ideological embrace of a stultifying conservative nation state patriotism (the Scottish and the Welsh left are moving way beyond this, not least regarding European issues). Bernie should leave that kind of stuff to Jack Straw and the *Daily Telegraph*.

Brian Burkitt's article in last month's *LLB* reproduces most of Bernie's misunderstanding of the entire EMU project. The question of Britain's trade cycle or its interest rate structure being different to the rest of the European Union is frequently cited by Bank of England and Treasury monetarists but is really quite beside the point. If Britain joined EMU now it would have to reduce interest rates. Quite right too, say I. The Government would be under no obligation to reduce the UK budget deficit which is already well under the three per cent ceiling set in the Maastricht Treaty.

Brian combines a monetarist prejudice about interest rates with Keynesian illusions that letting the exchange rate go generates lasting growth. It does not. The British have had forty years experience of this sad fact. Indeed in a modern, globally integrated capitalist economy, a country which seeks a devaluation advantage or which runs a dangerous budget deficit risks a far more deflationary sanction at the hands of the international money markets than anything suggested in the Maastricht Treaty. The real issue for the left is not whether to run a low inflation strategy — we have little choice about that in a globalised system — but how this is to be achieved.

Crudely, is it to be achieved at the expense of capital or of working people? That is the key issue facing New Labour over taxation, public spending and growth policy. The simple moral is that not only can there be no socialism in one country — there can be no reforming social democracy in one economy today. That is why European integration is so essential for any strategy which sets out to confront the global power of contemporary capital. That is why the trade unions and the left in so many EU countries, while bitterly critical of the policy of member state governments, by and large support the Single Currency project.

International Demonstration

Cardiff EU Summit

June 13th, assemble 1:30 pm

No to a big business Europe
Yes to jobs, public services, democracy

Governments across Europe continue to attack jobs, welfare, health or education in order to meet the convergence criteria for the single European currency. The response has been strikes, demonstrations, and other mass actions in defence of jobs and welfare rights. In Britain, New Labour wants to go into the Single Currency as soon as politically possible. That's why Tory spending plans are still in place, with cuts in council services, low levels of benefit, no link between pensions and earnings, and cuts in higher education funding. On top of this Tony Blair is already using the British presidency of the EU to push British levels of "job flexibility" onto the rest of Europe instead of real job creation.

Reclaim Europe! Counter Summit

Friday 12th June - Sunday 14th June

Two days of discussions and workshops on the leading role of the EU as an agent of economic globalisation. Speakers include Alan Simpson MP.

- **Contact: Cardiff Euro Demo Committee, c/o CCTUS, 131 Crwys Rd, Cardiff CF2 4NH, Cymru-Wales. Phone: 01222-302 324. Fax: 01222-302 325.**
E-mail: full.employment@cableol.co.uk
Web site: http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/5581/

The Scottish Parliament must deliver!

Scottish Executive member, and candidate for the National Executive Committee, Cathy Jamieson, looks forward to an important year for the Scottish Labour Party.

THE LABOUR Party is not having everything its own way in Scotland, at least in the press and the opinion polls. Several polls have shown Labour and the SNP neck and neck and recently, for the first time ever, one showed the Nationalists ahead.

Some Party sources suggest that the polls may have been influenced by the way the questions were asked, or by people not really understanding that under the new voting system for the Scottish Parliament they will have two votes, one for a candidate and one for the party list. With three elections in Scotland next year — local government, Scottish Parliament and European — all under different systems, it would be easy to become confused!

Opinion at grass roots level suggests that this is not the whole story. While it was easy to rally round the cause of devolution and campaign for the Parliament to be set up, activists are finding that it isn't so easy to motivate people on the nuts and bolts of the process. People are becoming disenchanted with all the talk of process when they want answers to how the Parliament will deliver better housing, more jobs, increased funding for the health service and improvements in education. In short, the Scottish Labour Party now desperately needs its manifesto for the Scottish Parliament to take to the Scottish people. The manifesto must make clear what Scottish Labour will deliver early in the life of the Parliament.

The reality of the structure of the Scottish Parliament is that it will be difficult for Labour to gain an overall majority. The danger is that the voters may well decide to try to have it both ways — by voting Labour in the constituencies, and SNP in the list, in the belief that somehow this will keep the Parliament on its toes and put the interests of the Scottish people first — even though the record of the SNP in local government clearly shows it has never delivered anything remotely left of centre when in power.



Cathy Jamieson

We are also facing the reality of the Scottish Parliament elections taking place towards the mid-term of the Labour Government, when traditionally support tends to be lower and we will have had the effects of two years spending limits inherited from the Tories. The temptation for many of the "switchers", who were so crucial in the General Election, may well be to switch back, or even worse, for disenchanted Labour voters to "switch off" and not bother voting. Any inroads made by the SNP at this stage would give it a platform to continue a campaign for independence. This will simply detract from the Parliament's real business of creating a better standard of living for the majority of Scotland's people and tackling the very real poverty which still exists in both our urban and rural communities.

We have a huge task ahead of us. If we are to succeed in halting the SNP in its tracks we have to secure votes not just once from each voter, but twice! Labour in government can help us by giving us the tools to do the job — setting a decent level for the national minimum wage, supporting trade union recognition and ensuring that welfare reform really does benefit those with the lowest incomes. We can't afford to take our core voters in the Labour heartlands for granted and we have to give them good reasons to keep voting Labour, in every election in 1999 and beyond. ❑

- *LLB* supports Cathy for the NEC Constituency Section.

Spectre

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New Labour's historic mission: completing Thatcher's revolution

Rob Deans, North East Cambridgeshire CLP, looks at New Labour's plans to transform the welfare state into a workfare state.

THE POST-WAR settlement was built upon a universal commitment to full employment, the mixed economy and the welfare state. This consensus broke down in the world economic crisis of the 1970s. Keynesian orthodoxies were called into question by the outbreak of stagflation (rising unemployment and inflation). The monetarist counter-revolution gave credibility to the ideas of the emerging New Right who argued that the post-war consensus was intellectually discredited, morally indefensible and financially insupportable.

The outcome was Thatcherism: the abandonment of full employment, the privatisation of publicly owned assets, the deregulation of most forms of industrial, commercial and financial activity and the attempts to reduce state provision in education, health and social security. Each pillar of the post-war settlement was subjected to a ferocious and sustained attack. The results have been decisive: full employment and the mixed economy have been rejected as has government intervention to manage levels of aggregate demand and reduce inequalities.

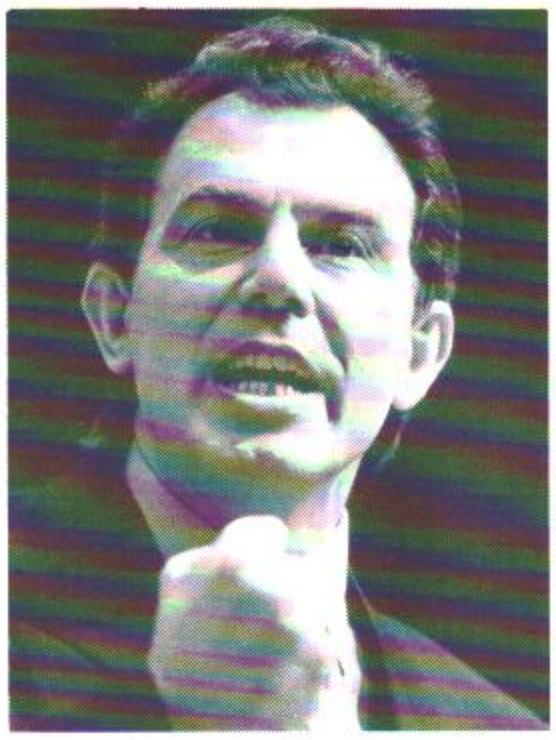


PHOTO: ANDREW WIARD

"Outside, Deans!"

However, the attempts to dismantle the welfare state were not as successful. While some measures of privatisation and marketisation have been successfully introduced into education and health, the social security system has proven to be more resistant to change, notwithstanding the repeated efforts to reduce expenditure by restricting entitlements and cutting benefit levels.

New Labour is one of Thatcher's children, despite the denials of the leadership and self denial of much of the Labour Party. It is committed to policies which seek to legitimise the conditions necessary for the unfettered accumulation of capital and to creating a society which conforms more closely to the requirements of the global economy. It accepts as axiomatic the need to diminish the role of government in public life and to open up further areas of economic activity and social provision to the assumed benefits of the market.

New Labour is constructing an ideology which combines economic liberalism, social conservatism and political authoritarianism. These provide the context within which its statements about economic efficiency and social justice should be understood. Its adherence to the monetary and fiscal restraints required by the imperatives of economic liberalism underpin its belief that economic efficiency can only be achieved through pursuing supply-side reforms, especially those promoting labour market flexibility. Likewise New Labour's social conservatism and political authoritarianism has found ready expression in communitarian sentiments concerning the nature of social justice and the urgency of welfare reform.

The principal attraction of communitarianism to New Labour is that it offers a critique of the social outcomes and excessive individualism of free market capitalism, while continuing to accept the central premise of the market process in determining those outcomes. It allows New Labour to endorse individual freedom, competition and reward while simultaneously advocating greater individual responsibility, co-operation and fairness. It also provides an agenda for the moral renewal of society that sanctions the retrenchment of the welfare state and the reduction of spending on social security.

The message of communitarianism is that individual rights need to be balanced with social responsibilities: too great an emphasis has been placed on personal autonomy at the expense of communal ties. The welfare state has exacerbated the problem by producing citizens who are content to live off society without being prepared to contribute to its upkeep. This has nurtured a dependency culture which knows all about its entitlements and nothing about its obligations. The moral foundations of society have been eroded, as evidenced by the breakdown in marriage, parenting and the family. In turn this has contributed to the crisis in law and order, failing schools and sink council estates. The burden and cost of unemployment, sickness, disablement and retirement has fallen instead onto the state.

Communitarianism has become a fertile source for New Labour's policy makers. Since coming to office, a common thread running through all New Labour's initiatives and proposals has been to link consciously the relationship between rights and responsibilities, effort and reward, actions and consequences, and blame and punishment. Naming and shaming and zero tolerance are seen as essential to creating the moral framework within which society is to be regenerated. Central to this development are the proposals for welfare reform.

The importance placed on social obligation is inevitably leading to workfare programmes that enforce the duty to work. Likewise the stress on individual responsibility will ultimately require the introduction of compulsory personal insurance and saving as the state transfers the provision of social protection to the private sector. This is not just about cutting costs — it is about fundamentally changing the way individuals conceive of their relationships with one another and with the wider community.

New Labour is unashamedly committed to policies whose purpose is to legitimise the institutions, values and work practices essential to capitalist accumulation and to removing restraints hindering global expansion. Critical to its success will be the ability to force through, against the mounting opposition of its own supporters and the public, its proposals to transform the welfare state into a workfare state. This is the final act in the destruction of the post-war consensus and the dawn of the new settlement. New Labour is seizing the opportunity. Its historic mission: to complete the unfinished revolution.

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One step forward, three steps back

Ann Black, West Midlands Constituency Labour Parties' delegate to the National Policy Forum and a member of the Labour Reform Steering Committee, describes the pros and cons of the way the Forum is working.

BACK IN January Tony Blair promised a fresh start for the new National Policy Forum. Members could ask questions on anything, and express the mood of the Party. Continuing dialogue between the policy commissions and the Forum was acknowledged as essential.

The second meeting in May seemed to have relapsed. Most participants were members through the Forum's invisible years, and at times the atmosphere was self-congratulatory, a cosy little club admitting a few new boys and girls as long as they behave. We discussed draft papers on health, welfare reform, Europe and crime and justice, though we were asked only whether they provided a sensible basis for consultation, not to make policy recommendations. These will now go out to the Party and to Conference.

The workshop format is a congenial and generally effective way of working. But the papers, the ideas, come only from above, not from the grassroots. Constituencies are supposed to have year-round input through the policy commissions. The Forum elected members to the commissions in January. Four months on, they have not told us what they are doing. They will meet in July, and submit a report to Conference in our name. But we do not know what constituencies have sent to them, nor what they have replied. National Policy Forum members will only know what the Party is saying if you send resolutions and views from local policy forums directly to us.

The Forum is primarily for long-term policy development. Indeed, we suggested that emphasising the Tory legacy in our documents would look outdated by Conference 1999 after more than two years in power. But we should also reflect on contemporary issues. The lone-parent benefit debacle has largely been defused by the budget plus child-care provision. A topical session might have heard about staging nurses' pay, about rural concerns, about lynch-law, Mary Bell and paedophiles; and above all about hunting. Many see the failure to back Mike Foster's bill as a straight breach of a manifesto commitment. In raising this I was supported by representatives from around the country and by Clive Soley MP, but there was no place to record it in the Forum's proceedings.

We were described as the Party's ambassadors, as its "listening visionaries". But we want intelligence, not flattery. Some of us still cannot consult with, and report back to, the people who elected us. Constituency representatives put forward practical proposals to make the Forum work better. We were told to defer them to the business session, and then denied time to discuss them. This undermines the people who want to make the system work, and gives ammunition to those who want it to fail.



Ann Black

We do not meet again until November, and there is now little chance of improving communication before the Forum starts making real decisions next year. We need a Third Way, and we need it fast.

- Alan Simpson's column will return in September.

CLPD model rule change

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy is suggesting the following model rule change for CLPs to submit to Annual Conference. If passed, it would make it more difficult for the Party NEC to refuse to endorse a democratically-selected candidate for purely political reasons, as they did in Leeds North East.

Para 4A.7(a) [Rule book p.22] reads as follows:

The selection of a parliamentary candidate shall not be regarded as completed until the name of the member selected has been placed before a meeting of the NEC and his or her selection has been endorsed. Until such endorsement has been received the member shall not be introduced to the public as a prospective candidate.

Amendment. Add at end:

This endorsement shall be withheld only when there is prima facie evidence that the procedure laid down in the rules, and the general provisions of the constitution, rules and Standing Orders have not been carried out.

- The deadline for constitutional amendments is 5th June. A revised *Guide to Annual Conference* and further information are available from CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London, NW11 7SH, 0181-458 1501.

CLPD slate for the Policy Forum elections:

Central: Russell Cartwright, Val Graham, Paul Madeley (youth)

London: Dorothy Macedo, Kumar Murshid, Teresa Pearce, (plus Loraine Monk and John McDonnell who should be nominated for the NPF places to be elected at regional conference)

North West: Elaine Abbot, Tony Abrams, Sarah Livesey

North and Yorkshire: Gerald Ramsden, Martin Walker, Eddie Hart (youth)

South and East: Anne Belworthy, Mark Ereira, Richard Hanford

South and West: Ray Davison, Bernadette Hartley, Geoff Lumley

Wales: Maggie Simpson, Stevie Stevenson

West Midlands: Andy Howell, Cherry Mosteshar, Pat Tough

Scotland: Bill Butler, Joanne Lamont

- Nominations from constituencies have to be submitted by 5th June, and the vote will take place at Conference, with each delegate having three votes.

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Trade Union Notebook

When 63 Jeans Style workers went on strike, the boss's wife told them: "The sky will have to fall down before you get your jobs back here." Seven days later, the workers had won.

Jeans Style, a textile factory in Stoke Newington, London, employs mainly Turkish and Kurdish workers. The boss wanted to cut wages by £10 per week, supposedly for tax, but the workers believed it was going straight into his pocket. On 12th May they stopped and mounted a picket.

The boss transferred production to another factory in the same area. The workers followed, picketing that factory as well. The police then came and broke up the picket by force, threatening people with arrest. The workers continued to picket the first factory, and distributed leaflets to workers in neighbouring factories, asking for support.

On the seventh day, the boss agreed to concede to the workers' demands if they would end their strike. Their demands were: no wage cuts; no victimisation; workers to be re-employed if the workplace is changed; boss to recognise the shop steward. TGWU North East London Textile branch secretary, Tekin Kartal, played a key role in the strike, giving 24-hour support on the picket. Members of the Day-Mer Community Centre also supported the workers throughout.

The workers won ignoring anti-union laws and official strike procedures. The strike started and was conducted throughout on the basis of hand votes at mass meetings. Nobody was prosecuted or arrested. Determination and audacity won.

Islington's Labour Group is centralising its Neighbourhood Services and forcing housing staff to reapply for their jobs. The Council refused to re-employ a number of workers — nearly all women and mostly black, and including one of the best known union activists in the borough — and then refused to consider redeploying any of them as estate managers, though there were vacancies.

No one doubts this is a flagrant case of victimisation. Housing staff were incensed and took emergency industrial action, subsequently declared official by UNISON national officers. Council leader Derek Sawyer sacked them all for taking unofficial industrial action. the UNISON Executive is said to be furious and preparations are underway for an all-out strike. Rumour is that Sawyer was encouraged by Millbank, and that he will seek to ally with the Lib Dems to face down UNISON.

After 20 months of struggle, Magnet Kitchens — workers sacked for taking official strike action — were forced to settle. They voted 47 to 34 to accept the offer of £850,000 lump sum to be shared between all 320 workers. The workers had previously consistently demanded reinstatement, and the strike committee called for rejection of the pay-off, but the length of the dispute and the lack of effective solidarity action from other workers finally began to have an undermining effect.

The strike committee conducted the dispute with enormous energy and imagination. An active women's support group was formed and there was a solid 24-hour picket established at the factory gates. Shop stewards travelled across the country to gain support and organise boycotts of Magnet outlets. The Liverpool dockers and Women of the Waterfront gave advice and solidarity. In London, the Dockers Support Group became the support group for Magnet also. A 'chicken farm' was set up on land adjoining that of Magnet director Alan Bowkett.

The company's chief executives had a pay rise of £124,000 last year — more than enough to meet the 3% pay rise the strikers had originally sought.



PHOTO: ED HALL

Arthur Scargill and Shirley Winter (Magnet Women's Support Group) at Magnet AGM, London, 21/1/98.

The inaugural elections for the National Executive Committee of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) take place from 5th June to 3rd July. It appears to be a straight choice between the Left Unity slate and the Moderate/Membership First coalition who currently dominate the executive.

The new executive will have 46 members but only one will be elected by the whole membership! The rest will be elected by the former component parts of the union, ie. CPSA and PTC. The moderates railroaded through the merger with an incredibly undemocratic rulebook (moving conference and elections from annual to bi-annual, all major decisions by postal ballot, etc) on the back of a genuine desire for unity from ordinary members. If a new Left Unity executive is elected then reform of the rulebook must be a high priority. However, more pressing than that is to begin a campaign against the policies of the New Labour Government which on pay and privatisation has carried on the Tories' programme. The NEC of the union is more concerned with keeping on good terms with cabinet ministers than fighting privatisation of the Civil Service. We need a campaign to restore national pay bargaining and industrial action to defeat the sell-offs.

Left branches in PCS should ensure that they encourage the maximum turnout in the postal ballot, as the turnout in the former CPSA was around the 20% mark and not much better in PTC. All branches should campaign for a vote for Stella Dennis for President and the full Left Unity slate for the NEC.

Workers in Tameside's privatised old people's homes have been on indefinite strike since 30th March. The strike was sparked when management threatened the workforce with pay cuts or redundancies. In 1990 Tameside Council transferred ownership of the Elderly Persons Homes to a private company Tameside Care. Since then there have been pay freezes, cuts in sick pay and maternity leave. When a financial crisis threatened the company in 1992, staff took reduced terms and conditions. The present dispute started when the company told staff that it intended ending their current contracts and would issue new contracts involving pay cuts, reduced holidays and abolition of the sick pay scheme. In an official ballot UNISON and GMB members voted by 260 to 29 votes for strike action.

On Saturday 16th May strikers and supporters demonstrated through Ashton's streets to the town hall. The strikers can be contacted at Tameside UNISON, 29 Booth Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 7LB Tel 0161-308 2452.

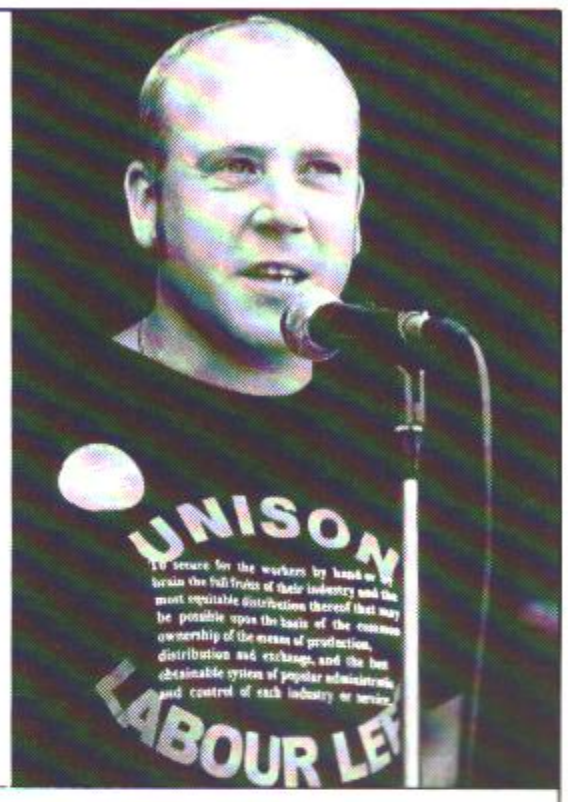
Members of the Public and Commercial Services Union at the Driving Standards Agency HQ at Stanley House in Nottingham have voted for a work to rule and a week's strike action, starting from 1st June. The Agency is the arm of the Department of Environment and Transport responsible for driving tests.

They are protesting at management's plans to sack casuals and re-employ them on worse terms, including no sick pay, no paid bank holidays and compulsory Saturday working; filling vacant executive and administrative posts with driving examiners; and plans to introduce different terms for new full-time staff including a ten hour day. Other action is possible in area offices over plans to computerise bookings, cutting over a hundred jobs.

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the Geoff Martin column

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



● When the General Secretary of the TUC starts acting as a sales rep for the Government front bench, you know that workers up and down the country are about to be shafted big time and that's exactly what has happened over this trade union rights business.

The TUC blew it when, in an act of tactical ineptitude that bore all the hallmarks of the Crystal Palace defence, they indicated that they would accept a voting threshold of 30% rather than the agreed union position of a simple majority.

As we say in our house, you don't sell out your principles for a bag of half-sucked sweeties. Any trade union official who tries to sell this to the members as some sort of victory deserves to get shoved off the nearest conference venue pier.

● Talking of general secretaries I have to be honest and say that I was surprised that Lew Adams got beaten in the recent ASLEF ballot. Lew was on the right side in key debates in the movement on issues like Clause IV and *Party into Power* but was still unable to resist a challenge from the left.

I think this could be a straw in the wind and that we might be moving into an era where any general secretary, particularly in the public sector, who is seen as having any kind of connection at all with this conservative government should be looking over their shoulder.

● Yes, I was in Stockholm for the Cup Winners' Cup Final, and it was fantastic. Great atmosphere, no aggro, but a nightmare trying to get out of the airport for the flight home. We were delayed for over four hours, which for me meant a quick shower and off to Radio Four to do battle with Alan Johnston and John Redwood on the back of about four hours sleep in two days, and a fearsome hangover. I just about managed to get away with it.

Funny enough, I didn't see Tony Banks or his big chum David Mellor at the airport, but then Banksy doesn't move in our circles any more and Mellor never did.

● I hear that Banksy may be Blair's man for Mayor of London. All I would remind you is that Banks appointed Mellor as head of the Football Task Force, an act which any real football fan will tell you is a bit like appointing Bernard Manning as the head of the Commission for Racial Equality.

● Our new daughter Katie is doing well, although I've been forced to grass her up to the internal security forces in UNISON after that prankster Fast Freddie Le Platt sent her a membership card for the CFDU.

LEADING WITH THE LEFT

Hillingdon strikers confound defeatists

Jon Rogers
Lambeth UNISON
branch secretary

FOR TWO AND a half years a small and determined band of cleaners from Hillingdon Hospital have sustained the longest strike in Britain — most of that time on unofficial strike. For all of that time they have insisted that they were unfairly dismissed and have demanded reinstatement. They have done this in spite of the apathy of their own UNISON branch and the lukewarm support of UNISON HQ. Official backing for strike action was withdrawn by the NEC in January 1997. This was after strikers rejected a pay-off offer which officials had accepted without balloting the strikers!

The strikers, originally 53 in number, overwhelmingly Asian women, have seen their former employers (Pall Mall) lose the contract to clean the hospital to Granada. They have also outlasted the local Tory MP — who supported Pall Mall against them in the House of Commons. The strike has been sustained by strong support from the local community and, following a defeat for their supporters at last year's UNISON Conference, even the left in the union had written off their chances of winning.

Now they have scored a victory at the Employment Appeals Tribunal — which ordered that their case should go back to an Industrial Tribunal. Pall Mall conceded that they had been unfairly dismissed. The tribunal hearing has now been adjourned until July, leaving open the possibility that it will order reinstatement or re-engagement of the sacked workers (a very rare result).

The strikers will lobby UNISON Conference to protest about how the union has treated them. The UNISON NEC voted to refuse to permit an extension of their full membership rights after two year's "unemployed" membership. They were forcibly transferred to a "holding" branch at regional level, denying them the right to speak and vote at meetings of the local Hillingdon Hospital branch.

UNISON delegates will face a confused response to these protests from union officials whose defeatist assessment of the strikers' chances has once again been confounded by the determination and courage of this small but significant group of strikers. ❑

Hillingdon strikers lobby Granada HQ, 9/4/98.



PHOTO: ED HALL

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Ethical foreign policy

Sean Coyne tries to unravel the crisis in Sierra Leone.

FOR EIGHT months the people of Sierra Leone were subjected to one of the worst regimes to emerge on the African continent for a decade. It was a poisonous combination of former antagonists (the APRC military regime and the Revolutionary United Front) who had waged a five-year phoney war against each other. This war consumed almost all the national budget of a country whose population was described by the World Health Organisation as being amongst the most impoverished in the world.

The conflict between the APRC military regime and the guerrillas of the RUF resulted in the displacement of two-thirds of the population, and the horrific deaths of thousands of innocent people. The 'war' was exposed by Amnesty International and others as an exercise to continue the flow of considerable material benefits to both sides. Any doubts about the character of the conflict were dispelled when the warring factions joined forces in May 1997 to overthrow the newly elected government of Tejan Kabbah. Their first act was to spring from prison a clique of low-level military officers awaiting trial for high treason, including the notorious Sergeant Johnny Paul Koroma who became the head of state.

As soon as the coup took place, hell on earth became a reality for the people of Sierra Leone. The new military regime was internationally condemned, and increasingly ostracised. Its only sources of wealth were what little remained in the Treasury, and whatever proceeds could be made from diamond smuggling. Sierra Leone is not a poor country; it has diamonds, gold and the potential to be a significant player in world mineral markets. But its people have been systematically denied the benefits of this wealth.

In order to pay the foot soldiers of the coup leaders, the new military regime endorsed looting by force, including cold-blooded murder. This took place on a massive scale, lasted the entire eight months of the Koroma regime and was especially hard on women.

"I watched in enforced silence as they first took my daughter's handbag which contained very little, then her shoes, and then led her away to the back of the building. I knew what was going to happen, and I tried to object. They hit me, and said if she behaved and I kept quiet, I might see her again. She was shaking with fear. Seven or eight of them took turns to visit the back of the building and made crude jokes to me on returning to the barrier. They then told me to come back in the afternoon and my daughter would be returned to me. I had no choice. They threatened to kill us both if I did not comply. I returned with my brother some hours later only to be told that this particular militia group had moved on, and that my daughter was taken with them. She was seventeen. My eldest child and I have not seen her since." (Affidavit collected by the Sierra Leone Labour Congress, Women's Wing)

This was not an isolated incident. There are thousands of such stories. It is in this context that the military action taken against the regime by the Nigerian-led ECOMOG forces received such overwhelming support from the population. The Nigerian army was welcomed into Freetown as liberating heroes. More recently, popular demonstrations in support of the British Government's role in the procurement of arms via Sandline International also reflect the gratitude and relief of the population. For people subjected to the worst of regimes, the ends do appear to justify the means, or do they?

There are serious questions to be asked about the role of the Labour Government and the spin put on this complicated episode. The Tories' bleating can be quickly disposed of. They have made great play out of the fact that the shipment of arms facilitated by Sandline International broke the UN arms embargo. But the 18 years of Tory rule are littered with such examples, and we should have no illusions about the depths of their concern and condemn their hypocrisy outright. However, it is important to correct the impression that the overthrow of the military regime was dependent on the arms shipment facilitated by Sandline International with or without the knowledge of the Foreign Office. The shipment, if distributed, may well have helped the Civil Defence Force, the co-ordinating body of the popular local militias, but reports indicate that they were not made available to them. Despite this, the CDF did play a critical role in militarily undermining the regime, particularly in the bush, and in the regional capitals. They defended their communities and provided expert local knowledge to the advancing ECOMOG forces, but they were only one part of the liberation jigsaw.

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or privatised warfare?

The trade unions and organisations of civil society played a crucial role. Throughout the eight months of military rule, as reported in the last issue, the Sierra Leone Labour Congress maintained an almost complete national stayaway from work. Even when peace agreements were being struck behind closed doors, and when the UN, the Commonwealth and the OAU were prevaricating about how best to make a settlement with the regime, the workers' movement stood fast. Hassan Barrie, President of the SLLC, told *LLB,* "We denied the regime any semblance of normality, popular support or legitimacy. The SLLC and its allies maintained popular resistance to the regime, even in the face of bloody repression and intimidation." Had it been defeated, it is very likely that the regime would have been able to buy the time it desperately needed, giving it the space to liquidate all those who stood in its way.

Parts of the population were understandably war weary. If the workers' movement had retreated, the regime could have filled the vacuum with demands for an end to the military activities of ECOMOG forces. They could have cynically re-entered protracted peace negotiations in which the mineral wealth of the country would have been a key factor. They could have bargained for time to negotiate an 'orderly' withdrawal and ensured that they were given safe passage to another country, free of possible future prosecution and 'compensated' by deposits in foreign bank accounts. This indeed was one of the scenarios considered by west African states at the time. Many of them did not want to become embroiled in a protracted military operation where they would have to commit resources. There was also unease about the dominant role of Nigeria given the growing pressure on its government to democratise. On visiting the country as part of an ECOWAS peace mission it was the Foreign Minister of Ghana who stated that life in Freetown "appeared normal" much to the dismay of those opposing the regime.

It was the workers' movement that ensured that the character of the Koroma regime was not glossed over, and that pressure to restore civilian rule was maintained. When it became clear that this movement could not be intimidated into inactivity, desperate attempts were made to incorporate trade union leaders and other sections of civil society into the administration. Once again, if the workers' movement had yielded under this pressure, it is unlikely such a swift ending of military rule could have been achieved.

It was the trade unions and their allies in civil society which argued openly for a decisive military intervention from ECOMOG. They understood the need for a combined campaign of international isolation, community self-defence, and mass defiance as the key elements, which would eventually bring down the regime. For Tony Blair to justify dealings with Sandline International as a necessary but unpleasant part of restoring the civilian government grossly underestimates the courageous role played by the people of Sierra Leone. It implies that without Sandline the regime could not have been defeated.

This whole episode throws into sharp relief the so-called ethical foreign policy of the Labour Government. Sandline has been involved in Sierra Leone for many years in one guise or another. It has worked for successive regimes, and always for the highest bidder. Its mercenaries are known to be ruthless professional killers, many of whom were trained by the apartheid government in the killing fields of Southern Africa, and who care nothing for the lives of local people. Their presence in Sierra Leone in the first place was at the behest of a former military regime, and was quietly bankrolled by De Beers, the giant diamond traders of South Africa. Their role was to 'protect' the diamond and gold mines in readiness for full privatisation! It is not impossible, in the crisis which was unfolding in Sierra Leone, to imagine a situation where Sandline received instructions from a more generous client to arrange delivery of the weapons to another party, perhaps over the border to Liberia, where combatants loyal to the military regime were awaiting arms.

How could an ethical foreign policy inform the decision to use one of the world's most notorious and discredited mercenary armies? If the Labour Government had really wanted to promote an ethical approach, they could have openly supported the struggle of the trade unions and the CDF, without involving the reactionary forces of Sandline International. They could have campaigned in all the world's forums for measures to isolate the regime further, and for the outlawing of organisations like Sandline who profit from the misery of war.

This would have given great heart to those who were campaigning politically and militarily inside the country. It would have strengthened civil society and reduced a problematic dependence on external military force largely provided by the Nigerian military dictatorship. In short, it would have strengthened national self-determination and encouraged the on-going struggle for democracy in Sierra Leone and elsewhere.

This approach would also have acknowledged that the Sierra Leone people had suffered for years at the hands of successive military regimes with the connivance of powerful vested financial interests. It would have exposed the hypocrisy of those who complain about human rights while financing and arming the perpetrators, including past British governments.

For those of us who see practical international solidarity with the oppressed at the heart of foreign policy, we have to ensure that the Government does not, knowingly or otherwise, ever engage the services of mercenary forces in future. Those who arranged it should resign. ❑

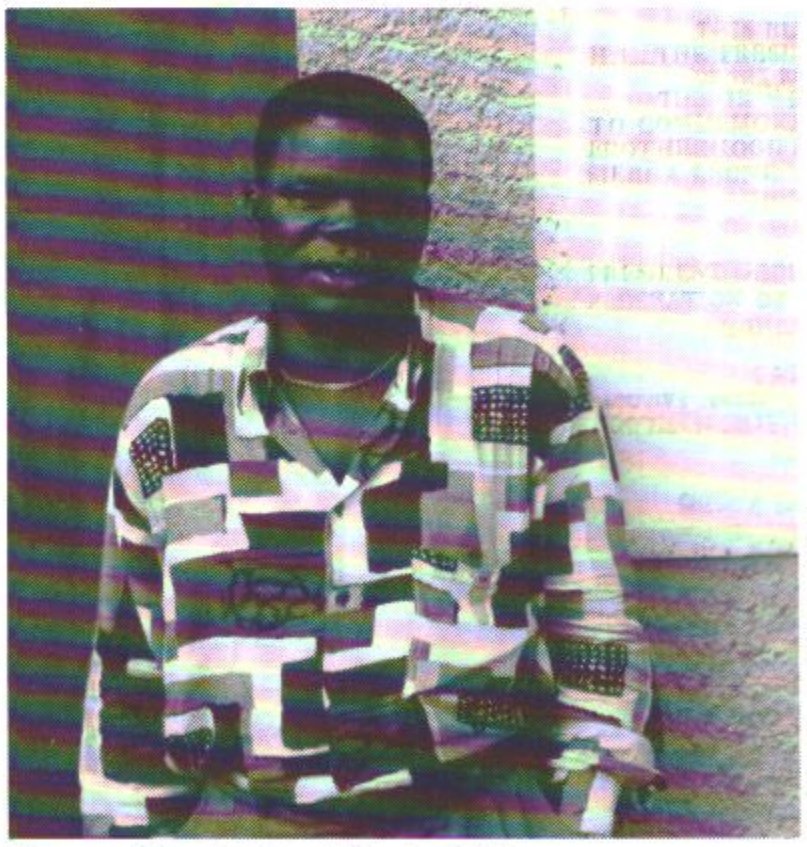


PHOTO: JOHN FISHER

Hassan Barrie, President SLLC.

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Apartheid did not die — as seen from South Africa

Anna Weekes, Press Officer of the South African Municipal Workers Union, looks at the reaction in South Africa to the screening of John Pilger's new documentary. She writes for *LLB* in a personal capacity.

PILGER'S FILM, *Apartheid did not die*, screened simultaneously in South Africa and Britain, has created a furore in South Africa that has yet to die down. Its screening prompted howls of outrage from the middle and ruling classes in South Africa. In the fortnight following the show every newspaper columnist gave their perspective. Most white columnists denounced Pilger as a revolution monger and a fringe lunatic.

The documentary's analysis, focusing on "post-liberation disillusionment" and "sado-monetarism" was supported by many letters to the press from ordinary South African workers. Terry Crawford-Browne wrote to the *Mail & Guardian (M&G)* newspaper from Cape Town: "Sadly, Pilger's analysis is spot on.... The spectacle of South Africa peddling weapons to Saudi Arabia and China is revolting. Armscor was symptomatic of the old South Africa's defiance of international judgements that apartheid is a crime against humanity. Human rights is the one issue on which South Africa could have influenced the world way beyond our economic significance. That opportunity has been thrown away."

Another reader, Tebollo Pitso, observed that "Pilger is correct to observe that those who benefited from the inhuman labour migration and hostel system hide behind the wall of reconciliation to avoid atoning for years of exploitation of the poor."

Opposition to Pilger came in the form of Allister Sparks, head of news and current affairs at the SABC. He screened a disclaimer before the film stating that the contents were not the viewpoints of the SABC and allowed a debate afterwards to pick the show apart.

It is impossible to ask most of the population what they thought of the show. Millions don't yet have electricity or running water, never mind a television. A quick scan of the letters appearing in the press in the weeks after the show reveal that, in all probability, the show that shocked the middle and ruling classes came and went without so much as creating a murmur in most townships.

An *M&G* reader, Dianne Salters, sums it up by saying "Pilger's views are not nearly as unique or controversial as Sparks has tried to make out. There are growing numbers of critics of the .....ANC government, not least of whom are from its own ranks."

What Pilger said was nothing new to South African workers. Most continue to live at the very brunt of poverty and unemployment (many workers support more than seven other family members), but they debate these issues regularly and with vigour at union meetings. There is a growing sense of outrage that old comrades seem to be shying away from the issue of poverty, which remains to workers and the unemployed as much a human rights abuse now as ever before.

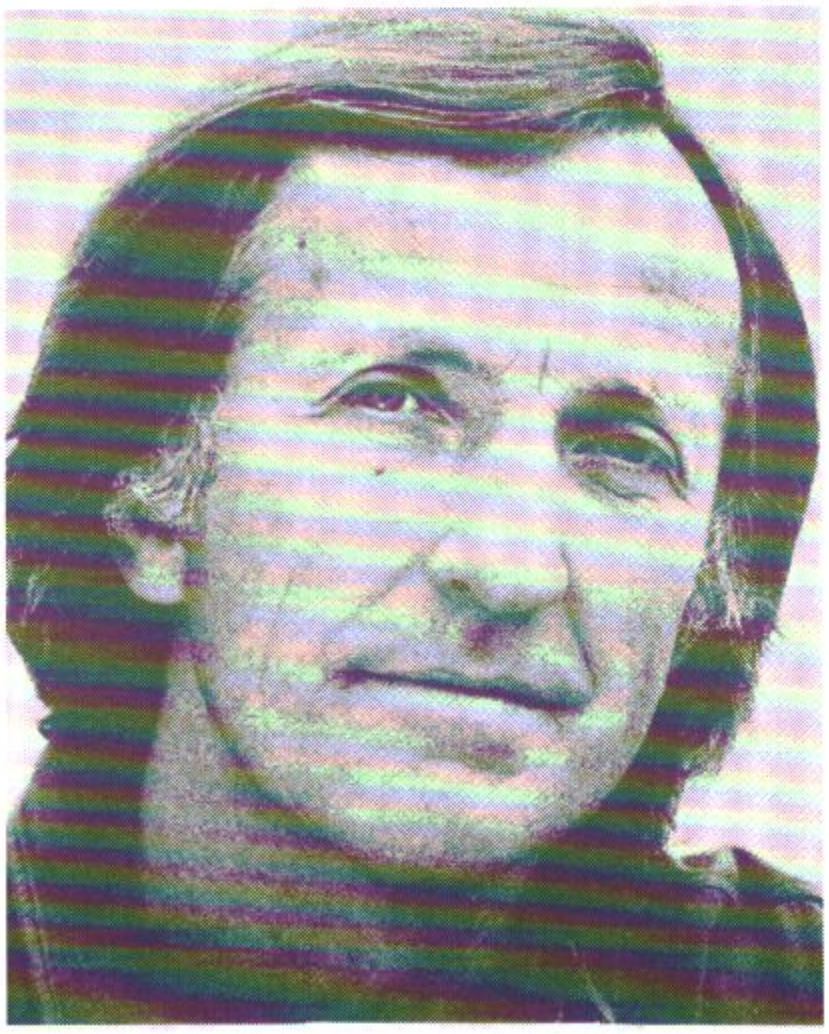
As Phil Mtimkulu, head of political sciences at the University of South Africa, asked in response to outrage from the white middle class, "If you travel 50km in any direction out of Johannesburg you will come face to face with poverty. Strikes and protests against low salaries and wages have also not stopped. Haven't you seen people struggling to make a living? Or is it because I live in a black township and have relatives in the rural areas where I see poverty first-hand?"

Pilger was not exposing anything that South Africans don't see every day with their own eyes. The N2 road to Cape Town International Airport is but one of many public places that is lined with frequently flooded and fire-ravaged shack settlements overflowing with uncollected refuse. The mainstream Sowetan newspaper's front-page story just after the show told of an entire community whose water has been cut, where children suffering from diarrhoea have been forced for the past month to spend their days in long queues to collect contaminated water leaking from an old pipe instead of attending school.

Here in South Africa, it is not the press or any TV show that tells us that inequalities are as glaring as ever. We come across these things on a daily basis. For example, "advantaged" (white) suburbs across the country have the same number of municipal workers as ever using advanced equipment to remove refuse from large bins on wheels (bags supplied). In most previously disadvantaged areas, (black townships) a skeleton workforce is lucky if they have the use of a few, ancient compactors to remove refuse from whatever the community could package it up in (no bins on wheels or bags supplied here). Over 12 million people are without running water. 80% of crime affects people in the townships. These are facts that show there has been very little meaningful redistribution of existing resources, and that the battle of the ordinary person and the worker remains a harsh one.

In the end, Brandon Edmonds, another *M&G* reader, who wrote that whites "have a trite belief that they can continue to be exempt from the facts of South Africa", summed up what Pilger was saying in *Apartheid Did Not Die*. This choice to lead a blinkered lifestyle has now unfortunately spread to many high powered ANC leaders. If Pilger managed to remove the blinkers from these languid eyes for even a few weeks, his show made a meaningful and beneficial impact on South Africa.

John Pilger



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Liverpool to Australia: dockers' solidarity

Liz Knight (Liverpool Dockers' Support Group, London) and Arif Bektas (correspondent for *Emek*, Turkish daily)

THE STRUGGLE of 2,000 Sydney dockworkers ended on 7th May in victory with the High Court ruling in favour of their reinstatement. A month before, the workers had been peremptorily sacked and driven out of the docks. The company responsible, Patrick Stevedoring, intended to replace them with non-union labour. The company had the overt support of the National Party government and also of right-wing organisations and pressure groups such as the National Farmers' Federation, which had a ready-prepared scab labour force.

Two and a half years ago the 500 Liverpool dockers were sacked under similar circumstances. The Liverpool dockers fought to the end, but were finally forced to settle without reinstatement. The Australian 'wharfies' have had at least a partial victory.

Why?

In Britain, the anti-union legislation was used by trade union officials as an excuse to avoid taking solidarity action with the dockers. They were left to fight alone, with TGWU truck drivers driving through their pickets every day. In Australia, the Maritime Union of Australia's (MUA) official leadership called on its 10,000 members to take solidarity action, as did later the Australian TUC (the Australian Workers' Confederation).

Building workers, mineworkers, railway workers, shop workers, white-collar workers, nurses, teachers, students, the old, the young and the unemployed went en masse to the defence of the wharfies, as did ethnic and community organisations.

Mass 24-hour pickets at Sydney's Port Botany and Melbourne's East Swanson Docks defended themselves against police attacks behind enormous barricades of vehicles, railway tracks and felled trees. They set up home on the picket lines, where sound systems relayed news of the dispute and the growing support, as well as music to dance to. In Melbourne the Turkish Cultural Centre brought their traditional pipes and drums to the picket and initiated a shoulder-to-shoulder dance of thousands. (Turkish and Kurdish workers in London had previously brought the same dance to the Liverpool dockers).

The strength of the pickets meant that it became difficult for the police or military to be used against the pickets. On 17th April thousands, including famous footballers, went to defend the picket at East Swanson as 800 riot police with horses prepared to attack. Suddenly 2,000 building workers who had walked off their sites appeared. The police were surrounded and had to ask to be allowed to leave.

Nationally these mass actions physically stopped the dock from operating effectively, squeezed the employers, and sent the most emphatic possible warning to other employers and to the government.

International support, official and unofficial, also played a crucial role in the victory. TGWU General Secretary Bill Morris disowned the Liverpool dockers' struggle from the beginning. Instead of challenging the anti-union legislation, he was most active in using it to justify his own inaction, and to try to prevent other union bodies, including the International Transport Federation, from assisting the dockers. He has since been rewarded, in the usual way, by a seat on the Bank of England board of governors, and the offer of a seat in the House of Lords. However, once the MUA had officially backed the Australian dockers, it was impossible for Morris not to endorse the ITF's call for international solidarity action for the wharfies, with the ringing endorsement that never came for the Liverpool 500.

The Liverpool dockers were left to build international support, official and unofficial, entirely through their own efforts. That they did, and on a scale never before seen in any workers' dispute in the world, is a tribute to their courage, tenacity and imagination. They built an alliance of dockworkers around the world in which the Australian wharfies played a major part. They held three international conferences where the agenda was strategy and tactics to defend dockers' unions around the globe.

Jim Donovan and other leading officials of the MUA feel they owe their success in part to the Liverpool struggle. "Without having learned from Liverpool, we would not have been prepared...They warned us of what was to come". The international alliance built from Liverpool swung into action for Australia more speedily than the official machinery could. Dockers' leaders in Liverpool, Sydney and Melbourne were in daily contact with each other throughout the wharfies' dispute. From South Africa to the USA, Canada and Japan, action was taken against Patrick's ships.

As victory loomed, workers and the community in Australia celebrated. On May Day 5,000 marched in Melbourne and another 5,000 in Sydney. On 5th May, after the High Court had ruled on the reinstatement of the wharfies, 100,000 marched in Melbourne to music and drums. Since the ruling, Patrick Co. has manoeuvred to prevent all the workers being reinstated. Thousands of workers in Australia in this dispute 'broke the law' and won a historic victory. Like the Liverpool dockers they were playing the music of the future. ❑

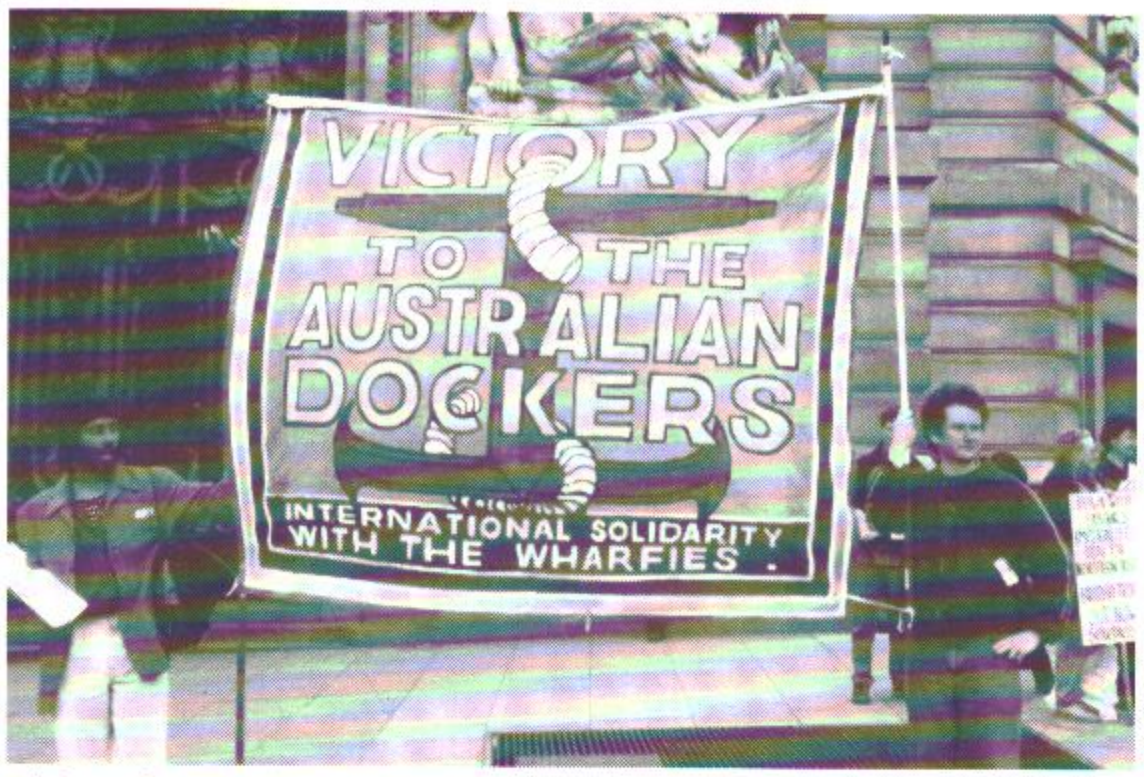


PHOTO: ED HALL

Picket of Australian High Commission.

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Arafat begs for the last few crumbs

The impasse in the Middle East peace process represents a total defeat for the Palestinians argues Tony Greenstein, Jewish life-long anti-Zionist.

THE LAST two decades of the 20th Century have seen concerted attempts to resolve the problems left by settler colonialism around the globe. When the European empires ruled over their colonies, the primary mode of colonisation was, as in India, where a tiny handful of Europeans ruled via intermediaries and collaborators. In the British Empire this form of colonisation died out in the early 1960s and the last such empire to fall was that of Portugal in 1975.

The other mode of rule was settler colonialism. In certain states such as Australia and the US the settlers achieved such an overwhelming and comprehensive victory over the indigenous population, that the only question today is one of individual rights and equality for Amerindian or Aboriginal peoples.

In Zimbabwe the 1980 settlement masked the comprehensive political and military defeat of the white minority regime. In South Africa a similar political defeat occurred for the white minority population, albeit with economic power and wealth remaining in the hands of the white population and the multinationals.

In Ireland, a country whose experience of British rule and partition is remarkably similar to that in Palestine, the attempt to square the circle between settler demands and the indigenous population has been less favourable to the latter. But in Ireland the peace agreement, while on the surface representing an historic defeat for republicanism, nonetheless accepts an all-Ireland dimension with the implication that Irish unity is the only viable long-term solution. This is why half the unionist population reject it or indeed any solution that does not involve the military defeat of republicanism.

While the Oslo Accords of 1993 on the surface seem quite reasonable in establishing the basis of a future Palestinian state, it is only in Palestine that a peace settlement actually represent a total and complete defeat. Even the homelands policy of Dr. Verwoerd in Apartheid South Africa conceded Bantustans that were contiguous. The Palestinian Bantustan, comprising about two and a half percent of the territories occupied in 1967, is a patchwork of villages and towns, divided by settler-only roads which join the settlements to Israel's main cities. The West Bank is divided from Gaza. Arafat's state cannot export an orange without it going via Tel Aviv.

The Israeli Labour Party conceded the idea of some Palestinian autonomy, whereby Palestinian police and militia took over the roles of the Israeli state, as a means of transferring sovereignty over the Palestinian people to Arafat's statelet while retaining sovereignty and actual control over the majority of the land, including its water resources. In this way Israel could remain a Jewish democratic state by legally excluding the Palestinians it had occupied from its remit. Netanyahu and Likud were never too concerned with legal niceties but have reluctantly gone along with the Accords under pressure. But they have made it absolutely clear that the only purpose of a peace settlement is to enable repression of the Palestinians to be carried out more effectively by the Palestinians themselves!

At first sight it would seem remarkable

Abuse allegation rocks Nicaragua

Allegations of child sex abuse against Daniel Ortega, leader of the Sandinistas and President from 1979 to 1990 have caused a political earthquake in Nicaragua. But as Mike Phipps reports, they could also have a devastating effect on the whole international solidarity movement.

On 3rd March 30 year-old Zoilamerica Narvaez publicly accused her adoptive father Daniel Ortega of having sexually abused her since the age of eleven. The story opened a public debate on an issue rarely discussed in Nicaragua as Zoilamerica called on abused people to "come out of the darkness, and assume their histories with fortitude and firmness."

Daniel Ortega has maintained an ambiguous silence throughout. The FSLN from the outset closed ranks around him and attempted to block discussion of the issue. Even the Sandinista Women's Commission was unwilling to listen to Zoilamerica's testimony, despite the fact that she, an active Sandinista, had requested it. Three days after the allegations were made, the FSLN National Directorate gave "categorical backing" to Daniel Ortega, refusing to refer the issue to the Party's Ethics Commission and effectively closing the discussion.

Those who support this stance argue that the abuse allegation is politically motivated and will damage the Party. Daniel Ortega is widely seen as the public image of the FSLN, and one of its few long-term leaders untainted with the blemish of corrupt self-enrichment when the Party left office.

But the heavy pressure from the leadership to prevent internal discussion seems to be far more damaging. Militants are left wondering what Daniel Ortega has to hide — especially as he now seems likely to use his legal immunity as an MP to avoid giving evidence in court.

The handling of the affair is having an important effect on the Sandinistas' international standing. The US Nicaragua Network, which co-ordinates 300 local solidarity committees and raised about $10 million in aid in 1995, has expressed its concern. "If the leadership ignore the allegations," argues their letter to the Sandinista National Directorate, "it would be dishonest to continue speaking of the FSLN as a leader of the struggle for women's empowerment. For this reason, it would be almost impossible to continue collecting funds and material aid for the FSLN among our base." In Britain the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign has withdrawn an invitation to Daniel Ortega to attend the 20th anniversary celebrations of the Campaign.

As *LLB* goes to press, the Sandinista National Congress meets, although whether it will even discuss the issue is in doubt. Failure to deal with what one commentator has called its "ethical deficit" could mark a qualitative decay in the FSLN.

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that Netanyahu can not only tell Clinton that he is "too busy" to attend a peace conference, but when he does visit the US it is mainly to keep company with Clinton's political enemies on the Republican right (including Christian fundamentalists Pat Robertson and Gerry Falwell). Israel after all depends on the US for its military and economic aid. It is a sign of the weakness of the Palestinians and their Arab allies and the lack of opposition to US policies throughout the Middle East that Netanyahu is able to snub Clinton without any retribution.

If a final "Third Stage" agreement on the Peace Accords is reached then there can be no doubt that it will represent the final humiliation of Yasser Arafat and the PLO. It will be a "state" without any economic strength or independence, lacking sovereignty over its own territory or resources, and at the mercy of an overwhelmingly powerful neighbour that in practice will dictate its policies. Within a short period of time we can expect the Hamas fundamentalists to have taken power because the "secular" Fatah of Arafat have no ideology beyond enriching themselves. Because they are unable to confront the Zionist state with anything other than rhetoric, they will wage war on those parts of the Palestinian population, including women, who consider themselves as being part of the 20th Century. At this point Israel will point out how backward the Arabs are!

For socialists the main demand on the 50th anniversary of Israel's foundation is for equality between Jew and Arab, within or beyond the Green Line. We should demand the dismantling of the Zionist nature of the Israeli state which means that over 97% of the land of Israel is reserved for Jewish inhabitants of Israel. Even today, within the 1948 borders of Israel, half the Arab villages are "unrecognised" i.e. they can be demolished at any time. The only alternative to Zionism and its mirror image Islamic fundamentalism is a democratic, secular state in Palestine.

Free Vanunu

Jeremy Corbyn MP reports on his recent attempt to visit Mordechai Vanunu, incarcerated for revealing Israel's nuclear plot.

IN 1986 THE *Sunday Times* carried an extraordinary photograph of a hand in the rear window of a van being driven through the streets of Rome. The scrawled writing on it was the only way the world knew what had happened to Mordechai Vanunu.

Mordechai, a nuclear scientist in Israel's research reactor, felt he could no longer allow the world to remain ignorant of the nuclear weapon system that was being manufactured that could be used to attack neighbouring Arab countries.

Mordechai took photos inside the establishment and then left for Britain, ostensibly for a holiday. The *Sunday Times* carried this dramatic story and the world knew what some had suspected, a weapon system was being manufactured.

Mordechai chose to remain in London, but was then lured to Rome by a "girlfriend". There he was seized by Mossad agents. A secret trial found Mordechai guilty of treason. He was imprisoned for eighteen years. Earlier this year a breakthrough occurred when he was released from solitary confinement and allowed to associate with other prisoners. Now a US couple, Nicholas and Mary Eoloff, have become his adopted parents (under US law) and have won a court order (in Israel) giving them rights to visit him. He now has access to TV, radio and newspapers.

Our Parliamentary Human Rights group was approached this year to support Mordechai's case. Over the past ten years there have been a number of parliamentary questions and motions about Vanunu that have helped raise the profile of his case. Much credit must go to Ernest Rodker and Rami Heilbrom from the Campaign to Free Vanunu who have campaigned tirelessly.

Mordechai Vanunu



In April a delegation to Israel was organised. It included Lord Eric Avebury and myself from the Parliamentary Human Rights Group and Susanna York. We tried to visit Mordechai but were refused access. We held a press conference outside calling for his release. In Jerusalem we presented President Weitzman with a worldwide petition including over seven hundred and fifty "names" headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

It is hard for people outside Israel to appreciate the courage of the campaigners for Mordechai who have consistently mounted leaflet forays and meetings in support of someone who is regularly called a "traitor" by the media. His parole application failed recently. A new one is due in September. Only a massive campaign will ensure his release.

This very brave man has served the longest period of solitary confinement in any western country. Those who support him in Israel need support from outside to show the world the reality of what happens to a man of conscience.

- Contact the Campaign to Free Vanunu, 89 Borough High Street, London SE1 1NL, tel/fax 0171-378 9324, send email to vanunu@innocent.com

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Pushing for real change

The referendum debate may have been dominated by unionist concerns, but now the Peace Accord must be made a reality, argues Brian Campbell, editor of Sinn Fein's *An Phoblacht/Republican News*.

FROM THE start of the referendum campaign it was clear there remains a large body of political opinion in the Six Counties which cannot countenance change. A large number of unionists opposed the Good Friday document while 90% of nationalists who voted support the Agreement. This, say its unionist opponents, denies the Agreement legitimacy — in their eyes only unionist votes count. These anti-Agreement unionists — led vociferously by Ian Paisley and Bob McCartney — have said they will prevent the full implementation of the Agreement. They will seek to persuade the unionist majority who are against the Agreement to vote for anti-Agreement candidates in the Assembly elections on 25th June. If they secure a majority of unionist seats, they will then seek to overturn those parts of the Agreement with which they disagree.

The anti-Agreement unionists will seek to prevent the release of prisoners, will try to block Sinn Fein becoming ministers in the administration and to make the cross-border bodies unworkable. They have also pledged to resist changes to the RUC and to try to block the implementation of the equality agenda. These tactics are designed to resist change in every way possible, just as they have resisted change throughout the entire process.

During the campaign Tony Blair did what he always does in a tricky situation — he consulted his focus groups. They told him that the people who were wavering were unionists. For this reason the referendum campaign was dominated by the debate within unionism. Tony Blair paid three high-profile visits to the Six Counties in two weeks and took part in numerous phone-ins and interviews. Every time his words were addressed to unionists. He reassured them about prisoners, about the future of the RUC and tried as best he could to say that Sinn Fein would not take office in the new administration until the IRA had surrendered weapons. Nationalist concerns have been lost in the rush to persuade unionists to vote Yes. But those concerns are very real and the referendum campaign has shown how difficult it may be to ensure that, for instance, the equality agenda will be pursued in the way that nationalists expect.

Amid all the calls for IRA decommissioning, no-one has been allowed to demand that the British Army begin a process of demilitarisation, as indicated in the Agreement. No effort has gone towards assuring people that the terms of the Agreement can be transferred from the fine words on paper into daily reality. And that must happen if the Agreement is to lead to a future of lasting peace. There has also been no room for a wider analysis of the conflict and the myth of "two warring communities" has been given free rein.

Tony Blair's Government may believe it has created a polity that is stable and long-lasting — that indeed was its intention. Instead, it may have created an inherently unstable arrangement which could be vulnerable to the intransigence and the wrecking tactics of reactionary unionists. Sinn Fein will enter the Assembly with the intention of pushing for change, real change. The question for Tony Blair will then be — does he back the wreckers or the builders? The process isn't over by a long way.

Democratise Indonesia!

THE OVERTHROW of Indonesian dictator Suharto marks a huge victory for the people of that country. The regime came to power 33 years ago amid a bloodbath which saw over half a million people slaughtered and tens of thousands imprisoned, some without trial for up to fifteen years. But the tremendous outpouring of opposition by Indonesians of all walks of life against the dictatorship, led by the students, will not have achieved its aims if Suharto's resignation does not immediately lead to real democratic reforms. The whole New Order regime must share responsibility for the Suharto dictatorship. Habibie, one of the dictator's closest cronies, was chosen by the same undemocratic process which allowed Suharto to rule for three decades, and is thus an unacceptable successor.

The repressive political laws, which muzzle the press, opposition political parties and trade unions, and prevent people from villages and small towns from becoming legally involved in political activity, have to be abolished to allow for fair and free elections to elect a new government.

The Indonesian armed forces must be confined to barracks and their interference in political affairs ended. Countries like Britain — which under New Labour have continued to arm the military with weaponry for internal repression — should break links until the full restoration of democracy.This must include the release of all political prisoners and withdrawal from illegally occupied East Timor.

The western media has portrayed Suharto as a corrupt leader who profited from his country's economic crisis. It's true he amassed $16 billion during his years in power. But he was sustained in his parasitism by the loans of the IMF and World Bank which contributed to Indonesia's official debt of $60 billion and by Japanese banks which lent crony companies another $40 billion. If Indonesia's poor are not to suffer further, the slate must be wiped clean with the rebirth of democratic government.

- For more information, contact TAPOL (the Indonesian Human Rights Campaign), 111 Northwood Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8HW, tel: 0181-771 2904.

TAPOL lobby Foreign Office, 20/5/98.



PHOTO: STEVE FRENCH

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MAI: step up the fight

Protests may have forced the postponement of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, but it is far from dead. Caroline Dumonteil reports from Paris.

PROTESTERS against the MAI from all over the world gathered on 28th April outside the OECD headquarters in Paris. Many French organisations participated, including the CGT union, an immigrants' rights organisation and the Peasant Confederation which set up tents and organised debates. The event had the air of a country fair, with the smell of cooking sausages filling the air. Speeches from the Director of the Observatory on Globalisation, Susan George and Lori Wallach of Public Citizen's Global Trade argued that the global economy should serve the needs of citizens rather than vice versa.

Despite its bucolic appearance, this event proved important. The *Financial Times*' correspondent described the efforts of the rich nations to draft a treaty giving multinationals the right to move in and out of any country at will, regardless of national legislation, as being "ambushed" by a "horde of vigilantes". Consequently the OECD decided on a six month delay, during which a "charm offensive" will be carried out. The whole issue will then be discussed at the next OECD ministerial meeting in a year's time.

The US is not going to reduce its demands, despite the fact that the anti-Cuba Helms-Burton Act is incompatible with the MAI. In fact they are increasing the pressure by taking the offensive on investment rights into the IMF and the World Trade Organisation. A new two-year cycle of negotiations on global investment was also announced at the end of the G8 summit in Birmingham. The MAI agenda is now popping up all over the place as its instigators try every way they know how to get their own way. It really is now up to the world's citizens to make it clear that this model of the global economy is completely unacceptable.

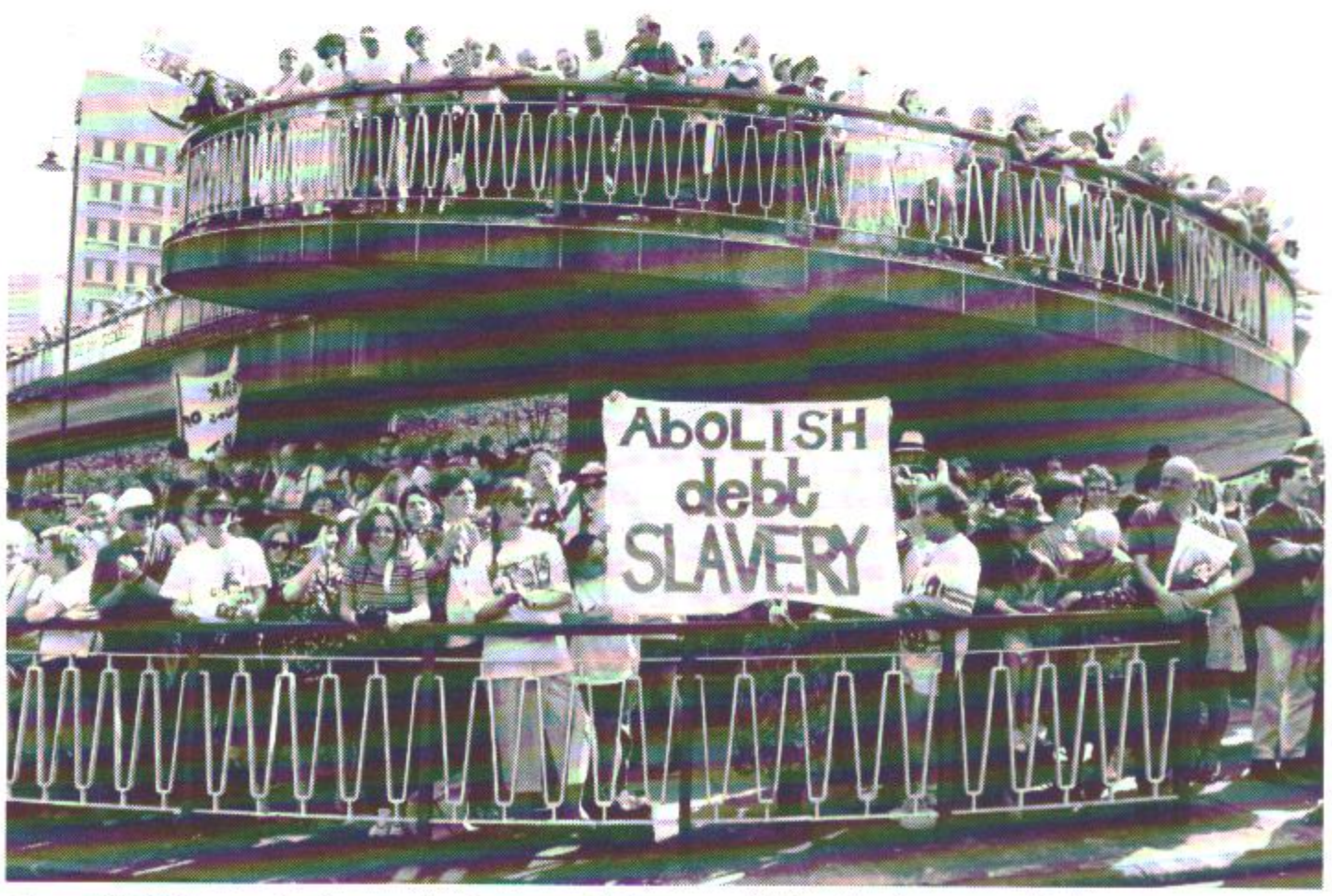


PHOTO: ANDREW WIARD

Over 50,000 people formed a human chain round Birmingham on 16th May to protest to the G8 summit about Third World poverty.

National strike closes down Denmark

DENMARK'S FIRST nationwide strike in more than a decade brought transport, construction, manufacturing and many service industries to a standstill as more than 500,000 workers, both unionised and private sector employees, demanded a wage increase and an extra week of holiday. With people stockpiling essential supplies, Danish radio reported food riots in several supermarkets as supplies ran out.

The action came after union members voted to reject a negotiated settlement covering a wide range of Danish industries by a majority vote in a postal ballot. The employers' demand that a new agreement should not increase company costs caused widespread resentment, since the Danish economy is booming and companies are reporting excellent results. Once the strike began, there were big falls on the Danish stock market and dire warnings from foreign investors that they would withdraw. Yet the union leaders, rather than push home their advantage, instead watered down the demand for 35 hour week and seven days extra holiday.

In response a national meeting of 1,200 shop stewards set up national and local co-ordinating committees to run the strike, ensuring the delivery of emergency services such as medicine to counter the employers' threat of a generalised lock-out. "It is the employers who want to shut down the country, not us," said one steward. "They cannot run the country without the workers, but we can run the country without the employers."

Getting petrol required an authorisation signed by the Transport and General Workers Union — only signed in genuine emergencies; without that, not even the police could get petrol. The strike hit the employers hard — 4bn kroner a day, according to some estimates. As it progressed into its second week, many called for compulsory government arbitration.

Meanwhile the workers' mood hardened. At a meeting of shop stewards in the Zealand region (around Copenhagen) when a young apprentice stood up, called on the shop stewards to take the effective leadership of the movement and fight against government intervention with a general strike, the whole meeting erupted and started to shout "general strike, general strike". After witnessing this scene, a national union leader, who had come to persuade the meeting that the government offer of an extra couple of days' holiday and some concessions to the employers was the best that could be hoped for, quietly left the hall without speaking.

The government's intervention, however, required a response that had a broader perspective to involve the public sector fully and declare a general strike. Pushing the government compromise, union leaders were able to head off such a scenario. Yet the conflict did not end in defeat. Most workers will be better off and the conflict has strengthened the reconstruction of a left wing in the trade unions and paved the way for local negotiations which in many cases look set to go beyond what the government proposed. ❑

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India's nuclear nationalism

Achin Vanaik, India's leading campaigner against nuclear weapons, surveys the frightening implications of the recent bomb tests.

FIVE NUCLEAR tests in all. Perplexity among the large majority of Indians, exultation for a much smaller but still very large number, horror and anger among the relatively small number not besotted by the myths of national "strength".

India was not pushed into this momentous step because of any sudden threat from Pakistan or China. The real reason for the tests is India's aspiration to be seen as a 'great' power and win world 'respect'.

What we have witnessed in India for some time is an insecure, tension-filled mood of frustrated and uncertain nationalism among the elite and middle classes. It is not a coincidence that the party which has pursued the most aggressive and viciously communal form of Hindu nationalism — the BJP, the dominant force in the current coalition government — has also been the party with the most aggressively pro-nuclear position.

Fifty years after independence there is a widespread sense within the Indian elite that the country has not 'made it' internationally. China has its economic miracle; smaller far eastern countries are greater success stories; we are a great civilisation, yet we are not listened to. These are the sentiments that dominate and the search for a short-cut to global prestige has become desperate. The sheer lack of sobriety in much of the public response and the near-hysterical character of the adulation is not only pathetic but deeply disturbing because of the out-dated mind-set it reveals.

The BJP has shown by this act that it has no democratic scruples whatsoever. The decision to test was not even discussed beforehand with its coalition partners. Yet the RSS, the so-called cultural organisation which provides the grass-roots backbone of the BJP, was clearly privy to it. Its newspaper, *The Organiser*, hit the stands barely one hour after the public announcement with an issue devoted to glorification of the (mainly symbolic) 1974 test.

The BJP-RSS are systematically seeking to hijack the discourses of national security and national greatness, and the tests must be seen as part of that project. This project cannot be effectively challenged by doing what the Congress and other opposition parties have done — clamouring for a share of the credit. The feeble official response of India's two mass communist parties, the CPI and CPM, has been equally disgraceful. The protests of the small and angry band of anti-nuclear activists in India are needed more than ever.



Achin Vanaik

There will be tremendous domestic pressure on Pakistan to carry out its own test in retaliation. If this happens, which is likely, the pressure on India to go a step further and openly deploy nuclear weapons will become intense. Once this occurs, Pakistan will follow suit and we will find ourselves in the midst of a regional nuclear arms race whose consequences no one can foretell.

Since the end of the Cold War there has been hesitant, uneven but nonetheless real world-wide progress to nuclear disarmament. Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine (with the third largest arsenal) have given up nuclear weapons status. Three other countries, South Africa, Brazil and Argentina (unlike Israel, India and Pakistan), have given up their 'threshold' status. Strategic stockpiles have been significantly reduced, tactical missiles removed, nuclear weapons-free zones have spread and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was signed (though not by India). This momentum is threatened with the likely entry, for the first time in 34 years, of two new entrants to the nuclear club (India and Pakistan), which will encourage others (North Korea, Iran, Iraq) to do the same.

China will have to view India with new eyes and quietly reorganise its strategic nuclear preparations. Neither in word nor deed (as opposed to the fevered speculations of Indian 'experts') has China behaved as if India was a potential nuclear opponent. However, this is exactly what India has now done vis-a-vis China. By doing so it will force China to become a potential rival. The insanity of 'deterrence' has prevailed.

Pakistan must shun arms race

Dr Pervez Hoodbhoy, leading Pakistani physicist and peace activist, adds: The peoples of India and Pakistan stand closer to the brink of disaster than ever before. We are witnessing grotesque and obscene celebrations of the power to destroy. Today the champagne is flowing in Delhi.

"We will soon bring Pakistan to its knees", crows the president of the BJP, Khushabau Thakre. Barely a month ago it was Pakistan that had been joyous after the launch of the Ghauri missile. Euphoric crowds had made their pilgrimage to the Kahuta laboratory, and Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Gauhar Ayub, bragged about having overtaken India in missile development. It is hard to imagine greater stupidity.

For the last fifteen years, peace activists in Pakistan have ceaselessly urged their government not to get into a nuclear competition with India. This is not a race that Pakistan can ever win. That this was correct has now been proven beyond a shadow of doubt. We have argued that the real threat to Pakistan is internal — low rates of production coupled with an excessive appetite for consumption, religious and ethnic tensions, and an education system which collapsed years ago. If we plunge into an arms race with India, we will never be able to address these problems.

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the Michael Hindley column



Michael Hindley, Labour MEP for Lancashire South, previews the German elections.

ONE OF the most frustrating things about politics is the enormous delay in the consequences of events filtering through to the consciences of those who do not follow political trends very carefully. This includes of course many politicians who are too busy pursuing their careers and "positioning" themselves rather than analysing what is happening, or, dread the thought, taking a principled stand on contemporary events.

It has taken a long while for the huge costs of German unification to filter through. In an amazing and revealing publication of government papers in the German magazine *Der Spiegel,* Helmut Kohl is shown to have shared the very same doubts about a rapid unification for which he derided his then opponent, Oskar Lafontaine, the leftish SPD candidate for Chancellorship. The gap between East and West Germany was too huge to absorb the shock therapy of single currency imposed on the east (at a rate of one-to-one East German Marks for D-Marks) but Kohl felt the history book calling and more immediately a General Election (1990) to be won with millions of East Germans voting for the first time in a genuinely pluralistic election.

The very silly and shallow idea widespread at the time that the east Germans would rush to embrace 'democratic socialism' freed from 'totalitarianism' was swept aside when an astute Kohl was rewarded — for giving the East Germans real money — with thumping majorities in the east. Broadly speaking the magic transformation and the sheer gratitude had not worn off by 1994 when Kohl, against many peoples predictions, won again. The resistance to the west's takeover of the east — a much more accurate description than 'unification' — was shown by the successes (exclusively in the east) of the reformed former ruling party of the GDR, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS).

Eight years on, east is east and west is still west despite considerable injections of funds from west to east and the terms 'ossis' and 'wessis', ie. easterners and westerners, are widely used terms of abuse. In the last accounted year, in the 'united' city of Berlin out of 16,383 marriages, only 562 were between ossis and wessis. There is great resentment in the east at the denigration of everything that remains of the old East German state. Whereas for the West German elite the criminalisation of all aspects of the former state, which Helmut Kohl himself was happy to work with right down to the collapse, offers at long last a suitable diversion to exorcise the ghost of guilt about the Nazis.

Moreover the disturbing support for neo-Nazis in the east contradicts the west's idea that they had made a better transition from "old, undemocratic" Germany than the east. Everyone was shocked by the 13% vote for the Neo-Nazi DVU in the recent state elections in Sachsen-Anhalt, yet closer analysis is even more disturbing. Sophisticated exit polls reveal that 25% of under 25 year old voters voted DVU. These are youngsters who have gained maturity since unification. Their vote is a protest against their lack of opportunity. The DVU put out a strong message of discontent whereas the ruling CDU was saying things are all right and the main opposition SPD is cautious not to criticize too much — convinced like Blair in Britain that a change of government is needed, not a change in political direction.

THE SPD candidate for Chancellor, Schroeder, promises a new face with old policies, a reassurance for the German establishment, yet he is severely embarrassed by the political reality in the east where his own SPD party often relies on the pragmatic support of the PDS to stay in power. In Sachsen-Anhalt there was an SPD/Green coalition (Pink/Green) but that still did not have a majority and was kept afloat by the support of the PDS. The Greens failed to make the 5% cut while the PDS maintained their 20%. This left the SPD nationally and locally with a great dilemma. Schroeder advised the local SPD to try for a grand coalition with Kohl's CDU — certainly a precursor for what may well emerge in the national elections in the autumn. However the locals demurred: to go into a coalition with the party rightly accused of breaking all its promises of halving unemployment and bringing the east up to the level of the west would have destroyed the local SPD and been derided by the electorate.

So Sachsen-Anhalt will be ruled by a minority SPD alone, with pragmatic, not uncritical support of the PDS. The 'new' SPD, much as they would like to, cannot capitalise on the desire for a change that New Labour achieved because significant parts of the east are so alienated that the superficial changes it offers are transparently inadequate. The PDS cannot make any breakthrough at all in the west. Only a flight of fantasy can imagine a national left coalition.

On the right there may be no coalition partner for the CDU because its present one, the Liberals (FDP), may not get the necessary 5%. A grand coalition between the SPD and the CDU in Bonn looks increasingly to be the likely result of the autumn elections resulting in stagnant complacency in the west and growing anger in the east. Almost a decade after the fall of the Wall, we are seeing the consolidation of two Germanies.

Labour CND AGM

10:30am-4 pm, Saturday 20th June

Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1.

Delegates and waged individuals, £5, unwaged £1.50

- **Tony Benn MP will lead discussion on Labour's defence policies**
- **Stan Newens MEP and Rae Street on "The militarisation of Europe"**
- **Helen John will speak on "The militarisation of space"**

East is east and west is west

New protests by the Sans-Papiers

Sara Callaway (Black Women for Wages for Housework) and Benoit Martin (Payday Men's Network)

150,000 Sans-Papiers — undocumented immigrants and refugees in France — who applied for "regularisation" will be given decisions by 30th May 1998. Of those already decided, half were granted "temporary" papers. The others are under threat of deportation, despite having lived in France for years. Deportations have risen and become increasingly violent. Over 5,000 people were deported in the last six months and many of them were tied up, gagged and drugged in the process.

Protest has also intensified. Eight churches outside Paris have been occupied, the first by 42 Africans in Evry. Many nationalities have since joined the occupations. Since April, the resistance of deportees and passengers refusing to board in protest, has stopped Air France and Air Afrique aircraft from being used for deportations.

The strength of the Sans-Papiers' movement, begun in March 1996, has always been its autonomy. While encouraging wide support, the original 300 African women and men insisted on Sans-Papiers-only meetings, framing their own demands and tactics.

Women have been central to sustaining this autonomy. As Madjiguene Cisse, the main spokeswoman, writes: "Each time the movement ran out of steam, the women met and worked out initiatives which relaunched the struggle." On 6th May 1998, 100 women and children Sans-Papiers marched through Nantes while men and supporters 'debated' in an occupied church.

Some supporters from voluntary organisations and political parties have resented the Sans-Papiers' autonomy. Their attempt to take over the direction of the movement and water down its demands intensified after the socialists were elected. There is a parallel here with Britain. As the Blair Government talks of granting papers to 10,000 asylum seekers while cracking down on the others, the Sans-Papiers' struggle for autonomy remains key to anti-deportation movements everywhere.

Faxes supporting permanent regularisation of all Sans-Papiers to: Lionel Jospin, Prime Minister, +33 1 42 75 79 47. Copy to Madjiguene Cisse, +33 1 46 07 16 19 (phone/fax). Madjiguene Cisse's *Sans-Papiers: A Woman Draws the First Lessons* is available from Crossroads Books, PO Box 287, London NW6 5QU, tel: 0171-482 2486, price £2.

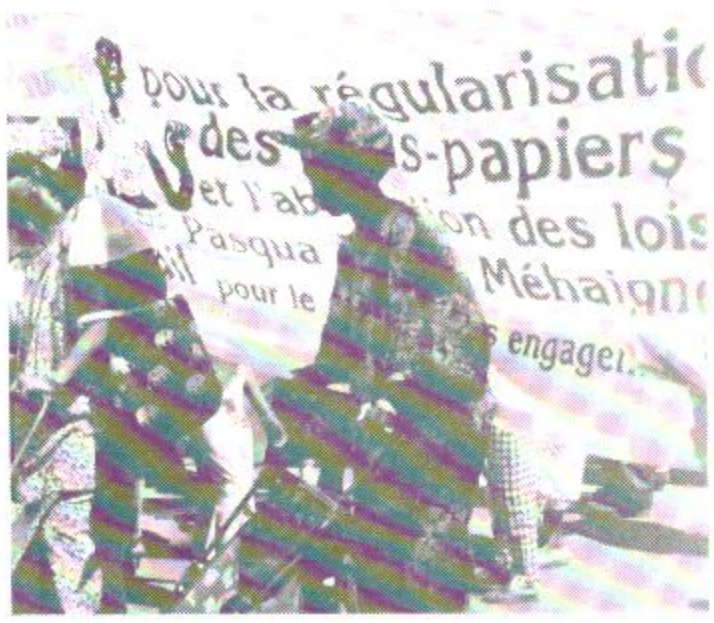


PHOTO: BENOIT MARTIN

Sans-Papiers: Fighting for regularisation and the abolition of the Pasqua laws.

Hit racism for six

THE PUBLICATION of a damning report on racism in cricket by the Centre for Sport Development Research (see last *LLB*) has forced the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to acknowledge, for the first time, that racism may be a problem in the English game.

Launching the report at a press conference held at Lords, Ian McDonald, one of authors of the report, called on the cricket authorities to grant black and Asian cricketers the three Rs of cricket development — recognition, respect and resources. Terry Bates, the ECB's development officer, was clearly uncomfortable with the whole issue, but was compelled to accept that something had to be done, and committed the cricket board to producing an anti-racist "mission statement" before the end of the year.

In the past, the English cricket authorities have denied that there was any racism connected with the game and denounced those who raised the thorny subjects as "interlopers". But after the Theresa Harrild affair, when the ECB was found guilty of sex discrimination by an industrial tribunal, they could no longer duck the issue with impunity.

Hit Racism for Six, which has campaigned against racism in cricket since 1995, welcomed the report and the ECB's response to it. The group is calling on the ECB to take three basic steps: convene a national forum of all bodies involved in black and Asian cricket, draw up a development plan for the game in the inner cities, and adopt an anti-racist charter. Both the report and Hit Racism for Six's demands have been backed in an EDM tabled by Jeremy Corbyn MP.

- HR46 is joining forces with the London Community Cricket Association to stage an anti-racist six-a-side festival in London's East End on 29th August. For details contact Ian McDonald at CSDR, Roehampton Institute, London SW15 3SN; fax 0181-392 3541.

Fascists falter in east London

MAY'S COUNCIL elections showed electoral support for fascist candidates in east London falling from the national peaks of support of the last decade: but fascist sympathy is more 'on hold' than eradicated.

BNP member Derek Beackon won a Millwall byelection in 1993 (1,480 votes) and lost in 1994 (2,000 votes). This time three BNP candidates polled over 600 votes each: but this is still 17%. Excluding the Bengali vote from the Labour result, two white electors voted BNP for every three voting Labour (nearer 1:1 on the council estates). Votes for three other BNP candidates in Tower Hamlets were about 10% of the Labour score and the vote for a local NF candidate in Lansbury was some 20% of Labour's vote. Newham returned Labour councillors in all 50 seats again, with BNP results some 20-25% of the Labour vote — or nearer 50% of the white vote for Labour. Two kite-flying candidates in south Hackney polled the more usual double figure results.

The BNP has been quiet since 1994 and were seldom seen during the campaign, often leafleting under cover of darkness. Optimism felt after Labour's general election victory has not evaporated yet. The majority of electors don't vote at all. The fascists have faltered: Labour has failed to inspire and remains vulnerable to the fascist "alternative".

Support the Campsfield 9

THE TRIAL OF the Campsfield 9 starts at Oxford Crown Court on Monday 1st June and the Defence Campaign is calling for a mass lobby of the Court from 8:30am that morning and then every Monday morning afterwards.

The nine, all young West African refugees, were being held in Campsfield House detention centre when protests broke out last August at the removal of two of their fellow detainees to another prison. The nine are charged with riot and violent assembly and are being scapegoated by the authorities in an attempt to frighten other detainees from protesting at their incarceration. Even under the previous Tory Government no immigration detainee was charged with any offence for protesting at their imprisonment. Now, in a dangerous precedent, New Labour's ministers have encouraged the bringing of charges against asylum seekers who dared to protest.

The trial will last for up to eight weeks and it is very important that the protests outside the court are as large and as vocal as possible. Scapegoating of refugees and their detention under immigration law must stop. To support the Campsfield 9 Defence Campaign contact 60 Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2, tel: 01865-558 145/726 804.

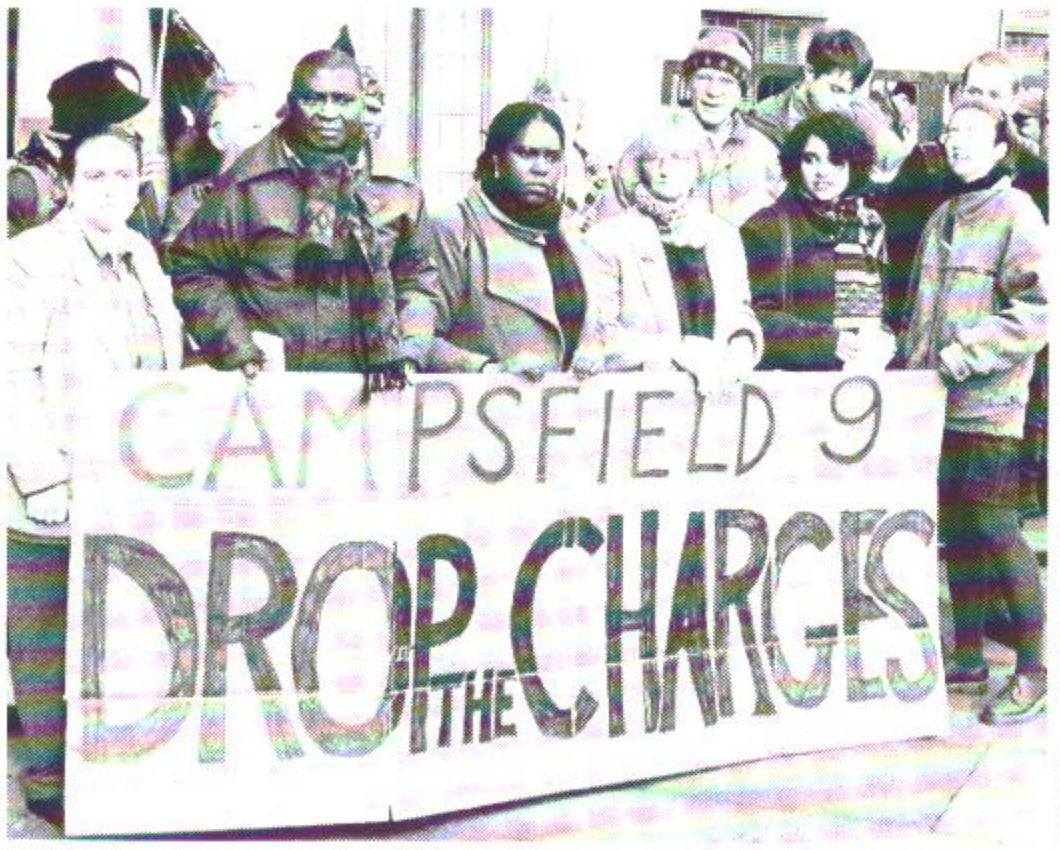


PHOTO: STALINGRAD O'NEILL

Lawrence inquiry latest

LLB's special correspondent

THE FIRST TWO months of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry have revealed a lack of respect for black life and a staggering degree of incompetence on the part of the Metropolitan Police.

- Not a single police officer tried to administer first aid to Stephen as he was dying; members of the public were prevented by police officers from offering assistance.
- Crime scene management was non-existent; no forensic search was made; police claims that house-to-house inquiries were made appear to be completely untrue; according to the police's own records, not a single house in the immediate area was checked.
- Anonymous tip-offs were never followed up; a number of local people provided the names of the five men suspected of the murder and details of their previous racist activities, making nonsense of police claims that their investigation failed because of a "wall of silence".
- The Police Complaints Authority inquiry mounted by Kent Police argued that all the suspects should have been arrested immediately; instead it was fifteen days before they were arrested; following arrest, each was interviewed for fifteen minutes; in contrast, the Bengali youth arrested for the Richard Everitt murder in Somers Town were each interviewed for at least two and half hours.
- A police surveillance officer outside the Acourts' house saw the two suspects (Neil and Jamie) take away two full bin liners during a critical period of the investigation, but did not stop, follow or report them.
- The next day, police received information that knives were hidden under the floorboard of another suspect's house (David Norris), but declined to search because the house was clean and tidy.
- Police officers who conducted the initial investigation continue to insist the motive for the killing was not racial, though they acknowledge that the youths shouted racial abuse at Stephen shortly before the attack.
- Most significantly, it has been revealed that Norris' father was known to the police as a major criminal gang leader with a record of intimidating witnesses; this has led to speculation that the police failure to pursue the killers may be linked with a corrupt relationship with the older Norris.

"The only thing that can explain the staggering level of incompetence displayed by police in the investigation of the murder would be some combinations of racism and corruption," observed one supporter of the Lawrence family.

The Lawrence family and their lawyers are concerned at what one supporter described as "a deliberate attempt by the inquiry team to keep key documents from us". Ten thousand pages of documents were handed over only one week before the inquiry began; papers concerning Norris were withheld. The family's lawyers fear that other documents may still be concealed.

Contrary to a recent *Guardian* editorial — which appears to have been influenced by heavy spin from the Metropolitan Police — the performance of Edward Lawson, the inquiry's own counsel (and formerly counsel to the Police Federation on a number of corruption cases), has not performed with zeal. Lawrence family supporters have been dismayed at his perfunctory approach to interrogating police officers. "He's not probing enough. He asks three or four questions of each one and leaves it at that."

The Lawrences' decision to raise questions about Judge Macpherson's suitability on the eve of the trial was pilloried in the press, with the help of a number of self-styled anti-racist activists, who insinuated that the meeting with Jack Straw was merely a political manoeuvre by people hostile to New Labour. But the Lawrence family feels the decision was the only way to ensure that Macpherson's conduct of the inquiry was kept under scrutiny, and believe the course of the inquiry so far has vindicated their judgement.

Dover multi-cultural arts festival

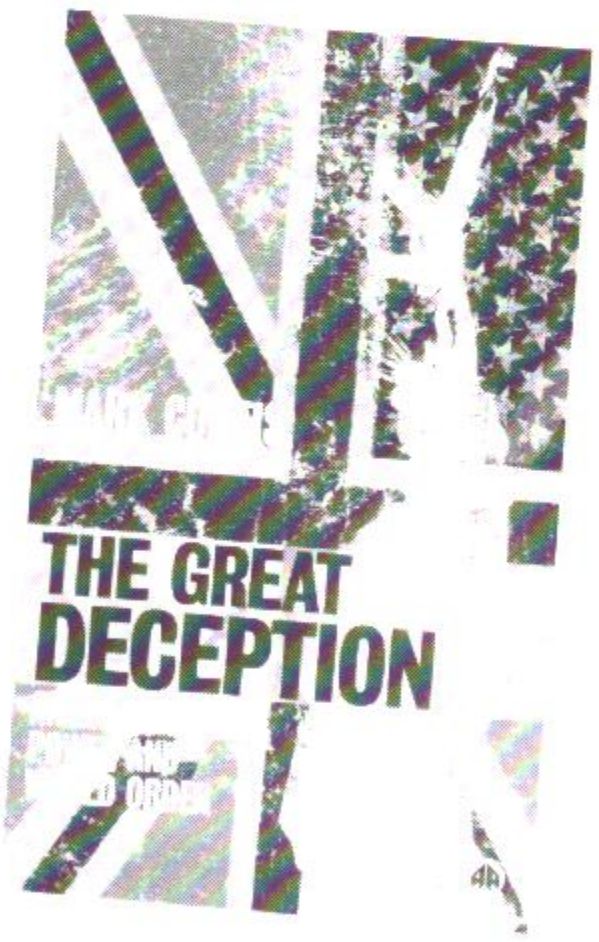
As part of the campaign against the National Front in Dover a festival is being organised in the town on Saturday 29th August. The festival will be held in Pencester Gardens from 11 am to 6 pm and will be free to all.

Any groups or individuals wishing to participate in the festival or help organise it are asked to contact Craig Hudson: 01303-262 039 or e-mail: Craigh204@aol.com.

The campaign against the National Front in Dover has a homepage at http://www.canterbury.u-net.com/Dover.html

Their ethics and ours

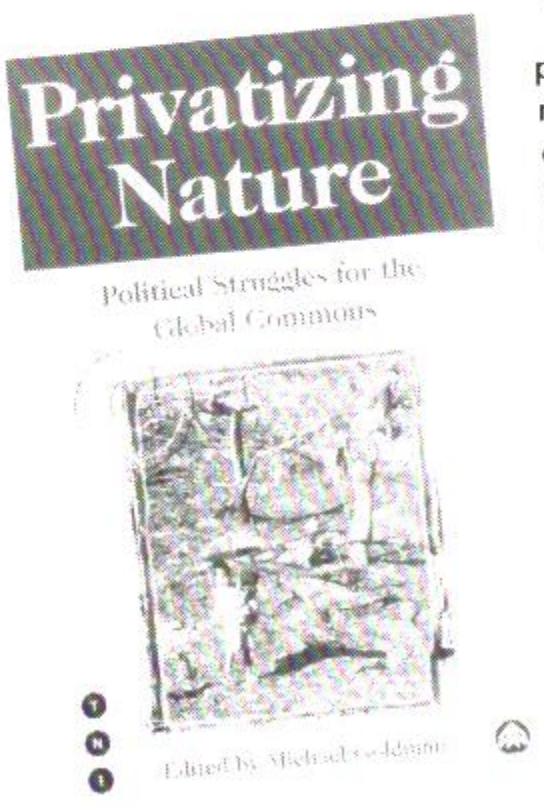
Mike Phipps reviews Privatising Nature, *edited by Michael Goldman, £15.99, and* The Great Deception *by Mark Curtis, £14.99, both published by Pluto.*



JUST AS the Enclosure Act threw people off their land in the last century, today a contemporary global enclosure movement is excluding people from access to resources they have historically enjoyed in common — land, water, forests, seeds, minerals even air (one in five people today breathe air more poisonous than the World Health Organisation standard). In recent years, 87 distinct groups of Amerindians have become extinct, which suggests this process is not primarily aimed at creating a reserve of landless workers. The truth is the excluded are not welcome in the capitalist economy, even as wage-labourers. They are expendable. So argues Susan George in the preface of *Privatising Nature*.

This process is not entirely dictated by the market. Powerful institutions like the World Bank play a key role not just in exploiting natural resources but also by instigating 'conservation policies'. Unfortunately, these policies frequently conserve what is of interest to the west at the expense of local people. In one such conservation area in Cameroon, industrial logging is permitted but hunting by the indigenous people is totally prohibited.

There is very real opposition to these policies — and not just from western environmentalists. In South India alone there is a broad alliance of local farmers fighting the World Trade Organisation's attempts to appropriate their "intellectual property rights" and a Coastal Women's Front against the mechanised trawling that threatens their traditional fishing-grounds. Perhaps the most important movement against the international expropriation of commonly-enjoyed resources is the Mexican Zapatistas, whose rebellion in January 1994 was triggered by the North American Free Trade Agreement — specifically the Mexican government's policy of privatising 50% of the country's land.



This problem is not confined to the Third World, as indicated by the recent resistance in South Central Los Angeles to the building of a 16 million ton-per-day waste incinerator in the neighbourhood. What unites this with other attacks on common resources is the US market research preceding the decision, which suggested that poorer areas tend to be "unaware" and therefore "compliant" on these issues.

These struggles are radical because they are about qualitative issues. Unlike traditional labour movement battles over pay and conditions, there is little scope for compromise. How much should the water supply be polluted, how much compensation should be paid? The absurdity of these questions shows that our air, food and land are — or should be — beyond mere profit-making.

MARK Curtis's study of Anglo-American foreign policy, *The Great Deception*, is important for its distinctive focus on the impact of British foreign policy on Third World development. This is a neglected area that has allowed successive government Ministers for Overseas Aid to pose as humanitarians dedicated to promoting development and overcoming poverty. This is a caricature of reality.

The aggregate sales of the world's ten largest transnational corporations are greater than the aggregate GNP of the world's 100 smallest countries. The former lobbied strongly for treaties like the recently postponed Multilateral Agreement on Investment which would have imposed massive constraints on poorer countries' ability to control inward investment. Britain's complicity in these countries' indebtedness can also be detected. Africa has paid out $100 billion in debt repayments since 1987 but its debt level has risen by one-quarter. This suits western governments which can make debt relief conditional on "good" — that is, compliant — behaviour.

To see Britain as a mere bit player in today's global events is a false picture. British forces are currently serving, in one capacity or another, in 71 different countries, including Indonesia, Colombia and Saudi Arabia. "Whenever we want to subvert any place," one leading US intelligence figure commented, "we find the British own an island within easy reach."

Britain has played an especially prominent role in the Middle East and the Gulf. Long before Saddam Hussein, Britain carried out chemical gas "experiments" on the Iraqis, and British forces were instrumental in propping up the repressive Saudi regime more than once this century. Even today the Foreign Office puts its links with the Gulf dictatorships above the most elementary human rights. When the Bahrein Human Rights Organisation reported troops "breaking into houses, looting, terrorising and arbitrarily arresting hundreds of citizens" in 1995, Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd criticised Arab dissidents for "indulging in malevolent propaganda campaigns against our good friends in the region."

How far will this change under New Labour's "ethical foreign policy"? Tony Blair is proud of Britain's position in world affairs, declaring "no British patriot should be willing to give up that status." Despite the rhetoric about a more ethical approach, continuity with the previous government is more noticeable. Even the most discredited Tory rejects are being recycled, for example the serious consideration New Labour gave to the idea, subsequently abandoned, of Michael Portillo as international mediator in Bosnia.

Blair's Government continues to promote the same international agenda — full support for the advance of neoliberal economics, only conditional relief for Third World debt, privatisation across Eastern Europe and sanctions against Iraq. And, as this excellent study reminds us, amid all the policy reviews there remains the commitment to Trident and the decision to buy 232 Eurofighter aircraft at a cost of £16 billion to the taxpayer. Truly a great deception.

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Still She Rises

Maya Angelou, acclaimed poet and novelist, visited the Brighton Festival to talk about her life and her new book Even the Stars Look Lonely. *Abbie Sampson went along to find out more.*



Maya Angelou

MAYA ANGELOU is an extraordinary woman. At first sight, her strength and determination are obvious. She stands tall and proud and never bows her head. Her colour and vivacity are unmissable. Angelou has a wonderful outlook on life: nothing will pull her down. For a start she did not expect to live until 70 so she enjoys every moment of it now.

Angelou was raped at the aged of seven by her stepfather but she did not want to name the rapist because he had threatened to kill her brother if she did. However the rapist was caught and jailed for one day and was "kicked to death" when he was released. Angelou believed that she had killed him with her voice so she decided to go mute. At the age of 13 Angelou found her voice again, through poetry, which she believes put "starch in her backbone". Angelou's performance slipped seamlessly between speech and song, this rhythmic quality is also present in Angelou's poetry. Many of her poems are actually supposed to be sung.

Humour is central to Angelou's philosophy on life. She believes that you should never trust anyone who doesn't have a sense of humour. Also she believes that you should never trust anyone who doesn't love themselves first: "Be careful when a naked person offers you a shirt."

To end the performance Angelou recited a few lines from her poem *Still I Rise*:

"You may write me down in history/With your bitter, twisted lies/You may trod me in the very dirt/But still, like dust, I'll rise/You may shoot me with your words/You may cut me with your eyes/You may kill me with you hatefulness/But still, like air, I'll rise."

- Maya Angelou's new book *Even The Stars Look Lonely* is published by Virago, £12.99.

The god-like genius of Paul Richards

Eddie Tucker reviews How to be your own spindoctor *by Paul Richards (Take That Ltd, £9.95).*

THE MAN WHO was the scourge of the left as a leader of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, who thinks Labour's new defence policy is the best thing since sliced bread and who *LLB* columnist Geoff Martin described as "Boris Karloff after a bad night at the graveyard" has finally written a major contribution to political activism.

At last we have an updated version of Pluto's masterpieces — McShane's *How to Use the Media* and Drinkwater's *Get it On* — packed with humourous examples, quotes and checklists.

The title may be opportunistic, but behind the gloss and the namedropping is a book that provides everything the spindoctors don't want you to know. Drawing on his own experiences, the man who as Labour candidate for Billericay managed to get *Newsnight* to a Labour Party plant sale, helps you understand how journalists work and teaches that dealing with the media is a skill not magic — "there are tricks of the trade and techniques that can be learnt."

Even seasoned campaigners can pick up tips: on radio "smaller stations have very few staff, especially at weekends, and so it is important to make the right approach. You can make a world of difference between phoning at five minutes to the hour, when the news presenter is desperately finishing off scripts...and five minutes after the hour when the bulletin is over and the presenter has time to talk."

The best spindoctors, as the book repeats, are those you haven't heard of, and Richards nearly joined them with his reported press conference at which the total media attendance was...nil. Richards describes *LLB*'s web site as having "the best link page"; this is simply "the best book on how to use the media".

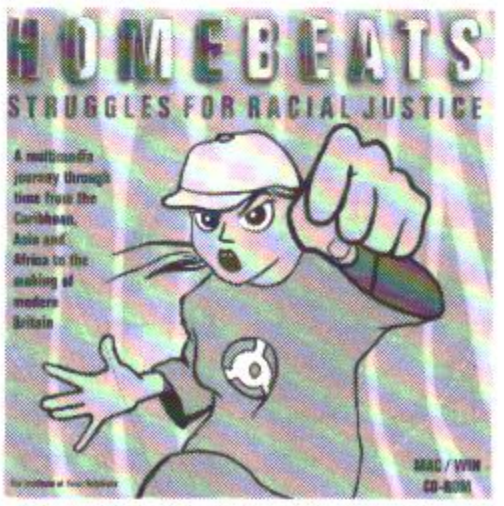
He may not have Geoff Martin's looks (Huh? — editor), but he has his ability to use the media. And he's shared it with us. Apparently even the Sultan of Spin Peter Mandelson turned up to the book's launch — what greater accolade could Richards have had?

Homebeats

Mike Marqusee reviews Homebeats: struggles for racial justice, *a CD-Rom produced by the Institute of Race Relations.*

WHO SAYS the devil has the best tunes (or technology)? This remarkable multi-media compendium, featuring sounds from Asian Dub Foundation and an amazing profusion of images from around the world, takes students on an interactive journey through time and space, encouraging them to explore for themselves the experiences of exploitation and struggle which have forged the Britain we live in today.

Here you can watch and listen to Malcolm X or Jayaben Desai, explore Southall or Manningham, study the Black Panthers, hip hop, anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa, the Notting Hill riots or Rock Against Racism. An added bonus is the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism's comprehensive *Calendar of Race and Resistance* detailing events from 1991-97. Everything is expertly cross-referenced and attractively presented, enabling students to pursue their own interests and make their own connections.



The political vision driving the project is explained by A. Sivanandan, IRR Director: "Anti-racist education is not about instilling black pride in some people, white guilt in others. You do not have to dwell on identity and ethnicity or appeal to some abstract morality to understand racism. It is simply a matter of producing an inclusive history which tells everyone — black and white — the truth about Britain and its relationships to the Third World and its peoples."

Homebeats is an inspiring educational tool and a rich resource for all those engaged in the struggle for racial justice.

- Available for £35 from IRR, 2-6 Leeke Street, King's Cross Road, London WC1X 9HS.

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Freedom to roam now!

Dave Bangs on about the right to roam, charting the ups and Downs of access campaigning.

ENVIRONMENT Minister Michael Meacher's proposal for a "freedom to roam" on certain categories of "open land" represents a tremendous opportunity for the countryside access movement. The proposal is very modest. Mountain, moor, heath, down and common land, will be open to public access ie. around 10% of the land area of England and Wales. Other types of "open land" — woodland, lake and riverside, cliff and foreshore — will not be considered until at least the year 2000.

The proposals thus sideline the simple and obvious route of creating a general right to roam and then subjecting this right to common sense exclusions (for example standing on crops). Such rights exist in Sweden and other countries with a more democratic rural culture. The way is set for exhausting and destructive arguments over definitions: does "moor" include fertilised and re-seeded areas, does "down" include areas used as horse gallops?

The most negative aspect of these proposals is their retreat from Meacher's earlier unequivocal commitments. We now have a three month consultation period in which the landowners' organisations are challenged to come up with voluntary solutions.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

The access movement must build a combination of technical arguments and a campaign of mass trespass to appeal to the whole range of countryside users. Practical programmes of trespass will highlight the problems walkers face: habitat destruction, game rearing, route blocking, landowner hostility and so on. Provided our numbers can guarantee ramblers feelings of safety, it will be possible for such trespasses to gather large numbers of countryside lovers and attract broad publicity.

Sussex activists are organising a number of research projects and at least two mass trespasses — on 14th June and 5th July. We are able to utilise the network of activists already created to fight for a South Downs National Park, and to oppose habitat destruction and local authority land sales. We cannot match the great trespass tradition of the Peak District and Lander Scout, but that is our model.

For 50 years — since the half-hearted voluntary measures passed in the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act — the demand for a freedom to roam has lain dormant. Decades of demoralising defeats for access and wildlife campaigns have meant the movement is ill-prepared for this major battle. The relentless destruction of bio-diversity and historic rural landscapes by agri-business farmers has left access campaigners with a deeply defensive culture — fighting hard for tiny victories and with little faith in their own ability to grasp major opportunities.

Our challenge is to turn this around. We cannot afford to wait another 50 years!

● Contact: South Downs Freedom to Roam Group, tel. 01273-388 392.

Regaining control of our bodies

To read the headlines, one would think that in refusing to have a caesarean, a woman was risking the life of her child. But the reality is far more complicated. Leonora Lloyd reports.

THERE HAS been an enormous increase in the use of caesareans in the US, where doctors practise "defensive" medicine and patients resort to the courts at the drop of a stitch. But caesareans increase the risks to the mother, postpone her return to activity, make future births more difficult, and do not significantly improve the chances for the baby. Despite this, British figures have also risen and now stand at around 16% of all births.

Some hospitals have been guilty of forcing women to have unwanted caesareans by getting judge's orders late at night, with no representation for the woman. Judges have taken the hospital's word for it that the operation is necessary and that the woman is either incapable of giving informed consent by reason of mental illness or incapacity, or is withholding it wilfully and without good reason. In the case that hit the headlines, the judge was told the woman had been in labour for 24 hours — but it was not true. She had not even started labour. The hospital wanted her to have a caesarean at an early stage in her pregnancy because she had been diagnosed with pre-eclampsia, a life-threatening illness. When she refused, she was sectioned under the Mental Health Act and the caesarean was carried out by force after a court gave the go-ahead.

The Appeal Court has now ruled that women have a right to refuse treatment even if their, or their baby's life, is at risk. Leading obstetrician, Wendy Savage, told me that she was "glad that the judges have confirmed that women have the same rights over their bodies as men". In one famous case, a Broadmoor resident suffering from schizophrenia refused to have his gangrenous leg amputated. A court upheld his right to refuse treatment even for a life-threatening condition — and he went on to become well and his leg was saved!

Although pre-eclampsia is dangerous, there were other options. For example, the birth could have been induced. In any event, there was no need, Wendy Savage said, for the dramatic midnight rush to the court. In many US cases, women have left hospitals against their doctor's advice — and gone on to have healthy babies quite normally.

Women have won the right to have their choices respected and accepted. Even when the woman is mentally incompetent, in future her own lawyer must represent her in any hearings. At least a dozen other women may now take hospitals to court.

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Straw in the wind

On BBC TV's *Question Time*, our ineffably eloquent and always well-informed Home Secretary, **Jack Straw**, was despatching thorny issues with his customary ease when a member of the audience asked his opinion on **MAI**. Now MAI, as *LLB* readers will be only too aware, is the Multilateral Agreement on Investment — an inter-governmental charter which gives big business virtually unrestricted and unregulated global freedom. Needless to say, our New Labour Government strongly supports it. However, someone seems to have forgotten to inform this high-ranking Cabinet member that his Government was planning to sign away workers' and consumers' rights, not to mention a fair chunk of national sovereignty. Stumped in front of several million viewers, Straw was compelled to admit he'd never heard of the MAI, though he promised to look it up after the show. No *LLB*, no comment.

King loses his head

As news of Labour's poor showing in **Islington** hit BBC TV, the country's senior political expert wearily explained the unexpected result to late night television viewers. "The Tories have targeted Islington for some time. They've put a lot of work in there." The authoritative tones belonged to **Professor Anthony King**, byelection pundit extraordinaire, guru of psephologists, sultan of swing (and midwife to the misbegotten SDP). Unfortunately for King, the Tories have no presence in Islington, and it's the Lib Dems who have been breathing down Labour's neck in one of the country's most high-profile local authorities.

Rage '98

National March Against Vivisection and Cruelty

Free Exhibition
Sheffield
1pm, Saturday 6th June

- Marquee 11am-5pm
- Details of transport from Uncaged

0114-253 0020

Lib Lab Mish Mash

In **Lewisham**, New Labour's local Executive Committee rode roughshod over local branch choices to deselect sitting councillors in several wards. Two defected to the Liberal Democrats, stood as Lib Dems in the council elections — and beat the Blairites' favourites. Seems the local people are more independent than they thought.

Better late than never

As the bad news for Labour piled up in **Islington** Town Hall on the night of the local elections, even Tony Blair's most devoted stooges had to admit something had gone wrong in the Prime Minister's former home borough. "Okay, okay," conceded a top advisor at 10 Downing Street, "I get the message. We'll have to do something about council housing." The advisor in question was none other than **James Purnell**, the former Islington councillor forced to apologise to **Liz Davies** in the High Court, and a former chair of Islington's Housing Committee.

MacCreep

We all wonder to what lengths new MPs will go to curry favour. Asking planted questions is a simple way to do it. So why be surprised when a Blair toady asks Jack Straw "what plans he has to strengthen immigration legislation to tackle abuse of the UK's immigration control" in order to allow him to announce new visa restrictions to try to stop those fleeing repression seeking safety here? Well, we shouldn't be surprised, even when the last job this MP had was as Director of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, an organisation committed to speak out on behalf of people affected by immigration laws. Stand up **Fiona MacTaggart**: with a nose so brown that even she might get stopped on arrival at Heathrow.

New Deal New Brighton

New Labour's **New Deal** campaign has got off to a sticky start in Brighton. The Federation of Small Businesses has issued a call to a meeting asking, "Have you ever thought how profitable your business would be if you didn't pay out wages?" Not the right idea, really, chaps.

Forth's FoEs

The Friends of the Earth took direct action when Tory MP **Eric Forth** used a bizarre Commons practice of blocking Private Members' Bills by simply shouting "object" to stall a number of environmental measures. They leafleted a key marginal ward in Forth's Bromley constituency before the local elections — the Tories lost two seats in the ward and control of the Council. Tory whips claim they can't control Forth, who has blocked many bills that have cross-party support. Perhaps his own Tory Constituency Association will prove more powerful.

Return of the undead

Just in case you were thinking of joining the Trade Union Committee for European and Transatlantic Understanding, you may be interested to know it is run by: a who's who of those who tried to destroy the labour movement from within in the 1980s. Who'd have thought vice president **Bill Jordan** (ex-AEU boss), **Marion Chambers** (the uncivil civil service union leader), **Lord Chapple** (remember the electricians' union?), Rt. Hon. **Lord Gilbert** (arms to the 'armful), **Eric Hammond** (the miners were "led by donkeys"), and Director **Alan Lee Williams** (former Labour MP turned SDP turncoat) were still alive? Let alone enjoying a fat CIA salary.

Totnes socialist in chains

Long-time *LLB* supporter **David Horsburgh** has become the Deputy Mayor of the ancient Royal Borough of Totnes. One of four Labour councillors on the previously "apolitical" (ie. Tory) town council, David has kept the red flag flying in the west country market town. A meeting with Tony Benn attracted several hundred, and Totnes Labour Party was recently a major participant in a local rally against the Government's plans to introduce university tuition fees. Well done to David and all the comrades in Totnes.

The star chip enterprise

An interesting snippet from *The Irish Post*. You may have thought that cross-border institutions would take some time to actually materialise under the **Stormont Agreement**. But one already exists! It's called Hughes' Chip Van which plies its trade between Co. Derry and Co. Donegal.

And as Mr. Hughes runs bona fide cross-border business he receives an EU grant. Not exactly what republicans envisage by "a united Ireland" — but it's a start.

AOB

"At Oxford...I also read a lot of history and politics, including Deutcher's superb biography of Trotsky." — Tony Blair on World Book Day, *The Times*.

"Embarrassed Mr Dobson? You should be bloody well ashamed." — *Daily Mirror* front page on yet another increase in hospital waiting lists.

"The idea that every nation ought to have an atomic bomb as every woman ought to have a mink coat is deplorable." — Clem Attlee. Under New Labour, Britain has both nuclear weapons and mink fur farms.

"The World Cup isn't just for fans — it's for nations." — Des Lynham.

NEC elections — vote for the grass roots alliance

Mike Marqusee reports: The left and centre of the Party have united around a strong team of candidates for the constituency section of Labour's National Executive Committee.

The six individuals standing represent a broad and diverse swathe of Labour Party opinion and experience. All have serious records of sustained, democratic activity at the grass-roots of the Party. They are not media creations or time-serving careerists. They are standing on a joint slate because they believe that the time has come to challenge the Blairite policies that are damaging our Party and, above all, the people it exists to serve. Because they owe nothing to the patronage of the Party leadership, these six individuals are genuinely independent. Party members can vote for them confident that their only masters will be the people who elect them.

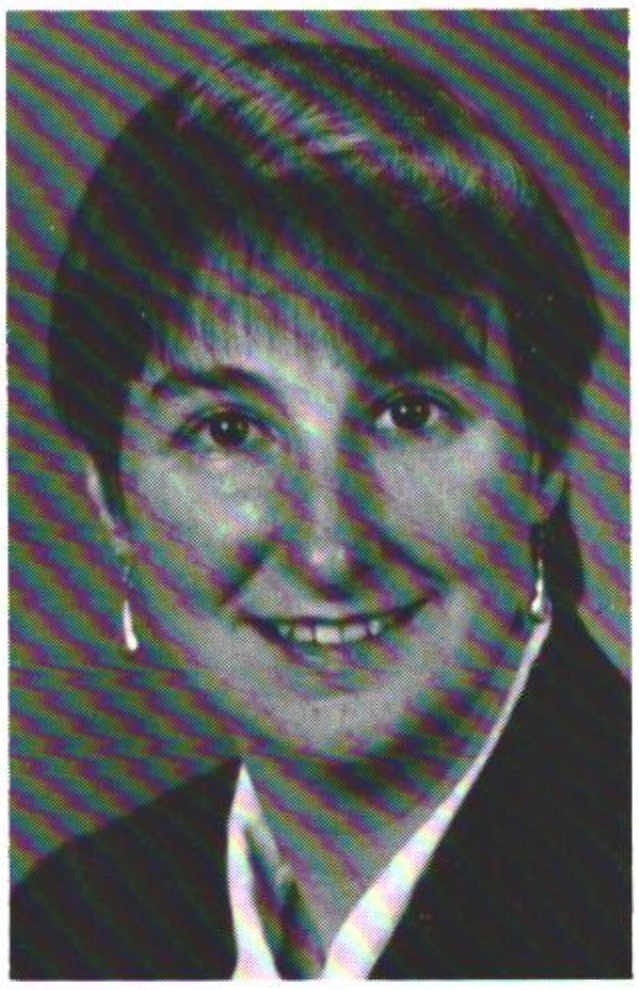
On the NEC, they will speak up for the priorities and stand up for the rights of ordinary Party members. They will oppose further centralisation of decision-making and press the Government to adopt the kind of redistributive policies necessary if we are to tackle poverty and inequality in our society.

Already, it has become clear that the leadership plans to use our Party's extensive resources — and the prestige of the Prime Minster — to ensure its preferred candidates are elected. As these will be the first elections held under the new system, no one can be certain what will happen. But make no mistake, this is a crucial year in the history of the Labour Party. All those who believe that working people need a voice in national politics must co-operate to ensure our voices are heard loud and clear inside the Party structures.

This is an alliance for democracy in the Labour Party; for the rights of constituency members and trades unionists (for these candidates will act as a voice for all sections of the Party); for open, informed debate and genuine consultation. This is a group of people dedicated to enhancing, not dismantling, the welfare state; to progressive taxation, and to increased investment in health, education, transport and other public services.

If you share these core Labour values, then please join the campaign for socialist representation on the NEC. Organise a meeting for the candidates in your locality. Make sure every Party member you know has a leaflet for the elections and casts his or her vote as soon as they receive it. The Millbank machine will be working flat out to get their favourites media coverage and appearances in Party publications; it is up to us to ensure Party members can make an informed choice on who to vote for.

● For more information and details contact the *LLB* Office on 0181-985 6597.



Liz Davies

Liz Davies

● Party member since 1979 ● Islington Councillor 1990-98 ● Chair, Council Womens' Committee 1993-98 ● Democratically selected PPC for Leeds North East 1995 — subsequently refused endorsement by NEC ● Member of TGWU, Co-operative Party ● Legal aid barrister specialising in tenants' rights ● Active in campaigns on domestic violence, racial harassment, against closure of nurseries, playgrounds. "I want to see our welfare state enhanced, not dismantled. We need increases in the state pension, a return to free higher education and a strong minimum wage. We must fulfil our commitments on workplace rights, and redress the imbalance in industrial relations created by the Tories."

Andy Howell

● Chair of Labour Reform ● Councillor in Birmingham with experience of political policy work at both national and local level.
"The constituency section of the NEC purports to offer members a real stake in the management of their party. This can only happen if constituency reps are responsive to the concerns of ordinary members, articulate these with vigour and passion and exercise their responsibilities with intelligence and care."

Cathy Jamieson

● Party member since 1980 ● Member of the Co-operative Party Parliamentary Panel and TGWU ● Member of Labour's Scottish Executive Committee since 1996. "I want to see creative solutions to economic and social problems, based on full employment, national minimum wage and decent levels of pensions and benefits, while protecting workers and consumer rights."

Mark Seddon

● Editor *Tribune* ● Joined Labour Party aged 15 ● Member GMB, NUJ and Full Employment Forum.
"I believe in the redistribution of power and wealth, economic policies that help fulfil Labour's historic mission for full employment and a properly funded welfare state, strong, affiliated trade unions and a socialist internationalism aimed at alleviating poverty and environmental destruction."

Christine Shawcroft

● Joined the Labour Party in 1976 ● Member of Co-operative Party since 1985 ● Poplar and Canning Town CLP Secretary ● London Borough of Tower Hamlets Councillor 1985-98.
"I support the Government working for full employment, a minimum wage starting at half median male earnings, public ownership of the utilities and railways, comprehensive education with no student loans and a properly funded health service."

Pete Willsman

● National Conference Arrangements Committee 1981-94 ● National Constitutional Committee 1995-98 ● ILEA Councillor 1986-90 ● Branch Secretary APEX/GMB 1980-98 ● Political Committee Co-op Wholesale Society SE 1988-97.
"I believe in an accountable party with the Government fully informed of members views. Our socialist and co-operative principles — redistribution of wealth; reducing gender, race and class inequalities; universal welfare provision — can ensure Labour's second term."

● The candidates are supported by Labour Reform, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, the Labour Womens' Action Committee, the Campaign for Socialism (Scotland), the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups, *LLB* and *Socialist Campaign Group News*. *Tribune*'s editorial has welcomed the initiative.

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